3.5 Recognise the lived experiences and support considerations of neurodivergent people

Kaupae | Level	3
Whiwhinga | Credit	5
Whāinga | Purpose	This skill standard is for learners working in a support setting. Learners will be able to describe neurodiversity and how it may impact on a person's life, recognise key support considerations for neurodivergent people, and identify ways to promote access, inclusion, and wellbeing for neurodivergent people.
	This skill standard aligns with the outcomes of the New Zealand Certificate in Disability Support (Level 3).

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

Hua o te ako | Learning outcomes	**Paearu aromatawai | Assessment criteria**
1. Describe neurodiversity and how it may have an impact on a person's life.	a. Define neurodiversity using inclusive, strengths-based, and current terminology.
	b. Identify how neurodiversity can present for a person.
	c. Examine how neurodiversity may impact on a person's daily life.
	d. Identify conditions that can co-occur with neurodivergence.
2. Recognise a range of key support considerations for neurodivergent people.	a. Identify person-centred approaches that support a person's holistic needs.
	b. Describe support strategies that enhance access, independence, and wellbeing.
	c. Examine how mana-enhancing and culturally responsive approaches can support a person's identity, preferences, and self-determination.
3. Identify ways to promote access, social inclusion, and personal wellbeing for a neurodivergent person.	a. Acknowledge societal and environmental barriers that can affect access, inclusion, and wellbeing.
	b. Identify services, supports and networks that promote access, inclusion, and wellbeing.

	d. Examine how relationships, networks, and community connectedness support access, inclusion, and wellbeing.

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, or through individualised funding models that enable the person to direct their own support.
- *Neurodiversity/Neurodivergence* - a neurodivergent person may think, learn, communicate, or experience the world differently from what is societally considered to be neurotypical. Neurodivergence includes conditions like Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), neurodiversity can include learning disabilities and is valued as part of human diversity. Not everyone with a learning disability is neurodivergent — and not all neurodivergent people have learning disabilities. A neurodivergent person may not identify as disabled.
- *Person* – a person accessing disability support services. Depending on the context, other terms that may be used include disabled person, tāngata whaikaha, tāngata whai ora, client, consumer, resident, patient, tūroro, 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

Could include, but is not limited to:

Understanding neurodiversity and its impact

- Neurodiversity refers to the natural and wide variation in how people think, feel, learn, and experience the world.
- Definitions of neurodiversity and neurodivergence should use inclusive, strengths-based, and current terminology that reflects language used in Aotearoa New Zealand/
- Overview of 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 Spectrum Disorder (ASD)* – 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.

- o *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.
- o Dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia – and the intersection of neurodiversity and learning disabilities.
- Māori perspectives of neurodivergence:
  - o *Takiwātanga* - reflects ASD as "in their own time and space."
  - o *Arorereini* - reflects ADHD as energy, creativity, and movement.
- Recognition that neurodivergent people experience and express the world in different ways, with unique strengths and support needs.
- Examples of how neurodiversity may affect daily life, including:
  - o Executive functioning and routines
  - o Sensory processing (e.g., hyper- or hypo-sensitivity)
  - o Communication styles and preferences (e.g., AAC, non-verbal cues)
  - o Emotional regulation, relationships, and learning
  - o Social expectations, masking, and navigating environments.
- Understanding co-occurrence with other conditions (e.g., intellectual disability, mental health needs, trauma, physical health conditions).

Support considerations for neurodivergent people

- Person-centred approaches that affirm identity, preferences, and strengths.
- Concepts of neuro-inclusion, and how social, cultural, and environmental contexts shape a person's experience.
- Support strategies that uphold wellbeing, communication, access, and independence. For example:
  - o Use of visual supports, routines, sensory-friendly environments
  - o Respecting stimming, downtime, or focused interests
  - o Adaptations to reduce overstimulation and support transitions.
- The importance of predictability, emotional safety, and flexible support.
- Strategies to uphold the mana of neurodivergent people in support relationships.
- Culturally responsive support approaches that integrate Māori and Pacific values, such as:
  - o Whanaungatanga and manaakitanga
  - o Use of cultural supports and practices to build belonging and identity.
- The role of support workers in modelling inclusive attitudes and behaviours.
- Recognising that 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.
- Enabling Good Lives.
- Rights, legislation, and protections:
  - o NZ Disability Strategy 2016–2026
  - o Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights
  - o UNCRPD
  - o Human Rights Act
  - o Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Promoting access, inclusion and wellbeing

- Recognising how ableist assumptions, sensory environments, or inflexible systems create barriers.
- Examples of physical, communication, or policy barriers in education, housing, healthcare, or community services.
- Inclusive communication practices:
    o Plain language, visual aids, giving processing time
    o Checking understanding and supporting informed decision-making.
- Community participation and inclusion strategies, including:
    o Creating welcome, safe and responsive environments
    o Facilitating social connection and relationship-building
    o Connecting people with advocacy groups or peer networks that are important to them.
- National and community-based organisations, services and networks that provide resources, information or support:
    o Altogether Autism, Autism NZ, ADHD NZ, FASD-CAN
    o Neurodiversity in Education, Kapo Māori, Deaf Aotearoa.
- The role of peer advocacy and disability-led organisations in supporting neurodivergent people's 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. (1996). *Health and Disability Commissioner (Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights) Regulations 1996*. https://www.hdc.org.nz/your-rights/about-the-code/code-of-health-and-disability-services-consumers-rights/. 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 2016–2026*. https://www.whaikaha.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Disability-Strategy/pdf-nz-disability-strategy-2016.pdf. Retrieved July 25, 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.

Pārongo Whakaū Kounga | Quality assurance information

Ngā rōpū whakatau-paerewa | Standard Setting Body	Toitū te Waiora Community, Health, Education, and Social Services Workforce Development Council
Whakaritenga Rārangi Paetae Aromatawai | DASS classification	Community and Social Services > Health, Disability and Aged Support > Neurodiversity
Ko te tohutoro ki ngā Whakaritenga i te Whakamanatanga me te Whakaōritenga | CMR	0121

Hātepe | Process	**Putanga |** Version	**Rā whakaputa |** Review Date	**Rā whakamutunga mō te aromatawai |** Last date for assessment
Rēhitatanga | Registration	1	DD MM YYYY	N/A
Kōrero whakakapinga | Replacement information	N/A		
Rā arotake | Planned review date	31 December 2029		

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