



Project Analysis

Employment Survey to Autistic employees or seeking employment



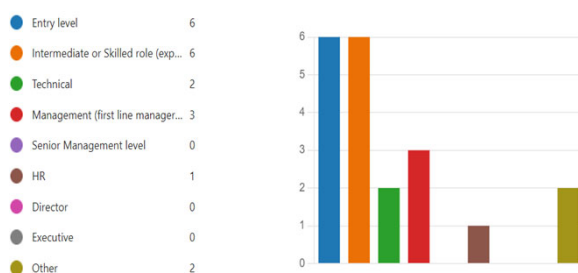
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We had 24 responses to this survey of which:

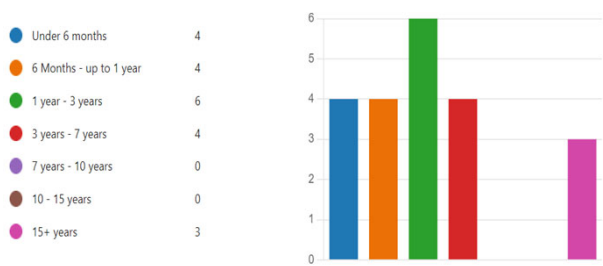
- 18 identified as diagnosed Autistic
- 4 on pathway for an Autism assessment
- 2 Believe they are Autistic but no official diagnosis in place or being sought.

42% of respondents were in full time work (32hrs+), 42% in part time work, 4% in voluntary work and 13% not in work currently.

Employment positions:



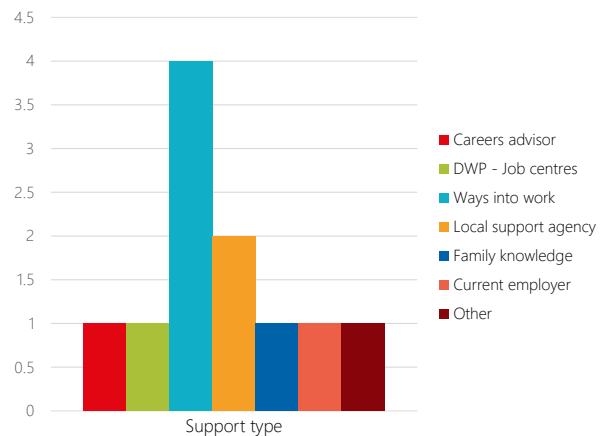
Length of time employed with company:



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- 75% of respondents felt they needed support for employment however only 20% of those people felt there was sufficient support to aid getting into employment.
- Of 20 respondents 45% stated they had accessed support during the recruitment and employment process or when looking at role progression
- 75% of respondents (note only 8 responses) stated the support continued once employed.

Where did you gain this support?



Of those who stated yes, a rating of 4.11 out of 5 was given for how much the support helped in gaining employment

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What support aided you in gaining that employment



What additional support would have been beneficial to support you gaining employment?

53% of respondents wanted more support which focused around:

- CV/application writing skills
- Interview coaching
- Preview of interview questions to lower anxiety
- Skill based assessments/interviews rather than reliance on social assessments.
- Tailored Adjustments
- Mentor/work buddy when starting employment
- Focussed career coaching
- Companies to support with better awareness and accessibility.

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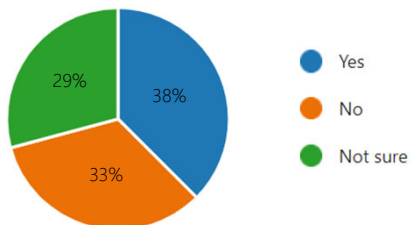
What additional support would have been beneficial – Quotes from respondents



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Progressing in your role

Do you feel able to progress in your role?



Reason why people said no:

Anxiety of more responsibility	Part time hours	Social based recruitment selection
Bias	Not wishing to line manage	Lack of knowledge and understanding of how best to support autistic employees
Fear of moving onto an unknown role/ line manager/ work colleagues/ work environment.	Few progression opportunities.	Fear to request adjustments.

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Progressing in your role

Quotes from Autistic Employees about why they don't feel able to progress:

Probation period was very much fuelled by masking as much as possible and although they are all nice at my job, I don't if I can ask about adjustments that could be made.

Bringing up accommodating needs without feeling like a burden or and inconvenience.

Currently at my place of employment, despite working with autistic children, knowledge and understanding of how best to support autistic staff is limited on how best to support me in my employment.

I don't know. Life is a lot to handle already.

In order to progress in my role now, I would need to take on additional responsibilities or look into moving onto a leadership track. This seems very overwhelming and will require working with more people and needing to do things I struggle with such as making phone calls.

In order to progress I feel I would have to take on more responsibility, including line management of other people and tasks that would cause me to fail instead of progressing in my areas of technical ability and strength.

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Support - Quotes from Autistic individuals in what has aided them

My line manager has helped to arrange professional development opportunities for me, such as roles in working groups.

Time! It has taken me much longer than many colleagues to progress.

Applying for the Access to work scheme generally

Understanding colleagues and bosses

A safe work environment with people who are understanding and knowledgeable.

Specific coaching through the access to work scheme

Regular meeting with line managers to discuss how things are going and work to find solutions on issues straight away rather than leaving them to fester because I am too anxious to approach anyone about them.

Colleagues have suggested roles that they feel I would suit, and so I have taken a shot at them and succeeded.

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Support

When things have been difficult in work what has been helpful from your employer or what could have been done better:

39% of respondents stated time would have aided which related to elements such as:

- Regular set breaks
- Flexible working
- Time to process and/or regulate when required
- Time with managers to discuss issues find solutions
- Extra time to complete tasks/qualifications
- Understanding by colleagues about time keeping and potential for needing more time to process information than others

"Having a meltdown or shutdown is involuntary and out of my control, this is not something I should have been told off for."

"On the few occasions when I have needed to take mental health days my employer has always been understanding."

Further responses referred to:

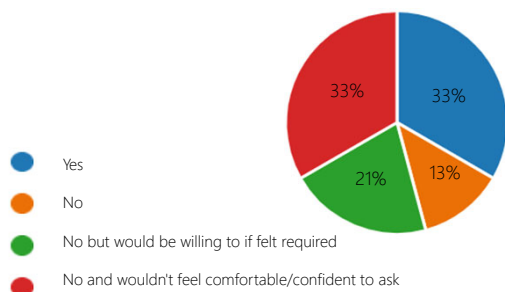
- More understanding of social & sensory difficulties
- Quiet spaces to work when needed
- Tailored support to manage stressful situations or changes that may overwhelm an Autistic person.
- Making accommodations personalised – employer making suggestions
- Access to work
- Understanding from employer/colleagues
- Written instructions including after face to face meetings
- Additional
- Working with the person to find ways of managing new job role/expectations/workload and executive function issues
- Feeling listened to and believed
- Working from home has helped reduced anxiety of going into the office

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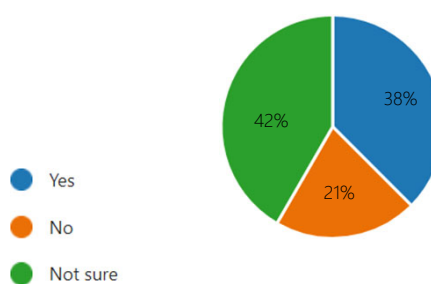
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Reasonable adjustments

Have you ever asked to have adjustments in recruitment or your employment



Do you know where to go for employment support?



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Barriers to looking for employment

"If you disclose autism before getting a job interview you'll immediately get rejected."

Recruitment bias

- Already feels barrier as the "world is set up to neurotypical norms" and social systems don't work in the way Autistic people need them to.
- Companies wanting people to 'fit into the role' rather than looking at people's skills
- Feel being Autistic will lessen chances but not able to challenge discrimination
- Age

Confidence

- Anxiety in applying for jobs.
- "Not feeling good enough to apply for roles."
- Fear of unknown or starting something new
- Doubt regarding the support available.
- Lacking ability to show communication skills employers ask for.
- Feeling unable to be open about the struggles faced by an Autistic person.

Lack of true understanding

- Companies often state they are accessible but do not have deeper understanding or practical things in place to be accessible.
- "Microaggressions and judgements often faced in first impressions can prevent access and sustainment of employment."
- Feeling of being a burden if requesting support.

Processes

- Lots of long forms – even the support forms are long and little support to complete these.
- Interview and selection process often not Autism friendly.
- Resources to support lacking for each process of employment.
- Support needs to mean something - not just a tick box exercise

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Barriers to being successful in gaining job

"The challenges I face with being autistic cause a number of barriers in the neurotypical universe because the world and social system is not designed for me."

Recruitment bias

- Traditional Interviews do not gain the best from Autistic individuals – "I do not do so well in face to face interviews".
- Previous sickness (context often not known)
- Medical/fit to work questionnaire – feel will affect chances if declare Autism.
- Lack of understanding of how an Autistic person may present themselves or interact means first impressions of Autistic individual is often seen negatively.

Confidence

- Anxiety in telling employers about being Autistic before getting job
- Fear of unknown or starting something new
- Anxiety in interview process especially if employer is ignorant about Autism.
- Doubt regarding the support available.
- Lacking of knowledge about entry routes into employers.
- "Not meeting expectations of an employee as they can be very stereotypical to neurotypicals."

Stereotypes

- Presumed lack of intelligence by job centres and employers.
- Communication skills are presumed poor but it is just different for Autistic people.
- Lack of understanding about sensory, processing needs and behaviours such as shutdown or stimming and how varied these things are.
- Lack of understanding of specialty areas.

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Barriers to remaining in employment

"Where employers have an awareness that neurodiverse people often need additional support / reasonable adjustments, their training and understanding is hopelessly naive."

Mental health

- Being overwhelmed leading to burnout
- Without support "challenges faced on daily basis can become continually more challenging."
- Managing increasing workload/changes in expectations of job role
- Feeling rejected
- Finances - feel forced to work, even though it is impacting overall mental health, as can't afford to work part time of benefits system unable to support enough financially.
- Masking leads to burnout when feeling unsupported.

Lack of understanding or support

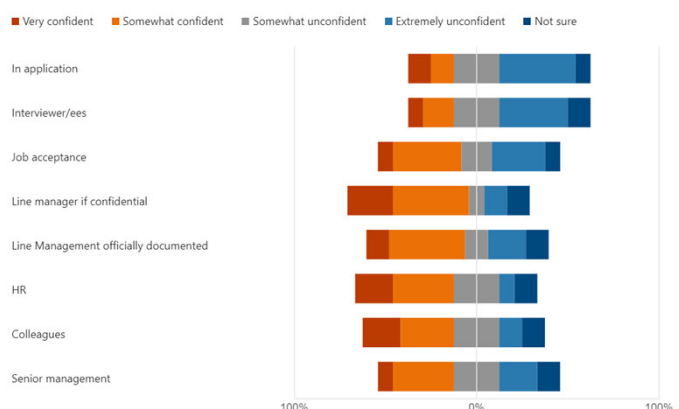
- Lack of accommodation of sensory issues.
- Not being understood by employer and/or colleagues.
- Microaggressions and judgements faced in workplace.
- Illness – may need more time off than others.
- Having clear understanding of what is expected in the role before the probation period ends.
- Fear of losing role if ask for accommodations.

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- 92% of respondents know Autism comes under definition of Disability.
- 83% of respondents know that being Autistic meant they were legally entitled to reasonable adjustments.
- Confidence to tell an employer was rated 3.29 out of 5 on average, with 29% stated they would feel very confident in telling their employer.

Confidence levels of disclosure of Autism at varying points of employment



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Quotes from Autistic individuals about why they wouldn't disclose being Autistic to an employer.

I'm aware that some hiring managers still dismiss applications from autistic people out of hand, especially for public-facing roles

You can't take it back once it's said. There's a stigma to go with being broken and disabled.

I feel that disclosing this information 'too early' in the recruitment process of job start will affect other peoples views of me.

Fear of judgement

Afraid to be viewed as lacking intelligence or awkward to deal with.

I feel that people still see it as a bad thing.

I have no issue with it but experience has taught me to not expect any real understanding from those who I disclose to.

I would be nervous about people's unconscious or conscious bias against autistic people during the application and interview process.

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Project Analysis Summary

Support

- ¾ of respondents felt they needed support to gain employment but less than a ¼ felt the support in place was sufficient.
- Of those that had support however, they believed the support was vital part of gaining employment which suggests once support is in place there is generally a positive outcome.
- The main areas of support respondents felt would be beneficial was CV/application writing skills, interview support, adapted interviews focusing on the roles skills rather than social skills and more tailored adjustments. Having a mentor when starting a new role and companies have better accessibility training was also felt important.
- When asked about what aided during a difficult time in work the main support was around time; for example being flexible around hours, increased breaks and time to process information.

Barriers

- The main barriers respondents felt there were in place around looking for and gaining employment were: Recruitment bias, Lack of true understanding from employers, overly complicated processes and stereotyping, all of which leads to a lack of confidence from the Autistic individual.
- The main barriers in retaining employment were: A lack of understanding and support being in place which can impact their mental health.
- Just over a 1/3 felt they would be able to progress in their role.
- The main barriers to feeling able to progress were around anxiety around increased responsibility and not wishing to line manage despite wishing to progress in their role. There were also concerns around recruitment selection being biased and being fearful to ask for adjustments.

Reasonable Adjustments

- The majority of respondents knew Autism is a disability under the legal definition and that that meant they were legally entitled to reasonable adjustments
- Despite this 33% said they hadn't and wouldn't feel comfortable to request adjustments and only 29% felt very confident to tell their employer they were Autistic
- Over 2/3 were not sure or did not know where to go for employment support.

Must be noted small sample means this cannot be statistically used as Hampshire views but will complement the wider public survey findings.

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Final thought quote

I think the level of understanding of Autism in the workplace is paramount to support individuals with being their authentic selves and having more tailored support during times of stress, change, overwhelm and other challenges.

Thank You