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## Neurodiversity in the workplace

It is important to have a diverse workforce. Nearly all organisations recognise this need and can understand the benefits that a diverse workforce can bring. We see this benefit as bringing different perspectives from different backgrounds to provide diversity of thought, resulting in real creativity and innovation.

Diversity as a term for employers covers several groups of individuals and considers different genders, ethnicities, religions, sexuality and disability. However we feel that although these many groups are represented, diversity in the workplace hasn't yet properly understood the need to represent those people with neurological differences - conditions such as:

- autism
- autism spectrum conditions (ASC)
- ADD/ADHD
- dyslexia
- dyspraxia
- dyscalculia
- learning disabilities.

It is equally important to consider these neurodiverse conditions, which are essentially the different ways a person learns, processes information and communicates. This would ensure that employees with hidden conditions are able to access the right support and reasonable adjustment in the workplace.

### Barriers in the workplace

Until recently only the negative aspects of these conditions have been focused on, while the special talents that often come with these conditions are overlooked. Coupled with this, there are also barriers to employment which neurodiverse individuals have to overcome in order to gain employment or progress in a desired career path.

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Organisation: BBC  
Date of publication: 13 January 2016

Existing recruitment processes for example, are not flexible enough to allow neurodiverse candidates to properly exhibit and demonstrate their abilities. This first step to employment is still the largest obstacle to overcome.

There also still remains an element of stigma around these hidden conditions. Employees can be reluctant to disclose their condition for fear of negative reaction from colleagues, or of it potentially limiting their career opportunities, meaning they are often not receiving the support or adjustments that may be available.

Equally, managers are also often unsure about what these conditions are, what support they should offer or even what support their organisation has to offer- things such as assistive technology or workplace adjustments.

## **Embracing neurodiversity**

The relatively new term of neurodiversity is, however, helping to bring about an increasing awareness of these hidden conditions, focusing on the positives that such conditions can provide, rather than the negatives. This will hopefully help to eventually end this stigma and allow people to properly access support which will allow them to achieve their potential. Indeed, we are seeing an increasing number of organisations who are starting to recognise the need to embrace, nurture and facilitate those with neurological differences because of the desirable skillsets that they can offer.

The creative and ever growing digital industries are particular areas which are benefitting by recognising and harnessing the potential that neurodiverse employees have. We at the BBC are currently working on a [project which is looking at neurodiversity in the workplace](#); promoting awareness of neurological conditions and the advantages of having a differently wired brain.

The project is exploring how we can better support people with hidden disabilities, focusing on the strengths, talents, aptitudes and abilities of individuals with neurological conditions. It is about dispelling the myths, perceptions and even prejudices people may have about these conditions, especially in employment.

We believe it is important for organisations to keep in mind that an individual is a unique learner; that no two people are exactly the same and no two people learn and work in exactly the same manner.

If employers can open up to new ideas around how they recruit, and are willing to incorporate new ways of working to allow individuals to demonstrate skills and talents in a way they feel best able, we believe it will enable them to discover and access a broader range of key talent in the workplace.

## **Further reading**

[5 things to consider when managing someone with autism](#)

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[5 useful coping strategies for those with autism](#)

[BBC Careers Extend scheme](#)

[BBC Neurodiversity project](#)

[Why a neurodiverse workforce can improve your management skills](#)

[Why we need more neuro-inclusive recruiters](#)