# Policy Review Starter Pack

*A neuro-inclusive framework for evaluating organisational policies*

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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.

Policies shape behaviour long before individual judgement does.

They determine:

- what is punished or protected
- how discretion is used
- when escalation occurs
- whether vulnerability is safe or risky

Many organisations invest in training, wellbeing initiatives, and inclusion strategies… while leaving policies untouched. This creates a gap where **neurodivergent people are supported in theory, but penalised in practice**.

This starter pack helps organisations review existing policies for **hidden neuro-exclusion, unnecessary escalation, and risk amplification**.

# How to use this pack

This is not a compliance exercise.

Use this pack to:

- review policies section by section
- identify language that creates threat or ambiguity
- spot points where ND staff are disproportionately exposed to risk
- redesign policies to support regulation, clarity, and fairness

You do not need to change everything at once.
You do need to know **where harm is being baked in**.

# Core review lens

Before reviewing any policy, ask:

- Does this policy assume one "normal" way of functioning?
- Does it rely on interpretation rather than clarity?
- Does it escalate quickly rather than stabilise first?
- Does it punish behaviour without examining context?
- Does it require disclosure to access fairness?

If the answer is yes to several of these, the policy is a **risk amplifier**.

# 1. Behaviour Policies

*From moral judgement to contextual understanding*

## What to review

Look for language around:

- "professionalism"
- "appropriate behaviour"
- "attitude"
- "emotional conduct"
- "respect"

## Key questions

- Are behaviours defined clearly, or left open to interpretation?
- Is emotional expression automatically framed as misconduct?
- Is context (stress, overload, disability) explicitly considered?
- Are managers guided on *how* to respond before escalating?

## Common neuro-exclusion risks

- Vague behavioural standards applied inconsistently
- Emotional dysregulation treated as misconduct
- Tone policed more than impact
- No requirement to assess capacity or context

## Neuro-inclusive shift

Move from:

"Unacceptable behaviour will result in disciplinary action"

To:

"Behaviour concerns will be reviewed with consideration of context, workload, health, and support needs, with stabilisation prioritised before escalation."

# 2. Performance Management

*Preventing capability processes from becoming ND punishment*

## What to review

Look for:

- rigid expectations of consistency
- timelines that assume linear output
- lack of adjustment pathways
- performance framed as attitude or effort

## Key questions

- Does the policy distinguish between **capability** and **access**?
- Are adjustments explored before formal action?
- Is support clearly documented as a first step?
- Are managers required to clarify expectations explicitly?

## Common neuro-exclusion risks

- Performance plans triggered by overload, not underperformance
- "Informal" processes that feel threatening but lack safeguards
- Failure to recognise task initiation and regulation issues

## Neuro-inclusive shift

Move from:

"Failure to meet expectations may lead to formal action"

To:

"Where performance concerns arise, role clarity, workload, adjustments, and support will be reviewed before any formal process is initiated."

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# 3. Sickness & Attendance Policies

*Separating health from moral judgement*

## What to review

Pay attention to:

- trigger points
- absence thresholds
- language around "reliability"
- how stress, burnout, and ND conditions are framed

## Key questions

- Does the policy treat absence as risk, or as information?
- Are neurodivergent burnout and mental health explicitly recognised?
- Is presenteeism discouraged or silently rewarded?
- Are managers guided to respond with curiosity, not suspicion?

## Common neuro-exclusion risks

- Rigid trigger systems without discretion
- Attendance framed as commitment
- Burnout treated as repeated short-term absence
- Return-to-work meetings that feel interrogative

## Neuro-inclusive shift

Move from:

"Absence levels will be monitored and managed"

To:

"Patterns of absence will be reviewed to identify underlying causes and support needs, with prevention prioritised over sanction."

# 4. Hybrid & Flexible Work Policies

*Ensuring flexibility is real, not conditional*

## What to review

Check:

- eligibility criteria
- manager discretion clauses
- expectations around visibility
- language around "business need"

## Key questions

- Is flexibility framed as a privilege or an access tool?
- Are hybrid options applied consistently?
- Is productivity measured by output or presence?
- Are ND needs explicitly acknowledged?

## Common neuro-exclusion risks

- Flexibility granted only after crisis

- Camera-on expectations undermining flexibility
- Informal bias in approval decisions

**Neuro-inclusive shift**

Move from:

"Flexible working may be considered"

To:

"Flexible working options are a standard means of supporting performance and wellbeing, including neurodivergent access needs."

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# 5. Neuro-Inclusion Language

*Words create threat or safety*

**What to review**

Scan policies for:

- deficit-based language
- euphemisms for control ("robust management")
- vague behavioural descriptors
- silence around neurodiversity

**Key questions**

- Does the language pathologise difference?
- Are ND conditions only mentioned in legal sections?
- Is inclusion framed as compliance or culture?
- Are employees described as problems to manage?

**Common neuro-exclusion risks**

- ND referenced only in disability statements
- Language that implies burden or exception
- Overuse of "reasonable" without clarity

**Neuro-inclusive shift**

Aim for language that:

- names neurodiversity explicitly
- normalises adjustments

- separates behaviour from intent
- frames inclusion as system responsibility

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# 6. Escalation Frameworks

*Preventing unnecessary harm and legal risk*

**What to review**

Focus closely on:

- escalation triggers
- informal vs formal steps
- timeframes
- manager discretion

**Key questions**

- Does escalation happen before regulation is restored?
- Are there built-in pause points?
- Is support mandatory before discipline?
- Are ND factors considered at every stage?

**Common neuro-exclusion risks**

- Immediate escalation after emotional incidents
- No guidance on de-escalation
- Informal warnings without safeguards
- ND traits misinterpreted as insubordination

**Neuro-inclusive shift**

Move from:

"Escalation will occur if issues persist"

To:

"Escalation will follow attempts at clarification, support, and adjustment, with consideration of neurodivergent and health factors at every stage."

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# What good policy review achieves

When policies are neuro-inclusive by design, organisations see:

- fewer grievances and disputes
- reduced burnout and absence
- lower legal and reputational risk
- greater manager confidence
- alignment between values and practice

This is not about lowering standards.

It is about **removing structural unfairness**.

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# A final note

Policies do not need to be harsh to be effective.

They need to be **clear, predictable, and humane**.

Neuro-inclusive policy design does not protect people from accountability.
It protects organisations from **avoidable harm**.

If your inclusion work stops at training and doesn't reach policy, the system will eventually override your intentions.

This starter pack is where alignment begins.