



Understanding Neurodivergence and Multiple Disadvantage



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Instructions

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What is Severe and Multiple Disadvantage (SMD)?

Refers to people who experience 3 or more of the following issues:

It is a way of describing the lived experience of people whose current circumstances have been strongly shaped by:

- ✓ Homelessness (vulnerably housed)
- ✓ Substance use
- ✓ Mental ill-health
- ✓ Offending/ victimisation
- ✓ Domestic/ sexual violence and abuse

Adverse childhood experiences



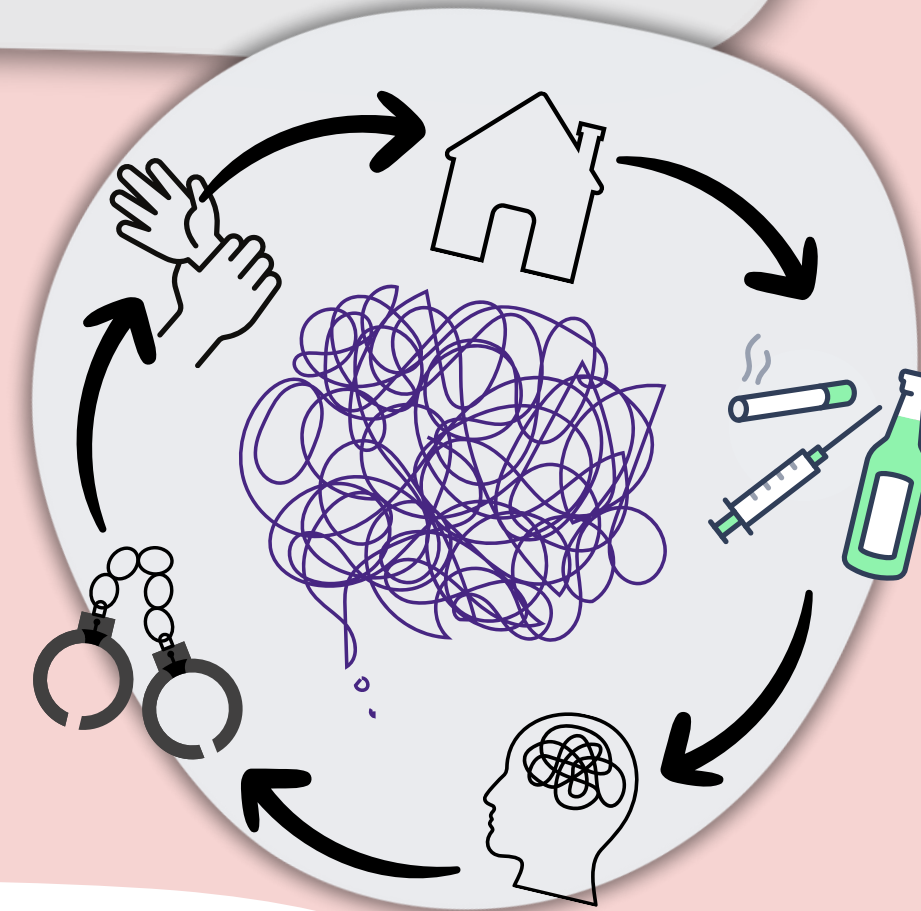
Poverty



Trauma



Stigma and discrimination





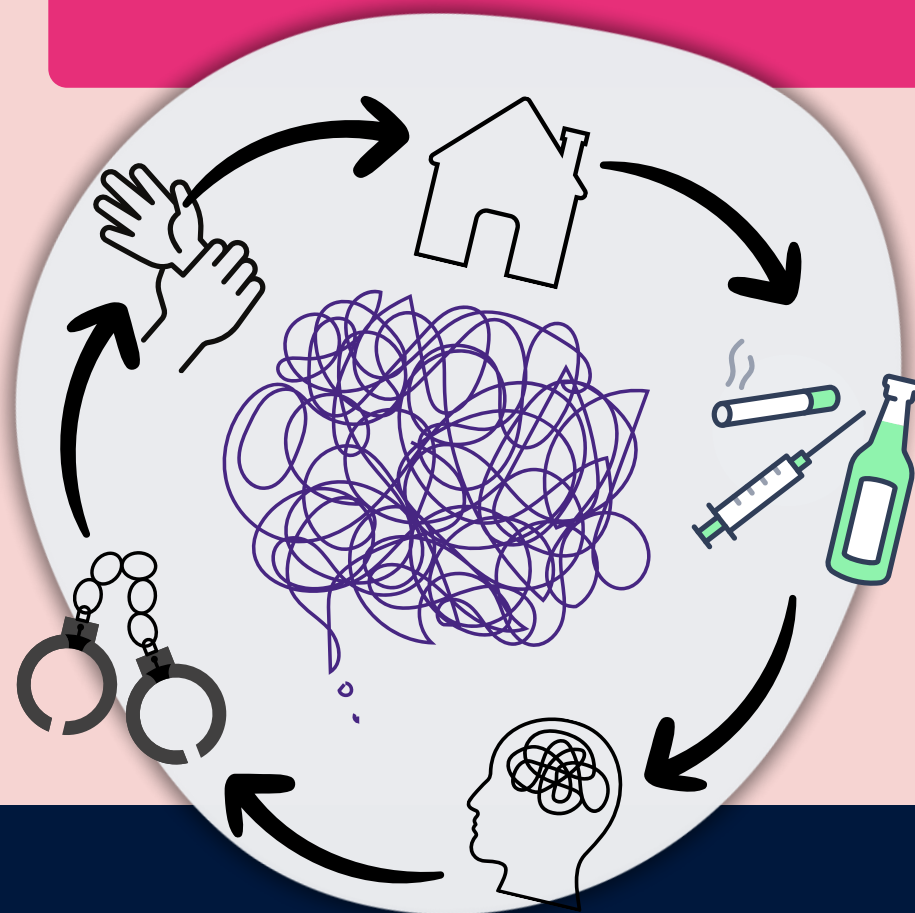
Severe and Multiple Disadvantage (SMD)



“ — ?

Why are we talking about Neurodivergence and Severe and Multiple Disadvantage together?

— ”



 **changing
FUTURES**
Believing in people. Inspiring change.



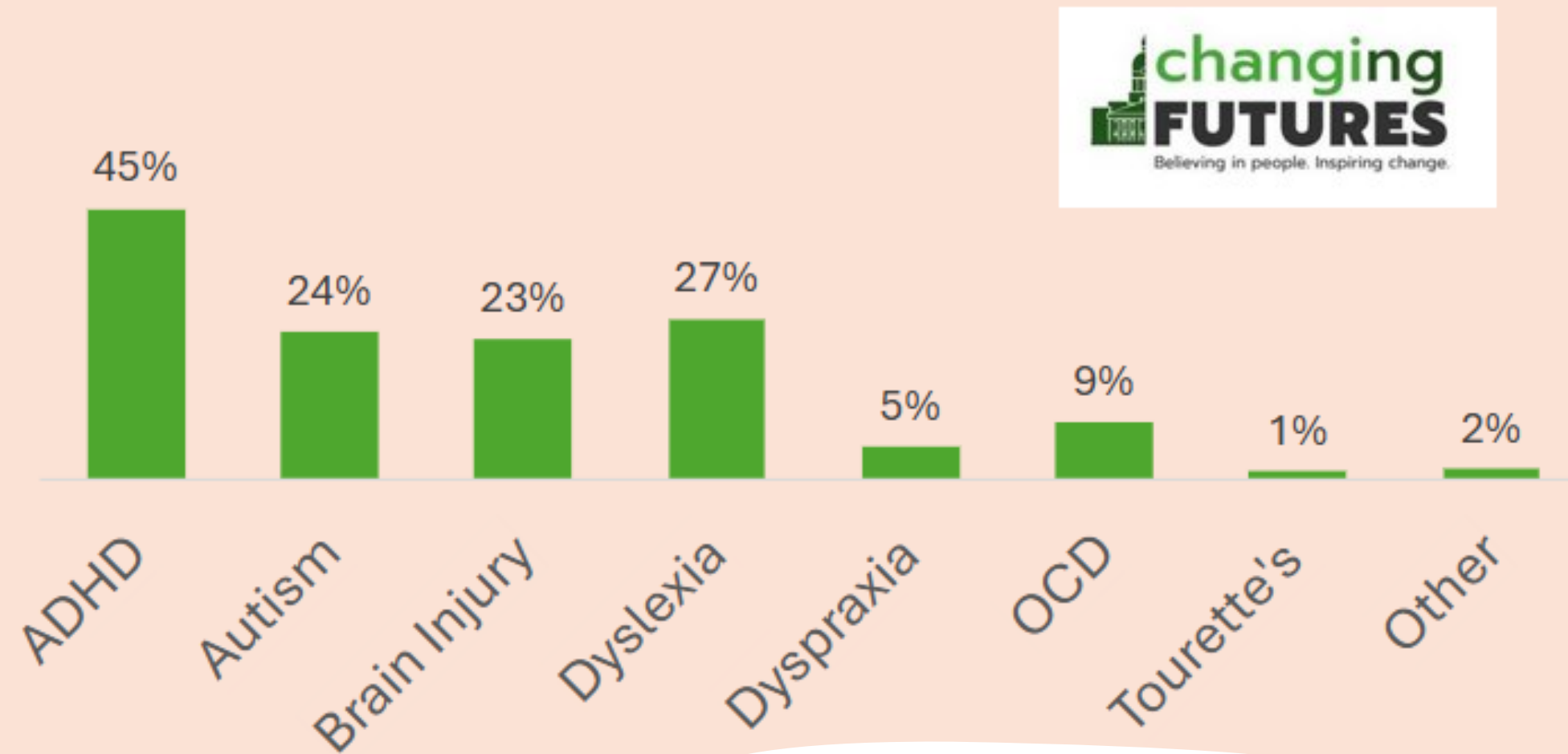
 **Nottingham City
Place-Based
Partnership**



Why are we thinking about Neurodivergence and Severe and Multiple Disadvantage (SMD) together?



Percentage of Changing Futures Beneficiaries who are Neurodivergent



Changing Futures Beneficiaries all experience SMD

58 – 62% are Neurodivergent

No difference in gender, age, ethnicity or sources of disadvantage.

Neurodivergent beneficiaries are more likely to be LGBTQAI+ than non-Neurodivergent beneficiaries.



Why it's important to think about neurodivergence in homelessness services?

ADHD homeless population



■ ADHD ■ Unknown

ADHD general population

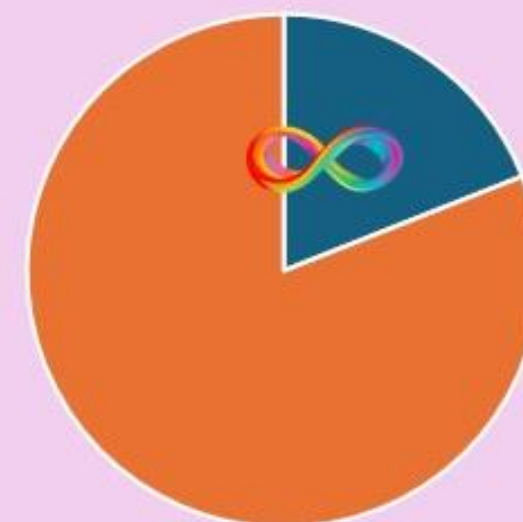


■ ADHD ■ Unknown

64% homeless samples reporting ADHD (Gallagher, 2023).

Murillo et al. (2016): In the USA 134 boys diagnosed with ADHD were followed up for 33 years. 24% of the ADHD group had experienced homelessness by the time they were 40, compared with 4% of the matched-control group.

Autism homeless population



■ Autism ■ Unknown

Autism general population



■ Autism ■ Unknown

19% homeless samples reporting Autism (Gallagher, 2023)

Campbell (2015) over 50% autistic people who did engage with services had negative experiences.





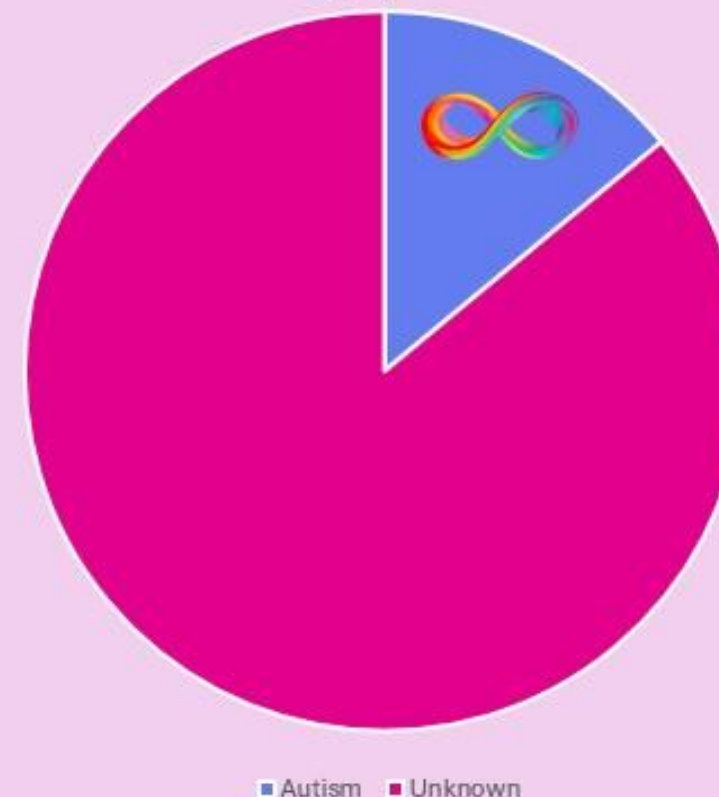
Why it's important to think about neurodivergence in Criminal Justice services?

ADHD in the Prison population



25% of the prison population in the UK have ADHD (Justice Select Committee Inquiry into Mental Health in Prisons)

Autism in the Prison population



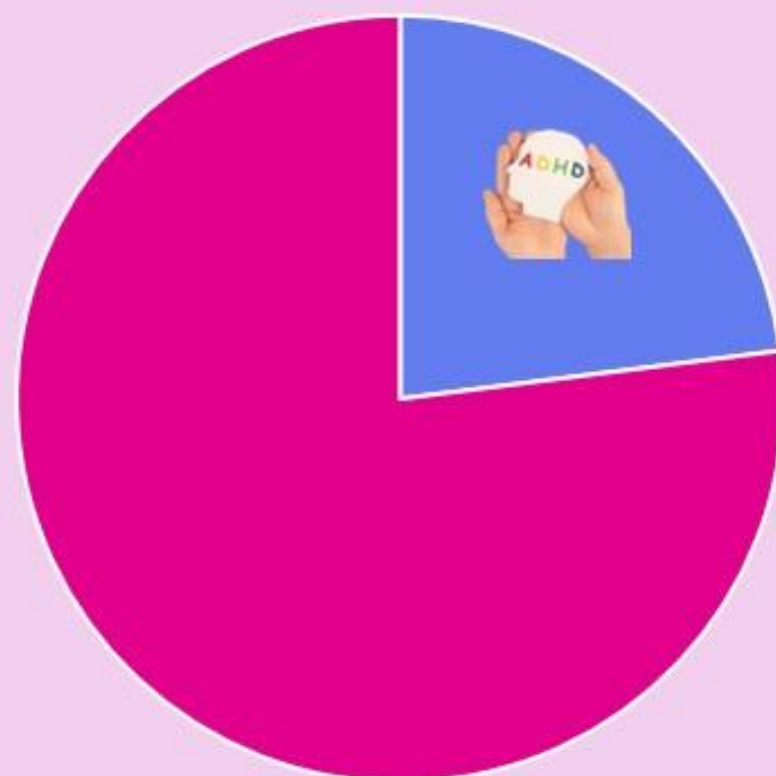
14% of the prison population have Autistic traits (Neurodiversity in the criminal justice system: A review of evidence, CJI)





Why it's important to think about neurodivergence in **substance use services?**

Proportion of people in substance use treatment with ADHD



■ ADHD ■ Unknown

It is estimated that 28% of people with ADHD will become addicted to a substance within their lifetime. Lifetime prevalence for UK general population is about 10%

23% of people in substance use treatment have diagnosed ADHD (van Emmerik-van Oortmerssen et al. 2012). Likely an underestimate!





Why it's important to think about neurodivergence in **mental health services?**



Proportion of Autistic people with a diagnosed mental health condition



■ Mental Health Diagnosis ■ No Mental Health Diagnosis

79% autistic adults have an additional mental health diagnosis (Newell et al. 2023).

Proportion of people with ADHD with a mental health diagnosis



■ Mental Health Diagnosis ■ No Mental Health Diagnosis

58% of people with an ADHD diagnosis also have a mental health diagnosis (Schein et al. 2023).

25% of the UK general population have a diagnosed mental health condition



Why it's important to think about neurodivergence in domestic abuse services?



Autistic Adult Population



■ Domestic Violence ■ No DV

64% of Autistic women interviewed had experienced sexual abuse (Bargiela et al. 2016)

A review of the research into domestic and sexual abuse and violence of autistic adults estimated 44% to 62% have experienced sexual violence, 40% to 60% physical violence and 60% to 70% emotional abuse (Gibbs et al. 2024).

Learning Disability Adult Population



■ Domestic Violence ■ No DV

57% of people with a learning disability have experienced domestic abuse (Us Too Project)



People with ADHD are more likely to be perpetrators and victims of intimate partner violence (Merscher et al., 2025)

UK Adult Population



■ Domestic Violence ■ No DV

20% of the UK adult population have experienced domestic abuse (ONS March 2024)



Neurodivergence & SMD Workstream

A partnership of local organisations
which began in June 2024.

- It reports to Nottingham City SMD partnership, which is part of Nottingham's Place-Based Partnership.
- Services collaborating on this work include: homelessness charities, substance use support services, SMD support services, domestic abuse charities, sex worker outreach services, primary care, probation, police, HM prison service, local mental health teams, public health representatives, SMD lived experience group, neuro developmental assessment services, specialist speech and language therapists in acute mental health, and more.



Neurodivergence & SMD Workstream

The workstream members have identified three key goals to work towards:



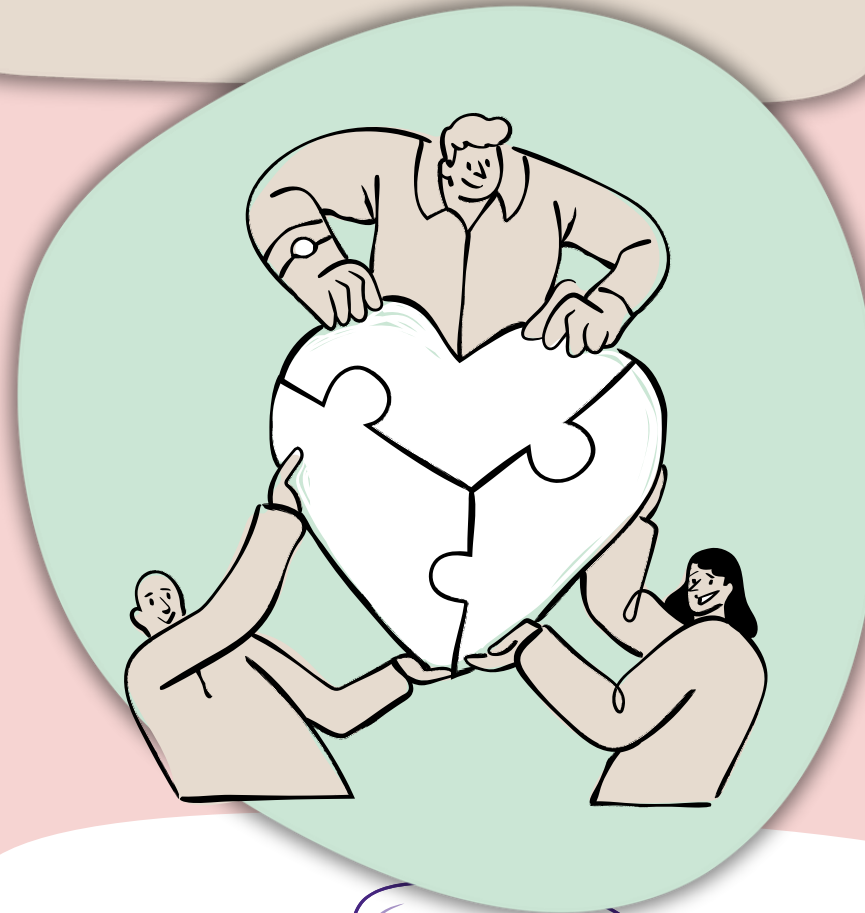
1

Training so that services are more aware of neurodivergence and SMD



2

Services that work in a neurodivergence affirmative way



3

Map out local neurodivergence support for people experiencing SMD





What have we learnt so far?

Neurodivergence & SMD Workstream

Accessible Diagnostic Pathways and Support

Assessments

- Assessment pathway for ADHD, Autism and Learning Disabilities in Prison, with psycho-education and collaborative risk plans as part of the process – short sentences and lack of continuity of care in the community are barriers to completion of assessments
- Change Grow Live in Nottinghamshire have an ADHD assessment pathway for prison leavers who use substances. This includes a slower, trauma-informed assessment process and group psycho-education.

Support

- Speech and Language Support is available for adult mental health patients with Autism
- Nottingham Recovery Network employs a speech and language therapist to support service users with communication plans
- Headway Nottingham supports people with acquired brain injury locally

In development

- Pilot of a brain injury identification and screening for service users of Nottingham Recovery Network
- Alcohol-related brain injury pathway to neurology being developed with Nottingham Recovery Network





What have we learnt so far?

Neurodivergence & SMD Workstream

Neurodivergence Affirmative Adjustments

- Some Framework homelessness hostels have introduced "calm spaces" and communication plans to support their neurodivergent residents
- There are Neurodiversity leads in the Police and Prisons
- Roll out of communication support tools in SMD-related services
- Co-authored communication cards have helped neurodivergent people experiencing SMD to explain their needs to professionals without judgement
- Early-stage awareness training on Alcohol-Related Brain Damage (ARBD) at NUH.



PDU Neurodivergence & Multiple Disadvantage Workstream



Learning series



Opportunity for practitioners to develop their understanding of neurodivergence in the context of SMD and to learn ways to more effectively meet the needs of their neurodivergent clients who also experience other forms of disadvantage.

- Over 750 learners engaged so far!
- 13 webinars and slides/resources available
- Connects learners to speech and language therapists, neurodiversity clinical leads for offender health teams, educational researchers, forensic and clinical psychologists, social workers and practitioners from street outreach.

✓ **CONNECT**

✓ **LEARN**

✓ **SHARE**

**PDU LEARNING SERIES:
NEURODIVERGENCE
AND MULTIPLE DISADVANTAGE**

Our learning series will:

- ✓ Showcase some of the new and innovative practices being used and developed across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
- ✓ Offer practical information, tools and advice to support front line workers
- ✓ Upskill people to implement neurodivergent affirmative approaches

About this Series:

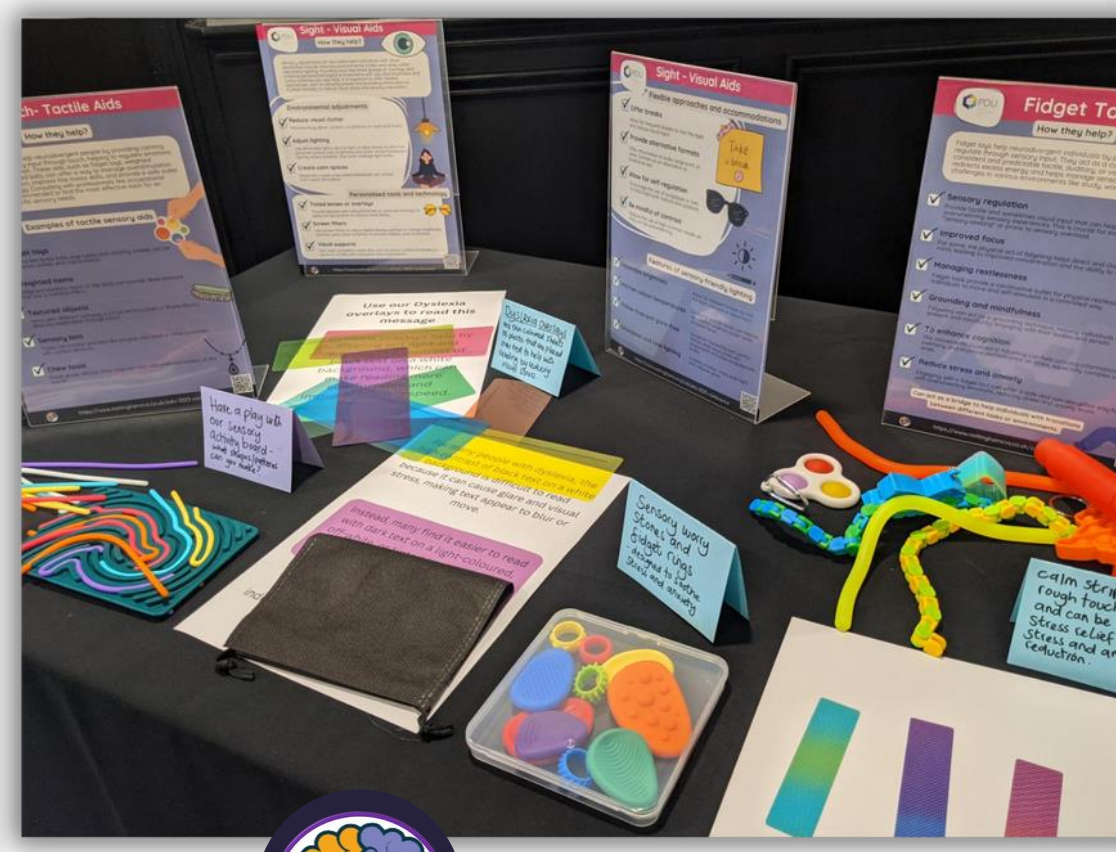
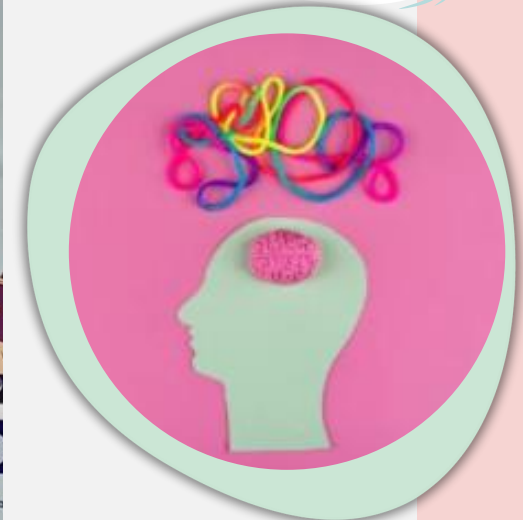
This monthly online learning series is an opportunity for practitioners to develop their understanding of neurodivergence in the context of multiple disadvantage and to learn ways to more effectively meet the needs of their neurodivergent clients who also experience other forms of disadvantage.

REGISTER NOW

Email: pdu@nottinghamcvs.co.uk

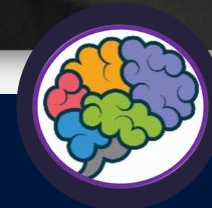
<https://www.nottinghamcvs.co.uk/neurodivergence-learning-series>

PDU Annual Conference



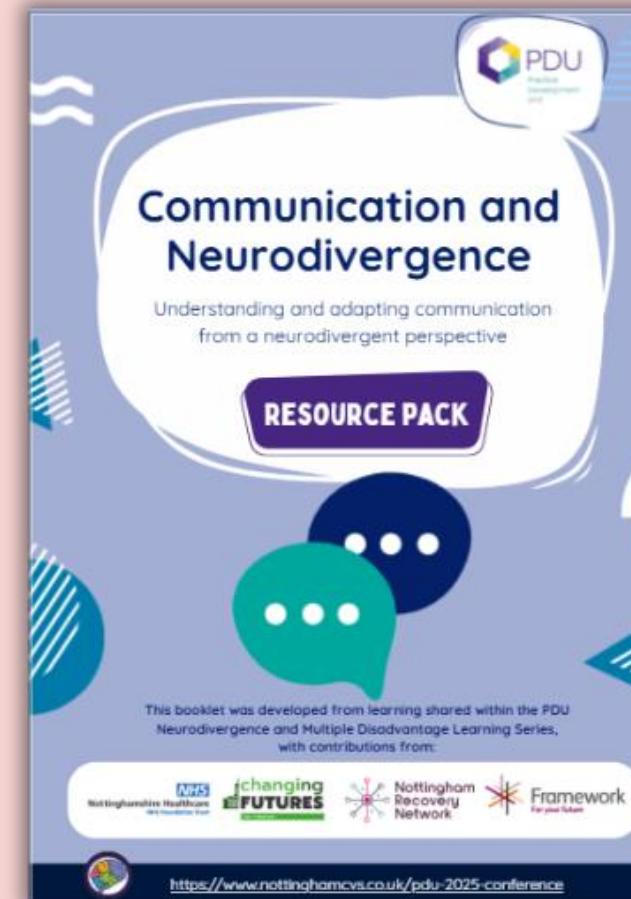
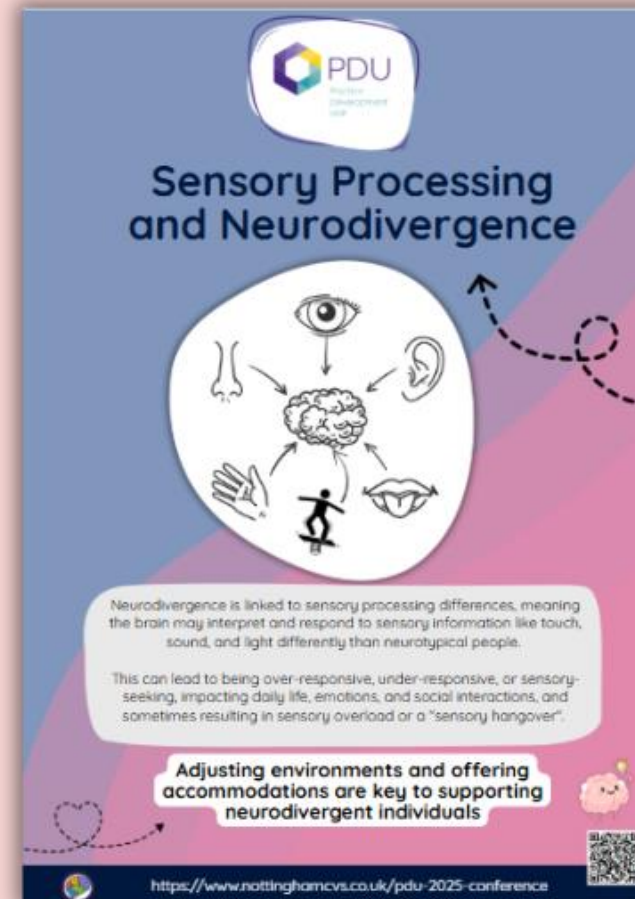
- Interactive workshops
- Sensory Showcase
- Communication Guide
- Signposting/Resource Pack
- Expert panel discussion
- Marketplace
- Networking opportunities

Understanding neurodivergence and multiple disadvantage: Improving support through partnerships



<https://www.nottinghamcvs.co.uk/pdu-2025-conference>

Check out our free event resources!



- **Conference Programme**- workshop summaries
- **Sensory processing and neurodivergence guide**
- **Communication and neurodivergence resource pack**
- **Information pack**- toolkits, reports, signposting
- **Case study**- reasonable adjustments in hostels



<https://www.nottinghamcvs.co.uk/projects/practice-development-unit/pdu-2025-conference/resources>

THANK YOU!



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Changing Futures Nottingham

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Practice Development Unit (PDU)

<https://www.nottinghamcvvs.co.uk/projects/practice-development-unit/>

