

Neurodiversity In The Workplace:

a critical review of the support provided for neurodiverse employees in South Wales Police and its impact on mental health.

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Introduction

Neurodiversity describes individuals with conditions such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism and Tourette's (Brady, 2022). It is estimated that 15-20% of the UK population are neurodiverse (British Dyslexia Association, 2022). This study was designed to establish what further support SWP can implement, how to attract and support neurodiverse candidates, and how this would benefit the organisation. Primary research was conducted through a questionnaire distributed to the SWP Neurodiversity Network and secondary research was gathered from articles, books and websites.



Literature

Neurodiversity Skillset:
The skillset of neurodiverse individuals includes hyperfocus, creativity, innovative thinking and detail processing (Birkbeck University of London, 2023) which are skills that will be most desirable by 2027 (World Economic Forum, 2023).

Workplace Adjustments:
Some of the most useful workplace adjustments are flexible schedules and hybrid working (McDowall, Doyle and Kiseleva, 2023). Unsuccessful adjustments included quiet spaces, sensory environment changes, and changes to culture (Davies et al, 2022). CIPD (2024) note that awareness training can develop awareness, understanding and appreciation for neurodiversity.

Recruitment:
Only 3 in 10 working age autistic people are employed (Gov.uk, 2024). Research shows that 88% of neurodiverse people felt discouraged from applying for jobs and 52% felt discriminated against in a recruitment process (AcheiveAbility, 2018). Lexxic (no date) advise that standardised interview assessment may not enable candidates to demonstrate their skills. Many organisations have neurodiversity recruitment schemes, with reasonable adjustments including providing questions in advance, extended interview time, interviews conducted in writing, and skills assessments (Microsoft, no date, Google Cloud, 2021, JP Morgan Chase, 2023). The results of having more neurodiverse employees show decreased error rates, improved morale, more inclusive culture, and neurodiverse employees were found to be up to 140% more productive (JP Morgan Chase, 2023, My Disability Jobs, 2024).

Mental Health:
Neurodiversity can impact on mental health through the additional challenges and barriers individuals may face (NHS Dorset, no date). Almost half of adults with ADHD also suffer with anxiety (Charlie Health, 2024). Workplace adjustments can assist in removing barriers that affect comfort, engagement and performance (Personnel Today, 2024).

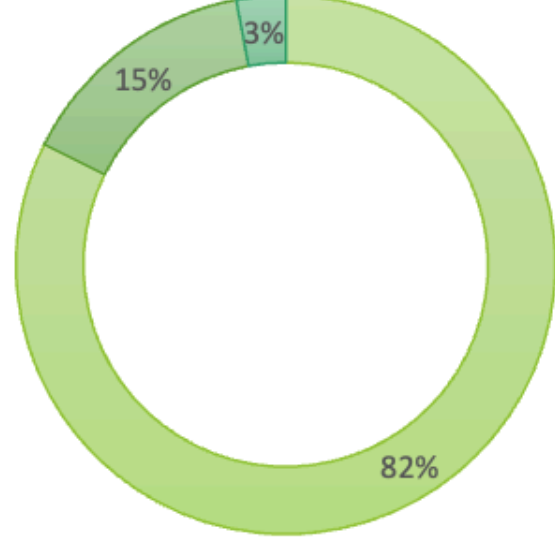
Methodology

The aim of this research was to conduct a critical review of the support provided form neurodiverse employees in SWP and its impact on mental health. The research onion developed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007) was used to demonstrate the progression of the methodology. A mixed method approach was used to gain data through a questionnaire sent out to members of the SWP Neurodiversity Network. A questionnaire was chosen as it seemed more accessible for neurodiverse individuals then other methods (Milliner, 2023). The questionnaire was created in Microsoft Forms, data was then assessed for themes and patterns. As the data collected was based on individual opinion and experiences the validity cannot be guaranteed (Chapman and McNeill, 2005). Limitations of this study include the sample size of only 34 respondents which is not a sufficient pool of people, the study could be repeated to gain more insight, giving individuals more time to respond and not conducting the research during the summer holidays when a lot of people take leave. There was a risk of bias as the feedback was based on their own personal experiences with their specific conditions.

Findings

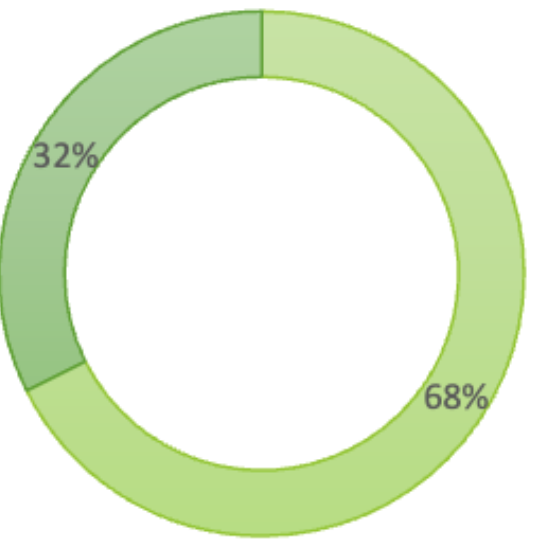
Of the 34 respondents to the questionnaire, the most common reported conditions were ADHD, dyslexia, and autism, with 61.76% reporting more than one condition. Most advised they would not declare themselves disabled during a recruitment or promotion process which aligns to research by McDowall, Doyle and Kiseleva (2023). Only 41.18% had used reasonable adjustments in a recruitment or promotion process, of those who had, extra time was the most common. One person reported having the questions in advance and another advised they had been declined this when requested which highlights inconsistency. When asked how SWP could more recruitment more accessible, feedback included allowing bespoke reasonable adjustments which mirrors Blackburn (2023), having questions in advance, sending photos/videos of the building, and changing the interview approach. With 67.65% advising they felt that SWP does not provide enough support there was a theme of individuals feeling there was a lack of knowledge from line managers and training around neurodiversity was needed. Only 55.88% of individuals had sought support from line managers, 23.53% found that support to be poor. 79.41% of respondents felt their mental health had been impacted as a result of their neurodiversity, this aligns to evidence that 70% with ADHD, and 40% with autism also have depression (Personnel Today, 2024).

Do you feel there is enough information about reasonable adjustments available during recruitment and promotions processes?



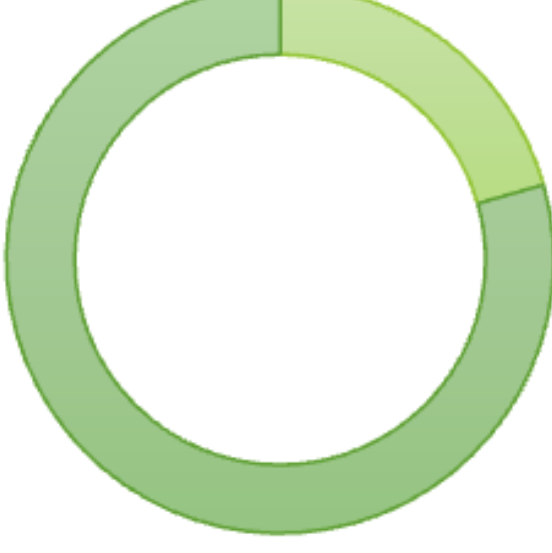
Response	Percentage
No	15%
Yes	82%
(blank)	3%

Do you feel SWP as an organisation provides enough support to those with neurodiverse conditions?



Response	Percentage
No	32%
Yes	68%

Has your mental health ever been impacted as a result of your neurodiversity?



Response	Percentage
No	20.59%
Yes	79.41%

Conclusion

To ensure SWP supports neurodiverse employees and candidates to the best of its ability further consideration needs to be given to bespoke reasonable adjustments. In-house workplace place assessors would bring expert knowledge on barriers and solutions. Force wide neurodiversity training would build on knowledge and understanding as recommended by the CIPD (2024). Providing information about the reasonable adjustments available at point of recruitment and promotion may appeal to neurodiverse talent. To improve the wellbeing of neurodiverse employees, better workplace support needs to be provided (Personnel Today, 2024).

