



Neurodivergent
MiNDs

Trustees' Annual Report

**For the year ended
31st May 2024**

Registered Charity Number: 1200152



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Charitable objects

The purposes of the charity as set out in the governing document

The objects of the CIO are, for the public benefit, to promote and protect the mental health of neurodivergent people in the United Kingdom, by means of, but not exclusively:

- a. issuing grants to neurodivergent individuals in need of psychological therapy, to enable access to approved, neurodiversity-affirming therapists;
- b. connecting neurodivergent people with effective, neurodiversity-affirming support;
- c. providing evidence-based information and guidance for neurodivergent people on understanding their mental health needs;
- d. seeking to advance the knowledge and skills of mental health professionals, health and social care staff and other primary points of contact for neurodivergent people;
- e. educating public service providers, academic researchers and the wider population on neurodiversity, acceptance and genuine inclusion, promoting acceptance and understanding of the differing abilities and needs of all individuals and combating stigma and discrimination.

For the purposes of this clause:

“Neurodiversity” refers to the natural variation in neurodevelopment across all individuals – the diversity of all brains and minds.

“Neurodivergent” describes a person whose neurodevelopment falls outside of the ‘typical’ range, including neurodevelopmental differences such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia and Tourette’s Syndrome.

“Neurodiversity-affirming” means an approach which embraces neurodiversity and seeks to understand an individual’s unique profile of strengths, interests and support needs, empowering the individual to advocate for their needs and supporting them to achieve their personal goals.

Our vision

Every mind is valued.

Our mission

We centre the experiences of neurodivergent people to:

- advance the knowledge of professionals within the mental health system;
- connect people with effective mental health support;
- empower neurodivergent people to unmask, express their needs and be heard.

Our values

We represent – We provide a platform from which all parts of our community can be heard, actively seeking out the voices of those who are traditionally disadvantaged. Every action we take and decision we make is informed by ND voices.

We amplify – We place neurodivergent experience at centre stage, so professionals can learn and society can change for the better.

We respect – We value differing perspectives and treat everyone with fairness, equity and dignity.

We are authentic – We nurture a culture of openness, accessibility and trust to make space for genuine two-way communication.

We learn – We seek out knowledge and expertise to inform our practice and guide our progress. We listen and we learn from our mistakes.

We honour diversity – We celebrate the range of human difference whilst being wholly mindful of the lived realities of disabled people and those from marginalised groups who may face significant challenges in daily life.

Main activities

The trustees of Neurodivergent MiNDs have regard to the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance. We ensure this guidance is taken into account when making any decisions to which it is relevant.

During the financial period for this report, our activities were primarily focused on:

- Fundraising and financial sustainability
- Research and service design
- Branding and website development
- Strengthening governance and capacity

Through all of our activities we endeavour to ensure that the services we deliver are directly relevant to our beneficiaries and in alignment with their priorities, needs and values, enabling us to be truly effective in furthering our purposes for the public benefit. We are embedding emotional safety, flexibility, clarity and collaboration as core design principles, ensuring our work reduces, rather than reinforces, the barriers identified by our users.

“You have to put in a lot of personal effort. It needs to feel like they are invested in you and actually care.”

Fundraising and financial sustainability

- We researched and applied for grants to support our planned activities, particularly focusing on funding opportunities available to charities in the early stages of development.
- We identified funding bodies focused on supporting neurodiversity, disability, healthcare access and mental health initiatives.
- We developed an initial fundraising strategy outlining future funding streams, including community fundraising efforts.

Research and service design

To ensure that our services reflect the needs and priorities of our beneficiaries, we adopted a User Centred Design approach. This involved:

- Participating in training courses and workshops to develop expertise in user involvement and service design.
- Conducting research interviews with neurodivergent adults to address the question: *“How can we help connect neurodivergent people with services that will provide effective support for their mental health?”*

Please see Appendix 1 for the insights and experiences of neurodivergent people and the key outcomes of our user research.

- Developing a framework for fairly compensating neurodivergent individuals for their participation in research and service development.
- Engaging with professionals across mental health, healthcare, and community services to explore the core issues highlighted in our research.
- Gathering information on existing sources of training for mental health professionals, such as the National Autism Trainer Programme and the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism.

“It’s so hard to find support... It all takes time and a certain level of knowing what you are doing. There will be people finding it even harder than me.”

Branding and website development

Our branding and website development were shaped by our research findings:

- We collaborated with a neurodivergent branding consultant to develop a logo and visual identity reflecting our values and accessibility requirements.
- We utilised our user feedback to ensure the branding was inclusive and resonated with our beneficiaries.
- We defined the core structure and features of the website, informed by the key requirements highlighted in our user research, ensuring compliance with accessibility standards and neuroinclusive design principles.
- We evaluated multiple, detailed quotes from website developers, selecting a specialist in accessibility-focused design.

Strengthening governance and capacity

To ensure strong governance and compliance, we undertook the following activities:

- Developed and approved key policies and procedures, including Risk Management, Data Protection, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI), and Health & Safety.
- Recruited and appointed two new trustees to strengthen our governance structure. One to replace a leaving trustee, the second to add to our capacity. Each new trustee brought professional expertise (in accountancy and IT) as well as experience of neurodivergence, enriching our decision-making and oversight capabilities.
- Implemented governance measures to ensure compliance, responsible financial management, and risk mitigation.

Achievements and performance

User involvement and impact

We conducted research interviews with neurodivergent adults to directly inform the development of our services and accurately capture lived experiences. Our research highlighted major barriers to accessing effective mental health support – including long waiting times, a lack of understanding or accommodations, diagnostic overshadowing, and unclear or conflicting guidance.

In response, we are embedding these insights into every area of our work. For example:

- Co-designed resources and services: We are creating clear, accessible tools to help neurodivergent people navigate the mental health system with greater confidence.
- A central hub for support: We are designing our website to be accessible and easy to navigate. This will act as a central source of evidence-based information and support for both neurodivergent people and professionals.
- Supportive and flexible spaces: We are developing activities that prioritise emotional safety and trust-building, informed by the clear message from our user research that past harm often leads to disengagement from support.

“The thing that would stop me contacting a service is doubt that it would help - other services haven’t”

Our user-centred approach ensures our services reflect the real needs, priorities, and experiences of the people we’re here to support.

We are deeply grateful to the neurodivergent adults who generously shared their experiences, emotional energy, and time. The insights they offered will:

- Help raise awareness of systemic barriers to effective mental health support
- Support the creation of evidence-based resources for mental health professionals, promoting lasting change
- Directly shape our services to ensure they are truly accessible and effective

Please see Appendix 1 for the insights and experiences of neurodivergent people and the key outcomes of our user research.

Prioritising neurodivergent professionals in consultancy

We actively engaged a neurodivergent brand designer to develop our logo and visual brand. Alongside their skill and expertise in creating interesting and engaging designs, their lived experience brought unique insights into user accessibility. These insights have been invaluable in helping us to integrate inclusion into our branding, website design and wider culture.

This experience confirmed the value of prioritising neurodivergent professionals in future consultancy roles, as an action to further our charitable purposes.

Successful funding application

We submitted a successful application to the Fat Beehive Foundation and were awarded funding for the development of a website to meet the key priorities highlighted to us in our user research.

This grant will enable the creation of an accessible online platform that serves as:

- A central point for sharing evidence-based information with neurodivergent people and professionals, each key parts of the charity's objectives.
- A hub for connecting neurodivergent individuals with effective mental health support – simplifying access to neuroinclusive therapists and mental health services.
- A networking tool, demonstrating our ethos and activities, to facilitate engagement with professionals and future fundraising, thereby enabling the charity's work.

Brand identity and website development

We established the core content, features, and accessibility requirements for our website.

Specific achievements include:

- Developing a detailed site structure and content plan, including the format for our service directory.
- Consulting with mental health professionals to inform the content of our information and support guides.
- Engaging with neurodivergent therapists to refine our service directory model and explore effective ways of gathering data to populate it.

We created professionally branded templates for our website and for future documents, social media and marketing materials, to ensure consistency, accessibility and effectiveness in conveying our messages.

Strengthening governance and compliance

By expanding our Board of Trustees and implementing key policies for compliance and risk management we have established a secure structure and administrative foundation for the charity.

We have taken steps to ensure:

- Appropriate regard for the safety of our beneficiaries, volunteers, research participants, and stakeholders
- Financial accountability and responsible use of funds
- Regulatory compliance with charity law, data protection and safeguarding measures.

Building collaborative relationships

We have engaged with professionals across multiple fields to inform the development of our services, including:

- NHS professionals at various levels within mental health and social care services
- Neurodivergent therapists
- Charity professionals with expertise in User Centred Design.

These professionals have provided valuable resources and insights for shaping our services and future initiatives.

Our intended focus for future collaborations is with neurodivergent professionals from relevant fields. The insight and expertise acquired through personal lived experience brings unique value which will directly contribute to the successful furthering of our charitable purposes.

“The people who ‘get it’ most are the ones who’ve been there themselves”

Public Benefit Statement

All our activities are undertaken to further our charitable purpose of promoting and protecting the mental health of neurodivergent people in the UK. Our focus on User Centred Design and co-production ensures that our services are directly aligned with the needs of our beneficiaries. By gathering evidence, engaging with professionals, developing our website and strengthening our governance, we are laying a strong foundation for future service delivery that will have a lasting and meaningful impact on neurodivergent individuals seeking mental health support.

Financial Review

Income for the year totalled £2,540, comprising £2,500 from grants and £40 from voluntary donations. No voluntary donations received during this period were eligible for Gift Aid.

Expenditure for the year totalled £2,141, covering costs related to branding, website development, and governance. All further activities were carried out by the trustees on a voluntary basis.

All incoming funds were unrestricted and have been allocated to the general fund, resulting in total general fund reserves of £6,869 as at 31 May 2024. The total net assets as at 31 May 2024 consist entirely of cash at bank, amounting to £6,869.

These accounts have been prepared on a going concern basis. No funds are considered to be in material deficit.

Policy on reserves

The charity maintains reserves to manage operating fluctuations, provide a contingency for income shortfalls, and support the charity while it establishes its fundraising. The charity's policy is to hold at least three months' worth of expenditure in free cash reserves.

As of 31 May 2024, the charity complied with this policy, with free cash balances of £6,869.

Structure, Governance and Management

Neurodivergent MiNDs is a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO). Its governing document is a CIO foundation constitution.

New trustees are appointed by the existing trustees, by a resolution passed at a properly convened meeting of the charity trustees.

Reference and Administrative details

Charity name: Neurodivergent MiNDs

Other name the charity uses: ND MiNDs

Registered charity number: 1200152

Charity's principal address: 82 Stansted Rd, Bishop's Stortford, CM23 2DZ

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity:

	Trustee name	Office	Dates of trustee service
1	Zara Fryer	Chair	23/08/2022 – present
2	Hannah Prince	Secretary	23/08/2022 – present
3	Charlotte Hatchard	Treasurer	02/10/2023 – present
4	Timothy Brown		02/10/2023 – present

Trustees' responsibilities in relation to the financial statements

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for maintaining proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011 and the *Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008*. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above,
Neurodivergent MiNDs Trustees' Annual Report 2023-4.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

Signature	
Full name	Zara Fryer
Position	Chair
Date	31/3/2025

Statement of Financial Activities for the year to 31 May 2024

	Unrestrictede funds	Restrictede funds	Year ended 31 May 2024 Total	Period 23 August 2022 - 31 May 2023 Total
	£	£	£	£
Incoming resources				
Grants	2,500	-	2,500	-
Voluntary donations	40	-	40	5,220
Gift aid	-	-	-	1,250
Total incoming resources	2,540	-	2,540	6,470
Resources expended				
Expenditure on charitable activities 2	2,141	-	2,141	-
Total resources expended	2,141	-	2,141	-
Net income/(expenditure)	399	-	399	6,470
Net movement in funds	399	-	399	6,470
Reconciliation of funds				
Fund balances brought forward	6,470	-	-	-
Fund balances carried forward at 31/05/2023	6,869	-	-	6,470

Balance Sheet

as at 31 May 2024:

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds 31/05/2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 31/05/2023 £
Current Assets			
Cash at bank	2	6,869	6,470
Total current assets		6,869	6,470
Creditors; amounts falling due within one year			
		-	-
Total current liabilities		-	-
Net current assets			
		6,869	6,470
Total assets less current liabilities			
		6,869	6,470
Total net assets		6,869	6,470
Funds of the Charity			
Unrestricted general funds		6,869	6,470
Restricted funds		-	-
Total Charity Funds		6,869	6,470

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Trustees on the 31/03/2025 and signed on their behalf by:

Zara Fryer
Chair of Trustees
Date: 31/03/2025

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 May 2024

1. Accounting Policies

a) Basis of Preparation

These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant notes(s) to these accounts.

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued on 16 July 2014 and with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), and with the Charities Act 2011.

b) Public benefit entity

Neurodivergent Minds was established under a CIO constitution and is registered with the Charity Commission under the reference of 1200152. Neurodivergent Minds constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102.

c) Fund Accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the charity for particular purposes. The cost of raising and administering such funds are charged against the specific fund. The aim and use of each restricted fund (if applicable) is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

d) Income

All incoming resources are included in the statement of financial activities when the Charity is entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy.

Gift Aid receivable is included in income when there is a valid declaration from the donor. Any Gift Aid amount recovered on a donation is considered to be part of that gift and is treated as an addition to the same fund as the initial donation unless the donor or the terms of the appeal have specified otherwise.

e) Expenditure

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with use of the resources.

f) Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts.

2. Costs of Charitable Activities

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Year Ended 31 May 2024	Total Period Ended 31 May 2023
	£	£	£	£
Research and website development	2,141	-	2,141	-
Total expenditure on charitable activities	2,141	-	2,141	-

Analysis of Expenditure on Charitable Activities

	Total Year Ended 31 May 2024	Total Period Ended 31 May 2023
	£	£
Direct costs	2,091	-
Support costs	50	-
Total expenditure on charitable activities	2,141	-

3. Support Costs

	Total Year Ended 31 May 2024	Total Period Ended 31 May 2023
	£	£
Governance Costs	50	-
Total Support Costs	50	-

All support costs have been allocated to costs of charitable activities as these were the only activities in this period (2023; £nil).

4. Cash at bank and in hand

	Unrestricted Funds 31/05/2024	Unrestricted Funds 31/05/2023
	£	£
Cash at bank	6,869	6,470
Total Cash at bank and in hand	6,869	6,470

5. Transactions with Trustees and Related Parties

None of the trustees have been paid any remuneration or received any other benefits from an employment with their charity or a related entity.

No trustee expenses have been incurred.

There have been no related party transactions in the reporting period.

Appendix 1

User research

Barriers: The barriers neurodivergent people face when seeking mental health support

Needs: What neurodivergent people need to access mental health support



Barriers: The barriers neurodivergent people face when seeking mental health support

We asked neurodivergent adults about the barriers they’ve faced when trying to access mental health support. Their words highlight critical issues in service design, delivery, and professional understanding. These insights directly inform how we design our services at ND MiNDs and shape the advocacy we undertake for wider change.

Insufficient service provision
What users said <i>“12 months after contacting a charity recommended by a social worker – I’m still waiting to be seen.”</i> <i>“I was on CAMHS waiting list for a year.”</i> <i>“I saw three therapists in my time there, meaning I lacked the opportunity to actually become comfortable with a singular person.”</i>
What this tells us Long waits, limited capacity, and frequent staff changes make services feel unreliable and unsupportive. For neurodivergent people, this disrupts trust and increases distress – often worsening mental health and decreasing future engagement.
How ND MiNDs will respond • Design our activities to prioritise early access, reliable support and ongoing care • Centre lived experience alongside research to advocate for timely, stable, and person-centred support from mental health services

Inadequate professional knowledge

What users said

“There’s just a lack of knowledge about autism and PDA in women. Professionals should know more.”

“My struggles were played down as ‘low mood’ ”

“My parents gave up on trying to get me help. They were told “It’s a problem at home” and I think they believed it.”

“I was depressed and he was just an ADHD specialist and that’s all he could see”

What this tells us

A lack of understanding of neurodivergence – especially in relation to mental health and intersectionality – can lead to misdiagnosis, inappropriate treatment, or dismissal. Many professionals base their evaluations on outdated stereotypes, preventing accurate recognition and appropriate support.

How ND MiNDs will respond

- Equip neurodivergent people with the tools and language to advocate for themselves in health and
- care settings.
- Use our platforms to share lived experience and evidence-based guidance with professionals
- Proactively collaborate with marginalised neurodivergent communities to ensure our services and resources reflect diverse realities and needs

Lack of trust and emotional safety

What users said

"The thing that would stop me contacting a service is doubt that it would help - other services haven't"

"I'm not sure I would want to say... if I tell them something's wrong they may take my medication away."

"Going to the sessions caused more anxiety."

"CAMHS was damaging rather than helpful"

What this tells us

Previous negative or harmful experiences impact on trust and diminish engagement with services. Emotional safety must be a foundation for all mental health support. When it is lacking, it can cause further harm and worsen mental health outcomes.

How ND MiNDs will respond

- Co-design services with neurodivergent people to ensure emotional safety is prioritised through embodiment of a **neuroinclusive*** service culture
- Build supportive environments that centre agency, belonging, and trust
- Advocate for emotionally safe, neuroinclusive practice at every level – from policy to frontline delivery.

Inflexible service expectations

What users said

“My parents tried to get me some therapy a while ago. They were told “ND kids don’t engage”. Which I didn’t - but it was because they were pushing me to do certain things... I don’t think they tried to understand me at all.”

“I was threatened with cancelling all further sessions after missing two - due to the mental health struggles they were meant to be helping”

“With the CBT courses provided by the NHS you have to attend every session - if you miss any you lose your place.”

What this tells us

Rigid attendance rules and standardised therapy formats reflect neuronormative expectations. When services don’t adapt to individual needs, they reinforce stigma and create unnecessary exclusion.

How ND MiNDs will respond

- Challenge rigid service models that stigmatise or exclude neurodivergent people
- Embed flexible, collaborative approaches across all our work – supporting people to engage on their own terms

Practical and structural barriers

What users said

"So many NHS services have incorrect opening hours online or don't update their information."

"To find the link for booking an appointment... There was a link to something completely different at the top – I got lost."

"They're putting things in front of what you know you need. When it takes so much to just get there and ask"

"A big problem is the inconsistent advice you get when you go to different people"

"None of these people were able to direct me to further support."

What this tells us

Confusing systems, outdated information, and lack of clear guidance make it harder to access support – especially for people already in distress. Services should reduce cognitive and emotional load, not add to it.

How ND MiNDs will respond

- Co-design our information and services to be accurate, meaningful, evidence-based and accessible
- Provide tools that help neurodivergent people engage with services, including service finders, information guides, and practical resources
- Advocate for health and care providers to improve their communication and design with accessibility in mind

*What does "neuroinclusive" mean?

"Neuroinclusive" means actively creating spaces, systems, and support that recognise, respect, and respond to the full range of ways people experience the world – including those who are neurodivergent.

Neuroinclusion is rooted in collaboration with neurodivergent people. It means listening to lived experience, working together to identify barriers, and making meaningful changes that improve access, understanding, and wellbeing.

It goes beyond being 'welcoming'. It challenges neuronormative assumptions and aims to create environments where neurodivergent people are supported without needing to mask or fit in to be treated with respect.

**What does "neuronormative" mean?

"Neuronormative" refers to the belief that there's a 'normal' or 'correct' way to think, feel,

communicate, and behave – often based on how non-neurodivergent people experience the world.

When mental health services, support systems, or everyday expectations are shaped around these assumptions, they can unintentionally exclude or harm neurodivergent people.

Needs: What neurodivergent people need to access mental health support

We asked neurodivergent adults what would help them find and access mental health support that actually works. Their responses offer clear insight into the changes needed – not only in services, but across systems and society. We’ve reflected on how ND MiNDs can respond to these needs through our activities, resources, and advocacy.

Understanding and navigating the mental health system
What users said <i>“I didn’t realise that it’s the GP you go to for everything.”</i> <i>“I would have liked to have been explained at the time why I was being referred to a psychiatrist and what the end results would be – what could happen next after seeing them.”</i> <i>“Understanding how CBT was supposed to work helped me be able to do it... I didn’t feel like I was just ‘doing a bunch of dumb exercises’”</i>
What this tells us People need clear, accessible information about how the mental health system works and their treatment options. Confusion about where to go, what to expect, and who’s involved contributes to anxiety and delays support. Predictable processes reduce overwhelm and increase engagement.
How ND MiNDs will respond • Develop accessible guides to the mental health system, written and designed in collaboration with neurodivergent people • Advocate for clearer NHS communication by sharing user insights from our research alongside peer-reviewed scientific literature

Finding the right support

What users said

"It would be helpful to have been told, 'for this type of support, this is the thing to search for'"

"It's so hard to find support... It all takes time and a certain level of knowing what you are doing. There will be people finding it even harder than me."

What this tells us

Neuroinclusive support must be easy to find, clearly explained, and actively recommended by professionals. People shouldn't be left to navigate complex systems alone.

How ND MiNDs will respond

- Build a central directory of neuroinclusive services and activities, designed for clarity and accessibility
- Ensure professionals are educated to guide people toward the right support

Clear and accurate guidance from professionals

What users said

"She was very nice, but couldn't really answer my questions."

"If they had directed me towards some leaflets or support groups... You trust them to know what's going on."

What this tells us

People expect professionals to provide reliable, informed advice. When this isn't available, it can lead to confusion, mistrust, or missed opportunities for support

How ND MiNDs will respond

- Develop a digital hub for professionals, including guidance on neuroinclusive signposting and support pathways
- Share resources that help professionals feel confident in offering practical next steps

Neuroinclusive therapeutic services

What users said

"They offer 6 sessions. That's it. It takes that long just to build trust."

"They threatened to kick you off if you missed a session - with my anxiety, that's pretty likely."

"My anxiety surrounding talking to strangers about vulnerable topics could stop me from going."

What this tells us

Rigid support offers from therapeutic services, with strict attendance requirements and time-limited formats, often undermine trust and safety for neurodivergent people.

To be truly effective, support offers must be developed in collaboration with the individual - offering time, flexibility, and space to build mutual understanding and trust.

A neuroinclusive culture fosters acceptance and compassion, both of which are essential for building strong therapeutic relationships.

How ND MiNDs will respond

- Model a neuroinclusive service culture across all our therapeutic activities
- Offer flexible formats (e.g. drop-in sessions), familiarisation opportunities, and space to build trust
- Equip professionals with resources on creating neuroinclusive environments

Therapeutic flexibility and individual agency

What users said

“Don’t try to make me do role-play, it makes me extremely uncomfortable. How can that be good for therapy?”

“[Breathing exercises] were continually pushed on me, even after I expressed that they had not helped me in the past and I had no interest.”

What this tells us

Standardised or prescriptive methods, based around neuronormative expectations, can be harmful.

To support meaningful engagement, therapeutic approaches must be flexible and developed in collaboration with the individual, this not only strengthens the therapeutic relationship but also supports recovery by:

- Modelling acceptance,
- Validating lived experience, and
- Fostering self-agency

How ND MiNDs will respond

- Embed flexible, collaborative approaches across all services
- Provide professionals with tools for adapting therapy in ways that validate neurodivergent experiences

Understanding and compassion from professionals

What users said

“You have to put in a lot of personal effort. It needs to feel like they are invested in you and actually care.”

“If they don’t understand my neurodivergence when I speak to them, I won’t take things further... It’s damaging.”

“There’s just a lack of knowledge about autism and PDA in women. Professionals should know more.”

“The people who ‘get it’ most are the ones who’ve been there themselves”

What this tells us

To provide effective and compassionate mental health support, it is essential to understand the unique challenges linked to each person’s neurodivergence.

Professionals need training grounded in lived experience – learning directly from the experiences, narratives and insights of neurodivergent people. This helps translate clinical concepts into real-world understanding and supports recognition of presentations that don’t fit dominant stereotypes.

It is also vital to recognise how intersectionality, oppression, and discrimination affect people with multiple marginalised identities.

How ND MiNDs can help

- Curate a list of trusted neuroinclusive training providers for professionals
- Amplify lived experience and share evidence-based information to challenge common myths and assumptions about:
 - Building therapeutic relationships
 - Engaging with therapy
 - Expressions of distress (often labelled as “challenging behaviour”)
 - Executive function differences (frequently misunderstood as issues with “accountability” or “willpower”)
- Proactively raise awareness of intersectionality
- Ensure our team is trained in neuroinclusive practice and, where possible, includes neurodivergent practitioners

Community connectedness

What users said

"Being with [ND people] normalises things. You don't feel so isolated."

"I can unmask a bit. There's less pressure. They 'get it'"

"Advice from other people with PDA has been the most helpful."

What this tells us

Peer support is powerful. It reduces isolation, validates identity, and builds confidence. Neurodivergent people benefit from spaces where they don't have to mask or explain themselves.

How ND MiNDs can help

- Facilitate neuroinclusive peer support and community-based activities
- Highlight these opportunities in our service directory and outreach

Flexible modes of access

What users said

"I won't contact a service if they are only available online."

"When it's online, I like the anonymity. I can just read about the experiences of others in a similar situation."

"The good thing about online groups is the access at my fingertips - I don't need to make an appointment, or be there between 9-5, I can look at 11 at night. 1 in the morning."

What this tells us

People need options. Accessible support means offering a range of formats and timings – not just traditional models.

How ND MiNDs can help

- Offer services in various formats (e.g. online/in-person) and at different times
- Filter our service directory by format and availability to match user preferences