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# Implementing Neuroinclusive Practices in the Workplace

## Panel Discussion Summary

Thurs 19 March 2026 • 2:00–3:00pm GMT • Zoom • Neurodiversity Celebration Week

### Key takeaways

Neuroinclusion works best when it is designed into everyday systems rather than bolted on for specific individuals. Each panellist, speaking from personal and professional experience, came back to the same practical advice:

- have genuine, regular conversations with your people;
- make reasonable adjustments portable and personal, not tick-box;
- use the free tools and accessibility settings already built into your technology;
- and create an environment where disclosure is safe but never required. The strongest thread was that none of this requires large budgets. It requires curiosity, kindness, and a willingness to treat every person as an individual.

**300**

Registrations

**160+**

Organisations

**21**

Countries

**6**

Speakers

## The panel

<b>Cath Darwen</b>	Business Engagement & Support Officer, Worcestershire County Council
<b>Holly Bolt</b>	Neurodiversity specialist, consultant, and educator
<b>Jonathan Downes</b>	Founder of Glassfull and executive and mindset coach specialising in neurodiverse leaders.
<b>Katie Downes</b>	Student, Royal Holloway University of London; neurodiversity advocate. Community building, Glassfull.
<b>Helena Darby</b>	Founder of NeuroCompass and neurodiversity coach.
<b>Dave Swallow</b>	Group Commander, Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue Service

## Questions discussed

- How did your own journey — whether lived experience or professional — shape how you approach neuroinclusion?
- How has establishing a neurodiverse staff network changed the culture at the Fire and Rescue Service?
- How can managers support neurodivergent team members without singling them out or making assumptions?
- What does a good workplace adjustment process look like, and how do you avoid it becoming a box-ticking exercise?
- How can workplaces make it safer for people to disclose neurodivergence — and should disclosure even be necessary?
- What are the most impactful "small, thoughtful changes" organisations can make that don't require a big budget?

## Key Themes

### 01 Lived experience drives authentic inclusion

Many speakers came to neuroinclusion through:

- Their own diagnoses
- Supporting neurodivergent children and adults
- Working closely with neurodivergent people

Personal experience helped them understand:

- The impact of small adjustments
- The importance of kindness and patience
- How misunderstood neurodivergence still is

“I have seen firsthand what a little adjustment in a workplace can do to help someone really show their true self and their true qualities.”

— Helena, NeuroCompass

“My main approach to neuro inclusion is patience, calmness and kindness. Just approaching things with a real gentleness that allows people to have space.”

— Katie Downes, Student & Glassfull

## 02 Inclusion by design, not by request

A big theme was “**inclusion by design.**”

This means:

- Create systems that work for everyone from the start
- Don't wait for someone to ask for help
- Make inclusive practice normal

Example:

At Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service:

- Accessibility features are built into devices and software
- Staff networks advise on policies
- Inclusion is part of everyday processes

“It becomes sort of reasonable adjustments for everyone, rather than reasonable adjustments for the specific few who need very specific stuff.”

— Dave Swallow, Hereford & Worcester FRS

### 03 Personalisation, not singling out

Design systems that work for everyone, then personalise where needed through genuine conversation

Good practice includes:

- Avoiding stereotypes and assumptions
- Getting to know each person as an individual
- Personalising support when needed

Important distinction:

- **Singling out** → uncomfortable and isolating
- **Personalising support** → respectful and effective

“Every single individual in the workplace deserves to be recognised for who they are, for what they bring to the table and for the things that they find more challenging to be acknowledged.”

— Holly Bolt, NurturingND

## 04 Conversations are the most powerful (and free) tool

Managers don't need big budgets to start making changes.

Helpful habits:

- Regular one-to-one check-ins
- Asking what helps someone work well
- Explaining the reason for meetings to reduce anxiety
- Clear, kind communication
- Being understanding of your manager

Small language changes can reduce stress.

“They know themselves best, they know how they work.”

— Helena, NeuroCompass

“Those conversations are free. They don't really cost anything. Just getting to know each other and what makes each other work well together.”

— Dave Swallow, Hereford & Worcester FRS

## 05 Adjustments: practical, personal, and portable

### Good adjustments:

- Tailored to the individual and the role
- Reviewed regularly (at least annually)
- Documented and portable, traveling with the employee across roles and training.
- Employee might need to know what sort of adjustments are possible.

### Avoid:

- Tick-box exercises
- Doing adjustments only for legal reasons

“Sometimes you don’t know what you need until there’s a menu offered to you.”

— Holly Bolt, NurturingND

## 06 Disclosure: safe, but never required

People may:

- Not know they're neurodivergent
- Be waiting for diagnosis
- Choose not to disclose

Workplaces can help by:

- Creating a culture of trust
- Clearly welcoming disabled and neurodivergent people
- Showing inclusion in action (not just statements)

Example: Clear equality and accessibility statements on websites and job adverts reduce barriers. (Equality Act 2010)

“Somebody might not know they're neurodivergent. They might know and not want to share. And they don't have to. As a manager, you're dealing with those uncertainties anyway.”

— Jonathan Downes, Glassfull

**Making disclosure safer:**

- Make inclusion visible
- Put equality and accessibility statements on websites and job adverts — free and immediate
- Visible commitment must be backed by genuine practice.

“I entered my current workplace without realising I had ADHD. Adjustments were made by a manager and it was only through that exploration that I thought, oh my goodness, I might have ADHD.”

— Cath, Worcestershire County Council

## 07 Small, low-cost changes with outsized impact

### Communication

- Share meeting agendas in advance
- Send follow-up notes
- Use clear formatting and accessible documents

### Environment

- Provide quiet or flexible spaces
- Allow movement and breaks

### Tools

- Use built-in accessibility settings on devices
- Provide fidget or stim tools
- Offer adjustment “passports” when staff start

“All technology has accessibility settings and those things can be absolute game changers. They’re already there and they’re tiny tweaks.”

— Holly Bolt, Nurturing ND

### Free resources mentioned

- British Dyslexia Association — style guides for accessible documents
- Dyslexia Scotland — formatting and accessibility resources
- Microsoft 365 and iPad built-in accessibility settings

“On the website it doesn’t just say everyone is welcome — it says everyone is wanted. And just seeing that is immediately a reassurance.”

— Katie Downes, Student and Glassfull

## 08 Neurodiversity networks as engines of change

### Case study: Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service

Network members span firefighters, training, HR, IT, and support teams. They act as champions in their areas and subject matter experts consulted on policy, equality impact assessments, and technology rollouts. A chief officer sits on the network with personal commitment.

“Having strategic support is key. We’ve got one of the chief officers who sits on the network. It’s not just something he has to do because he’s a senior member of staff, it’s something he’s got an interest and a passion about as well.”

— Dave Swallow, Hereford & Worcester FRS

### Employee networks:

- Create peer support
- Inform policy and leadership decisions
- Build awareness across organisations
- Develop champions

### Starting points:

- Build from existing wellbeing or mental health groups
- Grow organically through interested staff

## 09 Neuroinclusion extends beyond your workforce

- Your customers, service users, and the public are statistically neurodivergent too.
- Internal neuroinclusion strengthens how you serve neurodivergent people externally.
- Dave's Prevention team developed an awareness poster for fire stations on neurodivergence in emergencies
- For police, NHS, fire services, and councils this has direct operational relevance

“If you're embracing this internally, you're in a much better place to understand and embrace it with your customers, service users or whomever. One becomes an expression of the other.”

— Jonathan Downes, Glassfull

## What's Next

### Follow-up session: Tuesday 1 April 2026 at 2:00pm

Holly, Helena, and Jonathan will outline practical ways they can support your organisation's neuroinclusion journey and review and address Slido questions. An invitation will be sent separately.

### A final thought

Getting started with neuroinclusion doesn't require large budgets or complicated programmes. It requires curiosity, willingness to listen and the confidence to make practical changes.

**"If you take care of your employees, they'll take care of the business."** — Cath Darwen,

Thank you to everyone who attended.

Your presence reflects a growing commitment to workplaces where everyone can do their best work.

Holly, Helena & Jonathan.

#### About this document's formatting

This summary has been formatted with neuroinclusive accessibility in mind, following British Dyslexia Association and WCAG guidance.

A key takeaways section at the top for readers who prefer a quick summary before the detail