

Session Title:	Understanding Neurodivergence in Higher Education
Speaker(s):	Gemma Spencer
Chair:	Alex
Reporter:	Raechelle Jackson

Speaker/Institution Bio/Information:	Gemma Spencer Lecturer in Pre-Registration Nursing University of Central Lancashire
Overview/Aim of session:	Applications to higher education institutions (HEI's) from learners who identify as Neurodivergent have increased year on year. This increase, coupled with the difficult to navigate transition to higher education highlights the need for increased awareness and support around neurodivergence. This session will explore common definitions and terminology, the legal, moral and ethical responsibilities of HEI's as well as provide tips to supporting Neurodivergent students in HE.
Workshop Content	<p>Encouraging students to thrive and not just survive.</p> <p>Attendees held up cards to show their personal identities to highlight how neurodivergent students usually lead with their diagnosis but are also part of lots of other identities.</p> <p>Gemma introduced that we are all neurodiverse and that we are moving away from terminology as a "disorder" implies that it is something that can be cured or "fixed".</p> <p>We have obligations to help our neurodiverse students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Legally <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are retention issues showing that students without support in Year 1 are more likely to leave University earlier - Content must be accessible for everyone ● Morally <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sometimes neurodiverse students come to University wanting to "drop the label" ● Ethically <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can we improve instructions such as including a "click here" button on a webpage? - Is DSA visible for students?

	<p>- Can we provide more opportunities for independence?</p> <p>We can use a <u>strengths</u> based approach to students by focusing on what they CAN do</p>
<p>Case Studies/Examples:</p>	<p>Who is the one student you'll never forget and what was the impact?</p> <p>Gemma referenced a student whose twin was passing whilst she had a diagnosis of dyslexia and didn't have access to support.</p> <p>UCLAN Umbrellas at Preston, Burnley and Westlakes campuses to raise awareness and understanding of neurodiversity and celebrate the many strengths that come from thinking differently</p> <p>They have also implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Achievement coaches by year group ● Personal tutors for pastoral care ● Inclusive support being mindful of lengthy waiting lists to access support ● Disabled student commitment with Advanced HE
<p>Scenarios/Roundtable discussions:</p>	<p>How many students have declared neurodivergence? 20% have self-reported but it is likely to be more than 40%. Gemma then introduced 100 balls into the room with 20% of these balls brightly coloured to represent this in communities</p> <p>Areas to reflect upon:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What support is there? 2) When is support signposted to students/applicants 3) How can it be accessed? 4) Is it visible? 5) Are there any key ideas in progress?
<p>Questions and Answers:</p>	<p>How do you feel about the phrase neurotypical?</p> <p>It can perpetuate differences with some neurodivergents not identifying as being disabled although it is "generally" considered a disability</p> <p>Do you have any advice or recommendations for prospective applicants that disclose neurodiversity on open days?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clear signage and arrows ● A quiet room or a "wobble room" for those that feel overwhelmed with a comfortable space such as beanbags ● Maps to clear up the unknown ● Tangible and physical solutions ● Quiet time in the first and last hours

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health support ambassadors • Fidget toys for every visitor
<p>SummaryKey takeaways:</p>	<p>There are lots of different types of neurodiversity including (but not limited to) ASD, dyspraxia, Sensory processing, dyscalculia and Tourettes</p> <p>Students want to see role models that reflect themselves - is there more that can be done to put in place more role models for education?</p> <p>We have legal, moral and ethical obligations to help neurodiverse students</p> <p>We can do more to help support these students into HE and allows us to support early disclosure</p> <p>Encouraging students to know that accessing support is not a personal failure</p>