

# Social Work & the Neurodiversity Paradigm

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Aoibheann Barnes, Social Worker

# What is Neurodiversity?

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- Neurodiversity is a biological fact. It is the diversity of human minds, the infinite variation in neurocognitive functioning within our species.

*Nick Walker*

Neurodiversity is an inclusive term for brain differences diverging from the majority type.



# What is the Neurodiversity Paradigm?

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- The ND Paradigm is a specific perspective on neurodiversity;
- 1) Neurodiversity is natural and valuable
- 2) The idea that there is one 'normal' brain or one 'right' style to function is a construction
- 3) The social dynamics that manifest in regard to neurodiversity are similar to the social dynamics that manifest in regard to other forms of human diversity

# What is the Neurodiversity Movement?

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- The Neurodiversity Movement is a human rights movement – it is a social justice movement that seeks civil rights, equality, respect and full societal inclusion for neurodivergent people

# Co-occurring Conditions:

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- Epilepsy, Intellectual Disability (10%), GI problems, IBS (HEDS), Autoimmune diseases, asthma, atopy and allergy, Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, Higher Incidence of dysautonomia including Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS), ME/CFS, Fibromyalgia, Chiari malformation, hernia, easy bruising, delayed wound healing
- An overactive sympathetic nervous system has become an identified characteristic of several cardiovascular diseases including ischemic heart disease, chronic heart failure and hypertension
- Associated neurodivergence: dyspraxia, dysgraphia, dyslexia, Tourette's and lefthandedness all prevalent in autistic people

(Dr Bernadette Grosjean)



# Autism and Mental Health

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- exponential increase of 787% in the diagnosis of autistic adults 1998 – 2018 (Brugha et al 2020)
- Autistic people continue to be under/mis diagnosed, particularly girls and women
- Autistic people over represented in the Mental Health Services – not due to their neurodivergency but due to the complexity of living in a world not designed for their needs

# Neuro-Affirming Supports

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- A recognition that different brain types need different approaches.
- Parents are struggling to support their neurodivergent children – often made more difficult by poor access to diagnosis and services, stigmatization, high levels of stress, poor quality information available in the public
- Recognition that there is a need for experience led support services

# Contacts Details:

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- Aoibheann Barnes listing on [www.thrivingautistic.org](http://www.thrivingautistic.org)
- Email – [barnesao@tcd.ie](mailto:barnesao@tcd.ie)
- [www.beeutifulminds.ie](http://www.beeutifulminds.ie)