



**Building a Network to Transform Unions to
Represent the Neurodivergent Workforce (TURN):
Context, key findings, conclusions and next
steps for TURN**



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1 Executive Summary

Transforming unions to represent the neurodivergent workforce (TURN) is a project set up by academics at Heriot-Watt University grounded in the belief that only trade unions can deliver comprehensive, sustainable and a form of change required to make UK workplaces inclusive to neurodivergent workers (see Figure 1 for a full summary of TURN and its goals). Aside from setting out important contextual information of TURN (see Section 6), the main purpose of the report is to consider key issues arising, conclusions and next steps, from a workshop designed to build a network around the aims of TURN.

Specifically, the report assembles key information setting out the background, the impetus for and recent events regarding TURN (see Section 6), followed by an extensive analysis of key findings from the three-part TURN workshop (see Section 7), held via *Zoom*, on 27 July 2022. A range of further key information regarding the TURN workshop can be found in appendices 1-3, that is: key literature related to unions and neurodiversity, wider details of the workshop, and verbatim details of views and ideas generated in workshop breakout rooms.

The workshop generated a very wide range of findings, as the participants were drawn from a range of traditional (e.g., employees, unions and employers/HR professionals) and emergent parties to the employment relationships (e.g., practitioners associated with neurodivergent civil society organisations). Key finding focus on the important work already undertaken by unions on neurodiversity (see Section 7.2), what unions need to do to build capacity for neurodiversity, what power and voice means and how power and voice intersects with gender, for the neurodivergent workforce (see sections 7.3 to 7.5), and what a range of panellists, influential in respective fields related to employment relations, believe should be done to take notions of TURN to the next level (see Section 7.6). As the workshop was held on *Zoom*, this allowed participants to have parallel conversations, with analysis of such findings shedding further light on how to take TURN forward (see Section 7.7).

The conclusions (see Section 8.1) are divided between recommendations to unions, employers and governments, regarding TURN. Recommendations include mainstreaming neurodiversity across and within the labour movement, employers meaningfully adopting the social model of disability, and governments as employers working with unions on neurodiversity.

The next steps (see Section 8.2) for TURN include further workshops, disseminating key findings from the report, and exploring a wider range of funding to help get TURN off the ground. A full summary of TURN, including conclusions and next steps arising from the workshop, is summarised by Figure 1 (page 13).

2 Acknowledgements

The authors want to thank the following for making the first TURN workshop work as well as it did. We thank all the keynotes and panellists who agreed to take part at short notice, brought with them and shared important and in some cases quite personal stories, experiences and viewpoints. We would like to thank Sarah Chicken, Maya Aslam and Janine Booth for the help with the breakout sessions. We would like to thank the BSL interpreters for making the workshop accessible in one particular but important sense. We would also like to thank all those who attended and participated in the workshop exercises, some of whom shared personal but important experiences with the wider audience. Given the limitations of online events, we designed the workshop to allow maximum participation and input, but we believe we have drafted a report in the spirit of capturing a variety of moods, sentiments, knowledge and informed experiences, but without reporting on anything overly personal. Without all of the keynotes, participants and panellists, this report would not be possible, and more importantly with such contributions, we have heightened the prospect of the TURN initiative becoming a reality in the not-too-distant future.

3 Key terms of reference

Neurodiversity – This is the idea that cognitive conditions, such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia and dyspraxia, are natural variations in the way people think and process information. The term recognises both the difficulties that people who have these conditions may encounter in the workplace and the unique strengths that can derive from thinking differently.

Neurodivergence – Workers may be described as neurodivergent if they have a cognitive profile that is different to that of the average or typical person. For example, a dyslexic person may be said to be neurodivergent.

Neurotypical – This is a term sometimes used to describe people who are not neurodivergent.

Social model of disability – Says neurodivergent people are disabled because society and workplaces are organised for the benefit of neurotypical people. Under this model, employers should change their environments, policies and cultures to remove barriers faced by neurodivergent workers.

Source: GMB (2018)

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6 Overview of TURN

6.1 Background

Transforming unions to represent the neurodivergent workforce (TURN) was born out of academics at Heriot-Watt University, working with the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA), a trade union representing workers across the UK travel and transport industry, for almost 10 years – a partnership based around two projects, projects partly supported by the Union Modernisation Fund. Project one scoped out the appetite for member support and the realities of a new equalities initiative on neurodiversity. Project two looked at what union-friendly training could be designed and put in place for line managers who manage neurodiversity. Details of the research, reports and an impact case study generated from these projects can be found in Appendix 1.

6.2 The UK labour movement and neurodiversity

The TSSA is not the only UK union working on neurodiversity (see Figure 1). Prospect, representing scientists, engineers and tech experts, has run a “neurodiversity project” for several years. In a wider sense, Janine Booth, a National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) and disability activist, has over several years developed a range of rep training on autism and neurodiversity. Janine has trained reps for the following trade unions: RMT, Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), GMB, Communication Workers Union (CWU), National Education Union (NEU), Unite the Union, NASUWT, Chartered Society of Physiotherapists (CSP). Further, other trade unions have run an array of neurodiversity awareness training or workshops, e.g., UNISON, Royal College of Nursing (RCN).

6.3 Realities of trade unions representing the neurodivergent workforce

Essentially, while the work of unions rarely surfaces in the widest sense, except in the case of high-profile conflict situations, such as the rail strikes of the summer of 2022, TURN is based on a belief that only trade unions can deliver comprehensive, sustainable and a form of change required to make UK workplaces inclusive to neurodivergent workers. However, the current work of unions on neurodiversity, while building for some time, is largely unheard of except among neurodivergent members, and reps and caseworkers who work to defend neurodivergent individuals, plus reps who, especially in the case of the TSSA, have worked to get neurodiversity inserted into collective bargaining arrangements with employers, e.g., to help bring recognition of neurodiversity into everyday HR policy and practice (see Figure 1). As such, the work of trade unions on neurodiversity is yet to reach its full potential, with the work of some larger unions at an embryonic stage, and some unions are yet to embrace neurodiversity, despite at least anecdotal evidence of discrimination against their neurodivergent members. Further, the work so far appears remiss in understanding and embedding into rep training how neurodivergent workers perceive and experience power and voice within their trade unions and in the workplace, plus as is the case in wider settings, understanding and recognition of gender is barely (if at all) incorporated into practice surrounding unions and neurodiversity (see Figure 1).

6.4 The beginnings of TURN

Despite academics at Heriot-Watt University working with trade unions on neurodiversity for some time, the need to do more was evident, and an opportunity to take a substantial leap forward became apparent late spring of 2021 when the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) announced a special call to ‘investigate changes in working lives and power in the workplace’, a scheme offering grants up to £720,000/project. At this point, the notion

of “TURN” was born, and the next four months involved preparing the grant proposal and recruiting a range of research partners, including trade unions, employers, neurodiversity staff networks, neurodiversity practitioners, and a multi-disciplinary team of academics. The exercise led to 25 partner organisations (committing approaching £100,000 of in-kind financial support) and 12 individuals with various expertise agreeing to be part of TURN. The proposed project was driven by three research questions (also see Figure 1):

- What do unions need to build and wider capacity around neurodiversity?
- What do power and voice look like for the neurodivergent workforce?
- How should gender be reflected in power and voice at work, and in the work of unions on neurodiversity?

Unfortunately, despite excellent buy-in from key stakeholders and excellent grant reviews, in April 2022 it was announced the project in this instance would not be funded.

6.5 *Restarting TURN*

While the outcome from the grant application was very disappointing for all parties, a decision was made shortly after to find another way to launch TURN. A further incentive to restart interest in TURN arose out of how in May 2022 it was announced that an impact case study based on the work of trade unions on neurodiversity led by Heriot-Watt University academics, submitted to the Research Excellence Framework 2021 exercise (an evaluation of research conducted by UK universities every 6-7 years), was rated four star, or ‘world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour’. A decision, as such, was to organise a workshop in the summer of 2022, bringing together trade unions working on neurodiversity, with a range of known and newly interested parties, to build a network to help begin scaling up and intensifying the transformation of unions to represent the neurodivergent workforce (see Figure 1).

6.6 *The distinct features and advantages of TURN: Social model of disability*

TURN is based on trade unions taking a leading role in shaping the employment relationship around the interests of neurodivergent workers. The means to shaping the employment relationship is based around the social model of disability. Unlike competing approaches based on the medical model of disability – an approach focused largely on “training” neurodivergent people to fit in with neurotypical workplace practices and cultures; and the human capital model – an approach where some neurodivergent workers are seen as having valuable, but previously untapped “talents”, “skills” and “attributes”, the vision of TURN is for employers to work with trade unions to change their environments, policies and cultures, effectively removing barriers faced by neurodivergent workers. In other words, all workplaces should change to suit neurodivergent working people, and all employment should be equally open to neurodivergent working people, but not on a basis of making the neurodivergent individual fit the neurotypical workplace, nor on the basis of changing certain HRM practices to attract a small selection of neurodivergent “talent”. A key argument driving TURN is only trade unions are in a position deliver an approach based on the social model and on the scale required, and while trade unions have experienced a substantial decline in influence over many decades, trade unions remain at the vanguard of furthering and defending the interests of working people, often leading to important workplace change beyond where they are formally recognised, as noted during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the current “living standards crisis”. Further key reasons to make the social model of disability central to TURN is how the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) – the professional body for HR professionals, supports the social model of disability; plus, the

social model of disability is implicit in the Equality Act 2010, the main legislative framework surrounding employment and neurodiversity (see Figure 1).

7 Workshop details and key findings

7.1 Workshop details

The workshop took place on, 27 July 2022. It ran for half a day (3.5 hours), was online and delivered via *Zoom*, with British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters in attendance. Attendance fluctuated during the workshop, with more than 80 individuals attending at any one time and 59 in attendance at the end. Most participants were UK-based, with representation from the USA, Australia, India, Hong Kong, Canada, South Africa and France. Full details of the workshop can be found in Appendix 2. Appendix 2 details the three main parts of the workshop (showcasing the work of trade unions on neurodiversity, breakout sessions addressing key aims of TURN, and ending with a panel-led discussion), including naming all the keynotes, panellists and the 71 organisations, including 20 trade unions or affiliations of trade unions, represented at the event. As the workshop was held on *Zoom*, the organisers relied on associated technology, such as *Padlet* (a real-time platform participants can share views anonymously, and in this case, to allow maximum participation) for breakout sessions and the “chat feature” of *Zoom* throughout all sessions. The analyses of findings from the keynote addresses, breakout rooms and use of *Padlet*, panel-led discussion, and parallel participant-led discussion from the chat feature, are set out below.

7.2 Keynote speakers

The session heard from six speakers (see Appendix 2 for more details). The **first speaker**, a leader of the TSSA’s work on neurodiversity, spoke of how despite more than a decade of the Equality Act 2010 and the work of the union on such matters, far too many neurodivergent working people remain marginalised and repressed because of substantial gaps in employer/manager knowledge, awareness and policy on neurodiversity. The key to keep moving on this area is through traditional union practice, that of education, agitation and organising.

The **second speaker**, an employee of a UK rail organisation, provided details of the challenges of seeking support from their employer as an autistic worker and how a TSSA-trained equality rep made a crucial difference in resolving the member’s difficulties related to how his autism was understood at work.

The **third speaker**, a former senior HR representative of the same rail organisation, commented on how there was much to agree with unions on neurodiversity, recognising how unions and employers need to do more work on such matters, as well as recognising how several unions possessed important knowledge, and the ability to raise and share best practice on neurodiversity.

The **fourth speaker**, an official of a trade union (Prospect) with bargaining rights for scientists, engineers and tech workers, drew particular attention to the importance of language associated with neurodiversity, and how members and employers craved clarity or such matters, as well as more information and support. Importantly, the official remarked how unions and employers can work together to create staff networks that feed into decision-making on neurodiversity.

The **fifth speaker**, representing a union for teachers and education leaders (NASUWT), commented on the high-level of rep and member interest in training on neurodiversity, but how members struggle to get time off to take part in training. Importantly, the speaker noted how many unions worked together on neurodiversity, working with the TSSA and the final speaker.

The **sixth speaker**, among many things, was invited to the workshop because of substantial work developing and conducting rep training on neurodiversity. In this instance, a key issue was raised in that “Plan A” for unions should be about going far beyond raising awareness and discussion of reasonable adjustments. Instead, the goal of unions should be to train reps to collectively bargain with employers over accessible workplaces. Further, we heard how neurodiversity should not be seen as a specialist rep activity; it should be integrated into core rep and branch training.

The first part of the workshop ended with a brief **Q&A session**. Time was taken to clarify language and key terms used in the workshop and TURN more generally, such as neurodiversity, neurodivergence, neurotypical and the social model of disability (see Terms of Reference and Section 7.6). A second issue raised considered the failure to integrate neurodivergent children into mainstream education, and the legacy of such failures, but more specifically to TURN, how neurodivergent children will one day become the workforce and may well be the workers best placed to campaign for accessible workplaces.

7.3 Breakout session 1: What do unions need to build and widen capacity around neurodiversity?

Breakout session 1 led to the generation of 33 comments (all comments can be accessed via Appendix 3). The findings in this instance point towards highlighting a range of wider issues, such as the ethos of the trade union related to neurodiversity, including:

- Build such work on the voices of neurodivergent working people
- Key goal is to change workplaces/deliver systemic change
- Consider how neurodivergence intersects with other protected characteristics
- Work should be done based on co-operation between unions, other neurodiversity representative staff bodies, and employers
- Adopt/draw on wider good practice
- Challenge stereotypes developed pre-employment
- Encourage young neurodivergent workers into debate and practice, i.e., workers who may have had better experiences during education
- Develop consistent language and terminology
- Adopt zero tolerance for ableism
- Emphasise the human costs of disabling barriers in bargaining situations

More specifically, the comments point towards a range of specific issues trade unions should address when building and widening capacity around neurodiversity:

- Build capacity initially through awareness (including intersectionality) training for reps, members and employers
- Provide guidance to employers
- Develop case studies of changed workplaces
- Build a united campaign across the labour movement
- Embed information about Access to Work scheme into a training
- Develop bespoke union organising models on neurodiversity
- Trade unions themselves need to change internal policies and practices to be more inclusive towards neurodivergent members, reps and officials, e.g., addressing equalities internally, neurodivergent friendly training and conferences
- Improve availability and access to training for reps, officers and lay officials
- Embed the notion of “affinity groups” into training

Further discussion after the breakout sessions reflected on how a project the scale and ambition of TURN could be limited by important disparities between the nature of work, jobs, occupations and professions. The discussion considered how trade unions are employers and have democratic structures that could discriminate against officials, reps and members. A further key point was how trade unions need to consider the balance between individual and collective representation, i.e., unions should prioritise collective over individual representation, and when making claims surrounding neurodiversity, make such claims very clear and concise.

7.4 Breakout session 2: What do power and voice look like for the neurodivergent workforce?

Breakout session 2 led to the generation of 23 comments (all comments can be accessed via Appendix 3). Analysis of the comments indicated two broad themes: the consequences for the neurodivergent workforce where power and voice are largely (if not exclusively) determined by neurotypical-led union and management practice; and what could be done differently to build power and voice for the neurodivergent workforce. That said, as reflected in one comment to wider contributors, whatever changes are made in terms of power and voice regarding the neurodivergent workforce, will require pressure of some sort (i.e., effective trade unions and/or legislation) to regulate the imbalance of power between employers and neurodivergent workers. Consequences of failing to build power and voice for the neurodivergent workforce include:

- Marginalisation and silence
- Invisibility and non-disclosure
- Employer failure to recruit
- Othering
- Narrow, subjective and discriminatory views of poor or under-performance
- Lack of trust and reluctance to disclose
- Discrimination and secondary mental health problems

What could be done differently regarding power and voice include the following suggestions:

- More neurodivergent figures in positions of authority
- Empower via changes to HR practices (e.g., recruitment, performance, job design, career development, promotion opportunities, teamwork, use of metrics especially if generated by artificial intelligence)
- Employers meaningfully accept they are part of the problem (and solution), i.e., follow the social model of disability
- Decisions based on consulting groups led by neurodivergent employees
- Spaces and resources for neurodivergent groups to organise and grow
- Policy and practice co-determined/co-produced by neurotypical and neurodivergent reps on both sides
- Shared language and terminology led by neurodivergent employees
- Consultation on the social, cultural and physical working environment
- Neurodivergent role models are chosen by neurodivergent employees
- New ideas audited for ableism

Further discussion after the breakout sessions questioned how power and voice for neurodivergent workers could be built into situations where employment is based on freelance work or self-employment.

7.5 *Breakout session 3: How should gender be reflected in power and voice at work, and in the work of unions on neurodiversity?*

Breakout session 3 led to the generation of 11 comments (all comments can be accessed via Appendix 3). There was a similar pattern to the findings of breakout session 2. The consequences of ignoring or ignorance of gender in relation to power and voice, including the work of unions on neurodiversity, led to the following points:

- One dimensional (male) approach limits strategies to change the workplace
- Lack of understanding exacerbates already difficult experiences
- Emergence and reinforcement of stereotypes
- Lack of opportunity or career progression
- Burnout for reps involved in multiple committees/campaigns all aimed at workplace change
- Failure to recognise multiple sources of disadvantage
- Women, trans and non-binary workers are often voiceless/silent

What was proposed to overcome such challenges/be done differently includes:

- Trade unions to be more inclusive to and increase the visibility of neurodivergent members based on gender
- Education on the impact of later diagnosis and how later diagnosis can coincide with peri-/menopause
- Bring in notions of intersectionality and multiple sources of disadvantage into rep training
- Promotion of women and trans neurodivergent role models
- Challenge masculine notions of neurodiversity
- Trade unions providing guidance on where to seek specialist help and advice
- Such work must be led by neurodivergent people and neurodivergent people to be defined by the widest sense of gender
- Work of UK trade unions promoted on an international basis, especially in contexts where understanding and expertise on neurodiversity is limited, or where neurodivergent workers face the worst cases of oppression

Further discussion after the breakout sessions focused on, for example, how if trade unions are to organise on the basis of gender and neurodivergence, they must be prepared to commission research as little to no such research on gender exists elsewhere. Such research should consider intersectionality as, for instance, neurodivergent women can face a double disadvantage in the workplace and are likely to face further and even more complex discrimination if, for example, also of colour. A further key issue raised involved how groups set up to look at particular protected characteristics do not have a tradition of working together.

7.6 *Panel-led discussion*

The final session involved a panel-led discussion (more specific details of this aspect of the workshop can be found in Appendix 2). The panellists were chosen in terms of being influential in their respective fields, thus raising the prospect of generating wider awareness, and scope for TURN to become an active union strategy partnered by a set of research projects. Attempts to invite a range of Westminster-based politicians did not bear fruit, but such politicians will receive a copy of the report and be invited to further workshops. Some of the panellists attended earlier sessions of the workshop and some did not because of prior commitments. However, all panellists were informed and reminded to check the *Padlet* for

themes that could arise in the discussion. All panellists were familiar with the chat feature of *Zoom*, and many engaged with this aspect of the workshop before and after they spoke. Each panellist was introduced to the wider workshop, with the first opportunity to speak given to Professor Phil Taylor, as he had been in attendance for most of the workshop. Then, the discussion was opened to all panellists and for participants to put questions and queries to the panellists. The lead author of the report chaired the session.

Phil Taylor, a Professor of Work and Employment Studies, began the discussion by reflecting on wider research conducted with trade unions on performance management in the civil service, highlighting the rise of performance management by micro-measurement, micro-management and algorithmic forms of artificial intelligence (AI), practices increasingly common in contemporary employment, and practices trade unions need to learn to organise around. He then drew attention to how performance management initiatives created **systemic disability discrimination** against civil servants, with disabled employees disproportionately facing “must improve” and “below expectations” notices, and subject to “personal improvement plans.” Wider attention was given to how BAME civil servants reported similar experiences. He further reflected on, as per earlier discussions, the importance of not just producing research based on **intersectionality**, but how trade unions must recognise such an approach in tackling equality issues. Professor Taylor made one further major point, that of how **trade union education** would be critical to matching the aspirations of TURN, and how matters related to disability, including neurodivergence, are commonly proposed as ideas for further and new forms of such education.

Next to speak was Dr. Jo Grady, General Secretary of the University and College Union (UCU). Dr. Grady commended the use of the **social model of disability** and how her own trade union “pushed” such an approach in matters related to disability. Dr. Grady also commended earlier discussion on **disability passports**, a means to record agreed adjustments and allow smooth and positive transitions should a disabled employee require a new line manager. Following on, she highlighted the reality of working in higher education and how the growing organisational culture surrounding the “**ideal worker**,” or in this case an academic who is wedded to long hours, high performance and commitment to their vocation, disables many academics, including those neurodivergent. An ultimate point was how UCU, having organised substantial industrial action across the further and higher education sectors in recent years, had developed guidelines on making **strike action inclusive to neurodivergent members** (see Appendix 1).

At this point Kudsia Batool of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) drew attention to the importance of considering **workplace design** in relation to neurodiversity, i.e., how workplaces are designed to exclude workers with protected characteristics, especially disabled workers. Kudsia commented on how the labour movement was there not just to **remove barriers in the workplace**, but also **remove barriers to involvement in trade union activities**, at all levels of such organisations. She believes trade unions need to build the movement with neurodiversity at the core of what it does, i.e., change and challenge the narrative of what unions do around neurodivergent workers. However, in Kudsia’s opinion, the **labour movement was not diverse enough**, with many groups, including neurodivergent people under-represented in decision-making structures. A final further key point involved how unions were not doing enough to gather data to allow extensive **equalities audits**. Such data would inform where unions are and what still needs to be done.

At this point a question from a participant was put to the panel. The participant argued how unions could do more to recognise ableism and **challenge how deeply rooted ableism is**

in society. The participant argued how outright ableism is rare in our times, but it remains deeply rooted and hidden away in attitudes. At this point Kudsia responded, agreeing how a **zero-tolerance approach to ableism** was required, and how unions must also get their “house in order” on such matters.

The subject matter of ableism led to Eve Cole joining the discussion. Eve is neurodivergent and is known for her inclusion and diversity work with British Transport Police, especially surrounding autism. Eve criticised employers for claiming to follow the **social model of disability**, yet in practice steadfastly followed the **medical model of disability**, an approach where disability is seen as a problem of the individual and not the employer. Eve broadened the discussion at that point to suggest it was not just trade unions that could be agents of change for neurodivergent people in the workplace. She argued how there are a wider range of people who can be drawn upon in work organisations to help call for change in relation to neurodiversity. Linking back to the medical model of disability, Eve drew attention to how many neurodivergent workers felt they needed to fit in (develop **coping mechanisms**) rather than call for or expect changes to working practices. A further reality was some employers congratulated themselves because they “see” neurodivergent workers getting on with the job without adjustments but ignore or take no ownership of high incidence of **burnout** experienced by such workers as they work under the same increased pressure as neurotypical colleagues but perform extra and often exhausting coping-related labour to keep up with such colleagues. Eve finished her points by reiterating earlier comments about **everyday ableism**, drawing attention to colleagues commonly and openly passing off bad language as Tourette’s Syndrome.

At that moment it represented the right time to bring in Dr. Ian Iceton, a former Group HR Director in the rail industry, and a speaker from the first session designed to showcase the work of trade unions on neurodiversity. Dr. Iceton wished to comment on recruitment/selection, and how many assessment tools associated with selection processes are implicitly discriminatory. However, Dr. Iceton pointed out the emergence of a new form of selection - the **Cambridge Code**, an assessment tool not designed around neurotypical traits. Dr. Iceton followed on from one of Eve Cole’s points referring to a notion of **finding your allies** in work organisations when organising to make workplaces inclusive to neurodivergent workers. He recommended being open-minded to who may be on your side in work organisations over such matters.

A comment from a participant added to the discussion by drawing attention to how neurodivergence and disability are commonly managed in their experience of being a journalist and a rep in the media industry. Too often, typically inadvertent disclosure of disability through apparent ill-health, led to colleagues being “**managed out**” of the organisation. The participants concurred with Eve Cole on the **burnout** rates among neurodivergent journalists. One positive outcome was how disclosing neurodivergence led to an opportunity to **mentor** a young, autistic trainee.

A range of short comments and contributions brought the discussion to an end. Dr. Grady, for example, restated the problem of **everyday ableism** going unchallenged and how there is little understanding and acknowledgement from employers on how damaging such attitudes can be. Professor Taylor reiterated the importance of **trade union education** in the context of what was being discussed as he believed the biggest resource trade unions has been the thousands of members who do training, but in saying so, believed unions needed to adjust their roadmap to include neurodiversity. Finally, Kudsia Batool reminded all participants how trade unions are built on democratic structures, and how **members have**

the power to shape democratic structures to better reflect under-represented members involvement and interests.

The workshop ended with the lead author of the report showing appreciation to fellow organisers, keynotes, panellists, and all attendees, followed by details of what may follow the workshop, including the dissemination of this report.

7.7 Discussion in Zoom chat feature

Participant comments from the *Zoom* chat feature are not reproduced in the report as many clearly identify individuals, and individuals were not asked to give their consent for us to reproduce chat that had the potential to identify, directly or indirectly, but we did seek informed consent to conduct a broad analysis of such input, primarily to see if such comments and discussion had the potential to shed further light on the key issues the workshop was set up to explore. In total, more than 6,600 words of further data were captured from the chat feature, although a good minority of such chats did not involve matters of direct consequence to the future and viability of TURN. An analysis of relevant comments revealed a range of themes:

- Importance of agreed definitions, language and key terms, and the rejection of “jargon” as it creates divisionary interpretations
- Misuse of the term “neurodiverse,” i.e., it should not be used to describe an individual
- Trade unions will not build successful and sustainable campaigns unless the right and agreed terminology is used regarding neurodiversity, neurodivergence and the social model of disability
- Varying (dis-)identification of participants with key terms and concepts related to neurodivergence
- Limitations of the social model of disability
- Exchange of personally conducted research or information, advice and research generated elsewhere
- Enquiries about research particularly related to race
- Individuals seeking and sharing practical advice
- Debates arising out of inputs from panellists, e.g., performance management, artificial intelligence, and burnout.
- Importance of sharing what comes from the workshop but not on basis of sharing identifying information
- Importance of recognising intersectionality.

What can be taken more broadly from the discussions that appear in the chat feature includes the following. First, 49 of the participants made at least one comment via the chat feature, indicating an engaged audience. Second, the chat feature served to strengthen the notion of a network, as many participants were willing to share research, information, advice and personal experience with wider attendees. Third and finally, there was a sense of how the ideas behind the workshop and the notion of TURN were very well received.

7.8 Summary

The workshop generated a wide range of novel and important findings (see Figure 1), especially in relation to how unions can go about building capacity, but also in terms of how power and voice generally, and what power and voice look like for neurodivergent workers, and how gender could be reflected in such power and voice. The next and last section generates key conclusions to be drawn from the workshop and what the wider implications are for key parties to employment relations, such as unions, employers and governments.

8 Conclusions and next steps for TURN

8.1 Conclusions

A range of important conclusions beyond the specific findings of Section 7 can be drawn from the workshop, with such conclusions reflected further in Figure 1. Considering the employment relationship is based around three distinct parties (workers and their unions, employers, and government), and all such parties must work together in some way to allow working practices to be transformed to benefit the neurodivergent workforce, such conclusions are thematically organised around how each party can help realise the aims of TURN.

Workers and their unions should:

- Mainstream neurodiversity across all activities, including making trade unions more inclusive to neurodivergent members, lay reps and officials, as well as embedding neurodiversity further and wider into trade union education.
- Build rep and official training based on bargaining for accessible workplaces.
- Develop consistent and shared language, terminology and conceptualisations surrounding neurodiversity, across the labour movement.
- Work towards changing internal policies and practices, including democratic structures, to make trade unions more inclusive for neurodivergent reps and officials.
- Invest in research to better understand gender and neurodiversity, how neurodiversity intersects with peri-/menopause and the widest range of protected characteristics, and incorporate findings from such research into trade union education.
- Better share best organising practices surrounding neurodiversity within the UK and the wider global labour movement.

Employers should:

- Encourage reps, through the provision of facilities time, to undertake trade union training on neurodiversity.
- Invite trade unions to showcase their work and best practice and line manager training surrounding neurodiversity.
- Work with trade unions to set up neurodiversity staff networks, networks to be consulted on current and future social, cultural and physical working environments.
- Recognise the social model of disability.
- Develop a neurodiversity policy and incorporate neurodiversity into the full suite of HR policies and practices.
- Include ableism and intersectionality in equality impact assessments, and equality impact all HR policies, practices, tools and systems.

Government should:

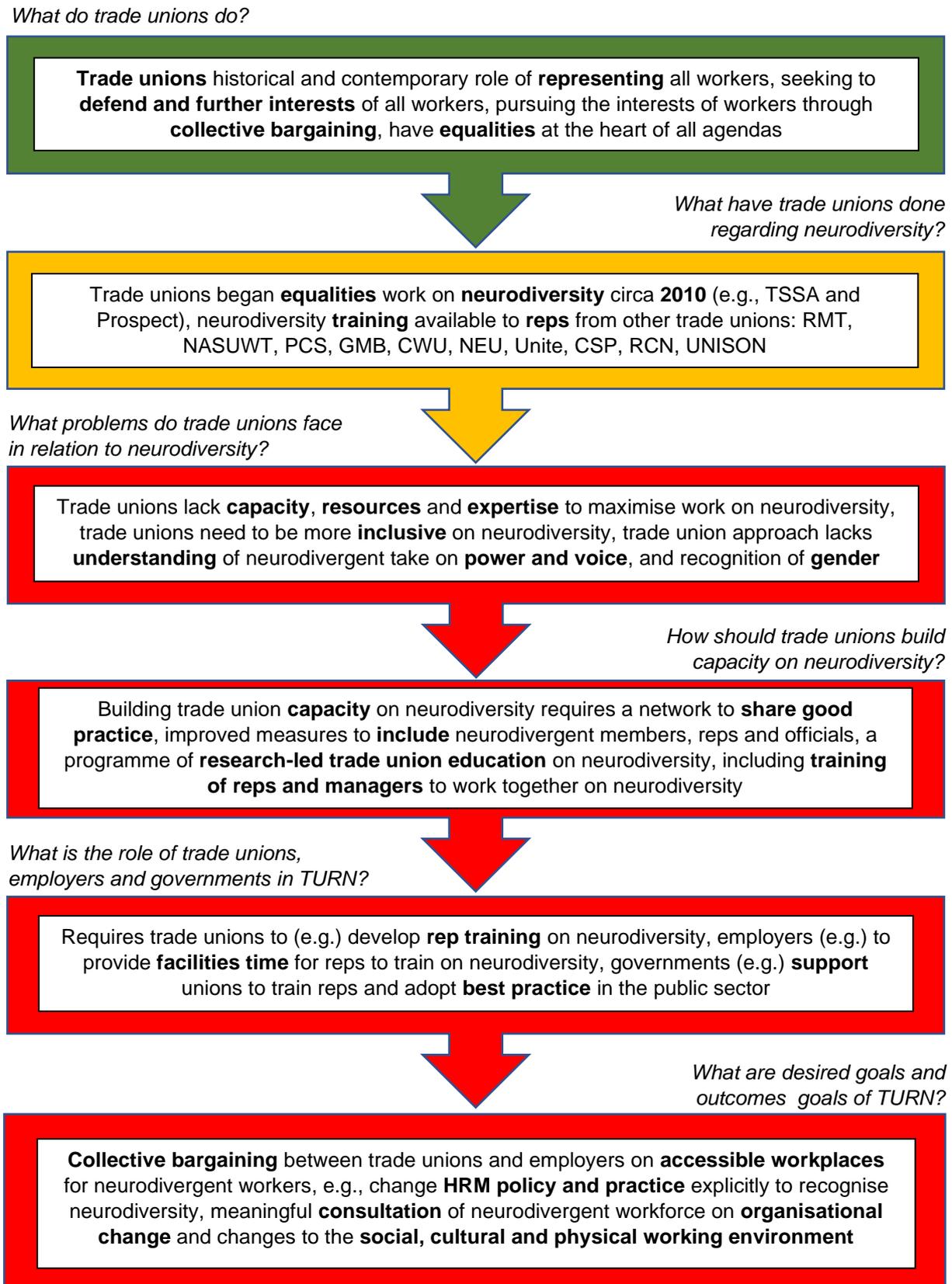
- Provide support for trade unions to undertake work on neurodiversity, e.g., re-start or re-launch Union Modernisation and Union Learning funds.
- Broaden the statutory basis of collective bargaining to include equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Work with trade unions recognised in the public sector on neurodiversity, e.g., NHS, education, social work, civil service, etc.
- Make more explicit reference to the social model of disability, ableism and intersectionality in the proposed Employment Bill.

8.2 *Next steps*

The conclusions lead to a range of next steps for TURN. As above, such proposed next steps at least broadly revolve around the three main parties to the employment relationship:

- Consult all parties on ideas for future workshops, but ideas for future workshops arising from the findings include, good practice surrounding senior managers and HR professionals working with trade unions on equalities, exploring how staff networks feed into decision-making regarding neurodiversity, and investigating how neurodiversity intersects with other protected characteristics and what the implications may be for wider practice related to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Generate wider interest in TURN via the dissemination of the report to unions, international union federations, employer associations, HR professional bodies, e.g., CIPD, government departments responsible for employment, equalities and fair work, and neurodiversity civil society organisations.
- Explore a wider range of funding opportunities, including consulting the TURN network on such matters.

Figure 1: Summary of TURN



Appendix 1: Resources related to trade unions and neurodiversity/disability

Below is a list of open sources (with hyperlinks) and easy to access resources related to unions and neurodiversity. The list contains examples of resources related to disability, the social model of disability, and examples of neurodiversity staff networks. The list also contains a range of resources generated by attendees/presenters at the workshop (requested by attendees). Let us know of any further resources and we can update the list for future reports.

Trade union research, reports and guides on neurodiversity

[Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru \(undated\) Autism awareness in the workplace: For unions reps and officers.](#)

[Booth, J. \(2019\) A social model of disability at work.](#)

[Booth, J. \(2022\) Autism and neurodiversity in the workplace: Training for trade unionists.](#)

[Booth, J. \(2022\) Is there power in the union for autistic workers?](#)

[Chartered Society of Physiotherapy \(2021\) Reasonable adjustments neurodiversity case study.](#)

[Equity \(2022\) An adapter-plug guide to autistic artists.](#)

[FBU \(undated\) Dyslexia in the workplace.](#)

[GMB \(2018\) Neurodiversity in the workplace: Thinking differently at work \(authored by Turner, L and Andrew, N.\).](#)

[Prospect \(undated\) Neurodiversity.](#)

[Richards, J. and Sang, K. \(2016\) Trade unions as employment facilitators for disabled employees, International Journal of Human Resource Management, Vol. 27, no. 14, pp. 1642-1661.](#)

[Richards, J. and Sang, K. \(2021\) Improving equality, inclusion, and workplace justice for professional neurodiverse employees, Impact Case Study for REF2021.](#)

[Richards, J., Sang, K. and Marks, A. \(2012\) Neurodiversity in the transport and travel industry: An exploratory study of knowledge and attitude towards neurodiversity, and perceptions of support and the management of employees with dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, ADD/ADHD and Asperger syndrome.](#)

[Royal College of Nursing \(2022\) Neurodiversity guidance: For employers, managers, staff and students.](#)

[TSSA \(2022\) Neurodiversity.](#)

[TSSA \(2019\) Neurodiversity at work: TSSA equality bargaining standards.](#)

[TUC \(2014\) Dyslexia in the workplace: A TUC Guide, third edition.](#)

[UCU \(2022\) Neurodiversity in the workplace: Supporting neurodivergent members at work and campaigning for neurodiversity-friendly workplaces.](#)

[Wales TUC Cymru \(2019\) Autism awareness in the workplace: A toolkit for trade unionists and Ymwybyddiaeth o Awtistiaeth yn y Gweithle.](#)

Trade union reports and guides on disability

ASLEF (2020) 2020: Disabled members forum.

BMA (2020) Disability in the medical profession: Survey findings 2020.

CWU (undated) Disability and health.

EIS (undated) Reasonable adjustments in the workplace guidance for EIS members & representatives.

EIS (2013) Teaching and disability.

GMB (2020) GMB disabled workers.

NASUWT (undated) Disability leave: Model policy.

NEU (2018) Reasonable adjustments at work.

NEU (2022) Social model of disability.

NUJ (2012) Disability handbook.

PCS (2022) Disability matters.

PDA (2020) About the ability network.

RCN (2017) Disability passports: The RCN peer support service guide.

RCN (2017) Reasonable adjustments: the peer support service guide for members affected by disability in the workplace.

TUC (2015) Trade unions and disabled members: Why the social model matters – taking forward TUC policy on the social model of disability.

TUC (2019) Reasonable adjustments disability passports.

TUC (2021) Disabled workers' experiences during the pandemic.

TUC (2022) Improving inclusivity in online union meetings.

Unison (2016) Disability and health and safety: A guide for UNISON safety reps.

Unison (2020) Let's be reasonable - disability equality in the workplace: A report by Unison.

Unite the Union (2014) Summary of law on disability discrimination.

Unite the Union (2016) Disability at work: A negotiators' guide.

USDAW (2017) Supporting disabled members: An advice guide for USDAW reps.

USDAW (2019) Hidden disabilities: An advice guide for USDAW reps.

Other resources

Hussein, A. (2021) A participatory research approach to understanding the experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) autistic young people, Ph.D. thesis.

Labour Hub (2021) The Labour Party autism and neurodiversity manifesto.

Legally disabled? Career experiences of disabled people in the legal profession.

Neurodivergent Labour (2021) Autistic and neurodivergent people in Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities (YouTube).

Nibbs, A. (undated) Autism and strike action: Guidance for autistic workers and UCU branches.

Richards, J., Sang, K., Marks, A. and Gill, S. (2019) "I've found it extremely draining": Emotional labour and the lived experience of line managing neurodiversity, Personnel Review, Vol. 48, No. 7, pp. 1903-1923.

Sang, K., Richards, J. and Marks, A. (2016) Gender and disability in male-dominated occupations: A social relational model, Gender, Work and Organization, Vol. 23, No. 6, pp. 566-581.

The Disability Employment Charter

The Empowerment Passport

Neurodiversity staff networks

BAE Systems Dyslexia Network

Bird & Bird

Capco

Civil Service Dyslexia and Dyspraxia Network

Defence Equipment & Support

National Police Autism Association

NHS Business Service Authority

University of Bradford

University of Bristol

University College London

University of Nottingham

Verdica

Appendix 2: Full details of the TURN workshop

Learn about existing projects, engage in discussion and help to build a network that represents the neurodivergent workforce.

About this event

What is the workshop about?

The workshop *aims to address the challenges faced by UK unions in building a wider and extended capacity to represent the neurodivergent workforce.* Such challenges broadly involve the capacity and resources to provide the training required to build and sustain effective rep networks capable of representing neurodivergent members. Within such challenges, unions need to better comprehend what power and voice mean to neurodivergent members, plus consider how gender intersects with neurodiversity to inform power and voice at work.

Background

For around a decade, UK trade unions have built the capacity to represent neurodivergent members and work towards re-shaping HRM policy and practice traditionally designed around the neuro-typical workforce. Importantly, research suggests unions undertaking work on neurodiversity are viewed positively by employers and managers, simply because unions have scarce and effective expertise on an increasingly important aspect of equality, diversity and inclusion.

As such, a range of unions have put together toolkits and provided training to members and reps on neurodiversity – e.g., TSSA, Prospect, Unite, Unison, RMT, PCS, NASUWT. However, UK unions face a range of wider challenges, with one consequence being unrealised capacity to represent, collectively and individually, the neurodivergent workforce across the full range of industries, sectors, professions and occupations where unions operate.

Who is the workshop for?

- Union equalities officials and reps undertaking or seeking to undertake work on neurodiversity;
- Neurodivergent workers (union and non-union) seeking to know more about, influence and lead on union work on neurodiversity;
- HRM professionals and managers who work with unions and staff representatives on equalities;
- Government policymakers with a remit covering equalities, fair work, employment, and industrial relations;
- Neurodiversity practitioners seeking to learn more about union work on neurodiversity; and,
- Academics from fields surrounding equalities, neurodiversity, gender, work, employment, HRM, and industrial/employment relations.

What will the workshop involve?

There will be three inter-linked sessions:

1) **Keynote speakers:** A sequence of short presentations showcasing union work on neurodiversity, hearing from neurodivergent members and HR professionals/managers who have benefitted from union work on neurodiversity, and details of research conducted on unions and neurodiversity.

Adele Potten Price, Strategic Organising and Campaigns Organiser, TSSA

Julian Ross, Senior Programme Manager, Network Rail

Dr. Ian Icton, former Group HR Director, Network Rail

Jonathan Green, Research Section Head, Prospect

Catherine Myerscough, Principal Official (Equality & Training), NASUWT

Janine Booth, Neurodiversity Trainer, RMT.

2) **Breakout activities:** Facilitated group work discussing three key issues: *What do unions need to build and widen capacity around neurodiversity; what does power and voice look like for the neurodivergent workforce; how should gender be reflected in power and voice at work, and in the work of unions on neurodiversity?*

3) **A panel-led discussion:** Summing up key issues arising from the workshop, giving rise to a plan to transform the capacity of unions to represent the neurodivergent workforce.

Timing

09.30 – 09.45 Welcome & introductions

09.45 – 10.45 Keynote speakers / short presentations

10.45 – 11.00 Break

11.00 – 11.30 Breakout activities & discussion – via *Padlet*

11.30 – 11.45 Discussion of breakout activities as one group

11.45 – 12.00 Break

12.00 – 13.00 Panel-led discussion – Q&A

Panellists

Dr. Jo Grady, General Secretary of UCU

Eve Cole, Inclusion and diversity learning coordinator, British Transport Police

Dr. Ian Icton, former Group HR Director, Network Rail

Kudsia Batool, Head of Equalities and Strategy, TUC

Professor Phil Taylor, Professor of Work and Employment Studies, Strathclyde Business School

Attendees (names of organisations represented/unions in bold)

Accord (Bank Union)

Ahmedabad University

ASLEF

Australian Council of Trade Unions

Autism Understanding Scotland

Autistic Doctors International

Bath University

BBC	Hertfordshire University	Prospect
Brandeis University	I am Autism	Royal College of Nursing
Bristol Local Council	Johannesburg University	Samaritans
British Transport Police	Just Reasonable	Scottish Government
Brunel University	Kingston University	Society of Radiographers
Cardiff Met University	Kinneir Dufort	Sussex University
City Uni Hong Kong	Lancaster University	Thriving Autistic
College of Haringey, Enfield and Northeast London	Linda Laurie Associates	Transport Salaried Staffs' Association
Coventry University	Magnetic Ideals	Trades Union Congress
Dorset Police	Metropolitan Police	University and College Union
Dyslexia Box	NAHT	UKSBS
Educational Institute of Scotland	NASUWT	UNISON
Employment Autism	National Police Autism Association (NPAA)	Unite the Union
Employment Studies	Natural Resources Wales	University of Birmingham
Enable Charity	Network Rail	University of Bradford
Equity	Newcastle University	University of Leeds
Exeter University	NHS	University of Strathclyde
Fire Brigade Union	NHS Health Authority Research	Waltham Forest Council
Grenoble School of Management	Northumbria Police	Western University California
Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association	National Education Union	Westminster University
Heriot-Watt University	National Union of Journalists	Yum!
	Public and Commercial Services Union	

Appendix 3: Comments from breakout sessions

Breakout room theme 1: What do unions need to build and widen capacity around neurodiversity?

Awareness training but which foregrounds the voices of neurodivergent workers and TU Reps.

Deeper understanding of the social model of disability -- there has been some medical model language used by the speakers and we really do need to work in co-production with disabled people's movement on this.

Let's go beyond awareness and fight for workplace change!

Workplaces that are accessible for ND workers will benefit all workers.

Guidance to encourage employers to develop more flexible working practices as standard that can accommodate the needs of ND workers and minimise the need to request RAs.

It has to first start with raising awareness of ND and should be from an intersectional perspective in order to ensure that all communities are included.

Actual practical examples of working practices that benefit ND workers (and others) and how employers can work co-productively with ND/disabled staff to identify what changes are needed and how to implement them.

Lobby for systemic change. Make what is beneficial for neurodivergent workers business as usual rather than the individual responsibility of the employee, manager, or HR representative.

Lots to learn from work being done in the legal sector, that has built on the Legally Disabled research project which was coproduced with disabled legal professionals. The evidence base and recommendations were followed up by 'easy wins' tips and then more comprehensive guidance on RAs plus examples of good practice. It has created

a huge shift in attitudes of employers. As a result of the research, networks have been set up by disabled ppl including an ND podcast and other ND in law organisations. www.legallydisabled.com

A whole trade union joint campaign to lobby employers and govt for change.

Promote, and work for reform of, the Access to Work scheme.

If we don't do it, the employer certainly won't!

I feel Neurodiversity needs to stop being a Taboo or something people are nervous to speak about. Unions needs to encourage confidence. Confidence in members to be open and honest about their needs and differences and how best they can be supported. That confidence and openness will lead to greater support and in essence a better workplace.

Union organising models would be helpful.

Examples of good contract language to bargain for would be helpful.

TUs need to improve their own practices to develop ND activists - many meetings are conducted in a way that is not accessible which excludes voices.

It would be really helpful to have support within UCU. I cannot be open at work as I imagine students would probably refuse to be taught or assessed by me. That in turn means that I can't ask for certain 'reasonable adjustments' in the workplace or i would be outing myself.

Need a campaign looking at the emotional cost to neurodivergent people of non-acceptance in the workplace, as well as the financial cost to society of neurodivergent people being underemployed or unemployed.

Stereotyping of people particularly at the start of their education stays with them always. We need to look at how we information and train our colleague sin Early Years and Nursery education.

The staff and unions in university lac lack in supporting International ND students. They mostly give excuses that you are not illegible for a disability student allowance. All they ask for is an adjustment to put in place and signpost them in the right direction, nobody asks for allowance. Everyone talks about Equality, but it is not the duty of the international student to learn about it, rather staff need to be trained about it. so, it should be mandatory for tutors to have ND training.

ND friendly recruitment, standard interview process with expectations on eye contact etc can be exhausting and stressful. JP Morgan do this very well.

ASLEF has just begun to organise specifically for our members with disabilities, we are coming from a baseline of having done nothing in this arena and it's quite daunting as to where to start and what to do. I believe anecdotally that we could many members who are neurodivergent but are reluctant to be open about this either with their employer or within the union.

It is too bad these comments are all set to making it hard to connect with people.

Re: UCU member- As educators, we're expected to consider how best to support our learners, yet so often management fail to extend that understanding to staff. What a shame your organisation creates an environment where you don't feel comfortable sharing your experiences, as it would undoubtedly help your learners and probably your colleagues, too. Hopefully a good union rep will help change things.

As Trade Unions we have to be honest right at the start when we assess our understanding of neurodiversity and our

members. We need to get the best training for reps, officers and lay officials before we try to take steps with employers.

Would like to see affinity groups tackle the direct issue of career progression - why it's hard and provide practical learning for identifying own diverse strengths, irrespective of gender

Unions need to lead change by addressing their own imbalances - more women in key roles, more neuro-divergent people in key roles, more non white 40-year-old males in key roles. more neuro divergent friendly conferences etc.

Young people are really leading the charge of acceptance - more representation of young people in unions would definitely help facilitate change.

In terms of ND language to be more understood, we should suggest workplace and organizations (being external customers) where disclosure is needed to be more ND friendly. The forms or applications should be redirected to ND specialist qualify to understand those forms and the person's concerns.

There must be a cultural change along with a zero-tolerance approach to ableism

Greater support for developing younger activists is needed.

Unions must do more to support new recruits in their training/onboarding period, where the necessity of quick learning and information retention is likely to disadvantage ND people. This often means they don't progress as fast as their peers or are seen as less capable by management.

I think there are many ways things can be improved with the right, sometimes individual, approach but this will take time. For example, it is a known fact many ND persons get sensory overload so employers recognising this and taking this into consideration would be a huge move forward. Encouraging persons with ND to

share experience will help as much as academic study.

Breakout room theme 2: What do power and voice look like for the neurodivergent workforce?

Since the world of work is based on neurotypical views, the ND workforce is frequently marginalised and silenced

We need to see neurodivergent workers in positions of authority, in some sectors they are invisible and non-disclosure is viewed as an act of self-preservation, this needs to shift

There needs to be wider understanding of how to attract neurodivergent people to the workforce and also how to amend recruitment practices to be neurodivergent friendly

Limited voice in many sectors and lots of 'othering'

Too often I have seen ND employees being judged for 'poor performance issues' which are usually just a lack of understanding on the part of line managers and other colleagues. In recent cases, increased awareness around neurodiversity have shifted the energy of the issue from being the employee's problem, to being a shared company issue requiring action and support from all parties

I'd like to hear about Adele's play - did it increase ND voice and if so, how? X

The workplace is a site of conflict between employers and workers, battling over the balance of power

Yes and no power means no voice!

The voices of ND people should be first and foremost. Networks that feed into the development of policies etc as well as a space for ND to gain support raise issues etc

Do ND employees need separate policies so voices are highlighted, or would this marginalise further?

We have had a lot of conversations about appropriate language and correct terms. Discussion around this is great. However, this also creates a barrier and loss of power and voice. Getting hung up on the correct terminology in such a minute detail can lead to a barrier to having the power to speak up. Something I would like to see is a greater understanding of Ableism and it should be recognised in communication.

Social and physical environments where they can flourish, more needed on sensory issues.

I agree with the comments about language, this has really silenced me!

Disclosure is a difficult thing some employers want "proof" when i was diagnosed with ADHD my supervisor wanted to see the report - however I have CPTSD which was detailed in my report, this was something i wasn't willing to share which made everything very hard.

Employers who roll out their star ND employee as an example of being a fabulous employer of disabled/ND people, whilst side-lining anyone who requires more support - this lack of substance behind the self-promotion needs challenging.

Picking up the 'poor performance point above', neurodivergent people should be able to tailor their jobs to stop being bullied and punished for underperforming tasks difficult or impossible for them to do, and instead focus their jobs on what they excel at.

The impact of discrimination/getting by without enough or any support and constantly having to adapt to fit in has a huge impact on mental health which further disempowers and marginalises ND workers/activists.

Management need training- re, what's regarded as poor performance. Is it their poor performance in understanding differences? Is the employee performing poorly, or have they been directed poorly? Raising issues or asking clarifying questions doesn't equal challenging hierarchy.

Similarly, social expectations of the workplace can have a significant impact on ND people: being viewed as 'not a team player' by management or the butt of 'banter' by colleagues which is thinly disguised bullying, rather than accepting and respecting people's differences.

Co-production, with and by ND people, not imposed upon us by people who think they know what is best.

Sick and tired of not being involved in innovation stages of workplace improvements, new training, building improvements, design restructure, etc... and to end up on the receiving end yet again of some new and improved initiative that excludes me.

Address the use of AI/agencies in recruitment processes that are sifting out disabled/ND employees and demand that employers specifically put measures in place to ensure that disabled candidates aren't excluded. Recruitment agencies should be given a clause in their contracts that makes clear that employers specifically want to see diverse applicants. Otherwise, many agencies will assume that nobody wants to employ disabled/ND people.

Ditto with providing opportunities for career progression that meet individual needs and aspirations.

Breakout room theme 3: How should gender be reflected in power and voice at work, and in the work of unions on neurodiversity?

It would be helpful if more trades unionists were supported to be open about being divergent. Visibility within trades unions would be so helpful

Greater understanding of the negative impact of lack of diagnosis or late diagnosis can have for women workers. Too much of ND research has been focused on male traits

Improved understanding in menopause campaigns and resources of how perimenopause can greatly exacerbate challenges with cognitive functioning and how to ensure adequate support

Step away from lazy stereotypes based on typical male attributes. Teaching intersectionality is important. Female

(neurodiverse) role models, inclusive policies

Male voices and male role models talking confidently about neurodiversity is so desperately needed. Talking about differences and vulnerabilities are inertly not something "Men" do. This NEEDS to change and the union movement can change this

Lack of understanding on how masking can look very different in men and women - women are much more likely to fly under the radar with their needs not being met or even noticed

Not demonstrating expected 'traits' and qualities/behaviours associated with our ascribed gender and not being taken seriously or given opportunities for career

progression as a result. —
Intersectionality means we experience multiple forms of discrimination but also as activists who want to create change, we wear ourselves out getting involved in loads of committees, campaigns etc

Older AFAB folk have grown up with/been trained on outdated and limited models of what ND traits look like, expected to mask to fit in and many may not even realise they are neurodivergent. Fighting for recognition - even from a GP - to gain RAs can be an uphill battle. Union reps can have a role in raising awareness (as opposed to raising stereotypes) of traits, paths to diagnosis and support

Women's voices are often drowned out - this is made even worse when they are also disabled

Neurodivergent people need to take the lead on this. We don't need things curating by a 'helpful' neurotypical person. Really essential that neurodivergent views reflect women, men, trans etc and not typical white male autistic person rolled out to wave the flag

There is also a role for trade unions to help international trade unions on this issue. There is a dearth of information in many other countries about autism in particular, and they often have very backwards-looking employment or social policies regarding neurodiversity. We need to level up across the world on this issue.