



## Neurodivergence Resource Bank showcase

**Karen Clark**

Arts University Plymouth, UK

**Jennie Dettmer**

University of Hertfordshire, UK

### ***Presentation abstract***

An awareness of neurodiversity is important for educators as there has been an increase in the number of neurodivergent students accessing higher education (HE) in recent years (HESA, 2022). Additionally, universities have a legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010 to provide anticipatory reasonable adjustments to reduce barriers to learning (Equality Challenge Unit, 2010).

In this wildcard session, the authors presented the journey of the ALDinHE Neurodiversity/Inclusivity Community of Practice (CoP). They invited new members to become involved with the CoP. CoPs are 'socially configured spaces that necessarily involve learning as an aspect of membership' (Tummons, 2018, p.4). Community members can become involved by joining the bi-monthly meetings, hosting a session on a topic they are passionate about, or reviewing submissions for the Neurodivergence Resource Bank.

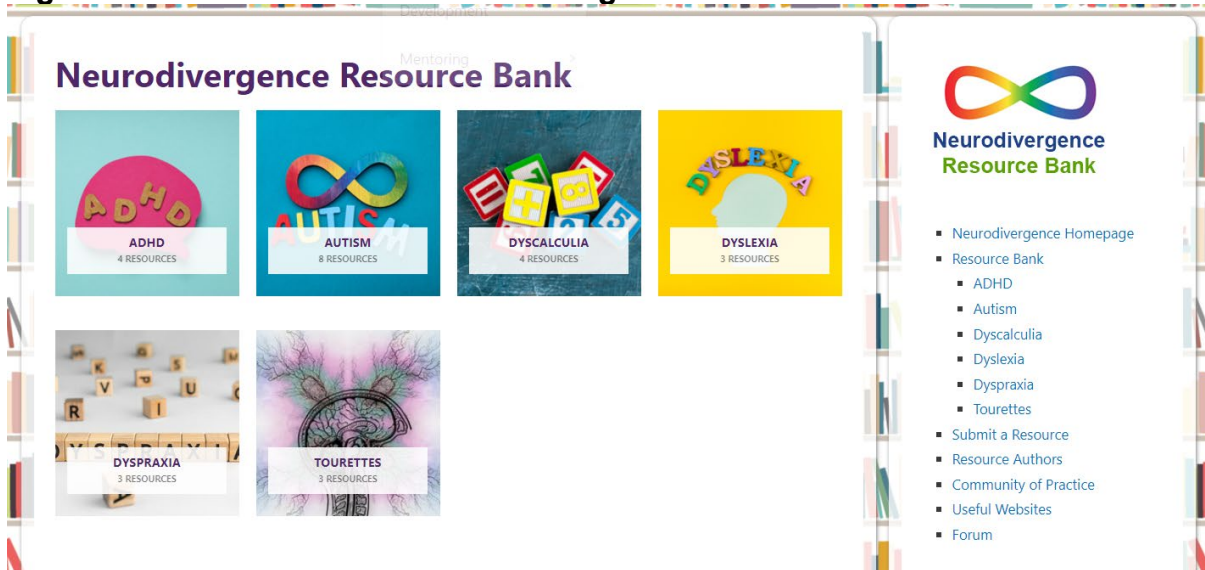
The session offered delegates the chance to explore the Neurodivergence Resource Bank. This open-access repository is available through ALDinHE's website, meaning all HE staff can access the resources. This is key as all HE staff 'should be aware of inclusive teaching practices, to ensure an equitable learning experience for all students' (Dettmer and Welton, 2023, p.64). Participants gave feedback on the submissions. They were also encouraged to submit their resources to it. This session explained how to submit resources and the benefits of evidencing impact for professional development.

**Keywords:** neurodivergence; community of practice; collaboration; terminology.

## Community response

At the Association for Learning Development in Higher Education's (ALDinHE) annual conference in 2023, Clark and Dettmer outlined work undertaken by the ALDinHE Neurodiversity/Inclusivity Community of Practice (CoP). During that session, they introduced the Neurodivergence Resource Bank (Figure 1), which was beginning its development at that time. This repository was eagerly anticipated by delegates (Welton [now Clark] and Dettmer, 2023).

**Figure 1. Screenshot of the Neurodivergence Resource Bank.**



This year's session was multifaceted. It provided delegates with an update on the development of the Resource Bank, alongside explaining the processes involved with suggesting, submitting, reviewing, and publishing resources. The session also included an overview of the work of the ALDinHE Neurodiversity/Inclusivity CoP. Delegates found it 'interesting to learn more about the processes and journey behind the Neurodivergence Resource Bank', and this part of the session enabled the sharing of the drivers behind the creation of the Resource Bank itself. Having this understanding enabled participants to see why the processes were in place and took the form they did.

The presenter shared video vignettes from people involved in the creation of the Resource Bank, enabling delegates to hear first-hand accounts of their experiences. One delegate emphasised how 'I really enjoyed the sharing of first-person accounts via video. It was good to hear from folk who are involved and have been part of the process.' Hearing from the contributors and reviewers themselves gave a clear indication of where they found

strengths in the experience, and it enabled the presenter to highlight the inclusive approaches to the development of the Resource Bank.

A walkthrough of the structure of the Resource Bank was provided. As part of the discussion, delegates considered the use of language. One delegate later reflected that:

Of interest was the terminology around neurodiversity and neurodivergence. In light of discussions, such as Brown's (2011) thoughtful essay, there is a need to always check with students what their preferences are and not assume a particular language, approach or perspective/understanding of someone's experience.

Within the session, Clark shared thoughts on the nuances around language and clarified some of the terminology around neurodiversity and neurodivergence, referring to the work of the CoP. The Resource Bank itself addresses this point, with a resource by Haider and Cubberley (2024) exploring identity-first language.

The final part of the session was a call to action. Delegates were encouraged to submit or request resources, and to consider becoming a reviewer or joining the CoP. The presenters outlined the benefits to creators of submitting a resource, which include building evidence for ALDinHE accreditation and Advance HE fellowships; gaining recognition as an author on the Resource Bank; and sharing good practices within and beyond the wider Learning Development community.

### ***Next steps and additional questions***

Community members were impressed by how the Neurodivergence Resource Bank has developed since ALDCon 2023, and they were excited to see how it will continue to develop. It offers guides for staff creating teaching and learning resources; examples of good practice and potential strategies; and advice for working with neurodivergent learners. Clark and Dettmer emphasised that the growth of the Resource Bank will stem from the community's engagement with it. They urged the community to help the CoP build on the successes of the last 12 months. Thus, the next steps for the Resource Bank will be its development through input from the community.

In writing about creating resources that will support a diverse student population, Fallin et al. (2023, p.2) identified the need for further accessible materials:



With the ever-growing utilisation of online spaces for teaching and learning, and the increasing student appetite for flexible provision, there is further need for accessible learning materials that promote equal opportunities for all.

As online learning grows and shifts, as Fallin et al. demonstrate, does this change the nature of the resources we will need? Are there resources we do not yet have which may support learners in online contexts? Are there resources that would respond to the specific challenges online learning can present?

One delegate reflected on whether the Resource Bank could, would, or should have resources 'created directly for students, rather than just for staff. There seems to be an interest in materials that could be placed on Digital Learning Environments (DLEs) for the benefit of students.' Could this also give rise to possible co-created resources, designed for students, by students? These resources may enhance the staff-facing materials that have been co-created with students that are already available through the Resource Bank.

### ***Authors' reflections***

It was great to see how our interest and enthusiasm around the Resource Bank was mirrored by delegates. Through watching video vignettes, delegates could see the submission and reviewing processes first-hand, which will hopefully support the ongoing development and growth of the Resource Bank. As discussed during the session and documented in this paper, there are many ways to become involved in the CoP, for mutually beneficial purposes, so please do so!

As it currently stands, the Resource Bank has been designed to support staff in higher education contexts. However, it could evolve in the future to directly support students ... watch this space!

### ***Acknowledgements***

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The authors and contributors did not use generative AI technologies in the creation of this manuscript.

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## **Author details**

Karen Clark is a Learning Development Advisor at Arts University Plymouth. She is passionate about ensuring neurodivergent students have an equitable learning experience in higher education. Her MA in Education was centred around dyslexia, using poetry as a creative response to students' learning experiences. She is the co-chair of the Neurodiversity/Inclusivity Community of Practice and a Senior Fellow of Advance HE.

Jennie Dettmer is an Academic Skills Adviser for the Centre for Academic Skills Enhancement (CASE) in the Business School at the University of Hertfordshire. She co-chairs the Neurodiversity/Inclusivity Community of Practice. Jennie is a Senior Fellow of Advance HE, a Certified Leading Practitioner of ALDinHE, and holds an MA in Education (SEND and Inclusion). Her research focuses on neurodivergence in higher education.

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