Suggestions to support a young person with neurodevelopmental differences:

Young people can have neurodevelopmental differences such as ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder).

-**Make it personal:** Everyone is different in terms of how their neurodevelopmental needs affect them, the key is to ask the young person what works for them, and keep checking in to ensure your approach is helping and that the young person can follow your sessions

-**Communication:** Do not give multiple questions or a high volume of information all together; break things down into chunks (whether this is written, spoken) to help your young person process information.

-Be clear and concise in your language used, using sarcasm, idioms or even ambiguous metaphors may lead to confusion or misunderstanding

-**Environment**: Consider your environment; if your young person has sensory needs, or is easy over stimulated (or keen to fiddle), is the environment right for them? Usually a quiet or neutral room is ideal – but check what works best for your young person

-**Fiddle Toys:** Does your young person need fiddle toys to help with their interaction? Fiddle toys are down to personal preference and based on what works for the individual but also what is appropriate for the setting. For example, something that makes noise or clicking sounds that could distract others may not be appropriate in a classroom if it has potential to distract others, or if there is a temptation to throw it

-**Ground rules:** Young people benefit from knowing what to expect. In your first meeting consider collaborating on some ground rules that you both feel are important. Maybe the young person wants to write these down or maybe they want you too, either way, having something that you can get out and remind yourself of at each session can be helpful.

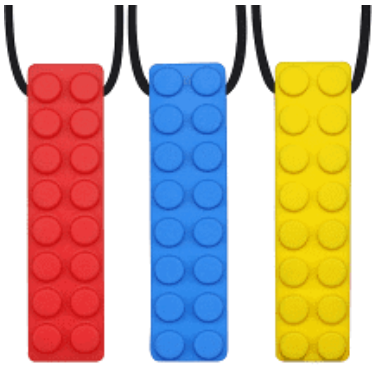
Examples of fiddle toys you may want to consider are:

Tangles: These come in a range of colours and textures so it would be down to the young person what they like

Blue tac or theraputty: This is often beneficial in class as it's quiet and relatively discreet

Poppets: These can be quite soothing for some people and provide a calming effect. Large ones may not be suitable in class but looking into smaller ones or key chains may be an option

Chewies / Chew Buddy: For some, their sensory needs are associated with chewing. Chewies come in bracelets, necklaces and pen toppers amongst other things and are safe to chew on. They come in different shapes, sizes and colours.



Fidget cubes: These have a range of clickers and textures and now come in larger forms and different shapes. The buttons can make a clicking noise so are not always practical in a classroom but may be suitable for 1:1 work

There is a whole host of fidget toys online, the above are just a few. In Norwich there is also the 'Smile' charity shop which has an entire range. If your young person is more tactile, going into the store and trying out what feels comfortable may be a good start.

-**Make it visual** :Whilst it's down to the individual, some people find it easier to process information when you are creating visuals of what you are talking about. This could be bubble diagrams to document idea's or drawings to help visualise how something feels or where in the body a young person feels something.

-**Making things predictable**: Having a routine is important for all of us but more so for young people with neurodevelopmental differences. Create a plan for your sessions and make this visual. You can do this together with the young person and allocate roughly how much time you need for

each topic you need to get through. This removes ambiguity and can help manage anxiety for some people who find uncertainty distracts them.

-**Social stories**: Young people with Autism will find social situations, social rules and nuances harder to understand. Using social stories, adapted to the age of the young person can aid this.

If you're unsure how to approach this, the National Autistic Society website has a section on communication tools and how to create a social story.

-**Now and next:** Sometimes it can be helpful for young people to know what's coming up next. Again this can be written down or made visual either on a white board, paper or making a now and next board.

-**Visual timers:** Sometimes time management or time perception can be tricky for young people with neurodevelopmental differences. Check with your young person to see if it would be helpful to have a visual timer e.g. a sand timer or digital timer and periodically remind the young person of how much longer you have left. This will help the young person prioritise how they use their session.

-**Understanding emotions:** For some young people with neurodevelopmental needs it can be tricky to understand their own emotions and the emotions of others. If they say, 'I don't know' in response to a question about their emotional state, they may not have the language to explain what they feel. You can purchase or make feelings cards which can aid this.

-**Use of movement:** Some young people, especially those with ADHD may find sitting for long periods uncomfortable. In 1:1 sessions or small groups, sitting is often expected but may not be needed. Given the young person the option to walk around, or stand and draw or write things down with you may help them process the information.