

Neuroinclusion in Practice

Neurodivergent Employees, Line Managers and the Missing Middle

Many neurodivergent employees are not getting the support they need at work. Not because organisations don't care, but because the practical layer between organisational intent and everyday experience is missing. This is what we call the missing middle. Our research that combines a six-month diary study with 18 neurodivergent employees, 20 employer interviews, and a survey of 995 senior HR professionals reveals where neuroinclusion breaks down and what it takes to close the gap.

"Managers aren't quite prepared to have that conversation. We're recognising it, we want to be better, so many people are on board – but we're just not there yet."

Disability Manager, Charity, Very Large organisation – employer interview

"I've worked with our L&D team on how to create neuro-inclusive training as they were keen to know how to weave this into everything they were doing – not just make it a separate thing."

Rae Nowicki, Disability Manager, British Heart Foundation

The perception gap

41%

of senior HR professionals in our survey of 995 said support for neurodivergent employees is fully sufficient yet separate research with over 1,000 neurodivergent employees found

only 31% felt the same.

When appropriate support is in place, for the individual and managers, it works. However, this combination is still the exception, not the rule.

"A lot of them are scared – scared of doing the wrong thing or saying the wrong thing, and not necessarily sure the best way to go about it."

CEO, Charity, Micro organisation – employer interview

Effective neuroinclusion requires action at three levels

1 Neurodivergent employees

Need practical, personalised, in-the-moment support that helps them perform and manage day-to-day challenges; not just formal adjustments.

2 Line managers

Need knowledge, confidence, and practical tools to provide consistent support, and ongoing guidance they can reach for when uncertain.

3 Organisations

Need the right systems, culture, and structures to make support reliable and consistent across individual managers.

"We've approached it from the ERG side – trying to get the environment right and the attitude right, as well as the individual support. Making it normal to discuss how we can best work together without having to say why."

Paul Meredith, Neurodiversity Lead, Lane Clark & Peacock



The missing middle: line manager reality

The day-to-day experience of neurodivergent employees is profoundly shaped by their line manager, yet most managers are not adequately supported to fulfil this role. Most managers want to help but are missing the practical knowledge, confidence, and organisational backing to act consistently.

33% of neurodivergent diary study participants ranked a supportive line manager as the single most important component of a neuroinclusive workplace.

44% placed a supportive line manager in their top three priorities for neuroinclusion.

75% of organisations were somewhat or very concerned about line manager overwhelm.

84% of senior HR professionals agreed that some neurodivergent staff choose not to disclose because they fear being judged or don't feel supported.

What good looks like: organisations closing the gap
Organisations making the most progress address neuroinclusion at all three levels simultaneously, embedding it into everyday practice rather than treating it as a standalone initiative.

Key takeaways

The missing middle matters

Our previous research shows that 53% of neurodivergent employees are somewhat or very likely to leave their organisation within the next six months and that 91% of employed autistic and ADHD employees report low or very low wellbeing on the WHO-5 wellbeing scale.

Neuroinclusion starts with the employee

Neurodivergent employees need direct, practical, personalised support – tools to communicate their needs, manage day-to-day challenges, and access help in the moment. This is the layer most commonly missing.

Enable line managers

Managers need practical, scenario-based capability not just awareness. Ongoing, in-the-moment guidance is as important as initial training.

The missing middle has system-level implications

Support quality should not depend on which manager someone happens to have. Structural changes such as central budgets, clear adjustment pathways, and shared accountability can help make neuroinclusion more consistent.

Awareness has outpaced capability

Most organisations care about neuroinclusion but many don't have the practical systems and skills to act on that commitment every day.

Measure the neurodivergent employee experience

Organisations may overestimate the impact of their provision. Tracking the neurodivergent experience as a metric is essential to progress.


Download the full research report

Read the complete findings, including ten practical recommendations for organisations ready to take the next steps.

[Download the report](#)

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