



Mitigating barriers to recruitment and workplace support for autistic employees



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Ayrshire Community Wealth Building Fair Employment Work Stream - Closing the Fair Work Gap

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Access to summary report [here](#)

Access to full report [here](#)



Aim of today

General and wider details
of our research on autism,
inclusion and the fair work

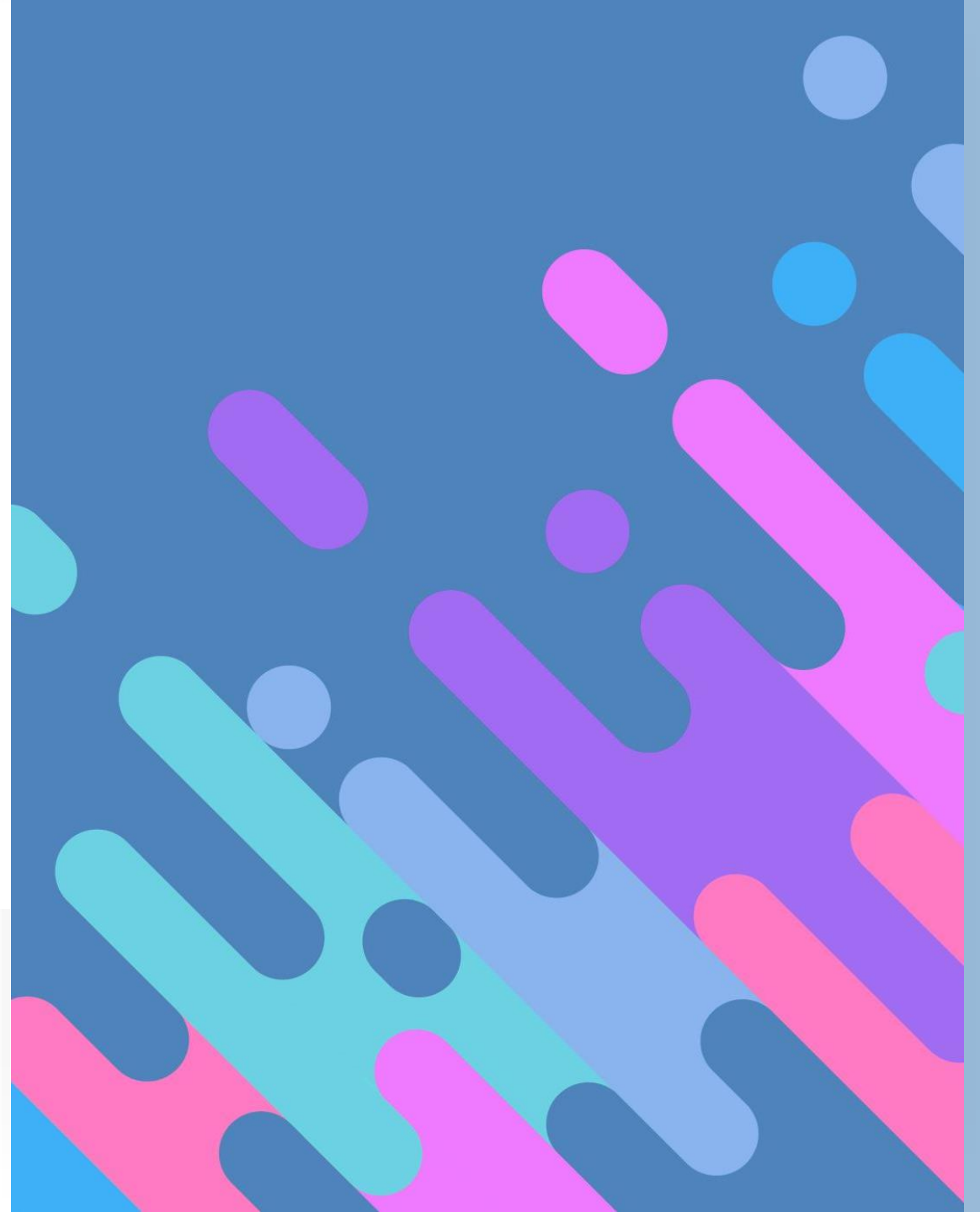
Draw out key aspects of
research related to:

Questions and queries

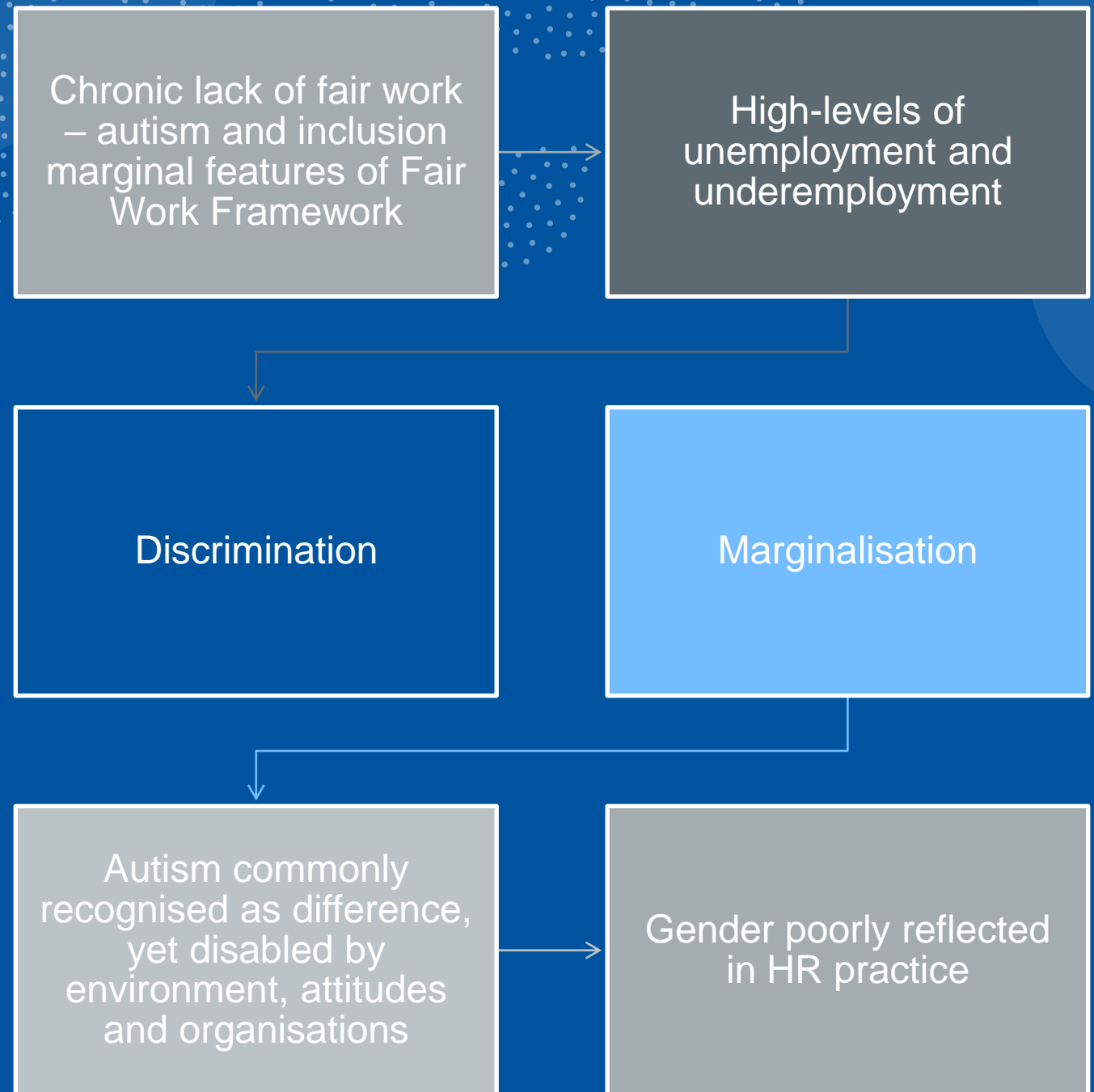
Mitigating barriers to
recruitment

Workplace support

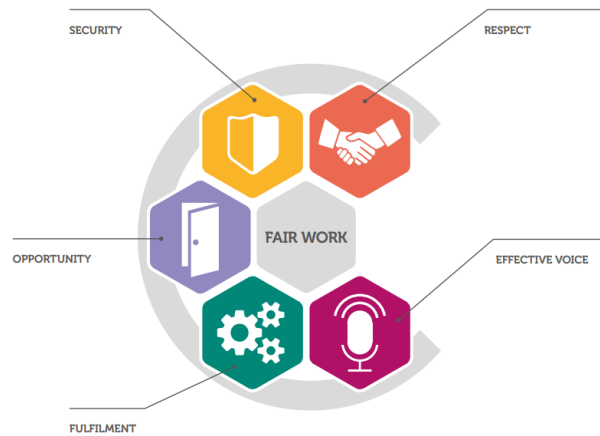
Part I: General details of the research



Motivation for research



Research questions



- What does work look like for autistic working people?
- How do autism and gender intersect with dimensions of fair work?
- What are the main barriers and facilitators to fair work for the autistic workforce?
- How can the Fair Work Framework be advanced to be more inclusive of the autistic workforce?

Methodology/conceptual framing

- **Two surveys** – autistic working people (n=191), and managers/HR senior HR professionals (n=32) with oversight of autistic employed working people
 - Based on 21 aspects of five dimensions to Fair Work Framework (next slide)
 - 5-point Likert scale (1 'strongly agree' to 5 'strongly disagree')
- **Two sets of qualitative interviews** – autistic working people (n=21), and managers/HR senior HR professionals (n=5) with oversight of autistic employed working people
 - Based on perceptions of fair work
- **Conceptual framing** – Fair Work Framework (5 dimensions), lived experience, social model of disability, intersectionality

Dimensions and aspects of fair work

Dimension of fair work	Aspect of dimension
Effective voice	• Employers encourage open communication regarding autism
	• Employees can safely express views in a range of ways
	• Employees have access to a staff representative or independent advocate
	• Employer responds positively when raising autism-related matters
Opportunity	• Employees offered reasonable adjustment during recruitment and selection
	• Access to training and development opportunities
	• Access to point of contact, mentor or job coach
	• Available promotion and progression opportunities
Security	• Paid a wage reflecting experiences, skills and qualifications
	• Employment is secure and low risk of losing job
	• Effective reasonable adjustments enable employees to do their best at work
	• Reasonable adjustments reviewed on regular basis
	• Employment rights understood and respected by employer
Fulfilment	• Job allows use of skills, knowledge and experience
	• Employees allowed opportunities to work autonomously, solve problems and make a difference
	• Reasonable adjustments made to allow employees to train, develop and learn skills for career development
Respect	• Employees feel understood as an autistic person
	• Confident of receiving support regarding bullying and harassment
	• Employer supports well-being, health, and safety
	• Meaningful training on inclusion and diversity translating in policy and practice
	• Colleagues have good understanding of needs of autistic workers

Key findings

- 'Fulfilment' rated highest and 'Effective voice' lowest by employees
- Substantial gap between how employees and employers rated availability of fair work
- Statistically significant differences between male and female employees
 - Employer responding positively when raising autism-related matters
 - Access to training and development opportunities
 - Job allows use of skills, knowledge and experience
 - Employer supports well-being, health and safety
 - Colleagues have good understanding of needs of autistic employees
- Least positively experienced aspects of fair work (men):
 - Access to point of contact, mentor or job coach
 - Reasonable adjustments during recruitment and selection
 - Understood as an autistic person
- Least positively experienced aspects of fair work (women):
 - Reasonable adjustments during recruitment and selection
 - Reasonable adjustments reviewed regularly
 - Colleague understanding of needs of autistic employee
- Multitude of organisational facilitators and barriers to employment – the bad likely to cancel out the good

Key recommendations

- Adapt Fair Work Framework to encompass inclusion (see next slide)
- Recognise intersecting identities
- Implement autism-inclusive HR policies and practices
- Uphold the social model of disability and the value of lived experience in shaping change
- Reduce the burden on individual employees to access adjustments
- Take a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach to addressing employee and employer-focused barriers to fair work



Adopt Social Model of Disability

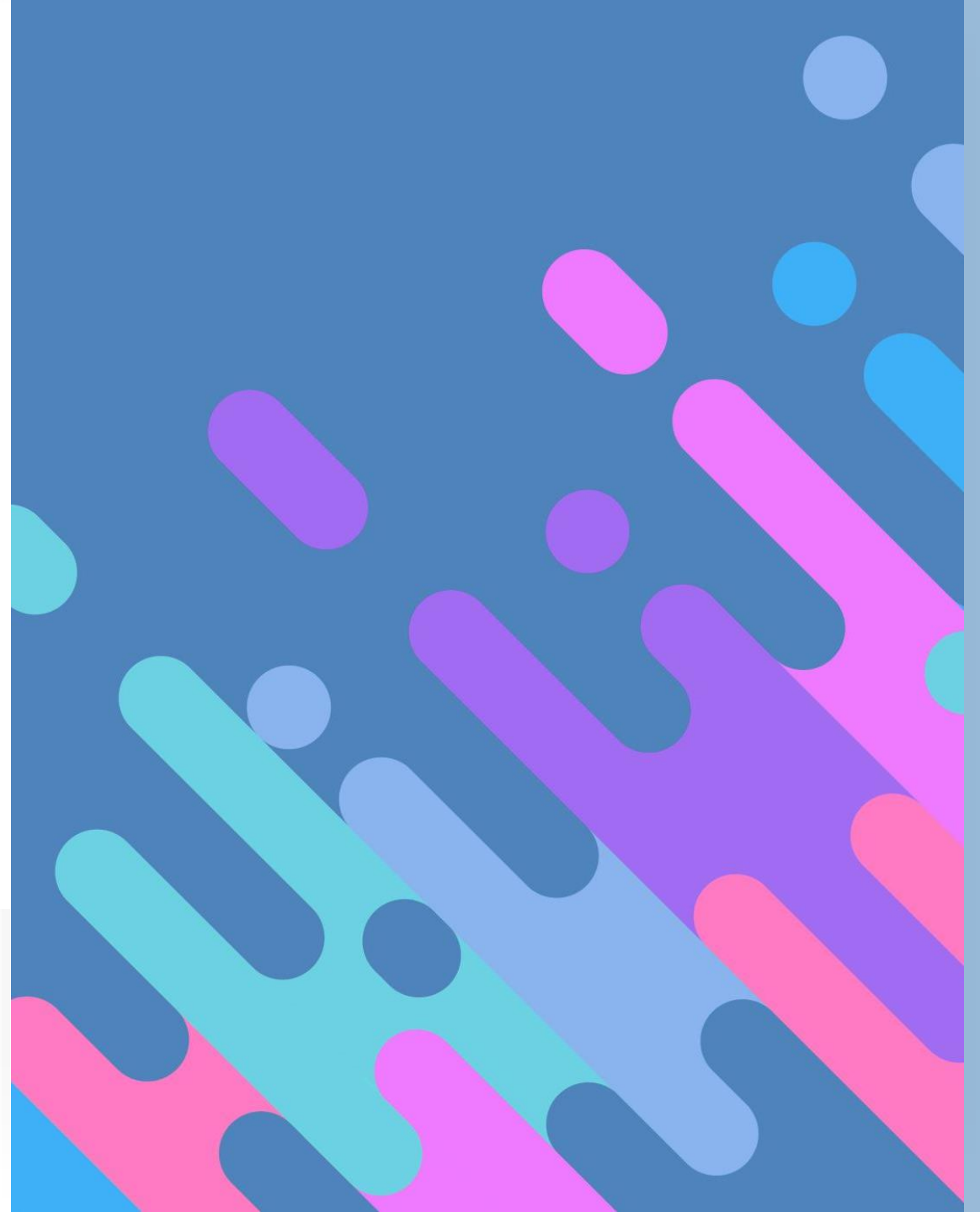
**Consult autistic workforce and
inclusive employment specialists**



**Consider gender differences
and other intersecting
identities**

**Multi-stakeholder
approach**

Part II: Mitigating barriers to recruitment and workplace place support



Barriers to recruitment

From surveys

- Reasonable adjustments problematic at all stages
- Employers failing to respond positively when raising autism-related matters
- Employment rights not or misunderstood and respected by employers
- Feeling misunderstood as an autistic person
- Lack of meaningful training on inclusion and diversity translating into policy and practice
- Employers widely and generally over-estimating ability to manage autism/inclusion

From interviews

- Bureaucratic decision-making
- Discriminatory recruitment and selection policy and procedures
- 'Lip service' or compliance with Equality Act 2010
- Minimal or lack of role models (especially regarding women)
- Lack of integration of neurodiversity and intersectionality into HR policy

Mitigating barriers to recruitment

- On top/instead of correcting specific issues on previous slide
 - Generally, adopt the full and wider principles of the Fair Work Framework
 - Consult staff and employment inclusive specialists, e.g., Into Work, a range of trade unions specialise in neurodiversity
 - Consider full recruitment process when making changes, i.e., job description, recruitment advertising, selection process/experience, job offer and contract forming, induction
 - Regularly review full process with input from staff and wider key stakeholders to fair work

Unsupportive workplaces

Inaccessible team meetings

Inability to use full range of skills

'Flexible' working arrangements without reasonable adjustments

Stereotyping autism

Poor transition to new line manager

Neurotypical work cultures, i.e., 'how we do things around here' attitudes

Open plan offices, or anywhere employees lack control over their environment

HR policy and practice without consultation



Workplace support – priorities for autism inclusive workplaces

- Organisational policy on autism/neurodiversity (and reflecting intersecting identities, e.g., gender)
- Employer takes the initiative
- Encourage open communications on autism
- Employee access to a rep/and or mentor/coach
- Extend/broaden employee autonomy
- Reasonable adjustments and regular review of such adjustments, including related to training, career development, expectations surrounding flexibility/mobility, etc.
- Widespread understanding and awareness of autism/neurodiversity, i.e., especially line managers, colleagues, team members
- Make sure communications (at all levels) are clear, consistent and available in accessible formats

Part III: Questions and queries

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