



Neurodivergent Athletes at Crawley SC

Every brain works differently — and that's a good thing

Neurodiversity refers to the natural variations in how people's brains work and process information — including autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, and dyslexia, as well as anxiety, depression and more. It's also used by anyone who feels they need additional support for their own neurodiversity.

From BUPA

"The term neurodiversity refers to the way that everyone's brains naturally work differently from one another. Most people are neurotypical — they think and behave similarly to most other people. But around one in seven people are neurodivergent, meaning they behave, think, process and interpret information differently."

In short — we're all different. While some athletes find something easy in training, others might need more guidance, understanding, or a different teaching approach. Our coaches have both the opportunity and the responsibility to create a space where everyone can thrive, by getting to know each athlete as an individual.

Sensory Preferences to Be Aware Of

- Can feel overwhelmed by loud noises
- May struggle to process more than one verbal instruction at a time
- May learn better with visual demos or materials
- May need visual information before visiting somewhere new
- May have completist or hyper-focused tendencies
- May alternate between sensory overwhelm and sensory seeking
- May show hyperactivity or a need to move around in short bursts

Coaching Neurodivergent Athletes

Advice shared by experienced coach Amy Bryant, lead artistic swimming coach at Hatfield Swimming Club:

Trust

Neurodivergent athletes are used to coping in a world built for neurotypical people, which can lead to feeling misunderstood or frustrated. Trust is everything.

Humour

When relaxed and feeling safe, athletes shine and become genuinely brilliant. The right humour helps them focus, or refocus.

Creating an Environment to Thrive

A fixed mindset or perfectionism is common, and can lead to giving up before giving themselves a chance to learn. Take the pressure to perform off — focus on the process, accept that nothing is right first time, and manage expectations.

Coaching Non-Technical Skills

- Consistency — a realistic aim is getting something right 7 or 8 times out of 10, not 10 out of 10
- Perseverance — reward hard work more than the outcome; nobody expects perfection every time
- Effort — talk about what effort looks and feels like, and help athletes judge their own effort levels
- Quality training — discuss what quality training looks and feels like, in simple language

Find Out More

Swim England — Coaching Neurodiverse Athletes

Guidance and resources

swimming.org/swimengland/coaching-neurodiverse-athletes

Neurodiverse Sport

Wider resources on neurodiversity in sport

neurodiversesport.com

Sport England

Celebrating neurodivergence in sport

sportengland.org

Neurodiversity in Sport

Further reading and resources

neurodiversityinsport.com