

Can we universally design to be neurodivergent-affirming?



Who are we?



Founder
Catherine Leggett

Expertise since 2014 –
Employment, Employability, Mental
Health, Community Participation,
Accessibility

Autism/Dyslexia



Support
Justin Mactavious

Expertise since 2017 - dementia, Autism,
ADHD, Schizophrenia, chronic depression,
personality and perception disorders,
traumatic brain injury and intellectual disability

Autism, Global Majority

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Regular lived-experience contributors



Drew Edwards
Pharmacy Dispenser

*Autism/Dyspraxia
Hypermobility*



Ffion SFX
Special Effects Artist

*Autism/ADHD
Sensory Processing Disorder*



Muttley
Disability Advocate

*Autism/ADHD
Neurofibromatosis, Amputee
Global Majority*



Pip Irving
Data Scientist

*Autism/Dyspraxia
Gender-queer*



Sophie Varley
Education and
Learning Consultant

Autism



Alex Kegie
Founder - Neurologik

*Autism/ADHD
Fibromyalgia/Hypermobility*



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Neurodivergent communities



perception disorders
e.g. Schizophrenia
Altered reality, unable to concentrate

Autism
Literal thinking, processing delays, needs predictability, sensory sensitivities

ADHD
Impulsivity, sensory sensitivities, quickly shifts focus of attention

Tourette's Syndrome
Physical and vocal tics

Dyspraxia
Coordination, motor skills and processing

Dyslexia
reading and writing

Dysgraphia
symbols and graphics

Dyscalculia
numbers

Amnesia
remembering or loss of memory

Aphasia
understanding speech or speaking

long term Depression
Fatigue and difficulty concentrating

Epilepsy
Recurrent, unprovoked seizures

KEY

- Condition that you are born with
- Condition you develop after birth
- Condition that you are born with or that you develop after birth

What is universal design? :

Equitable use

Don't provide separate accommodations or specialise



What is universal design? :

Flexibility in use

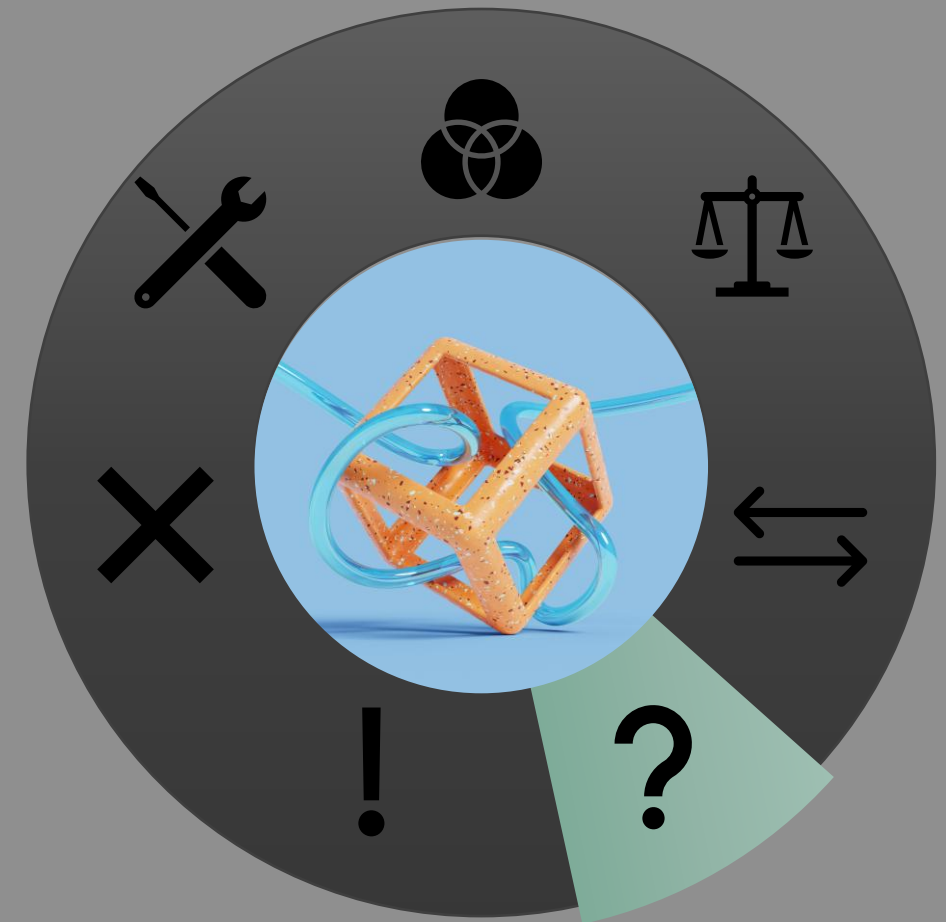
Different pace of use, left vs right handed etc.



What is universal design? :

Simple and intuitive use

Eliminate unnecessary complexity



What is universal design? :

Perceptible information

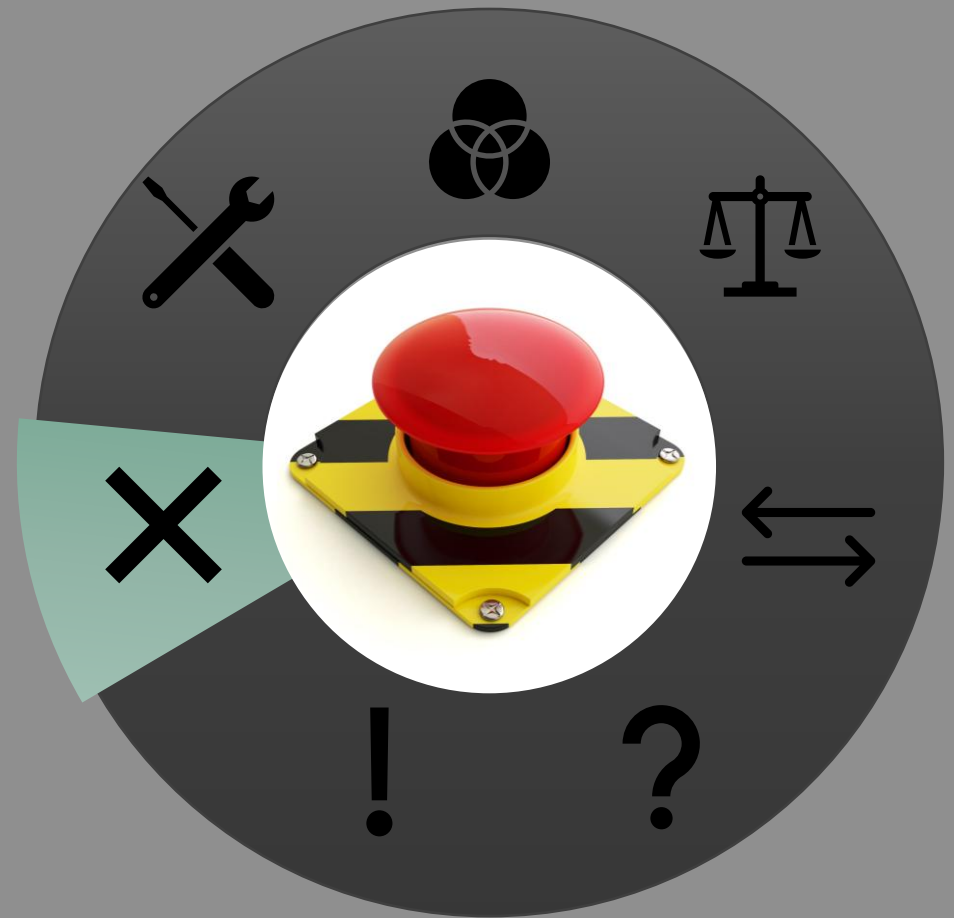
Contrasting and/or easily noticed pictorial, tactile or verbal essential information



What is universal design? :

Tolerance for error

Minimise hazards and errors,
include failsafe features



What is universal design? :

Low physical effort

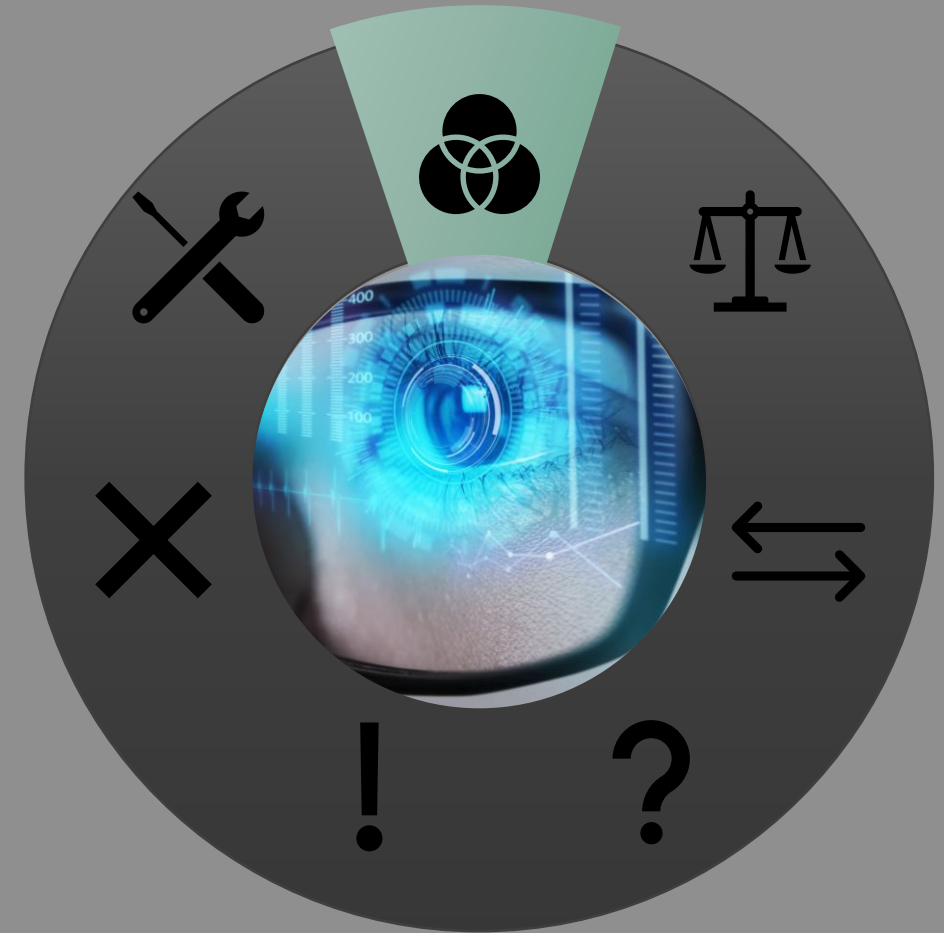
Minimise repetitive actions and physical effort



What is universal design? :

Size and space for approach and use

Clear lines of sight, easy reach, allow for physical variations, e.g., hand size/grip, allow for personal assistance or assistive tech



Neurodivergent-affirming CORE PRINCIPLES

Prioritise

lived experience

intersectionality

accepting difference

Support

self-advocacy

autonomy

adjustments

Adapt

processes

communication

environment



Prioritise

Universal design
for lived
experience

Provide flexible options for participation in lived experience insight sessions

- Remotely and on-site (hybrid ideally)
- In group and 1:1 sessions
- In writing



UP NEXT: FILM –
Staff Networks
2 minutes 21 secs

<https://youtu.be/L1DyH2G72To?si=-HOxfwiS2jwgfzk>



Empowering organisations so that autistic people can thrive

Prioritise

Universal design
for
intersectionality

Ensure intersectionality is considered

- specific cultures and community
- intellectual disability
- Neurodivergence
- mental health
- physical disability

Autism and intersectionality

Religion

In some religious communities: stigma, shame, no community support

Socio-Economically Disadvantaged

Lack of family or parents' awareness or education and funding for diagnosis/support

Global Majority

no access in own language, lack of community or family support, underdiagnosed or mis-diagnosed



Other neurodivergent (ND) conditions
intellectual disability,
mental health,
acquired ND

Health Conditions

Hypermobility (EDS),
epilepsy, allergies and
intolerances, digestive
issues, POTS, Irlens
Syndrome etc.

Gender

may be disconnected
from family, may not
have gender
transition support

Sexuality

may be disconnected
from family, may be
more confident about
being autistic if confident
about being gay etc.

Comorbidities in autism,
(Casanova et. al 2020)

Overlap between
autism and gender
diversity (Dettario, L,
2020)

Socio-economic
inequality (Durkin et. al.,
2010)

Autism Stigma and the
role of ethnicity and
culture
(Popadopoulos,
2016).

Prioritise

Universal design to accept
difference

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Is your culture change led and visibly supported by Senior Leaders?

- Knowledge and understanding
- Role-modelling
- Sponsorship of affirming initiatives and programmes

Support

Universal design for
self-advocacy

Provide every opportunity for people to let you know what support they need

- In writing
- By phone
- By video call
- By text-speaking



Support

Universal design for
self-advocacy

‘let me know if there is anything I can try to do to help you participate’

or

‘Please contact (named person), to request any adjustments’

or

‘Please fill in a reasonable adjustments request form’

Support

Universal design for adjustments

Disclosure/Knowledge:

template is needed

A template to request adjustments to LM

Guidance for LM's/employees is developed once the process and policy has been agreed

Supportive conversation:

Guidance /template is needed

Meeting should incl. line manager and/or representative from HR

Develop guidance on structuring these conversations if necessary

Refer to in-house/external specialists to identify adjustments and document employee self-reported effective adjustments

A template should be developed to document identified reasonable adjustments

Decision making: Guidance /template is needed

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Requests considered by LM and documented.

Where the LM declines a request refer to panel

Panels include the LM, HR and business leader

Panels refer to specialist when assessing efficacy/and employee's self-report.

Template to inform the employee of what adjustments can be taken forward, and what will be referred

Decision timelines : 14 days from request to LM, further 14 days for panel meeting, additional 14 days to gather expert input etc.

Inform outcomes, clearly and in writing, with decision making rational

So what should a best-practice reasonable adjustments process look like?..



Create a **reasonable adjustments process** including **flexible ways to request** them - and **ensure that everyone is aware** of it - in much the same way that you do for complaints.

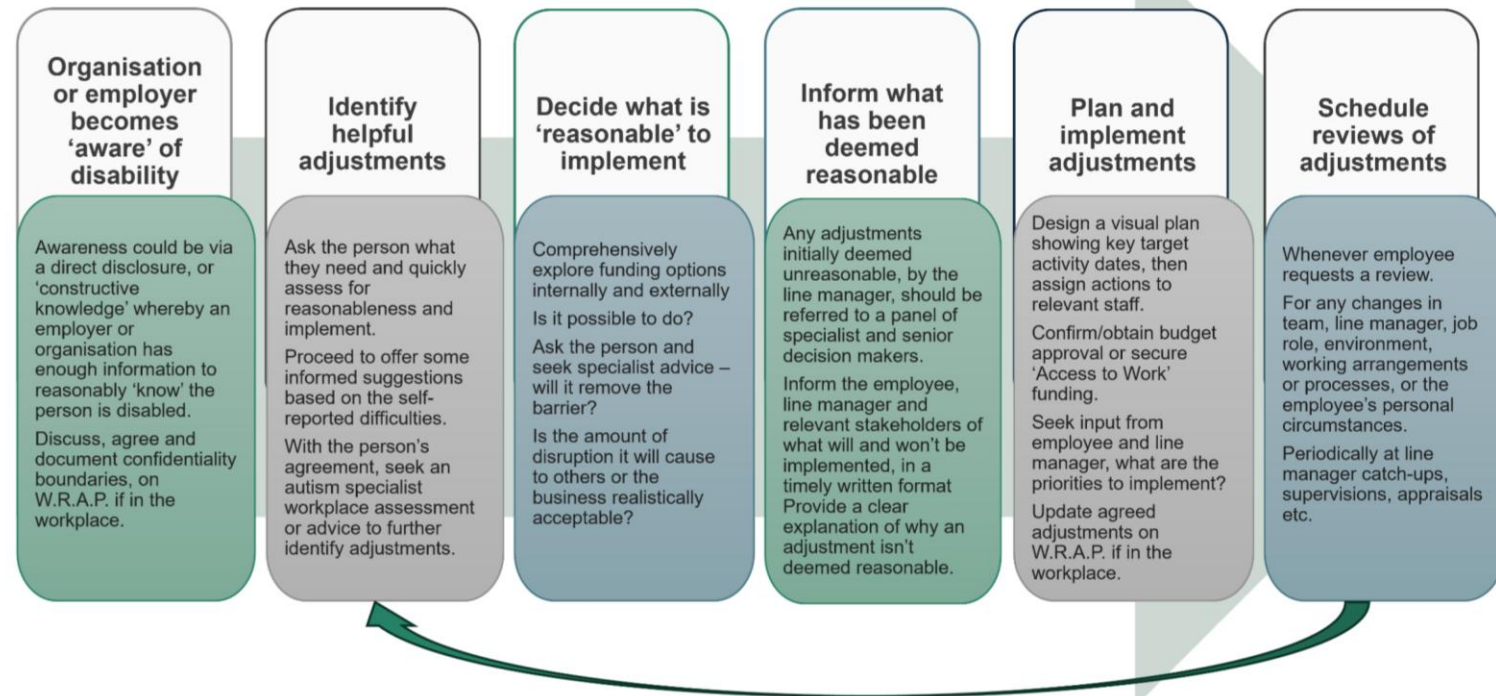


Support

Universal design for adjustments

Recommended reasonable adjustments process overview

A basic overview of a recommended process is shown below.



RESOURCES

<https://www.autentic.uk/workplace-reasonable-adjustments-passport-WorkRAP>

UP NEXT: FILM –
Reasonable Adjustments:
Remote working
4 minutes 16 seconds

<https://youtu.be/yIHIPXChHNE?si=TSQGZRrwSQGiP0Zz>



Empowering organisations so that autistic people can thrive

Adapt

Universal design for
processes and procedures



- **Carry out language and accessibility reviews**, on all written and visual information about policies and processes
- **Review the procedure or process itself** to ensure that is accessible for all

Adapt

Universal design for processes and procedures

RESOURCES

Make your own one page profile by downloading our editable template here



Predictability

Careers Service
Helping you into meaningful work

Sarah Jones STAFF PROFILE


Name: Sarah Jones
Email: sarah.jones@careerservice.co.uk
Phone: 02920 523127
Job Title: Careers advisor
Hours of work: Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm
Availability: I aim to respond to emails/voicemails within 24 hours

What people value about me

- I have a good memory for written information
- I like to laugh and enjoy meeting people
- I can usually find a solution for a problem
- I am supporting and encouraging to others

What's important to me

- Helping people into work
- Cooking, running and comedy shows
- My friends, my dog 'Jessie'
- Being on time

Best ways to work with me

- Let me know if you can't make an appointment
- Let me know how I can support you
- Leave clear voicemails, repeat phone numbers
- Ask for a break if you need one

EMPLOYEE PROFILE

Name: Anna Brown
Senior architect
Supervisor: Manuel Lopez
Manager: Zainab Barakat
Pronouns: They/them

ONE PAGE CANDIDATE PROFILE

Name: Feng Li
Support: M Lopez (Support worker) m.lopez@autismservice.org.uk
Next Kin: Chris Jones (Partner) tel: 07923089444
Conditions: Autism/Dyslexia/Anxiety
Pronouns: they/them

Interaction adjustments

- meetings: I prefer to avoid small talk
- verbally: I don't cope well sitting close to others
- writing: I'm very direct
- face-to-face: I tend to avoid eye contact

Sensory adjustments

- No strong artificial smells/perfume
- No harsh white lights/LEDs
- One person speaking at a time
- No touching or handshakes

Additional information for employers can be accessed here:
 and accessible job adverts, accessible interviews and accessible interview
 template, to provide in advance to your candidates, from <https://www.autentic.uk/>

Download an editable one page profile template from <https://www.autentic.uk/>

Adapt

Universal design for the environment

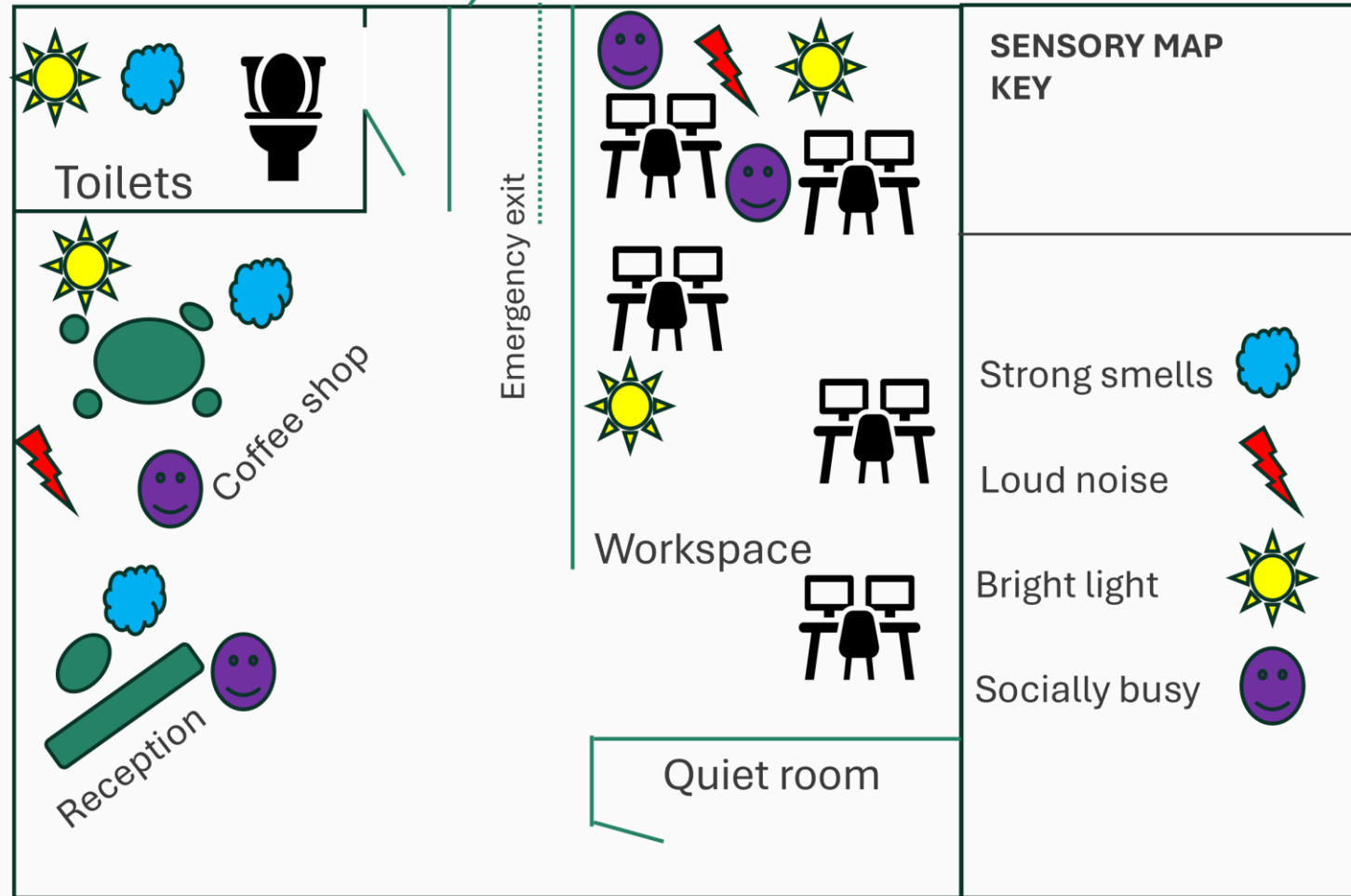
provide a sensory map

RESOURCE

[Download: quiet room design guide](#)



Sensory



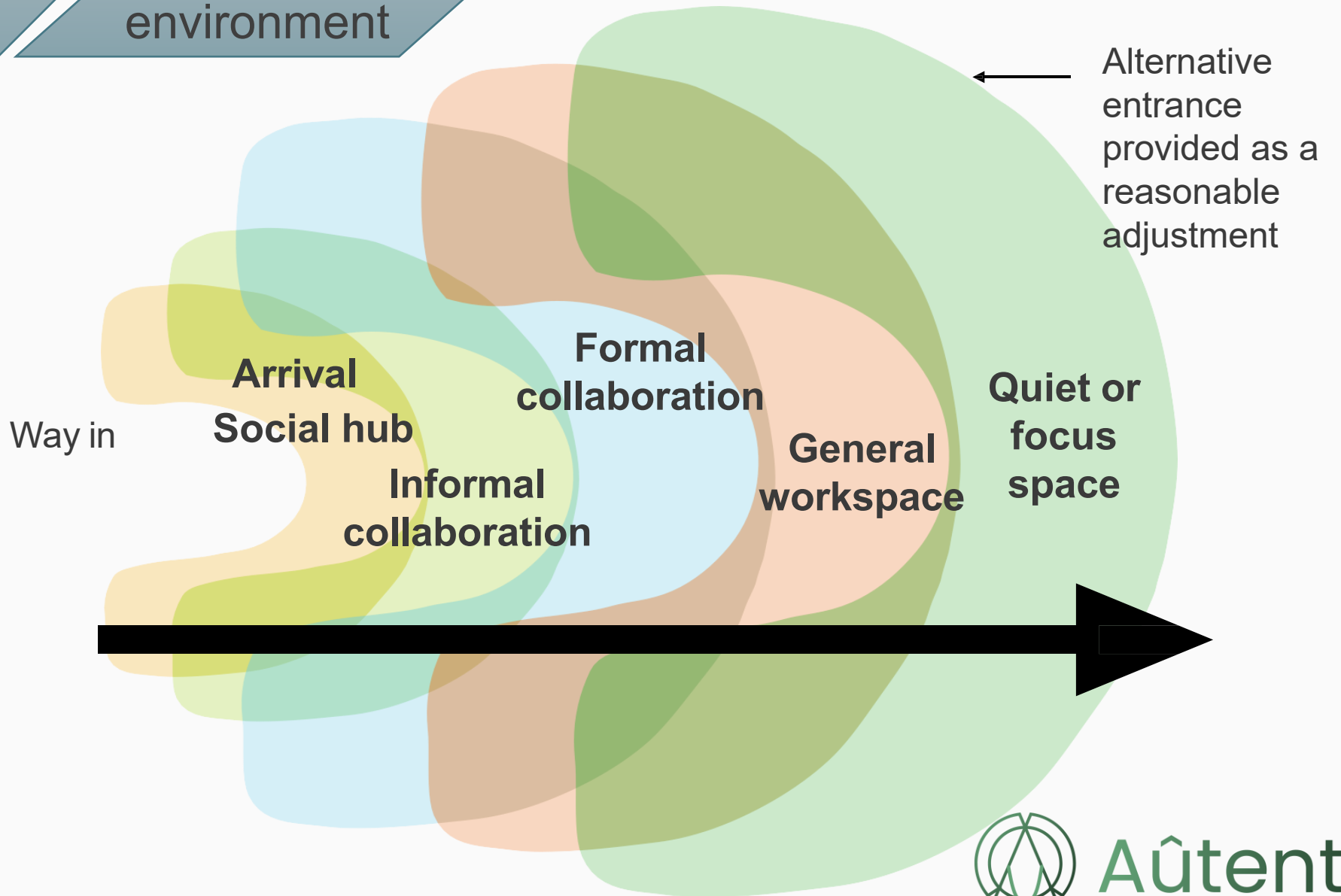
Adapt

Universal
design for the
environment

ZONING SPACES in buildings to be neurodivergent-affirming

The zones start at the entrance as 'high-stimulus' and then gradually get 'quieter'.

The zones should flow logically like this so that there aren't any focus/quieter zones next to highly stimulating, busy, noisy, smelly, bright or highly social areas.



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Further resources

- **Guides on accessible interviews, questions and job interviews:** <https://www.autentic.uk/resources-for-employers>
- **Guide on accessible services and appointments:** <https://www.autentic.uk/resources-for-employers>
- **Quiet room design guide:** https://www.autentic.uk/_downloads/bef612b82ee3a42c4cabb822865e0f41
- **Short learning videos:** <https://www.autentic.uk/autentic-learning-free>
- **Autism-affirming consultancy:** <https://www.autentic.uk/services>
- **Training and talks:** <https://www.autentic.uk/training-and-talks>
- **Aûtentic YouTube channel:** <https://www.youtube.com/@Autentic-uk>
- [Aûtentic's workplace reasonable adjustments passport \(WorkRAP\)](#)
- <https://www.autentic.uk/energy-accounting-guide-for-preventing-autistic-burnout-and-fatigue>
- [Make your own one page profile by downloading our editable template here](#)

Parting thought:



Do you affirm neurodivergent cultures in the way you do for other cultures?

UP NEXT: FILM –
Autistic culture
4 minutes 37 secs

https://youtu.be/11ERy7BdGmE?si=ZtBpDr_EG_Dlrm7Y



Aûtentic



Empowering organisations so that autistic people can thrive

Get in touch



<https://www.autentic.uk/>



<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/world-autism-acceptance-day-what-does-it-mean-to-be-autism-affirming-tickets>

Free Webinar 2nd April – 13:00-14:00



 **Aûtentic**
Autism consultancy and training

World Autism Acceptance Month: What does it mean to be autism-affirming?

Empowering organisations so that autistic people can thrive

Catherine Leggett
Autistic Elder, time-served practitioner and consultant

