

Capitalising on Neurodiverse Talent

Optimising the talents of diverse thinkers

Thursday 7 February 2019, London

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Aims of the event

- Build understanding of the opportunities and challenges of addressing neurodiversity in the workplace
- Consider approaches to HR and line management practice that enables previously unrecognised or unsupported employees to exploit their talents
- Surface some of the questions or challenges faced by delegates in supporting employees in the workplace

Neurodiversity at Work

An overview of neurodiverse conditions and the strengths and challenges which they represent to organisations

Ian Iceton

Neurodiversity ?

Oxford English Dictionary

“The range of differences in individual brain function and behavioural traits, regarded as part of normal variation in the human population (used especially in the context of autistic spectrum disorders)”

Neurodiversity ?

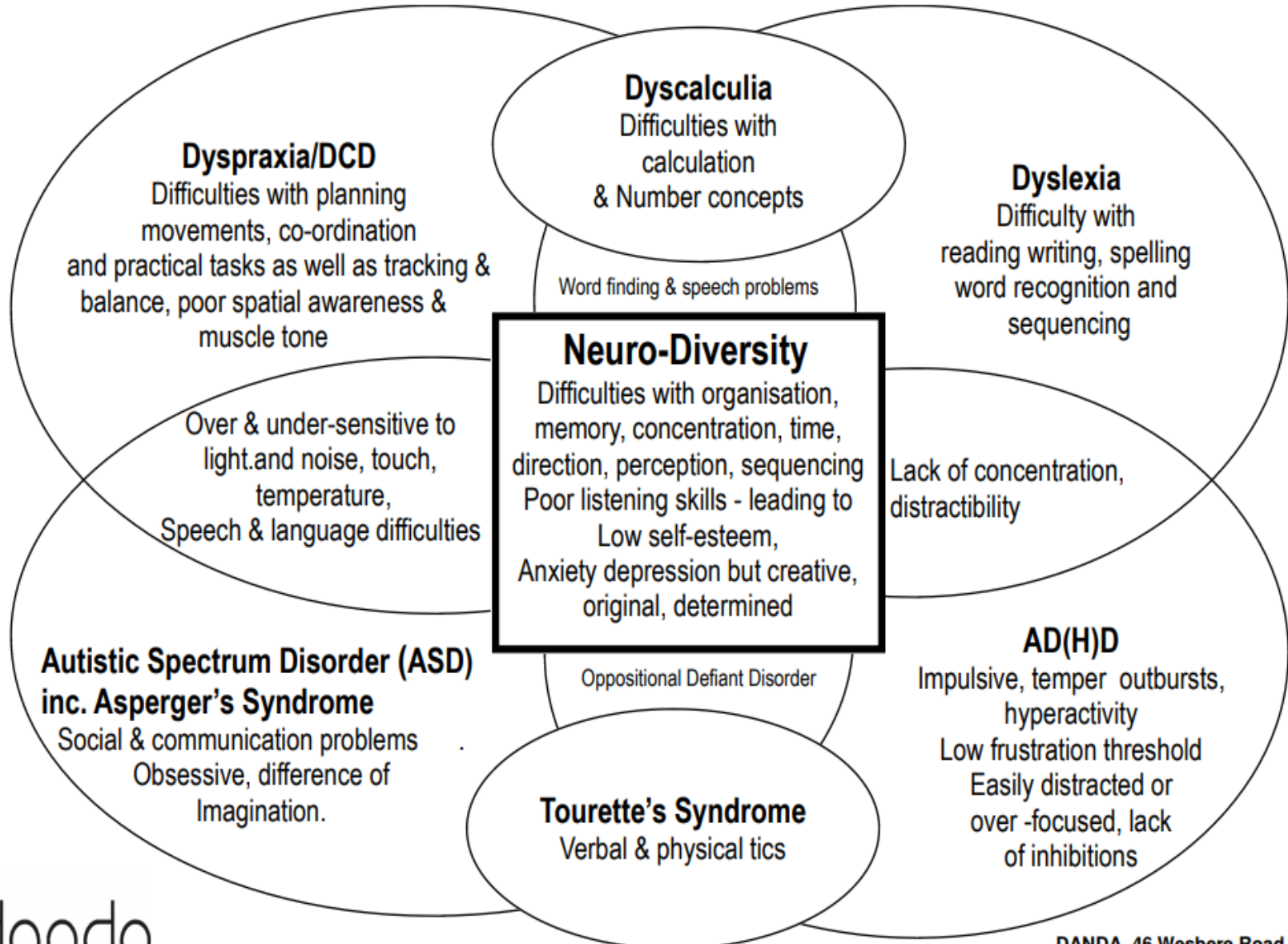
Oxford English Dictionary

“The range of differences in individual brain function and behavioural traits, regarded as part of normal variation in the human population (used especially in the context of autistic spectrum disorders)”

What do you think?

The Make-up of Neuro-Diversity

This is a document for discussion. Concentrating mainly on the difficulties of those with neuro-diversity. It must however, be pointed out that many people with neuro-diversity are excellent at maths, co-ordination, reading etc . We are people of extremes.



Potential Challenges with Autism Spectrum

- Communication style and requirements,
- Sensory challenges – light, noise, touch
- Structure and order, routine
- Difficulty with facial expressions, body language

Why Does this matter?

①

Diagnosis Levels increasing;
Unemployment levels

②

Existing employees;
Disability discrimination;

③

Recruitment biases, prejudice

④

Moral and ethical considerations

⑤

Advantages and Opportunities

⑥

Proxy for other "Hidden Differences"

⑦

Improved Line Manager capability

⑧

Employee Engagement scores/ company perception

Challenges – in Recruitment

- Job adverts, descriptions, levels of expectations; disclosure?
- Selection processes – Application forms, telephone screening, interviews
- Logistics

Challenges – in Employment

- Logistics and environment
- Team members and colleagues
- Managers
- Performance appraisal
- Training, learning styles, career progression

Strengths / opportunities (beware of stereotypes)

- Different way of thinking, diversity, creativity
- Avoidance of group think/ risk detection
- Focus, attention to detail
- Pattern recognition
- Honest feedback
- Their Line managers become excellent line managers for all
- Better understanding of a portion of customers/clients

Suggestions – for recruitment

- Training for recruiting managers;
- Targeted recruitment;
- Role descriptions – clarity and simplicity;
- Opportunities for information;
- Flexibility of process – don't screen out ;
- Flexibility of logistics;
- Flexibility of selection process;
- Trials
- Worker support

Suggestions – for employment

- Ongoing Training for recruiting managers;
- Job coaches / mentors
- Role descriptions – clarity and simplicity;
- Flexibility of process
- Flexibility of logistics/ environment
- Employee support group/ staff network/ affinity group
- Trials

Dandelion Principle

14

	Traditional HR Approach	Dandelion Principle Approach
Work Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Derive business needs from strategy and plans</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Design jobs by determining the tasks a job requires; translate into a job description</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Design jobs to maximise potential for particular individuals to create value</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Customise project roles so they “work” for short term needs</i>
Recruitment and Selection	<p>Template-based</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>seek, select and hire candidates who score well on checklists that are derived from job descriptions</i> 	<p>Variance-widening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Hire people with “differences”</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Hire unusual people</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Keep connection to short-term job needs loose</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Candidates need not be “well-rounded”</i>
Training and Development	<p>Assignment-based:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Train to provide skills needed for current job</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Offer development education based on forecasts of future needs</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Focus on intended, foreseeable value</i> 	<p>Individual-based:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Train to bring out and develop exceptional abilities, even those not related to current assignments;</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Build up relevant capabilities and readiness to capture serendipitous value.</i>

YouTube video of Microsoft neurodiverse recruitment practices

https://youtu.be/XUAsU_zQVMo

Research

- Grace Brown at Hult Research (Ashridge)
- DARE (Discover Autism Research & Employment) – UCL
- Ian Icceton, Cranfield University DBA

Summary

- Emergent Issue, growing in significance
- Strong business case;
- Switched on organisations are starting to react;
- Dandelion principle – DON'T treat everyone equally !

Ian Icton



Ian Icton : Managing Director (Talent, Performance & Reward) – Group HR Director at River & Mercantile Group, previously Group HR Director at Network Rail; Director of HR Operations at Skanska UK; and HR Director of Volkswagen UK.

Ian is also FCMA, FCIPD and a past non-Exec Director of the CIPD. Currently he is undertaking a part-time Doctorate (DBA) at Cranfield University, investigating Recruitment of people with Autism.

Further details can be found at **AutsimInWork.com**

Neurodiversity: what it means for work

Dyslexia	Dyspraxia, dyscalculia	ADHD	Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entrepreneurialism.• Creativity and cognitive control.• Visual reasoning.• Practical skills, visual-spatial skills and story-telling ability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High verbal comprehension ability: the ability to read, understand and process language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creative thinking.• Visual spatial reasoning ability (the ability to mentally manipulate 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional figures).• Hyper-focus (intense mental concentration), passion and courage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Memory ability, and other 'specialist individual skills' including reading, drawing, music and computation.• Innovative thinking and detail observation.

Dyslexia

What is it?	What it means for work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Up to 10% of the population are affected.• Difficulties with: literacy, memory, organisational skills, time management, communication, stress management and self-esteem.• Workplace participation in terms of mental functions and social interactions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entrepreneurialism.• Creativity and cognitive control.• Visual reasoning.• Practical skills, visual-spatial skills and story-telling ability.

DCD (dyspraxia, dyscalculia)

What is it?	What it means for work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2% of the population are affected.• Difficulties: driving, self-care, organisation, communication and self-esteem; processing speed and working memory.• Persistence of motor difficulties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High verbal comprehension ability: the ability to read, understand and process language.

ADHD

What is it?	What it means for work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Up to 4% of the population affected.• Difficulties with: time management, concentration, attention and self-regulation difficulties; insomnia, depression, injury and absence.• Maintaining employment.• Team work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creative thinking.• Visual spatial reasoning ability (the ability to mentally manipulate 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional figures).• Hyper-focus (intense mental concentration), passion and courage.

Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC)

What is it?	What it means for work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Up to 1.5% of the population affected.• Difficulties with: time management; concentration and coping with more than one task.• Social and communication difficulties• Need for routine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Memory ability, and other 'specialist individual skills' including reading, drawing, music and computation.• Innovative thinking and detail observation.



Why do it?...The Business Case

- Added value

- Productivity
- Creativity/innovation
- Customer trust

Google

Microsoft

BBC

SAP

JP
Morgan

DXC
Tech

- Neurodiversity inclusion far outweighs the necessary adjustments

How to do this

- Culture change
 - Why is neurodiversity being talked about more?
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Increased prevalence
 - Increased awareness
 - Pioneering by organisations such as Microsoft

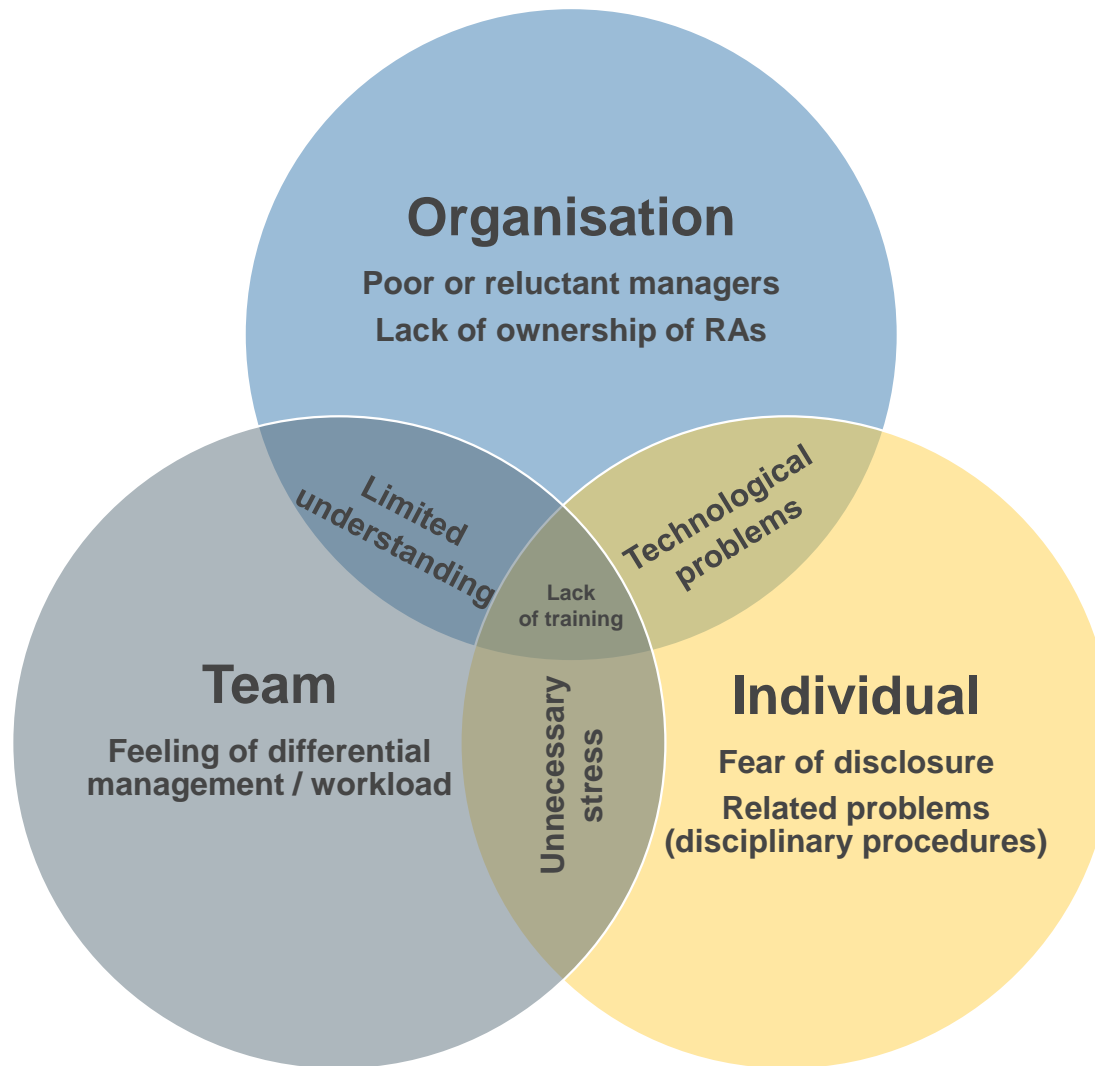
What can organisations do?



What are reasonable adjustments?

- Without support they don't work, needs buy-in
- Misunderstanding about performance
- Workplace Needs Adjustment (WNA)
- Encourage effective and assessment working practices
- Help from: Access to Work Scheme (govt) or private organisations (eg Auticon)

Potential barriers



Workplace Needs Assessment (WNA)

The process

1. Analyse the employee's **diagnostic assessment**
2. Analyse the employer's **job description**
3. Identify areas in **job description** likely to be affected
4. Identify and prioritise **performance** problems (and strengths) and consider how condition might affect them
5. Recommend **reasonable adjustments** to improve work performance
6. Recommend **skills training and assistive technology training**
7. Recommend other **equipment** and **different ways of working** that will have a positive impact
8. Provide assistance with **planning and implementing** these adjustments
9. Provide **resources** including **HR advice**
10. Provide information to make the workplace **neurodiverse-friendly / open culture**

Table 6: Common adjustments and their relevance to neurodiverse employees.

Adjustment	Applied ND	Clinical ND	Mental Health	Neuro
Environmental management of sound, smell, temperature and/or light	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Formal coaching and/or informal peer mentoring support with executive functions, communication skills, stress management and understanding own abilities. Can be provided by phone as well as face-to-face.	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Pre-and post-intensive support such as vocational rehab and IPS		✓	✓✓	✓✓
Regular breaks and access to flexitime	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Regular communication and feedback from employer	✓	✓	✓✓	✓
Workshops to improve key work-related skills including executive functions	✓	✓	✓	✓
Career counselling	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stress management techniques	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employer training and support for line managers	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adaptations to induction and training programmes – slower introduction, provision of handouts in advance	✓	✓	✓	✓
Access to quiet space to relieve pressure	✓	✓	✓	✓
Support with learning new routines and practical tasks	✓	✓		
Extra time for assessments	✓	✓		
Electronic literacy aids	✓✓	✓		
Accessible literature – sans serif 12pt font, use of bullet, headings, colour coding and shaded backgrounds	✓✓			
Electronic stress level reminders		✓	✓	
Weighted blankets to place on lap, to reduce restlessness		✓		

Session 2

Organisational perspectives

Adam Goldman, Auticon

Helen Gray, IES



What are organisations doing?

Case study: JP Morgan Chase

‘Many autistic people are simply brilliant people – highly educated, highly capable, detail-oriented, yet unemployed,’ says James Mahoney, Executive Director and Head of Autism at Work for JPMorgan Chase. Shocked to find out the true scale of the unemployment of autistic people, Mahoney and his firm saw opportunity: to recruit from a largely untapped pool of talent. ‘Because of our size and continued growth, we have an almost constant need for talented employees – especially in technology related fields,’ he continues. Mahoney, having created JPMorgan Chase’s autism hiring programme, is now scaling it across the company.

The initiative is giving new opportunities for people like Jon, a quality assurance analyst, who describes his strongest attribute as being the ability to assess situations and come up with the best possible solutions in order to make them more organised and more efficient. ‘I would encourage anyone on the spectrum to embrace what makes them different and see it as their greatest strength,’ he said. ‘I firmly believe that companies could always benefit from having employees who see things in an unconventional way, which is something to remember any time an individual on the spectrum is seeking a job.’

(Neurodiversity at work, CIPD, 2018)

Research, reports & articles

- Austin, R & Pisano, G *Neurodiversity as a Competitive Advantage* (2017), Harvard Business Review
- Bewley, H (Gray, H) & George, A (2016), *Neurodiversity at work*, National Institute of Economic and Social Research, Acas
- CIPD/Uptimize, *Neurodiversity at work*, (2018)
- Department of Health, *Increasing the numbers of people with learning disabilities in employment - The evidence base – best practice guidance for local commissioners*, (2011), Crown copyright 2011, www.dh.gov.uk/publications
- Hagan, B (2014), *Dyslexia in the workplace*, TUC, 3rd edition
- Hey, L (2019) *Neurodiversity: maximising talent in the workplace*. TrainingZONE online magazine: <https://www.trainingzone.co.uk/>
- IES, EUESF, NIACE, Skills Funding Agency (2013), *Engaging individuals with learning difficulties and disabilities in workplace learning – A guide for Providers* (2013), Crown copyright, 2013, www.skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk
- Weinberg, A & Doyle, N (2017), *Psychology at work – Improving wellbeing and productivity in the workplace*, British Psychological Society

Useful links

- Access to Work: <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>
- Auticon: <https://auticon.co.uk/>
- British Dyslexia Association: <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>
- Business Disability Forum: www.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk
- DARE: <https://www.autistica.org.uk/get-involved/become-a-corporate-partner/employing-autistic-people>
- Genius Within: <https://www.geniuswithin.co.uk/>
- Gresham lectures: <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/autism-advantage-workplace>
- Hult International Business School: <https://www.hult.edu/blog/thinking-differently-researching-neurodiversity-in-the-workplace/>
- Ian Iaceton Cranfield University DBA / Autism in work: <https://www.autisminwork.com/contact/>
- Lexxic neurotalent unlocked: <http://www.neurotalentunlocked.com/>
- MIND: <https://www.mind.org.uk/>
- National Autistic Society: <https://www.autism.org.uk/>
- Scope: <https://www.scope.org.uk/>
- TSSA: <https://www.tssa.org.uk/en/Equalities/dyslexia/index.cfm>

Thank you

Let us know how IES can support HR Network Members and organisations to continue their focus on neurodiversity.

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