Neurodiversity behind the wheel

Driving Change - Part 2

Introduction

We said it before, and we will say it again: fleet managers are not neurodiversity specialists, and they are not required to be.

Neurodiversity is a popular topic that often attracts strong opinions and misinformation, and managers could easily feel bamboozled, jump to conclusions or be reticent to engage for fear of saying the wrong thing.

Our previous white paper addressed all the above. It explained neurodiversity and the ways in which drivers may experience it, how to professionally discuss the subject and how to create a neuroinclusive fleet.

Our second paper in the series delves deeper into the cross-section between neurodiversity and fleet. Here, we analyse the ways in which training can be tailored for neurodivergent drivers, explain best practice for vehicle handovers and deliveries and examine some novel but simple communication initiatives to familiarise drivers with vehicles or equipment and provide passive assistance after an accident. It also includes real-world case studies from a professional driver, a manager and a specialist in the field, who explain what it means to live and work with and alongside neurodivergence and how to create a mutually beneficial work environment.

The universal design

Crucially, fleets keen to accommodate neurodivergent drivers do not need to upend their operations or introduce highly specialised measures. The universal design assumes that around a fifth of any workforce is neurodivergent and sets up the operation accordingly. It involves neither a complete overhaul nor even mentioning the word neurodiversity, rather a series of tweaks, adaptations and considerations to make the vehicles and the operation as accessible as possible to all employees.

The disability compliance model is when a business is set up for able-bodied and neurotypical staff and reasonable adjustments are made for neurodivergent and disabled people, typically after a paid-for assessment. It is the way most organisations operate and complies with the 2010 Equality Act.

The universal design is referenced throughout this white paper in relation to practices designed to benefit all drivers, neurodivergent and neurotypical alike. If it is well executed, it can boost morale, safety and productivity, improve employee retention and save fleets money, which is why we believe it is worthwhile.

What is Neurodiversity?

This section appeared in our first white paper and is intended as a refresher to explain the basics of neurodiversity and the extent to which it affects the population.

Everyone has a knack for something, and everyone finds certain things more difficult than others. For some people, the difference between the knack and the difficulty is more distinct, which can be useful or restricting depending on the conditions.

Neurodiversity is the concept that people experience and interact with the world in different ways and that their cognitive makeup means they have distinct strengths and difficulties. Such differences – which often correlate to verbal and visual skills, working memory and processing speed – are sometimes referred to as a 'spiky profile'.

Neurodivergent people often have a real flair for particular tasks and methods but can find certain activities or situations incredibly tough. That can come into sharp focus when they are at work, and lead to inconsistent performance or difficulties with adapting or fitting in.

Neurodivergent individuals often flourish when they spend less energy trying to overcome challenges and instead work in environments that complement their strengths.

What are neurotypes?

The expressions 'neurotype' and 'neurominority' refer to the different forms of neurodiversity. They include:

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): people who have ADHD may struggle with memory, organisation, time management, stress, concentration, listening and note-taking. It is often referred to as an inability to focus, but that is not entirely correct, because hyperfocusing on tasks is also a feature of ADHD, along with strong visualisation skills, problem solving, creativity and enthusiasm.

Autism: autistic people may find socialising confusing or tiring and may become overwhelmed in loud or busy environments. They may use repeated movements or actions to calm themselves or express joy and potentially mask their discomfort to fit in with others. They may also have intense interests and react well to order and routine, which means they can be exceptionally efficient in the right circumstances.

Dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia: dyslexia literally means 'difficulties with words' and primarily affects reading and writing skills. Dyscalculia refers to someone who struggles with maths and dysgraphia to someone who struggles with handwriting. They predominantly relate to processing, which means organisation and remembering information can be challenging. Strengths often include visual thinking, verbal skills and long-term memory.

Dyspraxia: also known as Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD), dyspraxia impacts motor coordination skills and affects muscle coordination and perception – vision, hearing or spatial awareness. Strengths often include big picture thinking, problem solving, tenacity, creativity and empathy.

Tourette syndrome: TS is characterised by involuntary movements and sounds known as tics, which can include blinking, shoulder shrugging, throat clearing or grunting. A common misconception is that individuals display severe tics or involuntarily swear – a symptom known as coprolalia, which affects only around 10% of people with TS. Individuals often display strong verbal skills, tenacity and resilience, innovation, emotional intelligence and attention to detail.

The aforementioned conditions exist from birth. The following are acquired neurotypes, which develop later in life.

Acquired brain injury (ABI): usually occurs after an accident or an illness and can cause difficulties similar to those associated with ADHD or dyslexia. ABIs do not apply to every part of the brain, and elements such as visual, memory or practical skills can be augmented with rehabilitation.

Mental health conditions: the term is widely used, but common mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression, can affect motivation and self-esteem. Individuals frequently exhibit abilities such as creativity, empathy and deep detailed thinking.

It is not unusual for a neurodivergent individual to have more than one neurotype.

How common is neurodiversity?

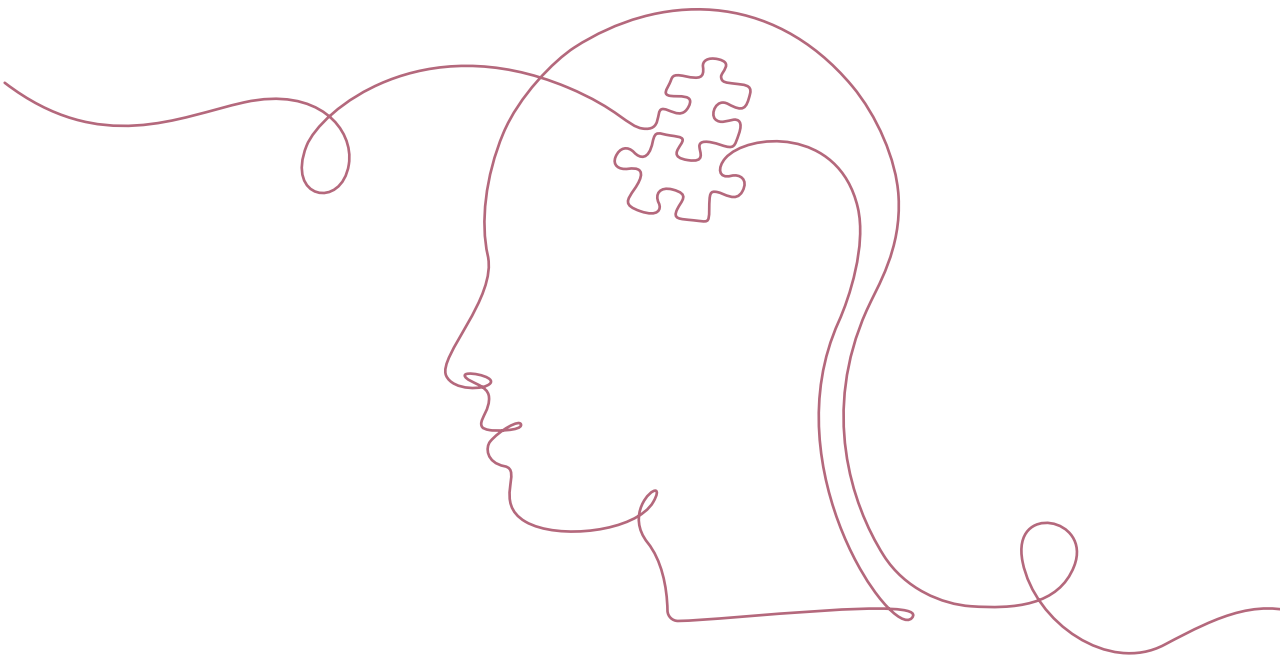
Neurodiversity is a popular topic and widely discussed. While a broader awareness of it is positive, it can be incredibly difficult to sort the informative wheat from the chaff, because it is a subject that divides opinion and attracts a lot of misinformation.

As a result, the true extent to which neurodiversity is present within the population is often misrepresented in commonly reported figures. For this white paper, we consulted and were informed by Genius Within – a community interest company that specialises in neurodiversity support for adults in the workplace.

According to Genius Within:

- *90% of disabilities are invisible*
- *5% of the population has ADHD*
- *1-2% of the population is autistic*
- *10% of the population is dyslexic*
- *5% of the population is dyspraxic*
- *1-2% of the population has Tourette Syndrome*
- *14% of the population has mental health needs*
- *5% of the population has an acquired brain injury*

Neurodivergence affects between 15% and 20% of the population, and those figures apply just as much to those who drive for work.



Neurodiversity and Driver Training

At its best, driver training is adaptable, engaging and caters to all. Training providers and instructors explain what fleets should expect, and how the service intersects with neurodiversity

Corporate driver training specialists are no more experts in neurodiversity than fleet managers, and it is hardly realistic to expect programmes tailored to each of the neurotypes described on page 3. However, fleets should expect instructors to be willing to adapt their techniques according to the driver sitting beside them in a vehicle or those in front of them in a classroom.

David Wales, product manager at Drivetech from the AA, believes every trainer should question the effectiveness of their teaching on the spot and adjust their approach accordingly.

"Every single course would be like the first time the trainer's ever done it," he explains, "as in, let's think about how to approach this person, how to get the communication correct and not use long words or jargon. Things like that really put the trainee at ease. The trainers need to have the ability to say, 'they didn't really know what I was on about. It's me, rather than them'."

Neil Robertson of Neil's Wheelz Driver Training instructs learner drivers and works with fleets via Roadwise Driver Training in Aberdeen. He has worked with neurodivergent students and, like Wales, believes the onus is on the instructor to tweak their practice to suit the individual.

"You can stick a label on it and say someone's got ADHD or someone's autistic, but there are obviously different levels of ADHD and autism and different abilities within those, so I take people at their own pace and each individual step of driving as it comes – as I do with most people. Some will need longer on specific things, and others will pick things up quite quickly.

If something weren't to go to plan because of something I've said, that would be my fault, because, as an instructor, I should be putting things across in a way that can be fully understood by anybody."

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) issues guidance for reasonable adjustments and special considerations for its qualifications, which can include allowing trainees more time for written assessments and permitting submissions via different formats, such as audio or video instead of text.

"Driver training must be inclusive and accessible to as many people as possible including those who are neurodivergent," says senior policy manager, Becky Guy **"ensuring that training is flexible and responsive to the needs of the individual is key. Adaptations might include using plain language, adjusting the pace of delivery or offering information in different formats."**

Don't sweat the technique

In line with the HR best practice outlined in our **first white paper**, both Wales and Robertson stipulate that instructors should never directly ask trainees if they have a particular condition. However, Robertson has a stock, non-invasive question that creates the opportunity for individuals to volunteer more information that might inform training if they feel comfortable.

Robertson's technique with new learner drivers is to start in a quiet industrial estate to allow them to get used to the car, and corporate driver training – which could be UK driver familiarisation courses for new arrivals or refreshers for existing UK employees – is surprisingly similar.

"We start off in the car park, because it just gives them a feel for the car," he explains, **"you are teaching them to suck eggs a little bit until you've defined what they can and can't do, but it's just a case of letting them have a little drive, because some of them may not have driven for a long time.**

"I ask them to disclose if there is any particular area in which they're going to need more help. I try not base it on anything and just let them tell me, because some people don't want to; they don't want to be defined by a condition."

"I believe heavily in repetition," he continues, **"because the more you go through something with someone, the more it will ingrain. That, and allowing them to figure things out for themselves to a degree, because then they have those 'aha' moments that stick with them."**

From the passenger seat: an instructor's guide to adaptations for neurodivergent drivers

Robertson's time with neurodivergent trainees has caused him to think laterally about how he transmits information to those at the wheel. While he stresses that instructors should always be informed by the individual, here, he explains how he has tailored his approach for three distinct neurotypes.

ADHD

"I find that people who have ADHD tend to tire very quickly of doing the same thing. I try to make the lesson like little chunks of things, rather than a whole lesson about one specific thing. If it's little bite-sized chunks, and you give them a really good breakdown of what they've done well afterwards, they'll feel they're achieving something from it, and they tend to put more into it. There tends to be a bit more focus on things that they're really interested in, and you can get an element of hyperfocus."

Autism

"Autistic people will generally take everything you say as it is said, so you have to process your thought in a way that is relevant to what you're doing so that what you say is not taken in a different way. You have to be quite exact with what you're asking people to do, so if you're in a manual car and you say, 'put it into first and gently lift up the clutch,' – define gently. Gently, to you, could be a lot slower and a lot softer than it is to someone else. If you tell someone to brake, they need to know how hard they're supposed to brake."

Dyspraxia

"I worked on using objects and road markers to help a student with his distance so that he was not judging by his spatial awareness, he was judging it by what he could see – and it worked. I had another student with dyspraxia who recently passed her test in an automatic. She tried a manual and it was too much for her, but she was OK when she switched to automatic. She had challenges, but we got there, she made it through her test, has her own car and seems to be doing really well."

"I'm a great believer in showing a picture to get the brain working..."

A class act

For classroom-based training, including CPC workshops for commercial vehicle drivers, Drivetech prefers graphic materials to text-heavy documents, and the former can be complementary particularly for individuals with ADHD and dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia, who may have a knack for visual thinking.

"Who reads terms and conditions?" asks Wales, **"nobody does, and we've developed CPC workshops for commercial vehicle drivers with that in mind. Instead of bringing up reams of text, we'll just display a sentence as the starting point for a conversation, and we ask drivers to visualise the words.**

"I'm a great believer in showing a picture to get the brain working, so if we're talking about vehicle checking, let's see a lorry that somebody's performing a check on. Your brain would naturally go, 'I see what they mean,' without a word from the trainer, so we're communicating not only in verbal form, but also pictorially – and with videos."

As clear as mud: what the DVLA says about neurodiversity

The DVLA requires licence holders to inform it about any condition that could affect their ability to drive. It has an online service that allows drivers to check if their condition needs to be reported and any ramifications for the validity of their licence.

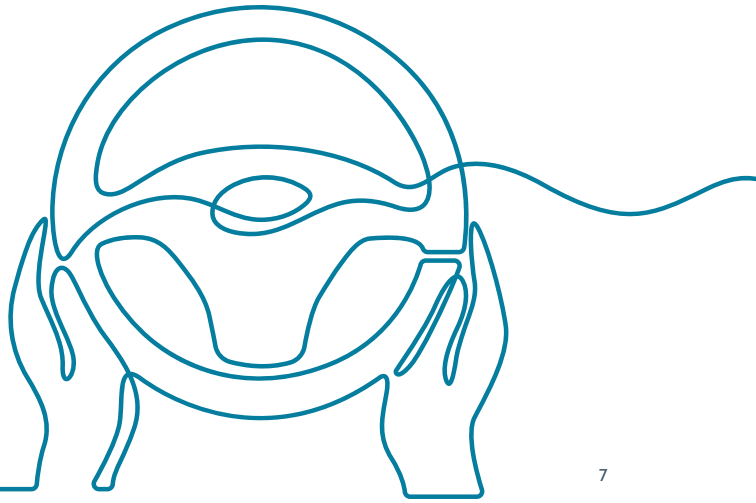
We asked the DVLA to confirm whether neurodivergent licence holders (we specifically mentioned ADHD, autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia and Tourette syndrome) were required to tell it about their condition. In response, it sent us links to its pages on learning difficulties (under which it classed dyslexia and dyspraxia) ADHD, Autism, Tourette syndrome. They all said almost exactly the same thing:

You must tell DVLA if your [condition] or your [condition] medication affects your ability to drive safely.

If your driving is not affected by your [condition] or [condition] medication, you do not need to tell DVLA. Ask your doctor if you're unsure.

Drivers are legally obliged to inform the DVLA if a condition or medication could impair safe driving, but its advice is in no way definitive and places the responsibility on licence holders to notice and determine whether their driving is affected. While it would be unrealistic to expect the DVLA to be a neurodiversity expert, its official guidance is not much help, and would clearly benefit from greater clarity.

- **Gov.uk : Health Conditions**
- **Gov.uk : Health Conditions A-Z List**



The responsibility shifts from instructors to fleet and line managers after the driver has completed their training, and it is equally important to communicate reports and follow-up sessions to drivers in as clear and as accessible a way as possible to ensure the learning sticks.

Anthony Marcou, UK commercial consultant at Drivetech, explains: **"Typically you'd be talking to area managers or regional managers that look after that particular segment or those particular drivers. There is a risk that the information could be relayed in a different way if it's cascaded down to somebody who doesn't really know what's going on. Reporting needs to be really robust. We need to state the facts, what happened and how to improve, so it's not a kick in the teeth for a driver, it's an improvement schedule."**

"Personally, I'd like to see every single driver have a one-to-one follow-up with their direct line manager," adds Wales, **"even if they come out as a low risk, it would be beneficial for them to sit in front of a manager, who says, 'well done, keep up the good work'."**

The same applies to telematics reports, which are often used alongside driver training to highlight areas in which individuals need to improve. Both fleets and telematics providers often talk of 'drowning in data' served up by the systems, and drivers could be just as afflicted if they are staring at a page of numbers instead of something digestible.

"Telematics is a major tool, but it can go both ways,"

says Wales, **"if you don't properly explain what it's for, then people may find it a little bit stressful, so you need to explain what it represents. Can you put it into terms that are easier to understand, like harsh braking? Can you discuss that in a way that makes it a positive rather than a negative, such as, 'don't rush up to the end of a traffic jam; let it go, carry on driving and it's less stress on you, less stress on the vehicle and better fuel efficiency – happy days for everybody. That's a much better interpretation of what telematics is all about."**

One-on-one: why it pays to spend time with drivers

Separately from training, Wales recommends that fleet and transport managers occasionally join drivers in person to better understand what they actually do or at least attempt to engage with those rarely seen on site.

"Many years ago, as a transport manager, I would physically go out with a driver now and again, just to see what they were going through. That's got nothing to do with diversity, it's just the communication you should have with your staff, so you can understand what they're going through.

"Even if you can't go out with them, you should be encompassing all drivers, not just the ones you see on a daily basis. You hardly ever see people on the night and early shifts, so make an effort to catch them.

"It's protecting your investments – and drivers are an investment. If you take the time to train them correctly, to understand their needs and wants, you'll get the best out of them, and that equals deliveries getting done on time, less accidents and more."

Vehicle Handovers: Best Practice for Drivers of All Types

The Association of Fleet Professionals' Dealer Standard defines a good vehicle handover, which benefits neurodivergent and neurotypical drivers alike

Genius Within says 83% of neurodivergent individuals it works with seek help with organisation skills and 78% with time management. Neurodivergent drivers who have shared their stories with us have explained how difficult they can find unforeseen events and changing plans on the fly (see our driver case study on page 16 for details and two more in our first white paper – www.venson.com/white-papers/).

Imagine a vehicle arriving out of the blue with a delivery driver expecting a quick sign-off and a lift to the station there and then. The driver – who has other, pre-arranged activities to be getting on with – obliges, slips behind the wheel and gazes at an interior so alien that they're not even sure if they're looking for an ignition slot or a button to get the thing going.

As with most other challenges facing neurodivergent individuals, it is not difficult to see how such a situation could be problematic for anyone. At best, it is inconvenient, confusing and time consuming; at worst, it could be debilitating.

The Association of Fleet Professionals' (AFP) Dealer Standard was created to avoid all the above. It was introduced in April 2022 to improve what, at the time, were felt to be variable levels of service, and the guidelines gave everyone from one-man-band delivery services to dealer group CEOs a clear idea of how best to drop off a company car or van.

The standard was updated in late 2024 with an emphasis on EVs, tech and interpersonal expectations at the point of handover, but the core elements were unchanged: vehicles should be clean, delivery drivers should be able to explain basic functions and the recipient should not be inconvenienced.

Signed, sealed delivered: dealers committed to the standard

The following dealers had signed up to the AFP Dealer Standard as of January 2026:

- *FRF Volvo*
- *Group 1 Automotive*
- *Lipscomb Cars Ltd*
- *Listers Volvo Worcester*
- *Lloyd Volvo*
- *Lookers Group Fleet*
- *Marshall Motor Group*
- *Paul Rigby Ltd (Volvo)*
- *Ray Chapman Motors*
- *Riverside Motors*
- *Startin Group*
- *Stoneacre Volvo*
- *Sycamore Peterborough Ltd*
- *TMS Motor Group*
- *Vertu Volvo*
- *Walton Audi*
- *Waylands Group*

Dealers signed up to the standard are widely regarded to excel at fleet vehicle deliveries. However, the AFP has suggested there is vast room for improvement among some that have not yet adopted it, citing vehicles

"delivered dirty or with damage, with limited or even no documentation, and the driver clearly being keen to get away and catch a train as soon as possible".

The latter point was addressed directly in the updates, and chair, Paul Hollick, explains why: **"Delivery drivers wanting a lift down to the train station... can make some of our members' drivers a little bit uncomfortable, and we were keen to make sure there were some standards around that. It's their responsibility to find their own way back out of that site.**

"I think it's becoming something that's almost expected now, particularly with some of the vehicle movement providers, but if you're a work-from-home mum and you've got a kid in the house, you can't do that, and it becomes quite an awkward conversation.

"The most important thing, I think, when that vehicle is delivered, is that there's got to be that moment of joy – whether it's a company car or a company van.

Even a van driver really loves getting in a new van, and what you don't want is any element of a social issue or a Curb Your Enthusiasm type moment, where... you are being asked by somebody to do something you don't really want to do."

Another update was the stipulation that EVs are delivered with at least 50% charge. It presents a challenge for dealers and for logistics operators, because charging obviously takes longer and requires more planning than topping up a fuel tank, but that delivery could also be a driver's first experience of an EV, and a nearly empty battery is far from ideal.

A further addition was the delivery driver's ability to explain the rudimentary aspects of the car, with one eye on the specifics of EVs and the other on general functions.

"There's a lot more technology," adds Hollick, **"people need a lot more understanding about how to charge a vehicle, what charging cables they've been issued with, what they potentially need to do... and also, the infotainment systems – how to pair your phone, get Apple CarPlay working or whatever it happens to be. It's just that extra TLC and making sure that the orientation is done properly."**

How not to deliver a vehicle

During our video call, Hollick showed us a real-world example of exactly why the AFP's dealer standard was developed. It was a photograph of the interior of a vehicle recently delivered to a fleet, specifically the cradle for an infotainment screen protruding from the dashboard.

The vehicle was supposed to be fitted with sat-nav and a DAB radio, but there was no infotainment system – just the empty cradle. The manufacturer allegedly told the fleet that the driver needed to download an app and use the data on their phone to power the sat-nav and the radio.

"No communications, no details, dropped off, and the driver is then effectively told that they need to use their own phone to get the radio to work,"

says Hollick, **"not a great dealer handover, especially when the spec sheet stated that the vehicle had DAB radio."**

Most, if not all the big dealer groups subcontract deliveries to specialist logistics operators, who are at the sharp end of the drop-offs. Drivers hop in and out of lots of different vehicles and, factoring in low pay and high attrition rates, showroom-level expertise should not be expected. Delivery drivers nonetheless perform an ambassadorial role for the dealer, and the groups signed up to the adopted standard prove it is quite possible to do the basics of a handover well.

The whole issue highlights the discrepancy between retail and fleet vehicle handovers. The former can be a ceremonious affair (the same may well apply if fleets get their vehicles from a local dealer, which a lot of AFP members reportedly like) but the latter could amount to dropping the key at reception – and that might even be the way some drivers like it.

The agency model – where vehicles are sold directly by the manufacturer and the dealer is paid a handling fee – also plays a role: **"[Vehicles] aren't necessarily going through a dealership anymore,"** says Hollick,

"the dealer might have ordered them, but they're being delivered straight from the manufacturer, or straight out of the docks, so there can be a little bit less PDI going on if you're not careful."

Hollick appeals to fleets grappling with poor deliveries to contact the AFP and offered to put the organisation's clout to work: "**We worked with a lot of the guys within the big motor retailers to develop the standard, and we were saying, 'is this reasonable?'. It gives our members the ability to flag up issues, and we can handle them directly with the dealerships on their behalf. Rather than them as fleet managers needing to go into bat with the dealers and the OEMs, we can handle that ourselves. The power of the collective can be really helpful.**"

The standard represents a solid set of guidelines for the sector, and its long-term test will be the level of adoption by dealers. But while the odd slip-up is forgivable – especially considering the hurdles facing logistics companies – there is still work to do (see our 'how not to deliver a vehicle' page 10 for details), while the absence of some major dealer groups is notable. The more receptive retailers who come to the standard, the better – and the better the experience for drivers of all stripes.

Innovative Initiatives for Neurodivergent Drivers

Simple methods that benefit all drivers are the best approaches for a neuroinclusive fleet. A police force and a software developer explain theirs.

In a fleet context, adapting vehicles to the universal design involves fitting air conditioning and an infotainment screen with a dark mode as standard (which many already have), reducing unnecessary specification and clearly labelling racking and storage areas in commercial vehicles with numerical, alphabetical and colour-coded formats.

The following examples build on those measures with their simplicity, accessibility and clarity of information, all of which would benefit any driver – especially those for whom communication, stimulation or unfamiliarity are challenging.

Devon and Cornwall Police: seatbelt covers with emergency information and communication advice

The simplest initiatives are often the most effective, and a Velcro seatbelt cover is about as simple as it gets. Devon and Cornwall Police began offering them to individuals with speech, language and communication needs in September 2025, complete with a card that allows the wearer to add their name, age, address, medical conditions and information about how best to communicate with them. A pilot scheme, the idea is that first responders – from blue-light services or members of the public – can look beneath the cover (the exterior of which includes the force's logo and an instruction to look inside) and quickly understand how to respond appropriately. The card also includes a picture of a body that the wearer can point to if they are in pain to illustrate where they have been injured, which was designed in consideration of non-verbal individuals.

Acting inspector Jon Ford stipulates that the seatbelt covers are not for child seats but can otherwise be used in any capacity: **"It's not just for the driver,"** he explains, **"it can go on any seatbelt, it doesn't have to be one particular vehicle and the person who has that seatbelt cover can take it on any journey. They could even go on a coach with National Express and, as long as it's an adult seatbelt, they can carry it with them, and the insert card is personalised to them.**

"[They are] a simple but important way to let others know that you may need extra help in certain situations, whether you are a driver or a passenger. Road traffic collisions can be distressing for everyone. For people with a speech, language or communication need, they can be especially hard."

The covers are supplied with an A5 explainer leaflet, which includes a QR code that directs users to a **YouTube video** elaborating on the printed instructions.

The initiative was conducted and funded in association with road safety organisation Vision Zero Southwest and the force produced 3,060 seatbelt covers at a cost of just over £13,000. They were made available to the public for free, distributed via police stations and around 50% had found homes by November. Ford says the likes of schools and health service organisations have enquired about ordering the seatbelt covers in bulk, but the scheme's pilot phase and its distribution model limited them to 100 per police station, while other forces and organisations at home and abroad are said to have enquired about how they can follow suit with their own versions.

"We would love to say to people, 'yes, you can batch-order, 100 or 300'," says Ford, **"because it's a pilot, we cannot meet that demand, but what we have said is, 'please send your pupil, the person you support, or a family member to one of their police inquiry offices, where they can collect them on an individual basis'. That's really how we've promoted this, so everybody has a fair opportunity to get hold of one."**

While the belt covers are aimed at the general public, there is nothing to stop fleets from adopting something similar for their own operations and adapting it accordingly, say, by including the fleet manager's contact details and/or a preferred insurance company contact on the card inside the belt cover.

"If somebody wanted to do it, then they'd have to find their own graphic designer [to change the seatbelt cover's exterior] but they'd be welcome to use our stuff as a template and we're not precious about it," says Ford, **"you'd just have to change the logo, rebrand it for your business or organisation."**

InfoCentre: QR codes for vehicle handovers

Our previous white paper addressed the methods by which key documents and information are presented to drivers. Fleet policies often appear as huge blocks of flowing text, and it is not uncommon for organisations to distribute such material via the most convenient means for the person sending it, usually because 'that's the way we've always done it'.

That does not account for how, when or where drivers take in key information or the most effective ways of disseminating it to a mobile workforce – and this is not limited to documents. Commercial vehicle drivers, especially, will often hop in and out of different vehicles, and as for familiarisation, 'figure it out for yourself' is frequently the answer.

InfoCentre produces QR codes that link to the likes of videos and documents designed to acquaint a user with whatever is in front of them. The company works in a variety of sectors, including automotive (it has worked with body builder MTE, dealer eStar Truck & Van and electric and hybrid vehicle manufacturer Electra), and the content to which the codes link is designed to be as concise as possible, with videos typically limited to a couple of minutes and other details kept similarly succinct.

"When you scan the code, information that is relevant to the thing in front of you is available," says director, Andrew Woods, **"that can be videos, documents, images, phone numbers, email addresses, websites or just data on a screen. We try and make it so that – instead of it being a code that takes you to a website where you have to search for something, which can be quite hard – we lower the barrier completely to access that information."**

The codes typically appear on 5cm x 10cm stickers with 'scan me' below them and, while they can be mounted anywhere, have been located on dashboards or doors in vans and lorries where they fall within the driver's line of sight as they enter the vehicle. They can also be adapted to cover different functions or equipment, so while a code in a cab might link to content about driver familiarisation, a separate code on a piece of specialist equipment fitted to the back of a vehicle, such as a cherry picker, would specifically explain how to operate it. One QR code costs £80 for five years (£16 per year) and can be used across multiple assets, assuming the content to which it links is consistent. Bespoke content that might be applied to complex or variable assets requires a new code and attracts an additional charge.

The codes link to a progressive web app. This means that what the user sees looks like a typical mobile application and incorporates common elements such as location capture and the ability to take photos, but the user does not have to download anything to access any of the features or information. **"What we don't want is for people to have to contact their system administrators to allow downloads – have an account with the App Store or Google Play or any of that sort of stuff,"** says Woods.

"Handovers happen every day – not just when the vehicle is delivered," he continues, **"if you've got an agency driver, they might not know what vehicle they're going to drive until they get in that morning. It's not like you've got a vehicle for six months and 'this is your route'... If someone new joins, you don't call out the company you bought the vehicle from and tell them, 'you need to come down here and train my new guy'."**

While the system is not designed specifically for neurodivergent individuals, its provision of information in multiple formats conforms to the universal design by providing the user with options as to how they absorb the information.

"What is the best medium for communicating that information to someone?"

says Woods, **"neurodiversity is more than ADHD and autism – it's massive. We try and make it so that there are many different ways you can put that in front of people. Some people will want to watch a video, and some people would want to sit down and pore over that pdf in detail, so the principle behind it is to make the information as available as possible.**

"When we started out six or seven years ago, people would say, 'what's a QR code?' and tell us people didn't have smartphones," adds Woods, **"one thing we'd get in this industry was that they would be quite disparaging about the ability for drivers to read and consume information. There has been a bit of a shift, I think, in people's perceptions... and there is now an awareness that maybe one way of communicating is not the only way or not the best way for every individual to consume information."**

The system is also designed to curtail phone calls, both in the name of saving time and resources and because individuals can often be reticent to make them.

"Ringing up is just another thing that people don't like doing, and they often think, 'I'll just bodge it,"

says Woods, **"and you don't want to receive phone calls as a supplier, either. You've sold that thing, so you just want it done with."**

The codes have also been applied to accident management and breakdown services to give drivers a walkthrough guide of what they need to do when the vehicle has broken down, or they have been involved in a collision.

"This was driven by the request from an operator," explains Woods, **"the maintenance company and the breakdown company changed depending on who financed the vehicle, so that obviously meant that the phone number that you ring changed per vehicle."**

The code would direct drivers to information specific to their vehicle and maintenance provider:

"If you've had an accident or a breakdown, then there are some steps to say, 'OK, what do you need to do?"

adds Woods, **"if you've been in an accident, maybe you're not thinking that clearly. Someone might not remember what that process was when they were told about it two years ago or when they had their refresher six months ago, so aside from just giving a bit of information, it helps to say, 'do this, do that'. And from an operator's point of view, there's always that thing of telling your team leader that you're not going to make it to that job, so they can get someone else to fill in. It's sort of minimising the amount of time that you're missing out on the job."**

When we spoke with Woods, the company was working on an AI tool that, when prompted, would scan longer documents and present the user with a concise answer, linked to the corresponding section of the source material. Crucially, it was being developed to draw only from the document in question, so would not trawl the internet for best-guess answers.

Light reading: fonts for dyslexic drivers

Assuming it has one, the company font is usually standard-issue for any documents or information destined for distribution, but it is unlikely to be the best option for dyslexic readers. OpenDyslexic – which this text illustrates – is a font specifically designed to increase readability for dyslexic individuals.

The letters have heavy, weighted bottoms to indicate direction. According to the developer, this helps the reader to establish which part of the letter is down, which assists with correctly identifying letters and helps to reinforce the line of text on which the words appear.

The font is **free** to download, although the developer accepts donations. For dyslexic drivers, it may be a welcome addition to any information they are required to read, be it a printed or digital document or labelling in the back of a van.

opendyslexic.org

Case Studies

An autistic professional driver describes his experience of the job, a managing director explains how working with young neurodivergent drivers' parents can help and an autism specialist details workplace adaptations

The driver

Stuart Harvey, 33

Stuart is an autistic class-one HGV driver at the namesake Class One Driving, headquartered in Romford, Essex, which specialises in general haulage. He qualified as a lorry driver in 2019, having previously driven vans, and has piloted everything from 7.5-tonne rigids to his current 44-tonne artic.

Based at the company's depot in Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, Stuart's nightly route is a trunking run from Northampton to Willenhall, near Wolverhampton, then back to base, and he knows it like the back of his hand.

"I could literally tell you every pothole, every chipping, every road sign. I have studied it so much. I even did an experiment one day where I was able to time – to the second – when I was going to get to the gate at a particular yard, just based on the traffic situation."

He enjoys the job's routine, but stipulates that it can vary, especially overnight: **"The regularity is great, but I always have to keep telling myself that, just because I know where I'm driving to, it doesn't necessarily mean I'm going to get there the same way. Let's say my route is all motorways; there could be a diversion or any kind of traffic situation that might mean I need to go a different way."**

He believes that autistic drivers' diligence and perseverance make them particularly well-suited to the job, while a role in which the individual can independently complete the work is also a good match.

"The complimentary side of it is that we are a group of people who don't give up. We will keep going until that job is done, which is something that not all drivers do."

Communication can be difficult when colleagues expect an immediate response while he's at the wheel, and he recalls a challenging occasion when a co-worker phoned him as he was driving out of a yard.

"I was having to concentrate on what I was doing – getting out of the yard and making sure I didn't hit any cars – and I just went quiet for a period of about five seconds. Instead of thinking 'Stuart's got to focus on what he's doing,' his response was, 'talk to me, talk to me'. I was sat there thinking, 'you can't say that to somebody who's driving a lorry, when they're trying to focus on a million and one other things'."

"I think for companies that are hiring autistic drivers, if they understand them and how they work, and you leave them alone to do the job that they want to do, you will get the best possible results out of them... I've actually said to people in the past, 'look, don't take it personally if I don't talk to you, it's because I need my time alone to be able to do this'."

Stuart's broader appeal to the industry is for more sociable hours. He believes such an initiative would make the job more accommodating for existing employees and begin to tackle the driver shortage and deficit of young talent.

"If you want to appeal to a younger demographic, then you've got to change the hours. You can't expect an 18-year-old whippersnapper who's just come out of secondary school to do seven in the evening until four o'clock in the morning. People just aren't interested."

The manager

Fraser MacLean

Fraser is managing director of M&H Carriers, a Scottish logistics company that specialises in last-mile deliveries. In our previous white paper, he shared his experience of hiring autistic drivers Bailey Griffin and Josh Flaherty – chiefly that their attendance rates were higher than the average employee's and the benefits of their diligence and consistency.

Both Bailey and Josh are under 30, and Fraser explains how cultivating relationships with their parents has helped to navigate tougher times: **"Because they're a bit younger, the relationship we have with their mothers is important, because they know them better than we do. If you've got a family member there who understands what you're doing for them as an employer, then that really makes the partnership a lot easier.**

"For example, when Josh had a meltdown one day, I took him home and had a conversation with his mother. His mother then said, 'Right, I know what to do; this is how we'll do it...' We were then able to go forward quite quickly, because she understood. I explained to her, 'this is what we've done, we haven't put him in the guillotine or anything, but we can't have this. We need to deal with it'. You've got more of a three-way team, and I think they appreciate the fact that you're trying to do the right thing by them, but you've got to run a business as well.

"And it can be the other way. Bailey's mum, at times, has said, 'he's got to be home at this time today,' and we've gone, 'OK, that's fine'. It isn't always perfect and there may be times when you disagree, but it's like all relationships – you'll have good times, bad times, but you're all genuinely trying to get to the same point.

"It's an important part of it, and if you've got an autistic person in their early 20s, maybe this is their first full-time job, then their parents will play a role in helping you to help them fit in."

The specialist

"The autistic community don't want you to feel sorry for them and they want to be given the same opportunities as everybody else". That's Joanna Panese, external learning and consultancy lead at Scottish Autism, a charity that specialises in supporting those living with the condition, including help with applying for jobs and training for employers.

She explains that businesses often don't know where to start with hiring autistic people or how to adapt the workplace for existing employees with the condition. For well-meaning organisations, it can be down to a fear of doing or saying the wrong thing, but others simply are not interested.

Training – and you don't need much – is one of the best ways to get up to speed. There is no shortage of organisations offering it and, according to Joanna, the best include autistic trainers, who can describe what it's actually like for them at work.

"Training can vary from an initial understanding of autism right down to understanding autistic communication and thinking," she explains, **"there are also things like how to support an autistic employee as a colleague and more detailed learning for line managers who might be in a supervisory role."**

According to the Buckland Review of Autism Employment, published in 2024, a lack of understanding of the condition was one of the biggest barriers to autistic people at work and, as Joanna says, perspective is a huge part of it.

"You might think you've been super clear about what you want, then the autistic person comes back with something quite different. Often, our immediate response is to think the person hasn't done it right, but actually, it might be that we didn't explain it in the right way. There's a theory around that called the double empathy problem, which is when two people with very different perspectives come together, and it's only natural that they're going to struggle to see each other's."

Joanna says employers should not expect much in the way of funding for adaptations, which is exactly M&H's experience with its own efforts. Government funding for disability and neurodiversity support was under review at the time of writing, due to conclude in August 2026.

Individuals seeking advice about neurodiversity in the workplace in other areas of the UK can visit **Neurodiversity UK** at **neurodiversityuk.co.uk** and **Neurodivergence Wales** at **neurodivergencewales.org**.

The Fleet Manager's Neurodiversity Action Plan: Part 2

Understanding neurodiversity

- Assume around 20% of any workforce is neurodivergent.
- Common challenges include memory, concentration, organisation and time management.
- Sensory elements, such as light and sound, affect neurodivergent individuals differently. Some may respond well to certain stimuli, while others may find them difficult.
- A universal design, that accounts for all employees and works well for everyone, is preferable to the standard-issue disability compliance model, where adaptations are made on request.
- Basic management training is a good move. It can help managers understand and identify neurodiversity.

Driver training

- Trainers should adjust their approach according to the individuals they are instructing. They should not assume that the same technique will work for each trainee.
- Language should be clear, jargon-free and easy for anyone to understand.
- As in any professional environment, trainers should not directly ask trainees to disclose any condition. However, a question such as 'is there anything you feel you may need help with?', asked discreetly, creates an opportunity for individuals to discuss anything they feel comfortable with.
- Pictures, infographics and videos are particularly helpful for visually oriented learners and often better than text-heavy documents. They can also be useful for presenting any form of data to drivers, such as from telematics.
- Consider one-to-one follow-ups with fleet or line managers after a driver has undergone training. These are known to help with learning.

Vehicle handovers

- Consider working with dealers signed up to the AFP Dealer Standard to ensure quality handovers. Bring it to your dealer's attention if they do not follow the standard: https://www.theafp.co.uk/afp-dealer-standard/
- At a basic level, vehicles should be clean, delivery drivers should be able to explain basic functions and the recipient should not be inconvenienced.

Also consider

- Simple initiatives such as the seatbelt covers by Devon and Cornwall Police and InfoCentre's QR codes have the potential to benefit all drivers. Keep an eye out for anything that could easily be integrated into your fleet.
- OpenDyslexic font is specifically designed to be easier for to dyslexic readers to comprehend – and it's free. Consider using it for material you plan to send to drivers and/or for labelling vehicle cargo areas: https://opendyslexic.org

Summary

As we established in our first white paper, there is no need for fleets to procure a swathe of new vehicles to accommodate neurodivergent drivers.

The techniques, examples and opportunities detailed here in our second white paper strengthen the case for adaptability, flexibility and straightforward initiatives that would benefit any driver, neurodivergent or neurotypical, which is what the universal design is all about.

The ages of the three drivers – 22 to 33 – we interviewed in both white papers are noteworthy. They are exceptionally young for the haulage industry, which has long struggled with an ageing driver population. Each are examples of highly efficient and dependable employees who excel at tasks such as trunking, where consistency, process and regularity are assets.

Fleets would do well to consider all the above if recruitment, retention or productivity are in any way obstacles. Any driver, working in any capacity, is more likely to stick around, perform better and want to do a good job for a well-run operation that aims to accommodate them.

Credits and Sources

Our research for this white paper was based on interviews with the following individuals. We are extremely grateful for their assistance.

David Wales product manager, Drivetech from the AA

Anthony Marcou UK commercial consultant, Drivetech from the AA

Caroline Burnell head of marketing and communications, eStar Truck & Van

Jon Ford acting inspector, Devon and Cornwall Police

Stuart Harvey class 1 HGV driver, Class One Driving

Paul Hollick chair, Association of Fleet Professionals

Fraser MacLean managing director, M&H Carriers

Joanna Panese external learning and consultancy lead at Scottish Autism

Neil Robertson owner, Neil's Wheelz Driver Training

Andrew Woods director, InfoCentre

In addition to the interviewees, we consulted the following sources for information about neurodiversity, neurotypes, the associated language/terminology, reporting best practice and general statistics:

ADHD UK
- About ADHD
- ADHD Language Style Guide

British Dyslexia Association
- About Dyslexia
- What is Dyscalculia?

British Medical Bulletin: Neurodiversity at Work: a Biopsychological Model and the Impact on Working Adults

The Buckland Review of Autism Employment

Dyspraxia UK: Definition of Dyspraxia

Genius Within: What is Neurodiversity

International Dyslexia Association: Understanding Dysgraphia

Journalism.co.uk: How to report on Neurodiversity Accurately and Ethically

National Autistic Society
- What is Autism?
- How to Talk and Write About Autism

Press Gazette: Reporting Neurodiversity

RoSPA Qualifications Reasonable Adjustments & Special Considerations Policy (supplied by RoSPA)

Venson Fleet Management Solutions

Company vehicles are an important asset for supporting core business operations and that's why our contract hire and fleet management solutions are created in response to our customers' needs and based on our commitment to long-term partnerships and exceptional customer service.

Testimony to this is our client retention rate of 95%. Along with exceptional service, we ensure our customers receive great value from their fleet by delivering solutions that are based on impartial advice and that provide tangible financial returns. We can do this because we've only ever specialised in managing fleets, so our knowledge and in-depth understanding of the market is the best in this sector and relevant to public, private, not-for-profit and emergency service organisations.

We also believe in true partnerships, working with fleet operators, fleet teams, procurement, HR, finance and fleet drivers to ensure they always receive the most appropriate solution to support their operational and financial needs.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the future of your fleet, please call 0330 094 7803 and speak to one of our fleet consultants or visit www.venson.com for more information.

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