

Supporting Neurodivergent Educators

A SAND guide for inclusive, reflective staff support

Why This Matters

Schools increasingly recognise neurodiversity among students, yet neurodiversity among educators is rarely discussed. Many teachers, LSAs, and support staff navigate environments that are sensory overwhelming, emotionally demanding, and highly reactive – every day.

SAND recognises that educator wellbeing is part of the support system. When adults within a system are supported, behaviour responses become more consistent, reflective, and sustainable.

In SAND, adult experience is not separate from behaviour support – it is part of the system that shapes it. This guide is not about labels or diagnosis. It focuses on creating environments where all adults can work sustainably and effectively – regardless of how their brain processes the world.

What Neurodivergent Educators May Experience

Sensory demands

Classrooms are noisy, bright, unpredictable environments. For staff with sensory sensitivities, this can be exhausting – not because the work is too hard, but because the environment makes everything harder.

Emotional labour

Managing the emotional needs of others while regulating your own is demanding for everyone – and can be particularly intense for staff who experience emotions deeply or process social situations differently.

Masking and performance

Some educators mask their natural responses in order to meet professional expectations. This is unsustainable long-term and contributes to burnout, fatigue, and withdrawal.

Executive function demands

Rapid task-switching, last-minute changes, and managing multiple priorities simultaneously can be particularly challenging. This is not a lack of competence – it is a processing difference.

How SAND Supports This

SAND provides reflective tools that support all staff – including those who may experience these pressures more acutely:

Pause Before Reacting (PAUSE) – Creates space between stimulus and response. Helps staff recognise when they are approaching overwhelm and choose a reflective response instead of a reactive one.

Educator Regulation & Reflection Sheet – A private reflective space for staff to check in with their own regulation, identify pressures, and name what they need.

Sensory & Environment Reflection – Helps staff understand how their working environment affects them and identify adjustments that could make a meaningful difference.

Staff Reflection Form – A post-incident reflection tool that includes “What did I notice in myself?” – normalising the idea that adults are affected by behaviour moments too.

Creating Inclusive Working Environments

Schools and settings can support neurodivergent staff by:

Normalising differences – Acknowledging that adults, like children, have different ways of processing. This is a strength, not a problem.

Providing quiet spaces – Somewhere staff can decompress, even briefly, during the day.

Reducing unnecessary sensory load – Changes that benefit neurodivergent staff often benefit everyone – calmer environments, clearer communication, predictable routines.

Supporting flexible working where possible – Recognising that one-size-fits-all approaches to the working day may not work for everyone.

Using reflective supervision – Rather than performance-focused check-ins, offer spaces where staff can reflect honestly on what is working and what they need.

Supporting educators is not separate from supporting children.

It is the same work, seen from a different angle.

Behaviour is communication. *When we look and listen, we begin to understand the voice behind it.*