

**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\*



**Aûtentik**

# What is universal design? :

## Equitable use

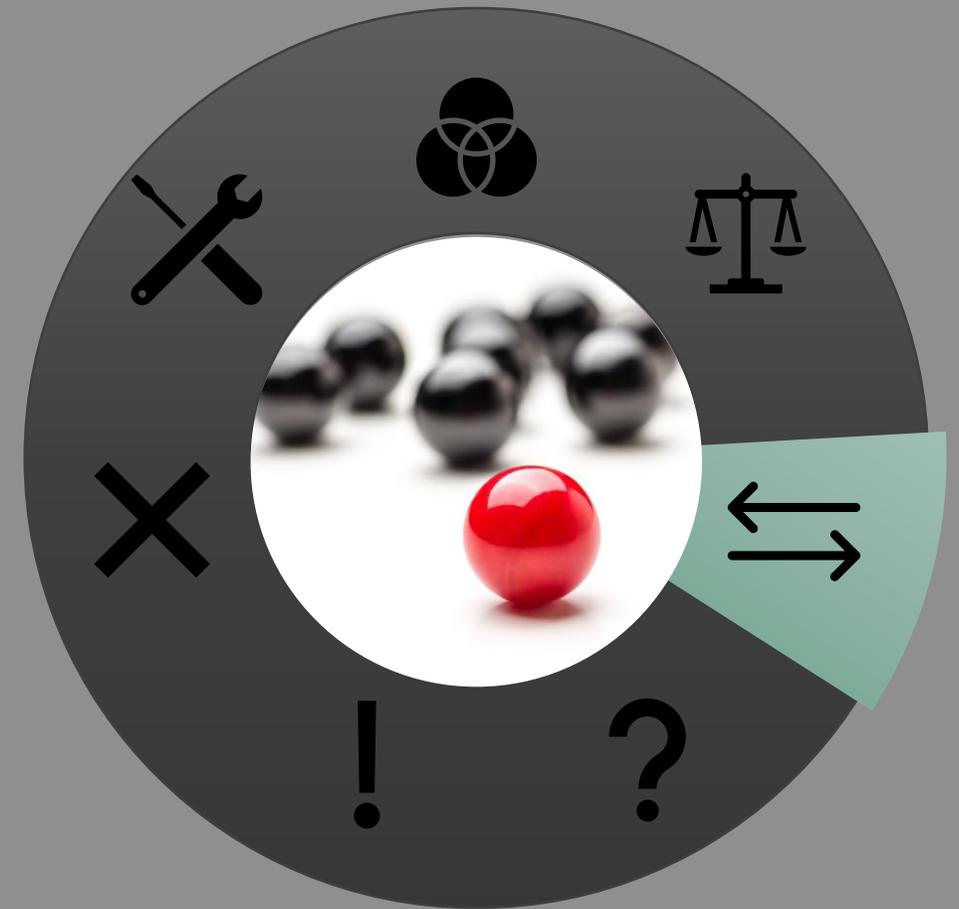
Don't provide separate accommodations or specialise



# What is universal design? :

## Flexibility in use

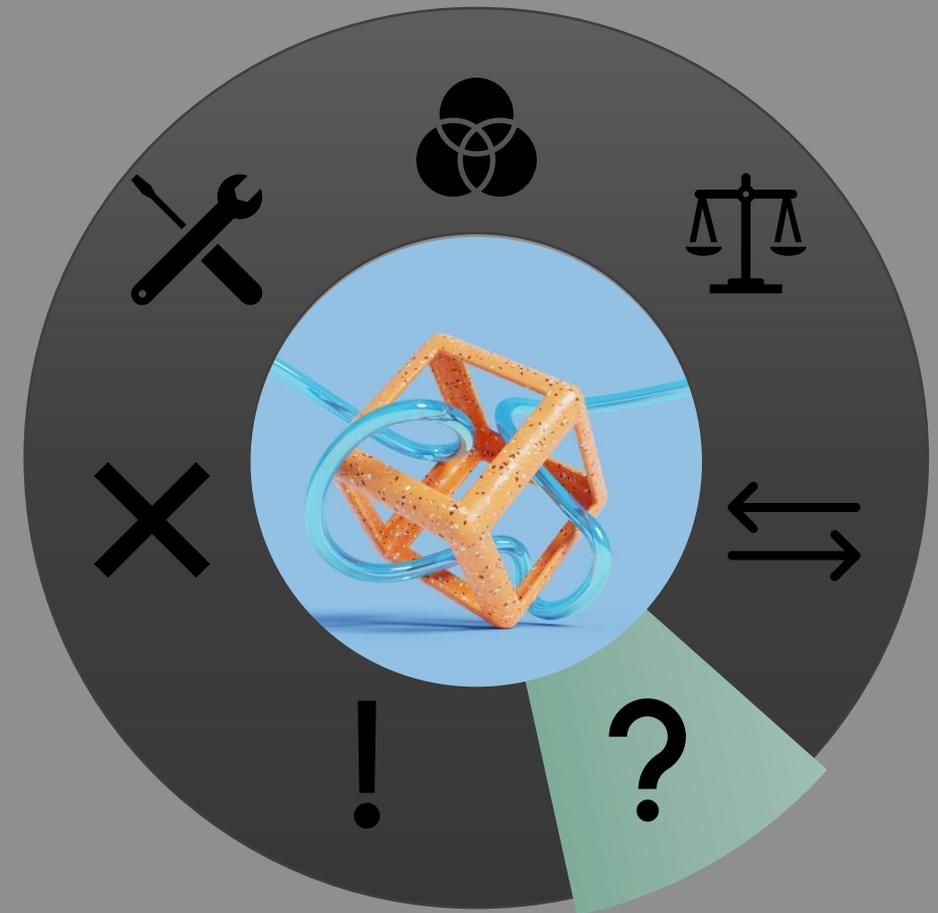
Different pace of use, left vs right handed etc.



# What is universal design? :

Simple and intuitive use

Eliminate unnecessary complexity



# What is universal design? :

## Perceptible information

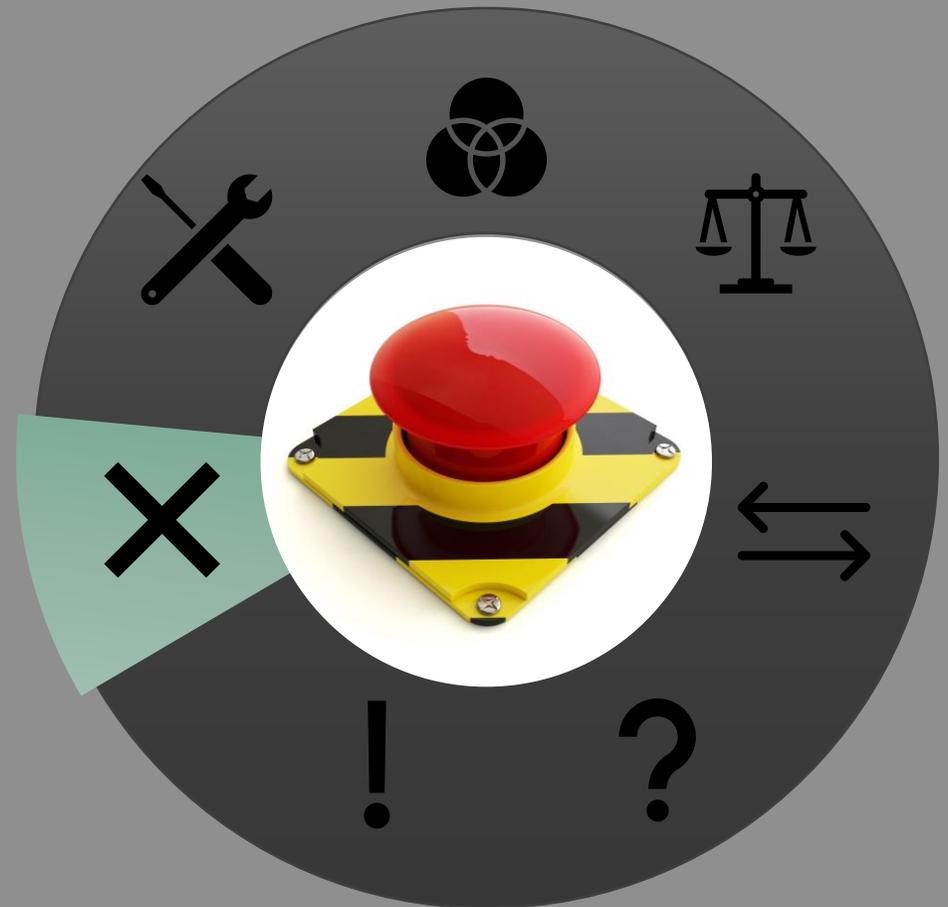
Contrasting and/or easily noticed pictorial, tactile or verbal essential information



# What is universal design? :

## Tolerance for error

Minimise hazards and errors,  
include failsafe features



# What is universal design? :

Low physical effort

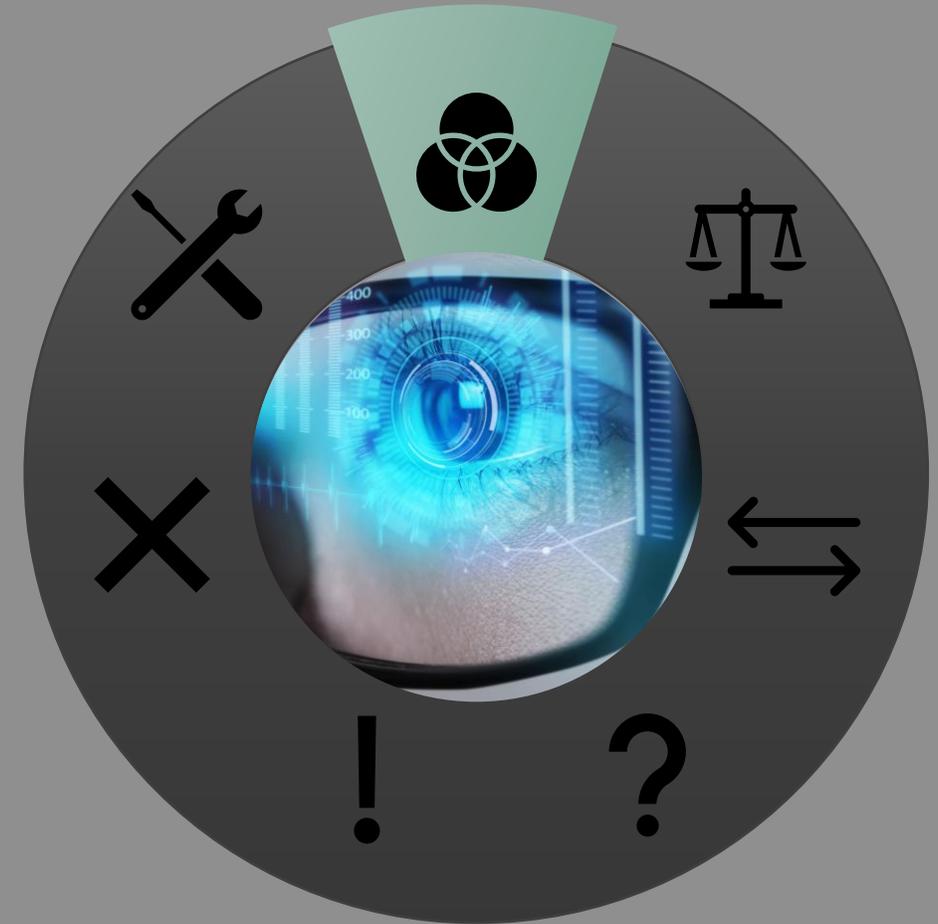
Minimise repetitive actions and physical effort



# 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

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## Prioritise

lived experience

intersectionality

accepting difference

## Support

self-advocacy

autonomy

adjustments

## Adapt

processes

communication

environment



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**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.

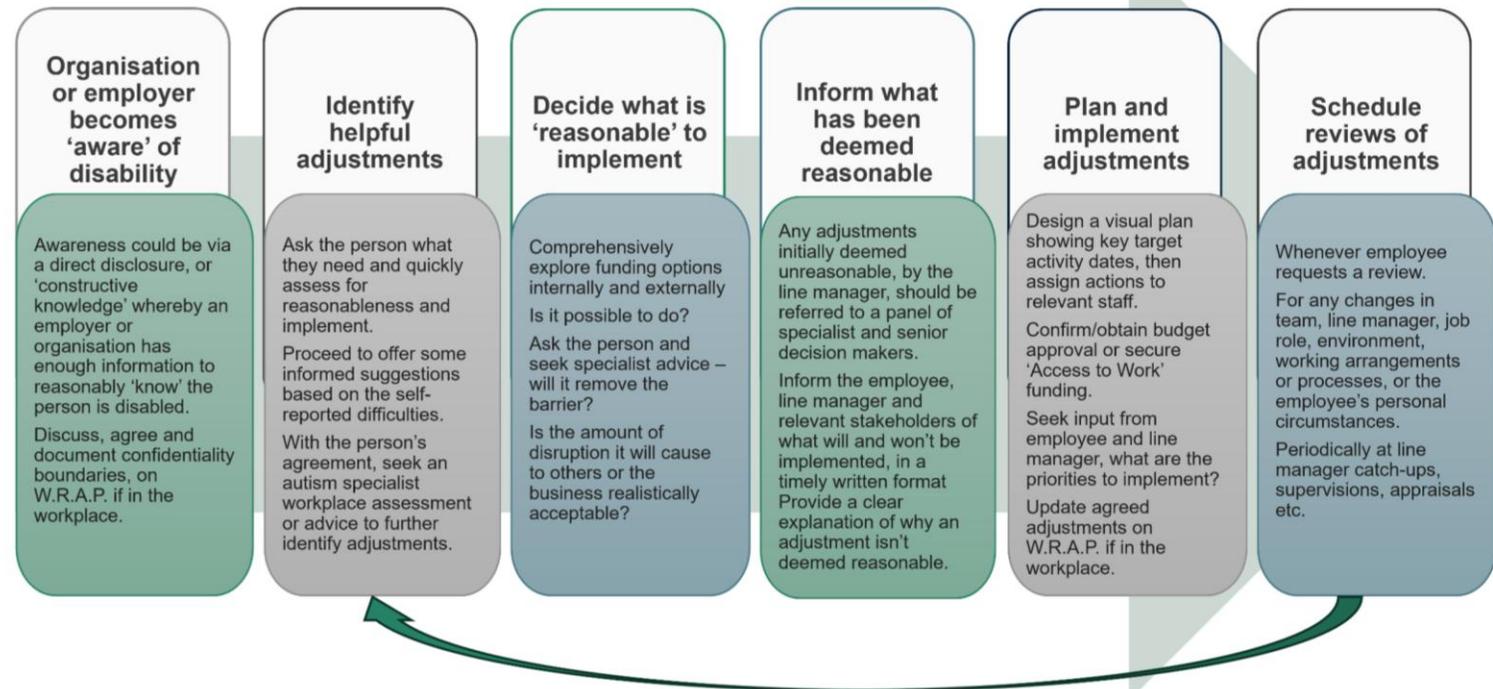


# Support

## 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

**Cloud Busters**  
Helping autistic people thrive

**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
- phone: 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

**Feedback**

Feedback, relating to my demonstration of the competencies required, if I am unsuccessful

**Additional information for employers can be accessed here:**

and accessible job adverts, accessible interviews and accessible interview questions, 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

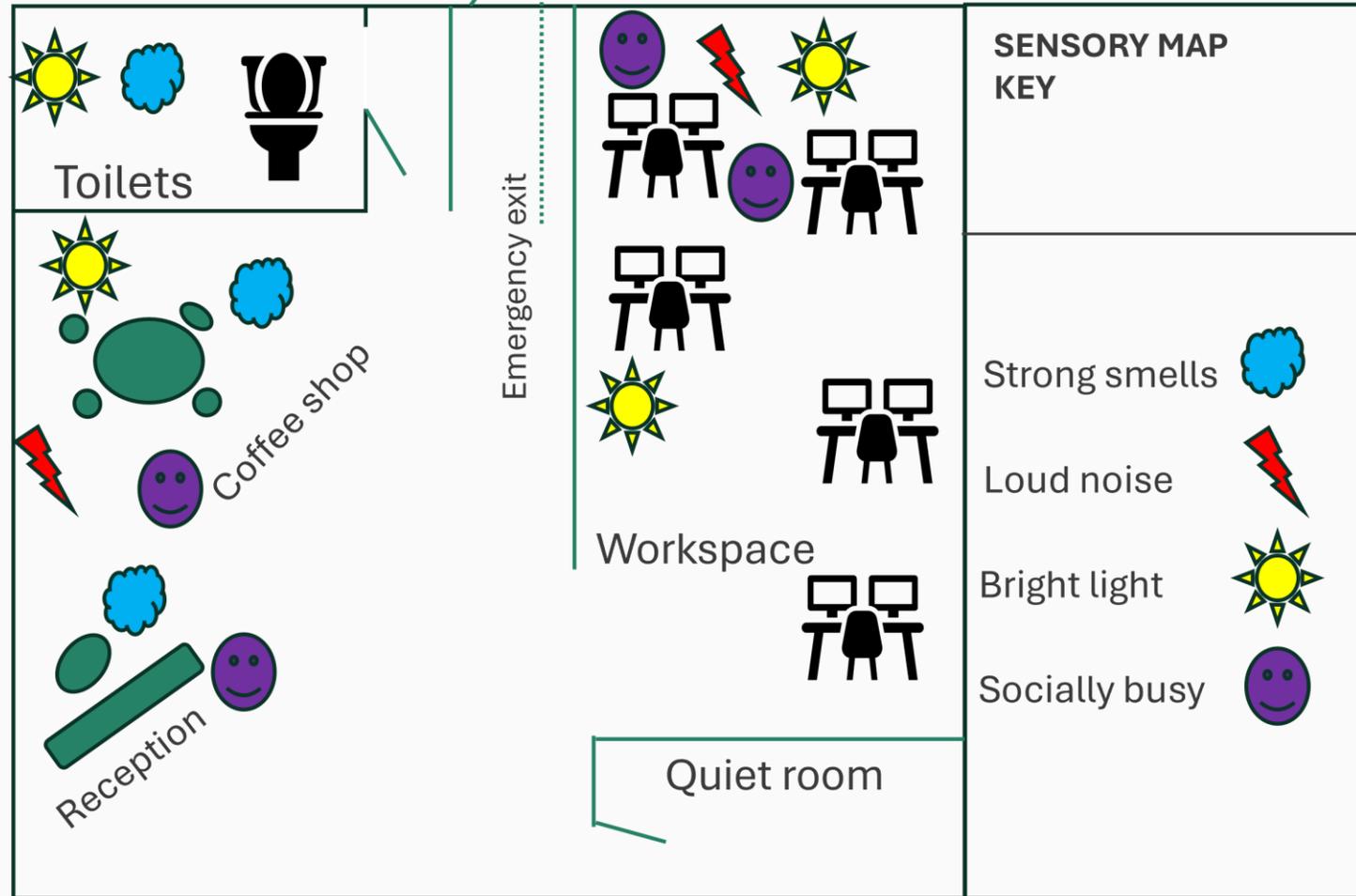
provide a sensory map

## RESOURCE

[Download: quiet room design guide](#)



Sensory



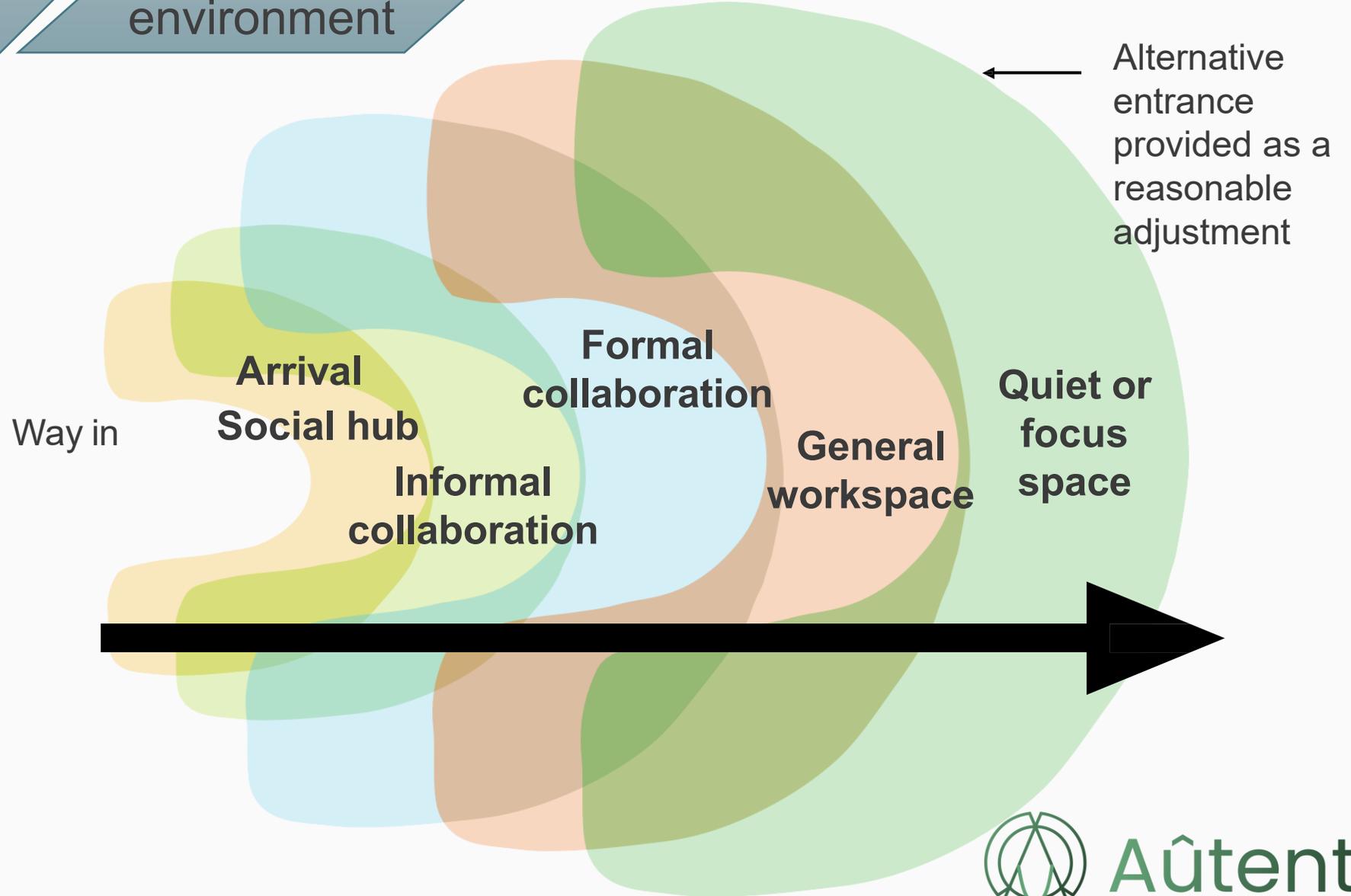
**Adapt**

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



Authentic



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 2<sup>nd</sup> April – 13:00-14:00



 **Aûtentive**  
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

