



The Educational
Institute of Scotland

Autism appropriate workplaces

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Working Together Agreement

- Be mindful of your power and airspace
- Seek to understand not agree
- Sharing is for celebrating, confidentiality is important for any workplace issues/cases
- One person speak at a time (stay on mute otherwise)
- We all have different knowledge and lived experience - we all have something to learn and to teach
- Look after yourself and take breaks as need be, keep camera on if you feel you need to, otherwise keep it on while speaking (to enable lip reading)
- Confidentiality

Fair Work

- ▶ The importance of voice - Fair Work - listening to people's individual experiences.
- ▶ Respect - respecting every part of who we are rather than just one bit.
- ▶ Fulfilment - how can you feel fulfilled if your whole self cannot be recognised?
- ▶ Opportunity - where there are barriers, for example a gender bias, an opportunity offered specifically to women may still disadvantage disabled women.
- ▶ Security - being safe at work and not discriminated against or experience harassment.



Poetry - Julie Farrell

Welcome

Tell us...

- ▶ Your name
- ▶ One thing that helps you feel comfortable in a work/learning space

Understanding autism and neurotypical workplaces

Mentimeter:

- ▶ How well would you be able to explain what it means to be non-autistic?
- ▶ How confident do you feel in your understanding of the barriers autistic educators might face at work?
- ▶ What words do you associate with autism inclusion?

The legal framework

Equality Act 2010 : key anti-discrimination legislation

Making it unlawful to discriminate on the basis of ‘protected characteristics’ - such as religion, race, gender, etc.

The protected characteristic ‘Disability’ applies to autism

What ‘Disability’ means in this context: any condition or impairment that has ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative impact on your ability to do normal daily activities

Public Body Equality Duty - proactively anticipate and prevent discrimination against Disabled people

Including: direct and indirect discrimination, discrimination arising from disability, harassment, victimisation, failure to make reasonable adjustments



Reasonable adjustments

A wide variety of measures – whatever can be done to enable the employee to be successful at work, and experience respect and good wellbeing.

These can relate to different dimensions of the workplace:

- ▶ Job tasks
- ▶ Space – where the work's done, physical and sensory accessibility
- ▶ Access to appropriate technology
- ▶ Instructions and guidance
- ▶ When and how the work's done
- ▶ Time off
- ▶ Work relationships
- ▶ Support and training
- ▶ Evaluation criteria

The legal duty for employers to make reasonable adjustments arises in relation to three specific areas:

- 'Provision, criteria or practice' (PCP)
- Physical features of the workplace
- Provision of auxiliary aids.

EIS Focus group

Autism Appropriate Workplaces

- ▶ Focus group of Autistic EIS members advising and directing the work of the EIS to develop guidance for employers and Union Reps
- ▶ EIS Survey of 52 Autistic Members found that:
 - 60% did not feel their workplace was a good place to work for Autistic people, only 25% agreed
 - Only 18% were comfortable talking openly about being Autistic at work, whereas 61% were not.

Activity: Creating accessibility

- ▶ What does being understood and valued (as a whole person) at work mean to you? Do you have any concrete examples - what have co-workers said or done that made you feel understood and valued? [Individual reflection](#)
- ▶ What does 'accessibility' mean to you? [Mentimeter word cloud](#)

Mia Mingus: ‘Access intimacy’

<https://youtu.be/ONpqOHGIbZM?t=986>

'It has looked like relationships where I *always* feel like I can say what my access needs are, no matter what. Or I can say that I don't know them, and that's ok too. [...] It has looked like able bodied people listening to me and believing me. It has looked like people investing in remembering my access needs and checking in with me if there are going to be situations that might be inaccessible or hard.'

<https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2011/05/05/access-intimacy-the-missing-link/>

Activity: Creating accessibility

- ▶ **What practical everyday steps** can you take to build more access intimacy in your workplace?

Mentimeter word cloud

TURN

**Transforming
Unions to
Represent the
Neurodivergent
Workforce**

Case Study 1

“I have actually been told by senior staff members that I will never be promoted here. I have still been interviewed so many times and always receive excellent feedback, but they always go with someone else. I have had some issues with colleagues in the past because I take a very direct approach and I always ask for clarification, to encourage others to be less vague in the way they communicate, which some take the wrong way! It just helps me understand.”

(Sara, 42, secondary school teacher)

- ▶ How would you support Sara if she told you this?
- ▶ How can recruitment processes be better suited to Autistic staff?

Case Study 2

“It’s time for the end of year social, but I never go. It is usually the same people who go to these things, and only a few staff members who generally don’t come out. I haven’t told my colleagues that I am Autistic and find these types of events difficult, and I just end up feeling really left out. I want to suggest we could go somewhere we can have a pub quiz instead, but I am not sure how to contact them as I think they have their own WhatsApp group”.

(Andrew, 55, secondary school teacher)

- ▶ How would you support Andrew to address this issue?
- ▶ How could social spaces for staff be more accessible to Autistic members?

Case Study 3

“When I started my job, I said I am Autistic to my employer and was told I wouldn’t have to cover classes as this is really stressful for me. Now, after being in post for two years, we are under so much pressure at work and the Headteacher keeps asking the to cover and I keep having to say yes even though it really has an impact on me, and I just feel exhausted. I am worried that if I say no, my colleagues will think I am getting an easier time than they are and that I am being treated more favourably.”
(Fatima, 38, primary school teacher)

- ▶ How would you support Fatima to address this issue?
- ▶ How would you explain that this is a reasonable adjustment, if a colleague complained that it was favourable treatment?

Feedback and next steps

Mentimeter:

- ▶ How has this session been for you?
- ▶ What more support or resources do you need?

Resources

- ▶ Reasonable Adjustments in the Workplace, EIS guidance
- ▶ Local Reps, and EIS Equality Reps can advice and support
- ▶ The EIS Disabled Members Network meeting on 2nd December is open to Autistic members
- ▶ www.Autismunderstanding.scot a professional autistic led service dedicated to helping people deepen their knowledge and understanding of autism. More information on their website.

Next Workshops

- ▶ *Furthering Disability equality at work, 7th December*
- ▶ *Mobilising against Anti-Muslim Prejudice at Work, 11th January*
- ▶ *Dynamics of Gender at Work, 18th January*
- ▶ *Equality in Focus: intersectionality and summary TBC*