

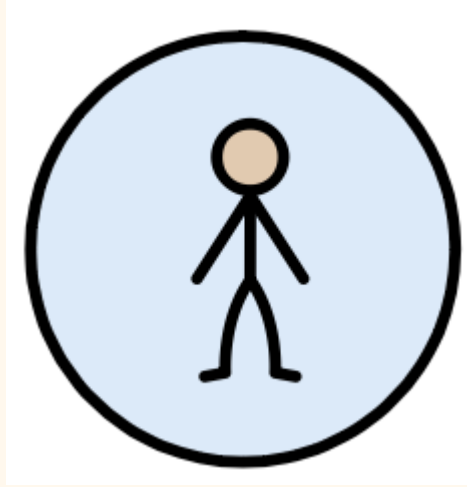


Mental health

Partnership for the Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools

The programme is funded by the Department for Education (DfE), supported by the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS England (NHSE)

PINS overview



- PINS provides a unique opportunity to work in partnership between health, education, children and their families to develop different aspects of school life to support neurodiversity
- We know that meeting needs of neurodivergent children will be of benefit to all children
- Meeting needs of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in mainstream schools is the cornerstone to improving outcomes (attainment, attendance and wellbeing), parental confidence and delivering a financially sustainable SEND system.

Who are we?



HCRG Care Group are the current Community Provider of Children's Service in B&NES, Wiltshire and now Swindon.

Within our organisation we have a skilled mix of specialist clinical workforce who are helping provide consultation and expertise to this partnership programme.

Professionals include:

- Learning Disability Nurses
- Clinical Psychologists
- Paediatricians
- Occupational Therapists
- Speech and Language Therapists
- Physiotherapists

Plan

1. Identifiable Mental Health Conditions/Diagnoses



2. Contributing factors to mental health in neurodivergence



3. Break



4. 'Let's get practical' - training/resource ideas



Activity:

What mental health conditions are you aware of in the students in your school?

How do these impact their ability to achieve their full potential in school?



Identifiable Mental Health Conditions/Diagnoses

Identifiable Mental Health Conditions/Diagnoses

- Anxiety disorders – phobias, separation anxiety, social anxiety, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Mood / Affect disorders – depression, bipolar disorder
- Eating disorders – anorexia, bulimia, Avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID), Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (EDNOS)
- Trauma disorders - post-traumatic stress disorder
- Schizophrenia



Others:

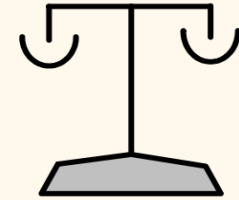
- Attachment disorders e.g. abnormal pattern of attachment to main care givers due to trauma or Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Disruptive behaviour and dissocial disorders – Conduct disorder

Good levels of emotional/mental wellbeing help children to:

- Learn and explore the world
- Feel, express and manage positive and negative emotions
- Form and maintain good relationships with others
- Cope with and manage change, setbacks and uncertainty
- Develop and thrive



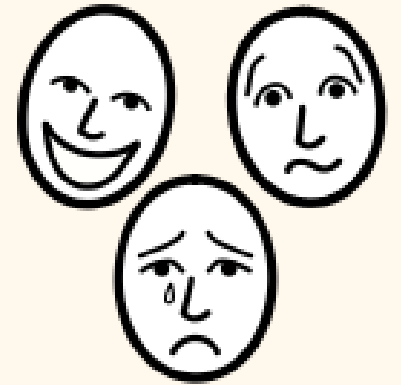
What can make a child more/less likely to experience poor mental health?



Risk factors	Protective factors
Child's individual characteristics	Resilience
Exposure to traumatic events (ACEs)	Parental figure at home
Changes in relationships with family or friends	Lifestyle factors
Sleep	Good friends
Broader society	
Having a neurodevelopmental condition	

Anxiety

- Fear, panic, worry
- Trauma
- Intolerance to Uncertainty (Jacqui Rodgers, Newc Uni) in neurodivergence
- Rational and irrational anxiety
- There is a difference between anxiety in the context of autism and having an anxiety disorder in addition to autism



Rational and irrational anxiety

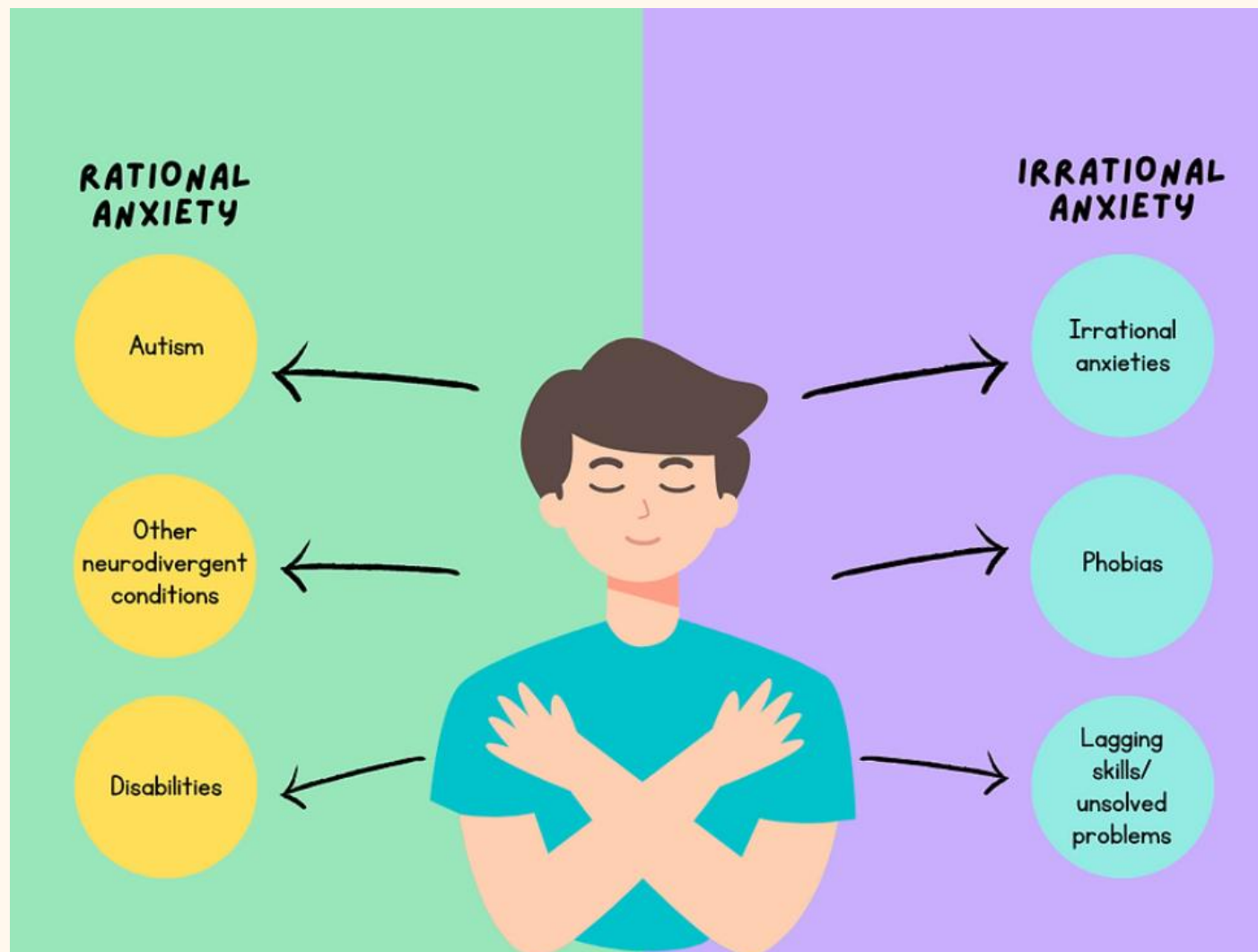
How to help:

Understanding

Acceptance

More support

Environmental changes



How to help:

Recognising there isn't actually anything to be scared of

Reducing triggers and overall anxiety

Taking small steps



Contributing factors to mental health in neurodivergence

Mental Health and ND Conditions

Neurodevelopmental conditions are **not** a mental health condition, but people with neurodevelopmental differences are more likely to have difficulties with their emotional wellbeing and mental health.



Mental Health and ND Conditions

Why do you think that neurodivergent people are more likely to have poorer mental health than neurotypical people?

Let's think about:

- Autism
- ADHD
- Developmental Language Disorder (Difficulties in understanding and using language)
- Dyslexia
- Dyscalculia

A Visual Guide to NeuroDiversity language & Inclusion

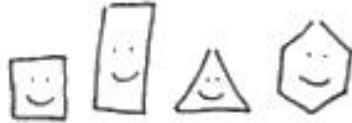
developed from a design by @scrappapertiger



A diverse group of shapes.

But ☺ is the most common.

☺ are typical



are all divergent from the most common shape ☺

They are divergent



Here is a family of △. They are All divergent from the majority, who are ☺, but they are not diverse. Within their family group they are all the same.



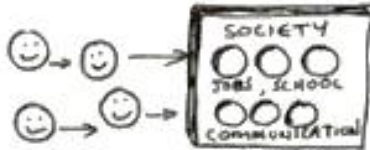
is divergent from the average ☺, but they can't be diverse, as there is just one shape (not a group).



This family is diverse, with two divergent members in a society where ☺ is most common.

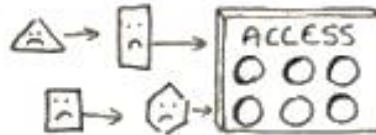
The ☺ is typical but part of a diverse family.

Typically society is designed for the majority ☺ of people



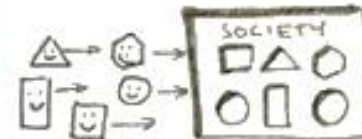
The majority are generally unaware of the challenges others face (as they don't experience them)

"Trying to fit in"



For divergent people this can mean they face huge unrecognized challenges, that can cause severe levels of mental and physical damage. Just trying to fit into society can mean masking our real selves.

All people need to be included in designing society, for society to work for All people!



There should be "Nothing About Us, Without Us"

#NAUWU

idea based on original work by Sonny Hallett @scrappapertiger

Video



Recent data from Autistica

Recent research shows 7/10 autistic people have at least one other mental health condition

- 85% Anxiety
- 36% Depression
- 33% Self harm and self injury
- 27% Suicidal thoughts
- 21% Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

www.autistica.org.uk

Anxiety Disorders and Autism

Anxiety disorders are not simply part of autism but can independently co-occur.
They can be addressed and treated albeit with modification for autism.

Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD)

Social anxiety

Panic Disorder

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Separation anxiety

Specific Phobia

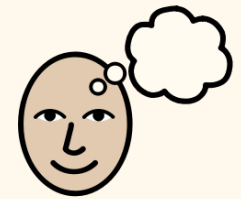
A thorough assessment and formulation are key to planning the way forward.

(Slide taken from Wiltshire Community CAMHS)

Anxiety in autism

Jamieson (2011)

- Unfamiliar or unpredictable situations
- Performance-related situations
- New leisure activities
- Social situations
- Unusual events e.g. sudden or unexpected events
- Situations/decisions in which the outcome is uncertain



Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

There are definite overlaps between autism and OCD:

- Ritualised and compulsive behaviour patterns
- Fixation on routine
- Restricted and repetitive behaviours
- Resistance to change

(Slide taken from Wiltshire Community CAMHS)

Key difference

An autistic person might tap their pencil on the desk 30 times because they like the sound of the tapping.

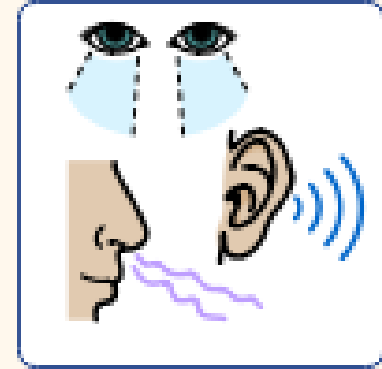
A person with OCD might tap their pencil on the desk 30 times because they believe that unless they tap, something bad will happen.

(Slide taken from Wiltshire Community CAMHS)

Sensory differences

Hyper- or **hypo-** sensitive to:
sights, sounds, smells, textures (plus others)

Impact on ability to participate in activities



Activity:

What sort of behaviours might you notice in a student that could indicate they are experiencing anxiety?

Recognising anxiety

- Difficulties concentrating
- Poor sleep patterns
- Poor eating habits
- Quick to anger, outburst/meltdowns
- Constant worrying – preoccupations
- Complaining of feeling unwell
- Difficulty making decisions
- Repetitive behaviours e.g. picking skin
- Retreating from others
- Poor school attendance

Emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA)

- A severe difficulty attending school, often causing long-term absence
- Affects 1-5% of the school population
- Autistic students are at increased risk of EBSA



EBSA: Working together

- Child's views
- Parent views
- School staff views
- Any other professionals involved



Activity: The stress bucket

List factors related to neurodivergence that could contribute towards **anxiety**

and/or

emotion-based school avoidance



EBSA in neurodivergence

- Bullying
- Sensory environment
- Not being able to follow own agenda
- Fear of the unknown or unpredictable changes in classroom
- Anxious about failure or perfectionism in their work
- Poor concept of time
- Difficulties with communication
- Transport or journey to school
- Separation anxiety
- Rules which make no sense to them

Contributing factors to mental health in neurodivergence - continued

Alexithymia

Alexithymia is a Greek word that literally translates as “**no words for feelings**”.

It means difficulty with understanding and/or describing your feelings/emotions.

Autistic people are more likely to experience alexithymia.

Consider: How might alexithymia impact a child/young person's mental health?

Impact of Alexithymia

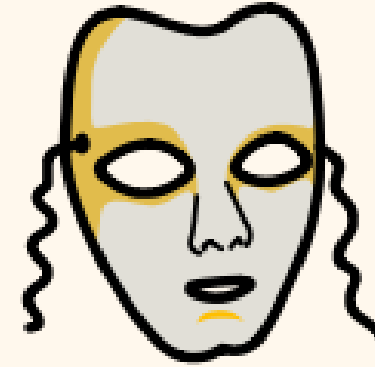
- Not knowing how they are feeling
- Difficulties engaging with traditional counselling approaches
- Difficulties understand other people's feelings
- Being bullied, teased, rejected, humiliated by peers and siblings
- Feeling judged by peers and adults
- Fear of social 'performance' and making a social mistake
- Not knowing the social 'script' in new social situations

Also, consider children with language difficulties may also experience this.

Masking

What is masking?

Camouflaging to 'fit in'.



Can all children mask?

They must have developed executive function and meta-awareness skills.

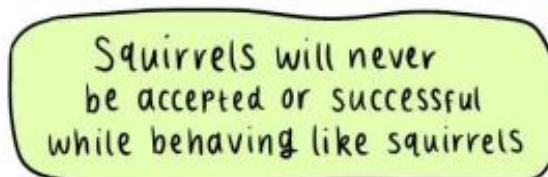
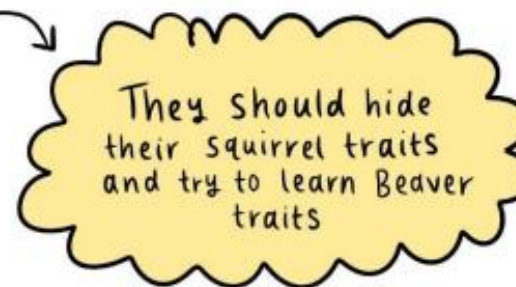
Do we want young people to mask?

Impact on exhaustion, anxiety and depression.



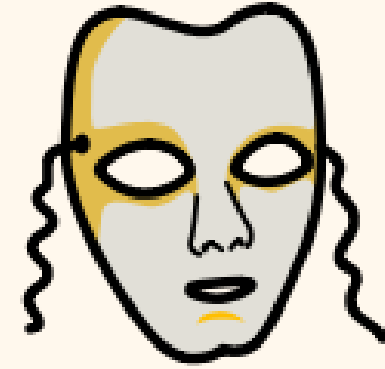
Being a SQUIRREL in a world
designed for BEAVERS is often
VERY TOUGH.

Squirrels are often taught that:





Trauma related to masking



Negative experiences mean we don't feel safe.

Masking is a repeated behaviour response to not feeling 'safe' to be our true self.

This leads to fight/flight/freeze/fawn response.

Children need support to identify this and to help them feel safer.

<https://autismunderstood.co.uk/co-occurring-conditions/the-mind-is-a-muscle/>

Autistic burnout

Just like a muscle, the mind can become tired and work less effectively, which means it needs rest to get back to normal.

If a muscle works too hard, it can become worn down.

This requires time to recover.

<https://autismunderstood.co.uk/co-occurring-conditions/the-mind-is-a-muscle/>



Let's get practical

When someone says 'don't be anxious'
and your anxiety is cured



School environment and mental health

Start in their world

Accept their right to feel anxious

Look ahead to predict upcoming situations

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/professional-practice/anxiety-classroom>

Prevention

- Teach young people how to recognise emotions within themselves and other people
- Promote pride in being neurodivergent
- Create predictable learning environments; reduce unexpected change
- Provide one-page profiles
- Develop an emotional regulation kit bag
- Energy accounting activity (Maja Toudal)

Energy accounting

Withdrawals – Things that sap energy

- Socialising
- Making a mistake
- Change in routine
- Being teased or excluded
- Crowds



Deposits – Things that replenish energy

- Sleep
- Activity related to special interest
- Favourite food



Activity:

Reasonable adjustments – take 5 minutes to read through this list of reasonable adjustments and consider what could be established in your school

<https://autisticgirlsnetwork.org/reasonable-adjustments-possible-at-school/>

Training and support for schools

- Suite of parent videos e.g. anxiety/worries
- After school behaviour outbursts – support for parents
- Supporting my child to come to school - for parents
- Supporting my child to come to school- for parents
- Emotion based school avoidance (EBSA) - for schools
- Right Choice training – options around social, emotional and mental health
- SSENS training e.g. masking and camouflaging
- Think more broadly about whether training/resources in other areas may have a knock-on effect on mental health e.g. Healthy eating / sleep / playtime / transitions / sensory environment

Useful signposting – nationally

- **Young Minds** - Information and advice about mental health for young people and parents www.youngminds.org.uk
- **Anxiety and Autism** – Useful videos to find out more about anxiety and autism and strategies that help.
<https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/wellbeing/autism-and-anxiety/>

Useful signposting – B&NES

- The **School Nurses** can provide advice and support around many health issues including mental health and sleep
<https://bathneshealthandcare.nhs.uk/childrens/school-nursing/>
- The **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service** provides advice and links as well as information about how to refer
<https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/banes/>
- **Off The Record** provide information to parents, carers and young people about mental health, as well as offering school based counselling services
<https://www.offtherecord-banes.co.uk/>
- **Kooth** provides confidential mental health support for young people in Bath and North East Somerset <https://www.kooth.com/>

Useful signposting - Swindon

- The **School Nursing Service** can provide advice and support around many health issues including mental health and anxiety and can be contacted via 01793 465030 or email SwindonSchoolNurseTeam@swindon.gov.uk
www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20222/services/1507/school_nursing
- The **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service** provides advice and links as well as information about how to refer www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/
- **Be U Swindon** is available for young people with mental health and well-being challenges who live or are registered with a GP in Swindon. Young people can refer themselves or ask someone else to refer them such as a parent/ carer or someone working with them. Referrals can be made here beuswindon.co.uk

Useful signposting - Wiltshire

- The **School Aged Health Service** can provide advice and support around many health issues including emotional wellbeing and mental health support and can be contacted via the Single Point of Access 0300 247 0090 (Mon-Fri 9am to 5pm)
- **On Your Mind** – the emotional wellbeing service provides advice and support for mental health for children aged 5 to 18 in Wiltshire including free counselling sessions <https://www.onyourmind.org.uk/>
- The **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service** provides advice and links as well as information about how to refer <https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/wilts/>

Useful resources/documents

- <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/getting-started/whats-mental-health/>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2>
- <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7196/CBP-7196.pdf>
- Free interactive resource for a whole school approach to mental health - <https://www.annafreud.org/resources/schools-and-colleges/5-steps/>
- Mindful Educational Brain Break ideas - <https://www.weareteachers.com/brain-breaks-for-kids/>
- 50 minute training online that schools can access about ACEs and trauma – <https://www.kirkleeslocaloffer.org.uk/sendco-professional-information-and-resources-page/tools-resources-and-training/aces-adverse-childhood-experiences-training/>
- CAMHS website has an online course for autism and anxiety - [Taking charge of autism and anxiety | Oxford Health CAMHS](#)
- West Sussex EBSA resources - <https://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Page/10483>

4. Questions, comments, feedback

