

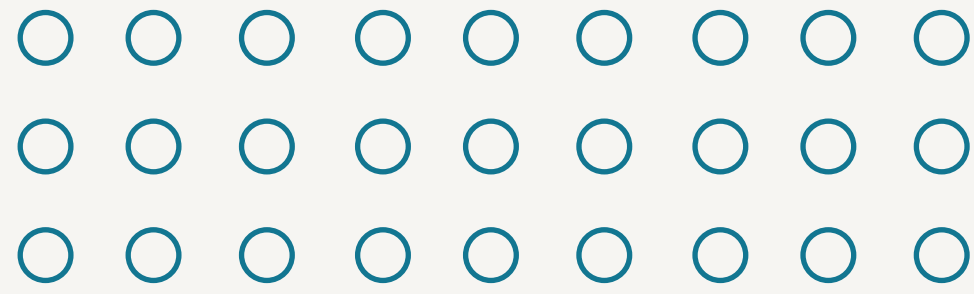


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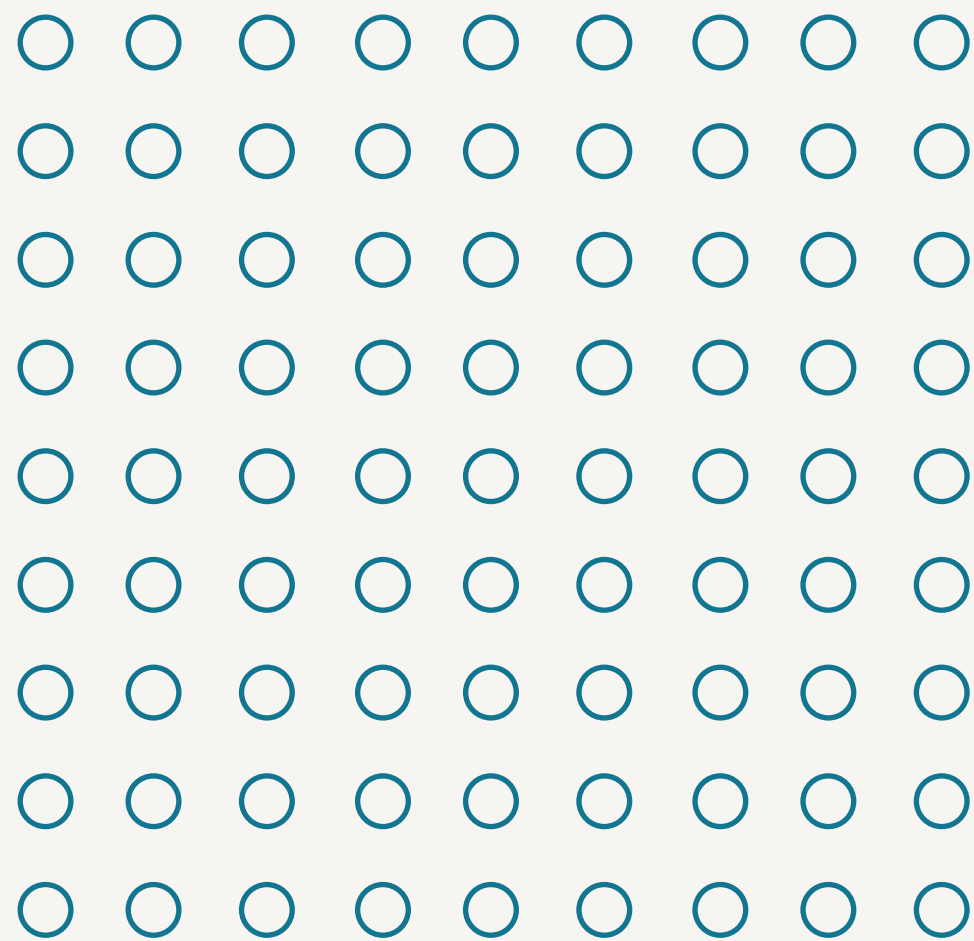


The Ultimate Guide To Neurodiversity In The Workplace





Dr Richard Purcell
Co-Founder & Director,
CareScribe



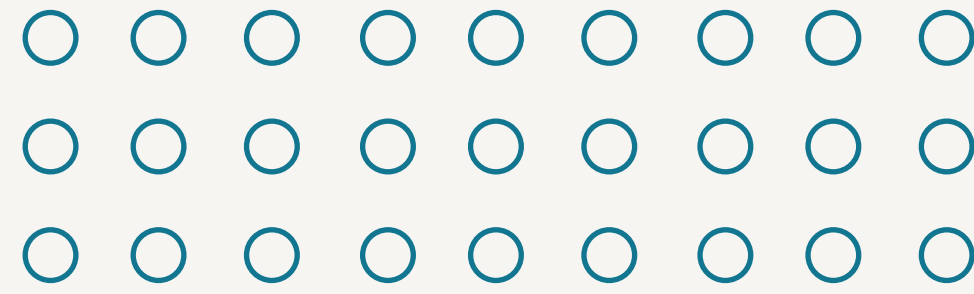
Foreword

Supporting and celebrating neurodiversity at work isn't a straightforward task. But making small changes can lead to huge improvements. When organisations fail to take action to improve working environments for neurodivergent staff they risk low morale, feelings of isolation, and lower rates of disclosure - if at all. They also miss out on the sizeable potential that increased neurodiversity offers.

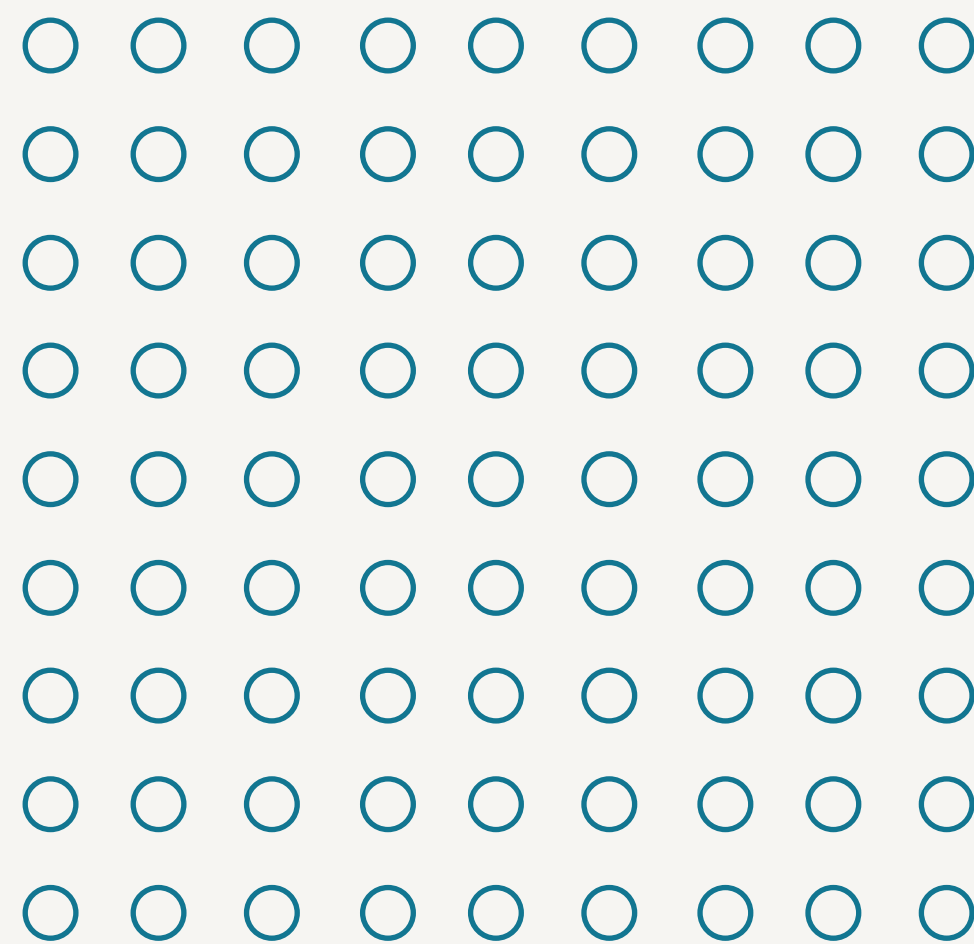
A report by Neurodiversity in Business and Birkbeck University entitled 'Neurodiversity at Work 2023: Demand, Supply, and a Gap Analysis' highlights how neurodivergent staff bring **better levels of focus, processing of detail, creativity, and workplace innovation**. But it also demonstrates how, through supportive atmospheres that underline the importance of neurodiversity, organisations of any size can increase productivity, innovation, and retain talent for longer.

To support neurodiversity in the workplace and leverage benefits for your organisation, I'm excited to offer you this helpful guide. In it, you'll find detailed explanations of neurodiversity and a set of recommendations that can help organisations of any size break down barriers to better leverage the skills of neurodivergent staff.

I've also found this to be revealing for what we're doing here at CareScribe, too. As an early-stage start-up, founded by a neurodivergent team, I appreciate the importance of making neurodiversity in the workplace a priority area for our organisation too. No organisation is perfect and we also have much ongoing work to do to reap the benefits of neurodiversity and keep this at the front of our minds.



Elle Chappell
People Director,
CareScribe



Introduction

Global organisations are recognising the benefits of supporting workplace neurodiversity. And the progress they've made has inspired us to produce this guide. Through well-researched, detailed information and practical advice, this ebook aims to support organisations of all sizes to better promote neurodiversity at work. Featuring a comprehensive outline of the definitions of neurodivergence, this guide offers suggestions on how to improve workplace neurodiversity in a variety of contexts. And while our intentions are well-placed, we acknowledge that lasting change in neurodiversity isn't a straightforward or simple process.

A report by the Harvard Business Review revealed how typically displayed behaviours of neurodiverse people can run counter to common notions of what makes a good employee. Often, hiring panels look for salesperson-like personalities, networking skills, and the ability to follow processes without extra support or accommodation. But these assumptions can result in unfair judgements or instances where hiring panels overlook the potential benefits of hiring neurodivergent candidates. For existing staff with an undiagnosed or undisclosed condition, negative workplace assumptions often prevent disclosure and block access to support from schemes such as Access to Work.

Without the appropriate tools to support them, people with autism, dyslexia, ADHD or even long-term depression will find it harder to bring their talents to work. A survey by Neurodiversity charity Neurodiversity in Business and Birkbeck University suggests 65% of employees fear managerial discrimination and a further 55% worry they'll face discrimination from peers. Neurodivergent staff need to feel safe disclosing their challenges and much of this lies in creating positive workplace environments that prioritise this area.

We recommend workplace diversity leaders—at all levels and in all contexts—review this ebook and consider the steps they can take to effect change. And while we're not suggesting any of this is simple, easy, or straightforward, our aim is to inspire you to consider the benefits of promoting neurodiversity at work and present a number of ways to encourage it.

At Carescribe, we know that leveraging the skills of neurodivergent staff leads to competitive advantages and that's why we're committed to designing tools such as Caption.Ed and TalkType. So, while we can't claim to have our house completely in order yet, we can say that we're committed to positive change both for employees and for business outcomes.



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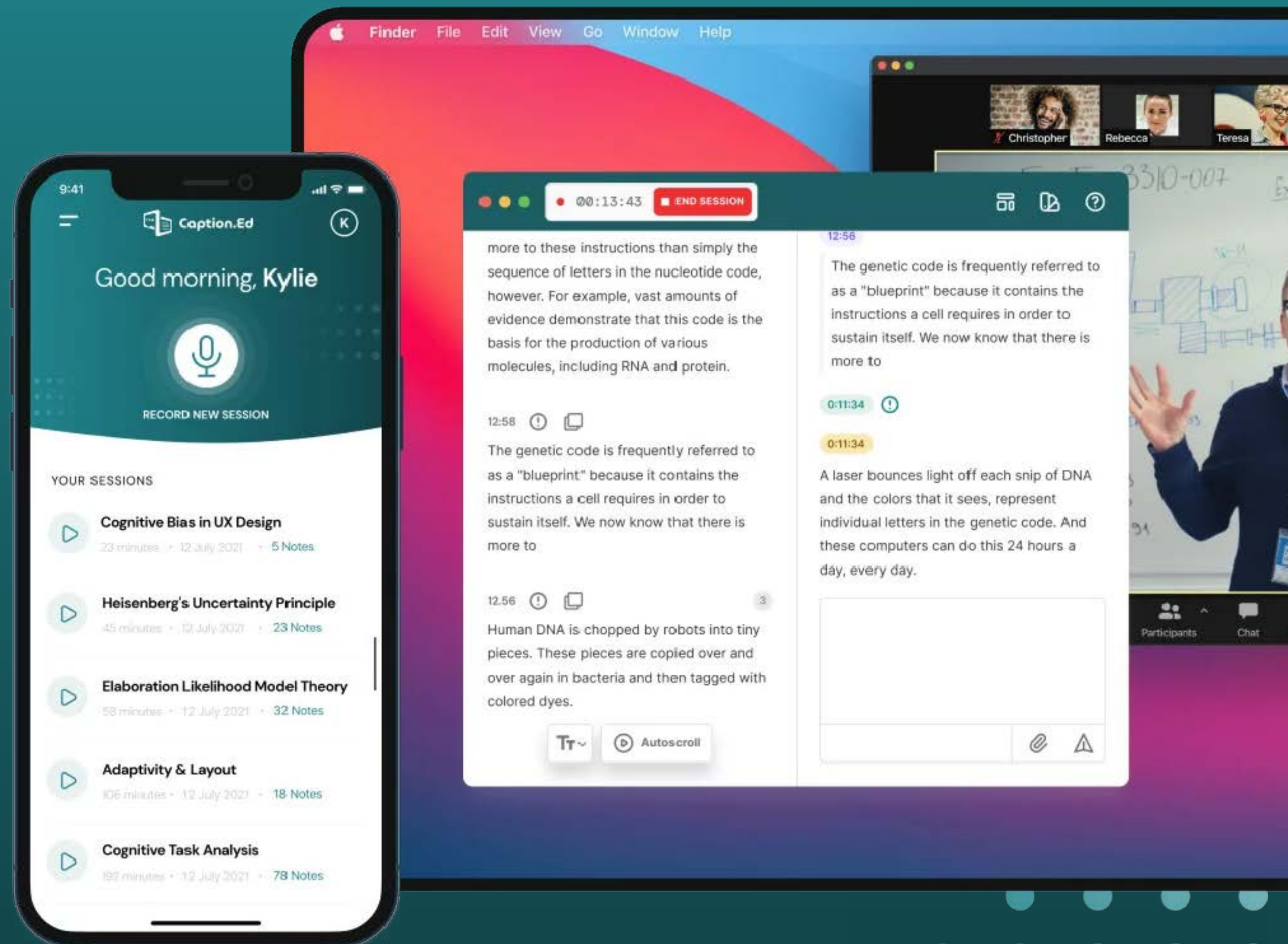
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Section 1:

Why it's Important to Support Neurodiversity in the Workplace

Why it's Important to Support Neurodiversity in the Workplace

Modern workplaces aren't facilitating neurodiversity. Employees don't feel safe to disclose and employers are making assumptions about skill sets. Neurodivergent staff don't feel safe or supported and employers don't have the knowledge or confidence to improve the situation. Also, workplace cultures can defer to stereotypes and assume neurodivergent staff don't have the desirable, people-oriented skill sets they would expect from staff like networking and persuasiveness.

When staff don't feel confident to disclose their condition, due to fear of stigma or lack of support, they can feel invisible. In some cases, this can lead to higher staff attrition and damaged employer brands. In more extreme instances, employers can face costly legal fees. And Fox & Partners LLP confirms that the number of employment tribunals citing neurodiversity discrimination rose by a third between 2020 and 2021.

“A lack of awareness and understanding has led to hiring processes, management practices and workspaces being designed only with neurotypicals in mind”

Neurodiversity at Work Guide, CIPD 2018



Approximately 15% (1 in 7) of working-age people in the UK are neurodivergent



Estimates suggest 30-40% of neurodiverse people aren't participating in the workforce



33% of the global population has a neurodivergent condition



45% of neurodivergent people say they've lost or left their job because of the challenges of being misunderstood



Neurodivergent staff are underrepresented in the workforce

69% of employers think lack of disclosure is due to underrepresentation

65% of managers say they don't know enough about neurodiversity

30% of employers don't believe workplace adjustments can achieve their intended outcomes



Why it's Important to Support Neurodiversity in the Workplace

Giving neurodivergent staff the support they need to work to their full potential is important. But there are also many benefits for organisations, employers, and team members.



Benefits for organisations

- **Higher rates of productivity:** The Harvard Business Review said neurodivergent staff can achieve 30% better productivity compared to their neurotypical peers.
- **Creativity, innovation, imagination, and ideation:** A survey by Neurodiversity in Business and Birkbeck University showed 80% of neurodivergent staff with skills in hyperfocus, 78% in creativity, 75% in innovative thinking, and 71% with detail processing skills.
- **Data visualisation and computational thinking skills:** Sparta Global's 2023 EqualTech report on neurodiversity showed how employees with autism achieve above-average results in machine learning and quantum computing.
- **Reduced attrition rates:** The report by Neurodiversity in Business also showed how employees are 50% less likely to leave a workplace when adjustments are tailored to their needs.
- **Improved Employee Value Proposition:** GCHQ advertises positions for neurodiverse females to ensure a diverse mix of minds. They say this is crucial for code cracking, reviewing threats and minimising the predictability of UK security systems.
- **Hire from a wider candidate pool:** Advertising for neurodiverse talent is an active way to widen your candidate pool and select from a wider range of high-calibre candidates. Very often, neurodivergent candidates will have perspectives that others may not have thought of before. Hiring them can realise their untapped potential while adding significant value to teamwork, operations, and project outcomes.



Benefits for teams and employees

- **Increased focus, observation, and problem-solving:** Neurodivergent staff often show higher potential for problem-solving. Sparta Global's report highlights how employees with these traits drive new developments in robotics and augmented reality.
- **Empathy and intuition:** According to CIPD, autistic people often feel very deep emotions but find it difficult to express them. This can enhance teamwork and lead to more supportive environments.
- **Authenticity and adaptability:** Increasing visibility for neurodivergent staff can help disarm other team members and allow everyone to bring more of themselves and their talent to their roles.



“In order to benefit from the power of neurodiversity, organisations need to create a safe and supportive environment for neurodivergent employees. Neuro-affirmative attitudes, a shift in mindset towards the social model of disability and an inclusive culture are critical to enable this.”



Jessica Meredith
CEO and Founder
Differing Minds



Section 2:

What is Neurodiversity?

What is Neurodiversity?

It's important to understand the differences between different types of neurodiversity. Neurodivergent individuals do not all display the same attributes. And while the term is helpful to highlight problems it can also be unhelpful when explaining differences in thinking styles.

So, let's clarify the terms we're using and the differences between each type of neurodivergent thinking.



Definitions

A key point to note is how easy it can be to stereotype neurodivergent individuals and make assumptions on the potential for shared characteristics. In a 2016 study, The National Institute of Economic and Social Research—Britain's oldest independent economic research institute—explained how there is a 'propensity for neurodivergent individuals to be stereotyped according to the more well-known characteristics of their condition'. And since we want to avoid stereotyping and be more precise about the differences between neurodivergent conditions, let's get into more detail before we describe each type and subtype of neurodiversity.



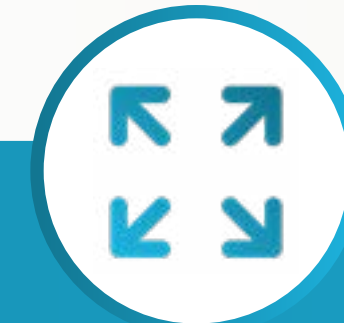
Neurodiversity

A catch-all term that describes groups of individuals who show different ways of thinking. In practice, neurodiversity includes individuals with divergent ways of thinking, such as individuals with autism, dyslexia, and ADHD, for example. But these groups should also include individuals who don't have diagnosable differences in thinking. Organisations that support neurodiversity will have a workplace that contains both employees with and without diagnosed disabilities.



Neurotypical

Neurotypical individuals are people who show thinking patterns that fit within societal expectations. They do not have a diagnosable disability nor do they show indications of a disability.



Neurodivergence

This refers to individuals who have thinking patterns that the majority of people consider different. Specifically, neurodivergent individuals will have a diagnosed disability relating to the way they process information.



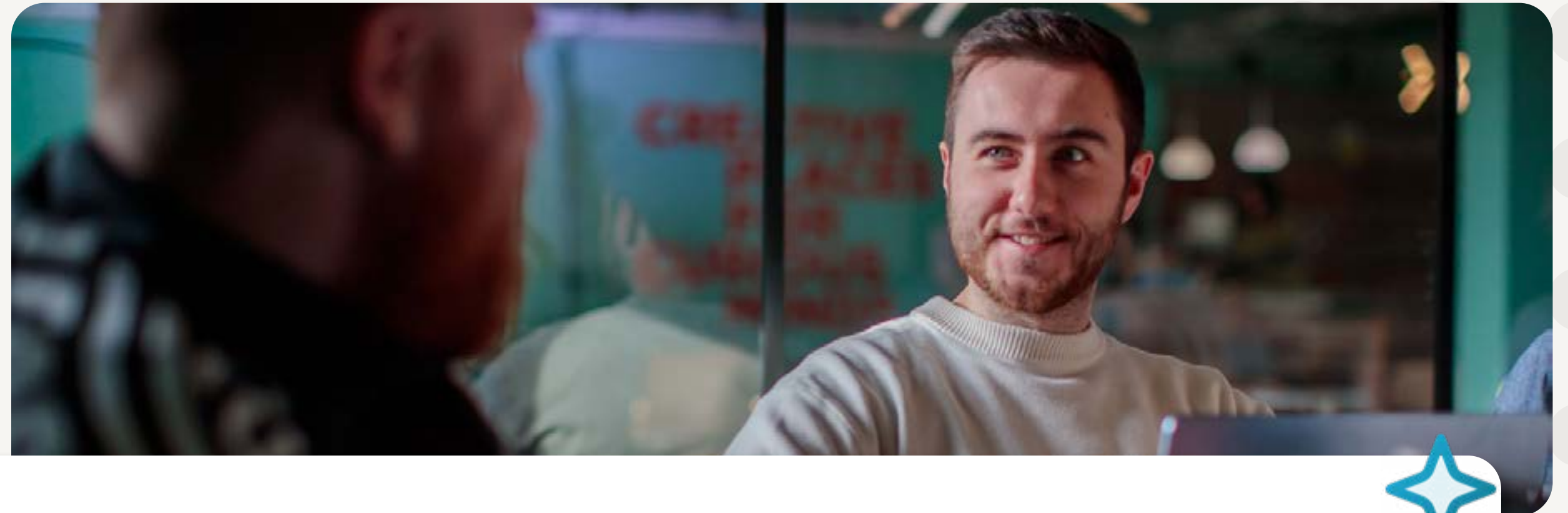
Neurominority

These are groups of neurodivergent individuals who share a similar form of neurodivergence. When using the word 'Neurominority' it should be assumed to be a group of individuals with the same type of neurodivergence.

What is Neurodiversity?

In recent years, new ways of thinking have uncovered the possibility that we may be wrong to assume humans have a 'typical' way of thinking. Instead, several academics suggest neurodiversity may be biological phenomena to embrace.

In his 2015 paper '**The Myth of the Normal Brain: Embracing Neurodiversity**', Thomas Armstrong, Professor at the University of La Verne, highlights the absence of any standard model of a normal brain to compare neurodivergent thinking to. And he explains that the 'three dimensional' way of thinking in some people with dyslexia may have been an adaptive measure in preliterate cultures. In effect, he suggests people with dyslexia may have evolved to pioneer innovations such as tool design, shelter construction, and plotting hunting routes.



The Neurodiversity Paradigm and Neurodiversity Movement

Further to this thinking is 'The Neurodiversity Paradigm' and the subsequent neurodiversity movement. Defined by autistic scholar Nick Walker, PhD., the Neurodiversity paradigm acknowledges how neurological diversity benefits the richness of the human species. But rather than refer to people as either normal or abnormal, the words 'neurotypical' or 'neurodivergent' would be better descriptors.

The Neurodiversity Movement originates from the Autistic Rights Movement which emerged in the 1990s. Australian sociologist Judy Singer coined both this phrase and, in fact, the term 'Neurodiversity' in a 1998 thesis. An associate in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Bristol, Robert Chapman PhD, has taken this a step further. They define it instead as a social justice movement that's moving away from the default approach and making mental, developmental, and cognitive disability not one of pathology but towards what they call a 'social ecological' approach which promotes pride, inclusion, and acceptance, akin to what's seen in the LGBTQ+ movement.



What is Neurodiversity?

Receiving a diagnosis for a neurodivergent condition can be life-changing. And it often brings with it a sense of relief and acceptance when those affected are able to explain their differences to others. But while Autism, Dyslexia, and ADHD are considered formal diagnoses, these conditions can sometimes overlap with less recognised disorders, specifically Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD).

SPD is a neurological condition that disrupts the body's ability to receive messages from its senses. It can prevent someone from filtering out less important sensory information such as background noises but also prevent them from acting on the messages they receive via sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. Someone with SPD may become overwhelmed or triggered when lights are too bright or when they hear loud sounds like fireworks. SPD can be comorbid with other neurodivergent conditions and up to 60% of children with either ADHD or SPD will also show symptoms of the other condition.



**Autism Spectrum
Condition diagnoses
have increased by 787%
in the past two decades**



**The worldwide
prevalence of ADHD is
estimated at around
3.4% in adults**



Different types of SPD

Sensory Modulation Disorder (SMD)

Impacts sensory processing across single or multiple sensory systems.

Sensory-Based Motor Disorder (SBMD):

Affects balance and motor skills. Includes Postural Disorders and Dyspraxia.

Sensory Discrimination Disorder (SDD):

This may occur across visual, auditory, tactile, smell, taste, vestibular, proprioception, and interoceptive senses.



Section 3:

Types of Neurodiversity

Types of Neurodiversity

It can be overwhelming in itself to consider the broad range of neurodiverse conditions and how these can impact people at work. One way to manage this is by grouping conditions into broader categories. According to the Neurodiversity Working Group at the UK College of Police, three categories can help to segment different types of neurodivergence, i.e. Applied, Clinical and Acquired.

Applied Neurodivergence

Applied Neurodivergence refers to a condition that someone is born with but isn't a pathological condition or health condition. Instead, Applied Neurodivergent conditions are innate, genetic differences, and someone's natural state. People with Applied Neurodivergence may find it difficult to use certain cognitive skills like reading, writing, gross motor control, and numerical cognition. But it's important to note that Applied Neurodivergence occurs across a full range of intellectual abilities.

Dyslexia

People with dyslexia have a different way of learning and processing information from neurotypical individuals. Dyslexia affects accuracy and fluency with word reading and spelling. It can also impact phonological awareness, verbal memory, and verbal processing.



Dyslexia influences at least 1 in 10 people



Over 6 million individuals in the UK have dyslexia and may not have received a diagnosis

Dyspraxia

Also known as Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD), dyspraxia affects movement and specifically fine and/or gross motor coordination. People with dyspraxia can also have problems with organisation, and speech and language. They may find it harder to keep up with conversations and can have difficulty with attention or memory.



Dyspraxia affects up to 10% of the population



2% of people with dyspraxia may be severely affected

Dyscalculia

People who have dyscalculia have a specific difficulty with processing and understanding numbers. And this can lead to problems with mathematics. Also referred to as Developmental Dyscalculia (DD), people with dyscalculia struggle with number sense, memorising arithmetic facts, and showing fluency with calculation.



Estimates suggest around 3% of the population has dyscalculia



60% of people with dyslexia will also have maths learning difficulties

Types of Neurodiversity

Applied Neurodivergence

Continued

Dysgraphia

Dysgraphia affects fine motor skills and shows up as distorted or incorrect writing. It can affect all aspects of writing from legibility to word spacing, spelling to general expression. But it can also show up as problems with spatial perception or even having a tight grip on a pen or pencil.



The prevalence for developmental writing disorders is about 7–15% among school-aged children, with boys being more affected than girls



Children with dysgraphia have a four-to-five-times higher chance of having another learning disability

Others

Other conditions beyond the four we've mentioned include:

- **Synesthesia:** People with synesthesia use blended senses. They can describe visualising music as colours or tasting shapes.
- **Colour Blindness:** People who are colour blind can't experience the sight of colours in a neurotypical way. It can be a genetic and an acquired phenomenon.



“Organisations benefit from the tangible and real-world strengths and abilities to build a neuroinclusive, disability-friendly culture where everyone can thrive. Whilst every individual is unique, there are many reported in-demand skills such as lateral thinking, problem-solving, connecting seemingly disparate ideas, attention to detail, hyper-focus, empathy, and relationship-building, among others. To harness these skills, organisations must be on the front foot and actively create neuro and disability-inclusive environments, practices and policies.

The alternative is that we risk performance management issues, employee disengagement, high rates of employee turnover and reputational damage. Then there is the risk to the individual, the potential for a lost generation, stigmatised and denied access to the working world.”



Dr Deborah Leveroy
Head of Consultancy & Research
neurobox

Types of Neurodiversity

Clinical Neurodivergence

Clinical Neurodivergence refers to people born with a neurological difference that is also considered a health condition. So while the term refers to innate differences, a person with 'Clinical Neurodivergence' will find they have difficulties in communication, behaviour, and social skills.

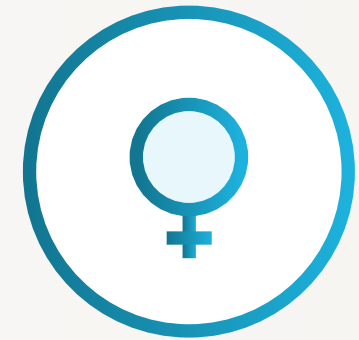
Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)

Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) is a neurological condition and a developmental condition. It affects how people behave and communicate. Individuals with ASC can have specific, restricted interests and repetitive behaviours. They may also have delayed language, movement, or cognitive and learning skills. Specific types of ASC include:

- **Level 1 ASC / Asperger Syndrome:** ASC is a spectrum and people with Asperger syndrome don't often have the same learning disabilities as other people with ASC. Asperger Syndrome may present as a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)
- **Classic Autistic Disorder / Kanner's Syndrome:** Symptoms can include communication difficulties, lack of eye contact, and hypersensitivity to stimuli.
- **PDD-NOS / Pervasive Developmental Disorder / Atypical Autism:** Individuals may show fewer or milder symptoms which can include challenges with social interactions and communication.
- **Rett Syndrome:** Rett Syndrome is a rare condition resulting in a loss of motor skills and language.
- **Childhood Disintegrative Disorder (CDD):** This is a rare disorder that results in a regression of skills such as language or motor skills.



More than 1 in 100 people in the UK has ASC



Rett syndromes impacts around 1 in 10,000 girls born each year. It rarely affects boys

Types of Neurodiversity

Clinical Neurodivergence

Continued

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

ADHD affects people's behaviour. It's marked by inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity which can interfere with functioning or development.

- **Inattention** can include difficulties staying focused on a task or staying organised. It may mean people overlooking or missing details or avoiding tasks that require sustained mental effort.
- **Hyperactivity** may result in a person moving around a lot and in situations when it is not appropriate. They may be 'always on the go' or talk excessively.
- **Impulsivity** can manifest as a lack of appropriate self-control. An example could be interrupting others in the workplace or not thinking through the long-term consequences of actions.



Chief Executive of the ADHD Foundation, Dr Tony Lloyd, has seen a 400% increase in the number of adults seeking an ADHD diagnosis since 2020



ADHD affects around 2% of adults in the UK and is more common in males than females (4:1)

Intellectual and Psychiatric Disabilities, including Down's Syndrome

Intellectual disabilities affect a person's life across three categories: conceptual, social, and practical. This can show up as a lack of empathy, judgement of social norms, or self-care. And while Down's syndrome is classed as an intellectual disability, people with the condition can and do contribute to the working world in many positive and productive ways.



Down's Syndrome affects 1 in every 1,000 babies born in the UK



Individuals with intellectual disabilities have a 40% higher chance of co-morbid psychiatric disabilities

Types of Neurodiversity

Clinical Neurodivergence

Continued

Tourette's Syndrome

People with Tourette's Syndrome suffer from involuntary body movements and noises referred to as 'tics'. Tics can include eye rolling, blinking, jerking of head or limbs, touching objects, touching other people, grimacing and shoulder shrugging. People with vocal tics can also make noises like whistling, coughing, clicking, animal sounds or blurt out random or inappropriate words.



In the UK, Tourette's is thought to affect around 1 percent of the population

Others

Other Clinical Neurodivergent conditions include Epilepsy and Cerebral Palsy.



In the UK, an estimated 633,000 people suffer from Epilepsy



Estimates suggest 1 in 400 babies is born with Cerebral Palsy in the UK

Types of Neurodiversity

Acquired Neurodivergence

Acquired Neurodivergence refers to changes in cognition and behaviour that emerge from a health condition or injury. These types of neurological differences have the potential to resolve as an injury or illness heals. In some cases, though, the neurological differences remain.

Bipolar Disorder, PTSD, OCD, depression, anxiety

Acquired conditions include mental health disorders such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, and depression and anxiety. Bipolar Disorder is one of the most common Acquired Neurodivergent conditions and it's thought that around 1 in 50 people has the disorder. Research also suggests Bipolar Disorder exists on a spectrum, with around 5% of people existing on a spectrum.



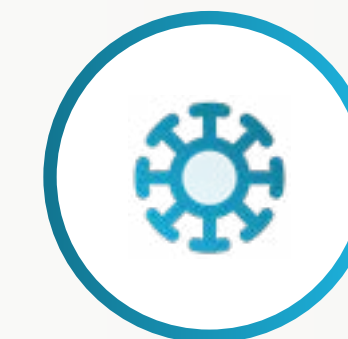
It takes an average of 9.5 years to get a correct diagnosis of bipolar and there is a misdiagnosis an average of 3.5 times

Traumatic brain injuries that alter cognition

Cognitive impairments can happen to individuals following traumatic brain injury and are fairly common. Impairments can impact memory and levels of attention while decreasing concentration and verbal or visual processing. The variety of impairments that follow brain injuries makes rehabilitation complex and sometimes difficult to achieve.

Illnesses or treatments that limit cognition

Some health conditions and illnesses can also impact cognitive function. One example is the number of people who experience what's known as 'Brain Fog' from illness, inflammation, or hormonal imbalances. Conditions that cause Brain Fog include diabetes, hypothyroidism, Multiple Sclerosis, menopause and perimenopause, vitamin deficiencies, and Long-Covid.



Neuropsychiatric symptoms associated with Covid-19 include disrupted sleep, headaches, anxiety, depression, impaired attention, and memory loss, and can affect between 31–69% of people

Others

Other conditions which fall into this category include Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) and Histrionic Personality Disorder (HPD). While people with BPD can have a genetic disposition, it's thought that BPD is a result of problems with neurotransmitters in the brain like serotonin.

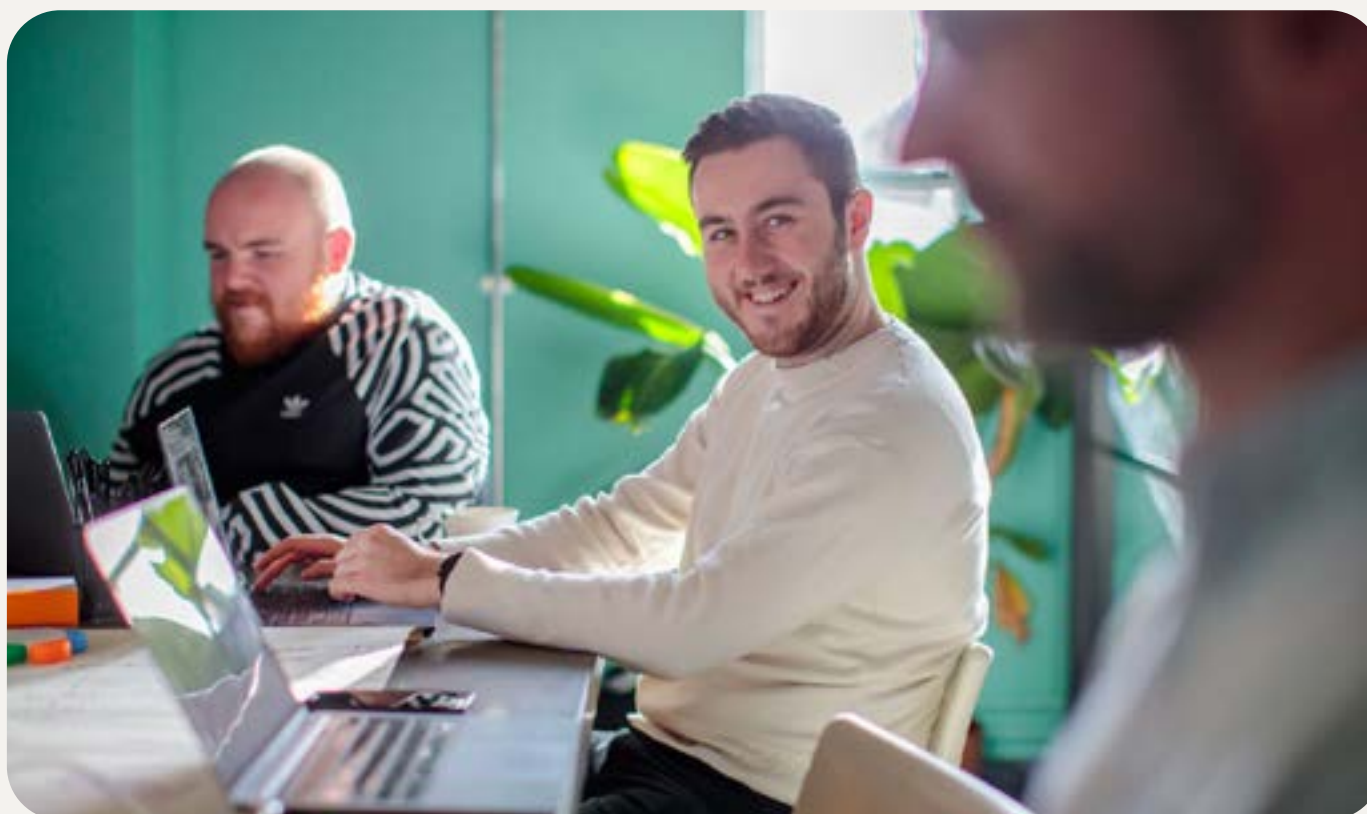


Section 4:

How to Manage and Work with Neurodiverse Candidates and Employees

How to Manage and Work with Neurodivergent Employees: Make Staff Feel Safe

With better knowledge of the range of neurodivergent conditions at hand, what can you do to improve outcomes for neurodivergent staff? We've outlined three ways below. And in the pages that follow, we'll share resources and practical steps aimed at helping you take action in your context.



Reduce stigma

Creating an environment free of stigma and judgement allows staff to feel safe in disclosing their neurodivergent condition. But reducing stigma and normalising neurodiversity can also encourage a workforce to take proactive action in gaining a diagnosis for any symptoms they've been experiencing. Stigmas do exist, on many topics, but are often down to assumptions, lack of knowledge, and stereotyping. Tackling these areas and highlighting the positive impact of neurodiversity at work will help any organisation to make full use of the range of skills that neurodivergent staff offer along with improved outcomes from diversity of thinking and perspectives.

Encourage disclosure

Without sufficient recognition of their abilities, neurodivergent staff can feel disheartened, undermined, and undervalued. At the same time, over-emphasising differences may increase feelings of self-consciousness and a sense of 'otherness'. To find the middle ground, managers and leaders should aim to encourage everyone to embrace neurodiversity. In practice, this may mean fostering an environment where everyone considers themselves to be neurodiverse, with their own individual way of thinking. Doing so will help to normalise neurodiversity and reduce stigmas. But since neurodivergent conditions exist on a spectrum, it can also help everyone to benefit from tools, resources, or environmental adaptations that can improve their productivity and thinking in general.

Develop programmes

Several multinationals have increased levels of neurodiversity through bespoke programmes. JP Morgan, for instance, launched their 'Autism at Work' pilot programme in 2015. They hired 30 individuals with ASC to work on specific areas and gained a 140% increase in productivity. Another example is GCHQ, which now advertises roles specifically for neurodivergent women. Their data suggests neurodivergent women bring new perspectives and ways of thinking that they're missing, and badly need since higher levels of diversity lead to an increased ability to identify and detect potential threats to UK security.



“Ask employees what they need in order to work best. This allows people to raise anything relating to neurodivergence if they wish, but it will also allow people the opportunity to raise things related to other aspects of their identity. And ask this consistently, not just once. Sometimes it takes time for people to feel safe enough to share, and sometimes needs change.”



Jessica Meredith
CEO and Founder
Differing Minds

Recommended Support

Organisations of any size can make a difference to improving neurodiversity in the workplace. Whether it's a small team of two, two hundred, or two thousand, companies at every stage can take practical steps towards more inclusive environments for neurodiversity. To consider what's possible, we've outlined a list of practical steps, resources, stats, and guidance. Each set of recommendations offers specific guidance in a particular context. Bear in mind, these suggestions aren't exclusive to each category but more of a general guide based on potential budgets and company size.



According to a report by PWC, 65% of employees are discussing sensitive topics at work, including diversity

41% said discussing sensitive topics helped them understand their colleagues better

Over 30% said discussing sensitive topics created a more open and inclusive work environment

SME's (Small to Medium Enterprises): < 50 employees, annual turnover < £10M

1. Make reasonable adjustments:

As a bare minimum, The Equality Act 2010 states that all UK companies must make reasonable adjustments for any staff who they know is disabled, if a disabled staff member asks for adjustments, if they have difficulty doing their work or if they're absent due to their disability. Reasonable adjustments should be made when neurodivergent staff come forward to disclose their disability. And while rates of disclosure may be low, highlighting a willingness and priority to make necessary adjustments will go some way to making staff feel safer to disclose.

2. Promote the Access to Work scheme:

Access to Work is a government-funded scheme that offers a grant to employees who may need specific equipment, training, or other support to carry out their jobs. It's worth highlighting that staff do not need a formal diagnosis to get the help they need, funded by the government. Both of CareScribe's assistive technology products, Caption.Ed and TalkType, are available via the Access to Work Scheme. [Reach out to our team](#) if you have any questions about accessing these products via Access to Work.

3. Prioritise neurodiversity internally:

Making a point of talking about neurodiversity, the benefits to a company, and the specialist skills of neurodivergent individuals will encourage a more positive and safe environment. This may mean creating a bespoke statement that includes statistics or relevant information about neurodiversity to share on a company intranet or in online learning modules. It's also worthy of review and discussion in company meetings, during breaks, or with a dedicated 'neurodiversity at work' week of activities, discussions, and learning.

Recommended Support



Employees are 50% less likely to leave workplaces that make tailored adjustments to their needs. Women and ethnically minoritised people are more likely to leave than others

Mid-sized Enterprises: 50 - 250 employees, annual turnover £10M - £50M

1. Audit your environment:

As you've read in this guide, neurodivergent staff can often experience sensory overwhelm or react strongly to lights, sounds, and busy environments. Taking the time to assess the degree of flexibility in these workplace environments can make a huge difference. One way to do this is through an audit that considers the degree of office lighting, level of noise, space, but also the equipment used.

There are organisations that can help with this. For instance, Exceptional Individuals is a UK-based charity providing full cycle workplace audits ranging from a review of recruitment practices and workplace culture to assessing the employee lifecycle. Alternatively, consider your own auditing to determine potential alternatives, for instance finding ways to offer quiet spaces, more controlled lighting, and potential tools like assistive technology that all staff can use.

2. Offer prep time before meetings:

Larger all-staff meetings can be overwhelming for a lot of people, particularly when asked to speak. Medium-sized organisations can support neurodivergent staff—or indeed all staff—by offering pre-reads and run throughs. Preparing ahead of time can help all staff reduce their anxiety levels and increase their sense of confidence.

3. Recognise and reward:

Recognising and rewarding performance-based achievements of neurodivergent staff can drive positivity, reduce stigma, and encourage better disclosure. With careful planning, any recognition or reward scheme aimed at neurodivergent staff should make allowances for their differences. And, by creating a separate recognition scheme for neurodivergent staff, organisations should find their neurotypical peers more inspired to boost their own performance. When they recognise how their peers are rewarded based on an equitable playing field and not one that overlooks the need for support, their motivation to improve performance can increase.

Recommended Support

Larger Organisations:

>250 employees, annual turnover > £50M



Agility in Mind found that despite 99% of FTSE100 companies having an inclusive mission statement, only 37% have a substantial disability initiative, and only 4% offer a neurodiversity initiative

1. Offer tools that everyone can use:

Larger companies may have bigger budgets available for promoting employer branding and staff retention. So rather than just funneling spending towards those who need it, larger firms should make tools available to all staff. For instance, offering assistive technology to everyone can destigmatise neurodivergence while improving productivity for neurotypical staff. Some examples include:

Captioning and note-taking software: Caption.Ed is captioning, transcription, and note-taking software that helps people who are disabled or neurodivergent become more independent. It provides highly accurate, lightning-fast speech-to-text which means users get access to consistent, reliable captioning software. Combine that with the power of in-app note-taking and Caption.Ed is a product which really helps staff thrive in work.

Transcription and dictation software: TalkType dictation software is another CareScribe product. Users rave about how intuitive and easy to use it is, making it the go-to dictation software for reducing stress, increasing productivity, and supporting people to feel more confident at work.

Text-to-Speech technology: Reading text on a screen out loud, or to a user through headphones, can support deeper comprehension and understanding for individuals with dyslexia, dyspraxia, or ADHD.

Noise-cancelling headphones: By reducing background noises, noise-cancelling headphones can improve focus and reduce anxiety. People with ASD also report how they're particularly effective in handling loud or chaotic environments.

Accessibility tools: Many digital tools can improve accessibility for neurodivergent staff. For example, Ayoa is an AI-powered mind mapping tool that promotes visual learning and eliminates distractions.

Sensory toys that reduce anxiety: A range of sensory toys can help individuals to feel more connected to their bodies and reduce their levels of anxiety. Toys to consider include fidget spinners, vibrating pillows, and speed cubes (think Rubik's cubes of different shapes).

2. Give managers neurodiversity training:

Neurodiversity is a complex and unknown area for many people. But through education, it's possible to increase confidence levels and drive positive change. Organisations like The Brain Charity run dedicated neurodiversity training schemes. These can help upskill and educate managers to feel more confident in taking proactive action to recognise and actively support neurodiversity within their teams.



“Embracing neurodiversity in the workplace means recognising that every mind is a masterpiece of its own design. Just as colours create a beautiful painting, a spectrum of minds empowers our collective journey. Remember, not all chapters of someone’s story are shared openly; some will choose to whisper their struggles while others remain silent. By fostering a culture of understanding and awareness, we create a canvas where every stroke of brilliance, whether diagnosed or unspoken, is valued. In this gallery of diverse minds, let’s paint a safe space where authenticity thrives, conversations flow, and the narrative of each unique wiring finds its place.”



Alicia Teagle
Co-Founder/Director
SR2

How to Manage and Work with Neurodivergent Candidates: Adjust the Candidate Experience

Improving workplace neurodiversity must run into employer branding and sourcing, i.e. from the point of recruitment. With the right approach and an open mind, small changes to recruitment and HR practice can increase the chances of creating a workplace of acceptance, encouragement, and one that staff want to stay with.



Include neurodiversity

Using [inclusive language](#) in the recruitment process can aid in building a pipeline of neurodiverse staff by creating safety. For instance, candidates with a diagnosed neurodivergence may fear stigma or judgement and may choose not to disclose. Many want to avoid jeopardising their chances of securing employment and especially if they sense an employer may not support them. So what does being more inclusive in the selection, hiring, and onboarding process mean? We've outlined some practical examples in the next section.

Don't penalise

A big part of promoting neurodiversity lies in accepting differences. Unconscious biases can influence a hiring panel to exclude candidates based on race, nationality, or social class. But judging candidates on their spelling and grammar, presentation skills, or gaps in employment can do the same too. Dyslexic students in particular may find it harder to complete writing tasks, or worry about how they'll be perceived. Without knowledge and experience of dyslexia, hiring panels may judge writing abilities over content. Making a point to avoid penalising candidates can make an employee feel safer to eventually disclose their differences.

Design training

Making improvements to hiring and selection can also improve the onboarding process because it dictates the need for creating and redesigning training materials. Onboarding should include flexibility to accommodate the full spectrum of workplace neurodiversity. For instance, training packs should be available in a range of formats from written digital material to audio and video. This should also apply to online and in-person training. Workplace training set-ups should also be mindful of potential distractions and risks of overstimulation. New staff should be able to engage with and focus on training. But also, after onboarding, firms should offer ongoing training on how to recognise and support neurodiversity with teams and colleagues.

Recommended Support

A range of opportunities to shape and improve rates of workplace neurodiversity through the candidate experience is open to companies of all sizes.



The worldwide prevalence of ADHD is estimated at around 3.4% in adults

SME's (Small to Medium Enterprises): < 50 employees, annual turnover < £10M

1. Become a Disability Confident employer:

Disability Confident is a free, voluntary scheme developed by employers and disabled people's representatives. Accreditation to become a Disability Confident Committed employer lasts around three years in duration. The scheme helps in several ways, including ensuring recruitment practices are inclusive and accessible. Displaying a Disability Confident badge also helps to show neurodiverse candidates you're an inclusive employer when checking your website or job postings.

2. Design an inclusive pipeline:

Becoming a Disability Confident employer also means committing to creating at least one new pipeline opportunity for disabled people to join your organisation. This may mean creating either an internship, apprenticeship, traineeship, or job shadowing opportunities. This, of course, will not only help you to bring in new staff at an early stage but will also feed your pipeline of neurodivergent applicants who recognise your inclusivity and commitment.

3. Create a Diversity Style Guide of Inclusive Language:

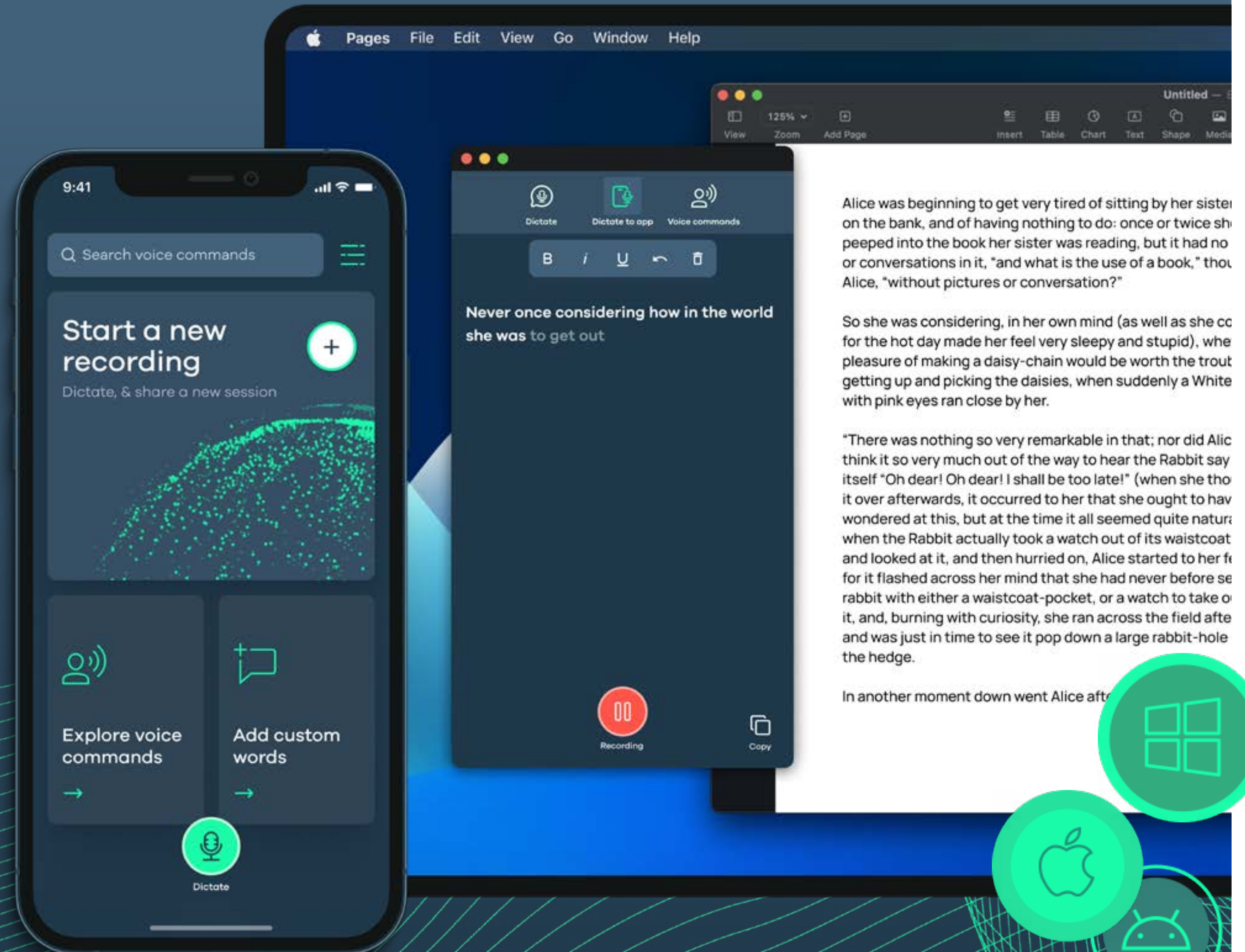
Leadership can increase hiring teams confidence in neurodiversity by providing a style guide to inform their job descriptions and job postings. For instance, referring to applicants as 'neurodivergent' shows regard for differences in thinking without prejudice. And a style guide can include other appropriate words to use along with those to avoid. Also, consider accessibility for neurodivergent applications too such as those with dyslexia. The BDA produces a dyslexia-friendly style guide-aligned with WCAG-which highlights the best format to present written material in. For instance, it's better to use certain colours, headings, and fonts for people with dyslexia.

TalkType

Highly accurate, lightning-fast dictation software

Compatible with Windows, Mac
and mobile devices, TalkType helps
professionals thrive at work.

Book your 121 demo with the team



Recommended Support



The pay gap for employees with disabilities was 13.8% in 2021, where employees with disabilities continue to earn less than employees without disabilities



22% of autistic people were in work in 2021, the lowest among the disabilities analysed

Mid-sized Enterprises: 50 - 250 employees, annual turnover £10M - £50M

1. Upskill Line Managers:

Changing wordings and document formats is one thing. But real, long-lasting organisational change is usually a result of significant behavioural change. Managers and senior staff must feel confident to display skills in using inclusive language and using neurodiversity-appropriate approaches to hiring. But they may also carry biases or prejudices that can be explored and worked on. Several resources are available such as CPD eLearning modules on Neurodiversity for Line Managers. Or, if you need a more hands-on and personal or ongoing approach, neurodiversity awareness training or coaching is available from many places, such as organisations like neurobox.

2. Facilitate support networks:

The bigger the company, the higher the chances of hiring neurodivergent staff. Of course, these staff members may or may not have formally disclosed their condition. Instead, larger firms can aim to instigate or promote dedicated support groups where staff can discuss their challenges. This will not only help organisations make improvements, but also help to optimise performance. A great example of this is the Civil Service Dyslexia and Dyspraxia Network which aims to improve experiences for people with dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia in Civil Service. And they do this through a bespoke Line Managers toolkit.

Recommended Support



Employers often require a formal, costly diagnosis to provide adjustments. This can lead to some neurodivergent workers feeling unsupported and leaving employment. The National Autistic Society suggests 45% of neurodivergent people have lost or left their job because of challenges due to being misunderstood

Larger Organisations: >250 employees, annual turnover > £50M

1. Host events:

Event marketing is a strong and powerful way to not only boost neurodiversity inclusion but to also demonstrate an organisation's commitment to it. By designing an event that's fully accessible for neurodivergent employees and showcases positive examples of the adjustments made to boost inclusion, productivity, and innovation. Virtual and in-person events can also offer other organisation's a benchmark to aim for while role modelling best practices.

2. Normalise neurodivergence:

Handling a Zoom or MS Teams call can be overstimulating and affect concentration levels for neurodivergent people. As a default, providing site-wide licences to appropriate assistive technology software is not only inclusive but will boost comprehension levels for neurotypical staff too.

3. Include support for neurodiversity within benefits packages:

Workplace assessments and reasonable adjustments are legal requirements for companies. But going beyond that, employers might consider offering additional benefits on top based on selecting from a range of optional benefits. For instance, some employers may offer a choice of therapeutic well-being days, one-to-one mental health support, or the provision of bespoke assistive technology tools that could attract more neurodivergent applicants.

How to Manage and Work with Neurodivergent Employees: Enable Leadership

A more urgent need to improve outcomes for neurodiversity in the workplace sits with leadership. A 2021 report by Tortoise Media and the Valuable 500 revealed there were no senior execs or senior managers with a disclosed disability in any FTSE 100 company. And this included those who 'preferred not to say' or didn't disclose.



Model disclosure

Encouraging leadership to seek diagnoses, disclose their differences, and actively embrace them will help to offer safer environments for staff. When senior execs can confidently model neurodiversity, inside and outside the organisation, it can also influence senior stakeholders and board members. Leadership holds much power and influence over workplace habits, cultures, and values, and when these are actively modeled by leadership it gives others permission and encouragement to do the same.

Promote advocacy

Leaders who don't identify with neurodivergence can still make a difference by becoming advocates. Leadership advocates can actively keep neurodiversity on everyone's agenda while championing neurodiversity from all angles. Encouraging advocacy across the leadership spectrum—from C-Suite to SMT to Board Member and Head of People—can reinforce the importance of neurodiversity. But it also serves as a reminder of its importance in promoting innovation, problem-solving, creative thinking, and increased staff retention.

Target results

As a global partnership of companies seeking to end disability exclusion in the workplace, [The Valuable 500](#) highlights how disability inclusion is missing from company targets, metrics, and KPIs. They make recommendations to support better disclosure and targeting of neurodiversity as a marker of competitive advantage. And by including outcomes and targets in reporting, it goes a further step forward to normalising neurodiversity, reducing stigma, and creating safer and more productive environments for staff.

Recommended Support

Leaders at all levels can make a difference regardless of organisation size. We recommend some guidance below.



20-40% of entrepreneurs have dyslexia, according to a study by Professor Julie Logan of Cass Business School in London. This is significantly higher than the estimated 10% of the UK with dyslexia



Only 49% of survey respondents were extremely or very confident their employer was transparent in addressing diversity and inclusion in the workplace, according to PWC

SME's (Small to Medium Enterprises): < 50 employees, annual turnover < £10M

1. Encourage CEOs to mentor other CEOs:

Entrepreneurs and CEO's of SME's and start-ups are more likely to have dyslexia than the general population, according to the Cass Business School in London. The reasons for this aren't fully clear, but nonetheless, the chances are up to 40% higher that a start-up founder will have dyslexia. More established SME founders and entrepreneurs with recognised dyslexia should consider mentoring or coaching other leaders in neurodiversity. By offering regular mentoring, they not only help other CEOs to improve their business decision-making but upskill them in becoming an ambassador for neurodiversity.

2. Support Neurodiversity Celebration Week:

SMEs and start-ups are notoriously busy and may be challenged in prioritising many different initiatives and programmes. Neurodiversity Celebration Week is one way to mark calendars for March each year and get involved on social media. Signing up to participate can signpost your commitment and support, particularly if you can get leadership to post on their social channels too.

Mid-sized Enterprises: 50 - 250 employees, annual turnover £10M - £50M

1. Appoint Neurodiversity Champions:

Medium-sized organisations should consider appointing individuals to champion and promote neurodiversity across their organisation. Acting as a touchpoint for all staff, neurodiversity champions can help to oversee processes, support changes, and feed into senior management meetings or agendas with data on progress.

Neurodiversity champions don't have to be SMT or senior leaders, but they do have to influence and engage others at a senior level. This may include attendance at Senior Executive meetings.

2. Offer SMT and Senior leaders Neurodiversity Awareness training:

Neurodiversity Specialists is a training organisation that offers half-day or full-day training in Neurodiversity Awareness. It's founded by a BDA workplace needs assessor who covers the full range of neurodivergent conditions and differences in thinking. They can tailor training to specific staff and also offer training for HR and recruitment leaders.

Recommended Support



The Valuable 500 suggest only 12 out of 100 FTSE companies reported on neurodiversity in their annual or company reports and only 5% issue board-level statements on disability

Larger Organisations: >250 employees, annual turnover > £50M

1. Join the Generation Valuable programme:

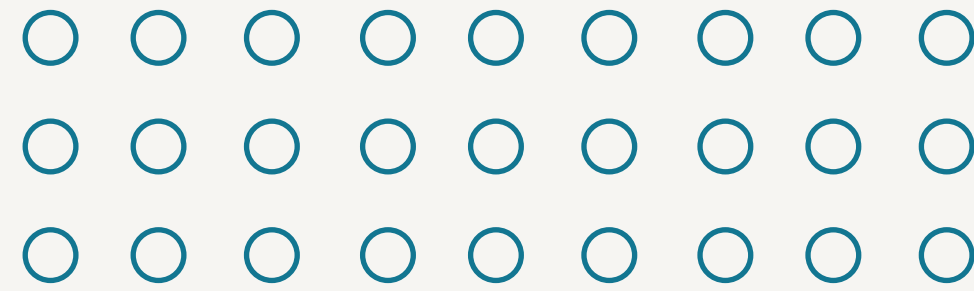
The Valuable 500 is a global collective of 500 companies such as Pearson, Sony, and Accenture committed to improving outcomes for people with disabilities by encouraging leadership to make this a priority. Generation Valuable is their bespoke training programme for C-Suite business leaders in Valuable 500 companies. Featuring global experts in disability inclusion and leadership development, the programme runs over 12 months with access to an executive mentor, networking opportunities, and training modules like Personal Identity Development, Strategic Thinking, and Creative Leadership.

2. Appoint a Chief of Continuous Improvement:

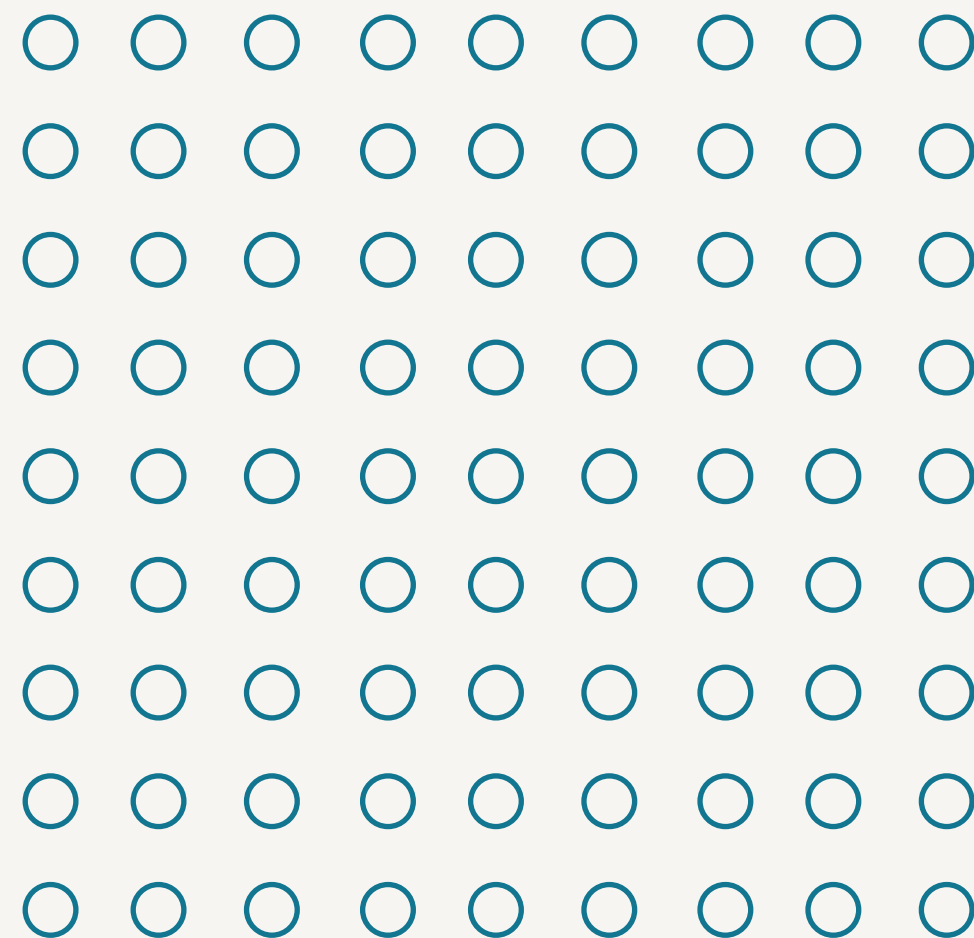
The ideal situation to promote neurodiversity at leadership level is to encourage people with neurodivergence to get into leadership positions. Or, indeed, for those in leadership positions to feel comfortable disclosing their differences. So rather than placing neurodiversity under a general EDI banner or responsibility, a Chief of Continuous Improvement—as demonstrated at Rolls Royce and other UK companies—can help to move the agenda forward by talking up the benefits of nurturing neurodivergence at work.

3. Report progress with data:

Very few organisations report on the progress they make on neurodiversity. Neither are they open about senior level executives with neurodivergent conditions. Including data on support given to neurodivergent staff helps to reaffirm a message of inclusion internally and externally, but also to senior stakeholders and board members. The Chief of Continuous Improvement or other neurodiversity champions can take up responsibility for reporting. But creating a model for reporting can help to ensure it's consistent and included in any annual report and accounts.



Key Summary

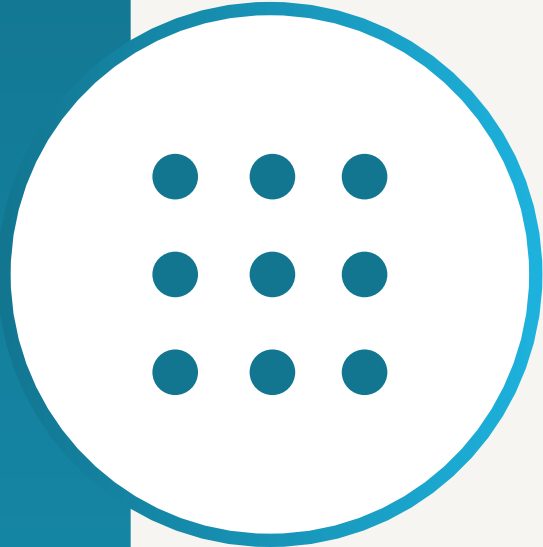


Multiple workplace barriers exist for neurodivergent employees that can prevent them from securing and staying in employment. But organisations that don't make efforts to improve neurodiversity at work are not only doing them a disservice but are missing out. Neurodivergent staff bring many talents in different ways. But some commonalities can include greater creativity, better problem-solving, data visualisation, graphic design, and empathy for others.

With many organisations facing uncertainty in how they should break down barriers, embracing and celebrating neurodiversity starts with greater knowledge, training, and awareness raising. Better neurodiversity at work brings a greater range of thinking styles that can improve workplace innovation and offer competitive advantages.

Despite this, the employment gap for neurodivergent workers isn't closing. And this means companies of all sizes must take proactive steps to create safer, more supportive environments that are more accepting of differences and better able to support them.

Supporting neurodiversity at work takes a multi-faceted approach rather than a checkbox approach. Appointing neurodiversity champions and encouraging leadership to disclose will be impactful. But it shouldn't absolve everyone else of doing their part and empowering all staff to increase their knowledge while they make the effort to share the impact they make both externally and internally.

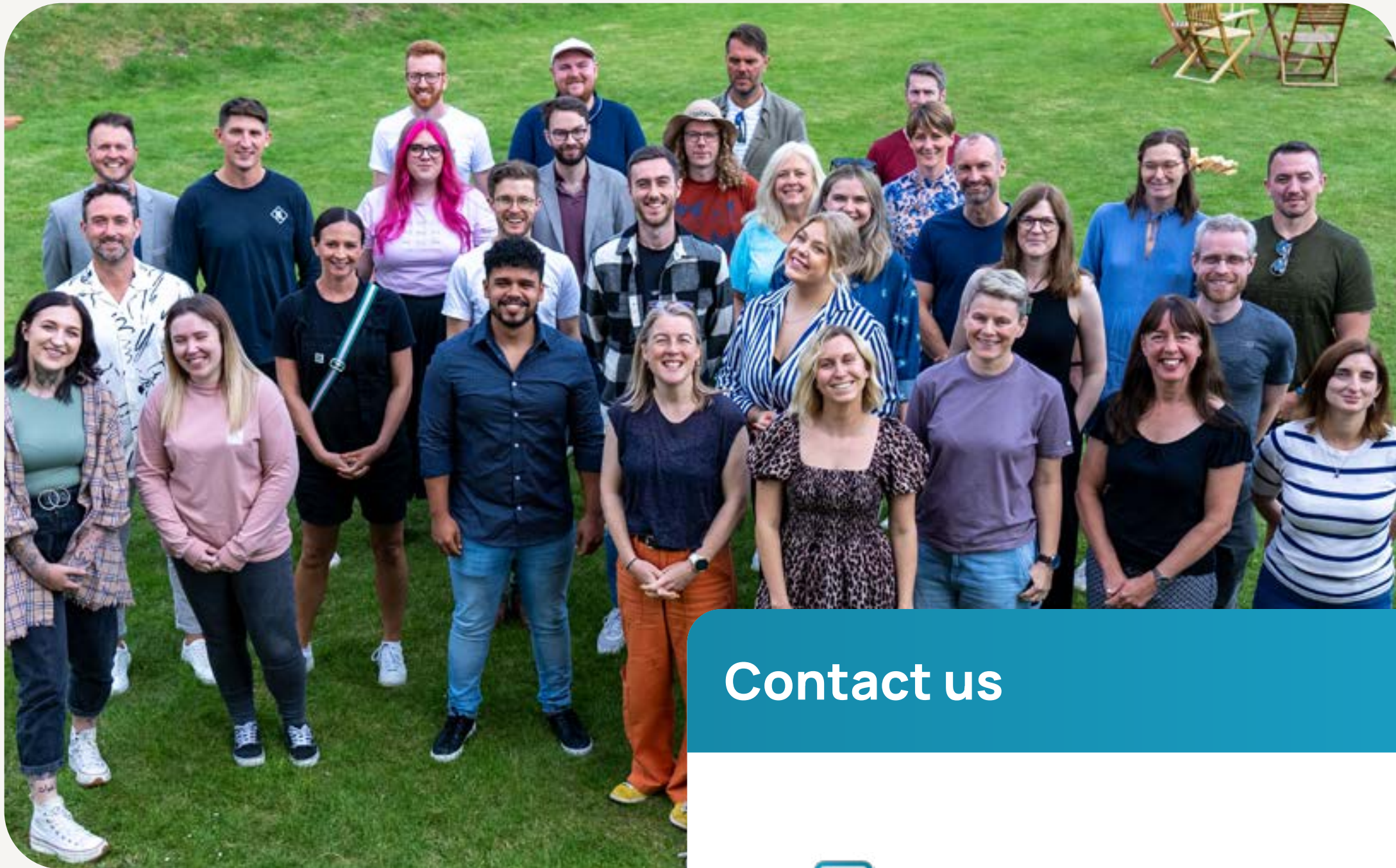


About CareScribe

This ebook is produced by [Carescribe](#), an assistive technology company based in Bristol, UK. CareScribe is on a mission to create accessible software that empowers people with disabilities to capture and comprehend information.

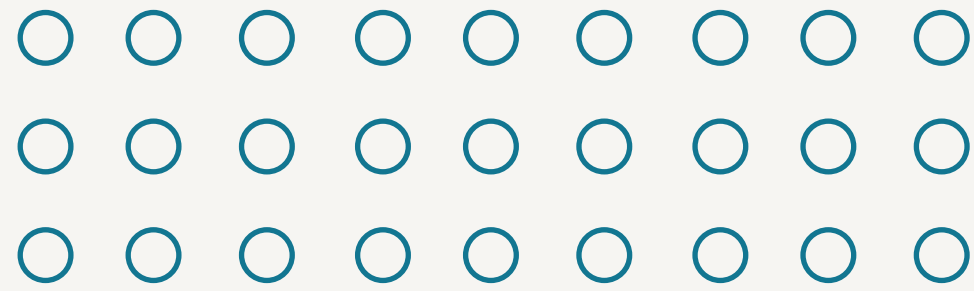
Our vision is to help people with disabilities work and study independently. We do that by building award-winning assistive technology - including [Caption.Ed](#) and [TalkType](#) - that helps remove barriers and our products are used by thousands of people worldwide daily.

Want to know how Carescribe can help boost productivity in your workplace? Our team of experts can help you review the best approach to your needs. Whether you need help with an Access to Work justification for one of our products or want to understand how best to roll out our assistive technology across your organisation, we'd be delighted to support.

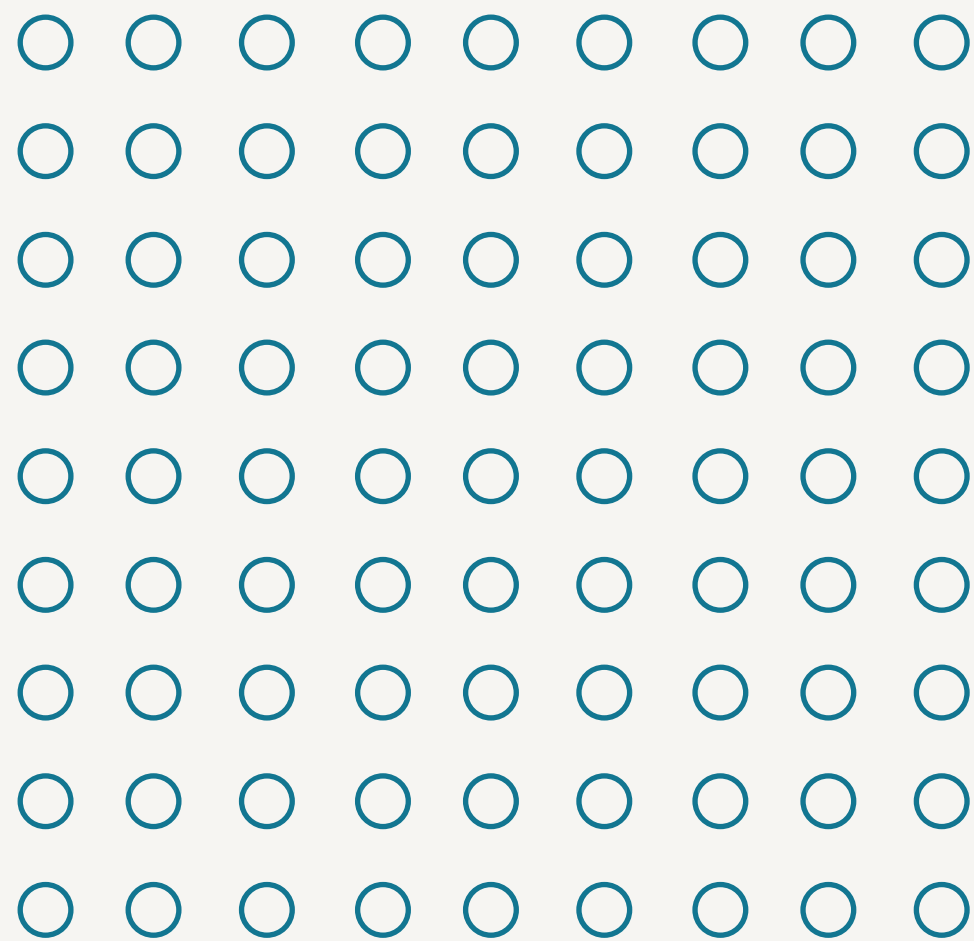


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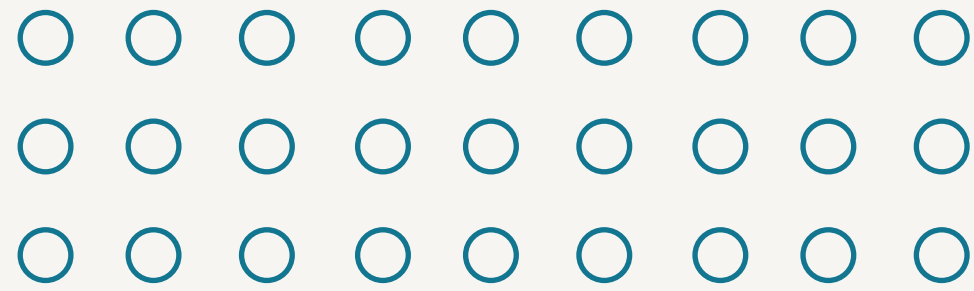
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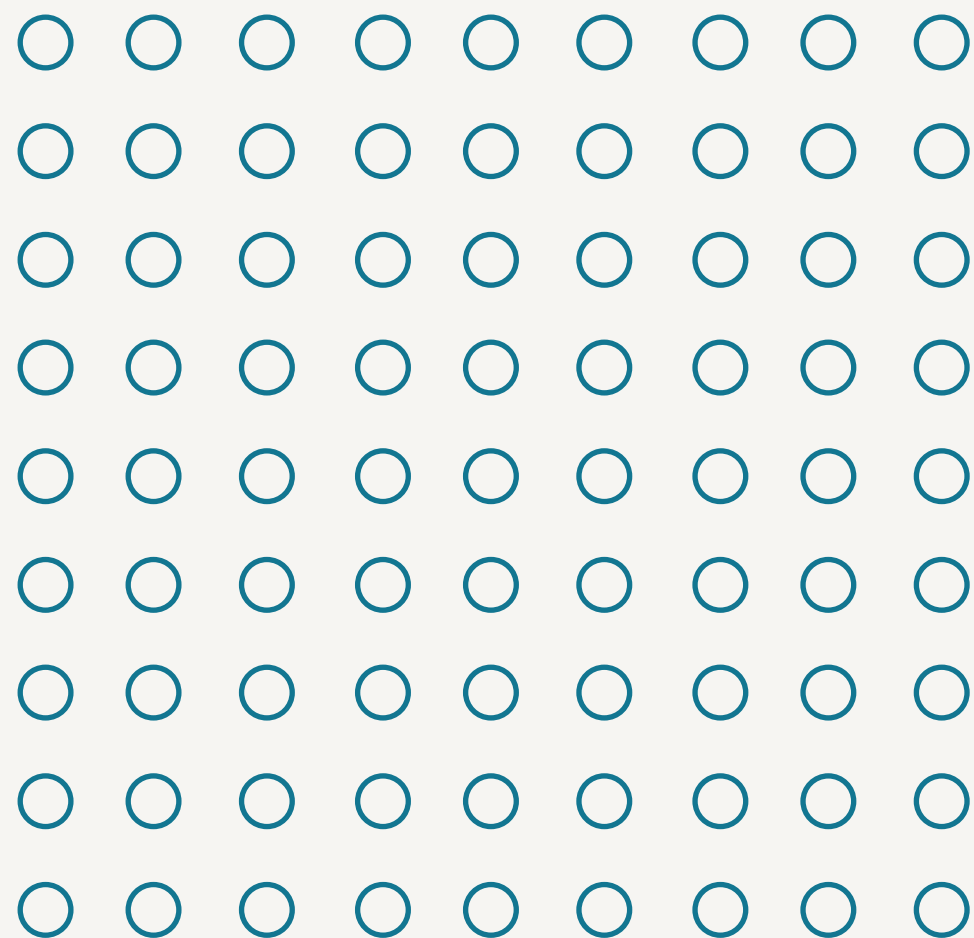
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