

4.6 Awareness of conditions

Awareness that staff had certain neurological conditions had increased over time for both employers. In the first case, this was partly influenced by neurodiversity amongst the students that they served and in the second it was, in part, due to the fact that some senior employees with neurological conditions had raised the profile of neurodiversity.

Despite increasing awareness it is still key that employers are proactive in providing information on neurodiversity for those with a neurological condition as much as for those without. Employees with neurological conditions are not always fully aware of the ways in which their condition might affect their ability to perform particular work tasks. Even if they were diagnosed with the condition at an early age and have learned ways of coping with particular aspects of it, they may encounter different challenges in a work environment.

Having access to a network of employees with neurological conditions was a source of information for all employees. Awareness and access to support were also increased by having role-models at all levels willing to talk about their neurological condition. However, at times neurodivergent employees were not aware of what was available to them, leading some to access support only after a period of time in employment. This indicates the need to regularly publicise networks and activities through a range of channels so that individuals can make full use of resources in a timely manner.

The research from the case studies found mixed views on the need for specific training on neurodiversity for line managers given that only a subset would have line management responsibility for a neurodivergent employee at any given point in time. There was, however, general agreement that greater awareness by all employees of neurological conditions and possible adaptations would be beneficial. Experts echoed the views that *all* employees should have greater awareness of neurodiversity, however, they emphasised the importance of giving line managers training and support in relation to the neurodivergent staff they are directly responsible for.

4.7 Support for individuals

Some aspects of good support and management apply to employees generally, not just those with neurological conditions. For example, clear instructions given verbally and in writing, ensuring that staff are not overloaded or placed under excessive time-pressure, providing a working environment free of distractions and encouraging employees to discuss ways of working together effectively. Additionally, allowing employees to channel themselves into tasks where they could excel, rather than demanding that they continue to perform tasks to which they are less suited would benefit the majority.

However, some practices do need to be tailored to the individual to take account of their condition; for example, giving staff with autism advanced notice of any changes so that they could be fully-prepared. Similarly, an expert interviewee highlighted the importance of communicating in an unambiguous manner and leading discussions and solution-finding for those with autism.

Another important channel of support was the networks for staff with neurological conditions. In addition to raising awareness they were a source of support for employees and were particularly invaluable to those recently diagnosed or

experiencing problems. Also useful was the support available from neurodivergent colleagues being visible role-models and acting as mentors for their co-workers.

In addition to thinking about employees' roles and their working environment, consideration needs to be given to a wider range of situations, for example training. Issues to consider here are the pace of training, the mode of delivery and the way in which course materials are provided. Awareness of some people's difficulty in activities that might seem everyday, such as reading aloud or writing on a flipchart, is also important.

An essential factor in providing appropriate support is to understand that symptoms or difficulties are not necessarily shared by those with the same condition or in fact may not be consistent for an individual at any given time. For example, a stressful situation may lead to difficulties being more apparent. Being aware of and dispelling myths around neurological conditions would also be beneficial in providing appropriate support.

One of the benefits of having a number of employees with a particular condition is that employers became familiar with appropriate adjustments and established practices to aid their staff. This is more problematic where the employer did not have a previous history of putting in place adjustments for employees with a particular neurological condition, as it took time to establish what adjustments might be feasible.

4.8 Support for employers

There were signs that unless employers (or employees) are willing to pay for external support, it can be difficult to get timely, tailored support that takes into account existing technology and the most low-cost adaptations. There appeared to be a distinct difference of views on the quality of external support in the college in comparison to the private sector firm. In the latter support was often paid for by the firm and considered good. The company employed a third party to do assessments which they believed resulted in adjustments being put into place quicker, thereby enabling employees to sooner have tools to proceed with their work more effectively. However, this indicates that smaller companies or those which can less afford to pay for advice may have less easy access to support.

One suggestion for support to employers was a straightforward guide of the adaptations that might be necessary depending on an employee's traits. It was felt this could be a good starting point to discuss potential adaptations. The main criticism of external support was the lack of a single website with links to other sources of information.

4.9 Benefits of a neurodiverse workforce

Respondents felt employers could benefit from having employees who thought differently and had particular strengths, provided it was possible to put in place ways of minimising any areas of weakness. Additionally, it was thought by some that having a neurologically diverse workforce could be used to gain a competitive advantage if positive traits were harnessed effectively. Indeed some neurodivergent individuals attributed their career advancement to their condition to some extent, stating skills such as the ability to think laterally, be creative and

think a few steps ahead as factors in their progression. Respondents also recognised that there was neurodiversity amongst clients so it was useful to have employees who had an insight into this. One employee highlighted that successful applicants need to be of a certain quality, and that losing them or not enabling them to deliver to their full potential was wasteful.

Similarly, expert interviewees highlighted the potential benefits of having neurodivergent employees, giving examples such as, creativity, high ability and consistency in tasks once well-trained and bringing a different perspective which could result in innovation and original solutions to problems.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Summary

Some aspects of what works are just good practice generally, for example ensuring that staff are clear on what is expected of them, making employees feel supported in raising any problems that they encounter, and offering training to help them to carry out their job and fulfil their potential. Additionally, having some flexibility in job roles to allow individuals to play to their strengths, rather than a rigid approach which takes no account of comparative advantage is beneficial for all staff, but more so for those who are neurodivergent.

However, certain actions do need to be taken to improve employment for those with a neurological condition. Greater awareness and understanding of neurodiversity through training of all employees as well as increased visibility through employee networks, mentoring and role-models can greatly aid the employment experience of neurodivergent individuals. Furthermore, employers will need to put adjustments in place, adapt roles and organise things differently in order to successfully employ neurodivergent staff. When employers are aware of their employees' neurological conditions, the onus to implement support should be on the employer rather than the individual, as would be the case for non-hidden disabilities.

Employers need more information on the adaptations that might be required. This would enable them to make more informed employment decisions and might break down some of the barriers, at least for some. Adaptations do not necessarily have to be complex or costly and combined with fostering greater tolerance and acceptance of diversity will bring advantages to the employer as well as for their staff. Moreover, diagnosis of a condition is not the necessary starting point for support; if employers have sufficiently high awareness they can put measures into place to support their employees without the need for formal identification of a condition.

It is also crucial for employers to be aware that these neurological conditions are spectrum conditions. Characteristics will vary across individuals and how they cope with the associated characteristics of their condition will differ at points in time. Ultimately, the employer needs to gain awareness and a good understanding of the person separate to the label of their condition.

5.2 Limitations and areas for further analysis

The findings have been drawn from only two case studies; these were a medium and large employer. There may be differences in smaller workplaces and those in which there are a wider range of conditions; in this study participants mostly reported having dyslexia. The research examined neurodiversity in mainstream employment and as employees self-select into jobs and employers, the neurodivergent individuals who participated in the study are those able to function in a conventional employment environment. Thus, the needs of those who are less able to do so are not examined here.

APPENDIX A - TOPIC GUIDE FOR EXPERT INTERVIEWS

Explain interested in mainstream, not supported, employment.
Recognise variation across individuals – and also overlap between neuroatypical conditions.

Barriers

1. What are the main barriers to the employment of people with <condition>?
Explore different stages: Recruitment, retention, progression, dismissal
Different types of jobs, different types of people

Employer measures

2. What are the main things employers should do to ensure people with <condition> fully participate in mainstream employment?
Explore strategic approaches, as well as specific measures
3. What makes for the most effective management of people with <condition> as a whole, and at an individual line manager level?
4. What are the main measures employers should take to ensure people with <condition> are not disadvantaged:
 - a. in recruitment *advertisements (where, style, content); application forms; interviews; tests; other selection methods,*
 - b. on recruitment/induction
 - c. are trained *receive and benefit from training*
 - d. perform *performance management approaches; targets*
how manage underperformance and capability issues (including, e.g. interpersonal conflict between neuroatypical and neurotypical colleagues?)
 - e. progress
 - f. are retained
5. Are employees with <condition> vulnerable to disciplinary action/dismissal by their employers, owing to their condition? CORE ISSUE FOR THE STUDY
concerned with unmerited/wrongful/discriminatory action
 - a. How does vulnerability to disciplinary action/dismissal occur (*e.g. lack of recognition of atypicality by the employer or the employee; employers' failure to manage behaviours relating (directly or indirectly) to atypicality; employers' lack of knowledge to know how to manage behaviours*)?
 - b. How can the risks of disciplinary action/dismissal be minimised?
6. Are there other things employers should be doing to support their employees (and potential recruits) with <condition>?
 - a. Job redesign (tasks, time, teams)
 - b. Movement between jobs
 - c. Aids and adaptations
 - d. Action against bullying
7. Are their measures employers should be taking in relation to other employees to improve the employment of people with <condition>?
 - a. How can employees' interaction with employees with <condition> be improved?
 - b. And with employees with neuroatypical conditions in general?
 - c. How can employees' awareness of neurodiversity issues be improved?

Disclosure

8. Are there particular issues around disclosure and neurological conditions?
 - a. How should employers deal with workers who they suspect might have a neurological condition where there has been no disclosure?

General

9. How can employers become 'disability confident' (to borrow a phrase from the Government campaign¹⁴) with regard to:
 - a. <condition>
 - b. neurological development conditions in general
10. What are the potential benefits to employers of attracting and maintaining a neurodiverse workforce? In respect of :
 - a. <condition>
 - b. neurological development conditions in general
11. What are the potential risks to employers of failing to attract and maintain a neurodiverse workforce? In respect of :
 - a. <condition>
 - b. neurological development conditions in general
12. And the risks for employers which fail to take adequate measures for their neurodiverse employees? In respect of :
 - a. <condition>
 - b. neurological development conditions in general
13. Where can employers go for help and assistance? *Websites, documentation; advice, training, consultancy; free, cost; quality. What issues covered.*

Employer case study suggestions

14. Suggestions for case studies?
 - a. *Why good; what doing*
 - b. *Contacts (as much detail as possible) – or them to contact*

Anything else

15. Prevalence
 - a. How widespread is <condition> within mainstream work currently?
 - b. Are they aware of any reliable estimates as to the size of the UK working population with <condition>
16. What is current understanding like among employers generally about employment of staff with <condition>...
 - a. is it something that even figures in their thoughts,
 - b. is it gaining currency,
 - c. are there myths (or else legitimate worries) to overcome?
17. Anything else to add?

¹⁴ The mission statement for which is... "To remove barriers, increase understanding and ensure that disabled people have the opportunities to fulfil their potential and realise their aspirations. Employers are crucial to improving employment outcomes for disabled people"

APPENDIX B - TOPIC GUIDES FOR CASE STUDIES

Topic guide – HR manager

Permission to record interview? [to reduce need for note-taking].

Anonymity.

Neurological conditions that will be the focus – dyslexia, dyspraxia, autism and ADHD.

Purpose of study – to inform guide to best practice by talking to HR manager, employees with particular neurological conditions and their line managers.

Explain interested in mainstream, not supported, employment.

Recognise variation between individuals – and also overlap between neurological conditions.

About interviewee	
Job title	Check that person with primary responsibility for HR at workplace.
What does your role cover?	e.g. recruitment and selection; equal opportunities and diversity; disciplinary and grievance procedures; training; promotions etc?
Does your role cover this site alone or a number of sites?	If single site: How many employees work here? If multiple sites: How many employees are employed across the sites that you are responsible for?
Employment of neurodiverse employees	
To your knowledge, does <organisation> currently employ people with:	
Dyslexia	If so (for each condition): Approximately how many? How many in total (given that some may have multiple conditions)?
Dyspraxia	
Autism	
ADHD?	
Has the number of people with these neurological conditions employed by <organisation> changed over time?	If so: In what way? What has caused it to change?
Does the organisation formally monitor numbers?	If so: How long has the organisation been monitoring numbers?
How high do you think awareness of these neurological conditions is amongst:	
your employees in general?	

line managers in general?	
line managers of neurodiverse employees?	
colleagues of neurodiverse employees?	
Do you think that awareness varies by condition?	If so: Which conditions do you think staff are generally most aware of?
Does <organisation> take any particular action to raise awareness of neurodiversity?	If so: What type of action? What prompted the decision to take action? Is the action targeted specifically at employees or line managers working with neurodiverse employees, or at the workforce in general?
In addition to any action to raise awareness, does <organisation> take any action to improve interactions between employees and those with neurological conditions?	If so: What sort of actions?
What are the main barriers to employing neurodiverse employees?	Do the barriers vary by condition? Are there myths to overcome? Are there legitimate concerns/barriers to overcome?
Neurodiversity policy and practice	
Does <organisation> have an explicit policy on neurodiversity?	If so: What does this cover? If not: Is it implicitly covered by other policies? If so: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the fact that neurodiversity is implicitly covered communicated to other employees/line managers in any way?
Moving on to practices, does <organisation> take any special measures to ensure people with these neurological conditions are not disadvantaged in:	
the recruitment process?	e.g. advertisements (where, style, content); application forms;

	interviews; tests; other selection methods.
on recruitment/induction?	e.g. tailored induction; workplace assessment; additional support during probation period; training for colleagues/line managers etc.
training?	receive and benefit from training
performance appraisal and management?	e.g. target setting; managing underperformance and capability issues; dealing with interpersonal conflict between neurodiverse employees, bullying etc; line management, including support for line managers.
retention?	
Are particular routes for progression more suited to employees with particular neurological conditions?	
Is it more difficult for those with particular neurological conditions to progress e.g. because it is difficult for the organisation to offer career paths suitable for all?	
Do you have explicit written policies in relation to neurodiversity on each of these topics?	Recruitment process On recruitment/induction Training Performance appraisal and management Retention Progression
Do you monitor each of these activities (listed previously) in terms of neurodiversity?	e.g. recording the number of people with disclosed neurological conditions applying for jobs; being shortlisted for interview; being recruited, promoted etc.
Do you review each of these areas of activity to identify any potential indirect discrimination against employees with neurological conditions?	
What makes for the most effective management of people with these neurological conditions as a whole, and at an individual line manager level?	
Are there some key things that apply to all conditions?	
Are there any important differences in approach necessary between different neurological conditions, or between employees depending on neurodiversity?	
Disciplinary action/dismissal	
Are employees with neurological conditions vulnerable to disciplinary action/dismissal, owing to their condition?	Particularly interested in unmerited/wrongful/discriminatory action If so: Why are they particularly vulnerable to this? e.g. lack of recognition of impact of

	condition by the employer or the employee; employers' failure to manage behaviours relating (directly or indirectly) to condition; employers' lack of knowledge to know how to manage behaviours; discrimination.
How does <organisation> seek to minimise any risks of disciplinary action or dismissal as a result of neurological conditions?	
Other support available within the workplace	
Does <organisation> do any of these other things to help employees and potential recruits with neurological conditions:	
Job redesign (tasks, time, teams)	e.g. adjusting start and finish times; assigning particular tasks to other team members etc.
Movement between jobs	e.g. moving people to a more suitable job.
Aids and adaptations	Use of Access to Work; or paid for by the employer?
Action against bullying	If so: What sort of action?
Does <organisation> take any action with other employees to improve the employment of people with neurological conditions?	
Disclosure	
How do you seek disclosure of neurological conditions by potential recruits or employees?	When does this happen? How is the disclosure question worded?
In your experience, do employees always disclosure neurological conditions?	If not always: Do any problems arise as a result of potential recruits/employees not disclosing, or disclosing at a late stage? How do you deal with employees who you believe have a neurological condition which they have not disclosed? Do you believe that this approach was effective?
Are there particular things that you do to try and increase the likelihood of disclosure?	
What do you do in cases where you suspect an employee may have a neurological condition, but they have not been diagnosed?	Would this be raised with the employee?

Impact of employing a neuro-diverse workforce	
Do you think that there are particular benefits to <organisation> from employing people with <each neurological condition mentioned at the start>?	What sort of benefits?
Do you think that <organisation> would lose out in any way if it hadn't taken the actions described to facilitate the employment of neurodiverse employees?	Particularly ask this if they don't mention particular benefits at the previous question. Probe ways in which they would lose out. Cover losses related to having a less neurodiverse workforce and losses as a result of not taking adequate action to accommodate neurodiverse employees.
Support for employers	
What external support, if any, has <organisation> used related to its employment of neurodiverse employees?	e.g. websites; documentation; advice; training; consultancy; Access to Work; workplace assessments from organisations supporting those with particular types of condition. If they have used external support: Has <organisation> had to pay for these services, or have they been provided for free? How helpful have you found these sources?
Do you feel that there are any gaps in the available provision for employers in relation to the employment of neurodiverse employees?	If so: What sort of additional support would be useful?
Do you think there are any ways in which the support available could be improved?	
Are there people with particular types of condition that <organisation> would find it harder to employ?	If so: Is this because <organisation> has less experience of employing people with these conditions or due to some other factor?
Finally, is there anything else that might be relevant to the study?	

Topic guide – line manager

Permission to record interview? [to reduce need for note-taking].

Anonymity.

Neurological conditions that will be the focus – dyslexia, dyspraxia, autism and ADD.

Purpose of study – to inform guide to best practice by talking to HR manager, employees with particular neurological conditions and their line managers.

Important to hear their honest opinion of any difficulties that they have encountered for the guide to be helpful.

Explain interested in mainstream, not supported, employment.

Recognise variation between individuals – and also overlap between neurological conditions.

About interviewee	
Job title	
What does your role cover?	
How long have you worked for <organisation>?	
How long have you been a line manager at <organisation>?	
How many people do you currently line manage?	<p>If only one:</p> <p>Can you just confirm that this person has one or more of the neurological conditions previously mentioned?</p> <p>As far as you know, has the employee been formally diagnosed with <this/all of these> condition<s>?</p> <p>If more than one:</p> <p>As far as you are aware, how many of them have one or more of the neurological conditions previously mentioned?</p> <p>As far as you know, <has the employee/have the employees> been formally diagnosed with <this/all of these> condition<s>?</p>
Could you tell me about the neurological conditions of the <person/people> you line manage who <is/are> neurodiverse?	<p>For each person, note which conditions they have from:</p> <p>Dyslexia</p> <p>Dyspraxia</p> <p>Autism</p> <p>ADD</p>

Did you know that they had a neurological condition when you started line managing them or did you discover this later?	
How did you discover that they had a neurological condition?	
Management of neurodiverse employees	
Have you received any training in the management of neurodiverse employees whilst at <organisation>?	<p>If no:</p> <p>Have you ever received this sort of training i.e. whilst working for a previous employer?</p> <p>If yes:</p> <p>Was this training targeted specifically at line managers, or employees in general?</p> <p>Who provided the training?</p> <p>What did the training cover? e.g. recruitment, training, performance management, progression?</p> <p>How helpful have you found this training?</p> <p>Were there any gaps in the training that you received?</p> <p>How might the training have been improved?</p>
Are you personally involved in each of the following activities?	
Recruitment of staff?	Note which ones.
induction?	
training?	
performance appraisal and the management of performance?	
promotion/progression?	
disciplinary action and dismissal?	
retention?	
Is it necessary to approach any of these activities differently to allow for neurodiversity amongst employees or potential recruits?	<p>If yes:</p> <p>Which ones? Go through list.</p> <p>What differences in approach are required?</p> <p>How do you deal with this?</p>
Have you ever experienced any other challenges in working with the neurodiverse employees that you have line managed at this organisation, which you feel may have been due to their condition?	<p>If yes:</p> <p>What was the nature of these challenges?</p> <p>Were they subsequently overcome?</p> <p>If yes:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How? <p>If no:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the employee still with the organisation? • Are they in the same role?
In your experience, do employees always disclose neurological conditions?	<p>If not always:</p> <p>Do any problems arise as a result of potential recruits/employees not disclosing, or disclosing at a late stage?</p> <p>How do you deal with employees who you believe have a neurological condition which they have not disclosed?</p> <p>Do you believe that this approach was effective?</p> <p>In this case, as far as you know, had the employee been diagnosed prior to this action, or did they have an undiagnosed condition?</p>
Are there any important differences in approach necessary between neurodiverse and neurotypical employees?	<p>If they manage employees with different neurological conditions:</p> <p>Are differences in approach necessary between employees with different types of neurological condition?</p>
Have you encountered any difficulties with managers senior to you as a result of you line managing neurodiverse employees?	<p>If yes:</p> <p>What sort of difficulties?</p> <p>For example, unrealistic targets, pressure for all members of the team to carry out tasks which are more difficult for neurodiverse employees?</p> <p>Do these problems still remain?</p> <p>If no:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How were they overcome?
Have you encountered any difficulties between the neurodiverse employees that you line manage and other employees as a result of neurodiversity?	<p>If yes:</p> <p>What sort of difficulties have arisen?</p> <p>e.g. complaints by employees with neurological conditions, or</p>

	<p>complaints made against them. Problems with workload for other employees covering tasks an employee with a neurological condition is unable to carry out etc.</p> <p>Has any action been taken to overcome these difficulties?</p> <p>What sort of action?</p> <p>Has this been successful?</p> <p>Do any problems still remain?</p>
Support available within the workplace	
Does <organisation> take any particular action to raise awareness of neurodiversity amongst employees?	<p>If yes:</p> <p>What type of action?</p> <p>Is this targeted specifically at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line managers working with neurodiverse employees; • Employees working with neurodiverse employees; • The workforce in general; • Or other sections of the workforce? <p>If other sections of the workforce:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are these groups defined?
In addition to any action to raise awareness, does <organisation> take any action to improve interactions between neurodiverse employees?	<p>If yes:</p> <p>What sort of actions?</p>
Do you think there are any ways in which the available support could be improved?	
Do you feel that there are any gaps in the current provision by <organisation> in relation to the employment of neurodiverse employees?	<p>If yes:</p> <p>What sort of additional support would be useful?</p>
Impact of employing a neurodiverse workforce	
In your experience, what are the main barriers to employing neurodiverse employees?	<p>Do the barriers vary by condition?</p> <p>Are there myths to overcome?</p> <p>Are there legitimate concerns/barriers to overcome?</p>
Do you think that there are particular benefits to <organisation> from employing people with <each neurological condition	<p>What sort of benefits?</p>

mentioned at the start>?	
Do you think that <organisation> would lose out in any way if it hadn't taken the actions described to facilitate the employment of neurodiverse employees?	<p>Particularly ask this if they don't mention particular benefits at the previous question.</p> <p>Probe ways in which they would lose out.</p> <p>Cover losses related to having a less neurodiverse workforce and losses as a result of not taking adequate action to accommodate neurodiverse employees.</p>
Finally, is there anything else that might be relevant to the study?	

	or the current one.
Impact of employing a neuro-diverse workforce	
Do you think that there are particular benefits to <organisation> from employing people with <condition(s)>?	What sort of benefits?
Do you think that <organisation> would lose out in any way if it hadn't taken the actions described to facilitate the employment of people with <condition(s)>?	Particularly ask this if they don't mention particular benefits at the previous question. Probe ways in which they would lose out. Cover losses related to having a less neurodiverse workforce and losses as a result of not taking adequate action to accommodate neurodiversity.
Finally, is there anything else that you would like to say that might be relevant to the study?	

