

# Sensory Audit Tool for Employers

## Welcome

This resource is designed to help employers and managers better understand how sensory needs may impact staff wellbeing and performance. It can support you to identify areas of good practice and highlight where changes may be helpful.

It takes a needs-led approach, recognising that **the best solutions come from listening to individuals and responding flexibly to what works for them.**

## Purpose

This tool supports employers, managers, and HR professionals to reflect on how the sensory environment may be helping or hindering staff – particularly those who are neurodivergent or have sensory processing differences.

It offers practical examples of good practice, possible adjustments, and prompts for thinking about what's working well and what could be improved.

The aim is not to diagnose or label, but to get curious and explore how the workplace can better meet the needs of individuals through thoughtful, flexible, and collaborative approaches.

Used well, this audit can support meaningful conversations, reduce barriers, and create a more inclusive and enabling environment for *everyone*.



## About the creator

This tool was developed by, **Emily Edwards**, an Autistic+ADHD (AuDHD) Neurodiversity Coach, Trainer and Workplace Needs Assessor at **withINsight Coaching**. I support neurodivergent people and organisations to create environments where people can work at their best – more of the time.



## I offer:

- 1:1 coaching (Access to Work funded or private)
- Group coaching
- Workplace Needs Assessments
- Neurodiversity awareness training
- Manager and/or team support

## Introduction

We all process the world through our senses – sight, sound, smell, touch, taste, movement, and internal signals like hunger or needing the toilet. For some employees, particularly those who are neurodivergent, sensory input can have a much greater impact on comfort, focus, and wellbeing at work. A noisy office, bright lighting, or lack of movement opportunities may go unnoticed by some – but feel overwhelming or exhausting to others. These sensory barriers can affect not only wellbeing, but also productivity, engagement, and retention.

This audit tool is designed to help you reflect on the sensory environment in your workplace and consider where small, needs-led adjustments could create a more inclusive and enabling space for everyone. It can be used to review current practice, gather feedback, or support meaningful conversations with individual staff members.

On the final page, you'll find a simple framework to help you move from **support** → **resources** → **actions** – making it easier to identify practical next steps and respond flexibly to individual needs.



## When Sensory Needs Are Overlooked: The Cost of Getting It Wrong

The modern workplace is often designed around assumed norms of comfort and concentration — but for a significant proportion of people, especially those who are neurodivergent, these environments can be overwhelming, stressful, and unsustainable. Getting sensory inclusion right isn't just a nice-to-have — it's a foundation for wellbeing, retention, and performance.

The findings below highlight the real-world impact of sensory exclusion in the workplace. From increased stress and burnout to lost talent and unmet potential, the cost of not paying attention to sensory needs is high — for individuals *and* organisations. Use this page to raise awareness, guide leadership conversations, or make the case for proactive, needs-led adjustments.

Up to 20% of people experience significant sensory processing differences—meaning traditional office designs leave millions overwhelmed by noise, lights, and crowds.  
(Longdom Publishing, 2024, p. 1)

Neurodivergent workers face hypersensitivity to noise, artificial light and crowded spaces, making sensory-friendly adjustments like quiet rooms and light control essential for their wellbeing and performance.  
(Weber et al., 2022, p. 2-3)

Tailored sensory-adjustments, think noise cancelling headphones, flexible workspaces and personalised lighting directly boost job satisfaction and wellbeing for neurodivergent employees.  
(Weber et al., 2024)


Leadership that listens and adapts to neurodivergent employees' sensory needs is key: supportive managers reduce stress and burnout, while rigid environments drive people out.  
(Lindqvist, 2025, p.11)

There's no one-size-fits-all fix: each neurodivergent employee's sensory needs are unique, demanding personalised and flexible workplace solutions.  
(Doyle, 2020, p.2)


72% of UK managers say neurodivergent employees often don't disclose their needs, making it harder to provide vital sensory adjustments.  
(ACAS, New Advice on Neurodiversity at Work, 2025)

**Legal Context:** Under the Equality Act 2010, many neurodivergent conditions are protected as disabilities — meaning employers must make reasonable adjustments and remove barriers to ensure fair access and inclusion.




 <b>Visual (sight)</b>	How people respond to light, colour, movement, and visual patterns. Bright lights, flickering screens, or busy environments can be distracting or uncomfortable.			
<b>Good Practice</b> What research or experience tells us tends to support sensory inclusion	<b>Example Adjustments</b> Practical ways this might be implemented	<b>What is working well?</b>	<b>What is not working so well?</b>	<b>What could be different better support inclusion?</b>
<b>Soft, non-flickering lighting with individual control</b>	e.g. Adjust desk lighting, reduce glare			
<b>Minimal visual clutter, especially in shared spaces</b>	e.g. Use calm colour schemes or visual barriers			
<b>Option to reduce visual input (e.g. partitions, low-stim spaces)</b>	e.g. Bookable quiet areas			
Add your own example here (e.g. something specific to your experience/context)				




 <b>Sound (hearing)</b>	How people experience noise in your surroundings. Background chatter, sudden sounds, or constant hums can be overwhelming or make it hard to concentrate.			
<b>Good Practice</b> What research or experience tells us tends to support sensory inclusion	<b>Example Adjustments</b> Practical ways this might be implemented	<b>What is working well?</b>	<b>What is not working so well?</b>	<b>What could be different better support inclusion?</b>
<b>Access to noise-cancelling headphones or quiet zones</b>	e.g. Quiet room policy or acoustic screens			
<b>Advance warning of loud or unexpected sounds</b>	e.g. Alert for fire drills			
<b>Minimise background noise</b>	e.g. Relocate noisy equipment			
<b>Add your own example here (e.g. something specific to your experience/context)</b>				




 <b>Taste (gustatory)</b>	How people experience flavours, textures and aftertastes of food or drink. Some people may have strong reactions which can affect what they eat, how often, and how comfortable they feel in shared food situations.			
<b>Good Practice</b> What research or experience tells us tends to support sensory inclusion	<b>Example Adjustments</b> Practical ways this might be implemented	<b>What is working well?</b>	<b>What is not working so well?</b>	<b>What could be different better support inclusion?</b>
<b>Access to food and drink that aligns with individual taste preferences</b>	e.g. Bring in preferred foods and snacks without pressure to join shared meals			
<b>No expectation to join in with shared food-based activities</b>	e.g. Opt-out of team lunches or taste-based events like bake-offs or food sharing			
<b>Freedom to eat foods that suit sensory needs (e.g. bland, repetitive, or plain foods)</b>	e.g. Have access to personal snacks, eat smaller portions more frequently			
Add your own example here (e.g. something specific to your experience/context)				




 <b>Smell (olfactory)</b>	How people react to scents and odours in the environment. Strong smells from food, perfumes, or cleaning products can be pleasant for some and distressing for others.			
<b>Good Practice</b> What research or experience tells us tends to support sensory inclusion	<b>Example Adjustments</b> Practical ways this might be implemented	<b>What is working well?</b>	<b>What is not working so well?</b>	<b>What could be different better support inclusion?</b>
<b>Fragrance-free policies or awareness of scent sensitivity</b>	e.g. Fragrance-free zones			
<b>Avoid strong cleaning or food odours where possible</b>	e.g. Flexible seating away from kitchens			
Add your own example here (e.g. something specific to your experience/context)				




 <b>Touch (tactile)</b>	How the body responds to physical contact, textures, or pressure. This can include clothing, seating, or how materials feel against the skin.			
<b>Good Practice</b> What research or experience tells us tends to support sensory inclusion	<b>Example Adjustments</b> Practical ways this might be implemented	<b>What is working well?</b>	<b>What is not working so well?</b>	<b>What could be different better support inclusion?</b>
<b>Flexible dress code to accommodate fabric sensitivities</b>	e.g. Non-restrictive uniform policy			
<b>Ergonomic furniture options and tactile tools allowed</b>	e.g. Chair cushions, fidget items			
Add your own example here (e.g. something specific to your experience/context)				




 <b>Proprioception (body awareness)</b>	The sense of body position and pressure – knowing where our limbs are and how much force we’re using. Some people seek deep pressure or need to move regularly to feel comfortable.			
<b>Good Practice</b> What research or experience tells us tends to support sensory inclusion	<b>Example Adjustments</b> Practical ways this might be implemented	<b>What is working well?</b>	<b>What is not working so well?</b>	<b>What could be different better support inclusion?</b>
<b>Movement breaks encouraged</b>	e.g. Stretch reminders, step challenges, access to gym			
<b>Use of resistance bands, lap pads, footrests etc.</b>	e.g. Referral to Occupational Health, access to reasonable adjustment funding (Access to Work)			
<b>Add your own example here (e.g. something specific to your experience/context)</b>				



 <b>Vestibular (movement and balance)</b>	Our sense of balance and spatial orientation. It helps us stay upright and feel grounded; too much or too little movement can affect focus and wellbeing.			
<b>Good Practice</b> What research or experience tells us tends to support sensory inclusion	<b>Example Adjustments</b> Practical ways this might be implemented	<b>What is working well?</b>	<b>What is not working so well?</b>	<b>What could be different better support inclusion?</b>
<b>Walking meetings, standing desks and movement-friendly routines</b>	e.g. Walking meetings provided as an option			
<b>Workspace layout supports clear, uncluttered movement</b>	e.g. Routes with minimal obstacles			
Add your own example here (e.g. something specific to your experience/context)				



 <b>Interoception (internal body signals)</b>	The awareness of what's happening inside our body – like hunger, thirst, pain, temperature, or emotions. Some people may notice these signals easily, while others might not realise they're overwhelmed and/or need a break until later.			
<b>Good Practice</b> What research or experience tells us tends to support sensory inclusion	<b>Example Adjustments</b> Practical ways this might be implemented	<b>What is working well?</b>	<b>What is not working so well?</b>	<b>What could be different better support inclusion?</b>
<b>Adjustments offered based on need, not diagnosis</b>	e.g. Communication passport or similar used within the organisation			
<b>Line managers trained in neuro-inclusion</b>	e.g. CPD sessions or specialist training			
<b>Adjustments reviewed regularly</b>	e.g. As-and-when basis and/or annual or bi-annual review meetings			
Add your own example here (e.g. something specific to your experience/context)				



**Activity:** Are there additional supports or resources that could improve how your organisation enables sensory inclusion in the workplace?

<p><b>Support</b></p> <p><i>What support structures (people, processes, culture) could enable sensory inclusion across the team or organisation?</i></p>	<p><b>Resources</b></p> <p><i>What tools, equipment, spaces, or guidance might help create a more sensory-inclusive environment?</i></p>	<p><b>Actions to Take</b></p> <p><i>What practical steps could be taken to review, improve, or embed inclusive sensory practices?</i></p>

If you'd like support implementing anything from this audit – whether that's neurodiversity awareness training to build understanding, a workplace needs assessment for a specific employee or coaching to enable you to support your team more effectively – you're welcome to [book a free Discovery Call](#) with me.

