Thinking differently

> *Pensions Age* asks the industry for its tips for tailoring pensions communications to neurodiverse people

Ensuring that pension communications are inclusive and meet the needs of people who are neurodivergent is, and always has been, essential. The Pensions Regulator expects trustee boards to consider member communications from an equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) perspective (both in their EDI guidance and in the General Code). This will be even more important for DC master trust schemes after the introduction of the Consumer Duty. If they're not already, managers and trustees really need to start considering how to make their communications more inclusive.

To make communications more inclusive, you need to understand the needs of your audience – this includes the attitudes to and behaviours of people who are neurodivergent in relation to saving for the future, as well as their needs when it comes to communications. This understanding can be used to shape the communications and broader engagement proposition.

Our hope is that by stripping out technical language and unnecessary words, and making pensions communications more accessible, everyone benefits and has a better understanding of their pension and what it means for them.

Like Minds managing consultant - insight and thought leadership, Danii Pout

Neurodiverse awareness begins with recruitment and project governance so that a team is diverse and inclusive from the outset.

Best practice will then be embedded at every step from planning, design and build, through to user testing.

We believe all users should receive the same experience. This means making any tool, interactivity, functionality, or content available to every audience group. Using the latest technology on websites will not necessarily endear you to those who have ADHD.

Users who have a learning disability may find it difficult when their access to content is presented in a way that requires a high level of literacy.

Pensions are often complex, so use simple, straightforward and unambiguous language. It's best to avoid idioms and ambiguous phrasing.

The design of a site should be well structured with a clear hierarchy. The most important elements on a page should be easily identified by their position, shape and colour alone.

Landscape creates websites and portals that are independently interrogated and tested by users on different devices with various conditions

such as blindness, dyslexia, mobility impairments or Autism Spectrum Disorder.

These real-life experiences will highlight any challenges so that they can be resolved as early as possible, ideally before launch.

Proactivity is always preferable but providing feedback channels on every web page will allow users to highlight specific issues and propose possible solutions.

Many leading employers and trustees now work with employee engagement and digital communications specialists to create inclusive and accessible pension communications to improve member engagement. However, increasing diversity within the pensions industry would also be a step in the right direction.

Landscape creative and delivery director, Ryan Sales

Neurodiversity is an umbrella term, covering many conditions, from autism to dyslexia to ADHD, and many more. But although it can be a useful shorthand to talk about these conditions, everyone they apply to is an individual with individual needs.

The good news is that there are a number of techniques that can make your content easier for any neurodiverse thinker to understand. The even better news is that they make it easier for everyone, too. Here, I've focused on written communication and listed 10 ways you can reduce the mental load on readers.

1. Use familiar words wherever you can.

2. Write in short sentences – don't force your reader to cling on to multiple ideas at once.

3. Use the active voice – be explicit about who's doing what.

4. Give clear instructions – don't leave your reader in doubt as to what they need to do.

5. Do the maths for your reader – and make numbers feel less daunting by using comparisons that are concrete and familiar.

6. Avoid metaphors – some people on the autistic spectrum, for example, find metaphors difficult. It's better to stick to straightforward language.

And don't forget the importance of layout.

7. Break up your text so it's not too dense.

8. Use headings to avoid large chunks of text and to signpost key messages.

9. Use white space to make text look less intimidating.

10. Consider using graphics to make concepts and processes easier to understand.

Quietroom director, Claire Harcup