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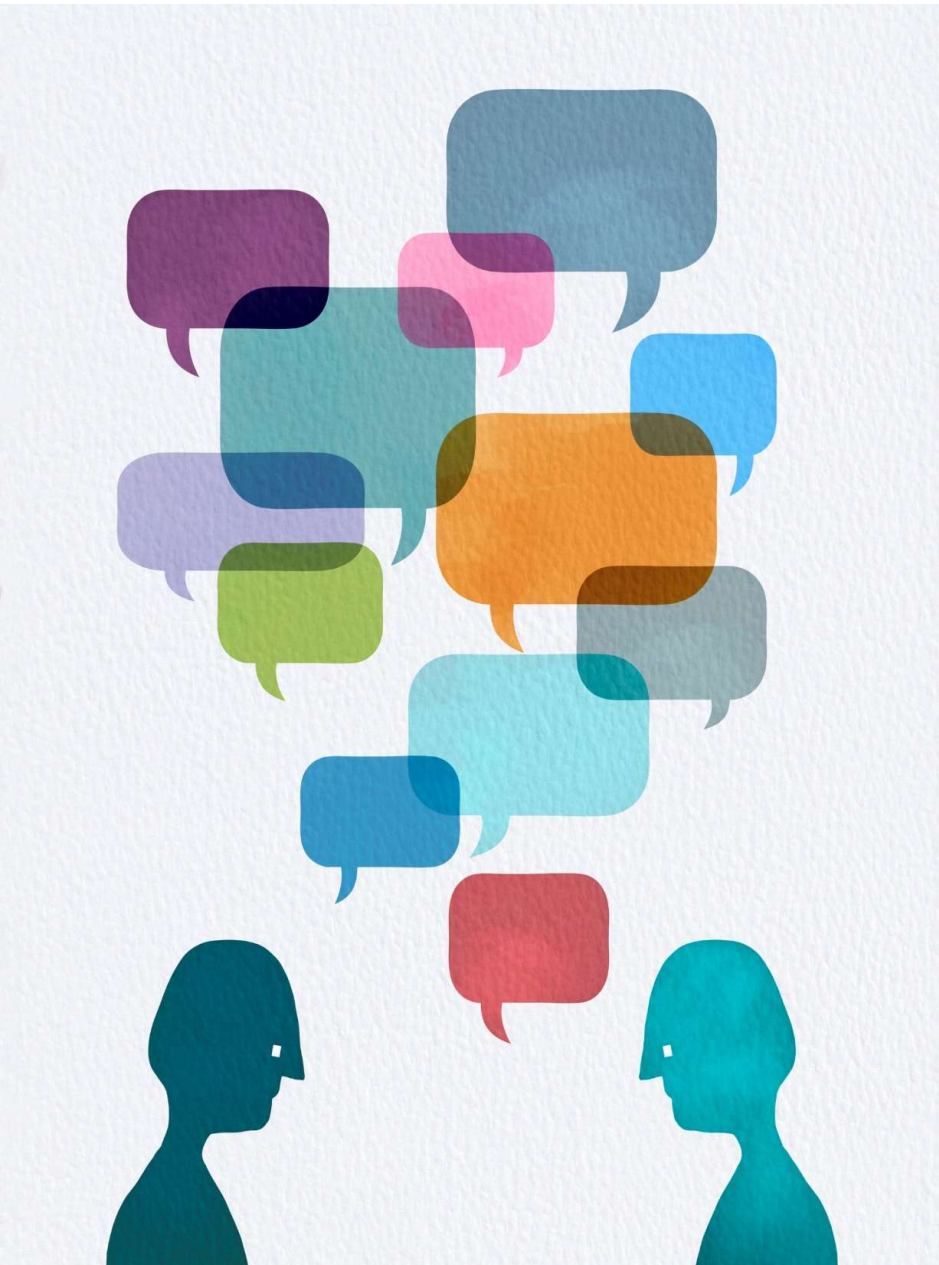
Supporting neurodivergent students with professional dialogue in work- based learning settings

Workshop Overview

1. Overview of project so far (20 mins)
2. Group discussion: supporting neurodivergent students in your settings (15 mins)
3. Group discussion: draft toolkit resources and other possible useful materials (15 mins)
4. Feedback and questions (10 mins)

OVERVIEW OF PROJECT SO FAR





Working with
neurodivergent
Student Teachers

Importance of
Professional
Dialogue

Collaboration &
Participation

“Going into a new environment can be severely overwhelming because...I know I'm a little bit like different in the way that I function and...when I first meet people...it takes people a while to get to like really understand me, I think.”

– STUDENT PARTICIPANT



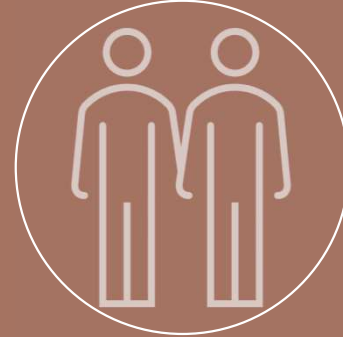
Students



University &
College
Tutors



Placement
Supporters



Student
Interns



Research
Team

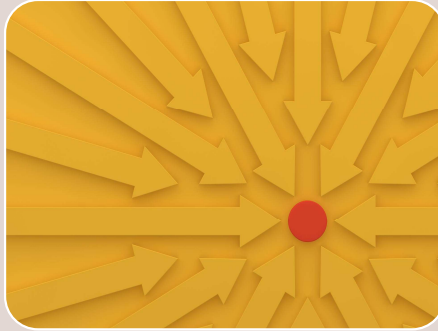
(University of
Aberdeen
+
North-East Scotland
College)



Aims



**Explore the
challenges
neurodivergent
students face
with
professional
dialogue**



**Capture
insights from
all perspectives**



**Co-construct
toolkit
materials**

APPROACH AND METHODS

- Participatory action research
- Ethical approval from University of Aberdeen
- Focus groups/ interviews chosen to allow participants to share their perceptions
- Eligibility requirements: neurodivergent students and mentors/ tutors who support them in tertiary education or in placement settings
- Participants so far: UoA students x 5; NESCol students x 4; UoA tutors x 7; NESCol tutors x 7; Local authority placement providers x 1
- Focus groups/ interviews audio recorded, transcribed, coded and thematised using a grounded theoretical approach

Key theme**Sub-themes**

What neurodivergent individuals bring to their roles	
Challenges of communication	Difficulty managing and participating in professional communication
	Finding receiving feedback challenging
	The need for clear expectations and explicit guidance
	Benefits of varied and flexible communication strategies
	The need for clear, structured, and actionable feedback
Disclosure and discussion of neurodivergence	The need for greater understanding and acceptance of neurodivergence
	Uncertainty in understanding and interpreting neurodivergent experiences
	Anticipating negative perceptions of neurodivergence
	Perceived benefits of disclosure
Building and experiencing relationships in placement	Benefit of supportive and communicative mentor relationships
	Challenges with building relationships
	Student-mentor relationship break down
Supporting neurodivergent students with their placements	Differences in support across placement settings
	The need for better neurodiversity training and support resources
	Identifying need for support through coursework and access to universal support
	The need for structured support to help students in their placement environment
Other challenges neurodivergent students may face on placement	Difficulties with adapting to and integrating into the new working environment
	Challenges with having a busy schedule, organising time and planning
	Finding sensory processing on placement challenging

Key theme: Disclosure and discussion of neurodivergence

Sub-theme: Uncertainty in understanding and interpreting neurodivergent experiences

Example code: Developing self-awareness of needs through placement experience

Example quote: ***"..they're kind of having this dual problem of they're in the classroom and there's all these new experiences and they're also trying to understand themselves and they're looking for support " (tutor)***

Key theme: Challenges of communication

Sub-theme: The need for clear, structured, and actionable feedback

Example code: Benefit of clear, structured and actionable guidance and feedback

Example quote: ***"And I think it really depends on the quality of feedback from the supporter teacher and their understanding of the supporter teacher about how that student best receives feedback." (tutor)***

Key theme: Building and experiencing relationships on placement

Sub-theme: Benefit of supportive and communicative mentor relationships

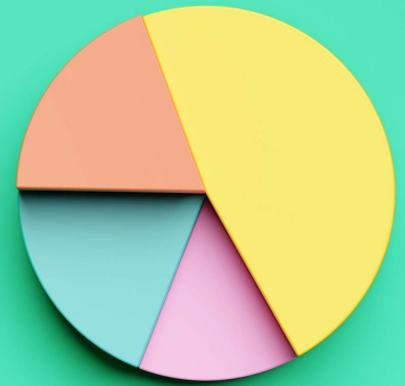
Example code: Benefit of supportive and communicative mentor relationships

Example quote: ***"When you are supported, I felt as if my wings were unclipped and I could just fly and I felt safe, you know, to be able to do that and to be able to perform to a higher standard than before."(student)***

THE STORY SO FAR: POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS

Data Analysis confirms there is a need to provide targeted support to neurodivergent students in professional dialogue contexts.

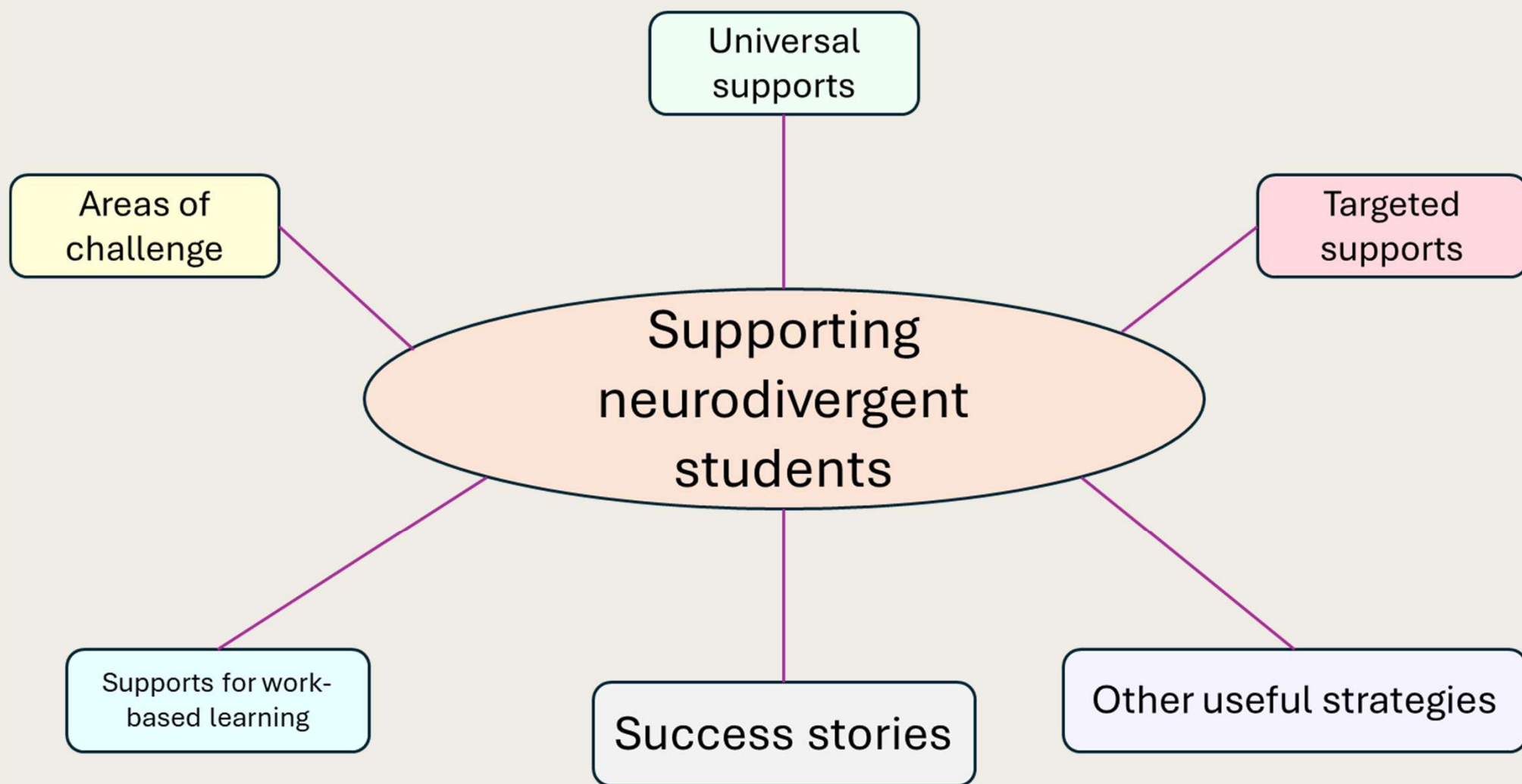
- Uncertainty and anxiety when expectations are unclear
- Feedback and guidance from mentors should be clear, structured, and actionable
- Challenges of disclosing and discussing neurodivergence
- Greater awareness and acceptance of neurodiversity
- Importance of communication between tertiary educators and partner placement providers.



Discussion Task 1 (15 mins)

- In your group, discuss universal and/or targeted supports you put in place in your settings which are likely to benefit neurodivergent students.
- If you have work-based learning as part of the courses/ programmes with which you engage, what supports are provided to students and placement setting providers around professional dialogue?
- You may wish to make use of the suggested mindmap structure on the next slide.





Discussion Task 2 (15 mins)

- In your group, discuss your allocated draft toolkit resource
- Discuss how this might help neurodivergent students/ tertiary educators/ placement providers
- Add feedback to these regarding how they might be used, how helpful they might be and any suggested changes (please write on them and/or use post-its)
- What other toolkit materials might support neurodivergent students/ tertiary educators/ placement providers with professional dialogue in placement settings?



NEXT STEPS

Complete
Focus
Groups

Data

Into the future.....

Review
toolkit with
partners



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ANY QUESTIONS?

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