

Employment and Autistic People/Neurodiversity – national update and emerging practice for councils

Monday 18 December 2023

The **Local Government Association** and **Association of Directors of Adult Social Services** are **Partners in Care and Health** (PCH) working with well-respected organisations.

PCH helps councils to improve the way they deliver adult social care and public health services and helps Government understand the challenges faced by the sector.

The programme is a trusted network for developing and sharing best practice, developing tools and techniques, providing support and building connections.

It is funded by Government and offered to councils without charge.

www.local.gov.uk/PCH



Webinar housekeeping

- **Please post questions, we will take questions at the end in a panel session**
- **The slides will be circulated after the event**
- **This webinar is being recorded**



Programme

Chair's Introduction Kirstie Haines Partners in Care and Health Principal Advisor Learning Disability and Autistic People

AUTISTICA Rebecca Sterry, Director of External Affairs
and Dr Michelle Newman, PhD CPsychol, 2030 Goals Research Fellow who is leading development of the Neurodiversity Employers Index (NDEI™)

**COUNCIL
PERSPECTIVE** Fiona Gordon Commissioning Officer Plymouth City Council
Peter Stokes Babcocks International NSIP Project Manager Devonport Neurodiversity Network
Chairperson
Neil Cattle Learning Disability Manager PLUS

**NEURODIVERSITY IN
BUSINESS** Alexander Hedlund Head of Corporate Membership Services (Volunteer) Neurodiversity in Business

**Question and Answer
session with the panel** Panel and Chair

Close and thank-you. Rachel Carter Partners in Care and Health



Chairs introduction

Kirstie Haines Partners in Care and Health Principal Advisor
Learning Disability and Autistic People



Autistica

Rebecca Sterry, Director of External Affairs

& Dr Michelle Newman, PhD CPsychol, 2030 Goals Research
Fellow



Autism, neurodiversity and employment

Rebecca Sterry, Director of External Affairs

Michelle Newman, 2030 Goals Research Fellow



18 December 2023

About Autistica

We are the UK's leading autism research and campaigning charity

Our mission is to create breakthroughs that enable all autistic people to live happier, healthier, longer lives.

We do this by:

- Shaping and growing research across the UK
- Funding new and innovative research solutions
- Campaigning for better services and shaping national policy
- Sharing evidence-based tools, resources, and information

Our Goals

Goal 1

By 2030 all autistic people will have proven support from day one

Goal 2

By 2030 the employment rate for autistic people will double

Goal 3

By 2030 autistic people will have proven treatments for anxiety

Goal 4

By 2030 public spaces will be more accessible for neurodivergent people

Goal 5

By 2030 every autistic adult will be offered a yearly, tailored health check

Goal 6

By 2030 attitudes to autistic people will change

Our work on employment

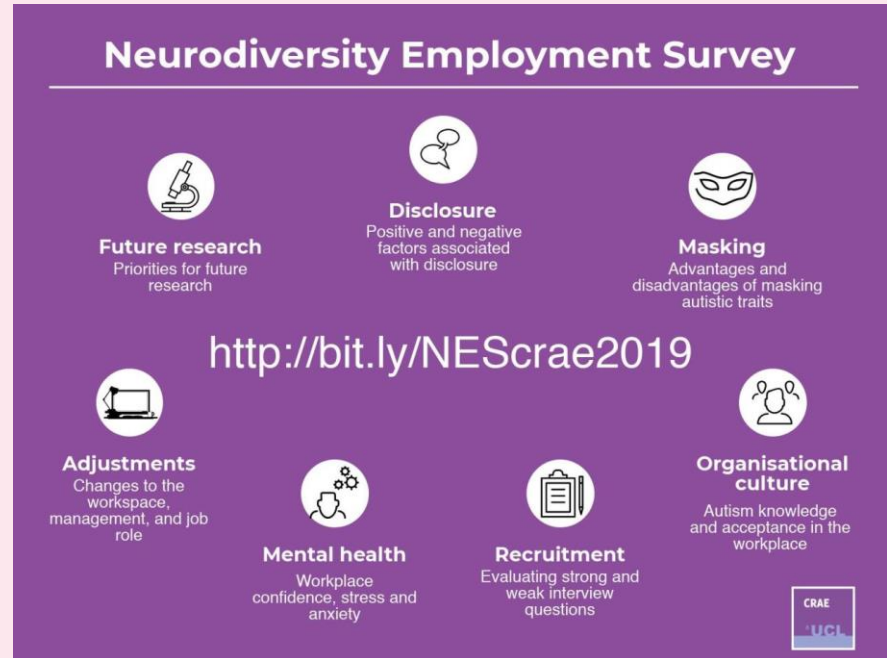
*“Sometimes you just need
someone to take a chance on you.”*

Graduate from the Deutsche Bank + Autistica
internship scheme

Research with UCL (2017-present)

Sources:

- *Diverse Minds* survey – an online survey open to autistic and non-autistic jobseekers and employees as well as their managers and HR.
- Multiple Autistic Graduate Internship schemes run with Autistica and Deutsche Bank



Neurodiversity Employment Survey

<http://bit.ly/NEScrae2019>

- Future research**
Priorities for future research
- Disclosure**
Positive and negative factors associated with disclosure
- Masking**
Advantages and disadvantages of masking autistic traits
- Adjustments**
Changes to the workspace, management, and job role
- Mental health**
Workplace confidence, stress and anxiety
- Recruitment**
Evaluating strong and weak interview questions
- Organisational culture**
Autism knowledge and acceptance in the workplace

CRAE UCL

Employers Guide to Neurodiversity

Free evidence-based resources to help employers make changes, including:

- Inclusive interviews
- Accessible workplaces
- Talking about autism at work
- Opportunity to subscribe for updates on the latest research, initiatives, resources and events



Inclusive interviews

This guide aims to help you think about changes you can make before, during and after an interview to help autistic candidates. If you interview someone who is autistic they may find the interaction difficult, struggle with the uncertainty of going somewhere new or have added sensory differences. By taking away these barriers you can

The Buckland Review of autism employment

- Announced March 2023 with Autistica as the lead advisor
- Series of roundtables with autistic people, charities and employers from a range of sectors, to explore five themes:
 1. What initiatives can help to raise awareness, reduce stigma and improve the productivity of autistic employees;
 2. What more could be done to prepare autistic people effectively for beginning or returning to a career;
 3. How can recruitment practices be adjusted to meet the needs of autistic applicants;
 4. How can employers identify and support autistic people already in their workforce;
 5. How can autistic staff be encouraged and supported to develop and progress their career.
- Report and recommendations due to launch January 2024



Economic report on increasing employment rates for autistic people



Report developed by Pro-bono Economics in partnership with Autistica to understand the economic and social benefits of doubling the employment rate for autistic people.

Top-line stats:

- The average autistic person would be £9,200 better off each year if they moved into work.
- If we double the number of autistic people in work the benefits to society could be £0.9bn-£1.5 bn. And the benefits to Government and the taxpayer could be £380 mn-£630 mn.
- Doubling the existing rate of employment in the autistic population would boost the labour force by 100,000.



The Autistica Neurodiversity Employers Index - NDEI®

*Supporting organisations to build a
more neuroinclusive workplace*

Autistica Neurodiversity Employers Index - NDEI™



An annual reporting programme for companies to assess how well their current processes and practices benchmark against the **gold standard** of neuroinclusive employment **best practice**.

The NDEI:

- **sets out the framework** for what best practice in neurodiversity employment looks like
- **measures** the processes and practices that companies currently have in place to recruit, retain and support neurodivergent talent in the workplace
- **engages with employees** to capture culture, where they feel supported, and where improvements could be made
- **calculates** an organisation's NDEI™ score against pre-defined constructs and measurement criteria
- **feeds back** to organisations their areas of strength, and where and how improvements can be made

Accreditation program

Participation accreditation

acknowledging an organisation's commitment to being a neuroinclusive workplace

Gold, Silver & Bronze awards

awarded to those organisations who not only meet the standards of best practice, but go beyond them

“the accreditation would act as a beacon to attract talent to the company”

Advisory group member

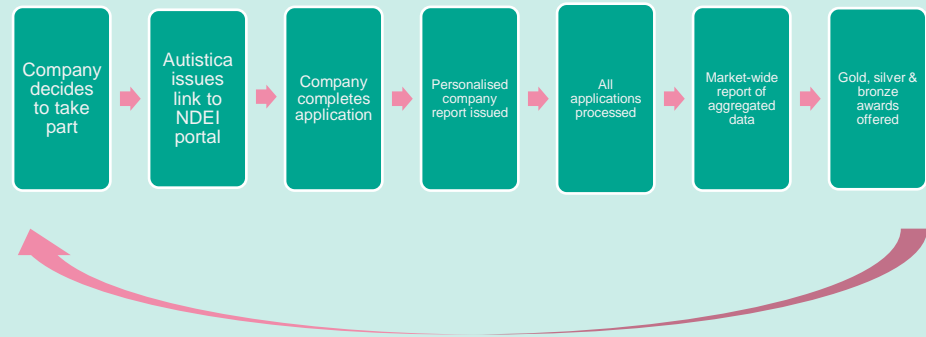
Not just a “box-ticking” exercise

Creating a neuroinclusive workplace is a long-term commitment and journey.

Therefore, the Autistica Neurodiversity Employers Index - NDEI™ is a cyclical program.

It supports organisations to make change at their own pace and to monitor their change year-on-year.

Participating organisations will need to renew – and hopefully improve - their NDEI™ score and accreditation level.



How it works

Step One: You are sent two unique links to the online reporting platform.

Step Two: Employee's survey link shared with employees.

Step Three: An appointed person or team completes the organisational sections.

Step Four: You are sent your bespoke roadmap report.

Step Five: Accreditation awards are issued along with our market trends report.

Step Six: You implement some of the changes recommended in your bespoke report.

Step Seven: the cycle starts again

The NDEI was specifically designed to provide organisations with practical guidance, but not to be onerous or costly.

Employee survey takes 5-10 minutes

Organisational sections takes 1-2 hours to complete

You will receive:

- A bespoke roadmap report
- Our market trends report
- Accreditation award (subject to meeting criteria)

How organisations can take part

We are currently running an early access period for a limited number of organisations.

Organisations will get early access to the best-practice framework, and their bespoke roadmap report.

Participating organisations will be the vanguard, setting the baseline for other organisations.

The early access period is being offered at no-cost to participating organisations.

For more information, get in touch via email to michelle.newman@autistica.org.uk

Or, you can register directly via <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/7FDNDX/>

Future projects

Achieving our employment goal

Support for Autistic People

Employment readiness programmes

Specialist work coaches

Career support profiles

Third party support

Career progression

Support for Employers

Neurodiversity Employers Index

Graduate/Internship Schemes

Adapted recruitment processes

Supported Employment programmes

Adapted working practices

Neurodiversity business strategy

Get involved

Employment news updates: To register for updates on the latest research, initiatives, resources and events, visit:

autistica.org.uk/register-employers

Take part in research: If you or somebody in your family is autistic you can join the Autistica Network. You will hear about new research and opportunities to take part.

autistica.org.uk/take-part





autistica

Thank you

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Fiona Gordon Commissioning Officer Plymouth City Council

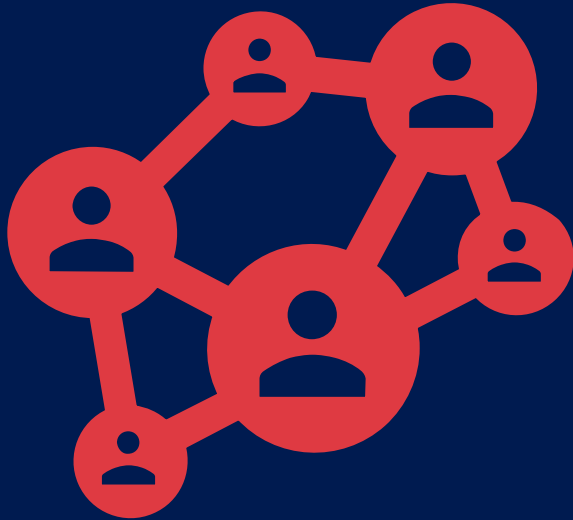
Peter Stokes Babcocks International NSIP Project Manager
Devonport Neurodiversity Network Chairperson

Neil Cattle Learning Disability Manager PLUSS



Working together to increase paid employment for neuro- divergent people in Plymouth

Babcock DWP Livewell Southwest Plymouth City Council Seetec Pluss



What we aim to cover in this webinar

- How we forged new partnerships
- Close working between agencies to really understand need and fill gaps in knowledge
Involving experts by experience, families & clinicians
- How a new employment network was born
- What works /doesn't work
- The power of reasonable adjustments
- Future plans

Forging new partnerships

- Understanding the unmet need of neurodivergent individuals trying to secure employment.
- Shaping a service around these individuals by identifying suitable partners.
- Ensuring neurodivergent individuals shaped this new partnership with their voice and experiences.

Levels of need for help with employment

- PASS is a post diagnostic support service for autistic adults in Plymouth
- 504 people PASS has supported since September 2020
- 181 of them have requested support around employment (36%).

- This led to the completion of 274 individual employment related actions.

- The advice and support provided may have included:
 - Writing character references
 - Liaising with employers around implementing reasonable adjustments
 - Referring to, or liaising with other services, including:
 - PLUSS (including the Neurodiversity Employment Advisor)
 - DWP Disability Employment Advisors
 - Skills Launchpad
 - On Course Southwest

How a new
employment
network was
born



Neurodiverse Plymouth Employers Network



Making
Neurodivergence
inclusion the norm

Project Roadmap



Concept

The idea was raised in a meeting between stakeholders including Plymouth Parent Carers Voice, Plymouth City Council and Babcock to form a network.

Launch

A conference was held at Home Park inviting employers and key stakeholders across the city to understand what they wanted from a network

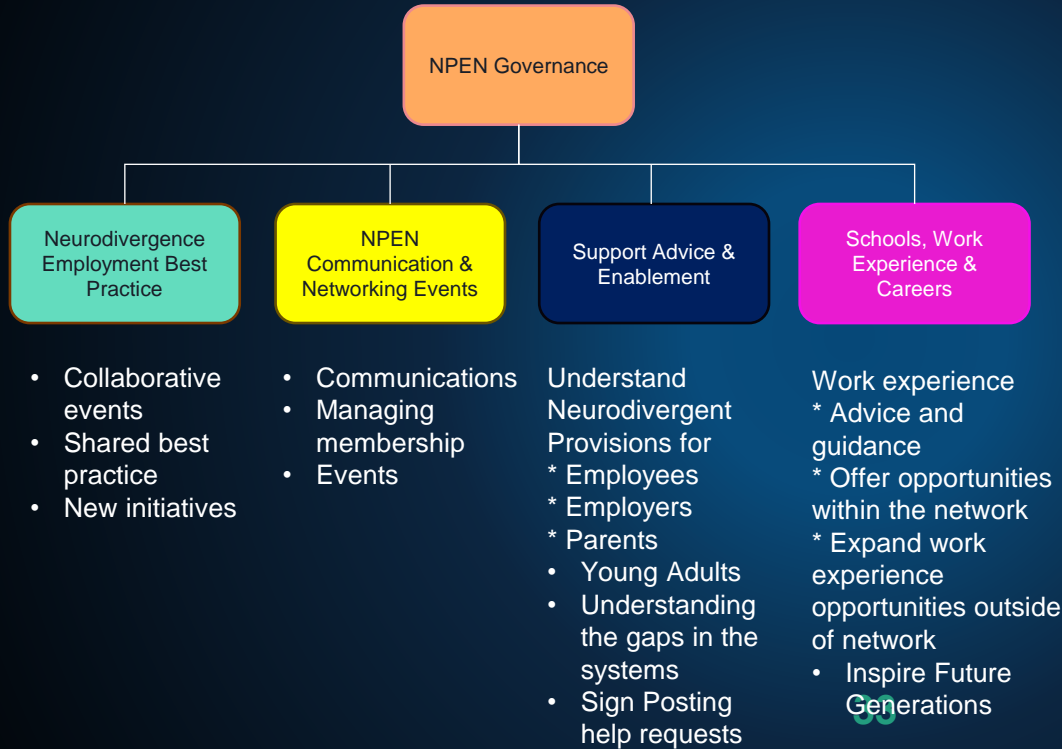
Establish

Created the goals, vision and established a framework for the network.
Creating an identity and recruited new members

Evolution and objectives

Created an online space for the network
Established what it meant to be a member
Hosted several presentations across the city and assemblies in schools.
Spoke with key leaders including MPs and Mayor to raise awareness of the subject.

Network framework



I just wanted to let you know how utterly brilliant you were this morning Dan. Staff and students have been talking about it all day and our young man, who stood up to ask you a question about Autism would never normally be brave enough to do that. You instilled the confidence in him to do so and we are so thankful!

It's so very exciting to be on this journey with you both - I look forward to the rest of the week and continuing to spread this positive message.

Thank you for taking the time to engage in this project.

Torr Bridge High

Membership



Including:

- Neurodiverse Policies / Procedures.
- Positive reasonable adjustment requirements policy/process.
- Advice and support for employees.



Including

- Neurodiverse Recruitment Policies
- Offering Mentors
- Offering Screeners
- Offer Management training
- Actively stating that your neurodiverse aware

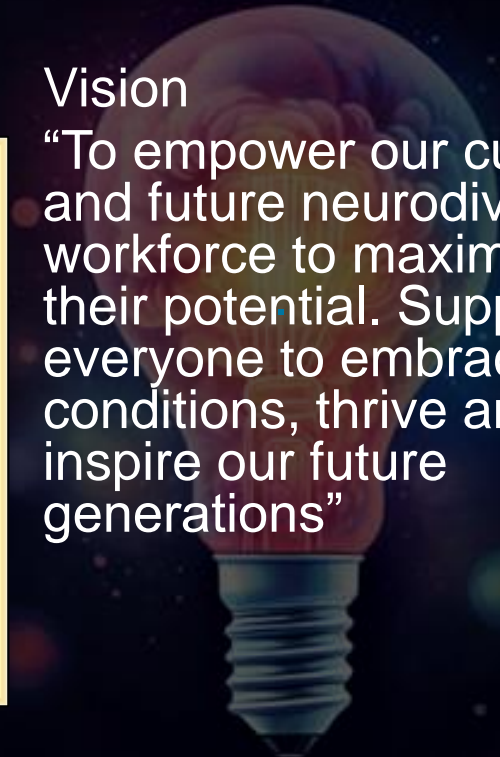


Including

- Offer work experience for send young people
- Supported internships / supported Apprenticeships
- External Community Engagement
- Participation in schools

Vision

“To empower our current and future neurodiverse workforce to maximise their potential. Supporting everyone to embrace their conditions, thrive and inspire our future generations”



Current members

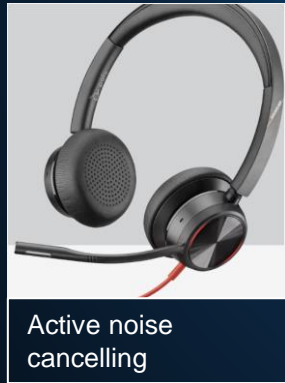
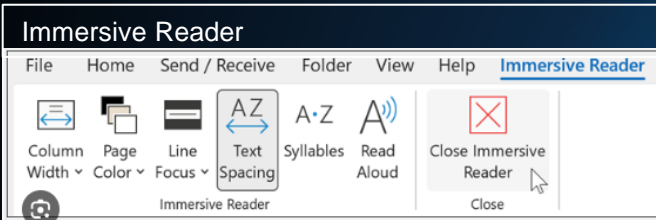


Learning about the power of real reasonable adjustments



Interview with Sian our customer from the Plymouth Neurodiverse Employment Service about how good reasonable adjustments can be so effective, whilst also understanding what the effect is without them.

Learning about the power of real reasonable adjustments

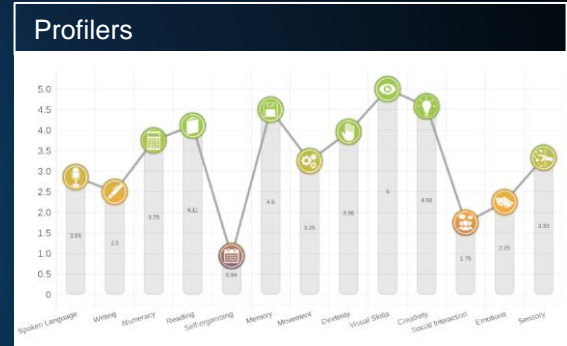


2%
Full investigation £800 -£2300

10%
Assessed by educational psychologist £180

88%
Profiler (£30) + Screeners

Working diagnoses



What has worked well & what needs to change/

- Putting neurodivergent people at the centre of our services, to be seen, heard and valued.
- Commitment in the partnership towards a shared goal with high aspirations.
- Continually listening, reviewing and adapting to evolve the service for the benefit of the neurodiverse community.
- Greater education for employers about reasonable adjustments for neurodivergent individuals is required, alongside implementing these effectively.



Case studies Pluss & Babcock

Supported internship

John's Journey to Babcock

- Diagnosed with Autism age 2
- Received specialist support throughout Secondary school and began attending REACH in 2012.
- Undertook BTECs and Foundation degree at City College from 2016
- Joined Babcock as a Production Support Operative in 2020
- Involved in a range of initiatives at Babcock
 - Neurodiversity Network & Young Persons Network
 - APM Challenge 2021/22
 - Neurodiverse Virtual Work Experience
 - Mentoring programme
- Rising Star award at the Neurodiversity Awards



A wireframe illustration of a human head in profile, facing left. The head is composed of a blue and white geometric mesh. Overlaid on the face is a large infinity symbol (∞) with a pink and orange gradient. Small green and blue arrows point outwards from the top and sides of the head.

Future Plans

- Educate and challenge stereotypes around neurodivergence
- Inspire future generations to be ambitious
- Improve accessibility for all neurodiverse employees
- Enable employees to thrive in the workplace
- Share best practice across employers
- Improved work experience opportunities across the city for Neurodivergent young adults
- Improved recruitment processes in breaking the barriers to entry for neurodivergent applicants
- Increase paid employment opportunities for the neurodivergent population

Many thanks for listening to our journey so far.

Can you direct any questions or comments to the Q & A at the end of this webinar.

Neurodiversity in Business

Alexander Hedlund

Head of Corporate Membership Services (Volunteer)
Neurodiversity in Business





Neurodiversity in Business

Presenter: Alexander Hedlund

Date: 18 December 2023



What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity encompasses the whole spectrum of human neurotypes, each expressing themselves in different ways.

These include (amongst others):

- **Autism**
- **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**
- **Dyslexia**
- **Dyscalculia**
- **Dysgraphia**
- **Tourette's Syndrome**
- **Neurotypicality**

By the numbers

- **15-20%** of the UK population is neurodivergent (rising sharply in STEM tertiary education)
- **700,000** people with Autism Spectrum Condition in the UK
- **2 million people** with Dyslexia in the UK
- **787%** jump in Autism diagnoses over two decades
- **800%** increase in prescriptions for ADHD medication



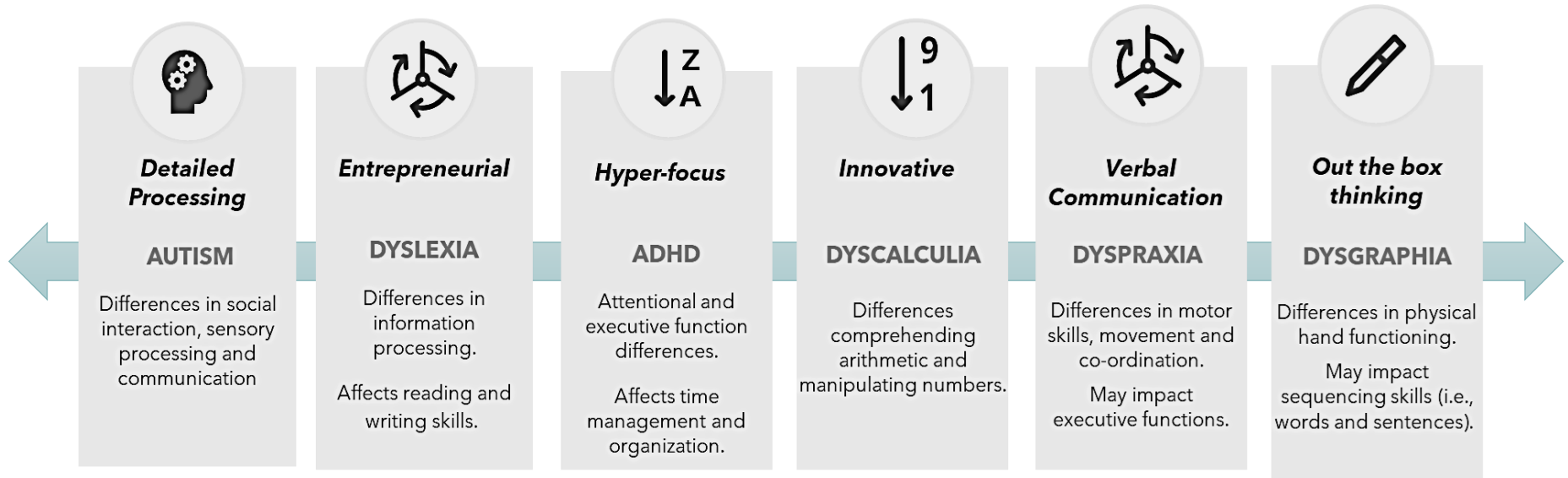
Neurodivergent strengths

- Critical, **detail-oriented**, routine and repetitive work
- **Design-orientated**, technical tasks
- Solving problems in **innovative, creative**, or unprecedented ways
- High levels of **sustained concentration**
- Strong **memory** and ability to recall information, details and knowledge
- Higher than average **resilience** and **perseverance**

**Society will gain a multitude
of long-term benefits
by enabling businesses to
make an impact that matters.**



Associative strengths





Why focus on neurodiversity?

Business drivers

- **Economic:** Neurodivergent individuals think differently, allowing for an innovative workforce, and true “diversity of thought”
- **Sustainability:** Provides access to hidden talent pools and reduces talent turnover
- **Legal:** Neurodiversity is covered by the Equality Act
- **Social:** Making an impact that matters is increasingly key to organizations' branding
- **Moral:** Empowering diversity is simply the right thing to do

NATIONAL AUTISTIC SOCIETY

Only **16%** of autistic adults are in full time paid employment.

CIPD POLL 2018

Only **1** in **10** organization are focusing on neurodiversity at work.

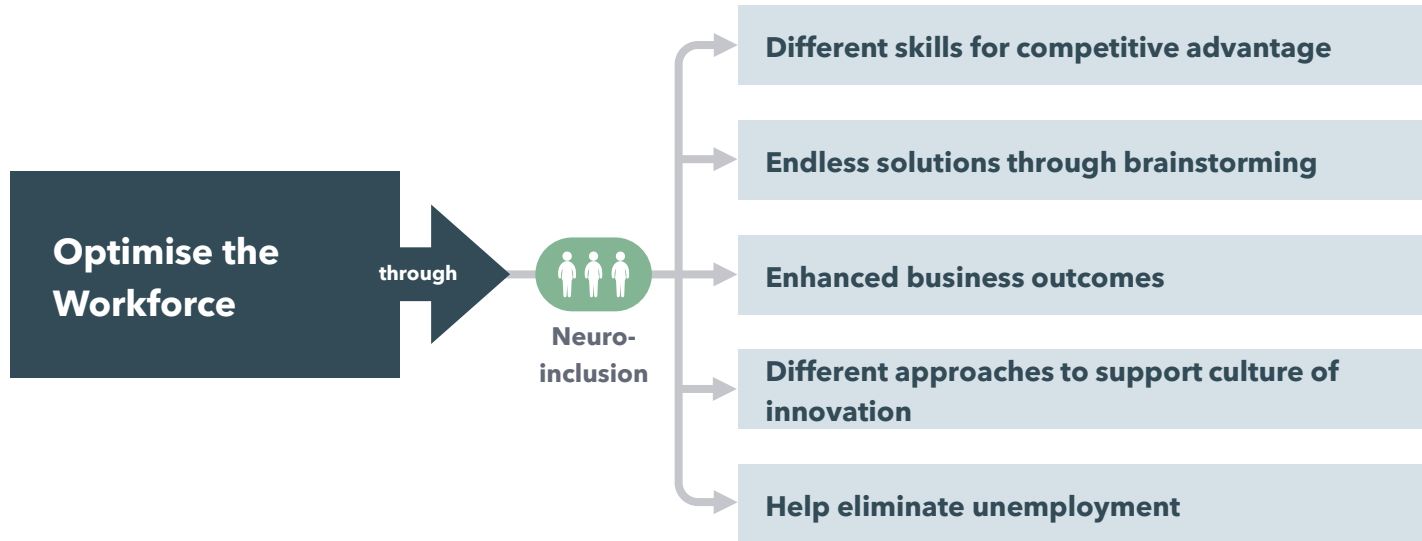


NATIONAL AUTISTIC SOCIETY

45% of people have lost or left their job because of challenges due to being misunderstood.



Neurodiversity as a differentiator





NiB objectives

Create a best-practice business community to share indispensable insight for:

Neurodivergent individuals

Empowerment, recognition, help and guidance to navigate a successful, happy and independent career path.

Employers

- Create awareness as to the benefits and strengths of neurodiversity in the workplace.

Neurotypical individuals

- To have a better understanding and awareness of their neurodivergent colleagues.



Supporting neuroinclusive workplaces

Educate. Demonstrate. Celebrate. Empower.



Neurodiversity In Business (NiB)

Our goal is to improve the working lives of neurodivergent individuals, by helping to unlock the unique and innovative contribution they can bring to the business world and society.



1. First global, quantitative study of neurodiversity in the workplace

We've partnered with the Centre for Neurodiversity at Work at Birkbeck University of London to conduct research which will provide the first global, quantitative study of neurodiversity in the workplace.

This research provides meaningful insights into:

- The challenges corporations and businesses face when considering neurodiversity as part of their DE&I strategy.
- The challenges neurodivergent people face in accessing employment and/or navigating their careers.

The results will help inform and strengthen:

- Neuroinclusive recruitment, support, and retention strategies.
- The development of resources and guidance on neuroinclusion best practices.
- Future research priorities.

Strategic partnerships to support study dissemination and engagement:

- British Chambers of Commerce
- Institute of Directors
- Chartered Institute of Personnel Development
- Confederation of Business Industry



2. NiB Annual Conference 2023

On 16/03/23 (during Neurodiversity Celebration Week) we invited businesses, organisations, politicians, thought leaders, charities, and communities from all over the world to visit London for our annual Neurodiversity in Business conference.

400 delegates attended the one-day event, where we:

- Shared the **latest research** on neurodiversity.
- Showcased neuro-inclusive workplace **best practices**.
- Hosted panels and Q&A sessions with **experts** and **community members**.
- Engaged with **policy makers** and **DE&I leadership teams**.
- Raised awareness of London's ambition to become the **Neuroinclusive Capital of the World**.

Media and Marketing partner

CITYA.M.

Event Partner





3. NiB Annual Conference 2024

The NiB Annual Conference brings together corporate members, partners and the community of neurodivergent individuals and their allies.

- We will highlight innovative ideas and neuroinclusive best practices and provide opportunities for collaboration.
- Our collaborative sessions will dive into solving problems together through workshops and hybrid panel discussions centred around:
 - Reducing stigma and supporting colleagues
 - Innovating through workplace and product design
 - Improving retention for neurodivergent employees
- NiB will also highlight our academic research, share new resources for members and present our charitable impacts and future plans - making it attractive to media.



NiB 2024
Annual Conference
Collaborating for Impact
16 April 2024
London and Online



4. The ND Resource Hub

The **ND Resource Hub** is a comprehensive single access point for reliable, expert resources to support and empower neurodivergent individuals in the workplace and allow businesses access to good practice industry content. Carefully curated by our diverse volunteers, the ND Resource Hub provides high quality resources in one place.

- **Quality assured** information with accurate links to insightful support materials
- Easily accessible, **intuitive navigation**
- **Regular updates** and **suggested links**, to drive traffic to trusted resource partners
- Impactful **assessments**, training **courses**, and background information on neurodiversity
- Links to **webinars, publications** and a recommended reading **library**



'Neurodiversity at Work' Report Applying the findings to your workplace

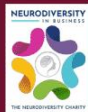
Neurodiversity at Work 2023

Demand, Supply and a Gap Analysis

Professor Almuth McDowall C.Psychol.

Professor Nancy Doyle C.Psychol.

Dr Meg Kiseleva



2022 Neurodiversity in Business Report Commission.
Sponsored by Rolls Royce, McDonalds and Sage

(Content credit: [Tristan Lavendar](#))



1. ND Strengths are Key

Your neurodivergent employees have strengths that are key to innovation.

- More than 70% of ND people in this study consider hyperfocus, creativity, innovative thinking, and detail processing to be among their strengths

There's an untapped need and opportunity to embed neurodiversity into DEI policies.

- 92% of employers surveyed have a DEI policy; only 22% said it includes a focus on neurodiversity.



How to foster ND strengths in the workplace

- Honest conversations
- Design considerations - both physical workspace, technology and policy
- Looking honestly at existing processes



2. Stigma and discrimination

Fear of stigma and discrimination is still widespread.

- 65% of neurodivergent employees are concerned about disclosing due to fear of discrimination from their manager.

Self-disclosure drives access to adjustments.

- The main data collection method by employers was self-disclosure (78.7%) and by disclosing employees gained access to reasonable adjustments. Largest barrier to accessing adjustments was a lack of disclosure (69.3%).



How to fight stigma

- Who should lead the conversation - the employee or the employer?
- Leadership is key
- Building psychological safety



3. Retaining talent

Neurodiversity-friendly career pathways are critical for retaining talent.

- Career progression is critical for retaining neurodivergent staff, but typical corporate career paths may impose a 'neurodivergent glass ceiling' because they are designed for generalists rather than specialists.

Intention to leave is high for neurodivergent individuals.

- 42% of neurodivergent employees are likely, or very likely, to leave your organisation.
- With tailored adjustments, this figure drops to 18.2%



How to retain talent - what works?

- Workplace adjustments
- Training
- Mentoring
- Building a culture of understanding



Thank you!

 [Neurodiversityinbusiness.org](https://neurodiversityinbusiness.org)

 [@Neurodiversity in Business \(NiB\)](https://www.linkedin.com/company/neurodiversity-in-business)

 [@NDinBusiness](https://twitter.com/NDinBusiness)

 [@NDinBusiness](https://www.instagram.com/NDinBusiness)

Question and answer session with the presenter panel



Close and thank-you!



Partners in Care and Health: autistic people and people with a learning disability team

For more information about our sector-led improvement
offer 2022-2025 go to:

www.local.gov.uk/pch/autistic-learning-disabilities

