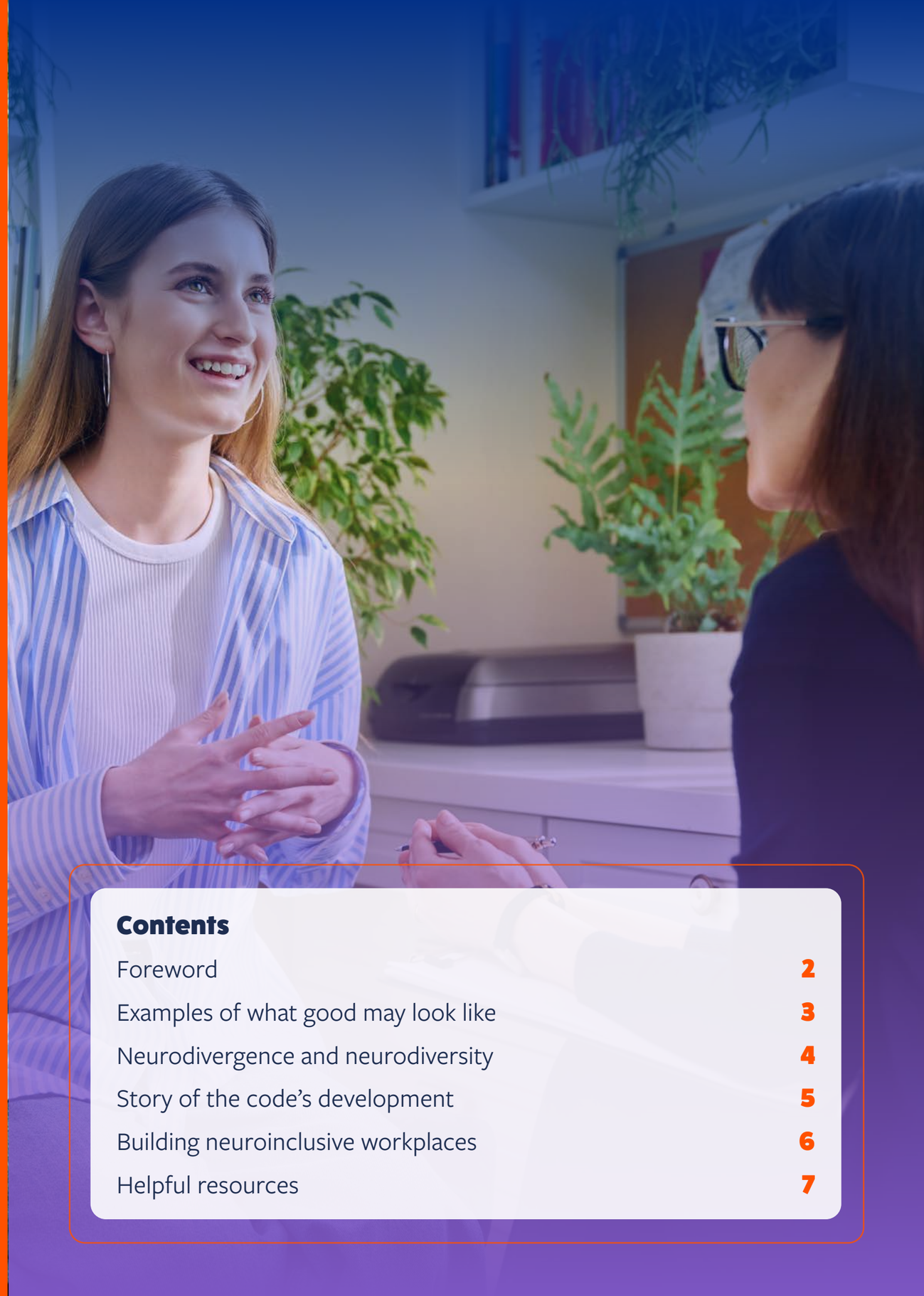
Bee Neuroinclusive Code of Best Practice

BEE NEUROINCLUSIVE

GREATER MANCHESTER GOOD EMPLOYMENT CHARTER



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Foreword

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester 2017 - 2026

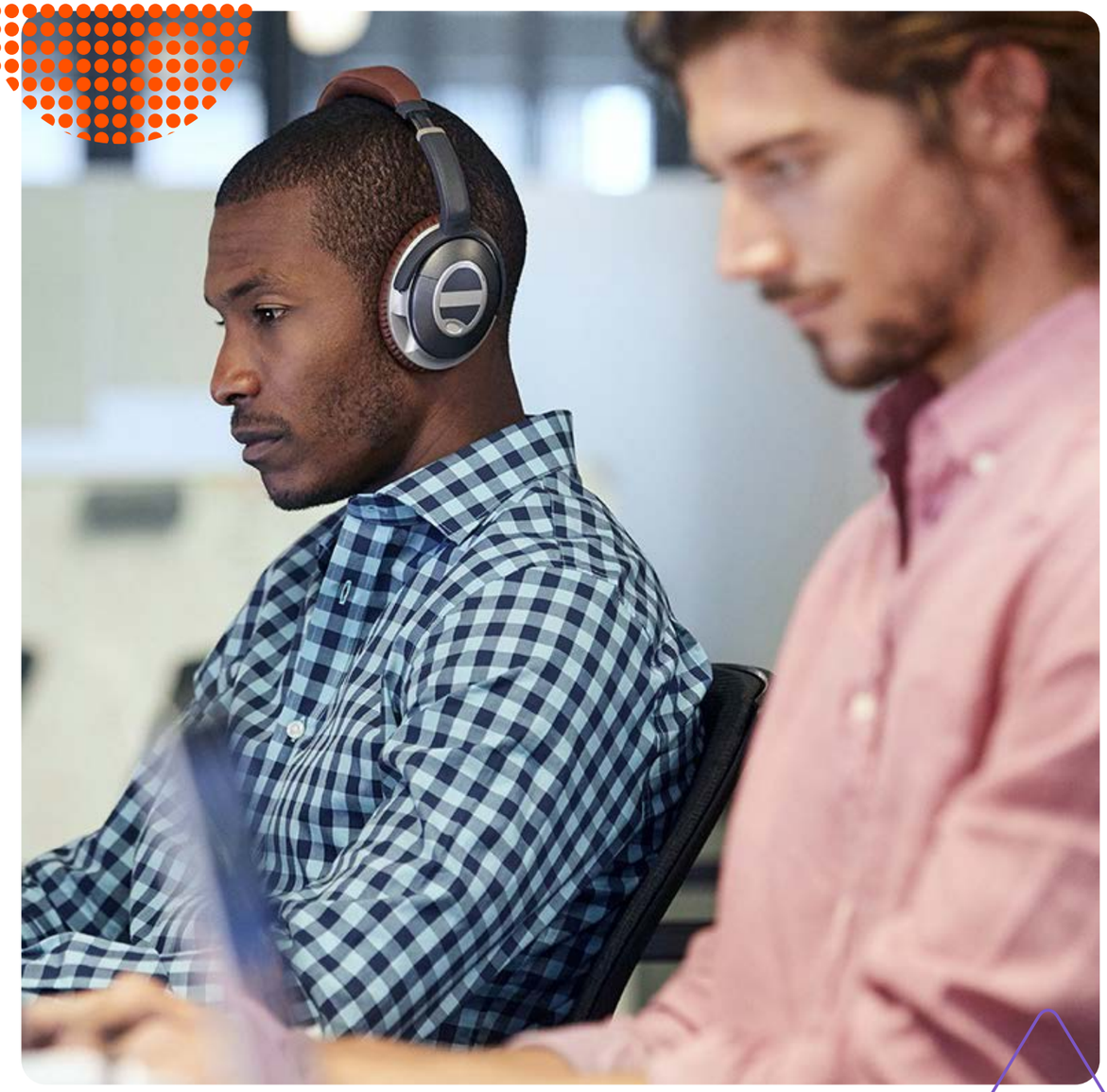
Greater Manchester has always been a place that thrives on the unique strengths of its people. Our success as a city region is built on the creativity, innovation and resilience that come from embracing difference. Neurodivergent people bring perspectives and problem-solving ability that can transform workplaces and drive progress.

Yet too often, those talents are overlooked because recruitment processes, workplace environments or communication styles are not designed with neurodivergence in mind. We can and must do better.

That's why I'm proud to launch **Greater Manchester's Bee Neuroinclusive Code of Best Practice** under the **Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter.** This is not just a set of guidelines, it's a commitment to building working environments where everyone can contribute at their best, and where neurodivergent staff are valued, supported and able to thrive.

The Code covers every stage of the employment journey. Crucially, it has been shaped entirely by people with lived experience of neurodivergence. Their insight and expertise ensure that the recommendations are grounded in the realities of working life.

As a city region let's send a clear message: Greater Manchester is proud to Bee Neuroinclusive.



Examples of what good may look like

- 20% of your workforce is neurodivergent (anonymised disclosure data) which is reflective of data for the UK population.
- Neurodivergent staff are retained and develop their careers over time (evidence by employee life cycle stats).
- Increase in the number of neurodivergent staff recruited to organisations for the first time.
- Organisations embrace neuroinclusion to innovate more in their sector and reap both financial benefits and industry awards for improved business practices for this area in particular.
- Greater Manchester bucks the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) trend data of 70% unemployment rate for out Autistic people and it reduces to 40% like all other disabilities.

Neurodivergence and neurodiversity

Dr. Maureen Dunne is a cognitive scientist, neurodiversity expert, global keynote speaker and leader who has served as a senior adviser and lead trainer to some of the world's top brands, Fortune 500 companies, educational institutions, philanthropic foundations, school districts, venture capital funds and government officials.

She is the author of the national bestseller, "The Neurodiversity Edge: The Essential Guide to Embracing Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, and Other Neurological Differences for Any Organization".

She frames neuroinclusion as this: "Authentic inclusion is fundamentally about maximizing what any given individual can contribute within an organisation and doing so in a way that appreciates and values diversity" (p. 27)

And in contrast: "Inauthentic inclusion is a critical idea in establishing the context for neurodiversity inclusion in the business world and something, at the start, to become aware of. This is when someone with an a typical cognitive profile is 'technically included' in the process, but that inclusion is predicated on the tacit guideline that the neurodivergent person will work to maintain a neurotypical facade. In other words, the price of inclusion is 'fitting in'". (p.25)

Story of the code's development

The Bee Neuroinclusion came about from campaigning for a neurodivergent leader of public services who was outed. **It is entirely coproduced by neurodivergent people in Greater Manchester.**

The Good Employment Charter has already been working on Bee Neuroinclusive via podcasts, blogs, supporting the development of the code with lived experience and evidence and supporting two Labour Party Fringe events since the new Government was elected in the last 12 months to share our learning with our Mayoral areas to show real leadership in this space.

The purpose of this Code is not to create a tick list of the most common traits of these difference types of brains as this could lead to creating stereotypes. No one is expecting employers to be experts on every neurodivergent presentation as this will differ from person to person and in many cases will present as an overlapping type of neurodivergence.

Building neuroinclusive workplaces

Leadership and culture

- **Embed neuroinclusion into organisational values**, visions and leadership behaviours.
- **Promote psychological safety** by encouraging openness and reducing stigma from the very top of the organisation.
- **Ensure neurodivergent representation** in leadership, boards, and decision-making roles.
- **Foster a culture** of allyship, dignity, and respect for neurodivergent individuals and parents/carers of neurodivergent children and young people.

Policies and procedures

- **Integrate neurodivergence** considerations explicitly into Human Resources, Diversity Equity Inclusion and Belonging, and customer service policies.
- **Ensure performance management,** grievance, and progression policies are neuroinclusive.
- **Include dynamic workplace adjustments** that evolve with individual needs.
- **Maintain a catalogue of tried-and-tested adjustments** and share them proactively through the Good Employment Charter network.
- **Regularly review neuroinclusion policies** with input from neurodivergent staff and experts.

Recruitment and retention

- **Offer optional anonymised disclosure mechanisms** for neurodivergent staff.
- **Offer optional disclosure mechanisms** for interviewees at shortlisting stage of recruitment, ensuring candidate privacy is protected.
- **Ensure that recruitment processes are inclusive** for neurodivergent candidates by providing accessible materials, offering flexible interview formats and job trials, sharing interview questions in advance, and offering pre-interview tours.
- **Avoid biased criteria for candidates** like mandatory eye contact or vague “team player” requirements.
- **Ensure AI recruitment tools do not screen out** neurodivergent candidates.

Communication and interaction

- **Provide clear, direct instructions** and avoid ambiguous language.
- **Recognise and respect** different communication styles and preferences.
- **Ask individuals** how they prefer to be addressed (e.g., identity-first vs. person-first).
- **Encourage reverse mentoring** and buddy systems to build mutual understanding.

Training and development

- **When delivering neuroinclusion training** for staff, use providers whose content is evidence-based and informed by lived experience. Prioritising Greater Manchester–based providers to help build neurodiversity competency within the region.
- **Offer development pathways** for neurodivergent staff across all career stages.
- **Track and share learning** on successful workplace adjustments across the organisation.
- **Ensure managers understand** neuroinclusion including their responsibility for the safe handing over of workplace adjustments when they change positions.

Governance and accountability

- **Implement a model audit tool** to assess baseline neuroinclusion.
- **Establish regular reviews** by panels of neurodivergent individuals and leaders.
- **Report annually** to relevant boards and stakeholders on progress, outcomes and future targets.
- **SMEs and micro firms** will be offered peer to peer support.
- **Proportionality:** The expectations in this code should be applied in proportion to the size and resources of the organisation. Larger organisations should be expected to do more, for example, supporting neurodivergent-led staff networks. Whereas smaller organisations may meet the principles in simpler ways appropriate to their scale.

Helpful resources

For more information, please click the button below that directs you to further guidance from our resources.

Link here

Neuro Pride

gmgoodemploymentcharter.co.uk

BEE NEUROINCLUSIVE

GMCA GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY

MAYOR OF GREATER MANCHESTER