



# We need to talk about Diversity – recruitment & retention

## INTRO



This is not a definitive document telling you what to do. The aim is to provoke questions. About attitudes, processes and behaviours toward attracting and retaining a diverse workforce. And from a moral point of view, every individual deserves an equal chance in business and in life.

What is diversity? Put simply it's about differences, both visible and invisible. Why do differences matter? They ultimately matter in business to contribute to the bottom line.

Tesla thought differently about the motor car.

Apple thought differently about the mobile phone where Nokia didn't.

Tiger thought golf should be played differently.

Do we get better by thinking and doing the same? We are not here to throw stats at you on how diversity improves the bottom line or quote popular sayings. But just to think about how you can surround yourself with people who think a little different to you in order that you both enrich your life and help perform better.

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### *What do we mean by 'talk about diversity'?*

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Let's start by thinking about how it applies to recruitment and retention (be it employed or self-employed people) with a few questions:

- How many times have you heard the phrase I recruit on 'gut instinct' and do you realise the 'dangers' of this approach?
- What experience does your candidate ACTUALLY need - Competency vs Knowledge?

- How much do you think about the candidate experience and how to ensure your brand represents itself professionally during an attraction and selection process?
- How do you ENSURE you are attracting a diverse range of candidates and then have you designed your selection process to be equitable, applied to both internal and external candidates?
- Why do you need to know what someone has been earning previously? Surely more relevant is how much you think their skills and impact are worth, assessed in an objective way, not subjectively 'pinned' to a previous salary. If you do work in a 250+ employee business what does your gender pay gap report say about your business?

## Make a Statement



We're not talking about diversity being primarily related to multiculturalism, it's about creating a wide ranging workforce with colleagues who have different attributes, including gender, age, race, religion, culture, education, sexual orientation, having a disability and so on.

If your organisation doesn't know your destination, how can you get there? So let's start with setting the parameters of the journey.

### **An Example of an Equal opportunities statement (equality and diversity policy)**

"We are committed to, and actively ensure, the equal treatment of all current and prospective employees or agents and we do not accept any discrimination on the basis of age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, race or ethnicity, religion or belief, gender identity, or marriage and civil partnership."

**A business should at the very least have a transparent commitment to equal opportunities.** This can simply mean looking at job requirements or incentive structures that exclude certain groups, even inadvertently, and how sure are you that your justification for this is transparent and accepted by all. This can also include the employment status of someone, does the role need to be self-employed if an advisor (for example), does that exclude certain backgrounds from applying. Conversely, could this role be self-employed rather than employed, giving more freedom to work and earn to the individual.

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*We believe diversity enables better business outcomes.*

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**Explain the business approach to attraction, selection, and retention - you will often see this at the bottom of adverts. An example might be:**

“We aspire to have a diverse and inclusive workplace and strongly encourage suitably qualified applicants from a wide range of backgrounds to apply and join us. We believe diversity enables better business outcomes. We also believe that a more inclusive workplace, where people of different backgrounds and lived experiences work together, ensures better outcomes for all staff and customers. From application to interview, we place inclusion at the heart of all we do.”

A diversity recruiting strategy should set out and define the aims of recruitment and will often be part of an overall equality and diversity policy. Recruitment is just part of making the cultural changes happen in the workplace. Your policy should be reflected in the recruitment process you have in place and the strategies to retain talent.

## Attract, Select, Retain



Much of what is outlined in this section is about **removing unconscious bias**.

**For example, it is important to review language used in the job descriptions and job adverts to make them less technical and increase accessibility by writing in plain English.** To be sure your description is neutral, ask different stakeholders outside the organisation to give their opinions on your job description (especially if they belong to an underrepresented group in your organisation).

## Where do you advertise?



Instead of targeting candidates from just one source, e.g. web recruiting platforms, reach out to different platforms to get a wider selection of candidates. Something as simple as a job posting on social media like LinkedIn or even Facebook can provide a wider sample alongside web recruitment than you may realise.

Internal referral incentives are a good idea but do not rely on this solely as it's likely to accentuate any existing biases rather than attract a truly diverse workforce.

When working with agencies, do you insist on diversity? Do you ask them about their sourcing strategy and what their commitment is to attracting diverse skillsets? For example, you want at least 20% of the candidates to be from underrepresented groups ( general rule is that the diversity of your company and leadership should reflect the demographic composition of the country or city you are operating in).

You need to identify the relevant channels through which to reach diverse audiences with vacancy advertisements. For example, there are many online and offline groups dedicated to women in technology. This would widen your search to be more directed towards this type of candidate.

## Only include actual true requirements



How important are educational requirements, e.g. does the candidate really need a degree ? Ask what would be needed to be able to do a role (e.g. CeMAP for Advisers) versus traditional 'nice to have' approaches - importantly this allows lived experience and unconventional career paths to be considered. For example, research shows that simply by asking for certain degrees types / Universities, there is already a big in-built bias to the recruitment process.

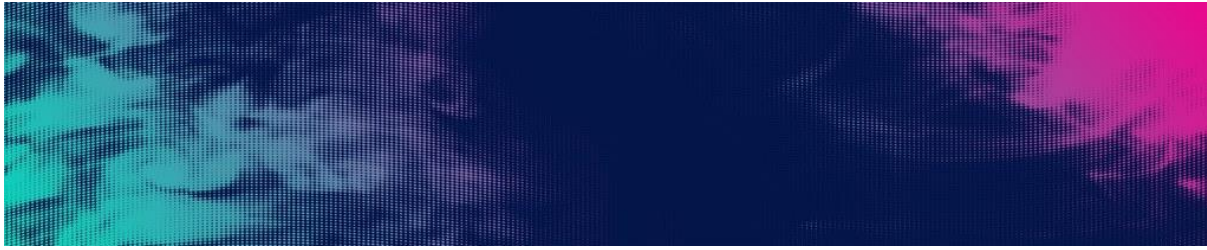
## Hire for knowledge & experiences, fire for behaviour



What is it that really makes a 'good' employee. Is it knowledge and experiences previously gained, and are they 'one of us' who will enjoy having a pint with us after work? Or something more innate about their attitude, their focus, their problem solving skills and their team ethos? Knowledge can be learned but behaviours are often inbuilt or 'hard wired'.

As diverse candidates come with diverse backgrounds and career paths, you will have to identify the behaviours, experience and skills that you usually value in a candidate, and decide which are really necessary. The tendency has been to select candidates from similar backgrounds and with similar knowledge which inhibits building a diverse team, and more generally from hiring people with potential and skills you do not already have. Focussing just on where they have worked and the knowledge they have (as many traditional recruitment practices do) puts up a lot of barriers to candidates from outside the sector and who might have a different approach.

## Selecting candidates to interview



How quickly do you make up your mind about interviewing a candidate based on their CV? Do you just look at their job titles and where they have worked and for how long, then the decision is made? Should you standardise all candidates by accepting an application form only, so every candidates has the same information in the same order?

There are plenty of initiatives and tech enablement that allow you to receive CVs that have been anonymised. By all means explore these options, however without developing processes that de-bias the whole selection, the outcomes will continue to generate the same type of hires as bias is pushed 'downstream' to interview stage. There are 'best practices' you can use but anonymised CVs in isolation are not a quick fix.

## Interviewing, use objectivity not subjectivity



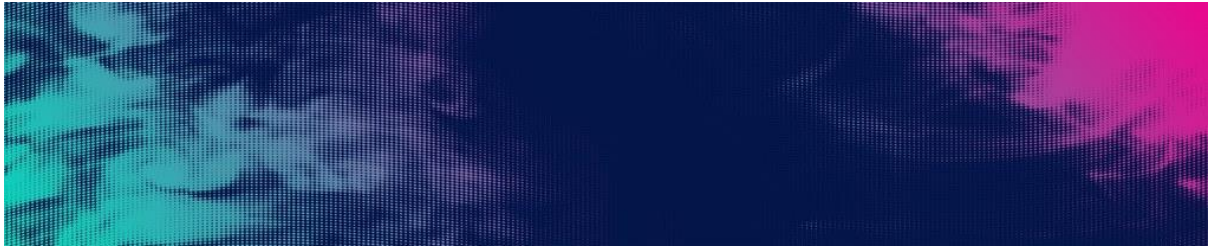
Does your assessment of suitability match what they will be doing? How do you 'test' the skills required for the post in your selection process? If you only ever ask for examples about where candidates have performed a task previously, then you are only going to hire people who come from a narrower background than if you consider the relevance and transferability of skills.

Do you provide the questions prior to interview? If not, why not? You may get a more accurate depiction of someone's ability to do the job rather than 'who can think best on their feet' and 'who performs best on the day'.

An interview isn't supposed to be based on how fast someone can think on their feet. It will allow a candidate to prepare, to feel comfortable and confident and to choose their best examples. In work, we don't expect people to immediately come up with a response 'on the fly' - they're given time to think, query and reflect, so why do we remove this option at the interview stage?

An interview should assess how a candidate is likely to perform in the job, so mirror the job as best you can in the interview process. Use real examples of what they will do in the role to assess them. For example, if they are applying for a Mortgage Advisor role, why not get them to give you mortgage advice? If they're an analyst, give them a spreadsheet! But don't expect a non-sales person to be the best at verbally selling themselves under intense pressure. Your outcomes may not be what you are looking for.

## Ensuring a balanced (and diverse) panel of interviewers



The unconscious bias in many of us means so often people recruit in their own image, be it education background, companies they have worked for, hobbies they have etc. But none of these examples has any influence on someone's ability to do the job. So think about the interview panel - do they represent different ways of thinking, different approaches and so on?

## Why is their current salary relevant to a different role?



Asking about the candidate's salary expectations for the role is a fairer way to negotiate salary than asking for their current salary and adding an increment to that. Using current salary 'bakes in' bias that may have suppressed salaries in previous roles, and in particular can disadvantage females who have had maternity breaks.

## Transparency about your recruitment process.



Be transparent about how the final decisions are made, what the evaluation criteria are, who the interview panels consist of, and so on. This builds trust in the organisation among candidates, especially diverse candidates. It also reduces the possibility of any bias impacting the process. This should be applied to both internal and external facing selection processes.

## Feedback



It is important to all Candidates to have constructive and detailed feedback. Would you expect more from feedback than there were “better candidates for the role”, or “ the cultural fit wasn’t quite right”? If you cannot provide objective feedback, your process cannot be right.

### *Examples of interview negative feedback miss-interpretations*

- They appeared to have poorer communication skills, for example they made little or no eye contact – this could discriminate against some protected characteristics e.g. a disability such as autism and some racial and cultural backgrounds
- They kept fidgeting – they could have ADHD
- They did not have knowledge of x, y or z, and we just thought they would require too much support in the first few months compared to another candidate – this just reinforces the status quo
- They were just not the right cultural fit – this is subjective and can lead to recruiting in own image. Shouldn't an organisation attract a diverse culture, people who ‘think / act differently’?

## Working models



Hybrid working really helps encourage working parents, removes barriers for those with disabilities as it can be easier to accommodate additional needs in their home environment, and likewise can be easier for those with caring responsibilities . Clearly it also helps reduce the financial burden of costs to commute to work offices.

Likewise, self-employment can be a barrier to many who need a guaranteed income, be it they are the main earner in the household or are going through a mortgage application themselves soon. Does the role have to be self-employed, or could another model be looked at ?

## Retaining staff



What if I don't play golf / drink? Are perks and business / team development activities open to all?

Diversity and Inclusion does not stop at the door as you enter the building of your first day of work. Think about 'constructive behaviours' that might reinforce a certain culture and thus exclude those that do not subscribe to those 'norms'. These can be obvious things such as dress policy or more subliminal things such as internal networking being done on the golf course, excluding anyone from 'getting ahead' or promoted who does not play the game.

Things like understanding religious holidays and encouraging flexible working hours means that you become instantly more appealing to a wider group of people.

You need to live the values when it comes to recruiting diverse candidates, and not just say you do. By having in place formal company policies that all must follow when attracting, recruiting and retaining staff, you will ensure you are doing all you can to recruit a diverse workforce.

If you want to encourage diversity in your recruitment process, then having policies like this and actively promoting them is a great way to get buy-in across the whole business.

## Own, Measure, Improve



## Ownership



Who 'owns' the D&I strategy within your business and who is accountable for the results?

Is it going to be HR? Is it going to be department heads? Is it going to be the board of directors? Usually, the task sits in HR but it is then shared across departments to highlight processes and procedures of this recruitment style.

Your diversity recruitment strategy should set out how the results of this strategy will be assessed and measured.

If nobody does it, it is unlikely to happen. Is this included in compliance-led thematic reviews in your business? Is this on your company risk register ?

Consider an externally run sentiment survey to find out how your colleagues genuinely feel about diversity, equity and inclusion within your organisation. How psychologically safe do your colleagues feel about being their true selves and sharing their backgrounds?

## Recommended to think about some "targets"



This could be the percentage of employees from underrepresented groups that you would like to have in your team. Make the data transparent and not hidden. By making the data publicly available, organisations can prove their commitment to diversity to job candidates, employees, and other stakeholders.

Transparency around representation of women and underrepresented communities by role is important and respected.

## Diversity and inclusion Key Performance Indicators



Once you have a greater understanding of how diversity is measured, you can start to apply some KPIs which will help with your diversity recruitment strategy.

These KPIs are guidelines and you should remember to keep your recruitment strategy open to everyone who can complete the job that they are being asked to do.

## Recruitment figures



Understanding who is being recruited versus who is applying is an interesting insight into the potential recruitment bias. This means assessing the numbers of applicants from various groups, for example age, background, ethnicity, experience etc.

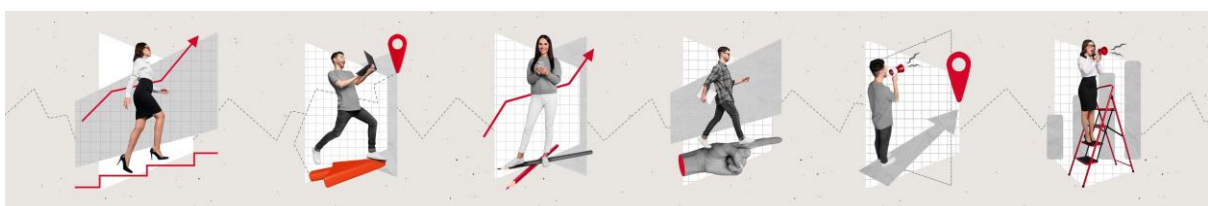
Figures can help determine how biased or broad recruitment efforts are.

Is your company hiring a wide range of candidates, or are certain groups over-represented?

Are teams starting to look very similar and like one another - with little differences in things like age or ethnicity?

Comparing figures to recruitment numbers can provide further insight into a company's hiring processes.

## Promotion figures



Who gets promoted at the company? Are individuals from certain groups more likely to get promoted than others from underrepresented groups?

Who is on your company succession plans? Who is being invested in and supported to grow within the roles?

These statistics can help determine if promotions are being awarded fairly.

## Pay comparisons



How do salaries and benefits of different employees compare?

Are some groups of people making less than others?

These metrics can reveal bias related to pay and benefits.

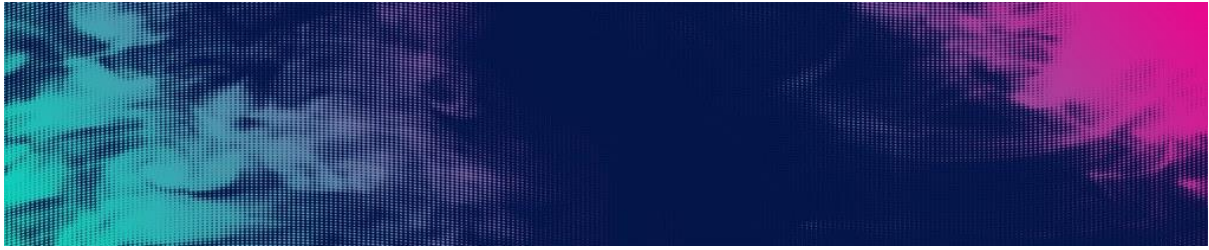
## Representation figures



Compare your organisation with the local community and other companies in the same industry.

Are there groups of people who are underrepresented in your company compared to your community or industry?

## Retention figures



Who is staying and who is leaving?

Are people from diverse groups remaining on board or are they leaving?

Figures can help uncover management or culture issues that may hinder your growth and diversity.

## Employee engagement figures

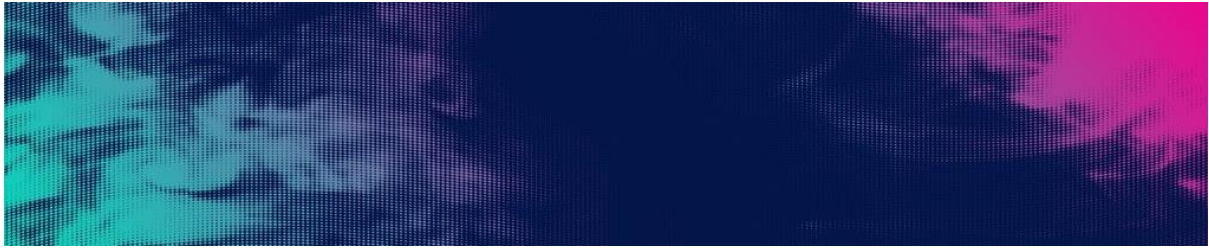


How engaged are the members of your team?

Do you see different levels of involvement from different people?

Looking at this can help uncover biased practices that may be affecting some employees more than others.

## Customer diversity figures



How diverse is your customer or client base?

This is not directly about employees but can reflect attitudes in an organisation.

This insight can help expand a customer base.

## Supplier diversity figures



How diverse are your suppliers?

Evaluating these relationships can help in deciding whether to opt for new suppliers who can help improve the overall diversity of your company.

## Exit interviews



Exit interviews can provide extremely valuable insight.






What are the primary reasons for people leaving the company?

We hope this document has been thought provoking and might lead to change in your business. The aim is to make the business world a fairer and more interesting place to work, which ultimately brings a happier, more loyal and engaged workforce and better financial results.

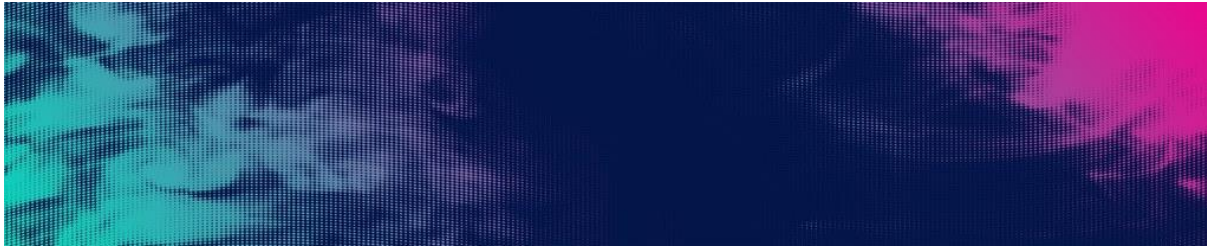


A good place to conclude is by sharing some work from the **CIPD, the Stages of recruitment and key recommendations.**

There is a lot more detail on their website at <https://www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/guides/inclusive-employers/>, but this is a good summary of things to consider in the recruitment lifecycle. This is taken directly from their website and invites you to research each area in more detail using multiple sources.

Stages of recruitment and key recommendations		
<b>1 Role design and job advert</b> 	Person requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make role requirements clear, specific, and behaviour-based.</li> <li>Remove biased language from job adverts.</li> <li>Caution: avoid mandating diversity statements.</li> <li>Caution: avoid a requirement for 'cultural fit' or 'person-organisation fit'.</li> </ul>
	Job specification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer flexible working by default.</li> <li>Make salaries non-negotiable and include them in job adverts.</li> <li>Advertise the specific benefits and policies available.</li> </ul>
<b>2 Attracting diverse candidates</b> 	Target marginalised groups to apply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Place job adverts where they are more likely to be seen by marginalised applicants.</li> <li>Use targeted 'word-of-mouth' referrals.</li> <li>Focus outreach efforts on marginalised groups.</li> </ul>
	Making the recruitment experience inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide candidates with clear expectations, timelines, and communications.</li> <li>Proactively ask applicants if they need reasonable adjustments during the recruitment process.</li> </ul>
<b>3 Application process</b> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anonymise applications.</li> <li>Caution: avoid asking candidates about the dates of their employment history.</li> </ul>
<b>4 Selection process</b> 	Sifting candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce bias in automated sifting.</li> <li>Include more marginalised candidates in the shortlist.</li> <li>Caution: avoid using social media to sift applicants.</li> </ul>
	Interviews and assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make scheduling interviews easy, accessible, and flexible.</li> <li>Use structured interviews.</li> <li>Use skill-based assessment tasks in recruitment.</li> </ul>
	Evaluate candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make decisions about candidates in batches.</li> <li>Use calibrations for hiring decisions.</li> <li>Caution: avoid mandating diverse interview panels.</li> </ul>
	Post-offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share and collect feedback from and to all candidates.</li> <li>Proactively offer reasonable adjustments to all new joiners.</li> <li>Encourage candidates to reapply.</li> </ul>
<b>5 Monitoring and measuring</b> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set diversity targets for recruitment.</li> <li>Collect high-quality data to monitor inclusion outcomes.</li> <li>Analyse recruitment data to prioritise inclusion efforts.</li> </ul>

## Appendix



### **You are not alone: further resources to help**

Whilst not exhaustive, we have provided some good reference points relating to all of the areas covered in this document.

#### **Women candidates:**

- Women in Social Finance (WISF): [womensocialfinance@gmail.com](mailto:womensocialfinance@gmail.com)
- Women in Banking and Finance: <https://www.wibf.org.uk>
- Women in the City Afro-caribbean Network: <http://www.wcan.co.uk>
- Black Women in Finance: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/bwifblackwomeninfinance/>
- National Alliance of Women's Organisations: [admin@nawo.org.uk](mailto:admin@nawo.org.uk)

#### **Ethnic minority candidates:**

- Voice for Change: [info@voice4change-england.co.uk](mailto:info@voice4change-england.co.uk)
- Race on The Agenda: [rota@rota.org.uk](mailto:rota@rota.org.uk)

#### **Disability candidates:**

- Voluntary Organisations Disability Group: [info@vodg.org.uk](mailto:info@vodg.org.uk)
- Business Disability Forum: [enquiries@businessdisabilityforum.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@businessdisabilityforum.org.uk)

#### **LGBT+ candidates:**

- Open Finance: LGBT equality in finance: <http://openfinancenyc.org>
- Inter Bank: The Financial Services LGBT forum: <http://www.interbanklgbtforum.co.uk>

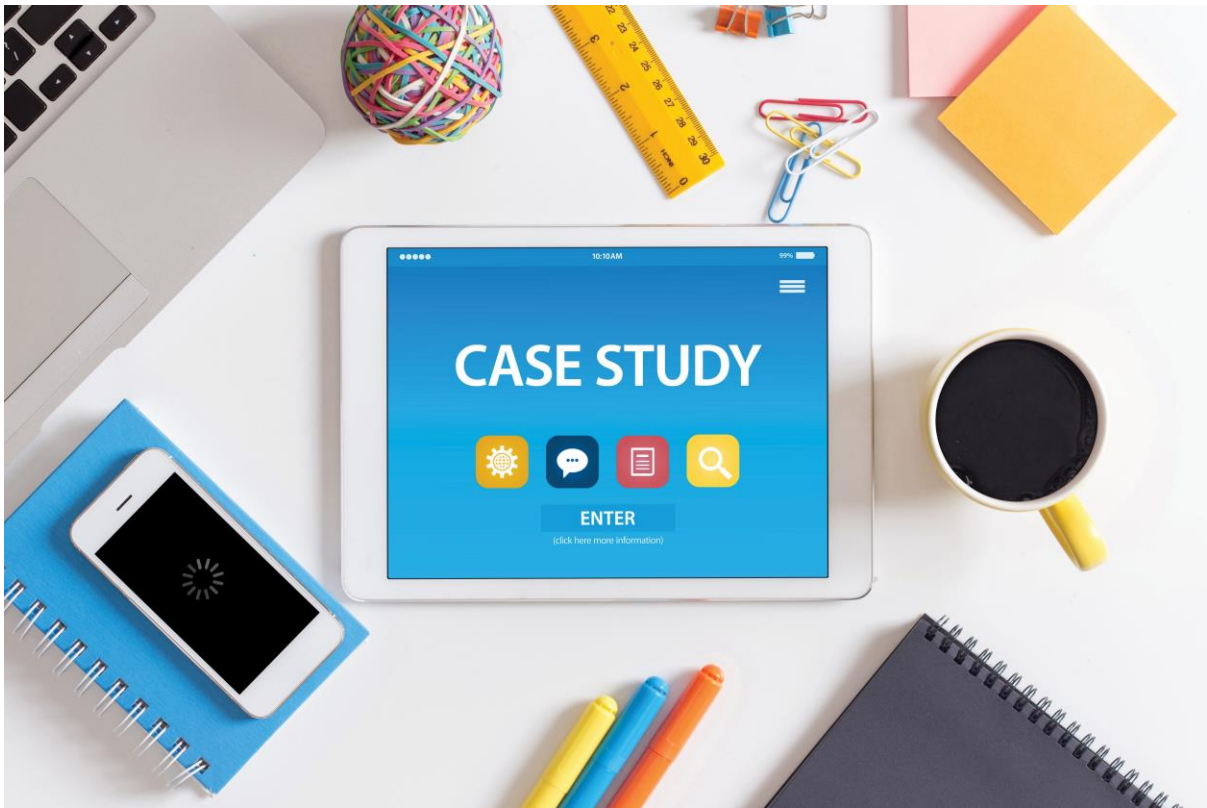
There are also agencies or jobs boards worth looking at, such as

Inclusive Boards - (<http://www.inclusiveboards.co.uk/opportunities/>),

Rare Recruitment- (<https://www.rarerecruitment.co.uk>) (for Board Members).

Timewise - (<https://timewise.co.uk/about-us/>) (for Mid-Level roles) attracts candidates interested in part-time work (mostly because of care responsibilities).

## Case Studies: Interviewing for Neurodiverse candidate e.g. Autism, ADHD



“Neurodiversity” is a word used to explain the unique ways people's brains work. Whilst everyone's brain develops similarly, no two brains function exactly alike. Being neurodivergent means having a brain that works differently from the average or “neurotypical” person.

Many of the adjustments below could be used for all interviews, remembering it is about getting the best person for the job, not the best salesperson.

Some ways to modify the interviewing process for neurodiverse candidates could be:

- As with any interview, make the candidate feel comfortable, and consider asking what, if any, particular adjustments that person may need.
- Give candidates a detailed outline of what the interview will involve. If they request it, supply the interview questions ahead of time to allow that person to familiarise themselves with what to expect.
- Be flexible in re-asking or rephrasing questions effectively in order to gather the information that you, as the interviewer, specifically want. You may need to allow the person a moment to collect their thoughts and give a response.
- Depending on the skills required for the specific position, consider creating an alternative method to assess the candidate’s capabilities and “fit” for the job. This might be an observational assessment that could exist in lieu of a formal interview, or in conjunction with one. For example, if an interview setting does not represent an individual’s ability to perform the necessary tasks, have the applicant do a sample of the work required for the position as you observe.

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*Whilst everyone's brain develops similarly, no two brains function exactly alike.*

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Ways to adapt questions during an interview:

- If you can, ask questions that are direct and literal rather than general and abstract. For example, instead of asking your candidate about a time where he or she may have overcome a challenge, lay out a specific problem that might arise in the office and have the candidate outline steps to solve it.
- Use examples in your questions when possible; it will illustrate the intent of the question and will allow the applicant to more easily process and respond appropriately.
- Ask more open-ended questions, avoiding questions that can be answered with a “yes” or “no,” in order to gather the information you need. Ask follow-up questions to help applicants expand on previous answers.

Carefully reflect on whether some common attributes of those on the Autistic spectrum interfere with their ability to succeed in the position at hand. Depending on the field of work, these might count against applicants in an interview yet have no bearing on the skills necessary for the job. Some of these include:

- Inconsistent eye contact - this may be a way of processing for the applicant.
- Lack of interest in small talk.
- Uncommon greeting.
- Unusual voice tone or manner of speaking.

## Example Case Study: Autistic applicant to Regional Building Society



- The business asks all candidates if they have a disability that would need an adjustment at interview. This candidate declared an Autism diagnosis but did not ask for an adjustment - this is common with Autism, as candidates may feel they will be consciously or unconsciously discriminated against.
- The business wanted the candidate to perform at his best, and had recently hosted a D&I workshop with recruitment partners.
- In partnership with the recruiter who had introduced the candidate, they researched the adjustments that could be made for candidates who have autism. They were surprised by how effective, yet simple, such changes can be.

- After the candidate had a sleepless night before his first interview, the recruiter asked the candidate if they would like to request some changes to the second stage - for example, a copy of the question topics prior to the interview, allowing more time if required, offering to go back to a question if the candidate can't immediately recall their answer, asking very direct questions one at a time, etc. The candidate was very grateful for the offer and happy for the recruiter to discuss his specific needs with the business, who in turn were very accommodating and did not question the adjustments.
- The candidate was offered the role, which he accepted and is currently doing a great job!