



ND Disclosure & Safety Protocol

A gentle, safety-first framework to support disclosure without risk.

By Neal Glendenning

Contact: info@theneuroinclusionproject.co.uk

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Important note

This resource is intended to support understanding and good practice in neuro-inclusive workplace design. It provides general guidance and does not constitute legal, medical, or clinical advice. Organisations should apply the principles in line with their own policies, regulatory obligations, and professional judgement.

A clear orientation (for organisations)

This is **not** a disclosure policy.

It is not a mechanism to identify neurodivergent staff.

It is not a process to encourage people to “share more.”

This protocol exists because **disclosure is a risk decision**, not a wellbeing activity... and many organisations unintentionally increase harm by:

- treating disclosure as inherently positive
- encouraging openness without safety
- linking disclosure to access or legitimacy
- placing emotional labour on staff

A safe organisation does not seek disclosure.

It **creates conditions where disclosure is unnecessary for support...** and safe *if* someone chooses it.

1. Core principle: disclosure is optional, contextual, and reversible

Neurodivergent disclosure:

- is not a milestone
- is not a sign of trust you must earn
- is not a prerequisite for adjustments
- may change over time

A foundational rule:

No one should have to disclose in order to be treated humanely.

Disclosure must always remain:

- optional
- partial
- revocable
- context-specific

Anything else introduces coercion.

2. Why disclosure carries real risk

For many ND people, disclosure has historically resulted in:

- subtle exclusion
- reduced opportunities
- heightened scrutiny
- misinterpretation of behaviour
- being treated as fragile or difficult
- information spreading beyond consent

These risks are often **invisible to leadership...** but well-known to staff.

When organisations ignore this reality, “encouraging disclosure” becomes unsafe.

3. What safety actually means in disclosure contexts

Safety is not reassurance.
It is **predictable protection**.

Psychological safety for disclosure requires:

- clear boundaries on information use
- control over who knows what
- assurance that support does not depend on labels
- consistency in leadership behaviour
- absence of penalty for *not* disclosing

If these conditions are not met, disclosure should not be invited.

4. The organisational goal (important reframing)

The goal of this protocol is **not** to increase disclosure rates.

The goal is to:

- reduce the *need* for disclosure
- ensure support is available without labels
- prevent harm when disclosure occurs
- create trust through behaviour, not messaging

High disclosure rates do not equal safety.
Low disclosure rates do not equal failure.

Safety is measured by **how people are treated**, not what they share.

5. Tiered support model (so disclosure is not required)

Organisations should structure support across tiers:

Tier 1... Universal design (no disclosure)

Available to everyone by default:

- clear expectations
- predictable workflows
- flexible pacing
- written communication
- sensory-aware environments
- humane feedback practices

These reduce harm **without asking anyone to identify themselves.**

Tier 2... Individualised support (no diagnosis required)

Available on request, without labels:

- workload adjustments
- communication preferences
- flexible hours or location
- quiet spaces or tools
- predictable check-ins

Language matters:

“What would help you work sustainably?”

not

“Do you have a condition?”

Tier 3... Disclosure-informed support (only if chosen)

Used **only when a person chooses to disclose...** partially or fully.

At this tier:

- information shared must be minimal and purpose-bound
- consent must be explicit
- support must not be contingent on full disclosure

Disclosure should **add safety**, not become the price of access.

6. How organisations accidentally coerce disclosure

Disclosure becomes coerced when:

- adjustments require diagnosis
- staff must “explain themselves” repeatedly
- behaviour is questioned instead of conditions
- disclosure is framed as brave or encouraged publicly
- leaders ask personal questions
- silence is interpreted as lack of trust

Even well-intended curiosity can create pressure.

Silence is not avoidance.
It is often **self-protection**.

7. Safe language for leaders and organisations

Language that reduces pressure

- “You don’t need to share anything personal to access support.”
 - “We can make adjustments without labels.”
 - “You’re in control of what you share and with whom.”
 - “Support isn’t dependent on diagnosis.”
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Language to avoid

- “We encourage disclosure.”
- “It helps us help you.”
- “You don’t have to be ashamed.”
- “Just be open with us.”

These phrases shift responsibility and imply expectation.

8. If someone *does* choose to disclose: the safety steps

When disclosure occurs, organisations must respond **consistently and predictably**.

Step 1: Acknowledge without overreaction

- Thank the person for sharing *without* emotional amplification
- Avoid praise, shock, or reassurance spirals

Neutral response builds safety.

Step 2: Clarify consent and scope

Ask explicitly:

- “Who can this be shared with?”
- “What would you like recorded, if anything?”
- “What is this disclosure for... support, context, or information only?”

Never assume.

Step 3: Separate disclosure from action

Focus immediately on:

- practical adjustments
- environmental changes
- workload or communication supports

Avoid:

- diagnostic discussion
- curiosity
- interpretation of behaviour

Disclosure is not an invitation to analyse.

Step 4: Confirm non-penalty

Explicitly state:

- disclosure will not affect role, progression, or evaluation
- no additional monitoring will occur
- the person can revisit or retract information

Silence here breeds fear.

9. Information handling & confidentiality (non-negotiable)

Any disclosed information must be:

- minimally recorded
- purpose-limited
- access-controlled
- revisitable and removable

Never:

- store unnecessary detail
- share “for awareness”
- discuss in absence
- allow informal spread

Breach of confidentiality destroys trust across entire organisations.

10. When disclosure is *not* the right next step

There are times when disclosure should **not** be encouraged:

- during conflict or performance processes
- when leadership behaviour is inconsistent
- when systems remain unsafe
- when the person expresses uncertainty

Pushing disclosure in unsafe contexts causes harm... even if intentions are good.

11. Measuring safety without measuring disclosure

Safer indicators of ND inclusion include:

- ability to access adjustments without labels
- consistency of leadership behaviour
- reduction in burnout and turnover
- early communication of limits
- reduced crisis escalation
- staff trust in processes

Disclosure is **not** a KPI.

12. Common organisational mistakes (and why they harm)

Avoid:

- disclosure campaigns without safeguards
- training that frames disclosure as empowerment
- asking “why didn’t you tell us earlier?”
- assuming non-disclosure equals disengagement
- linking openness to culture scores

These actions signal that safety is conditional.

13. A brief organisational self-check (optional)

Leaders and HR teams may reflect:

- Can staff access support without explaining themselves?
- Do we treat difference as information or risk?
- Are our systems safe *before* disclosure?
- Do people trust us to handle sensitive information?
- Would I disclose here if power were reversed?

This is an orientation check... not an audit.

14. Guardrails (must be explicit)

This protocol must **never** be used to:

- pressure disclosure
- legitimise support only after labels
- assess trust or openness
- collect ND data informally
- frame disclosure as courage

If disclosure is rewarded or expected, it is no longer voluntary.

A closing note for organisations

Safe disclosure is not created by asking people to trust you.

It is created by **acting in ways that make trust rational.**

When organisations:

- design support without labels
- respect privacy without question
- respond neutrally and consistently
- protect information rigorously

...disclosure may happen... or it may not.

Either outcome is acceptable.

Because the measure of success is not what people share.

It is **whether they are safe whether they do or not.**

