

# Talking Inclusion With ...

## Series 1 – Podcast 4:

# Neurodiversity in the workplace

**Intro** 'Talking Inclusion with' Steven Copsey.

**Steven** Hello and welcome to Inclusive Employers podcast 'Talking Inclusion with' - I'm Steven Copsey and today we're going to be talking about Neurodiversity, and how we can better support employees with neuro divergent conditions, like Autism, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, and ADHD.

Before I introduce our guests, in case you don't know us, we're Inclusive Employers, and we support employers to make inclusion, an everyday reality. Our mission is to make every workplace an inclusive employer, where every colleague values differences and can contribute their skills and experiences fully to their organisation.

These podcasts are for anyone and everyone who has an interest in Inclusion and Diversity. In our podcast, we share life stories and experiences. Learn about best practice and hear practical advice for employees from our guests, as well as Inclusive Employers own Inclusion and Diversity experts.

Today I'm joined by some fantastic guests, Zeinab Ali, Inclusive Employers, digital marketing and membership administrator. Hi, there Zeinab.

**Zeinab** Hi Steve

**Steven** Simon Richards, Vice Chair of all Wales People first National Council, which is the united voice of self advocacy groups and people with learning disabilities in Wales. Hi, Simon.

**Simon** Hello

**Steven** And Naz Mir, one of our Inclusion and Diversity consultants here at Inclusive Employers. Hello Naz

**Naz** Hi Steven

**Steven** My guests here today are going to share some of their own experiences of having a new or divergent condition, and how that's impacted them in their careers. Of course, we're going to hear real life practical advice from Zeinab, Simon and Naz on action that employers should be taking.

But I thought we should start with an explanation of what we're actually talking about here today.

So Naz, I'm gonna start with you. Can you give us an explanation of what we mean when we talk about Neurodiversity, and why it's important that we do talk about it with regards to inclusion in the workplace?

**Naz** So when we say Neurodiversity, we refer to the infinite range of differences in individual human brain function and behavioural traits. Now, that's a really fancy way of saying we all think differently, but typically

when we talk around Neurodiversity inclusion in the workplace, we include different lifelong conditions, learning difficulties and learning disabilities. These can include Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, ADHD, and much more.

I think when we're talking about Neurodiversity, it's important to hear from people with lived experience, to determine their comfortability with the term. And it's really important that we talk about Neurodiversity in workplace inclusion, mostly because it's a term many people are still not familiar with, and they might shy away from, but actually as so many of the different forms of Neurodiversity may be invisible. It's even more important that we actively talk about so people don't get forgotten.

Teachings on Neurodiversity are steeped in a social model of disability, so there's a real understanding that there are things we can all do in the workplace to support your diverse thinking, and be that Neurodiversity really is a competitive advantage.

**Steven**

Zeinab - Now, I'm going to come to you. Can you tell us a little bit about when you discovered that you weren't necessarily neurotypical? What did that mean to you, and how has that shaped your life?

**Zeinab**

So my discovery was quite unique because most autistic women discover that they're autistic as an adult, and this is due to a multitude of factors such as gender stereotypes, and ableism. So autistic women tend to not get diagnosed at a very young age, even though they probably should have been.

But my symptoms of autism at the age of five years old, was quite severe because my parents noticed that I wasn't communicating, and I wasn't talking very much. So they had a doctor look at me. And yeah, the speech

and language team decided that I should have diagnosis for autism and delayed speech.

So they sent me to a primary school with speech and language therapists to manage my condition. So like, I kind of always knew that I was autistic and different, but I don't think I truly realised that until I went from a special needs education schools to mainstream school, which is what they call it an educational environment for neurotypical children. Yeah, so, I didn't really notice that I was different from neurotypical people until I was put in an environment with neurotypical students.

**Steven** And how did that difference feel when when you first realised that Zeinab?

**Zeinab** So it felt very strange, because I didn't think I was that different to anyone else. But yeah, but when I realised that, 'oh, I'm not like the other kids' - It did explain a few things. So it was kind of like a light bulb moment. So even though I had an early diagnosis, the fact that I had not been put in a mainstream environment with lots of neurotypical people before, I realised, oh, I do need a bit of support with communicating with other people, and yeah, I do need a bit of support communication wise, because neurotypical core people tend to have different expectations for communicating with other people.

**Steven** Simon, similar question to you. When did you discover when did you realise that you weren't necessarily neurotypical to use that phrase, and how did that make you feel, what did it mean to you?

**Simon** Well, I was probably really fortunate that I got diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome at a young age. Although we had to travel to London to get that diagnosis, but I'm from Cardiff by the way, I was diagnosed at the age of eight.

And so from a young age, I kind of knew I was different, so to speak. But my path in school was that I was in mainstream education, which mostly, with extra help needed if I could get it, which mostly extended to gaining extra time in the exams, at the secondary school, and moving on to college level as well.

Away from that, and it was, well, it was very mixed. I mean, problems with bullying and being bullied in times in both primary and high school, as a lot of us unfortunately did, and do. But there was some happy times as well, and I was able to make some friends. And yeah, had a good upbringing, my parents fought for a very long time to get the support that I needed. And unfortunately, I had to fight quite a lot because I remember, there been a number of issues we've been denied access to support because of high IQ, which is very unfair. And it was something that both me and my brother who's more profoundly autistic, went through and we still do.

**Steven**

You mentioned high IQ being a barrier there - What are the sorts of barriers have you faced, you know, thinking outside of the school setting, Simon, when you started to look for work, what sort of barriers began to appear at that point for you?

**Simon**

Well, I was in education up until the age of 22, and at that point, at that time, I was also lucky enough to be as well as the college course I was doing at the time, I was also doing another course with an organisation called Vision 21, which do a variety of work based projects for adults with autism and their disabilities, and through them, I did a course called 'Training and Mentoring', where the aims of that course, was to prepare me for potential work and the skills necessary to do it.

We found that a number of issues with benefits would be a big issue, and probably at that time I didn't really feel ready for work as such. So instead, we found a number of voluntary opportunities, one of which was actually

presenting a radio show in the Heath Hospital in Cardiff, which I actually did for five years and was really enjoyable, and also at the same time, I became a member of my local People First group, 'Cardiff People First', which I still am a member of today and I'm actually Chairperson of it.

So much of my adult life, has been spent in the Self Advocacy sector. So learning about the skills necessary to learn about campaigning for acceptance and an understanding of learning disability, and getting involved in various projects with Cardiff People First. And as such paid work was difficult to get into because of issues with benefits. Thankfully, in more recent times, I've been able to take on some some part time work with an organisation called 'Babbled'. They do research into Learning Disabilities. They employ people with Learning Disabilities to do the research.

**Steven** Thanks, Simon. Zeinab, similar question to you, when we think about barriers into the workplace, what barriers were there for you, and how did you overcome them?

**Zeinab** I think I had similar light barriers to Simon, which was getting access to the right support. So when I went to my job centre and told them, I'd like to join the workforce, but I also have some concerns because I have a learning disability, and I'm autistic, so I want to find the right employer for me. But when I when I talked to spoke with my advisor, they said it would take a month for them to get me assigned to a specialist who helps people with disabilities get into work.

So I felt like that put me at a disadvantage compared to my non disabled peers, because they wouldn't have to wait to get that support, there wouldn't be that gap. So I feel like government services, like the job centre could be better, could be more proactive and speedier with supporting & getting disabled people into work. I think like, yeah, employers kind of

judge you if you have big gaps between employment, so it would be a lot more helpful if public services gave disabled people the same service that they would give non disabled people. Because, um, you know, we already have, like, a few disadvantages when it comes to entering the workplace.

For example, one of the things I had problems with, when I was searching for my first job, was attending interviews. I attended quite a few interviews, and the some of the interviewees would get quite annoyed at me because they could tell I was quite nervous, and I feel like interviews and autism aren't a great mix, because some autistic people have social anxiety. And that can be quite heightened and a high pressure situation where you want to show an employer that you're very capable.

**Steven** If we think about your career path up to this moment Zeinab, how did you get to where you are today?

**Zeinab** I am very grateful to organisations like Mencap, who are a charity for people with learning disabilities. Once I got referred to one of their career coaches, they did a great job of helping me find roles that they thought were not only suitable for the skills I had, but they also helped me find roles that I was interested in. And that's how I found Inclusive Employers. So Inclusive Employers were participating in the learning disability work experience week campaign, which is a campaign set up to help people with learning disabilities, and people with associated conditions like autism to find work experience or a job, just to give them that first opportunity and to build that confidence from the work experience they had.

And I remember in my interview with Inclusive Employers, I had brought my career coach with me to the interview, which I think really helped a lot to ease the nerves, and Inclusive Employers were completely okay with that.

Like, I know a lot of other employers would have maybe frowned upon, you bring a career coach with you to support you. But yeah, my interviewer Rosie didn't, she understood that having that bit of moral support gave me the confidence I needed to perform well at the interview. And as a result, I got the job. And I built the confidence I have now, by working as our campaign administrator for the campaign because he needed someone to help manage the administrative side of participating in learning disability work experience week, and they were so impressed with my performance that they decided to hire me full time.

**Steven** So Simon, can you tell us a little bit about your current role and what the team is like?

**Simon** So I work for an organisation called Barod, and it's really interesting, because initially, I started working on a project with them, which involve travelling to the Torfaen area of Wales, which is Cwmbran/Pontypool.

We visited various day services, across the area of Torfaen, and asking questions such as 'What makes a good day for people with learning disabilities in Torfaen?'

But then COVID hit and obviously the project was paused for a few months, and then when it came back, we were obviously having to work from home. And continued, we continue to do some form of meetings with people on Zoom, but then I also got involved in another side of Barod which is research.

I became part of the research team. Currently, there's four of us, with three of us being the, what we call neurodivergent people. I really enjoy doing it, because it helps me.. it means I'm doing something that I enjoy and can actually make a positive difference. Which I told myself, if I was ever going

to get into paid employment, I would want it to be something that I feel proud to really feel proud of doing, and could be a great benefit too.

**Steven** Thinking about being in the workplace, thinking about different roles you have had so far, have there been times where you've had to use certain strategies to get by or use any sort of assistive technology that has really helped you in your day to day work?

**Simon** Technology as such, I haven't had to use so much up until recently with firewalls, because obviously, we're now working from home, and so what's happened is I've been given a work laptop to use that was all set up for me with all the necessary software, so when that's all good. So that helps with making sure I go in timesheets, have the necessary information to do the job, things like that.

**Steven** And Zeinab, what about you in terms of assistive technology - Is there anything that you find really, really helpful in the workplace?

**Zeinab** I find Outlook to be very helpful, because it has a calendar tool where you can, like, allocate time to certain things, and I find, like being able to organise my time and know how much time I have to complete a task really helps me because sometimes, due to being autistic, I can like really focus on one thing for a very long time. I lose track of it, especially if I really enjoy doing it. So yeah, I enjoy Outlook. And yeah, I also like receiving instructions through e-mails because it makes it easier for me to process and remember all the information. And yeah, it helps me like sort the information out in my head, basically.

**Steven** Have you ever felt you've been treated unfairly or differently when it comes to the workplace, because of your autism?

**Zeinab** At Inclusive Employers, people don't treat me differently just because I'm autistic. It's just another characteristic to them, and something to be mindful of when they're giving me instructions. But sometimes you do notice that in other places - people might treat you differently because you're autistic.

So, like they'll make assumptions about your capabilities, which I don't like very much, because they wouldn't do that to a non-autistic person. We often assume like neurotypical, extroverted people.. we always assume they're very capable and very proficient, because they exude that confidence, whereas that might not always be the case. So, I do feel like there is a bias towards the neurotypical extrovert.

**Steven** And Simon, similar to you, do you have you felt unfairly treated because of your Asperger's? I know, we mentioned the the benefits situation earlier, but do you have any other examples where you have felt that?

**Simon** Well, I think I'm lucky in the sense that all the opportunities I've had, most of them have been with organisations that I work with, people will have already have a good understanding of what we need and what makes us tick. So to speak.

**Steven** Zeinab - when it comes to looking for work for that application, that recruitment process, do you ever feel you've been treated unfairly at this stage?

**Zeinab** So an example of when I've been on treated unfairly for being autistic, or having a learning disability, was when I finally did get to talk to the disability advisor at my local job centre, we were discussing potential jobs to apply for, and what kind of roles I should search for. And I said, 'I would like to search for administrative roles, please, because I think I would be quite good at it'. And she turned around to me and said, 'No, I think you

should work in retail', because I have a feeling that she thought working in retail would be easier. I had a feeling she had a bit of that kind of bias against retail jobs, even though from I heard from people who actually work in retail jobs, they can be quite difficult. So regardless, I persevered and said, 'No, I want to work in an administrative role. I know I can do it, because I have the volunteer experience, and I have the education'.

So when I showed her my CV, and when she saw that I have a Master's degree in English Lit, she changed her mind, and yeah, in that moment, I was quite thankful to have my education and I worked so hard to get my education because that was an experience where it helped. It helped disprove some of the misconceptions people have about autistic and learning disabled people, because a lot of people assume that autistic and learning disabled people can only do certain jobs. But in that moment, I proved her wrong. I proved her to her that I was capable. So yeah, well, the story is don't assume and listen to disabled people when you're trying to help them.

**Steven**

So we're going to spend some time now just thinking about the last 12 months, the effect of COVID the impact that that has had on us, and also how working from home may have had some sort of impact on us as well. Simon, how did COVID affect you? You know, when when we're all suddenly working from home, you've mentioned that technology point already, but what about the feeling of suddenly everyone was working from home almost overnight, how did how did that make you feel?

**Simon**

Luckily, managed to very quickly get to grips with programmes like Zoom, because they were being used everywhere.

My first go at it was with Gig Buddies, which is yet another organisation I'm involved with. Gig Buddies is a scheme that pairs people of learning disability with volunteers, called the Gig Buddy who in pre COVID times

would be travelling with them to events and gigs across their local area. And it could range from like a music event to just going for a walk or going to go to a theatre show or going for a stroll down the beach or anything like that.

In COVID times, we've been meeting up on Zoom instead. And it's actually led to more interesting opportunities such as a setting up of a group of people with learning disabilities who are organising regular similar events, yet another organisation, who are my housing provider. I have so many hats that probably could start my own clothes shop!

**Steven** Zeinab, how about you from, from your perspective? How did that overnight switch to working from home feel for you?

**Zeinab** I'll be honest, Steve, it felt quite overwhelming. So before the Prime Minister said everyone had to start working from home, I was already feeling quite anxious because of the pandemic, because my brain was thinking about all the terrible things that could happen to me, could happen to my family, to my friends, as a result of the pandemic. So yeah, I felt a little bit on edge, and the way the team at Inclusive Employers helped me, was by distracting me from what was going on.

So a very lovely colleague took me out for lunch one day, just so we could talk about non-COVID stuff, and that kind of helped me relax a little bit. But then we got the order to, we've gotten the order from the Prime Minister to, to start working from home. And the technical stuff was fine, because I'm already very good with technology, and comfortable using it. So yeah, the technical side of it was fine. But, I think I, compared to other members of our team, the change felt quite drastic. And it was like, 'WHAM - here's all this change'. And it was quite overwhelming for me, because some autistic people need more time to adapt and adjust to change emotionally. So when everyone else was quite positive and upbeat about working from

home, I just told the team, I was like, 'Well, I'm actually feeling quite very nervous about all this change happening at once'. And, yeah, everyone really appreciated that emotional honesty, because they found that gave them permission, to be honest about how they were feeling as well. And I think, the team being supportive of that, like really helped me, like, adjust to the change, because I realised I was not alone in feeling that way.

**Steven**

Naz - I'm going to bring you back in here, we're thinking about, you know, post COVID, post lockdown, many places, won't necessarily go back to the office full time, you know, we will still see at a lot of organisations employees working from from home, whether that's all the time or part time.

So can you offer any advice and as on how employers should approach home working and what additional support they could offer, specifically for those who may have a newer divergent conditions?

**Naz**

Yeah, absolutely. So you know, my advice would definitely be to move away from this idea that we'll be able to apply a broad brush approach that will work for everyone. So you know, even within specific neurodiverse groups, individuals will have so many different things that they need in order to be at their best. I've had conversations with people with groups on this topic a few weeks ago, really, and there's so many different things to take into consideration.

Some would like to stay exactly as they are now. You know, they found it really useful being at home without the kind of environmental differences and others we'd like a bit more of a balance. I think the key thing is that we have these conversations at individual level, and make sure also that there aren't any last minute surprises.

So my advice really is to start the conversation now if we haven't started to do it already,. Start thinking about what support and flexibility you can offer as an organisation permanently, because we have been through such a large time of change. And I think you know, the last year and a half has been really challenging for everyone. But thinking around if we try to find some concrete support that we can offer for the future, that's really important.

And now at Inclusive Employers, something that we've been encouraging our members to use are these inclusion passports, where individuals can write out their needs and work with their managers and organisations to make the support requirements a reality.

But when we talk around support, specifically, there's so many different things that we can be looking at, whether it be an assessment of home working setups, different equipment needs, thinking around how we create virtual communication guidance, you know, as Simon really nicely put there and Zeinab, we've had to move to this way of using Zoom or Teams. So you know, how are we making sure that people are comfortable using everything they need to. But we also will need to look at things like how we change our kind of recruitment and development process reviews. So if we're recruiting, virtually, you know, how are we supporting those from neurodiverse groups to be at their best in those interviews, so that they feel supported, because, you know, I suppose recruiting virtually is difficult for anyone, but putting kind of the neurodiverse spin on there as well, making sure we're supporting them as much as we can.

Things like Employee Assistance Programmes if needed, as well. So making sure we are reaching out to our employees, letting them know what support they've got there. And then thinking around, you know, if employers aren't able to support to the extent that an individual needs, can

we look at things like access to work schemes that can help individuals and get that extra support?

So I guess in a nutshell, really, the advice is to, you know, start thinking about it today, because it will be here very soon. And the last thing we need is, you know, people having to worry about what their kind of future in the workplace is going to look like in a couple of months time, listen to individual lived experiences and voices, and make sure that you know, the conversation is ongoing and reviewed regularly.

**Steven**

So we're gonna think about some advice for employers now, thinking about the 'Why' and the 'How' employers should attract and retain people with new divergent conditions. And Naz, you mentioned a virtual recruitment just earlier, actually, could you go into a bit more detail as to why employers should be looking to recruit people across that neurodiverse spectrum, and what sort of positive impact it can have on businesses?

**Naz**

It's a really interesting question, and I think, as I was thinking about this question earlier, I kind of reflected on the fact that, you know, it's really interesting that we ask, you know, 'Why is Neurodiversity something people should hire for'? And if you think about a little bit part in the past, as well, these questions will probably coming up around things like gender or ethnicity, when actually, you know, we've moved farther on and evolved from that conversation on those different diversity groups. So I think, you know, Neurodiversity brings a unique approach to problem solving and creative solutions in the workplace.

As I mentioned earlier, we see it as an absolute competitive advantage, and you know, as a business, as an organisation, we've always said in terms of inclusion, having a broad range of people with different thinking styles and abilities, is going to allow the organisation to benefit from this

diverse, creative, innovative pool of contributions and ideas. And, you know, it very much brings that advantage, like other forms of diversity, and but in some cases even more directly. So, you know, organisations are starting to wake up to the fact that skills and capabilities that Neurodiversity brings, and some organisations and like Microsoft, for example, have created a specific programme to attract neuro diverse talent. So they've got something called 'the Microsoft autism hiring programme', which essentially identifies that typical recruitment processes and development don't allow certain groups have the opportunity to showcase their best, and therefore making changes to support that. So you know, really thinking around best practice, organisations are thinking of the skills and capabilities that neurodiverse people might have, and really kind of using them and bringing them into the organisation to give them that career, where they feel like they're part of something as well.

Just last month, you know, the ONS released data showing that 22% of autistic adults are in employment. So again, thinking about that massive employment gap. You know, we talk around gender pay gap, and we're starting to talk around ethnicity pay gap to, but when we're talking around, whether it's Neurodiversity or even disability, kind of pay gaps. There's still so much more work to be done so massive, untapped pool of talent out there, that we should be, you know, really kind of focusing on.

**Steven** Simon, what do you think employers could be doing to make it easier for those with neurodivergent conditions?

**Simon** Traditional interview scenarios can be really overwhelming, especially for a person with a learning disability/autism. And it's just offering alternatives, because there are a lot of extremely high skilled people there who are more than capable of doing a very good job, but they have been denied by inflexibility, if that's even a word, being able to adapt for a new divergent

person can help. Do one to one just because they are often really high skilled and have much to offer.

Everyone is different than we don't all follow set routines all the time. Even people with autism will do set to follow routines. Sometimes they follow different routines as well. It's just being flexible - And this is why organisations such as Barod, where I work, are brilliant because it's exactly what they do do. Because there's a number of projects they do, and there were people on board who have different skills.

**Steven**

Zeinab, just picking up with you, on what Simon's mentioned about actually, people with neurodivergent conditions are not all the same. What sort of things would you like to see employers doing? What sort of approach would you like employers to take to find out more about individuals and support that individuals need?

**Zeinab**

I agree with Simon, that employers should be willing to change up their processes more often, because even with good intentions, they might be discriminating against people with neurodivergent conditions.

I also think it would be helpful if they did things to demonstrate that they do want neurodivergent talent. So for example, participating in campaigns, like 'Learning Disability Work Experience Week' is great, because that already kind of shows that, that the employer actually does want neurodivergent talent, and because they're seeking, they're going through the extra effort to seek it out. And I think also demonstrating that once you have neurodivergent talent within your organisation, that you're willing to do what it takes to support autistic people and support them so that they succeed.

I think role modelling is a very good idea for employers. So for example, like if you're having an online event, talking about any topic involving

disability or what it means to be successful in organisation, I think it's good to have neurodivergent people share their stories, because that will encourage other neurodivergent people to come forward and to self advocate, and to maybe be a bit more honest about their needs in the workplace. Because sometimes, I know from my experience, when I was applying for work, I would leave out the fact that I had a disability because I was afraid that if the organisation saw that I had a disability on my application, they would throw it out, even though technically that's illegal. But there's always that fear among the Autistic community and the disabled community in general that some employers will find an excuse to exclude you. So. if employers want to attract neurodiverse talent, it's good to participate in events showing positive support for autistic people and to spotlight autistic role models who have been successful in organisation,

Steven Thinking about you know, being successful in your organisation as well, how important is the role of your direct line manager to you Zeinab?

Zeinab Oh, they're very important. So when I first started working at Inclusive Employers, my line manager, Rosie, I feel she was very important to my success because she was very friendly. Well, how should I explain this? She was kind of like my Sherpa to the workplace. So she guided me. She told me how she was blunt in her communication about how things work in the organisation what the culture was like, and my one to one meetings with her were very helpful because I felt like I could go to her with any problems I had, which I think is very important because I think it's very important for autistic people to feel that they're supported in the workplace. And I know having someone I could go to for like, to help build my confidence, and talk about ways I could improve my skill set or ways the organisation could adapt to meet my needs.

**Steven** Naz, what conversations do you have with members in this area? And can you share some of Inclusive Employers advice to ensure that every individual has access can thrive in and enjoy the workplace?

**Naz** Yeah, so my conversations with members have actually been quite mixed. So I've been really impressed with the focus on neural diversity within some I & D plans.

They've embedded it into their policies. So they call out neurodiversity. Specifically, I've helped run 14 sessions on ways to encourage neurodiverse talent within the business. And I think they've really taken on that opportunity to say, in order to be that kind of, you know, world leader in what they do is now time to focus on neurodiversity.

And other businesses, may not have been that far on the journey yet. Some have kind of, you know, started with like a like, neurodiverse staff network, and it's not been fully embedded. So I think, you know, I guess my advice for organisations who are going on this journey, and members who are thinking about doing this is, you know, focus on the 'why' to start off with really define, you know, why is this something that's important to your organisation, and give those your diverse employees a voice in the conversation when establishing what is going to look like? Because you know, there are those examples where there's a risk of setting up a network, just because we've got one for disability, and then not understanding or appreciating that kind of difference and uniqueness in approach.

So you know, a lot of the support is really about going to that granular detail, because a lot of the support we ask, and typically of networks are things like reviewing ideas or documents, engaged in different parts of the business, etc. And when we ask different groups of people to do things

like that, you know, we need to just kind of think around what support we're giving them to enable them to be successful in it.

So my conversations with members really are around thinking about, you know, this isn't just another kind of diversity group that we can just chuck into the mix, and kind of say, Yeah, this month, we're going to focus on your diversity, it really is about that whole 360 picture of, of what that employee experiences in the workplace.

And I suppose, you know, if we're thinking around advice to ensure that every individual accesses, and can thrive in the workplace, I would really think about things like starting the conversation today, as I've mentioned, you know, make it okay, make it the normal part of our conversations to be talking around Neurodiversity. You know, it's no longer acceptable to shy away from terms that we don't really understand. You know, with the so much information out there, we can start doing the work ourselves. If someone in your team is neurodivergent. Think around having the conversation. But also, you know, go online, check out what it what some of the experiences are, I think amplifying internal and external voices with lived experience.

That line manager conversation is really, really important. So you know, how do we empower our line managers to take responsibility on that conversation? And just really thinking around, you know, as with any other part of diversity, how do we just make this the normal part of what it feels like to be in the workplace every day? How empowering would it be, you know, if you had a line manager who said something like, 'I don't have all the answers, you might not have all the answers and support you need to but actually, let's have a conversation and let's figure it out together'. So my advice really is around, you know, getting just get going. Have a conversation. Ask people what support they need and take it from there.

**Steven** A huge thank you to my guests today. Thank you, Zeinab.

**Zeinab** Oh, you're welcome, Steve.

**Steven** And thank you, Simon.

**Simon** Thank you, Steven. Thank you.

**Steven** And thanks, Naz.

**Naz** Thank you everyone. It's been a pleasure.

**Steven** To find out more about how Inclusive Employers can support your organisation To attract, recruit and support those with neurodivergent conditions like autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia and ADHD, visit our website at [inclusive Employers.co.uk](https://www.inclusiveemployers.co.uk) that's Inclusive Employers.co.uk. For Inclusive Employers members, we have free resources or Neurodiversity in our members area on our website.

On the next podcast, we're going to talk about mental health in the workplace.

We'll hear more stories, more experiences, and offer you advice on how you can better support your employees to look after their mental health. It's going to be another really interesting one, and you won't want to miss it.

**Outro** You've been listening to 'Talking Inclusion with' with Steven Copsey.

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