



Neurodiversity in the Workplace: Beyond the Hire

FOREWORD



Following the strong positive response to our previous report on attracting neurodiverse talent through inclusive recruitment practices, it became clear that the conversation can't stop at the point of hire. The recruitment phase is just the beginning.

While there's growing awareness and some progress being made around how to make the hiring process more accessible, many HR professionals and hiring managers told us they feel far less confident when it comes to what happens next; how to support, manage and retain neurodivergent employees in a meaningful, inclusive way.

This next report in our DE&I series is designed to shine a light on that next phase: creating a truly neuro-inclusive workplace. We are by no means claiming to be experts in this field but we were keen to hear the thoughts of the HR and hiring manager community we work with every day, to get a sense of the sentiment going into 2026.



We hope this report gives you some food for thought and maybe a kick start to creating some noise in your organisation around why this continues to be such an important area to invest in.

**CHRIS GOULDING – MANAGING DIRECTOR
WADE MACDONALD**

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INTRODUCTION

LOOKING BACK: WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT NEURODIVERSITY IN THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

In our previous report, Increasing Neurodiverse Talent in the Workplace (Pre-employment), we explored how organisations can make the first stages of recruitment more inclusive for neurodivergent candidates.

From rethinking job advertisements and embracing alternative application formats, to offering interview flexibility and clearer communication, our findings made one thing clear: traditional hiring processes unintentionally exclude a significant pool of highly capable individuals.

We also highlighted the importance of awareness, empathy, and the need to move beyond performative inclusion. While many organisations expressed a desire to attract neurodiverse talent, inconsistent DE&I strategies, a lack of training, and rigid recruitment methods often stood in the way.

Put simply: if we want to diversify our workforce, we have to start by redesigning the way we welcome people in.

But now it's time to focus on what happens next. This report aims to bridge the gap with data-driven insights, practical recommendations and realistic steps for all sizes of organisations.

*We surveyed over 100 HR leaders across the Thames Valley and the wider South East. Understanding the professional backgrounds of survey respondents is essential in assessing the results. The majority of participants came from HR leadership roles, including Chief People Officers (CPOs) and HR Directors as well as HR Managers and those in HR generalist roles. This distribution reflects the perspectives of those most directly involved in shaping and implementing DE&I policies within their organisations.

FROM WELCOME TO WELLBEING: HOW CONFIDENT ARE EMPLOYERS?

We started our survey with a temperature check: **“How confident are you that your organisation understands the post-employment needs of neurodivergent employees?”**

The average confidence rating came in at **6.38 out of 10**. Encouraging? In some ways, yes, but hardly a ringing endorsement!

No one rated their organisation as completely unaware, which is a positive sign that the conversation is happening. But equally, very few felt their organisation had it all covered. Most sat in the hazy middle ground, keen to be inclusive, but unsure if they are getting it right.

“ —

It's largely down to individual managers, which makes it inconsistent across the business

We have good intentions, but structure and confidence are lacking

We're keen to be inclusive, but don't feel equipped to support diverse individual needs

— ”

Perhaps the most surprising result comes from small businesses, where **14%** claim DE&I is fully embedded, and **57%** say it is important. At first glance, this seems positive, but smaller organisations often lack the formal structures, dedicated resources, and governance needed to translate good intentions into sustainable, impactful change.

These figures paint a concerning picture. Despite **DE&I** being a focus for over two decades, fewer than one in five businesses claim to have successfully embedded it into their culture. Even among larger corporations with greater financial resources and infrastructure, inclusion is still often treated as a secondary concern rather than an essential business function. This raises fundamental questions about whether **DE&I** is a genuine commitment or merely a corporate talking point.

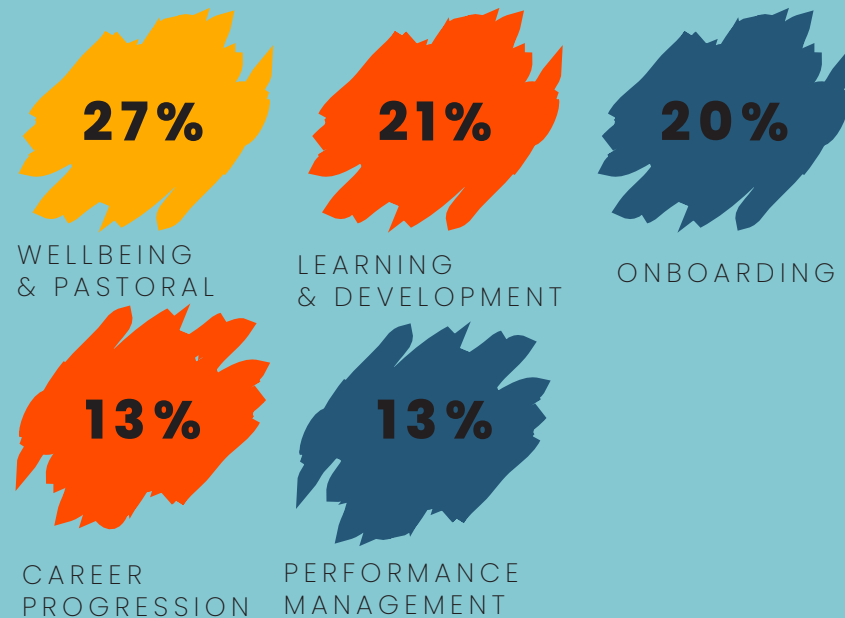


FIG 1 |
Which stages of the post employment lifecycle does your organisation actively support for neurodivergent employees?

WHEN SUPPORT EXISTS, IT'S OFTEN PATCHY.....

We asked organisations to tell us which stages of the post-employment journey they actively support neurodivergent employees through. The responses were telling.

While **wellbeing and pastoral care** emerged as the most supported area (with around **27%** of respondents selecting it), other essential stages such as **onboarding, training and development**, and particularly **performance management** and **career progression** lagged behind.

Only **13%** of organisations said they offered active support with **career progression** for neurodivergent employees, suggesting that while we're beginning to address how people start a role, we've still got a long way to go in helping them grow within it.

This disparity suggests a broader issue; many organisations are still thinking of neurodiversity in the context of short-term support, rather than long-term success.

"Trusting someone to get the work done however works best for them is the easiest way to see a dedicated, loyal and highly effective ADHD employee"

Leanne Maskell – ADHD coach and founder of ADHD works

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS: ARE WE REALLY PROACTIVE OR JUST PLAYING CATCH-UP?

One of the most revealing stats from our survey was how adjustments are handled post-employment. A significant **67%** of organisations told us they only provide adjustments when requested.

That means the responsibility is placed firmly on the individual to disclose and advocate for themselves, something that can be particularly challenging for neurodivergent employees, especially if they don't yet feel psychologically safe in their role.

“

Managers must also consider any reasonable workplace adjustments to ensure workers are happy and productive in the workplace. Many reasonable adjustments are low or no cost... and can make a world of difference in helping neurodivergent people to thrive and be comfortable at work

”

***CIPD Research**

Only **one in five** respondents said their organisation offers adjustments proactively, without the need for disclosure.

And this is where the opportunity lies. The more we normalise flexible practices, whether it's encouraging different communication styles, offering quiet workspaces, or giving people options in how feedback is delivered, the less pressure we place on individuals to ask for "special treatment."

WHAT'S ALREADY IN PLACE?

COMMON ADJUSTMENTS AND SUPPORT STRUCTURES

Despite the challenges, we were encouraged to see that some adjustments and supports are becoming more common. Among those already offered:

- Flexible working arrangements **26%**
- Modified communication styles **18.3%**
- Quiet workspaces or sensory-friendly environments **15.7%**
- Assistive technology **15%**
- Clear written instructions and structured workflows **14.4%**

However, these supports are still inconsistent across organisations. In many cases, they rely on a sympathetic manager or a switched on HR team, rather than being standard practice. Again the trend points to pockets of good work, rather than systematic change.

WHAT'S GETTING IN THE WAY?

We asked *"What are the biggest challenges your organisation experiences when supporting neurodivergent employees?"* and these were the most common replies:

Lack of Disclosure

Over a third of respondents said this was their biggest challenge. And it's understandable. Many neurodivergent individuals are reluctant to share their diagnosis or needs, often due to past experiences, stigma, or uncertainty about how the information will be received.

Lack of Manager Training

Managers often want to support neurodivergent team members but lack the confidence or knowledge to do so. Limited training means conversations are avoided, adjustments are misunderstood, and good intentions don't always translate into meaningful action on the ground.

Limited Budget or Resources

Budget and resource constraints remain a practical challenge, particularly for smaller organisations. There's still a misconception that neuroinclusive adjustments are costly or complex, when in reality many effective changes are low-cost and rely more on awareness than spend.

Inconsistent Internal Processes

Even where intent exists, inconsistent internal processes create confusion. Without clear frameworks, guidance or ownership, support becomes reactive rather than embedded. This inconsistency leaves managers unsure how to act and employees unsure what support is genuinely available.

Cultural Resistance or Stigma

Interestingly, overt cultural resistance or stigma was cited far less frequently. This suggests attitudes are shifting. The challenge now isn't willingness, but capability and turning positive intent into structured, consistent, and sustainable neuroinclusive practices.

POLICIES & ACCOUNTABILITY

WHO IS DRIVING NEURO INCLUSION

A key part of sustainable inclusion is policy. If it's not written down, it's hard to scale.

When we asked if neurodiversity is covered in DE&I policies post-employment:

- Only **15%** said yes, it's covered comprehensively
- **39%** said partly
- Over **40%** said there were gaps, or no coverage at all

This lack of clarity makes it hard to hold people accountable, and makes inclusion feel optional rather than essential. It also suggests a gap between strategy and lived experience within organisations.



15%

YES,
comprehensively



39%

SOMETIMES,
not consistent



34%

NO,
gaps exist



12%

NO,
not at all

FIG 2 |
Do you feel your
DE&I policy
adequately covers
neurodiversity in
post employment?

WHOSE NAME IS ABOVE THE DOOR?

We also asked who is primarily responsible for supporting neurodivergent employees in your organisation after they are hired.

HR with **40%** were seen as the main players, and Line Managers with **37%** came next, while just **9%** pointed to Senior Leadership.

This matters, because without visible, top-down support, it's easy for inclusion to be seen as "nice to have" rather than business-critical.

Worryingly, nearly **5%** left it to Occupational Health, another **5%** to Employee Resource Groups and **5%** had no clear owner. A far from ideal situation!

EFFECTIVE OR UNDER PREPARED MANAGERS?

It's one thing to have inclusive policies; it's another to bring them to life. And often, that responsibility falls on line managers.

When asked how effective managers are at supporting neurodivergent team members on a daily basis, the average rating was **5.6/10** – not an outright fail, but certainly not where we want to be.

Most managers aren't resistant to neuroinclusion. In fact, many are keen to do the right thing. The challenge is that support is often expected to come instinctively, without structured training or guidance. Managers are left navigating complex individual needs alongside performance, workloads and team dynamics, often relying on guesswork rather than knowledge.

This creates inconsistency. Some employees benefit from empathetic, informed managers, while others receive little meaningful support, not due to lack of care, but lack of preparation.

It's no surprise, then, that the number one support line managers said would help them was practical, hands-on training, not just broad awareness sessions, but proper usable guidance. So think: how to give feedback, how to manage workload, how to spot when someone might be struggling and respond with sensitivity.

And don't worry, we're not talking about turning managers into psychologists! We just need to give them the tools and confidence to lead inclusively.

MAKING IT WORK...

We heard it a lot from our survey respondents..... **"Great idea but where is the money coming from to pay for this?"**

We get it – there are lots of initiatives organisations want to implement, all competing for board sponsorship. But this is something we have to prioritise in today's world as it affects so many of the workforce. Experts tell us it's hard to put an exact figure on the number of neurodiverse candidates either in employment or unemployed, purely due to the number of undiagnosed conditions. But what we do know is employers often make it harder than it needs to be, and a few simple changes could make a difference.

So here are a few tips we have picked up from your responses and our independent research to get you started if you have a limited budget.

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"Inclusion means having a seat at the table, being wanted, not tolerated and being believed."

Charlie Hart (Ausome Charlie) – HR Voices Podcast

CREATE A SENSORY FRIENDLY WORK ENVIRONMENT

For many neurodivergent individuals, sensory overload is a daily challenge. Below are just a few simple ideas, and let's be honest, these solutions often benefit all employees so it's a win-win!

- Offer **quiet zones** or **breakout spaces** where people can recharge without distraction or allow noise-cancelling headphones.
- Adjust **lighting** (e.g., provide lamps vs. harsh fluorescents).
- Allow all employees to **specify communication preferences** on their email auto signature, such as preferred contact method, response time expectations, or whether they favour written updates over calls. This small adjustment helps reduce ambiguity, supports different communication styles and creates a more inclusive environment, particularly for neurodivergent employees who may find unplanned calls challenging.
- Allow **home working or flexible hours** to accommodate sensory sensitivities or executive functioning challenges (difficulties with planning, organising, starting tasks, managing time, controlling impulses, regulating emotions, and shifting focus, impacting daily life, work, and relationships, often seen in conditions like ADHD, anxiety, and depression)



BUDGET FRIENDLY ADJUSTMENTS FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE

MAKE ONBOARDING MORE SUPPORTIVE

The first few weeks in a new job are daunting for anyone, but for someone neurodivergent, they can be overwhelming without the right support. By starting with a few simple things below you can make new employees feel at home and welcome from day one:

- Provide **visual guides** and **checklists**, and **structured expectations** from day one.
- Assign a **mentor or buddy** who understands neurodiversity to make them feel part of the team from the get-go.
- Introduce **new tools and processes gradually**, offering time for questions and feedback.

FOSTER A CULTURE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Building a culture where psychological safety is the norm is fundamental. Many people with neurodivergent conditions are reluctant to disclose their needs for fear of stigma, or misunderstanding, or being bypassed for career development.

- Build trust with **regular open conversations** so employees feel safe to disclose their neurodivergence.
- Offer **anonymous feedback channels**.
- Clearly communicate that **reasonable adjustments are welcome** and encouraged and talk through examples already in place so they don't feel singled out.



IDEAS CONT'D



OFFER LOW COST TOOLS & TECH

There are a wealth of free or low cost tools available that not only support neurodivergent individuals but can also streamline processes for entire teams at the same time!

- **Text-to-speech or speech-to-text tools**, or meeting transcribe tools such as Otter AI
- **Project management apps** with visual timelines (e.g., Trello).
- Calendar or reminder apps to support executive functioning.

PROVIDE ONGOING DE&I & NEURODIVERSITY TRAINING

And let's not forget the importance of education. While formal training can be useful, it doesn't have to come with a hefty price tag.

- Many providers offer **free or low-cost webinars, podcasts or resources**. We'll include ideas in the Resources section at the end of the report but we have benefitted from the likes of "Inclusive Employers"
- Embed neurodiversity in broader DE&I awareness. Don't let it get lost in a vague overarching policy.
- Focus on **training line managers** specifically, as they are often the first point of contact.

Whilst it's a huge topic that, let's face it, we all know needs attention, just try and take a step back and remember; Creating a neuroinclusive environment doesn't have to be complicated or costly. Often, it starts with small, human-led changes that can make a significant difference.



IF A BIGGER BUDGET ALLOWS...

Bigger organisations often have more formal structures in place, which creates both opportunity and responsibility. This is the moment to go beyond performative policies.

- Appoint a dedicated neurodiversity lead or establish an employee resource group (ERG) to move beyond performative policies. Drawing on ideas from a cross-section of the workforce helps ensure initiatives are relevant, credible and sustainable.
- Integrate neuroinclusive practices into career development, performance frameworks and leadership training. This ensures inclusion isn't limited to entry points, but is embedded throughout progression, promotion and people management.
- Invest in tailored manager training and ongoing education, rather than one-off awareness sessions. Practical, role specific training builds confidence and consistency in how neurodivergent employees are supported day to day.
- Use internal data and employee feedback tools to measure impact and identify gaps. Regular surveys, ERG insights and exit data can highlight what's working, what isn't, and where intervention is needed.
- Partner with external specialists to audit recruitment, onboarding and management processes. Independent perspectives often uncover barriers organisations don't realise exist and provide recommendations for improvement.
- Design reasonable adjustment frameworks that are clear, accessible and consistently applied. Centralised budgets and guidance reduce friction, remove manager hesitation and ensure equity across teams.
- Review workplace environments and technology to ensure they support different neurotypes, from sensory considerations and flexible workspaces to accessible systems, tools and communication methods.
- Embed neuroinclusion into wider DEI and ESG strategies, with senior sponsorship and accountability.

FINAL THOUGHT...

Hiring neurodiverse talent is just the start point

Real inclusion happens after the welcome email is sent. It happens when the team meeting doesn't overwhelm. When the feedback conversation is delivered in a way that makes sense. When someone knows they don't have to put on a mask just to fit in.

It happens in the everyday.

Hopefully, after reading this you will see our message is simple: you don't have to get everything right straight away, in fact you probably won't, but don't beat yourselves up about it!

But doing something, however small could just kickstart your senior management team into taking the topic more seriously.

And if you feel you are only being asked to work on this as a tick-box exercise for your organisation's CSR then push back (where you can within the parameters of your remit!) Pull together a business case to show a neuroinclusive workplace is more productive, and an altogether happier place to be.

Whilst we certainly aren't claiming to be experts we are so passionate about this. We are positive that when we include a range of different minds, we get better ideas, a much better culture and hopefully that leads to a better organisation. Our wish is to do our bit to help build workplaces where every brain is not only welcome, but also believed and understood.

But don't just take our word for it. We took inspiration from a range of experts on this topic so take a peek at our sources at the end of this report for more ideas and guidance.

Building a neuroinclusive workplace is the right thing to do

NEURODIVERSITY CELEBRATION WEEK 2026

Neurodiversity Celebration Week 2026 will take place from 16th to 20th March 2026, bringing together employers, educators and individuals to recognise, value and better support neurodivergent people.



Continue to Increase
acceptance and
understanding



Move beyond
awareness by focusing
on action



Provide
Education



Celebrate
neurodiversity

The week aims to challenge outdated stereotypes, improve understanding of neurodiversity, and encourage more inclusive practices across workplaces and wider society.

The 2026 theme, “From Awareness to Action: Making Organisational Change Happen,” places a clear emphasis on moving beyond conversation and into practical change. Rather than focusing solely on awareness, the campaign encourages organisations to reflect on how inclusive their current practices really are, and where small, realistic improvements can be made.

For employers, particularly those at an early stage of their neuroinclusion journey, Neurodiversity Celebration Week provides a valuable starting point. A wide range of free and accessible resources will be available through the Neurodiversity Week website, including employer toolkits, fact sheets, posters, conversation starters, webinars and learning sessions. These resources are designed to help organisations better understand different neurotypes, challenge misconceptions, and begin embedding more inclusive approaches into recruitment, management and day-to-day working practices.

The week also offers organisations the opportunity to engage employees in a structured, supportive way. Hosting internal discussions, sharing educational content or attending virtual events can help open up conversations that might otherwise feel difficult or unfamiliar. For managers in particular, this can provide much-needed context and confidence when supporting neurodivergent team members.

Recognising Neurodiversity Celebration Week in the workplace calendar is especially important for employers with limited knowledge or experience of neuroinclusion. Many organisations want to do the right thing but lack clarity on where to start. This week offers a clear, time-bound opportunity to learn, listen and take first steps, without needing extensive budgets or specialist expertise.

Ultimately, Neurodiversity Celebration Week 2026 is not about having all the answers. It's about building understanding, encouraging action, and creating momentum. For employers, it can act as a catalyst for longer-term change, helping to create workplaces where neurodivergent talent is not only recognised, but genuinely supported to thrive.

*Sources:

- <https://www.cipd.org/uk/about/press-releases/manage-support-neurodiverse-talent>
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Wade Macdonald
220 Wharfedale Road
Winnersh Triangle
Berkshire
RG41 5TP

01189 560 600

www.wademaacdonald.com

admin@wademaacdonald.com

