

# ORGANISING AND NEURODIVERSITY

22nd Annual Scottish Hazards Conference: Organising for  
Health and Safety

---

James Richards

Heriot-Watt University

[j.richards@hw.ac.uk](mailto:j.richards@hw.ac.uk)

# Overview of workshop

- Introductions
- Definitions and approaches to neurodiversity
- Organising and neurodiversity: Case of Transport Salaried Staffs' Association
- Activity 1
- Activity 2

# Definitions and approaches to neurodiversity

**Neurodiversity** – 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** – A term 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)

# Organising and neurodiversity: Case of Transport Salaried Staffs' Association

- A range of unions currently providing rep training on neurodiversity: RMT, PCS, GMB, CWU, NEU, Unite, NASUWT, Chartered Society of Physiotherapists (CSP)
- Neurodiversity Project started 2012
- Strategies and achievements
  - Building awareness
  - Advocacy and representation
  - Policy development and bargaining
  - Line manager training

**Activity 1:** What does your union do/have you done personally regarding representation of neurodivergent members?

**Activity 2:** How should your union support you in effectively representing neurodivergent members?

For more information on how unions can transform workplaces click [here](#)