

# Neurodivergence at work; benefits and accommodations



Nov. 2024

---

Yvonne Hall

HeartScience Limited



# Agenda

---

01

Welcome and  
overview

---

02

Understanding  
neurodiversity

---

03

Benefits of  
neurodiverse  
inclusion

---

04

Strategies and  
accommodations

---

05

Case study

---

06

Conclusion

# Overview

**Neurodivergent:** Umbrella term for someone whose brain performs differently than what society considers the norm. Includes Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Specific Learning Difficulties (SLD) etc.

**SLD:** Persistent learning difficulties in reading, writing, and/or mathematics, which are not due to other disabilities or environmental factors

**Diagnostic benefits:** Communities, sense of belonging, role models, access to support

**Identifying as neurodivergent:** 13.1% identified as neurodivergent (DiversityWorks, 2022)

**Workplace issue:** 27.1% public / 21.4% private orgs

**Policies/programmes/initiatives for neurodiversity:** 19.9%

**Workplace unaware:** 63.3%

**Neurodiversity affected career development:** 32.1%

# Understanding neurodiversity

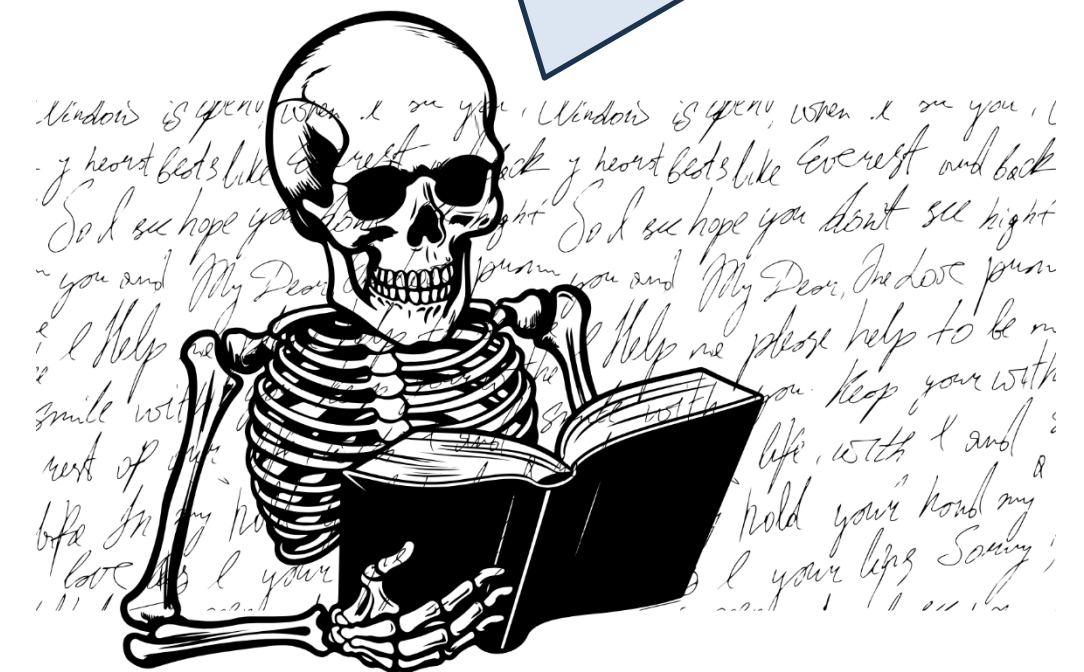
It's like a tele is playing all the stations, not one, at once.



I can't cope in this open plan office. It's affecting my performance and mental health.



At school I would be told I'm smart but lazy (with writing and reading). I was kept in on lunch breaks to catch up. I just couldn't get words onto paper.



If you have met one person with  
[autism] you have met one person  
with autism. Stephen Shore.

# Benefits of neurodivergent inclusion

## Unique Strengths

- Strengths in **Block Design** for those with ASD when measured using WISC (Takayanagi et al, 2022).
- In adults and children autism associated with a cognitive profile of relative strengths in **verbal and nonverbal reasoning**. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder appears less associated with a particular cognitive profile. (Wilson, 2024).
- **Creativity** in individuals with dyslexia? (Marjeet, 2021).
- Individuals with SLDs often develop **strong adaptability and problem-solving skills** as a process of adaption.
- **Empathy and determination.**
- Restricted, repetitive behaviours and interests – **knowledge** set (e.g. transportation, animals, technology, science, or history).

# Benefits of neurodivergent inclusion

## Outcomes

- Organisations with neurodiversity policies and tailored support had greater **employee satisfaction and retention** (Smith et al. ,2022).
- Workplace accommodations for neurodivergent employees has positive effects on **productivity and organizational culture** (Johnson et al. (2023).
- Benefits of neuroinclusive policies include **reduced turnover, increased productivity, and enhanced employee engagement** (Deloitte, 2023).
- Improved **performance and reduced recruitment and training** costs (Brown, 2022).
- **ROI of 2.5:1** for organizations implementing neurodiversity-inclusive policies (Deloitte, 2023).
- Organisations with inclusive policies report a more positive **workplace culture**, characterised by increased understanding, collaboration, and innovation (Silberman, 2015).

# Strategies and accommodations

- Evidence based recommendations (Neurodiversity in Business, & Birkbeck University, 2024).
  - Comprehensive not condition specific approach.
  - Strategic HR focus on job redesign and specialist career pathways.
  - All staff involved in wellbeing are appropriately ND trained.
  - Upskill and support line managers as first line responders.
  - Regular review of any inequities in outcomes or provision.
  - Build mutual trust and understanding between neurodivergent workers and colleagues.
  - Regular review of job design and work environments.
  - Neurodiversity training.
  - Barrier-free process to instigate reasonable adjustments.
  - Transparent expectations for specialist career pathways (without line management).

# Strategies and accommodations

## Inclusive hiring

- Skills-based assessments and performance-based evaluations.
- Avoiding bias in hiring.
- Minimise obstacles (e.g. complex application forms).
- Asking “are there any accommodations or special conditions you prefer?”

## Workplace Accommodations

- Flexible working hours, remote work options, and sensory-friendly workspaces.
- Access to assistive technologies. (e.g. text to speech programmes, AI, mind mapping tools).
- Screens, break out rooms, noise cancelling headphone, low light areas.

## Job content

- Assigning tasks based on strengths and preferences.
- Adaptive communication methods.

# Strategies and accommodations

## Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

- Establishing ERGs for support and advocacy.

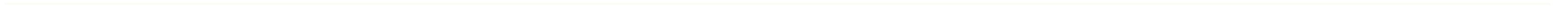
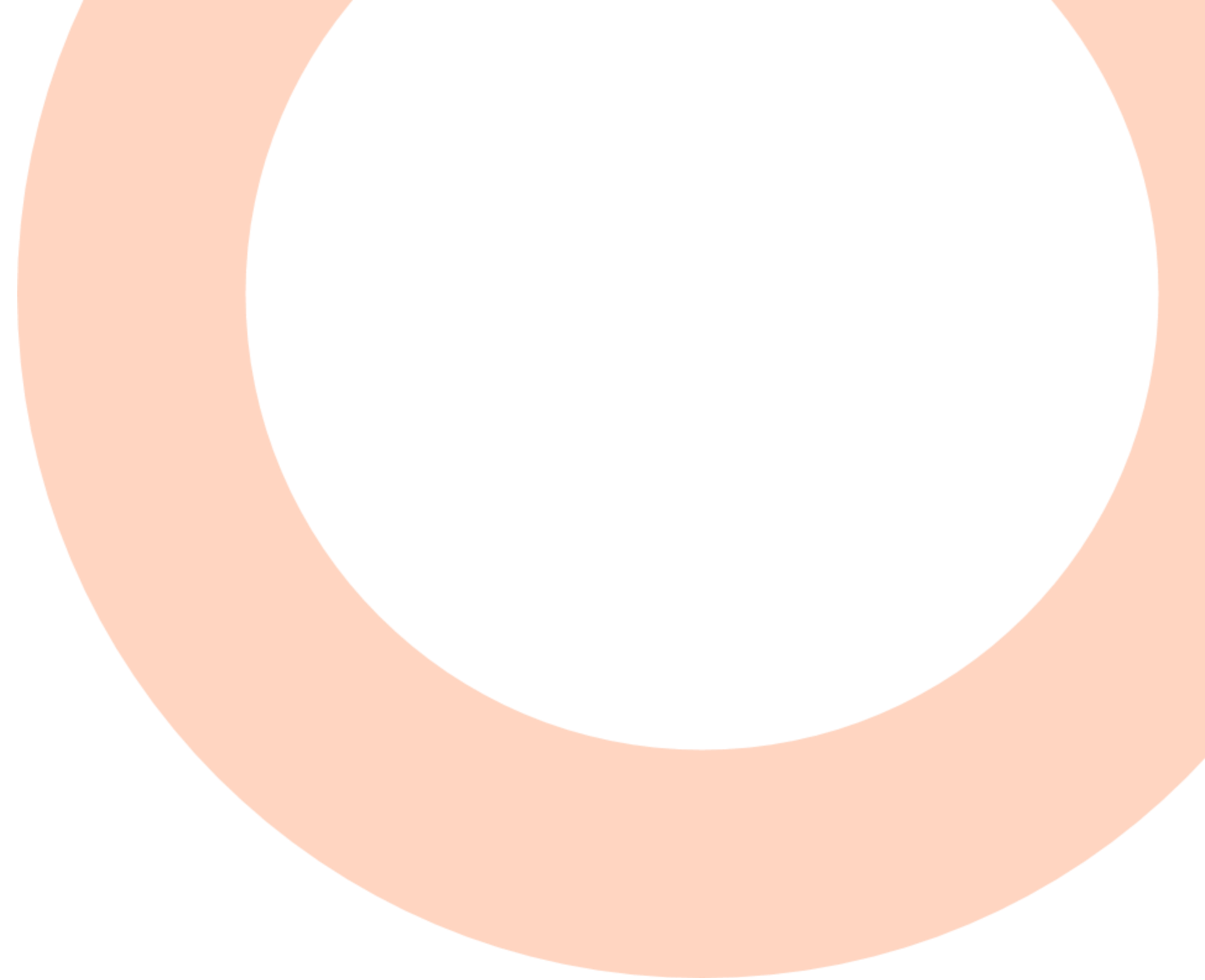
## Leadership Commitment

- Ensuring executive buy-in and ongoing training programmes.
- Leaders sharing their stories (22% of business owners had 6+ indicators of dyslexia – Logan, 2009).

## Training

- Useful training and resources (e.g. Clustering strategies, mind mapping, memory aids).
- Neurodiversity awareness training.

Case study time.



# Conclusion

## Does your organisation:

- Offer and provide accommodations for neurodiverse employees?
- Consider the impact of its decisions for neurodiverse?
- Train and coach its managers to support neurodiversity?
- Cultivate a culture of neurodiverse employee inclusion?



## References

- Brown, S. M., & Peterson, C. (2022). Tailoring Support for Neurodivergent Employees: A Comprehensive Approach. *Journal of Workplace Psychology*, 27(1), 45-60 (1) (PDF) *The Impact of Neurodiversity-Inclusive Policies on Employee Performance, Retention, and Organizational Culture in the Workplace*". Available from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381699207\\_The\\_Impact\\_of\\_Neurodiversity-Inclusive\\_Policies\\_on\\_Employee\\_Performance\\_Retention\\_and\\_Organizational\\_Culture\\_in\\_the\\_Workplace](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381699207_The_Impact_of_Neurodiversity-Inclusive_Policies_on_Employee_Performance_Retention_and_Organizational_Culture_in_the_Workplace) [accessed Nov 20 2024].
- Deloitte. (2023). The Economic Impact of Neurodiversity-Inclusive Policies: A Cost-Benefit Analysis. Deloitte Insights
- Logan, J. (2009). Dyslexic entrepreneurs: The incidence; their coping strategies and their business skills. Cass Business School, City University London. Retrieved from [https://www.bayes.city.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/367383/julielogan-dyslexic-entrepreneurs.pdf](https://www.bayes.city.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/367383/julielogan-dyslexic-entrepreneurs.pdf)[4].
- Majeed, N. M., Hartanto, A., & Tan, J. J. X. (2021). Developmental dyslexia and creativity: A meta-analysis. *Dyslexia: An International Journal of Research and Practice*, 27(2), 187–203. <https://doi.org/10.1002/dys.1677>
- Ndindeng, A. (2024). The Impact of Neurodiversity-Inclusive Policies on Employee Performance, Retention, and Organizational Culture in the Workplace". 10.13140/RG.2.2.32532.51843.
- Neurodiversity in Business, & Birkbeck University. (2024). Neurodiversity in business and work report. Retrieved from <https://neurodiversityinbusiness.org/wp-content/uploads/2024-09-30-Neurodiversity-in-Business-and-Birbeck-University-Research.pdf>
- Silberman, S. (2015). *NeuroTribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity*. Avery Publishing.
- Smith, A. R., & Williams, T. K. (2022). Implementing Neurodiversity Policies in Modern Workplaces: A Review of Current Practices. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, 44(1), 99-120. (1) (PDF) *The Impact of Neurodiversity-Inclusive Policies on Employee Performance, Retention, and Organizational Culture in the Workplace*". Available from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381699207\\_The\\_Impact\\_of\\_Neurodiversity-Inclusive\\_Policies\\_on\\_Employee\\_Performance\\_Retention\\_and\\_Organizational\\_Culture\\_in\\_the\\_Workplace](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381699207_The_Impact_of_Neurodiversity-Inclusive_Policies_on_Employee_Performance_Retention_and_Organizational_Culture_in_the_Workplace) [accessed Nov 20 2024].
- Takayanagi, M., Kawasaki, Y., Shinomiya, M. et al. Review of Cognitive Characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder Using Performance on Six Subtests on Four Versions of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children. *J Autism Dev Disord* 52, 240–253 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-021-04932-x>
- Wilson, A. C. (2024). Cognitive profile in autism and ADHD: A meta-analysis of performance on the WAIS-IV and WISC-V. *Archives of Clinical Neuropsychology*, 39(4), 498-515. <https://doi.org/10.1093/arclin/acad073>