

The Neurodivergent Experience in the Workplace

What it's like and how HR
can support neuroinclusion



brain in hand

Foreword

Supporting neurodivergent employees is a growing focus for employers because of the ongoing mental health crisis and the impact that has on productivity.

The number of young people (aged 16 to 34) economically inactive specifically due to a mental health condition has increased by over a quarter in the last year to

270,000¹

Whilst not all mental health conditions are associated with neurodivergence, typically there is a higher occurrence of mental health challenges amongst neurodivergent people².

Could some of them be achieving more at work if they were better supported by their employer?

The risks to business of missing out on neurodivergent talent are wide ranging from a reduced talent pool of young up and coming leaders, to HR time spent on grievance procedures and the cost and legal risks of discrimination cases. **There is also a risk that those who feel unsupported and unable to continue at work could end up on long-term sick leave and potentially exit the workforce.**

Conversely, the benefits of becoming a neuroinclusive workforce are enormous and providing evidence to support that is the focus of this report. On the following pages, we share key findings from Brain in Hand's research that will help HR leaders to start the conversation about neuroinclusion and consider what they could be doing to become a more neuroinclusive organisation. Although inclusion should mean that everyone feels a sense of belonging, neurodivergent employees may have individual support needs to be able to work at their best.

The good news is, meeting these needs is often simpler than you think.

Organisations should always be looking for ways to improve and diversify their workforce, plus, initiatives that improve neuroinclusion will typically benefit neurotypical employees too! I hope this research offers insight into an area of workplace inclusion that is sometimes overlooked and that it inspires you into action.



Dr Louise Morpeth
CEO, Brain in Hand

What's inside

- 1 Key findings from Brain in Hand's research into neurodiversity in the workplace
- 2 Understanding the neurodivergent experience in the workplace
- 3 The return on investment from supporting neurodivergent employees
- 4 How to become a more neuroinclusive workplace
- 5 How Brain in Hand supports autistic and ADHD employees in the workplace



1

Key findings from Brain in Hand's research into neurodiversity in the workplace

Research suggests that teams with neurodivergent professionals in some roles can be

30% more productive than those without them³.

A neurodiverse team must embrace neurodivergent people, yet according to our research,

just 27% of autistic employees receive professional support for their needs⁴

This often leads to burnout, stress, and time off work, with mental health challenges the leading cause of workplace absences in the UK⁵.

At Brain in Hand, our research found that supporting neurodivergent employees yields significant benefits for employers and employees.

A blend of coaching and digital support was proven to reduce absenteeism, boost productivity, and improve employee retention.

Our research is based on users of Brain in Hand, a coaching platform that helps autistic and ADHD people achieve more.



For employees

Overall, 62% of Brain in Hand users

in employment reported at least one of three positive industry standard work outcomes related to absenteeism (taking time off work), presenteeism (working effectively at work), or retention.

Support for neurodivergent employees yields results

33%

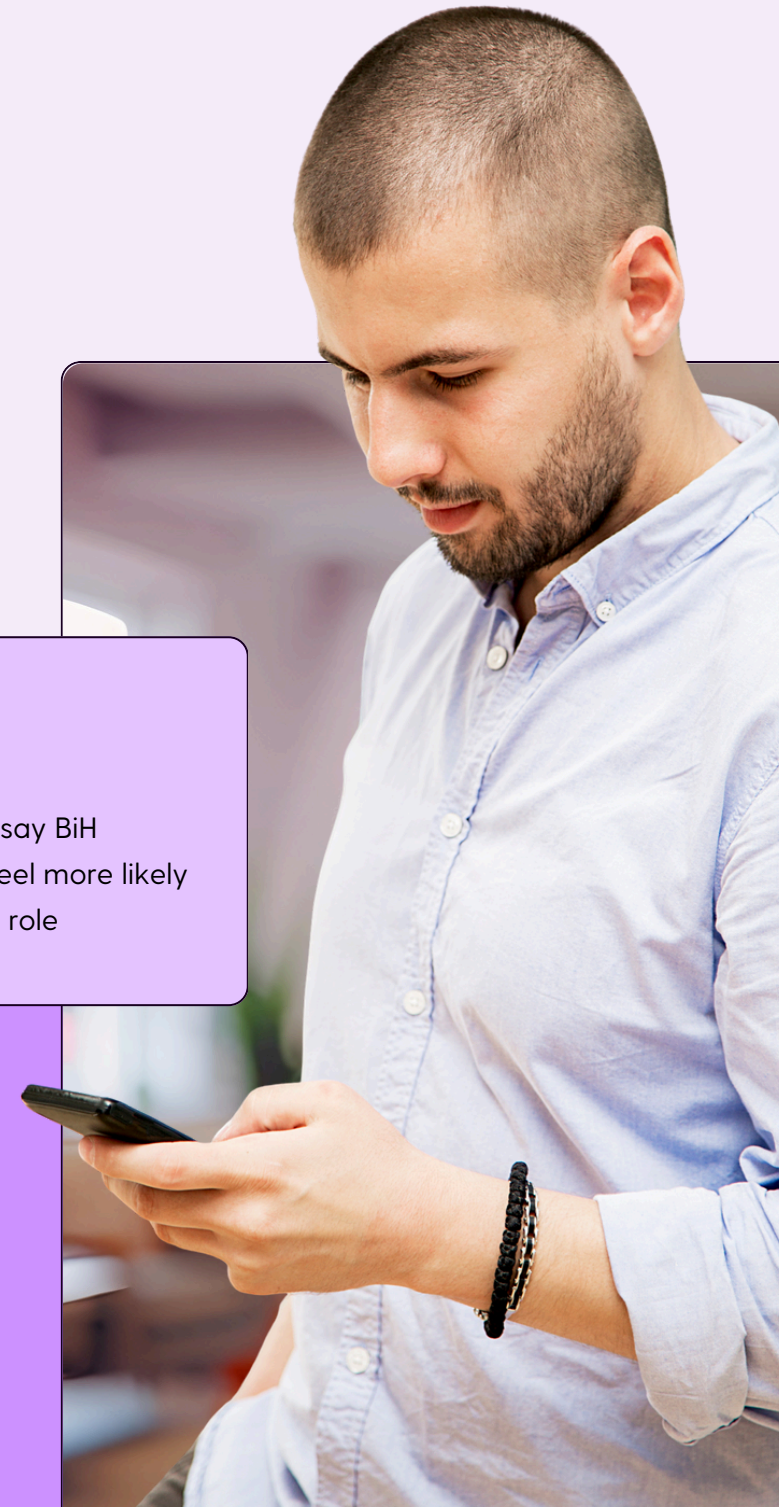
of employees say BiH helped them have fewer sick days

52%

of employees say BiH helped them perform better in their role

53%

of employees say BiH helped them feel more likely to stay in their role



For employers

Based on the improved productivity and retention, our research found that employers could save an average of £11,748 annually per employee using Brain in Hand, with 51% of this attributed to increased productivity.

Our research indicates that for every £1 invested, there could be a return of £5, and that if Brain in Hand is funded via Access to Work, the ROI can increase to 14. The broader economic benefits of employee retention through Brain in Hand result in average annual savings of £19,963 per person.

The ROI on supporting neurodivergent employees

£11,748

average annual savings for employers per employee using Brain in Hand

£19,963

average annual economic cost savings per person using Brain in Hand

500%

at least 500% return from employee wellbeing

£5

return for every £1 invested

£14

return if funded through Access to Work



2

Understanding the neurodivergent experience in the workplace

This section of our report goes into more detail on the key findings of our neurodivergent employee survey⁶.

The research centred on the most common challenges reported by autistic and ADHD participants as well as the benefits felt by these individuals when they are supported.

The research also compares the those with a dual diagnosis with those with either ADHD or autism.

Key findings



Disclosure of neurodivergence

Research has shown that neurodivergent people often hide their neurodivergence to avoid harming their chances of landing a job or progressing in their career. This is reflected in our research which found that work friends often know about individuals' neurodivergence, but HR and the broader management team often don't. In our research, 47% of respondents' work friends knew about their neurodivergence. Only 22% reported that HR or the broader management team knew. 14% reported that no one in the organisation knew about their neurodivergence.

Only 22%

reported that HR or the broader management team knew about their neurodivergence.



Key findings



Career development

Autistic employees with ADHD often reported being passed over for development opportunities and that their peers were doing better than them. 35% of autistic employees with ADHD felt they were passed over for development opportunities. Many participants also reported positive feelings about their career despite this.

“As a neurodivergent person, I want to work with ease. I want to use my skills and knowledge just like anyone else would. I just so happen to have to spend more of my time battling barriers than most.”

Connor Ward,
Brain in Hand user



Feelings at work

Autistic employees with ADHD were generally more likely than the user group overall to report feelings of exhaustion and overwhelm. 35% of the user group reported overwhelm, 31% reported exhaustion, 34% felt committed, and 26% felt enthusiastic. Those with both diagnoses were more likely to feel overwhelmed or exhausted and less likely to feel enthusiastic.



Workplace challenges

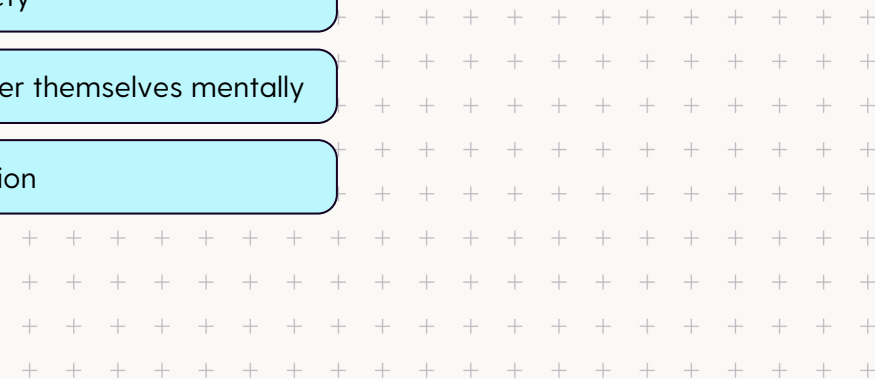
50% of autistic employees with ADHD reported social anxiety as one of their top 3 challenges at work, compared to 41% of the user group overall. Those with both diagnoses were also more likely to report challenges looking after themselves mentally at work.

The top 3 challenges participants reported feeling at work are:

Social anxiety

Looking after themselves mentally

Concentration



Key findings



Wellbeing

Overall wellbeing levels were lower for autistic employees with ADHD compared to the user group overall. While 14% of the user group overall reported poor or very poor wellbeing, this figure was 24% for autistic employees with ADHD. Autistic employees with ADHD were also less likely to report good wellbeing.



Retention

A high proportion of employees reported being likely or very likely to leave their current role in the next 6 months.

Although this didn't differ between diagnostic groups, those in smaller companies were particularly likely to leave, with 73% of those in companies with fewer than 10 employees likely or very likely to leave in the next 6 months. For the UK population overall, this figure is far lower (24%).⁷

Watch Brain in Hand CEO, Louise Morpeth in conversation with neurodivergent specialist employment solicitor, Jodie Hill, talk about the silent epidemic of neurodivergence the workplace.

brain in hand



The reality of being a Neurodivergent employee⁸

Burnout

50%

of neurodivergent employees feel burnt out (vs. 38% of neurotypical workers).

Wellbeing

Only 25%

feel financially secure and emotionally balanced.

Retention

43%

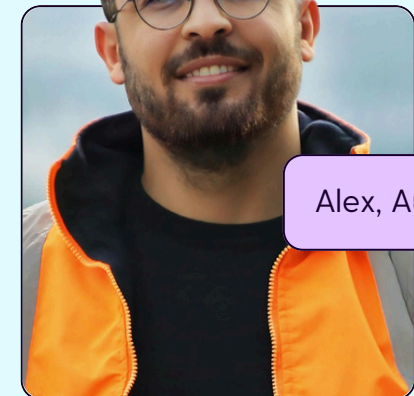
intend to leave their role within a year due to difficulties at work.

How support benefits ADHD and autistic employees

When neurodivergent employees feel supported (by Brain in Hand), the areas in which they feel the benefit include mental health and emotional and physical wellbeing, daily life skills, communication and interaction, personal growth and development and feeling safe. For example, 83% of respondents said support improved their mental health (stress, anxiety, overwhelm or burnout) and 62% said they feel more organised.



Susan, ADHD



Alex, Autistic

The return on investment from supporting neurodivergent employees

This section draws on BiH's workplace impact report⁹, and explores the ways in which Brain in Hand supports autistic and ADHD employees and the return on investment that employers can tap into if they invest in neurodivergent employees.

Proven results

£5

return for every £1 spent

83%

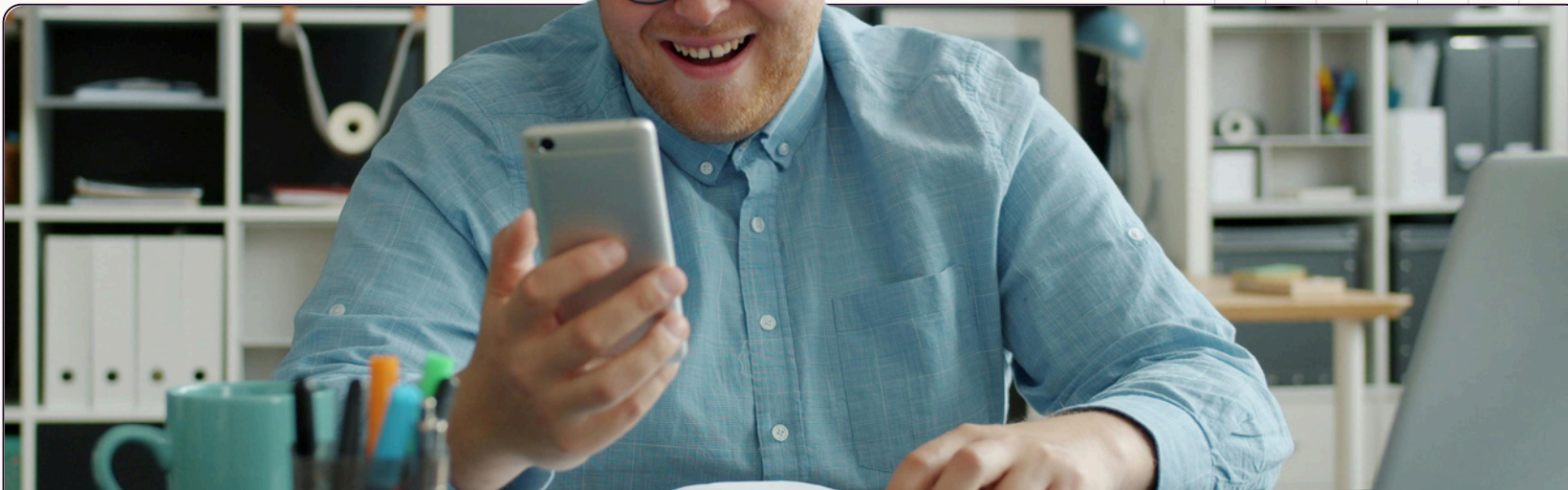
Improved mental health

53%

increased retention

82%

improved workplace achievement



Key findings



Significant ROI and cost savings for employers using Brain in Hand

Our research found that employers can save £11,748 per year per employee using Brain in Hand. 51% of the savings are from improved productivity, with 35% from improved retention. The return on investment on Brain in Hand ranges from 5 to 14, depending on whether Brain in Hand is funded by the employer or funded via Access to Work.



Ripple effect on the UK economy

Retention extended beyond the employer results in an average annual economic cost savings of £19,963 per person using Brain in Hand. For this, we considered the loss of income for the employee and the added cost of benefits and loss of tax income for the government. The broader ripple effects, such as improved work culture, better mental health support for colleagues, and reduced reliance on the NHS and other government resources for mental health and emergency services, could potentially double these savings.

Feeling supported
at work improves
productivity, wellbeing
and retention.

1 in 7

More than 1 in 7 are neurodivergent¹⁰

Anxiety¹¹ is one of the top reasons for

absence

How support helped autistic and ADHD employees

Our research found that using an app and coaching solution, Brain in Hand, improved the wellbeing and productivity of autistic and ADHD employees. Overall, 62% of Brain in Hand users in employment were reporting at least one of three positive industry standard work outcomes related to absenteeism (taking time off work), presenteeism (working effectively at work), or retention.

4

How to become a more neuroinclusive workplace

Where do you start? Here are some practical tips to start the journey towards becoming a more neuroinclusive workplace from People Director, Lucy Clemas:

1

Review your employee lifecycle from the first touchpoint – how could this journey be developed to be more neuroinclusive? And if you're not sure, ask some neurodivergent colleagues to offer their insights.

2

Develop a neuroinclusive recruitment process – for example, invite applications through a variety of forms; written, video and voice note.

3

Code the different aspects of a job description so anyone (neurodivergent or neurotypical) can determine for themselves whether the role is suited to them. For example:

- Level of in-person time - High;
- Need to navigate ambiguity - Medium;
- Level of interaction via video calls - Low.

4

Invite new starters to share their needs at the outset of the onboarding process, making it clear that its important in your organisation that individual needs are met and provide the support they might need or adapt ways of working from the outset of the employment relationship.

5

Introduce a buddy system for newly diagnosed colleagues so they can talk to someone else in the workplace who has lived experience.



6

Form an internal Neurodivergent Support Group, led by neurodivergent colleagues, with the brief to help design the workplace and make recommendations for the business to consider.

7

Take the time to understand individual difference and individual need with a simple tool like 'work with me' so colleagues can be open with one another about their communication preferences, preferred ways of working and ultimately get to know one another better.

8

Encourage managers to take the time to understand individual difference within their teams and encourage wellbeing as well as work related conversations at each 1-2-1.

9

Create a checklist of useful questions for managers to use to get to know their teams (For example, what do you need to perform at your best? If you don't know what you need let me help you explore that. How 'actually' are you today? How could I improve the way I share project briefs with you so you're clear about the expectations of you?).

10

If simple changes to ways of working aren't effective, seek the advice and input of an experienced, independent occupational health advisor who can recommend tools (like Brain in Hand) management techniques and also signpost to other organisations that can be used to enable neurodivergent people to perform at their best.



Coaching with Rachel 11:00 - 11:30
Repeats weekly on Wednesday



Of course, it's important to recognise an employer's obligations in terms of making reasonable adjustments for disabled employees, however, making it part of day-to-day conversations in the workplace culture to explore, understand and enable individual difference helps create a culture of psychological safety.

If employees can openly talk about what they need to perform at their best and be supported by their managers and HR teams to explore this, a lot of the solutions will be practical, inexpensive and don't need to become a big organisational project or worse still, a taboo subject.

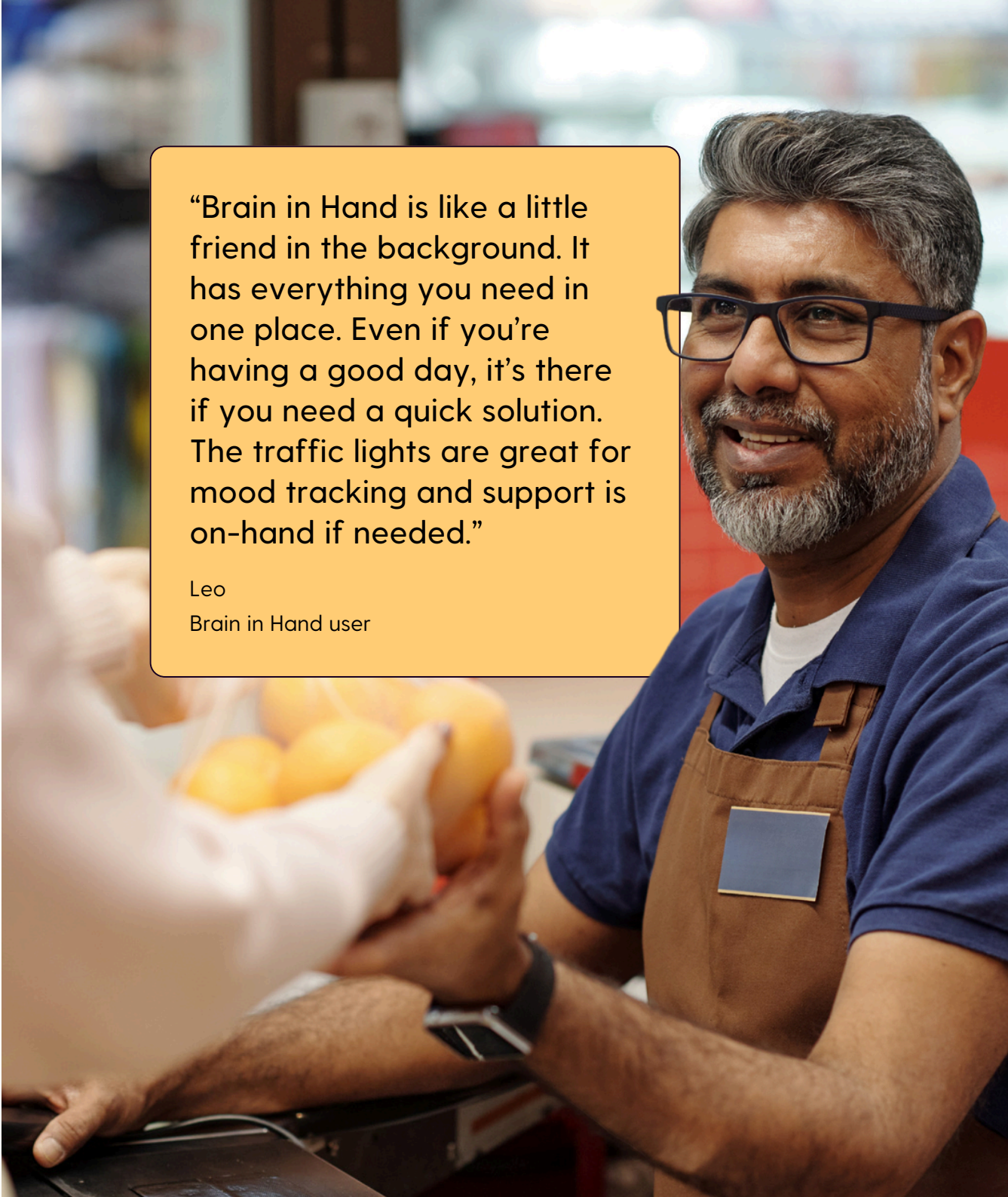


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How Brain in Hand supports autistic and ADHD employees in the workplace

Brain in Hand brings neurodiversity coaching into everyday moments at work, helping autistic and ADHD employees perform at their best. We extend coaching beyond scheduled sessions with on-demand personalised support when it matters most.

Our app delivers tailored strategies and human guidance, reducing anxiety and burnout while building confidence.

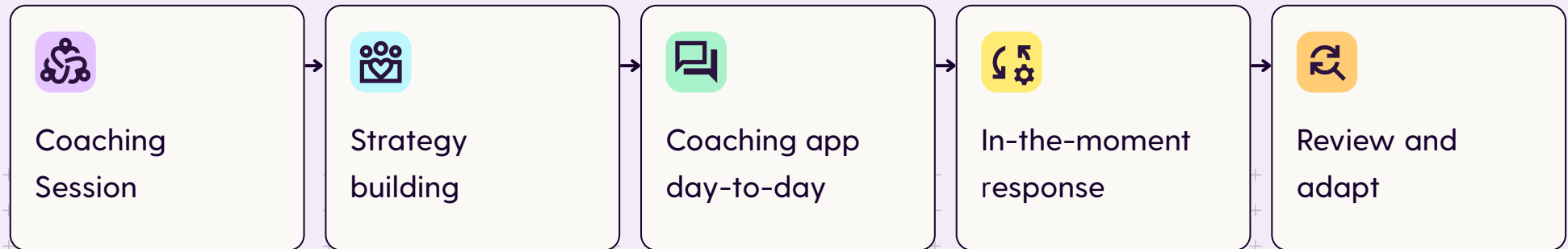


“Brain in Hand is like a little friend in the background. It has everything you need in one place. Even if you’re having a good day, it’s there if you need a quick solution. The traffic lights are great for mood tracking and support is on-hand if needed.”

Leo

Brain in Hand user

Our coaching app extends support beyond scheduled sessions and into everyday moments



brain in hand



See Brain in Hand
in action

A step-by-step guide

1

Employees work one-to-one with a Brain in Hand coach, to understand barriers, break down personal goals, and develop practical solutions.

2


These solutions are built into the coaching app, which works around your diary to offer suggestions and support when you need it most.

3

The app also prompts you to reflect on your moods, supporting you to regulate anxiety and identify triggers before you get too overwhelmed.

4

For those moments of need, additional support is always there – with a 24/7 on demand service via phone or text.



“As a result of coaching, I’ve noticed huge improvements in my daily routines and habits. I’m blocking out time more effectively. I’m being more productive. I’m working with to-do lists and solid diary management.”

Sarah
Brain in Hand user

Brain in Hand for your workplace

Brain in Hand is the UK's only neurodiversity support platform combining specialist human coaching, always-available digital tools, and 24/7 on-demand human support.

Speak to our team to find out more:



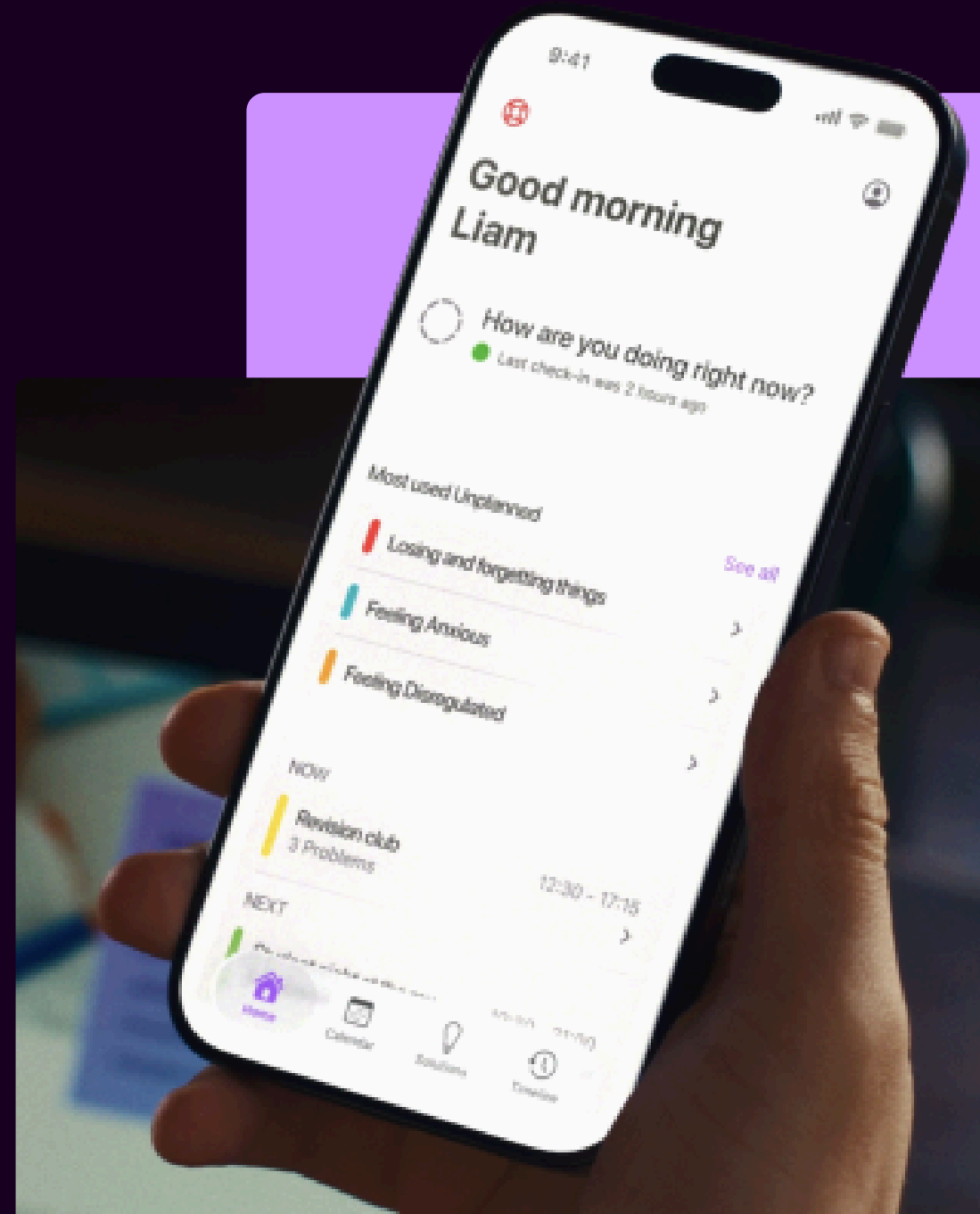
braininhand.co.uk/work



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