

# Where are we? The Neurodivergent (ND) Employment Gap

- Autistic people have one of the lowest employment rates of any disabled group in the UK (ONS, 2021)
- Those with ADHD are more likely NOT to be in education, training or employment (NHS England, 2025)
- Autistic graduates are twice as likely to be unemployed after 15 months (AGCAS, 2022)
- Cognitive diversity is a business asset
- Neurodivergent people want to work BUT face challenges at all stages (cited by Autistica, 2021)



Image taken from [‘The Autism Employment Gap: Too Much Information in the workplace’](#)

NAS, 2016.

# Some challenges for ND people in the workplace

“ I have sensory processing disorder and I’m particularly affected by noise. I hear every little sound in a room: people talking, keyboards tapping, the hum of air conditioners, and even the sound of fabric as people move. It becomes hard to prioritise the key sounds, such as someone talking to me directly.

- Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria (RSD) and Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)
- Workplace dynamics
- Misunderstanding and stigma
- Different styles of working, processing and communicating
- Burnout and masking
- Career progression
- ...and many more

Screenshot from [‘Jude’s employment story’](#) - Autistica, 2024.



The Neurodivergent in the workplace...

**Help** get me out of here!

# What has kept me here as an autistic employee



“Autism + Environment = The Outcome” (Beardson. p.44, 2024)

- Physical environmental changes
- Cultural changes: flexible working – wfh, walking/movement breaks and low stim days.
- Support changes: Weekly 1:1s with written agendas, clear guidance, verbal instructions followed up in writing, adaptations to my job duties and a workplace mentor.

Other ND voices on their reasonable adjustments: [Sheffield Autism Research Lab - Employment Experiences](#)

# What could be added



Image shows [‘The Calm Corner’](#) located in Crewe train station, taken from London Northwestern, 2019.

- Neurodiversity Champions
- Add to understanding of ND, including how this affects people at all stages of life
- Equipping line managers with a conversation-starter toolkit
- Quiet spaces
- Road testing of adjustment passports
- Beginning from day 1
- Inclusion by design

# Where we can help as mentors



Truthfully, I would rather be employed. I would love to be part of something bigger; a team working toward a common goal. But my experiences in the workplace, along with recent interviews, have made me feel that self-employment is the only option.

Jude, autistic adult

- Early signposting students to Careers
- Practicing and scripting self-advocacy
- Raising awareness of reasonable adjustments
- Instilling with hope

Screenshot from [‘Jude’s employment story’](#)- Autistica, 2024.

# References and worthwhile reading

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