

Welcome!

Dear **ND&D Readers**,

Welcome to the fifth edition of Neurodiversity & Disability Nexus and our first edition of 2026! We trust that you enjoyed the additional bank holidays, and hopefully a little time of rest.

The beginning of the year can sometimes feel quite mixed! As the weeks go on, the sparklines of the festivities begin to dim, and we seem to be ever waiting for spring to arrive – bringing new life, warmer days, and lighter nights.

However, there's still plenty to look forward to in January and February! This issue is jam-packed with positivity, ideas to spark joy, things to get involved with, and ways to look after your wellbeing, with a reminder on [p. 3](#) that the so-called 'Blue Monday' started as an advertising gimmick. Don't let it pull you down!

We hope that the return to the normality of work, life, and study goes well for you. Whether 2026 sees the start of your apprenticeship programme, the middle (which can often feel the longest!), or you're entering EPA, we wish you a happy and successful year!

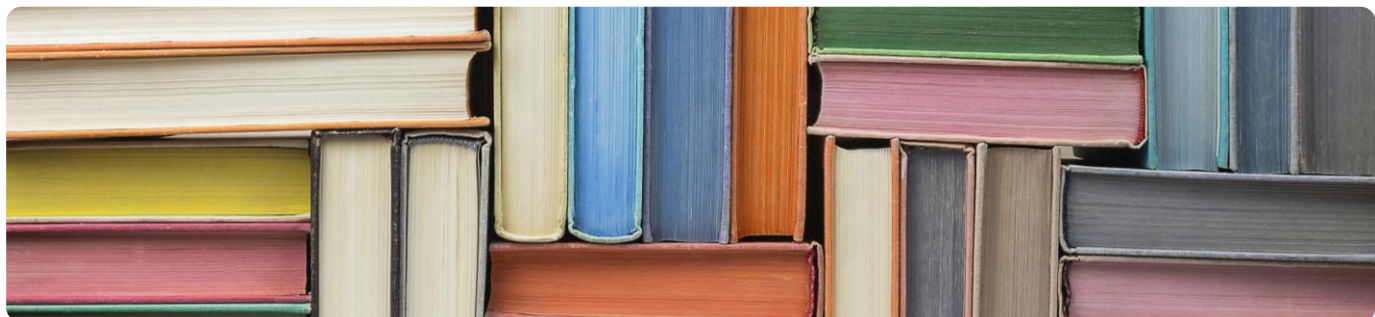
from the Learning Support Team



In this edition:

- January is **National Mentoring Month** which you can read about on [p. 12](#)
- Kolsuma presents a useful **time management** resource on [p. 4](#)
- We look at February's **National Apprenticeship Week 2026** on [p. 6](#)
- We focus on **joy** with an article by Mitzi on [p. 5](#)
- Kirstin's series on the **neurodivergent brain** is a double-pager this month with tons of strategies to try [pp. 7-8](#)
- **Event Calendar**: upcoming events and opportunities to connect
- **Helpful Links**: further resources and support available to help you

Please submit ideas for future contributions [here](#) and share your feedback [here](#). We eagerly await your insights!



ND&D Nexus

Brought to you by the Learning Support Team



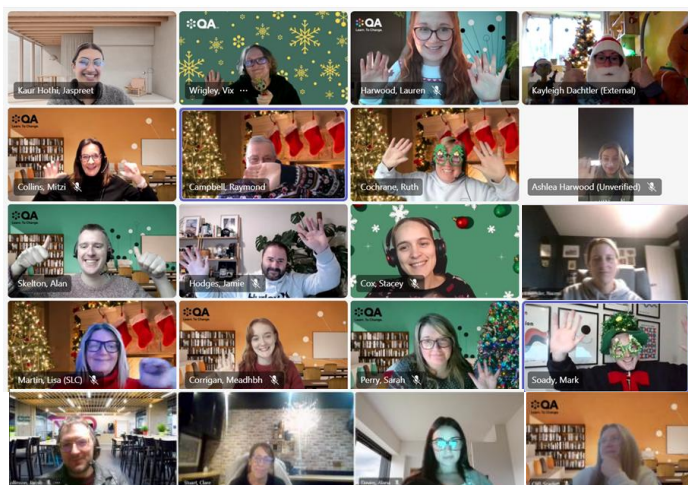
Team News



The end to 2025 seemed to fly! It's always a busy month in Learning Support as we're still required to meet all monthly supported learners as normal, even though it's shorter. However, we were able to set aside some time for virtual get-togethers and frivolities! QA ran plenty of festive events and activities which brought a lot of joy, and we had the Spirit Awards across the business to recognise staff achievements. We're delighted to announce that **Tracie Seath** was a winner in one category, and **Mark Soady** in another! **Congratulations!**



Mark Soady
Apprenticeships
Head of Learner
Services



There's quite a few of us in Learner Services who live around the Merseyside area, so we even managed an in-person meet up before we closed! To the left are all of us during the last working week of 2025 getting into the festivities with a quiz, fun, celebrations, and the annual Learner Services Awards!

2026 looks to be **another year chock-full with support, events, and exciting plans** coming together – we're looking forward to the challenge!

QAA Learning Support Team (Levels 3-6)

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Ray



Lisa



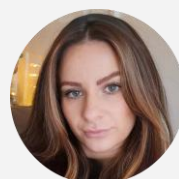
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Kirstin



Sarah



Mitzi



Jacob



Stacey



Meadhbh

Who Painted Monday Blue?

Okay, okay. This issue might be blue in colour, but this is literally because we're running through the QA 'rainbow' and blue was next up! Despite this, we're **filling this issue with positivity and joy!**

For many, January is associated with cold mornings, dark nights, long awaited paydays, Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), failed new year resolutions, and so called 'Blue Monday'. The **start of the year** can therefore be a time when **some struggle**. It's important to make sure you're linking in with people, spending time doing things you enjoy, looking for joy in the little moments, and taking care of yourself.

Check out Mitzi's article on **Joy Scheduling** ([p. 5](#)), and a new series by Lisa ([p. 9](#)) on **Mood Boosters** for some creative ideas to spark inspiration this new year!



Darryl Morris

@darrylmorris · [Follow](#)



Your annual reminder that [#BlueMonday](#) is a concept created by a holiday company as a PR stunt to drive up bookings.

Don't let a holiday company tell you how to feel.

8:07 AM · Jan 18, 2021

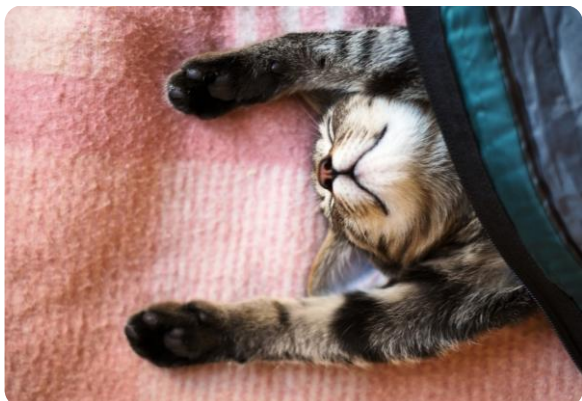


Failed Resolutions? You're Not Alone

It may be that you've already given up on a new year's resolution. If you have, don't despair! Sometimes, we set ourselves **unreachable challenges** rather than focusing on **building small, manageable good habits**. These challenges are often *extrinsically* rather than *intrinsically* motivated, where you're just doing something because you think you should.

An alternative to setting a New Years Resolution is writing a list of things you want to do in the year – and you still can! Rather than aiming for immediate changes in behaviour, **write a list a goals**. For example, "I will learn Japanese this year" rather than "I will go on an app daily to learn Japanese". You can then self-reflect and make regular progress towards the goal without missing the app on day four and giving up completely because you've "failed".

We reach our goals by taking attainable steps and altering our behaviours gradually, *not* by setting unrealistic standards. If your aim was rising early each day and you fell back into old habits within a month, don't panic! Rather than changing an 8am alarm to 6am, try setting it 10 minutes earlier across a number of weeks. **It's not too late to think of what you want to achieve this year and look at the steps you can take, or things you can plan in!**



Further Reading

[Blue Monday - Mental Health Foundation](#)

[Blue Monday: Why it's a 'load of rubbish' - BBC News](#)

[Why your New Year's resolutions often fail](#)

[Why New Year's Resolutions Fail](#)

What's On Fire?

by Kolsuma

Time management can be a real struggle for some of us – especially as we may have different, intersecting roles and responsibilities to fulfil in our daily lives. Lists of tasks can seem endless, and we may find ourselves procrastinating, avoiding, and trying to forget about things that need immediate attention. Here's a way to **prioritise** these tasks!



Time management can be seen as an umbrella term which consists of different components:

- **Task Setting:** What do I need to do?
- **Task Prioritisation:** What order do I need to do these in?
- **Time Scheduling / Planning:** What time in the day am I going to do each task? How much time do I allocate to each task?
- **Time Organisation:** How do I keep track of how I am spending my time – on a diary, planner etc?

The "What's On Fire?" Triage Method

At the start of your day, highlight your tasks according to the following categories:



Fire needs attention urgently – it cannot be left for another time and is the highest priority



Smoke - if something is up in smoke, it is not urgent, but it is still important and will need to be completed today or tomorrow



Sparks are lower priority; these tasks do not need immediate attention, but may still need to be completed within a week

Whether you prefer to make to-do lists on paper, OneNote, or elsewhere on your desktop, you can categorise your tasks according to priority using **coloured highlighters**. This acts as visual reminder, signalling which tasks need to be completed first. Couple this with **time blocking** and **scheduling** and you will have an effective way of sorting your tasks!

Example:

- ☐ Respond to today's emails (15 mins)
- ☐ Daily meeting with Supervisor 10am (1hr)
- ☐ Online learning (1hr, split into 3x20 mins)
- ☐ Portfolio work planning (30 mins)
- ☐ Write portfolio introduction (30 mins)
- ☐ Complete overdue presentation (1.5hrs, split into 3 x 30min)
- ☐ Meet with RC @ 4:30pm (45 mins)

In this example, I will need to **prioritise my fire** tasks first and try to get them done at the **start of the day**. I will then try to complete all **smoke** tasks. If there are any remaining, I will move them into my diary tomorrow and they will **become 'fire' tasks to complete tomorrow**. If I have time left over today, I can attempt some of the **sparks** tasks.

You will need to **revisit** your to-do list every day and add new tasks and **re-prioritise** using the colours. This means being proactive, editing your task list, and categorising tasks according to urgency on a daily basis. Why not give it a go?



Joy Scheduling

by Mitzi

Heather Small (with later help from Miranda Hart) famously asked: **"What have you done today to make you feel proud?"**. That's quite a heavy burden. Must we feel proud of ourselves everyday? Sometimes, just getting out of bed can be worthy of a high five!



Perhaps a more appropriate question should be **"what have I done for myself, lately?"** After a tumultuous few months with some big life events occurring, I realised that I was so pre-occupied with planning that there was little room for anything else – especially feelings. Tasks, appointments, and looming deadlines are often our primary focus. We switch to auto-pilot and become so entrenched in routine that there is limited scope for anything else, particularly joy. **This was me**, until I came across the concepts of **Joy Inventory** and **Joy Scheduling**. It's a simple notion: a way to intentionally plan in time for things that **spark joy**, protecting your wellbeing.



Create your own joy inventory: What activities, experiences, people, or places bring you happiness and a sense of wellbeing? Mine include:

- A morning **cup of tea** – decaf, because my brain doesn't need any further stimulants
- **Deep breathing** – box breathing techniques help!
- **Petting my dog**, Percy, who's always a keen participant
- **Cooking a meal** from scratch. It's very cathartic – I love peeling veg!
- The **smell of rain**... but like Percy I'm not always a great fan of being out in it
- Sound of **bird song** (preferably with a cup of tea!)

Once I had compiled my list, I had to **plan these in with reminders** - I scheduled time for joy.

We put so much effort into planning our work schedules, but why is that any more important than scheduling time for ourselves? It's **wonderful to have things to look forward to, however small**.

How often do we skip that well-earned cup of tea, sit down to binge Netflix, or **make any excuse** not to get out for that walk?

Now, rather than scrolling on my phone, I sit and drink my tea while listening to the birds singing. Those little **reminders still make me smile** when I see them pop up; they give me a nudge to do something that nurtures my wellbeing.

Why do I bother? Because **joy doesn't just happen - it takes intention**. We need to protect those moments that sustain us and bring us joy. So, what is on your joy inventory and when will you schedule it? **Perhaps this could be a chance to do something today that makes you feel proud!**

National Apprenticeship Week – 9-15 February 2026

NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK

I LOVE
APPRENTICESHIPS
#NAW2026

Every year there's an entire week to **celebrate apprenticeships** – from employers and those of you undertaking an apprenticeship, to us as a provider, it's an important opportunity to reflect, highlight successes, and **shine a light** on these programmes and their impact! Apprenticeships blend real-world experience and personal development, requiring commitment and hard work. For learners with a neurodivergence or disability, the journey can be as challenging as it is rewarding.



NAW is a fantastic opportunity to celebrate your apprenticeship journey, reflect on your achievements and progress, and look forward to achieving your apprenticeship!

#NAW2026

What QA are doing

Being in the digital sector, QA are one of the main industries lending itself to apprenticeships. We know **apprenticeships are more than just gaining skills**; apprenticeships “future-proof businesses, ignite careers, and unlock potential” and for us diverse and disabled folks, [QA](#) believes “diversity and inclusion are central to our approach, driving social mobility and broadening the talent pool”.

Throughout NAW QA has several webinars, success stories, events, workshops & employer advice, all of which are accessible to you & can be found [here](#), or by clicking on the image below.

With 2026 marking the 19th year of National Apprenticeship Week (NAW), we wanted to celebrate too! The purpose of NAW is to highlight the positive impact of apprentices on businesses, individuals, and the UK economy. Apprenticeships allow people to gain skills and knowledge for life within their job which help shape careers, unlock potential, and offer new opportunities.

So **get the word out!** Update your LinkedIn, explore the resources below, attend a webinar, and encourage your employer to join an event, or do a shout-out about your apprenticeship!

Further Reading:

[National Apprenticeship Week](#)

[Amazing Apprenticeships – NAW](#)

[QA - National Apprenticeship Week](#)

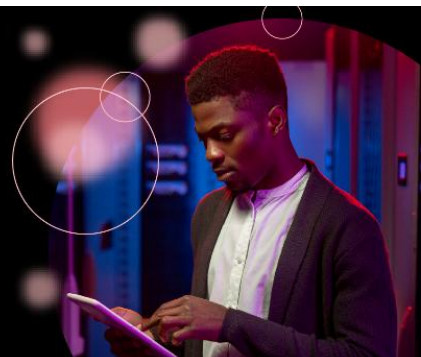


Join us for

National Apprenticeship Week

9-15 February 2026

Book your place now



Neurocrafted: Built to Think Differently



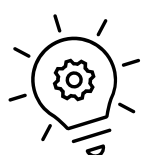
by Kirstin

In [Issue 4](#) we explored the **different cognitive domains**. Now, we look at how to utilise this information to benefit ourselves in the learning environment.

The Six Cognitive Domains:

- **Complex Attention:**
Focusing, filtering distractions, and sustaining concentration
- **Executive Function:**
Planning, decision-making, and problem-solving
- **Learning and Memory:**
Acquiring and recalling information
- **Language:**
Understanding and expressing ideas
- **Perceptual-Motor Function:**
Coordinating sensory input with movement
- **Social Cognition:**
Interpreting social cues and understanding others

We can use this information to help **implement effective strategies**, which you'll find in this article. As with all aspects of neurodiversity, these strategies work for a variety of reasons and in different contexts. For ease, they are **grouped by domain**. However, this is not intended as definitive categorisation!



[Image Link](#)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs suggests that once our basic physiological and psychological needs are met, we are more likely to engage in learning and personal growth (self-actualisation). With these needs satisfied, we can explore strategies across the six cognitive domains to enhance learning and growth.

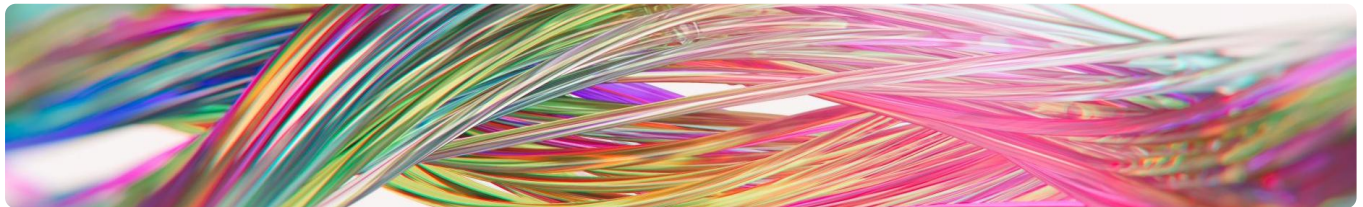


Complex Attention:

- Create a **sensory-friendly environment** by considering seating, lighting, noise levels, and temperature. Dysregulation can distract your brain from learning as it focuses on restoring homeostasis instead of learning
- Use **fidget toys** or manipulate something, such as blu tac or kinaesthetic sand
- If your online learning event is recorded, **jot down timestamps** for key points instead of trying to keep up so you can easily revisit and create more thorough notes later



Neurocrafted: Built to Think Differently



Executive Function:



- Establish a **structured or predictable routine**, considering which times in the day you are more productive
- **Chunking** helps manage cognitive load by breaking complex concepts into smaller, easily digestible information
- Apps: these days, there are numerous **apps to support with executive function** from creating to-do lists to mind mapping. Some useful ones to start with include **Trello** and **Forest**. Follow this [link](#) for even more ideas!

Language:



- Break information down into its **simplest form**, write your own definitions, and include examples. This helps process the information in differently, strengthening understanding
- **Allow for extra processing time** – whether it's adding time to an activity or requesting materials before an event
- Create a **glossary** of terms, keeping academic vocabulary within reach for when you need it



Perceptual-Motor Function:



- **Brain breaks** – take regular breaks away from your computer. Take 5 minutes to make a cup of tea or go outside for some fresh air!
- Practising [breathing techniques](#) may also be of benefit
- [Movement breaks](#)

Learning and Memory:



- **Brain dumping.**
- Dual coding and **visual aids** – create flow diagrams, infographics, combining words with associated visuals
- **Quizzes** – try [Quizlet!](#)
- [Metacognition](#) – the ability to be aware of, reflect on, and direct your thinking



Social Cognition:



- [Goblin Tools](#) has many features available.
- Try to develop **open communication** – don't be afraid to ask questions for clarification
- Utilise tools like **CoPilot** to help with tasks like writing emails (NOT assignments!)

Mood Boosters



Adapted from one of [Liggy Webb's](#) Bitesized Books, welcome to a **new series** on ideas to help you feel better!

by Lisa

Here are some **useful tips to boost your mood** as we enter the Winter Season, protect your mental health, manage stress, and improve your energy levels. We hope these tips will help you feel a little better and look on the bright side of life!



Wear Brightly Coloured Clothing



[Studies have shown](#) suggests that **wearing brighter clothes can make you happier**. Bright colours trigger responses in the brain that can release hormones associated with happiness and looking at them can release dopamine, which makes us feel happier. So, you can get a booster by simply **putting on something bright and colourful!** This is especially helpful during the drab winter months, where darker colours tend to be favoured.



Listen to Music and Dance



Music can be powerful in stimulating emotions and [research has demonstrated](#) how **music** can be used as a **therapeutic mood-lifting solution** to combat depression and anxiety. There are some great pieces of music that can make you feel better and singing along to songs with positive lyrics is a wonderful mood booster. **Dancing to your favourite track** can also be a great way to incorporate more physical activity into your day!



Replace Caffeine



Too much caffeine can cause nervousness, agitation, rapid or irregular heartbeat, dizziness and mood fluctuations. It can also **increase** the body's levels of **cortisol**, the "stress hormone" which can lead to moodiness. Caffeine increases dopamine levels in your system and can give you an immediate surge of energy which may well boost you at first. However, when it wears off, you can end up feeling low.



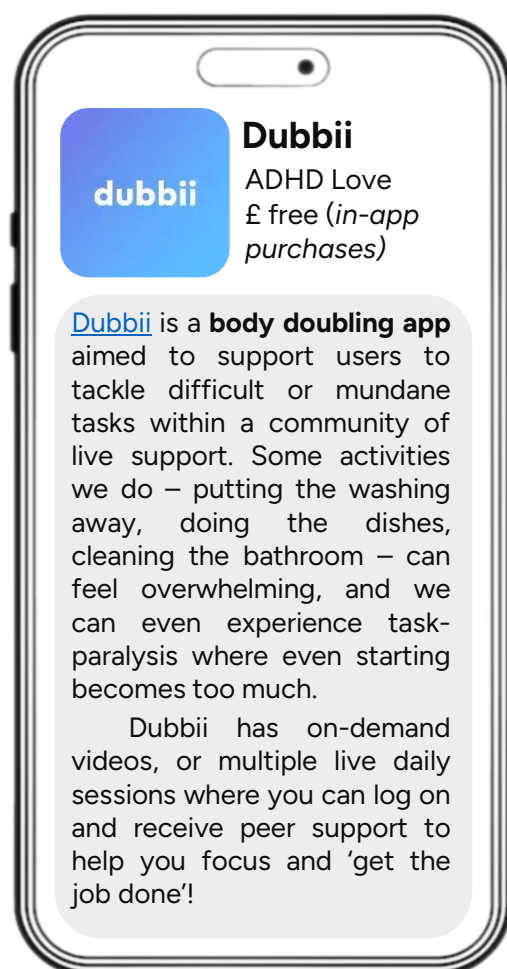
THREE WORDS THAT CAN MAKE SPACE
IN YOUR HEART FOR EMPATHY.

I WONDER WHY THEY'RE REACTING THIS WAY.
I WONDER WHY THEY'RE FEELING THIS WAY.
I WONDER WHY I'M FEELING THIS WAY.

SOMETIMES A LITTLE CURIOSITY
IS ALL WE NEED TO RESPOND
WITH KINDNESS INSTEAD OF ANGER.

[Image Credit](#)

App Recommendation



dubbii

Dubbii

ADHD Love
£ free (in-app purchases)

[Dubbii](#) is a **body doubling app** aimed to support users to tackle difficult or mundane tasks within a community of live support. Some activities we do – putting the washing away, doing the dishes, cleaning the bathroom – can feel overwhelming, and we can even experience task-paralysis where even starting becomes too much.

Dubbii has on-demand videos, or multiple live daily sessions where you can log on and receive peer support to help you focus and 'get the job done'!

Creativity Corner

A selected piece of neurodiversity inspiration!

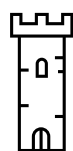
A bit of humour from [@alt_audhd](#)! Series 4 of **The Traitors** is arriving January 2nd on BBC1!



WHEN IT'S 3AM, EVERYONE'S ASLEEP, AND YOU SUDDENLY HAVE AN URGE TO FIND YOUR PASSPORT...



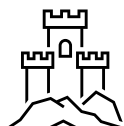
★ CELEBRITY ★
TRAITORS AUTISM &
ADHD MEMES



WHEN YOU'VE SPENT ALL DAY SOCIALISING AND YOU FINALLY GET HOME AND COCOON WITH YOUR FAVOURITE BLANKIE

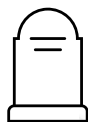


ME WHEN SOMEONE TURNS UP TO MY HOUSE UNINVITED AND UNANNOUNCED...



WHEN YOU'VE ADHD AND DESPERATELY TRYING NOT TO INTERRUPT A CONVERSATION...

WHEN YOU THINK YOU'VE BEEN BRILLIANTLY MASKING BUT THIS HAS BEEN YOUR FACE THE WHOLE TIME...



QA Apprenticeship Excellence Awards



This article *just* missed out on a place in Issue 4 as it took place on 24th October 2025, but it was so incredible we simply had to include it here! QA hosted our very first **Apprenticeship Excellence Awards** at the Custard Factory in Birmingham.

The [event](#) hosted over 100 attendees for awards across nine categories for both Employers and Apprentices, including Enterprise Employer of the Year; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Employer of the Year; Apprentice of the Year across Level 3, Level 4-5, and Degree Level 6-7; and a Rising Star award.

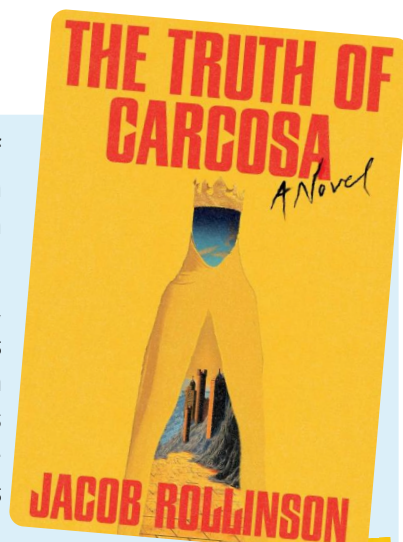
Shortlisted Apprentices and Employers gathered to celebrate successes and share apprenticeship inspiration. A **special shoutout** to two of our supported degree apprentices – **Lia**, who was shortlisted for Apprentice of the Year, and **Bharathi**, who won in the Rising Star award – we are so proud of you both! To all the apprentices and employers who were nominated, shortlisted, or won in their category – **congratulations!**

A Good Read

A slightly different book this issue! As we are starting 2026 off focussing on joy and positivity, the DA Learning Support Team wanted to give a huge **shoutout** and **congratulations** to our very own **Dr Jacob Rollinson!**

As if 2026 didn't hold enough exciting and upcoming events, **January 13th** sees the publication of Jacob's debut novel – how cool is that?! **The Truth of Carcosa** is being published in the USA (what a market!) but is available to purchase in the UK, with some extra days for postage! Team DA are already excited about receiving their pre-orders, and looking forward to spending some cosy January nights reading this book (or maybe afternoons... it is a cosmic horror!)

We wish Jacob every success with his debut novel, and hope it's the start of an amazing career as an author!



"At once a cosmic horror and state-of-the-nation dystopia, a discourse on the power of language, and a page-turner with the pace of a thriller—in Rollinson's *The Truth of Carcosa*, we see nothing less than the arrival of a major voice."

-PAUL COOPER, author of *Fall of Civilizations*

January is National Mentoring Month

Have you got a mentor in your workplace? Ever considered finding one? Mentoring is a great way to support team members develop both personally and professionally, with **benefits** for both mentee and mentor.



Benefits for a Mentee Include:

Knowledge and Skill Development: Mentees can tap into a mentor's wealth of knowledge, gaining practical insights, developing new skills, and understanding industry or company-specific guidelines and expectations.

Increased Confidence: The encouragement and support of a mentor can help build a mentee's self-esteem and confidence in their abilities to tackle challenges and reach their aspirations.

Objective Feedback: Mentors should offer an objective, third-party perspective, providing constructive feedback on strengths as well as areas for development.

Emotional Support and Well-Being: Mentoring provides a safe space for discussing challenges and concerns, which can help reduce stress and enhance well-being.

Learning from Experience: Mentees can learn from their mentor's successes and mistakes, allowing them to avoid common pitfalls and make more informed decisions.

Benefits for a Mentor Include:

Enhanced Leadership Skills: Mentoring offers an opportunity to practice and refine leadership, coaching, and management skills, such as active listening, problem-solving, or providing constructive feedback.

Personal Fulfilment: Many mentors find a deep sense of satisfaction and pride in helping others grow and "pay it forward," by making a positive impact on someone's life and career.

Fresh Perspectives: Engaging with mentees from diverse backgrounds can expose mentors to new ideas, different approaches, and current trends, leading to continuous learning.

Self-Reflection: The process of guiding a mentee encourages mentors to reflect on their own goals, experiences, and practices, often reinforcing their own knowledge.

Professional Recognition: A mentor's efforts can lead to recognition as a subject matter expert or leader, which can enhance a professional reputation and open up new opportunities.



Whether a mentor or a mentee, the benefits are vast. For those who are neurodivergent and trying to navigate the world of work, **mentoring can be a great way to boost confidence and promote self-advocacy.** Mentoring creates a **safe space** which can help reduce isolation and anxiety, with mentors able to empower their mentees to stay on track and achieve their aspirations – **why not find a mentor this month?**

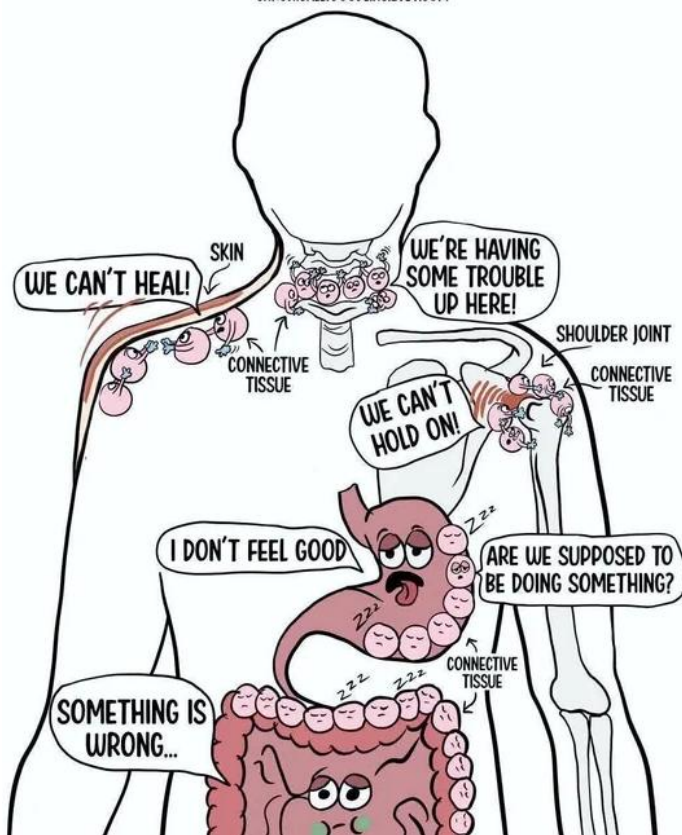
ND&D In Focus: Hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (hEDS)

by Kayleigh



HYPERMOBILE EHLERS DANLOS SYNDROME (hEDS)

CHRONICALLYDOODLING.ETSY.COM



[Image Credit](#)

Hypermobile Ehler's-Danlos Syndrome (hEDS) is a **genetic connective tissue disorder**.

Diagnosis is based on clinical criteria and symptoms include:

- Joint hypermobility
- Joint instability
- Chronic pain
- Hyperextensibility
- Abnormal scarring
- Chronic fatigue
- Gastrointestinal issues
- Headaches
- Dysautonomia (dysfunctional nervous system)

Whilst some people experience many of these symptoms, others experience few. There is **no cure** for hEDS, and it is **difficult to get a true diagnosis**.

Pain management, strengthening exercises, physical therapy, and minimal stretching (not yoga) are the current recommendations to support quality of life and help manage reoccurring symptoms.

My Experience

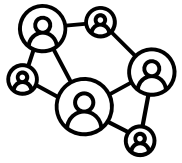
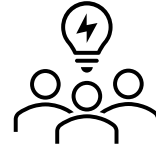
I began researching hEDS in 2015, when my GP knew little about it. Flare ups are unpredictable; there are often no warning signs! This is incredibly frustrating as I can't just avoid something specific. 10 years on, I do understand and manage it better. I am also honest with people, which helps nurture understanding and empathy, but **every day is different**.

hEDS can be a **difficult condition to manage**. An Apprentice with hEDS may require a flexible working pattern, ergonomic support or assistive technologies (provided via employer or [Access To Work](#)). Regular breaks and additional time to complete work may help with energy management.

Further Reading:

[Ehlers-Danlos Support UK](#)

QA Apprenticeship Neurodiversity Network



We held two more incredible Networking Sessions! You can book [here](#) to join us for the next one.



In 2026, our Network sessions are going to bi-monthly. We have some amazing upcoming topics, including creativity, relationships, and neurodivergence in the media, so please do [book in](#) and join our sessions!

In November's meeting, we explored **Hormones in Motion** and the ways that these can specifically impact the neurodivergent experience. From monthly hormones, pregnancy, teenage surges, to the menopause, we looked at how much these chemicals can impact us. It was great to highlight common threads, share strategies, and learn together.

Our last session of the year looked at **our authentic selves**, and how being neurodivergent shapes the way we experience the world and how we can express our authentic selves. Personal testimonies were shared, we discussed how we can embrace ourselves and be true to self, and how others can support us.

LGBT+ History Month

February is [LGBT+ History Month](#), where we celebrate the lives of LGBTQ+ people of the past; this year's theme is **science and innovation**. With a focus on celebrating LGBT+ scientists and technological innovators, it will highlight the harm that LGBT+ people have faced historically due to how science has been explored and misapplied, and how this still needs addressing today.

[Schools Out](#) and [The Proud Trust](#) have worked for decades for LGBTQ+ rights, to **create learning environments and spaces where LGBT+ people feel safe, seen and supported**. This is not just a month for remembrance of the past, it reminds us that inclusion and representation matter, and is a call to action for equality, respect, and understanding.



"If [LGBT+ history] was taught in schools it would show that LGBT+ people are just a part of everyday life and have been present throughout history but just haven't been able to show it...It gives you someone to look up to or admire, and gives other people the chance to see that queer people can be successful and are just as much of a part of everyday society."

– [Theo](#), a young person supported by [The Proud Trust's](#) mentoring programme.

Upcoming Events:

Book onto all of our upcoming [Wellbeing Calendar](#) events [here](#).

- Join us for our **Introduction to Neurodiversity** sessions, aimed at those new to neurodiversity - **January 15th** and **March 19th**
- We would love to see you at our **QA Apprenticeship Neurodiversity Network** sessions:
 - **18th February – Relationships and Neurodiversity.** In this session, we will discuss how being neurodivergent affects friendships, romantic relationships, and family dynamics. Explore boundaries, communication differences, and the importance of supportive relationships
 - **22nd April – Neurodiversity in the Media.** We'll open the floor to discuss how neurodiverse individuals are portrayed across film, television, and online, exploring common stereotypes, share examples of authentic storytelling, and reflecting on the impact media narratives have on public perception and inclusion
- Our Safeguarding Team are running monthly **Introduction to Safeguarding** sessions – 'Join us in a short live session to learn more about how we support you and how to make a referral' – **January 30th** and **February 27th**
- February sees **Eating Disorder Awareness Week** and we have a session running on **23rd February** – 'Join us for an open and informative session exploring the vital link between nutrition and mental health, and raising awareness about eating disorders. Eating Disorders Awareness Week is a time to challenge stigma, share knowledge, and promote understanding of these complex conditions that affect people of all ages and backgrounds'

Book onto all our upcoming events [here](#).

QA Celebrates National Apprenticeship Week

Join us for **three exciting webinars** as we celebrate National Apprenticeship Week 2026 – book [here](#) and secure your place!

- Monday 9th February 12:00pm
[The Apprenticeship Advantage: Driving ROI & Digital Transformation](#)
- Tuesday 10th February 12:00pm
[Reimagining Public Services in the AI Age: Skills, Strategy & Service Transformation](#)
- Thursday 12th February 12:00pm
[Beyond the AI Algorithm: Real People, Real Skills, Real Impact](#)



Image Credit

Feel You Need ND&D Support?

- If you are currently a QA Apprentice **without** learning support in place and you have a formal diagnosis, disability, or think you may be neurodivergent, please complete a **self-referral form**
- You need to have a disability or learning difficulty in line with **The Equality Act 2010** to access support, but are not required to have a formal diagnostic report for us to put reasonable adjustments in place. For further information, watch our **Learning Support Team Video** [here](#)
- You may have a formal diagnosis, disability, long-term medical condition, long-term mental health difficulties, have adjustments in the workplace, have received support in the past, or just be exploring a potential neurodiversity – **please link in with us!**
- If you would like to discuss receiving learning support please complete the correct **self-referral form** for your Apprenticeship and we will be in touch!

QAA Learning Support (Levels 3-6)

[Self Referral Form](#)

Email – Specialist.LearningTeam@qa.com

DA Learning Support (Levels 4-7)

[Self Referral Form](#)

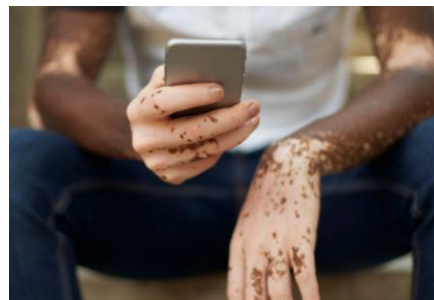
Email – DASpecialist.LearningTeam@qa.com

Helpful Links:

Check out the [Apprentice learner's portal](#) for information and support around your Apprenticeship. Access information on **your wellbeing, your success, your experience, your future,** and **your programme** and engage with everything QA can offer you on your journey!

If you feel that you'd benefit from **pastoral** or **welfare** support, then check out our incredible **Safeguarding Team**; they provide all kinds of support from crisis intervention, regular check-ins, mental health support, and short or long-term mentoring support. Please complete a [Self-Referral Form](#), or if you have a concern about a peer use this [Referral Form](#).

QA has partnered with the **Association of Apprentices (AoA)**: a membership organisation that connects apprentices across the UK. In working with AoA, QA provide **access to social and professional networks**, learning, guidance, and support to enhance the apprenticeship journey. All QA apprentices are eligible for **free AoA membership**. Find out more [here](#).



DA Only:

The Academic Community of Excellence (ACE) Team provide guidance for **Degree Apprentices** alongside regular classes on topics such as academic style, critical analysis, relating theory to practice, research skills, reflective writing, referencing, and much more - [ACE DA Learner Portal](#)