



**CENTRE FOR
NEURODIVERSITY
RESEARCH AT WORK
ANNUAL REPORT**



Centre Objectives

The mission of The Neurodiversity at Work Research Centre is to undertake cutting edge research to enhance and support ethical, impactful organizational practice. We do this through fostering collaborations between scientific researchers and practitioners to foster neuroinclusive and evidence-based organizational practice for the benefit of all.

Summary

Neurodiversity is a salient topic which has risen to the forefront in wider conversations and concerns about inclusion in the workplace. Across the world, policy makers, employers and social justice activists have understood the need to accommodate natural variations in human functioning and hidden disabilities to ensure sustainable careers and wellbeing for all. The Centre for Neurodiversity Research at Work struggles to keep pace with demand for talks, workshops and advice. We cannot collect data fast enough to support the ever-growing pool of neurodiversity consulting practitioners.

2023 was a year to focus on dissemination of our existing knowledge, built up since 2020 with a range of academic and professional papers, chapters and books. We reached over 2,000 people in direct talks and webinars alone and we featured in news, periodicals, radio and expert consultations.

Our postgraduate students remain an essential part of our authenticity: neurodivergent people researching neurodiversity inclusion. This is the ultimate in participative research, as we ensure intersectional

representation in not only conducting studies, but in the design of research questions.

Our focus for 2024 is to secure longer term funding for the Centre in order to increase researcher resources. The Co-Directors need the support of post-doctoral researchers in order to maintain the Centre's position as a thought leader in this field.

Publications

1. Neurodiversity Coaching: A psychological approach to fostering talent and career potential

Our first book has been published by Routledge – with so many pre-orders that they didn't expect that they had to delay the launch for 2 weeks to catch up on printing! Unheard of for an academic book, but symptomatic of the popularity of neurodiversity as a topic.

2. ADHD Career Success

Almuth and one of her former MSc dissertation students have published a study on what makes a successful career for ADHDers. They found that ADHD leaders experience catharsis with diagnosis, which helps them to take agency and control of their strengths and challenges. ADHD careers can be paradoxical, the same traits that cause difficulties in early roles can be co-opted as strengths later on. [Click here](#) to read this open access paper. Two weeks after publication it has already had over 7,000 downloads, so has clearly resonated a lot with various communities.

3. Neurodiversity and Work: Employment, Identity, and Support Networks for Neurominorities



Nancy has written the opening chapter for this book, to be published by the USA's Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, exploring the definitions, the biological, psychological and social foundations of neurodiversity. The chapter also contains a detailed explanation of the intersections with race, gender and sexuality. The book will be published in 2024.

4. Wellbeing and diversity

Almuth has written an extensive chapter on wellbeing and diversity for Paula Brough and Gail Kinman's edited book on "Wellbeing at work in a turbulent era". This book is aimed at academics and will hopefully be published soon in 2024.

5. Neurodiversity and psychometrics

Nancy has written an article for Psychologist assessors on accommodating neurodivergent needs when using psychometric tests – this includes the limits of psychometrics in assessments. Nancy is also planning a public document on the limits of diagnostic testing and the need for history taking and observation in a live interview to avoid misdiagnosis and to ensure psychological support for those experiencing difficulties.

6. Current narratives in the Neurodiversity Community

We have an article in press with the Achievability Journal due to be published early 2024 with a summary of lived experience 'state of the sector' narratives, from which we are drawing research objectives and directions for 2024 – namely around psychological safety, wellbeing and systemic inclusion / Universal Design.



Birkbeck
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



Dissemination

Almuth and Nancy have attended a wide range of conferences, delivered online webinars and participated in the Celebrating Neurodiversity Awards ceremony. They were consulted for the Robert Buckland MP's special report on Autism and by Dr Chantelle Lewis and Professor Jason Arday regarding their upcoming book on the intersection of Neurodiversity and Race, to be published by Princeton University Press.

Our 2023 calendar of talks involved a blend of in-person, remote and pre-recorded sessions. Each event attracts between 20 and 500 participants, the recordings continue to deliver knowledge transfer and engagement in neuroinclusion. A cautious estimate of 75 people per 29 events indicates that over 2,000 people have engaged with us in person/video. We have split our dissemination across student groups, Occupational Health, HR and related professional practice colleagues, as well as directly to employers and neurodivergent people.

Write ups in HR magazine, the Psychologist, INSEAD's alumni periodical and on the Jeremy Vine show means that we are reaching a wide practitioner audience and likely to be improve neurodiversity awareness, acceptance and clear actions from our practical research output. Nancy continues to write a monthly column for Forbes magazine. Our advice has since been included in the Sir Robert Buckland MP review of Autism and we have been asked to join the Task Force.

The neurodiversity information-sphere is still very much dominated by social media and there is a distinct schism between the social model of disability favoured by communities of lived experience and the medical, deficit model still taught and advocated in professional circles. This affects neurodivergent people every day at work. Our 2023 survey informed us that social media was the almost exclusive source of information for neurodivergent employees, whereas their employers

were more balanced to include disability charities, official bodies such as the CIPD and ACAS.

C4NDRAW's dissemination work in 2023 is a bridge between the two models of disability and the different stakeholder groups. Our aim is to bring clarity to the complex, ambiguous legal frameworks by sharing tangible, evidence-based advice on what works for neuroinclusion. This benefits all.

January 2023

- Nancy recorded a lecture for the Master's in Positive Psychology Coaching at UEL
- Nancy delivered a live webinar on Supporting Neurodiversity at Work for the Employment Lawyer's Association

February

- Nancy contributed to a panel discussion on neuroinclusive environments for JLL, the architect and facilities company

March – Neurodiversity Celebration Week!

- Almuth chaired a stream at the Wellbeing at Work Conference at the NEC on Neurodiversity, in which she hosted Nancy, Marcia Brissett-Bailey, Tumi Sotire and Nicola James for a host of lived experience, professional and academic talks. Almuth gave a talk and Nancy two talks.
- Nancy delivered a keynote speech for the 'It Takes All Kind of Minds' conference hosted by Edinburgh University
- Nancy and Almuth presented our flagship 'state of the sector' survey study for the Neurodiversity in Business charity.
- Nancy delivered a webinar for People in Law.
- Nancy delivered a workshop for the academic leaders at Imperial College, London.



- Almuth wrote a piece for HR Magazine to disseminate our survey results.
- Our survey study was featured in the Psychologist.
- Our survey study was reported in the Financial Times.

April

- Nancy delivered a webinar on Neuroinclusion for the National Union of Journalists.
- We hosted Australian sociologist Judy Singer¹ for an event at Birkbeck and at Cambridge to celebrate her scholarly contribution to the development of Neurodiversity as a topic in its own right.

May

- Nancy delivered a workshop as part of the Society of Occupational Medicine's spring meeting, devoted to the topic of Neurodiversity.
- We hosted two roundtable events with the Neurodiversity in Business charity members to discuss and debate the findings from our flagship survey.
- Almuth delivered a talk to WONE (Walking on Earth) about neurodiversity attending by over 100 people, mostly HR practitioners and EDI practitioners.
- Nancy and Almuth commented on the proposal for the Buckland review at an event in London.

June

- Nancy was a guest on the Jeremy Vine television show to discuss ADHD in adults and why so many people are being diagnosed.

¹ Since this event we have become aware the Ms Singer holds views about the transgender community which clash with ours and we find to be discriminatory. We are not working with her ongoing, yet we acknowledge her contribution to scholarly thought on the topic and feel that on balance, it is more accurate and transparent to report both the engagement and the schism.



- Nancy gave a keynote address to the Coaching Psychology conference, hosted by the British Psychological Society.

July

- Nancy delivered a neuroinclusion workshop for 40 global business leaders at the IMD Business School in Lausanne, Switzerland. This included a follow up article for their global students, staff, alumni and fellows.

August

- Nancy attended the Academy of Management Conference in Boston, and presented two papers on the history of neurodiversity and neurodiversity coaching, as well as meeting a fantastic cohort of fellow neurodiversity scholars from the USA and South America who continue to meet and collaborate across the pond.

September

- We sponsored the Research category at the Celebrating Neurodiversity Awards in London, hosted by Nicky Campbell and his daughter, awarding a prize to the Tourettes researchers Drs Maddie Groom and Camilla Babbage.





October

- Nancy presented at the Women in Business and Tech conference on the entrepreneurial nature of ADHD.
- Nancy presented to the Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology's special group meeting on Diversity and Inclusion on the topic of Universal Design in HR.
- Nancy was invited to the Black Leaders and Excellence in Neurodiversity community event to support our work in advancing intersectional concerns in the neurodiversity community.
- Nancy delivered a webinar on Universal Design for Text Help's Festival of Workplace Inclusion.

November

- Nancy was voted into the Shaw Trust's Disability Power 100 list for her work advancing key policies for neuroinclusion and attended the ceremony hosted by TV's Alex Booker.
- Nancy presented the results of our coaching publications to the DWP's Access to Work teams, to help them decide how and when to award coaching as a publicly funded disability adjustment.

December

- Nancy delivered a talk on Universal Design for HR for the combined Society of Occupational Medicine and Royal College of Nursing conference in London.
- Nancy delivered a workshop for the academic leadership of Imperial College London on deciding what is 'reasonable' in allocating disability adjustments.
- Almuth delivered two professional development sessions for the Premier League on Neurodiversity attended by over 50 people in total (mainly football academy managers).



- Nancy gave critical feedback on the final draft of the Buckland report on Autism.

Teaching and learning

Almuth designed an undergraduate final year optional module on Neurodiversity which has launched as oversubscribed.

We are delighted to say that our new course – a post graduate certificate on Neurodiversity Coaching - is being approved by Birkbeck and will start in 2024.

Our PhD and Msc students continue to thrive and make progress according to their neurodivergent patterns of energy, bringing insight and wisdom to our academic understanding of neurodiversity at work. Between them they have a full and essential program of research, which will add huge value to the field. Projects include:

- Early career narratives for ADHDers, and how to support them
- How and why the traditional recruitment triad of CV, interview and references can cause difficulty for neurodivergent people and what we can do instead
- How Job Crafting can lead to roles for 'specialist thinkers'
- The intersection of race and neurodiversity in the coaching space
- How to support neurodivergent employees with emotions and communication through coaching.

We're delighted that we have been accepted to host a symposium of our students' 2023 completed work at the British Psychological Society's Division of Occupational Psychology conference in 2024.



Funding and sponsorship

In 2023 we received funding from two main sources: The Neurodiversity in Business Charity and Genius Within CIC, a non-profit B-Corp.

Neurodiversity in Business provided us with funds to conduct our flagship survey, a Demand, Gap and Supply Analysis of Neurodiversity at Work which included data from 990 employees and 127 employers. They continue to fund this year.

Genius Within have funded several events and provide us with a fractional administrative support assistance.

It is clear that with such few resources, the Centre relies on the good will of directors Professor Almuth McDowall and Visiting Professor Nancy Doyle, as well as our dedicated students.

Plans for 2024

We have several high impact journal papers in process and scope for two new books. The first publication arising from the NiB project has been accepted to The Market (a business publication, on the use of evidence) and the second one is under review – keep your fingers crossed. Another publication, a rapid evidence assessment of supports for neurodivergent student is also under review.

Almuth has now run her undergraduate module on Neurodiversity (with excellent feedback) and been invited to craft a module at postgraduate level. This will take more of a lifespan perspective.

In 2024 Nancy intends to publish a book about her lived experience of Leadership, shaped by leadership research, with a reflective journal – again an example of our commitment to bridging science, practice and lived experience.



We are continuing to be invited to speak about our book. Almuth has given a well attended talk to National Air Traffic Services (NATS) with over 100 attendees, recorded a podcast with the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) and a podcast for the British Psychological Society's Division of Coaching Psychology. Nancy is delivering a number of podcasts for Surviving Society, the Hidden 20% and also running training for the Association of Coaching.

A priority is to obtain research project funding for additional staff so that we can keep doing what we are doing, and bring our unique structure to the design and delivery of high quality knowledge and thought leadership. The market for neurodiversity knowledge is thirsty and awash with heuristical 'best practice', lacking in critical thinking or longitudinal impact evaluation. We cannot address this on good will alone, so we must prioritise obtain the right infrastructure to support the development of this crucial field. A grant application has gone into a major funder, and we hope to hear if we have been short listed for the next stage in June 2024 (academic lead times are very long).

We have successfully obtained funding for 1 year of a full time post doctoral researcher, with fractional administrative assistance. Our hope is that this resource allows us to make additional bids and grow the centre, to continue our essential work.

To remind ourselves:

15-20% of adults are neurodivergent¹, with the majority experiencing two or more^{2,3} of:

- ADHD
- Autism
- Dyscalculia
- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia
- Tourette Syndrome and tic disorders

And the employment figures remain stark.



Only 29% of Autistic adults are in work⁴ in the UK and the figures are not that much different across the world.

Around 25% of the prison population meet the clinical criteria for ADHD⁵ and nearly three quarters are unable to read and write⁶.

Almuth and Nancy, established as two of a handful of academics leading thought and driving the research agenda, look forward to continuing to grow the centre and support the next generation of neurodivergent, neurodiversity researchers. Good quality, sound evidence to support career transitions, recruitment initiatives, ongoing wellbeing and support are essential to our society from a moral and economic perspective.

February 2024

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