

## 41039 Recognise the lived experience and support considerations of neurodivergent people

<b>Kaupae   Level</b>	3
<b>Whiwhinga   Credit</b>	5
<b>Whāinga   Purpose</b>	<p>This skill standard is intended for learners working in or entering a disability support setting.</p> <p>Learners will recognise neurodivergence using inclusive and strengths-based terminology, recognise how neurodivergence may shape a person's lived experience, and identify person-centred, mana-enhancing strategies that support wellbeing, inclusion, access, and independence.</p> <p>This skill standard aligns with the New Zealand Certificate in Disability Support (Level 3) [Ref: 5561].</p>

### Hua o te ako me Paearu aromatawai | Learning outcomes and assessment criteria

<b>Hua o te ako   Learning outcomes</b>	<b>Paearu aromatawai   Assessment criteria</b>
1. Recognise neurodivergence and its impact on a person's lived experience.	a. Define neurodiversity and neurodivergence using inclusive, strengths-based, and current terminology.
	b. Identify how neurodivergence can present and conditions that may co-occur.
	c. Recognise how neurodivergence may impact a person's lived experience.
2. Identify person-centred strategies to support the wellbeing, inclusion and independence of a neurodivergent person.	a. Identify person-centred, mana-enhancing, and culturally responsive approaches to support a person's holistic needs.
	b. Recognise support strategies that enhance access, independence, social inclusion, and personal wellbeing.
	c. Identify relevant services, supports, relationships, and community connections that enhance a person's wellbeing and inclusion.

**Pārongo aromatawai me te taumata paearu | Assessment information and grade criteria****Assessment specifications:**

For assessment purposes, evidence provided for the assessment of this skill standard must be gathered:

- in a disability support setting.
- in accordance with workplace or organisational policies and procedures.

**Definitions:**

*Disability support setting* – any environment where a disabled person receives support to meet their needs and goals. This may include, but is not limited to, residential support, home-based support, day services or centre-based support, community-based services, education support, or through individualised funding models that enable the person to direct their own support.

*Lived experience* – the first-hand knowledge and understanding a person has gained from living with a disability, including the impact on their daily life, participation, wellbeing, and interactions with society and community.

*Mana* – a Māori concept that refers to a person's inherent dignity, authority, and spiritual power. Mana comes from whakapapa (genealogy), personal integrity, and how a person is treated by others. In disability support, upholding a person's mana means recognising their value, supporting their autonomy, and promoting respect in all interactions.

*Neurodiversity* – the natural and wide variation in how people's brains think, feel, learn and experience the world.

*Neurodivergence/neurodivergent person* – a neurodivergent person may think, learn, communicate, or experience the world differently from what is societally considered to be neurotypical.

Neurodivergence is a disability, but not all neurodivergent person will identify as disabled.

*Organisational policies and procedures* – are the policies, procedures and methodologies of organisation. They include legislative and regulatory requirements which may apply across an organisation, a specific site, or a workplace. Requirements are documented in organisational health and safety plans, contract work programmes, quality assurance programmes, policies and procedural documents.

*Person* – depending on the context, other terms that may be used include disabled person, tāngata whaikaha, tāngata whai ora, client, consumer, resident, patient, tūrora, or individual. Wherever possible, terminology should reflect the person's identity, preferences, and the principles of the social model of disability.

*Support* – should aim to maximise a person's independence by utilising existing strengths and appropriate resources; but may include providing assistance to enable a person's health and wellbeing needs to be met.

**Ngā momo whiwhinga | Grades available**

Achieved

**Ihirangi waitohu | Indicative content**

Neurodiversity and neurodivergence:

- Definitions of neurodiversity and neurodivergence using inclusive, strengths-based, and current terminology that reflects language used in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Neurodivergence versus neurotypical experiences.
- Innate versus acquired neurodivergence.

- Common types of neurodivergence, including but not limited to:
  - Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) – a form of neurodivergence that influences how a person focuses, organises, regulates energy, and responds to their environment. It may affect attention, memory, impulse regulation, emotional expression, and activity levels. ADHD presents differently for each person and can change across life stages. Many people with ADHD have strengths in creativity, intuition, and hyperfocus.
  - Autism – a form of neurodivergence that affects how a person experiences, understands, and interacts with the world. It may influence communication, thinking, sensory processing, and social connection. Every autistic person is different, with their own strengths, needs, and ways of expressing themselves. The diagnostic term for autism is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
  - Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) – is a diagnostic term used to describe impacts to the brain and body of people prenatally exposed to alcohol. FASD is a lifelong condition. Individuals with FASD will experience challenges in their daily living and need support with motor skills, physical health, learning, memory, attention span, emotional regulation, and social skills to reach their full potential. Each person with FASD is unique and has areas of both strengths and challenges.
  - types of neurodivergence often referred to as learning disabilities, learning difficulties or neurodisability (for example, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia).
  - Irlen Syndrome.
- Māori perspectives of neurodivergence:
  - Takiwātanga – reflects Autistic people as "in their own time and space."
  - Aroreretini – "attention goes to many things" - reflects ADHD as energy, creativity, and movement.
  - Tipaopao kupu – reflects Dyslexia as words out of sequence, or out of order.
- Neurodivergent people experience and express the world in different ways, with unique strengths and support needs.
- Examples of how neurodivergence may affect daily life, including:
  - executive functioning and movement
  - routines
  - sensory processing (for example, hyper- or hypo-sensitivity)
  - communication styles and preferences (for example, Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), non-verbal or non-speaking cues)
  - emotional regulation, relationships, and learning
  - social expectations, masking, and navigating environments.
- Co-occurrence or co-existence with other types of neurodivergence, conditions or support needs (for example, intellectual disability, mental health needs, trauma, physical health conditions).

#### Person-centred support considerations:

- Principles of rights-based and person-centred support.
- Holistic needs: cognitive, emotional, physical, cultural, social, and spiritual.
- Trauma-informed practice.
- Concepts of neuroinclusion, and how social, cultural, and environmental contexts shape a person's experience.

- Support strategies that uphold wellbeing, communication, access, and independence. For example:
  - plain language
  - visual supports, routines, sensory-friendly environments
  - respecting stimming, downtime, or focused interests
  - supported decision-making
  - adaptations to reduce overstimulation and support transitions.
- Sensory profiles.
- Brain-based supports.
- The importance of predictability, emotional safety, and flexible support.
- Strategies to uphold the mana of neurodivergent people in support relationships.
- Tāngata whaikaha perspectives and cultural approaches to disability.
- Culturally responsive support approaches that integrate Māori and Pacific values, such as:
  - whanaungatanga and manaakitanga
  - cultural supports and practices to build belonging and identity.
- The role of Support Workers in modelling inclusive attitudes and behaviours.
- The role of whānau in the lives of neurodivergent people.
  - whānau as partners in support.
  - recognising and supporting whānau alongside the person.
- Enabling Good Lives.
- A person's support needs may be shaped by intersectional identities, such as being Māori, Pacific, LGBTQIA+, or part of a faith, cultural or neurodivergent community.
- Inclusive and mana-enhancing communication:
  - cultural responsiveness
  - plain language and supported communication
  - respecting communication choices and accessibility preferences.

Access, inclusion and wellbeing:

- How ableist assumptions, sensory environments, or inflexible systems create barriers to access.
- Impacts of exclusion on mental health.
- Role of social networks, peer support, and trusted relationships in wellbeing for neurodivergent people and whānau.
- Examples of physical, communication, or policy barriers in education, housing, healthcare, or community services.

- Rights, legislation, and protections:
  - Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights (1996)
  - Human Rights Act
  - New Zealand Disability Strategy 2026–2030
  - Ngā Paerewa Health and Disability Services Standard (NZS 8134:2021)
  - Te Tiriti o Waitangi
  - United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).
- Community participation and inclusion strategies, including:
  - welcome, safe and responsive environments
  - social connection and relationship-building
  - advocacy groups or peer networks that are important to a person.
- National and community-based organisations, services and networks that provide resources, information or support:
  - Altogether Autism, Autism NZ, ADHD New Zealand, FASD-CAN, Aoreretini Aotearoa
  - Neurodiversity in Education, Kapo Māori.
- The role of peer advocacy and disability-led organisations in supporting neurodivergent people and whānau rights, visibility, and inclusion.

## Rauemi | Resources

### Recommended resources:

- Enabling Good Lives. *Enabling Good Lives*. <https://www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz/>. Retrieved July 25, 2025.
- FASD-CAN. (2022). *FASD common messaging guide*. <https://www.fasd-can.org.nz/fasd-common-messaging-guide>. Retrieved July 25, 2025.
- Health and Disability Commissioner (Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights) Regulations 1996. (1996). *New Zealand Legislation*. <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/1996/0078/latest/whole.html> Retrieved July 25, 2025.
- Ministry of Disabled People. (2016). *New Zealand Autism Spectrum Disorder Guideline (3rd ed.)*. <https://www.whaikaha.govt.nz/resources/strategies-and-studies/guidelines/nz-autism-guideline>. Retrieved July 25, 2025.
- Ministry of Health. (2016). *New Zealand Disability Strategy 2026–2030*. <https://www.whaikaha.govt.nz/about-us/our-work/new-zealand-disability-strategy-2026-2030f>. Retrieved November 5, 2025.
- Neurodiversity in Education Project. (2024, February 27). *The shift we need: Neuroinclusive communication for every learner*. <https://www.neurodiversity.org.nz/post/the-shift-we-need-neuroinclusive-communication-for-every-learner>. Retrieved July 25, 2025.
- Neurodiversity in Education Project. *Neurodivergent learner characteristics*. <https://www.neurodiversity.org.nz/post/neurodivergent-learner-characteristics>. Retrieved July 25, 2025.
- New Zealand Government. (1990). *New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990*. <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1990/0109/latest/whole.html>. Retrieved July 25, 2025.

- New Zealand Government. (1993). *Human Rights Act 1993*. <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1993/0082/latest/whole.html>. Retrieved July 25, 2025.
- New Zealand Government. (2001). *Health and Disability Services (Safety) Act 2001*. <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2001/0093/latest/DLM119975.html>. Retrieved July 25, 2025.
- New Zealand Ministry of Justice. *Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)*. <https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/constitutional-issues-and-human-rights/human-rights/international-human-rights/crpd/> Retrieved July 25, 2025.
- Standards New Zealand. (2021). *Ngā Paerewa Health and Disability Services Standard (NZS 8134:2021)*. <https://www.standards.govt.nz/shop/nzs-81342021>. Retrieved July 25, 2025.
- Te Reo Hāpai. *Te Reo Hāpai: The language of enrichment*. <https://www.tereohapai.nz/>. Retrieved July 25, 2025.
- Waitangi Tribunal. *Māori and English versions of the Treaty*. <https://www.waitangitribunal.govt.nz/en/about/the-treaty/maori-and-english-versions>. Retrieved July 25, 2025.
- Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People. (2025, January 9). *Whaimana – Support My Decisions*. <https://www.supportmydecisions.nz/>

### Pārongo Whakaū Kounga | Quality assurance information

<b>Ngā rōpū whakatau-paerewa   Standard Setting Body</b>	Toitū te Waiora Community, Health, Education, and Social Services Workforce Development Council
<b>Whakaritenga Rārangi Paetae Aromatawai   DASS classification</b>	Community and Social Services > Health, Disability, and Aged Support > Neurodiversity
<b>Ko te tohutoro ki ngā Whakaritenga i te Whakamanatanga me te Whakaōritenga   CMR</b>	0024

<b>Hātepe   Process</b>	<b>Putanga   Version</b>	<b>Rā whakaputa   Review Date</b>	<b>Rā whakamutunga mō te aromatawai   Last date for assessment</b>
<b>Rēhitatanga   Registration</b>	1	18 December 2025	N/A
<b>Kōrero whakakapinga   Replacement information</b>	N/A		
<b>Rā arotake   Planned review date</b>	31 December 2030		

Please contact Toitū te Waiora Community, Health, Education, and Social Services Workforce Development Council at [qualifications@toitutewaiora.nz](mailto:qualifications@toitutewaiora.nz) to suggest changes to the content of this skill standard.