



**Neurodiversity in The
Workplace: The Business
Impact of Implementing
Workplace Needs
Assessments and
Reasonable Adjustments**

September 2025

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Executive Summary

In the evolving world of work, organisations have a powerful yet often underutilised opportunity to drive performance and resilience: proactively implementing reasonable adjustments to remove workplace barriers. These adjustments, which are often simple and low-cost, can significantly reduce unplanned absences, enhance employee well-being, and improve overall productivity.

Too often, such interventions are overlooked or delayed, resulting in preventable disruptions, disengagement, and lost potential. However, when organisations take a proactive, inclusive approach, the benefits are clear: a more engaged workforce, stronger retention, and a culture that supports everyone to perform at their best.

This white paper examines the complexities and benefits of reasonable adjustments through the lens of neurodiversity, highlighting both strengths and challenges encountered in the workplace. In addition, it illustrates the tangible benefits of conducting Workplace Needs Assessments (WNA) and demonstrates how the quality of the assessment, the alignment of support, and the effective implementation of adjustments are essential for maximising these benefits and return on investment (ROI).

By prioritising company-wide support and adjustments, organisations enhance employee satisfaction, performance, and foster an inclusive workplace culture that drives long-term success.



Neurodiversity in the Workplace

Neurodiversity recognises that neurological differences, such as autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, and Dyscalculia, are natural variations in how people think, learn, and process information. In the workplace, these differences should be embraced as unique strengths that can bring fresh perspectives and unlock new opportunities (Silberman, 2015).

For instance, autistic employees often demonstrate distinctive ways of processing information, leading to innovative problem-solving and creativity (Cherewick & Matergia, 2023). Individuals with ADHD may bring energy, adaptability, and divergent thinking, often sparking new ideas and momentum within teams (Schippers et al., 2022). Employees with Dyslexia frequently excel in spatial reasoning and visual problem-solving, valuable in roles that require design, strategy, or creativity (Eide & Eide, 2011).

By applying this strengths-based approach, organisations can move beyond outdated, deficit-based views and instead focus on the unique contributions neurodivergent employees bring.

This fosters inclusion, supports individuals to thrive, and drives meaningful organisational outcomes (Armstrong, 2010).

A Changing World

Organisations today face a three-fold business imperative for success: **innovation, talent, and reputation.**

1. Innovation: Modern innovation requires more than incremental improvements; it demands fresh perspectives that challenge conventional assumptions and frameworks. Neurodiverse teams, with the contributions of neurodivergent employees, bring exactly that. By reframing challenges in novel ways, they generate unique, value-creating solutions (Dhar, 2025).

2. Talent: Employers are struggling to recruit and retain talent. Neurodivergent candidates and employees remain an underleveraged source of capability (The Neurodiversity Index Report, 2025). Their distinctive strengths can fill critical skill gaps, broaden problem-solving approaches, and unlock productivity gains that traditional pipelines often overlook (Rollnik-Sadowska & Grabińska, 2024).

3. Reputation: Research demonstrates that brand reputation is inextricably tied to inclusive practices. By embedding neurodiversity into workforce strategies, organisations not only strengthen their employer brand but also enhance trust among customers, investors, and communities (Thompson & Miller, 2024).

Together, these imperatives make it clear that embracing neurodiversity is not just an ethical responsibility but a strategic advantage for organisations.

The Contextual Landscape for Inclusion

Strategic imperatives aside, the business case for inclusion is no longer optional, it is a matter of compliance, cost, and competitiveness.

Stricter enforcement of disability and occupational health regulations has raised the stakes for employers, with non-compliance carrying both financial penalties and reputational damage (Hartnet, 2025; Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2020).

At the same time, boards and HR leaders are now accountable for delivering measurable well-being outcomes, as stakeholders increasingly link health, safety, and inclusion to organisational performance (Young & Tong, 2025; Gallup, 2021).

For businesses, this shift is significant: failure to proactively support neurodivergent employees drives higher absenteeism, turnover, and legal exposure. For example, 50% of neurodivergent individuals have taken time off due to the absence of reasonable adjustments (McDowall, Doyle, & Srinivasan, 2024). This is not just a well-being issue, it is a drain on productivity, retention, and profitability.

This challenge is amplified by upcoming changes to **Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)**, which will take effect in April 2026. SSP will become payable from day one of absence (removing the current three “waiting days”), eligibility will be extended by removing the Lower Earnings Limit, and payments will be calculated as 80% of usual earnings or the flat rate, whichever is lower.

While these reforms strengthen protections for employees, particularly those with long-term or fluctuating conditions, they will also increase SSP costs for employers, with SMEs facing an estimated additional £425 million annually (CIPHR, 2025). At the same time, the TUC projects potential productivity benefits of £2.4 billion through healthier, better-supported workforces (The Guardian, 2025)



In this context, failure to make timely, reasonable adjustments for neurodivergent employees not only risks avoidable absenteeism but also compounds financial liabilities under the new SSP framework. Conversely, organisations that embed inclusive practices can mitigate costs, strengthen retention, and unlock higher performance.

**Estimated increase of
£425 million in costs for
SME's due to SSP
changes**

CIPHR, 2025

Therefore, inclusion is no longer just a moral obligation or a compliance exercise - it is a strategic lever for business resilience and growth. Employers that act early to address barriers for neurodivergent employees will not only safeguard themselves legally and financially, but also build stronger, more innovative, and more productive organisations.



The Business Case for Inclusion

With budgets constantly scrutinised, business leaders need to be clear on the business drivers for inclusion. These are varied and multi-layered and include:

1. Productivity Gains

Adjustments such as multiple monitors, noise-cancelling headphones, or sensory-friendly environments are not “nice-to-haves” - they directly improve focus, reduce errors, and enhance output (Ataya, 2024). Organisations that embed structured well-being strategies outperform peers by 11% in productivity and 15% in retention (Jeffery et al., 2025).

Practical, low-cost interventions can translate into measurable competitive advantage.

2. Retention and Cost Reduction

Turnover and absenteeism are expensive. Research shows that the national average of 34% employee turnover is reduced to 8%, with tailored well-being support in place. (McDowall, Doyle, & Srinivasan, 2024). Sickness absence costs UK employers an average of 7.8 days per employee per year (Sinclair & Suff, 2023).

This means failing to provide adjustments adds unnecessary cost pressures.

Proactive inclusion reduces churn and protects the bottom line.

3. Empowered Line Managers

Line managers are the front line of inclusion. Equipping them with the tools and confidence to support neurodivergent employees not only reduces compliance risks but also lowers managerial stress and improves engagement (Palumbo, 2025).

Supporting managers creates healthier teams and better business outcomes.

4. Legal Protection

Workplace Needs Assessments (WNA) and reasonable adjustments provide critical evidence under the Equality Act (2010). This not only demonstrates compliance but also mitigates the risk of costly tribunal cases (Hamerton, 2025).

Proactive compliance protects both people and profit.

5. Talent Attraction and Brand Value.

Inclusion is now a differentiator in the talent market. Research shows 83% of GenZ candidates say a strong DEI commitment influences employment choices (Kratz, 2023). Inclusive practices directly impact recruitment success, brand reputation, and long-term competitiveness.

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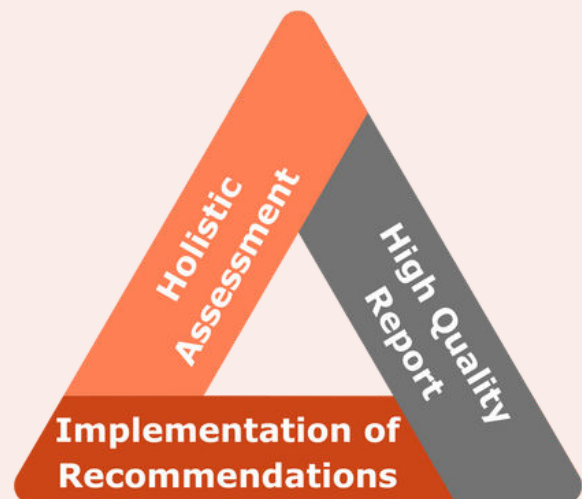
Organising for Success

Having established the business case for supporting neurodivergent employees, linking inclusion to productivity, retention, innovation, and reputation, we will now explore how organisations can operationalise these principles.

Evidence and experience show that meaningful impact requires a structured approach: one that moves beyond generic policies to tailored, expert-led interventions that address both individual and organisational needs.

Experience has demonstrated that a structured approach to identify and implement adjustments for individuals is the key to success.

The approach is based on **three interconnected pillars:**



1. Provision of a Holistic Workplace Needs Assessment

Leveraging expertise to understand the unique requirements of each employee and the specific context of their role.

2. Delivery of a High-Quality Report

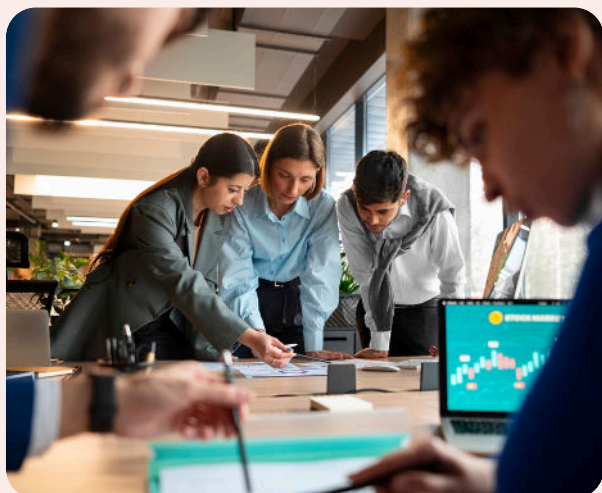
Translating assessment findings into clear, actionable guidance aligned with organisational systems, processes, and legal obligations.

3. Implementation of Recommendations

Embedding adjustments consistently, allowing time for adoption, and ensuring that both the employee and organisation realise the intended benefits.

Alongside these pillars, organisations must foster a wider culture of inclusion, supported by awareness training, coaching, and leadership engagement. Together, these elements create an environment where neurodivergent employees can thrive, unlocking measurable business value while reinforcing compliance and organisational reputation.

This section outlines a practical roadmap for putting these principles into action, ensuring that investment in neurodiversity delivers sustainable, long-term returns.



Holistic Workplace Needs Assessment (WNA)

A Holistic Workplace Needs Assessment (WNA) is now widely recognised as the first and most critical step in creating an inclusive environment where neurodivergent employees can thrive. It is not simply a checklist of adjustments. It is a strategic, expert-led process that identifies barriers to performance and wellbeing while aligning solutions with organisational objectives.

Skilled assessors take a comprehensive view of both the individual and their work context. This includes evaluating the employee's role, tasks, workflows, and cognitive and sensory profiles, as well as the physical and digital work environment. Assessments typically combine structured interviews, observation, ergonomic analysis, and task review to build a complete understanding of the employee's needs.

The result is a personalised, evidence-based set of recommendations that considers not only immediate challenges but also long-term requirements as roles and organisational priorities evolve.

The expertise of the assessor is crucial. Neurodivergent employees often experience barriers that are nuanced and role-specific. Managers, even when trained, may not anticipate all potential challenges. At Thriiver, our data shows that **89% of adjustments recommended during holistic assessments had not previously been considered** by the organisation, highlighting the value of specialist knowledge in identifying practical and impactful solutions.

By providing a structured, individual-focused evaluation, the WNA ensures that subsequent interventions, be they assistive technology, environmental modifications, or flexible working arrangements, are targeted, effective, and sustainable. This approach mitigates the risk of poorly implemented adjustments, maximising both employee engagement and organisational ROI.

Business Implications:

- Employees receive support tailored to their unique strengths and challenges, enhancing productivity, focus, and engagement.
- Organisations gain clear, actionable insight into how to support individuals while aligning with business operations.
- High-quality, evidence-based assessments reduce absenteeism, prevent costly attrition, and provide defensible documentation for compliance with legal obligations.

A well-conducted WNA therefore, lays the foundation for all subsequent interventions, ensuring that investment in neurodiversity translates into tangible performance gains, retention benefits, and reputational value.



Amanda Nicholls
Business Support
Manager
Grant Thornton

“I think some people start a role and then suddenly they think, actually I'm struggling with this, or I'm finding this challenging, and then they're coming forward to disclose”

High-Quality Reporting

Once a holistic WNA has been completed, the next step is to translate findings into a high-quality report that bridges insight and action. The value of the WNA is only realised when recommendations are clear, actionable, and aligned with both the employee's needs and the organisation's systems, processes, and legal obligations.

A high-quality report provides a structured roadmap for managers, HR teams, and employees. It details recommended adjustments, explains the rationale behind each, and outlines the practical steps required for implementation. For example, recommendations might include assistive technology, environmental modifications, coaching requirements, or adjustments to work schedules.

Crucially, the report aligns these recommendations with existing IT systems, workspace policies, and budgetary parameters, ensuring they are feasible and sustainable. Beyond logistics, the report plays a critical role in employee engagement and buy-in.

Employees are far more likely to adopt changes when they feel understood and validated through a thorough, empathetic assessment. Conversely, a poorly executed report risks leaving employees feeling misunderstood, which can reduce adoption and negatively impact morale.

From a managerial perspective, the report serves as a practical tool, providing clarity and reducing uncertainty. It equips line managers with guidance on supporting employees effectively, including how to integrate adjustments into workflows, track progress, and offer coaching support where required. Furthermore, high-quality reports contribute to risk management, providing evidence of compliance under the Equality Act (2010) and demonstrating due diligence in meeting legal obligations.

Business Implications:

- Clear, actionable reporting ensures recommended adjustments are implemented consistently and effectively.
- Employees are more likely to engage with changes, enhancing productivity and satisfaction.

- Managers and HR have a practical guide that reduces implementation errors, saves time, and mitigates compliance risk.
- Organisations build defensible, evidence-based documentation that strengthens both internal governance and external reputation.

Implementation of Adjustments

The final, and arguably most critical, stage is the implementation of recommended adjustments. Even the most insightful assessment and highest-quality report will deliver limited value if recommendations are not applied consistently and supported over time.

Implementation requires careful planning, clear communication, and integration into both individual workflows and organisational culture.



Matthew Carpenter
EDI and Engagement Manager
Mishcon de Reya

“It's about focusing on getting adjustments in place to bring out the strengths that neurodivergent employees have”

Depending on the findings of the Workplace Needs Assessment, recommendations can range from simple, low-cost adjustments to more specific interventions. For example:

Assistive Technology: Tools such as speech-to-text software, text-to-speech applications, or noise-cancelling headphones support focus, information processing, and communication, particularly for employees with ADHD or auditory sensitivities.

Environmental Changes: Adjustable lighting, quiet areas, or sensory-friendly workspaces remove physical barriers and create conditions conducive to sustained concentration.

Ergonomic Workstations: Sit-stand desks, multiple monitors, and personalised seating arrangements reduce physical strain and cognitive load, enhancing efficiency.

Flexible Working Arrangements: Bespoke schedules or hybrid working patterns allow employees to work during their most productive hours, improving output and engagement.

Coaching and Co-Coaching:

Structured coaching empowers employees to manage challenges effectively, while co-coaching equips managers with strategies to support their team members optimally.

Manager and Team Awareness

Training: Educating teams on neurodiversity, unconscious bias, and inclusive communication fosters a culture of understanding and collaboration.

Importantly, implementation is not a one-off exercise. Employees and managers need time to adjust, familiarise themselves with tools or processes, and refine working patterns. Structured follow-up, feedback loops, and periodic review ensure that adjustments are adopted effectively, integrated into everyday workflows, and continuously optimised for impact.

Business Implications:

- Well-implemented adjustments boost productivity, reduce errors, and enhance employee engagement.
- Absenteeism and turnover are reduced, decreasing recruitment and training costs.
- Organisations demonstrate compliance with legal obligations while building a positive reputation as an inclusive employer.
- Sustained implementation embeds neurodiversity as a strategic advantage, reinforcing innovation, talent retention, and organisational resilience.



Eva Toro-Freund
Trainee Solicitor,
Irwin Mitchel

“Asking for reasonable adjustments, being open and transparent about it, did work. I decided that if I was going to tell an employer that I'm dyslexic and I felt that the response was negative, that it wouldn't be a place where I'd want to work.”

Building a Culture of Inclusion

While WNAs and adjustments improve accessibility and well-being, retention depends on **broader organisational and cultural factors**. Neurodivergent employees may face higher absenteeism and turnover due to stigma, inconsistent accommodations, or limited inclusion efforts (Vargas-Salas et al., 2025). Managerial behaviour, career progression opportunities, and psychological safety all influence retention (Huang et al., 2016; Kraimer et al., 2009).

Leadership buy-in is essential. Executives who actively endorse inclusion initiatives, model behaviours, and showcase their importance. Awareness training, coaching, and leadership engagement ensure adjustments are adopted and respected.

Inclusive practices, such as celebrating neurodivergent strengths and integrating inclusion into leadership KPIs, help employees feel valued.

Regular organisational updates and open feedback channels reinforce transparency and accountability (Randel et al., 2016).

Inclusive cultures also offer strategic advantages: they attract top talent, improve engagement, and foster innovation by creating psychologically safe environments where diverse perspectives are shared (Forbes Human Resources Council, 2023).

Business Implications:

- Reinforces the adoption and long-term sustainability of adjustments.
- Enhances engagement, collaboration, and innovation.
- Strengthens employer brand and talent attraction.
- Supports compliance while demonstrating organisational integrity.

Employee retention hinges on effective management, clear career pathways, and a culture of psychological safety

(Huang et al., 2016; Kraimer et al., 2009)

The Benefits of an End-to-End Provider

Ease and Convenience:

Organisations and employees benefit from a streamlined process. Instead of coordinating multiple vendors, a single provider manages the full journey, from assessment to implementation and follow-up. This is particularly valuable for new hires, recently promoted staff, or employees with pressing needs, enabling support and reducing risks of absenteeism or disengagement.

Consistency in Service: Working with one provider ensures a reliable, standardised approach. Employees experience consistent support, while employers can trust that assessments, recommendations, and adjustments are implemented uniformly and effectively.

Accountability for Success and Quality:

With an end-to-end partner, accountability is clear. A coordinated team oversees every stage - conducting assessments, recommending adjustments, providing coaching, and implementing solutions.

Business Impact: Choosing an end-to-end provider simplifies the journey of implementing tailored adjustments, enhances employee well-being, and delivers measurable returns through increased performance, engagement, and organisational reputation.



Summary

Supporting neurodivergent employees is both a legal requirement and a **strategic business opportunity**. By implementing a structured approach, comprising **holistic assessments, high-quality reporting, and thoughtful implementation**, and embedding these practices within a culture of inclusion, organisations can realise measurable gains in productivity, retention, innovation, and brand reputation.

Organisations that invest in neurodiversity support not only comply with legislation but also unlock the full potential of their workforce, creating a resilient, high-performing, and future-ready organisation.

Thriiver: Together We Thrive

By partnering with an end-to-end provider like Thriiver, organisations can unlock the potential of neurodivergent employees, enhance productivity and engagement, and reinforce a culture of inclusion - transforming workplace adjustments into a strategic advantage.

For more information or to explore how Thriiver can support your organisation, please contact us at hello@thriiver.co.uk



Inclusive Summary from the White Paper

- Neurodivergent candidates and employees remain an underleveraged source of capability (The Neurodiversity Index Report, 2025).
- 50% of neurodivergent individuals have taken time off due to the absence of reasonable adjustments (McDowall, Doyle, & Srinivasan, 2024).
- SSP will become payable from day one of absence, eligibility will be extended by removing the Lower Earnings Limit, and payments will be calculated as 80% of usual earnings or the flat rate.
- SMEs are facing an estimated additional £425 million annually due to changes in SSP (CIPHR, 2025).
- The business case for inclusion: productivity gains, retention and cost reduction, empowered line managers, legal protection, and talent attraction and brand value.
- Organisations with well-being strategies outperform peers by 11% in productivity and 15% in retention (Jeffery et al., 2025).
- Sickness absence costs UK employers an average of 7.8 days per employee per year (Sinclair & Suff, 2023).
- Research shows 83% of GenZ candidates say a strong DEI commitment influences employment choices (Kratz, 2023).
- A Holistic Workplace Needs Assessment (WNA) is now widely recognised as the first and most critical step in creating an inclusive environment.
- Neurodivergent employees may face higher absenteeism and turnover due to stigma, inconsistent accommodations, or limited inclusion efforts (Vargas-Salas et al., 2025).

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