

Exploitation and Neurodiversity

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Objectives

What is exploitation?

What is neurodiversity?

Autism and offending/exploitation

ADHD and offending/exploitation

Case Study

The background features several decorative elements: a light blue circle with an orange flower-like pattern in the top left; a pink circle with radiating lines in the top right; a pink circle with wavy lines in the bottom left; and a pink circle with a dashed pattern in the bottom right. Scattered throughout are various colored dots in shades of pink, orange, purple, and blue.

What is exploitation?



Child Criminal Exploitation

“Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) is a type of child abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity.”

Child Sexual Exploitation

- Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse. It happens when a child or young person is coerced, manipulated or deceived into sexual activity in exchange for things that they may need or want like gifts, drugs, money, status and affection.



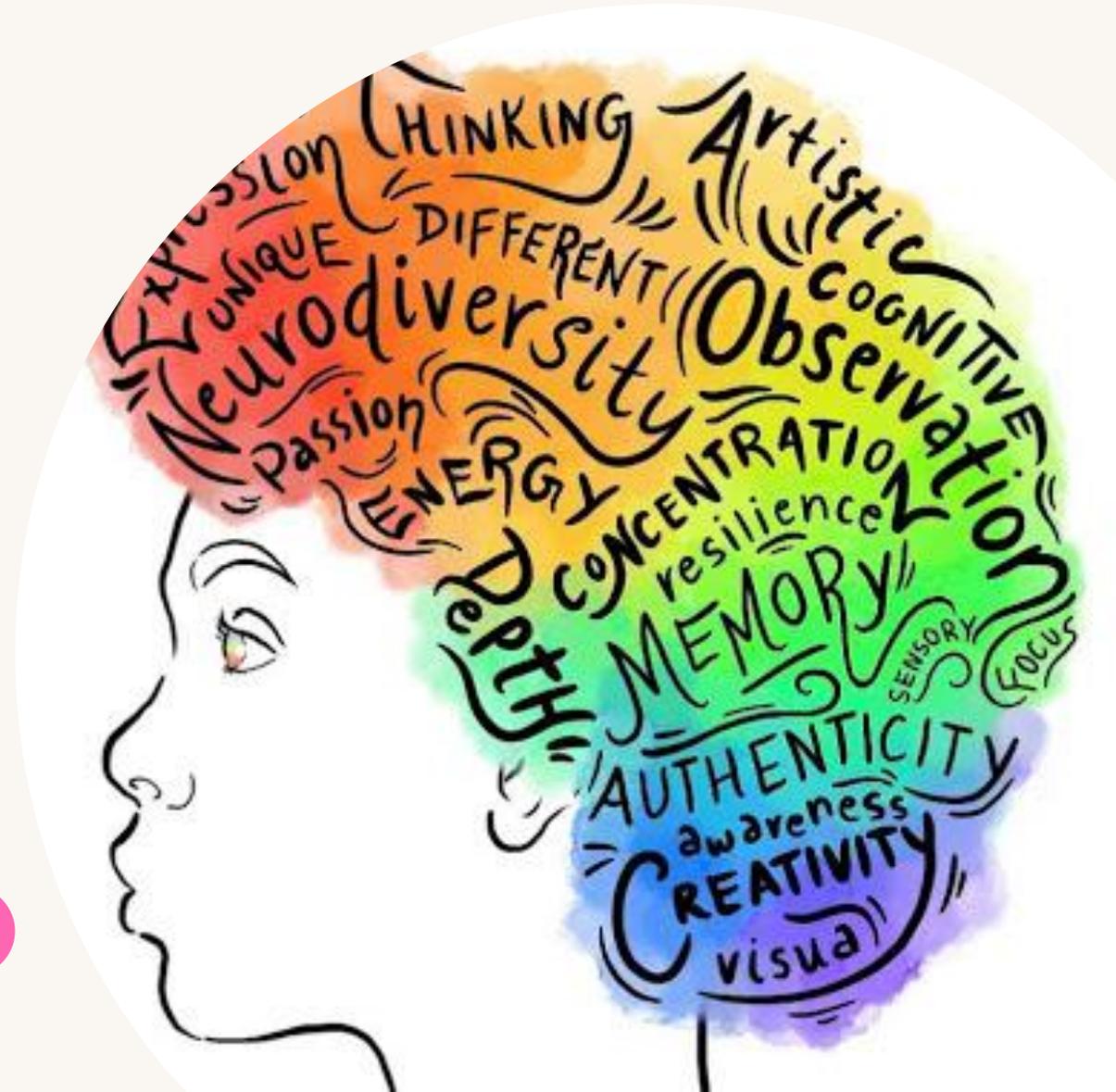
What is neurodiversity?



What is neurodiversity?

A term to describe differences in the way people's brains work.

Idea that there is no "correct" way for a brain to work.





Neurodiversity

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Tourettes Syndrome

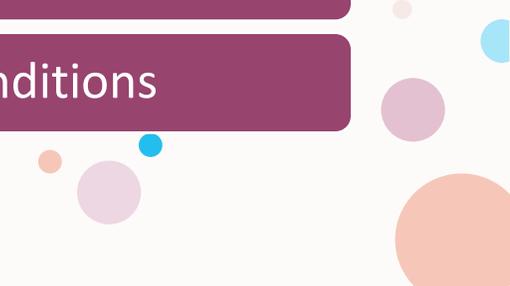
Dyslexia

Dyscalculia

Developmental Co-ordination Disorder/Dyspraxia

Learning Disability

Acquired Neurodiversity – traumatic brain injury, Parkinsons, stroke, mental health conditions



How common is neurodiversity?

- ADHD: ~5%, more boys than girls
- Autism Spectrum Disorder: 1%
- Tourette Syndrome: 1%
- Dyslexia: 10%
- Dyscalculia: 5%
- Dyspraxia: 5%
- Learning Disability: 2%



ADHD – DSM V criteria

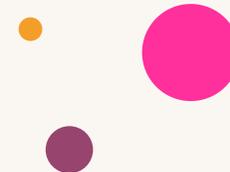
“A persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development”

Must persist for at least six months

Symptoms must interfere with, or reduce quality of, academic or social functioning

Must be present in two or more settings

Symptoms are not better explained by a(nother) mental health disorder



Autism Spectrum Disorder – DSM V

- **A. Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts:**
 1. Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity
 2. Deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction
 3. Deficits in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships
- **B. Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities:**
 1. Stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects, or speech
 2. Insistence on sameness, inflexible adherence to routines, or ritualized patterns or verbal nonverbal behavior
 3. Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus
 4. Hyper- or hyporeactivity to sensory input or unusual interests in sensory aspects of the environment



C. Symptoms must be present in the early developmental period (but may not become fully manifest until social demands exceed limited capacities or may be masked by learned strategies in later life)

D. Symptoms cause clinically significant impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of current functioning

E. These disturbances are not better explained by intellectual disability (intellectual developmental disorder) or global developmental delay

Why are children with autism more vulnerable to exploitation?



The Statistics

In a 2015 survey, 80% of autistic people reported that they had been taken advantage of by a friend

40-60% of young people referred to PREVENT have autism

77% of UK children with autism are experiencing bullying

American study of more than 24,000 children born in 2006 and found that 17% of the 387 autistic children had been the subject of calls to the state's child abuse hotline, compared with 7% of the others. However, child protection professionals investigated the caregivers of only 62% of the autistic children, compared with 92% of neurotypical children

2022 meta-analysis, 34 studies, rate of victimisation (bullying, crime, sexual victimisation) of 44% in autistic people

60-90% of autistic women in a 2022 study reported experience of sexual violence

Why?

Alexithymia – difficulty identifying one's own feelings, difficulty describing feelings

Often isolated and welcome friendships

Social impediments – impaired ability to decode social gestures (sexual assault)

Impaired ability to interpret negative body language

Intense interests – may be related to offending behaviours

Communication difficulties

Can be difficult to access peer relationships in healthy ways

Camouflaging autistic traits (CAT-Q questionnaire) – looks at compensatory behaviour, masking, assimilation



Why are children with ADHD more vulnerable to exploitation?

Why?

Strong link with ADHD and drug or alcohol misuse

Long term effect of disruptive behaviours on risk for experiencing abuse/neglect

Increased risk of being out of school

Feeling isolated

Emotionally immature

Early Developmental Trauma



[Childhood Trauma and the Brain \(with English subtitles\) | UK Trauma Council - YouTube](#)

Case Study

12-year-old boy seen for safeguarding medical – teenage girl alleged he had forced her to give him oral sex, filmed it and posted it on Snapchat

Privately diagnosed with ADHD and autism in 2021

Known to social care as mum had been in numerous abusive relationships

History Taking

- Mum and sister have poor mental health
- “Extreme emotional reactions to small things”
- Excluded from several schools, now home schooled by mum
- Spends time out with three or four older friends
- Likes to play “tapping out”
- No answer when asked about being in a gang
- Drinks alcohol regularly; uses weed sometimes
- Friends carry weapons; he owns a butterfly knife
- Sexually active since aged 12 ½, oldest partner aged 15, “usually” uses condoms
- Intentional overdose with ADHD pills, rates mental health as a 2 out of 10

What Can We Do?



Listen



Be aware of internal biases



Is there underlying neurodevelopmental need?



Attend training (Oliver McGowan) and read about neurodiversity



Know about local support e.g. STEP group, SENDIAS, WAY Beacons, Early Help Hub, Kooth



Recognition of exploitation, but even more prevention



Questions?

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