



**COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING  
CHALLENGES:  
AN INTRODUCTION**



INFORMATION SHEET

For your employees with cognitive functioning challenges to feel supported, you will need a neuro-inclusive work environment. When you prioritise neuro-inclusion, **your entire workforce will feel supported**, and you will experience enhanced employee retention, productivity, and well-being.

While there are many coping strategies that neurodivergent adults can put into place, neuro-inclusion is intended to be **a collective**, not a solo **effort**.

## What are cognitive functioning challenges?

Cognitive functioning describes an individual's cognitive processing ability. An individual may acquire cognitive functioning challenges following a brain injury, stroke, or a pre-existing medical condition such as epilepsy.

The resulting brain changes could cause individuals to have a reduced ability, compared to before the cognitive incident, in areas such as literacy or motor skills.

This change in cognitive functioning can be assessed by testing for acquired challenges through brain injury, such as:

- Alexia (literacy)
- Apraxia (motor skills)

If someone in your organisation has informed you that they have cognitive functioning challenges, they must not be met with stigma or discrimination. Being aware of the support an individual with cognitive functioning challenges may require will empower them in the workplace.

This information sheet will help you understand how Lexxic can help with supporting employees with cognitive functioning challenges in the workplace.



## What are some common cognitive functioning challenges?



Reading  
& Writing



Spelling



Planning



Memory &  
Concentration



Processing



Movement

- Reading and writing
- Spelling
- Planning
- Memory and concentration
- Processing speed
- Execution of movement

**An individual with Alexia:** can be known to experience tendencies that are similar to those presented in dyslexia. For example, they may experience challenges with literacy skills, such, as spelling, writing and reading, and with processing and retaining information.

**An individual with Apraxia:** can be known to experience tendencies that are similar to those presented in DCD (Developmental Coordination Disorder)/ dyspraxia). For example, they may experience challenges with gross and fine motor coordination, perception, speech, language, learning and memory.

Both individuals with Alexia and/or Apraxia may also have low self-confidence since the cognitive incident, or life experience, and may require support in building their self-esteem in work.



## Supporting the individual How can you help?

### 1. Diagnostic assessment

If someone you work with is returning to work after an incident that may have changed their cognition (e.g., brain injury or a stroke), or if they have informed you that they have cognitive functioning challenges but have not been formally diagnosed: a diagnostic assessment is suitable.

**A diagnostic assessment** - identifies an individual's cognitive strengths and challenges.

**This 3-3.5 hour diagnostic can also be helpful** if the individual requires adjustments for formal examinations (e.g., extra time).

The standard diagnostic assessment typically involves the following:

- A variety of **cognitive tests and discussions with a psychologist** to understand an individual's cognitive profile. The evaluation is intended to obtain a detailed analysis of strengths and challenges. Common abilities tested for are:
  - Reading, writing, spelling, language, and listening
  - Memory and processing speed
  - Fine and gross motor skills

**The creation of a report** - that concludes whether the individual has Alexia or Apraxia, and outlines areas of cognitive functioning strengths and challenges

### 2. A workplace needs assessment

**A workplace needs assessment** - builds upon the assessment process and provides bespoke advice of adjustments.

The standard assessment process includes the following:

- **A discussion with the individual** - to explore their work environment, daily tasks, strengths, challenges, and current adjustments
- **A discussion with a line manager or HR representative** - to understand the individual's job role, strengths, challenges, and current adjustments
- **The creation of a report** - that outlines the assessment's conclusions and supports the individual and employer in **implementing the recommendations**

**Adjustment recommendations can be implemented at little or no cost.**

Here are a few of the most standard adjustments for employees with cognitive functioning challenges:

- Low or no-cost specialist equipment
- E-learning
- Line manager awareness training
- Assistive technology
- One-to-one coaching

### 3. One-to-one coaching

A coach will help individuals develop strategies that work for them. One-to-one coaching sessions **teach soft skills that could be applied to the workplace** and environment.

Individuals can **embed the skills learned in the session** into their work, which can help increase the following:

- Productivity
- Confidence at work
- Retention

Coaching topics that may be helpful for an individual with cognitive functioning challenges include:

- Attention, listening, and concentration
- Memory
- Confidence and mindfulness
- Organising, planning, and prioritising
- Reading, writing, and note-taking.



## 4. Co-coaching

Co-coaching **builds healthy working relationships**. It also brings together employees with cognitive functioning challenges and their line manager in a joint coaching session with a psychologist.

Co-coaching is a helpful tool for developing the following:

- Mutual understanding
- Good communication
- Clear goals
- **A safe space** for honest conversations

Building healthy relationships increases collaboration and productivity while fostering a comfortable environment.



**As a team  
How can you help?**

## 5. Cognitive Functioning Challenges Awareness Training

Cognitive functioning challenges awareness training: **educates line managers and colleagues** working with individuals with cognitive functioning challenges. It also builds healthy working relationships, which will help individuals flourish.

Through this training, your staff will:

- Gain **a greater appreciation for co-workers** with with cognitive functioning challenges
- **Increase their level of understanding** of cognitive functioning challenges in the workplace
- Learn to **challenge stereotypes** and misconceptions
- Understand **adjustments** that can be implemented to support colleagues

## 6. Implement practical solutions at work

Practical solutions that your team can put in place to support an individual with cognitive functioning challenges include:

- Ensuring **written instructions are followed up by verbal instructions**. This helps with memory and keeping focused on the task
- Presenting written instructions using a **chunking technique that structures information**. With the chunking technique, bullet points split essential information into digestible chunks
- **Creating visual prompts** such as a diary reminder, to remember deadlines. This can also help prioritise tasks by helping dyslexic colleagues visualise what's coming next
- Ensuring that **minutes are taken during meetings** and comments are shared with the team afterwards with clear guidance on any necessary actions and deadlines



### Why Lexxic?


We are proud leaders in empowering neurodiversity in the workplace. With over 15 years of experience, our in-house psychology team has **extensive expertise** across a wide range of professions.

We pride ourselves on working in partnership with employers. At Lexxic, we bring together business and employee needs so that **everyone**, regardless of job title or neurotype, **can thrive**.

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