

Neurodiversity Employment Survey: Focus on Autism

Feedback Report

May 2025



1 Background

Shropshire Council's Neurodiversity Employment Survey – Focus on Autism was designed to gather valuable feedback from individuals who are autistic, whether diagnosed or self-identifying. The survey aimed to learn more about people's experience of employment including recruitment practices, workplace support and employer approaches in Shropshire. Questions were designed to find out what is working well, the gaps in support, and whether young people feel prepared for work.

The survey ran from the 3rd March to the 2nd May 2025. It was promoted through Shropshire Council's Get Involved section of the website, through the Gov Delivery surveys database, through the Council's Newsroom and communication channels and through a variety of local networks and groups.

The survey was hosted online but alternative versions of the survey were also available on request (e.g. large text). Members of the public were encouraged to highlight any communication needs and request any support required to respond. Most people chose to respond online.

The findings from this survey will inform future service provision and help Shropshire Council and its partner organisations develop clear priority areas and goals for the local all-age autism strategy. This collaborative effort involves working closely with stakeholders and individuals with lived experience to ensure that the approach taken is both inclusive and effective.

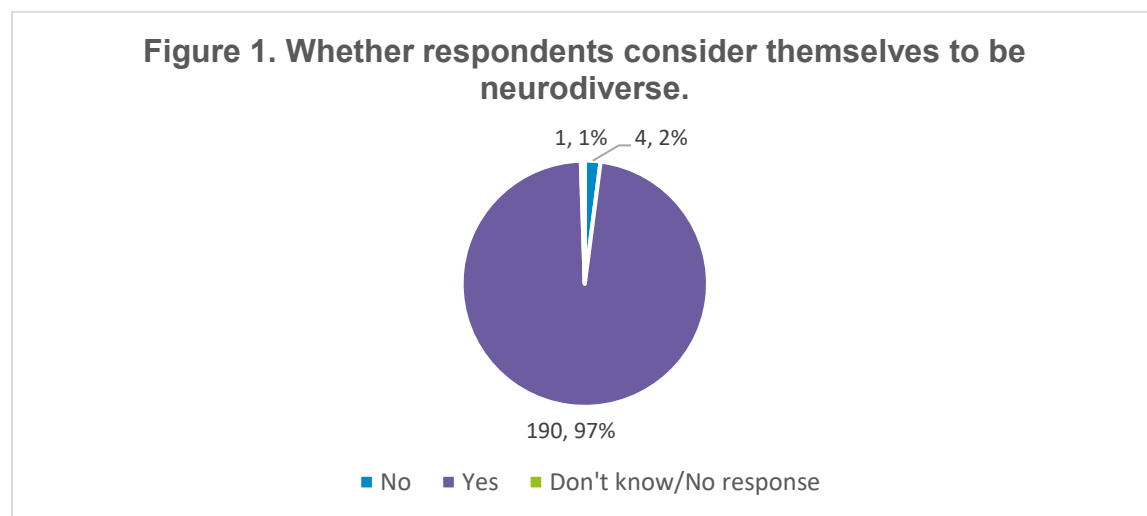
ND is used as the acronym/short hand for neurodiversity within the report and this was also explained within the survey introduction.

This report describes the survey findings within 7 main sections:

- **Section 1: Background** (this section) provides an overview of the consultation and how it was promoted.
- **Section 2: Respondents** presents the number and types of responses to the survey including respondent characteristics.
- **Section 3: Preparation for Work** explores how survey respondents feel about being ready of work and/or their experience in the workplace.
- **Section 4: Job Applications** analyses survey respondents' feedback about the process of applying for work.
- **Section 5: Job Interviews** considers feedback from people in relation to their experience of being interviewed and any adjustments made.
- **Section 6: Being in Work** covers issues related to neurodiversity in the workforce and the policies and support provided by employers.
- **Section 7: Summary and Conclusion** provides a brief summary and conclusion based on the overall analysis of the feedback received.

2 Respondents

The survey was responded to by a total of 195 respondents. Some core questions were included within the survey to find out a little more about the respondents and to determine if the sample provides a representative group of Shropshire's wider population or whether further engagement would be needed in addition to the survey. The response was really encouraging with 97% (190 respondents) of the 195 total describing themselves as neurodiverse/ neurodivergent. This is a key result and provides reassurance that the survey reached its target audience. In addition, 4 people responded who are not neurodiverse but must have an interest in the survey topic and 1 respondent didn't say or wasn't sure. Figure 1 displays the results.



Survey respondents were asked if they have been diagnosed and the results are shown in Figure 2. More survey respondents have been diagnosed than those who have self-diagnosed. Given nationally reported concerns linked to delays in diagnosis this could potentially be a positive indicator for Shropshire suggesting that a majority are clear about their diagnosis. 26% have self-diagnosed of the 190 survey respondents considering themselves neurodivergent and 72% have diagnoses.

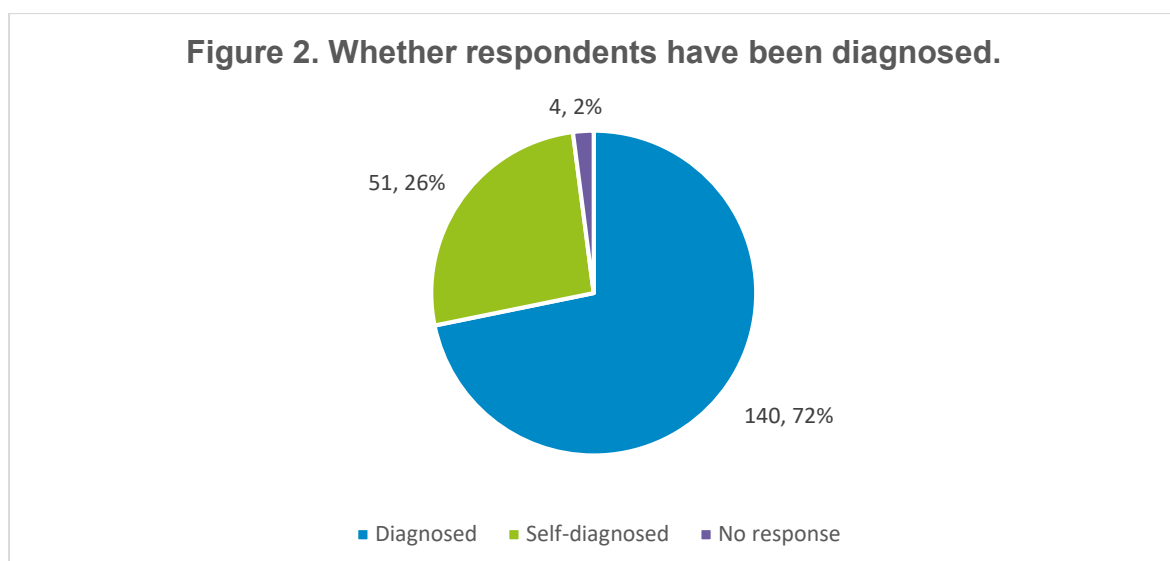
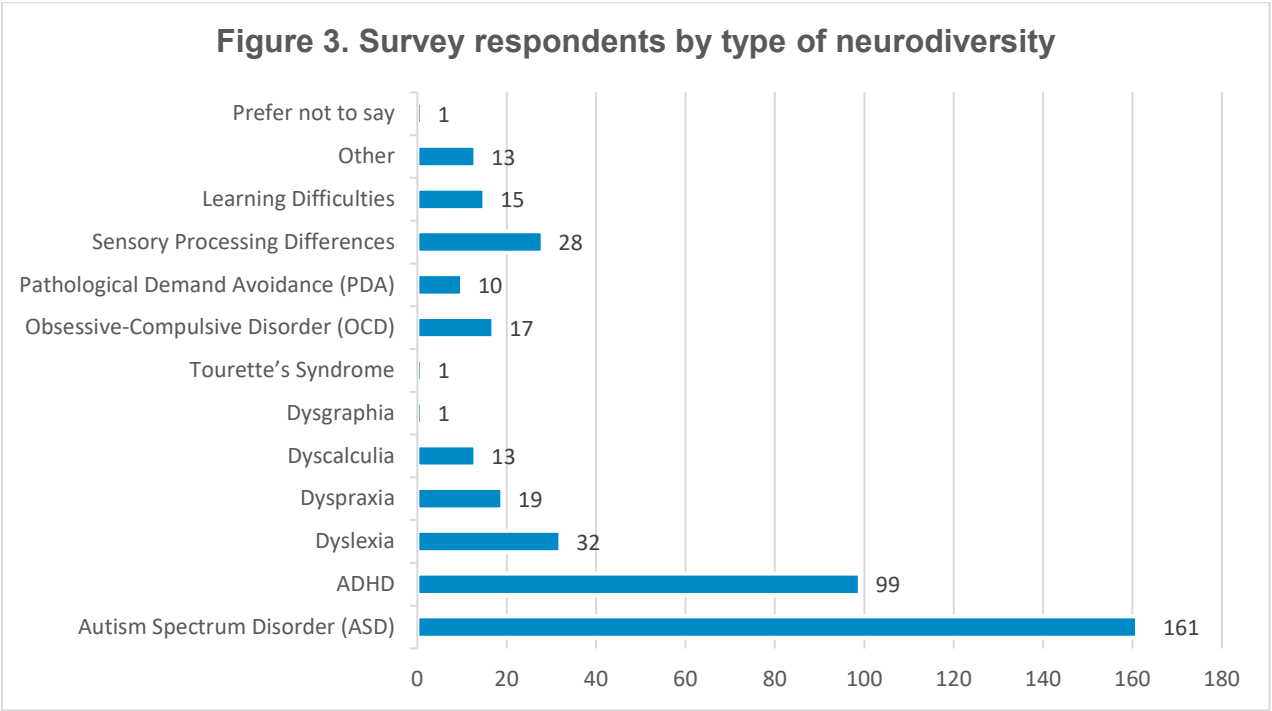


Figure 3 includes the results when survey respondents were asked to describe their neurodiversity. The results show that more survey respondents have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) than any other form of neurodiversity (161), with a high proportion also reporting ADHD (99). Respondents with dyslexia and sensory processing difficulties are also well represented within the survey sample. It is encouraging to see that people with a wide range of neurodiversity conditions and experiences took the time to participate within the survey.



In addition to the important information collected about neurodiversity, survey respondents were also asked for information on some of their other characteristics to understand the research sample. Figure 4 shows that 33% of the survey respondents were male, 62% female, 1% non-binary and the remainder preferred not to say or did not answer the question. The bias towards female respondents is common within survey results and should be noted but should not be cause for concern.

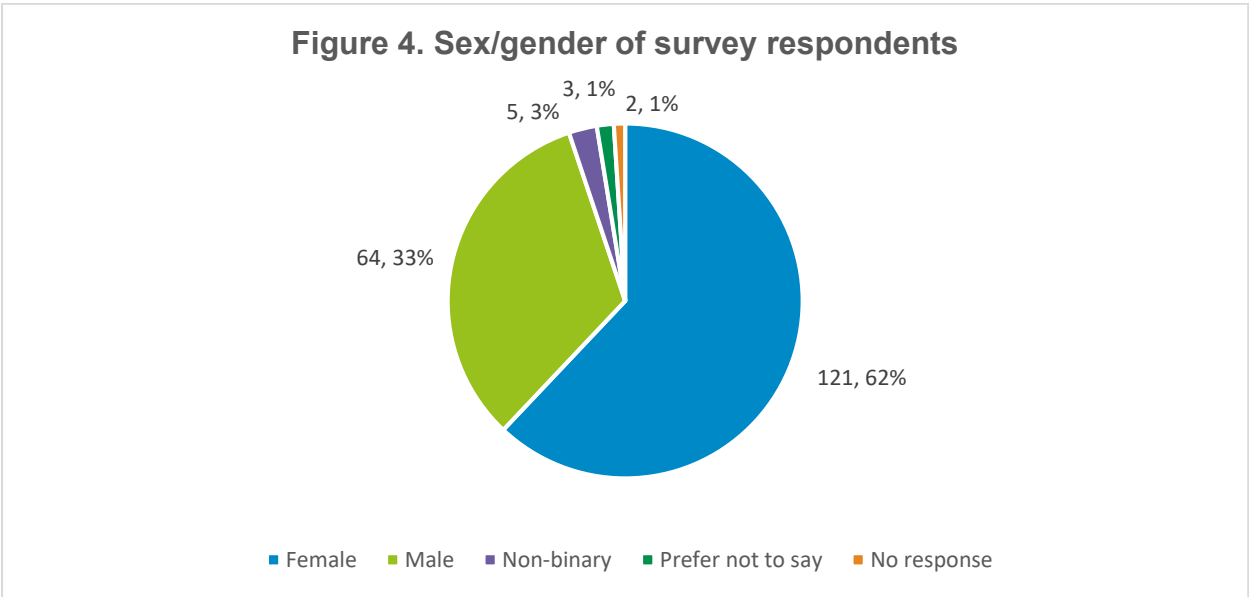


Figure 5 displays the age group breakdown of the survey sample. The results show a good spread of responses across age groups with fewer in the 60+ age group but this is to be expected when a large proportion of the older members of this group may be nearing the end of their careers or retired and have greater experience of managing with neurodiversity in the workplace. Only 1% of the survey sample are within the 15 and under age group and this is likely to reflect the fact that employment may not yet be a big consideration with a wide range of post-16 education options available. 12% of respondents represent the younger 16-19 age group and 30-44 year-olds form the largest group with 32% of all respondents within this bracket.

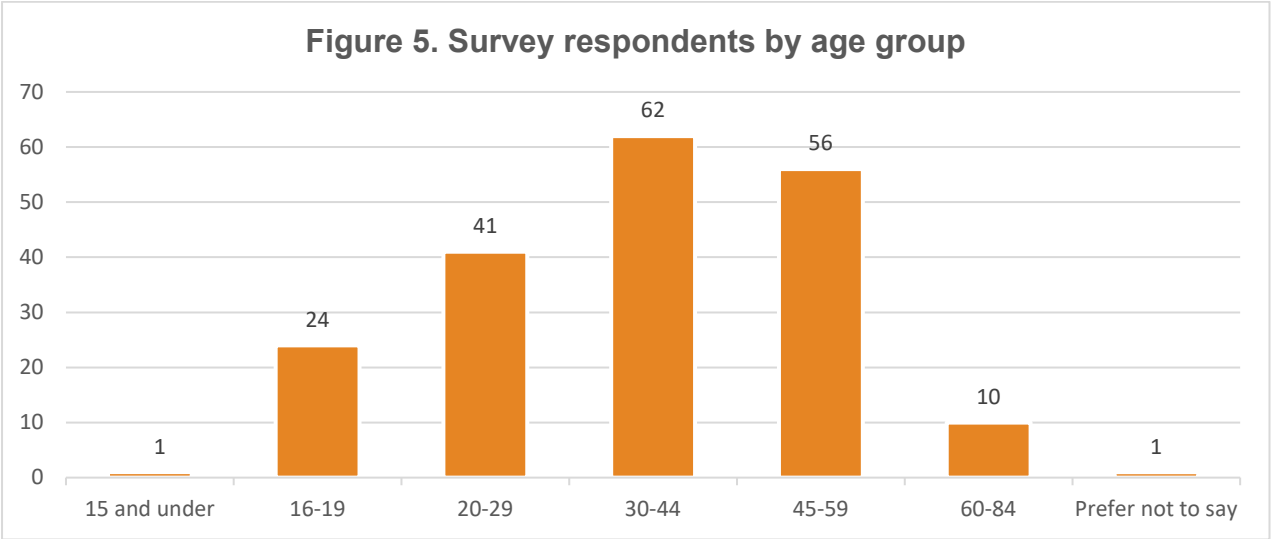
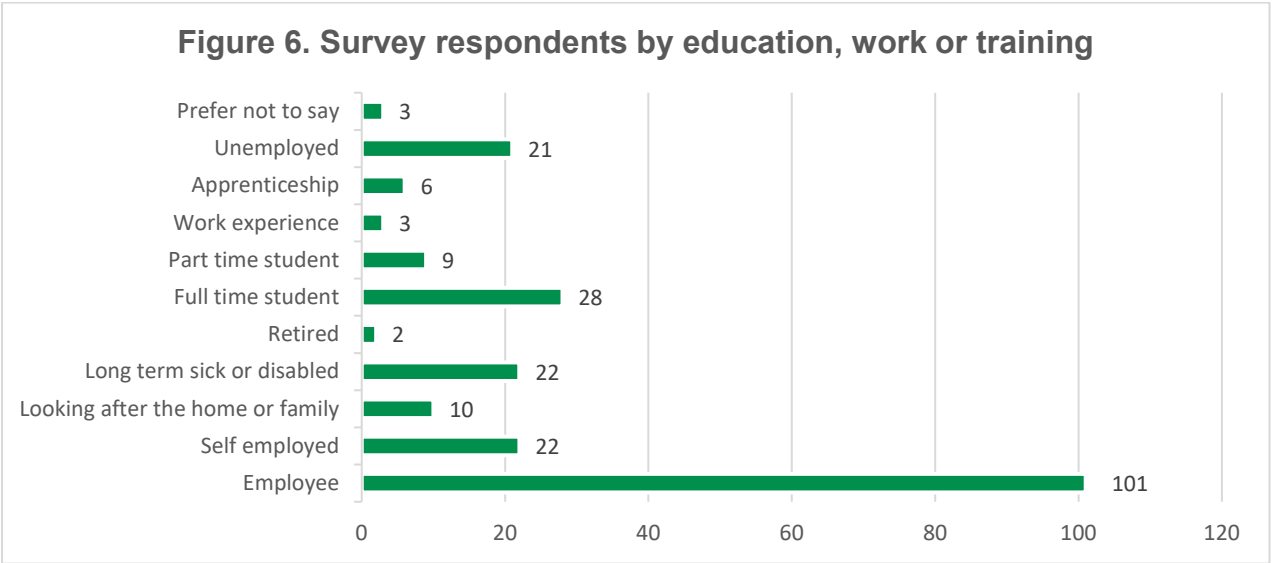


Figure 6 displays the results when more information was sought concerning the education, work or training status of respondents. Again, a good representative mix of responses was received. Some respondents selected multiple options and a large majority are employees (101 of the 195, 52%). 14% of the survey respondents are full time students, 11% self-employed, 11% long term sick or disabled and 11% unemployed.



A follow up question was included to determine whether survey respondents were receiving any help from an employment support service. Figure 7 displays the response and the results show that 16 of the 195 respondents are currently receiving support from

an employment support service. When asked to comment on this question, 27 made comments to explain further. A summary of comments is included within Table 1, a list of services mentioned is included as Table 2 and example comments are shown below.

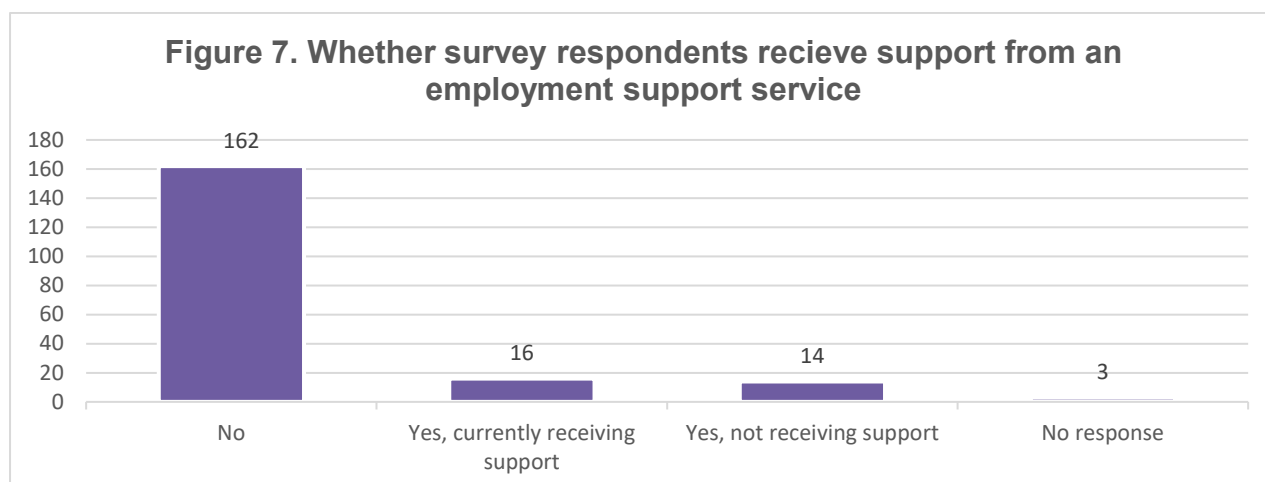


Table 1 Respondent access to employment support services

Theme	Count	%
Support from Enable	11	31%
Job coaching	3	8%
Work experience / internship	3	8%
Supported employment	2	6%
Access to work	4	11%
Would like support / no support at present	7	19%
Other	6	17%
Total	36	100%

Table 2 Services mentioned within comments

Type of support	Count
Enable	11
Access to Work	5
Able Futures	1
Genius Within	1
ESR (Electronic Staff record to allow movement of staff within the NHS)	1
Day Opportunities (Albrighton Moat and Greenacres)	1
Job Box (Telford)	1
Total	21

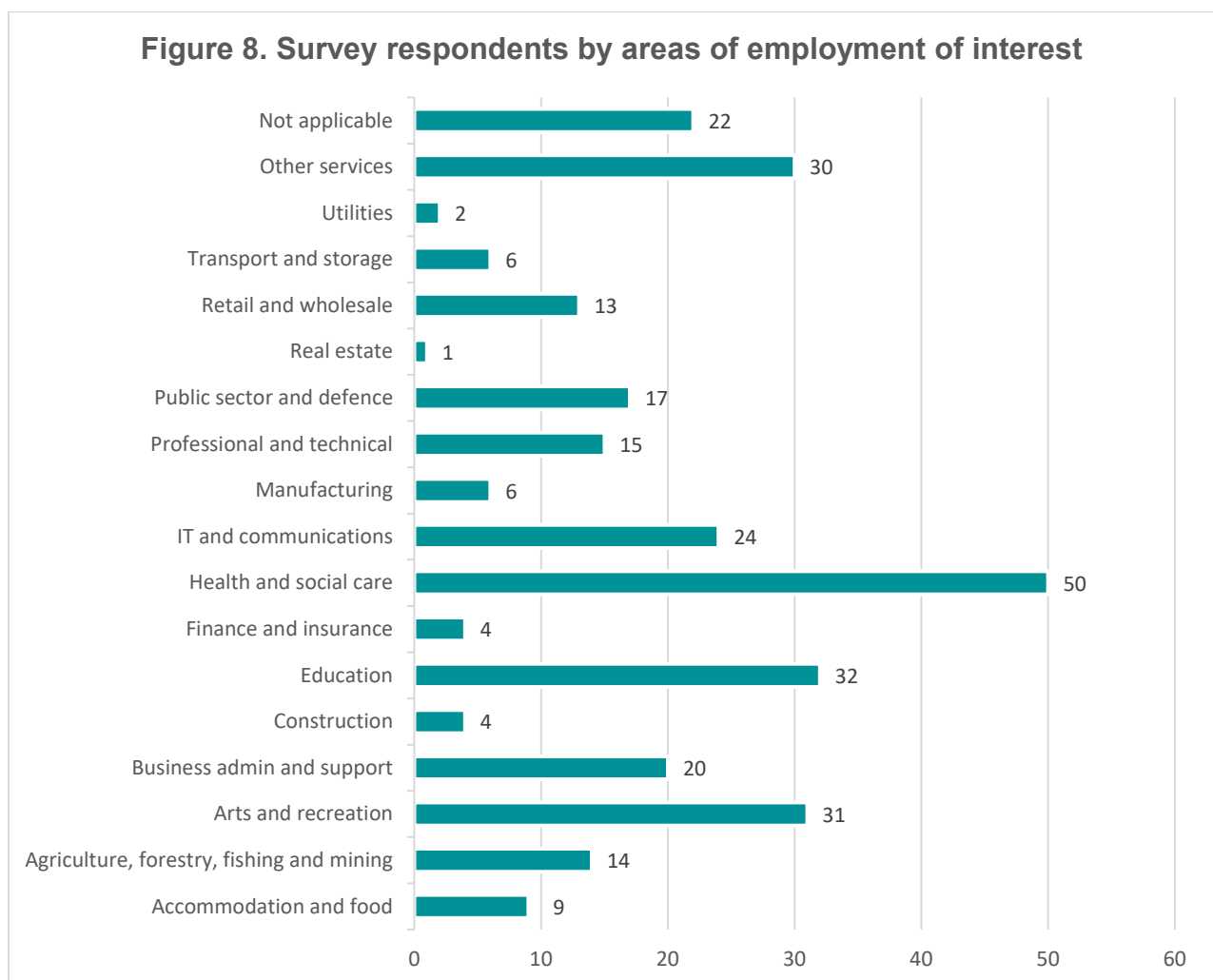
Example comments – Employment support

- “8 hours supported employment.”
- “Enable supported internship.”
- “Job coaching from Access to Work.”
- “Access to Work, Able Futures.”
- “Did have help from Enable previously and also from Access to Work service part of the DWP.”
- “Not having it anymore but used to do a Supported Internship at Shropshire Council and had

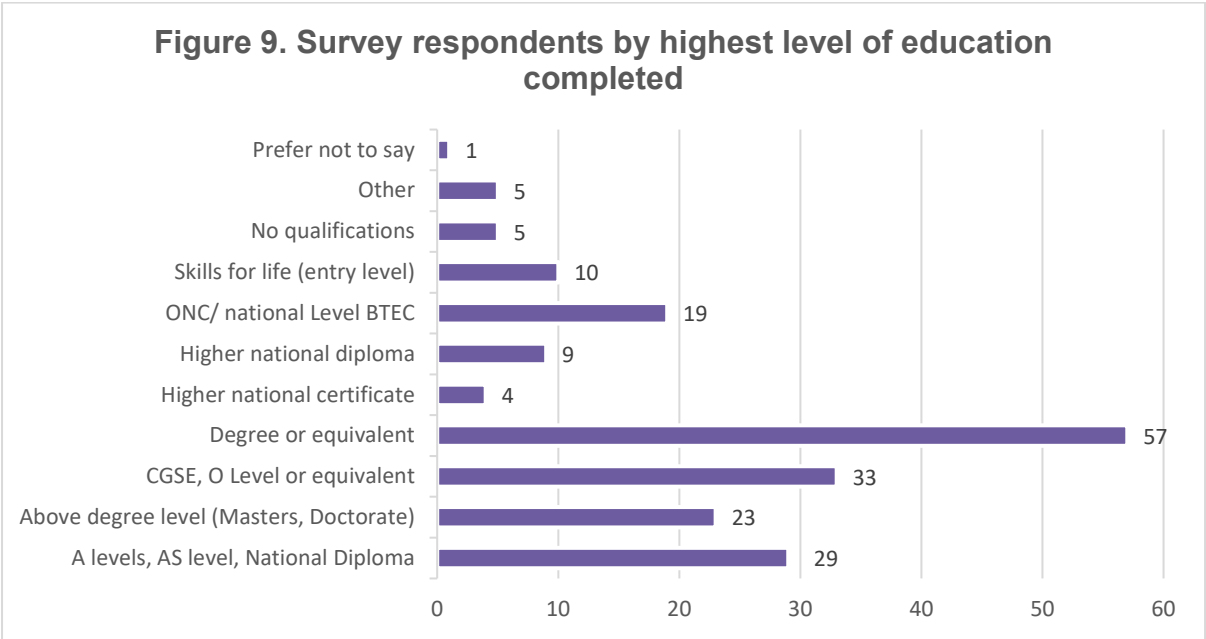
a Job Coach from Enable to support me.”

- *Job Box helping looking for work.*
- *“ADHD Coaching from Genius Within (a private provider).”*
- *“I used to but not now. I as I’m fine in my job. I used to have dyslexia support as needed it in the workplace to help me with letters and time management and equipment.”*
- *“I receive support from my Neurodivergent Specialists from my college.”*
- *“Enable - Job Mentor, available for me to reach out and ask for advice regarding Job related things but also apprenticeship related things Apprenticeship provider - Safeguarding time, mostly helps with mental health issues and making sure I am as well as possible during my apprenticeship[p and flag any issues + Learning support services, helps with getting accommodations during my apprenticeship, making sure I am doing alright with the content and amount of work ATW - About to provide a bunch of software that hopefully helps me.”*
- *“Go to Albrighton moat and Greenacres where I am supported to work.”*

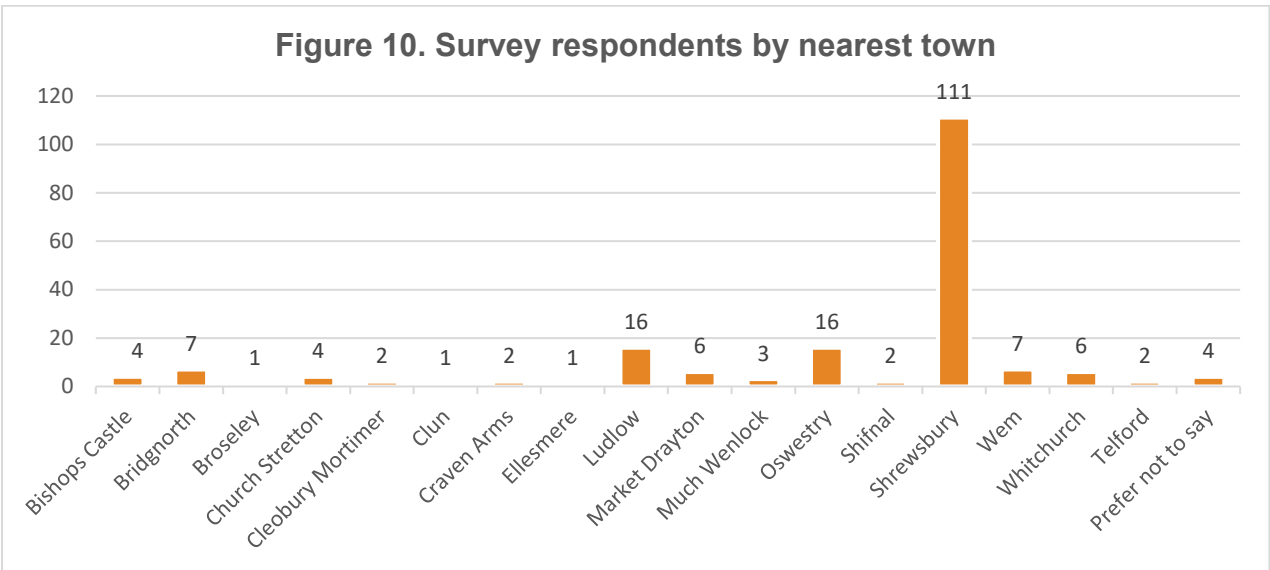
Survey respondents were asked about the types of employment that are of interest to them. Figure 8 displays the results and includes all types where there was at least one response (other employment sectors were included but not selected). The most commonly selected area of employment was health and social care followed by education, arts and recreation and other services. 22 of the respondents selected not applicable to indicate that they are not seeking employment opportunities, this reflects the previous results highlighting that not all respondents are necessarily in a position to be considering employment opportunities and support.



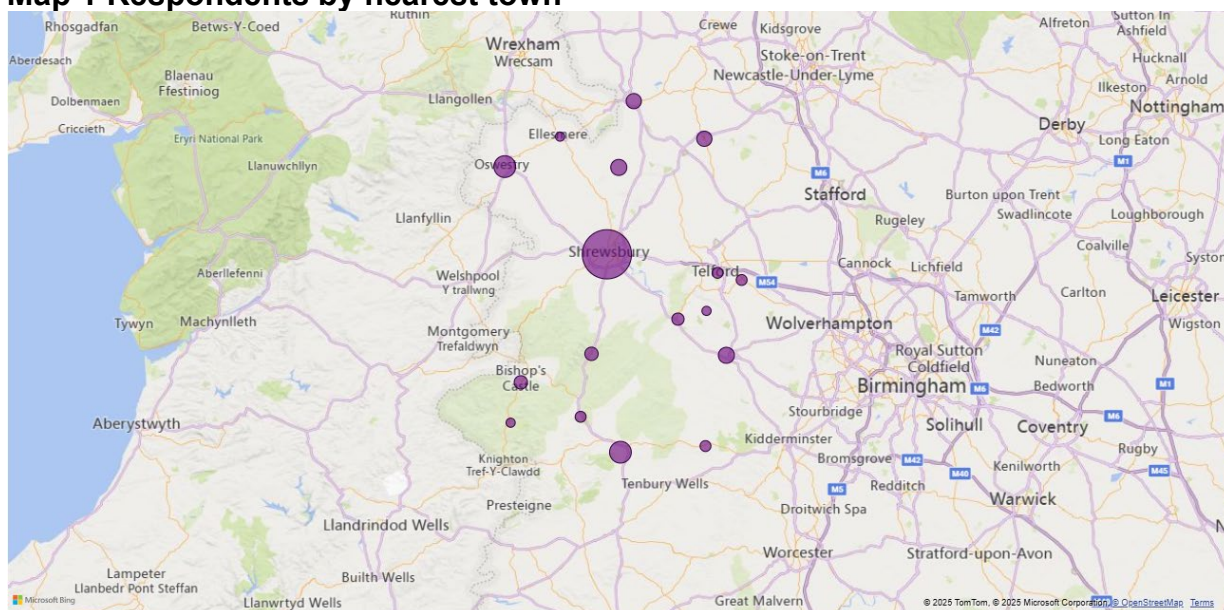
Survey respondents were asked about their level of education with the question reading ‘What is the highest level of education you have completed?’ The results are shown in Figure 9. There is a good representative mix of survey respondents across all levels of education. Only 5 (3%) of the 195 do not have any qualifications and a high proportion (41%) have a degree level qualification or above degree level (e.g. Masters, Doctorate). 15% completed education following A levels, AS level or National Diploma and 17% completed education following GCSEs, O Levels or equivalent qualifications. This spread is helpful in ensuring people across Shropshire are represented within the sample and the range of educational experiences may impact on how people experience employment entry and opportunities.



The last question included within the section on respondent characteristics considers where in the county survey respondents live, by noting the nearest market town to home location. The results are shown in Figure 10 and Map 1. Figure 10 and Map 1 display the nearest market town to respondents’ home locations. A large proportion of the responses are from Shrewsbury (57%) but there are smaller numbers of responses from across the county, as Map 1 shows.



Map 1 Respondents by nearest town



The next section of the report considers how survey respondents feel about preparation for work, their experience of work, and employment opportunities they may be interested in exploring.



3 Preparation for Work

The first main topic covered within the survey was on the theme of preparation for work. All survey respondents were asked if they feel prepared for work. The results are shown in Figure 11. This question was answered by most respondents despite various different employment status and age groups, and only 12 of the 195 did not respond. 55% feel prepared for work (108) and 39% don't feel prepared (75). A closer analysis of this suggests that those who don't feel prepared for work are spread fairly evenly across the 4 age groups encompassing 16-59 year olds. Considering employment status shows 16 full time students don't feel ready for work, 15 unemployed respondents are not ready for work and 14 people who are already employed don't feel prepared for work. There were smaller numbers spread across the other categories. The additional analysis suggests there isn't a clear pattern linked to gender, age or employment but educational achievement is a factor (those educated to degree level or above are more likely to feel prepared for work).

Figure 11. Whether survey respondents feel prepared for work

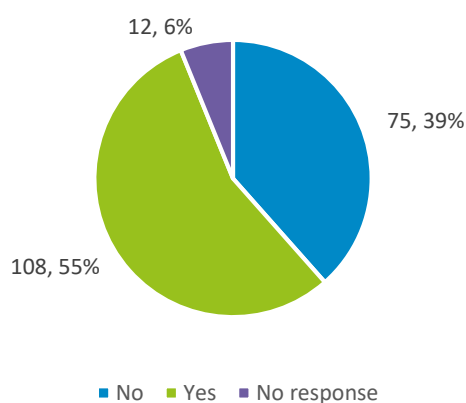
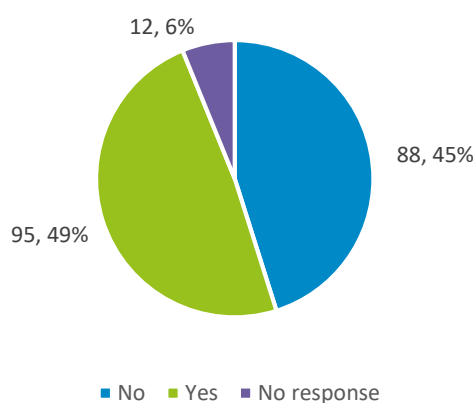
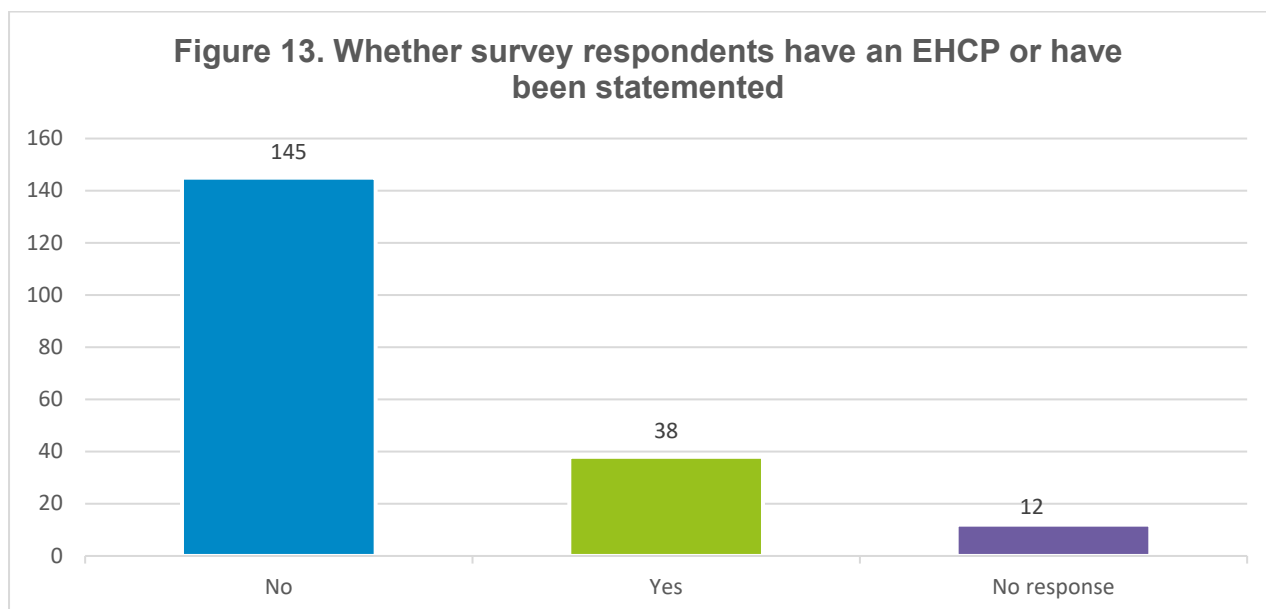


Figure 12 shows that there is a fairly even split between those who understand the options available to them and those who don't.

Figure 12. Whether survey respondents feel clear about the options available (e.g. volunteering, supported internships, apprenticeships, employment options etc.)



All survey respondents were asked whether they have an EHCP or have been statemented. A large proportion answered 'no' (74%). Of the 38 respondents (19%) who answered 'yes' most were under the age of 29, with only 10 people older than that (and 8 of those in the 30-44 age bracket). This highlights that older survey respondents are much less likely to have an EHCP or have been statemented (see Figure 13).



When asked about work experience, a significant proportion of the survey sample do have work experience with only 20 people answering 'no' (10%). Figure 14 illustrates the feedback obtained. This result supports previous findings suggesting a large proportion of the survey respondents are in employment.

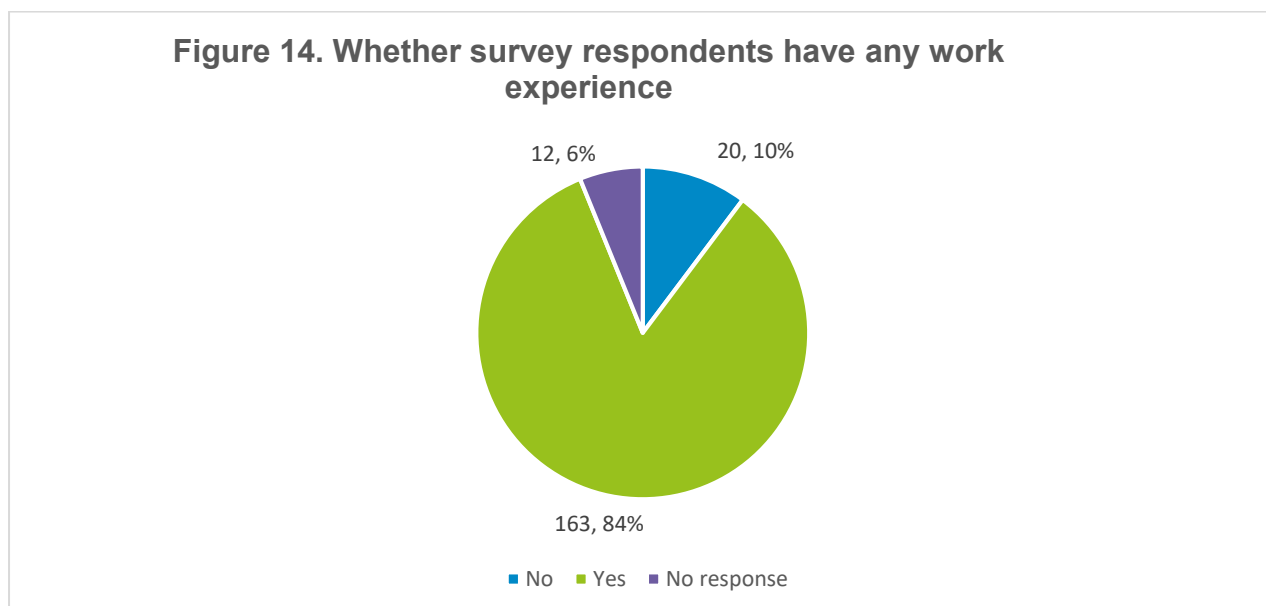
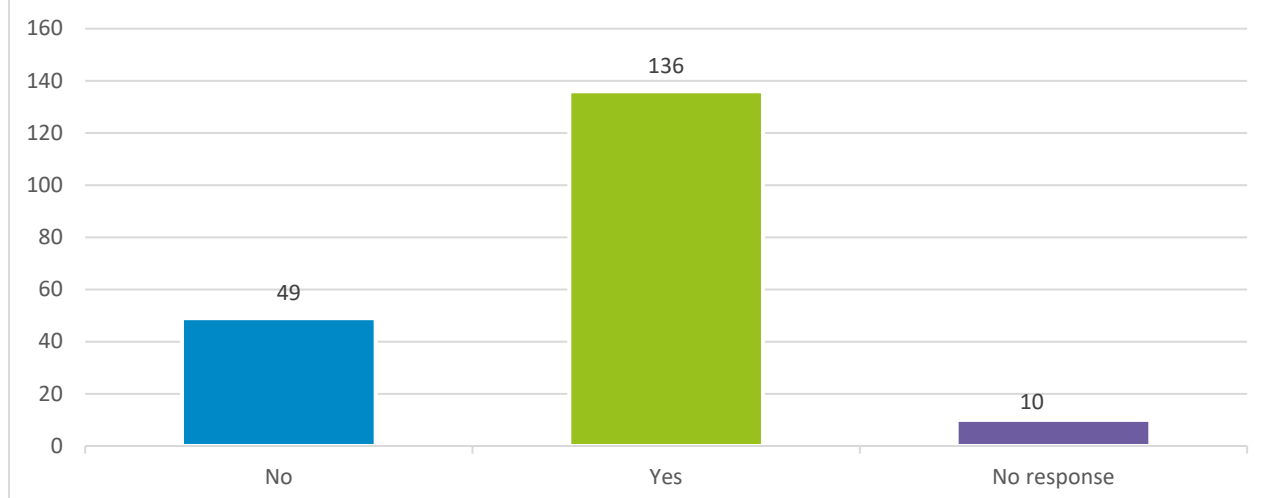


Figure 15 displays a good overall level of understanding of the term reasonable adjustments in the context of the workplace. 70% understand and 25% do not (5% didn't say). Although a positive overall result, this does mean that 49 individuals among those surveyed are not aware of reasonable adjustments and so further awareness building may be required.

Figure 15. Whether survey respondents know what is meant by the 'reasonable adjustments' that can be made in the workplace.



The next question included within the survey, and the final question on the theme of preparation for work, considered work opportunities that survey respondents would be interested in exploring. 63 people made comments and there were 67 separate themes within those comments. Table 3 displays a summary of the feedback. Working in the arts was the top theme within the comments followed by working in catering/hospitality and leisure and working in care. A significant number of respondents (21 comments) were not sure and didn't have any particular employment opportunities in mind. Some commented that they may need support to decide. Example comments are also used to better illustrate the comments made.

Table 3 Employment opportunities of interest to survey respondents

Theme	Count	%
Working with animals	5	7%
Working in catering / hospitality / leisure	7	10%
Working in care	6	9%
Working in the arts	11	16%
Working in education	4	6%
Working in agriculture / horticulture	1	1%
Working in business / administration	4	6%
Working in transport	3	4%
Continuing with education / apprenticeship / volunteering	5	7%
Other / unsure/ need more support	21	31%
Total	67	100%

Example comments – employment opportunities of interest

- “Environment, learning disabilities, leisure & tourism, retail, broadcasting.”
- “Anything with Animals, Craft/Art or Film media.”
- “Media, television and radio.”
- “Public facing or a driving job.”
- “I want to work in a laboratory, or a care home. But not with lots of people.”
- “Internships, full-time IT support related job.”
- “Not sure what work I could do, but want to.”

- *"I had no choice other than go self-employed."*
- *"As an experienced trainer I would like to deliver more training."*
- *"I am a qualified teacher, I have worked, the work itself is not the issue, it's the social expectations and misunderstandings of colleagues, and often bullying and ostracizing that is the issue not the work itself."*
- *"Unsure what is available and what I can get into without needing a degree or work experience in that field already."*
- *"Anything with a career development pathway, rather than being stuck in a rut."*
- *"Reasonable adjustments, and advocate for this to help me put across my needs."*
- *"I am fine at the moment as I had my dyslexia diagnosis in 2012 at the age of 40 and if I never had that I would not have known there was something wrong. I think more help is needed for adults who never gained the support at school as it was never a thing when I was growing up, So, more adult support and groups and training and help for us is needed."*

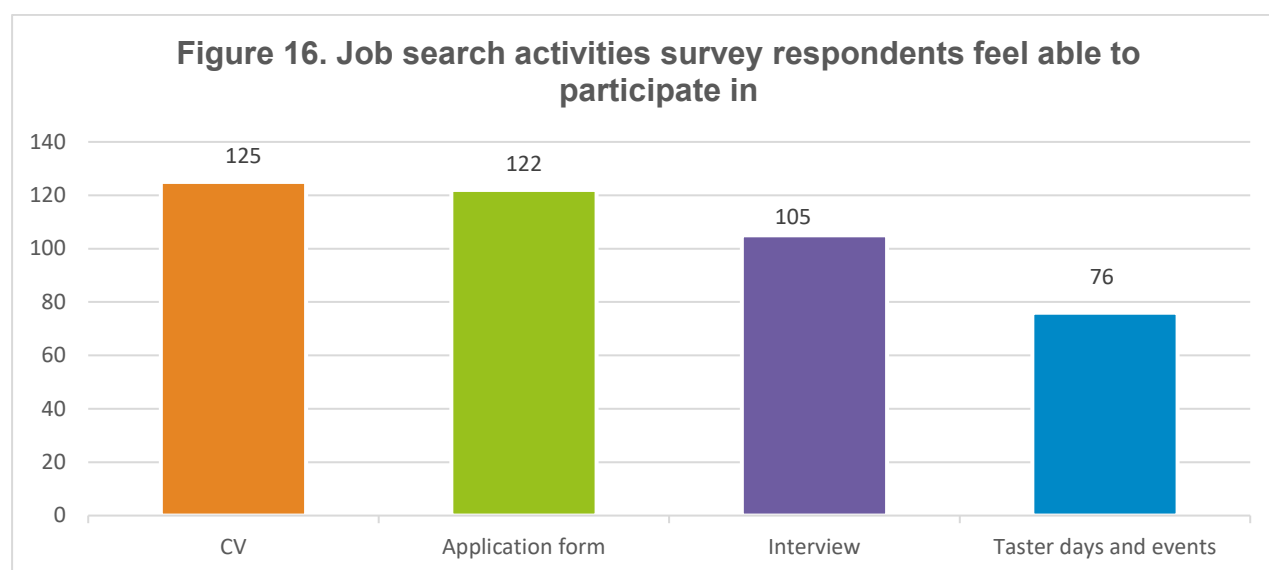
The feedback shows a very broad range of employment types are of interest to the survey respondents and the example comments help to illustrate that there are many different experiences. Some people who are already in employment refer to challenges, which may or may not be linked to their neurodiversity.

The next section of the report considers the process of applying for work and completing job applications. This section of the survey was used to explore experiences and views linked to the process of applying for jobs. It also helps indicate whether people with neurodiversity are successful through the job application process or report experiencing barriers.



4 Job Applications

The survey was used to find out more about how people with neurodiversity find the process of applying for work. All survey respondents were asked if they felt able to participate in writing a CV, completing application forms, interviews and taster days and events. The results were positive with most survey respondents feeling able to participate in CV development (64%) and application forms (63%). 54% feel able to participate in interviews and 39% in taster days and events. It should be noted that a proportion of respondents may not have selected some of these activities because they are not relevant for them (not all are seeking employment).



To find out more from people with neurodiversity all survey respondents were asked to give a view against the 7 statements below. These were included to determine if there are any particular barriers facing people when applying for work.

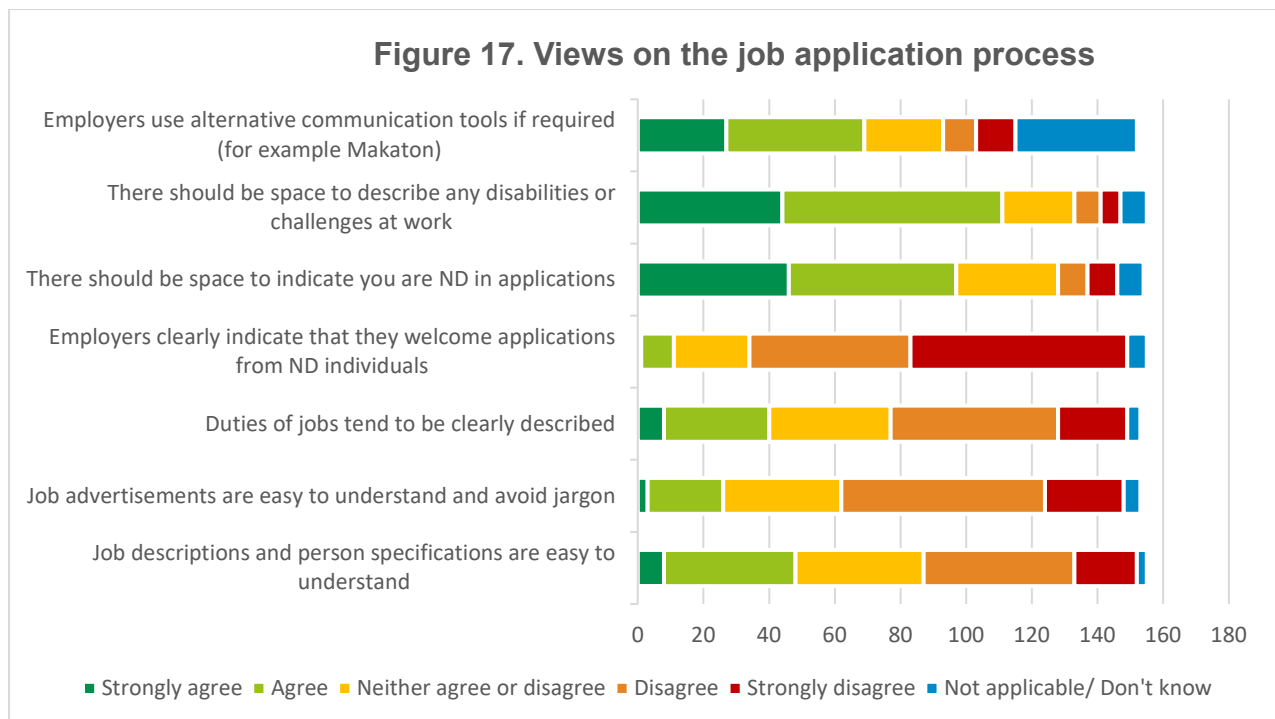
1. Job descriptions and person specifications are easy to understand
2. Job advertisements are easy to understand and avoid jargon
3. Duties of jobs tend to be clearly described
4. Employers clearly indicate that they welcome applications from ND individuals
5. There should be space to indicate you are ND in applications
6. There should be space to describe any disabilities or challenges at work
7. Employers use alternative communication tools if required (for example Makaton)

Figure 17 presents the responses received from survey respondents. The feedback shows most people agree or strongly agree with statements 5, 6 and 7 (there should be space to disclose ND in applications and to describe challenges at work and employers should use alternative communication tools if required).

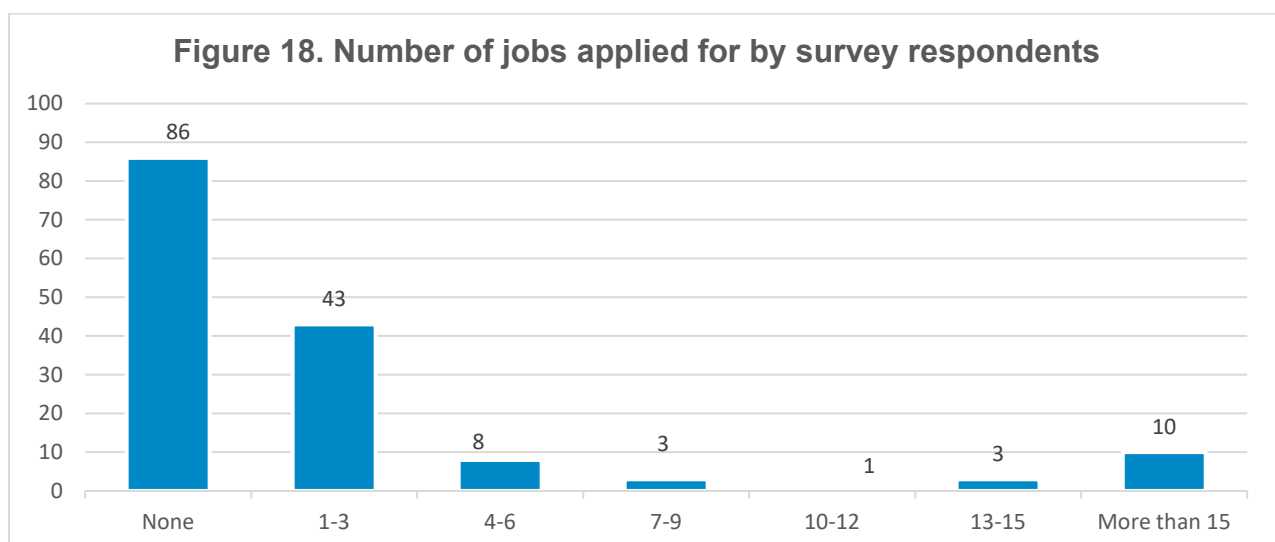
The results are mixed for statement 1, suggesting that some people find job descriptions and person specifications easy to understand and others do not (48 understand and 65 do not).

An overwhelming majority disagree that employers clearly welcome applications from people with neurodiversity. More people disagree or strongly disagree with

statements 2 and 3 (that job advertisements are easy to understand and avoid jargon and duties are clearly described).



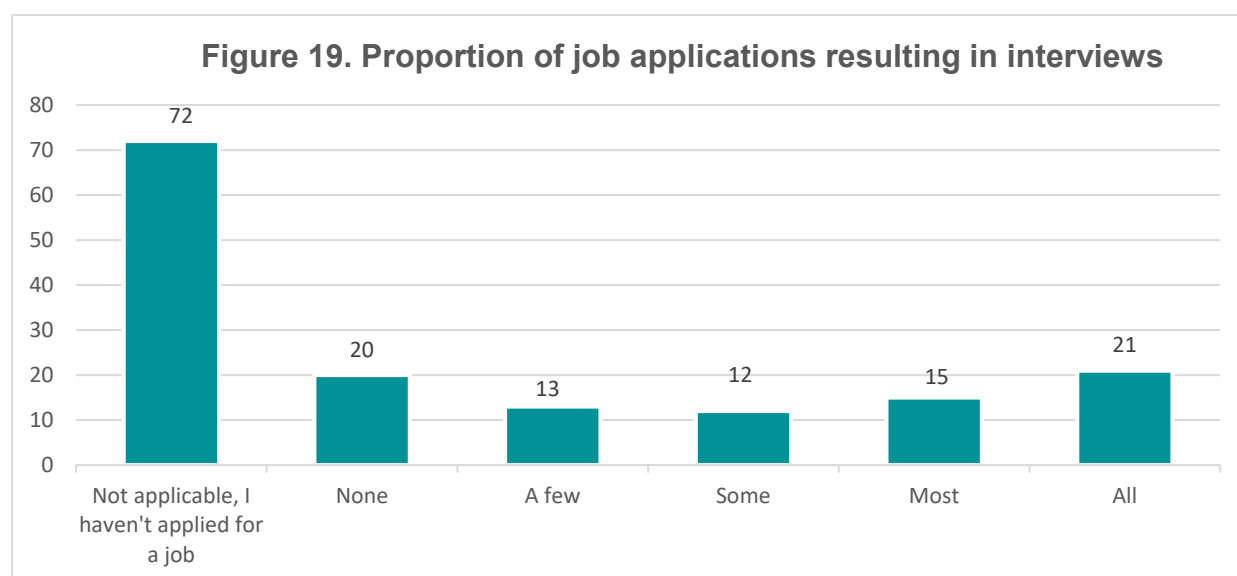
The last question within this section aimed to find out how many jobs survey respondents had applied for in the last 12 months. The feedback is shown in Figure 18. The response shows that 86 respondents (44%) have not applied for any jobs (in addition 41% didn't respond to the question (21 respondents)). Of those who have searched for jobs and made applications, most have applied for between 1 and 3 jobs (43 people). 10 respondents have applied for more than 15 jobs, perhaps suggesting that the process has been challenging for them.



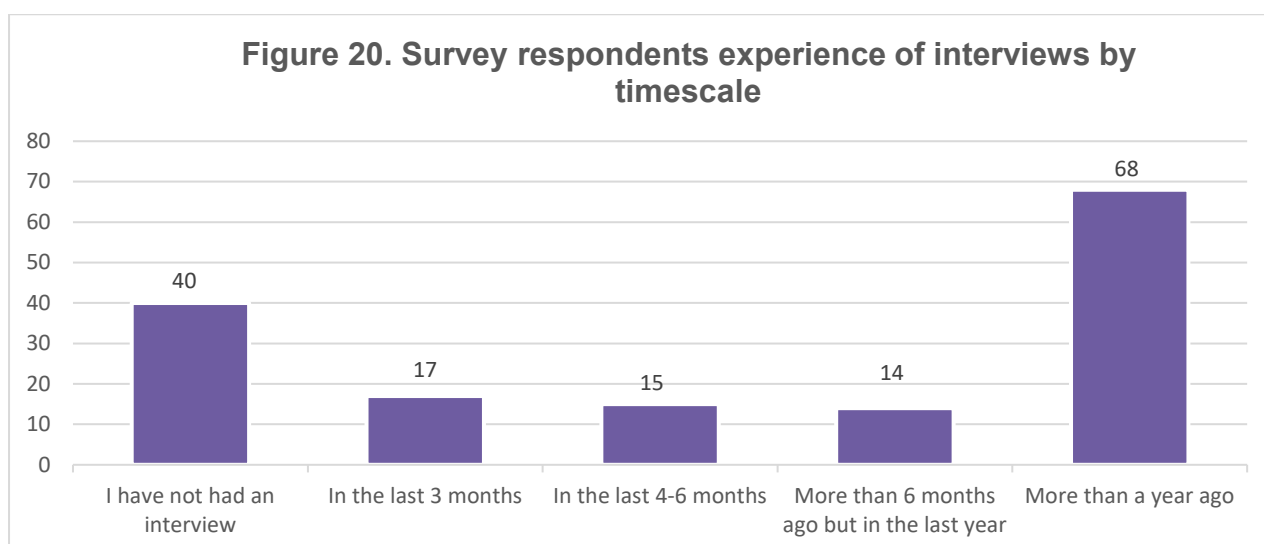
The next section of the report considered interviews and how survey respondents have found that stage of the employment process.

5 Job Interviews

The feedback obtained through the survey indicates mixed experience of the job application process, so it is helpful to understand how this links to access to interviews. A question was included within the survey which read 'How many of your job applications resulted in an interview?' Although this wasn't applicable for 72 of the 195 respondents (37% and an additional 42, 22% skipped the question), there was feedback from 81 people. The 81 who had applied for jobs had mixed results. 20 had not had an interview following applications, 25 had had a few or some interviews and 36 had had interviews from most or all of their applications.



The next question considered the timescales for this and how many survey respondents have had recent experience of interviews. Figure 20 shows that 68 of the 114 who have had interviews have not had an interview within the last 12 months (46 people have). Of the 46, 17 have very recent interview experience within the last 3 months, 15 between 4 and 6 months ago and 14 have had an interview within the last 6-12 months. This provides a good sample to suggest that responses are not based on historic experience but include a range of recent experiences.



To understand more about experience of interviews respondents were asked a series of questions about those interviews:

- Have you been provided with interview questions ahead of an interview?
- Have you been given a choice of interview format (e.g. in person, online)?
- For in-person interviews, were you given information about the set-up of the interview room and other details e.g. photographs?
- Have quiet waiting areas been provided to sit while waiting to be called into an interview?
- Have you felt comfortable discussing your ND or workplace needs in an interview?

Figure 21 shows that most people are not given questions in advance of an interview. Only 12 of the survey respondents have had interview questions in advance, 10 of those sometimes and only 2 always.

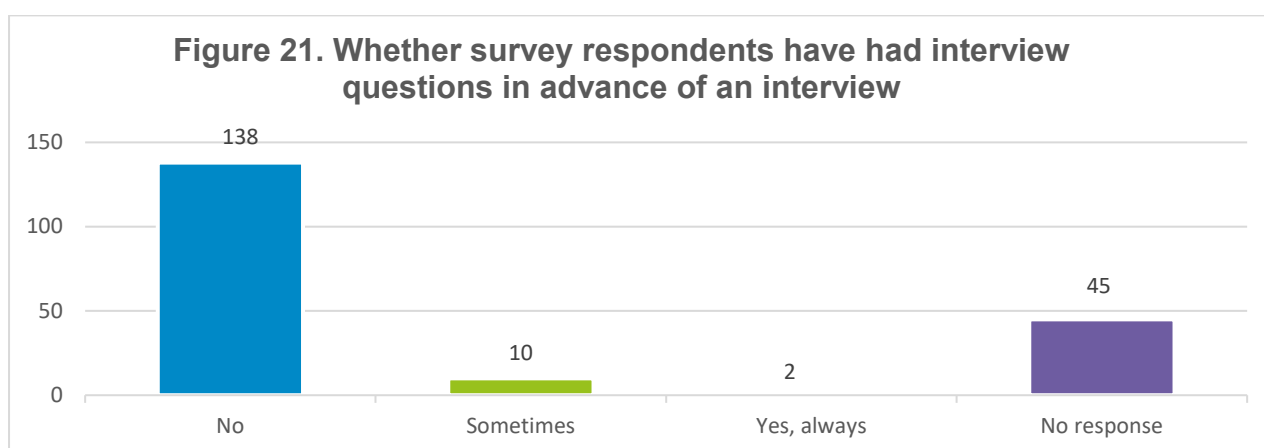
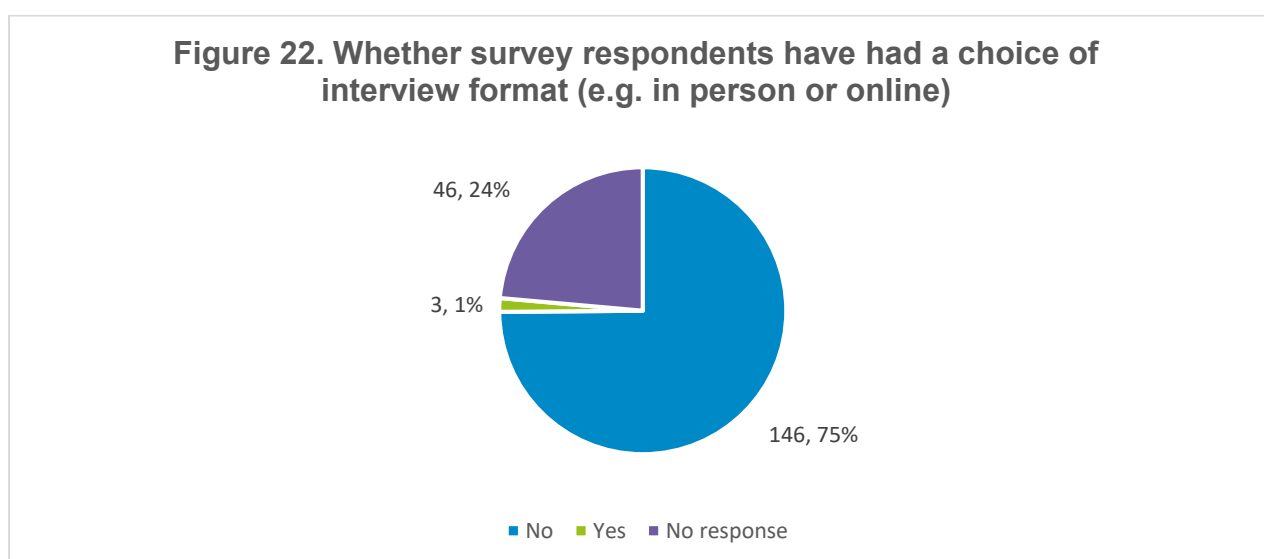


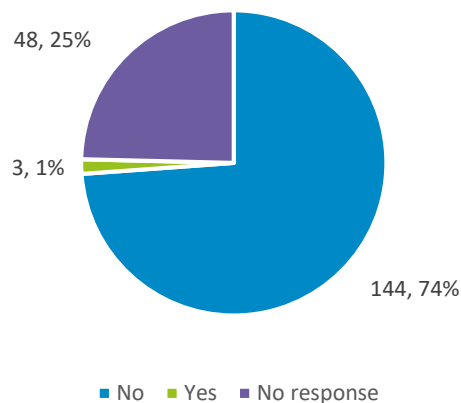
Figure 22 shows that only 3 of the survey respondents have been given a choice of interview format, suggesting it is not common practice to ask those chosen for interview for their preferences in advance.



The results for the next question were very similar (almost identical) with only 3 survey respondents having been given information about an interview room set-up in advance of

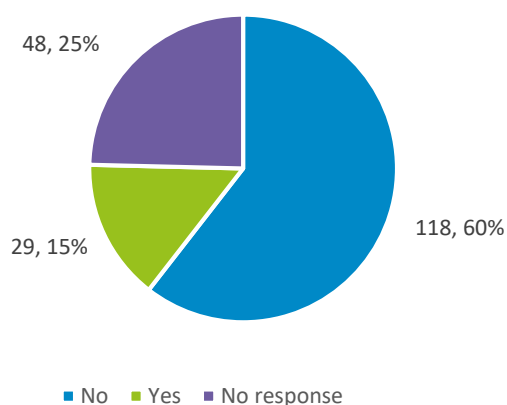
being interviewed (see Figure 23).

Figure 23. Whether survey respondents have been made aware of interview room set up for in-person interviews



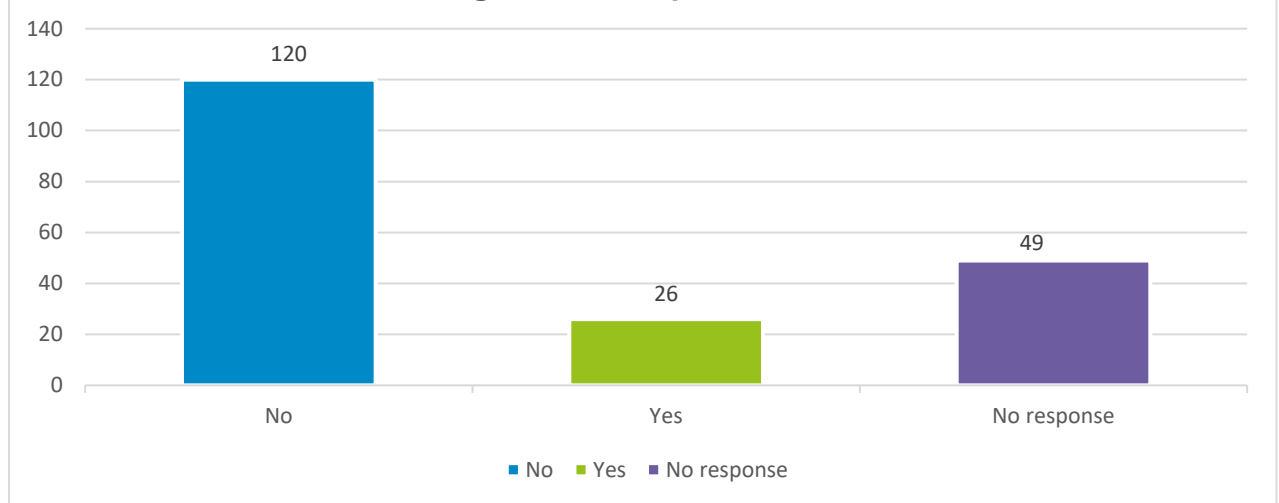
The survey results show that although provision of questions in advance of an interview, choice of format, and provision of information about interview rooms are not common practice, more people are provided with a quiet waiting area to sit while waiting to be called into an interview. 29 of the survey respondents have had a quiet waiting area to sit while 118 report that they have not (it is possible that a proportion of these were not those with recent interview experience).

Figure 24. Whether survey respondents have been provided with quiet waiting areas to sit while waiting to be called into an interview



The last question within this section of the survey was important and asked respondents if they have felt comfortable discussing their ND or workplace needs within an interview. Only 26 people have discussed their ND or any needs and this could be responsible for few reasonable adjustments being made at interview and the results of previous questions. A large proportion of the survey respondents 120 (62%) have not felt comfortable discussing their neurodiversity or any workplace needs when they have spoken to those interviewing them as part of the job application and employment process. The feedback is shown in Figure 25.

Figure 25. Whether survey respondents have felt comfortable discussing ND or workplace needs within interviews



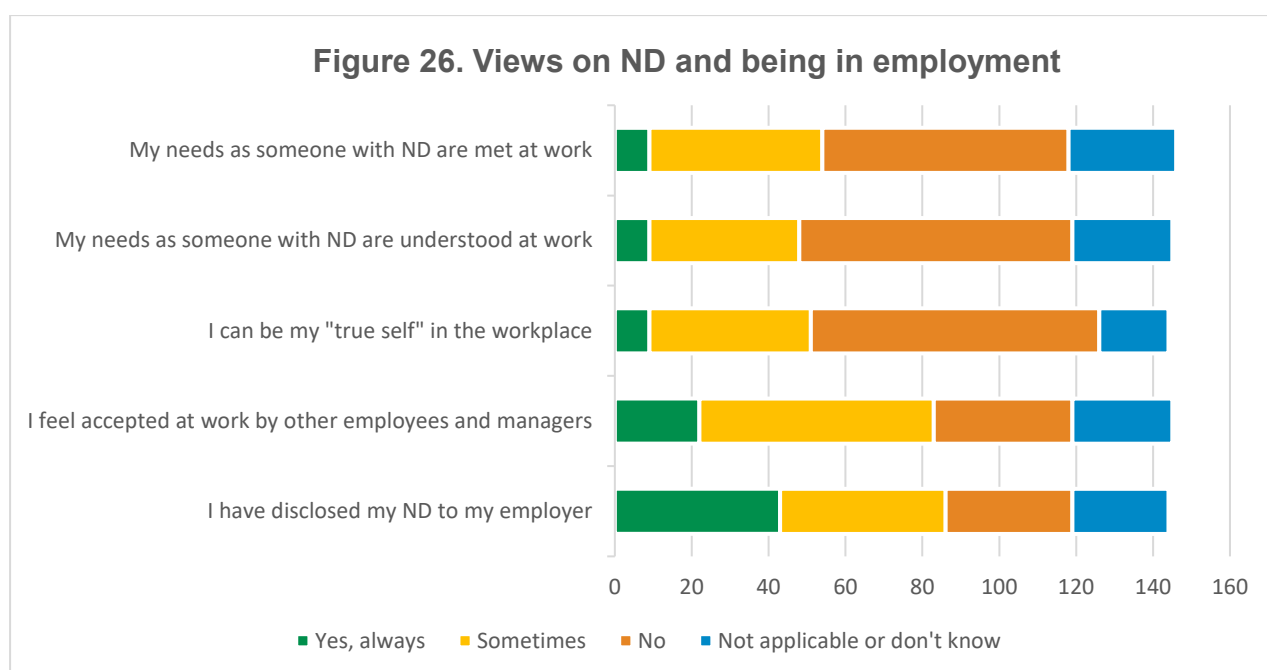
Whether people disclose their neurodiversity or neurodivergence is an important issue and critical to many of the other results within the research. Low levels of communication will lead to limited reasonable adjustments being made because employers will not be aware of the need to make adaptations to the way they recruit new employees. This issue is picked up again within the next section of the report which turns to look at the next stage of the process: when people have been employed and are in work. The next section of the report, 'Being in Work' considers views and experiences linked to survey respondent's experience of the workplace, awareness of their ND, the actions taken by employers, and the comments and suggestions obtained through the research.



6 Being in Work

The section of the survey related to being in work was responded to by approximately 145 of the 195 survey respondents although the responses suggest that 76 of the survey respondents are not in work or don't have experience of work. Figure 26 below highlights the responses to 5 statements designed to learn more about experiences of people with ND in the workplace. The statements were:

- I have disclosed my ND to my employer
- I feel accepted at work by other employees and managers
- I can be my "true self" in the workplace
- My needs as someone with ND are understood at work
- My needs as someone with ND are met at work

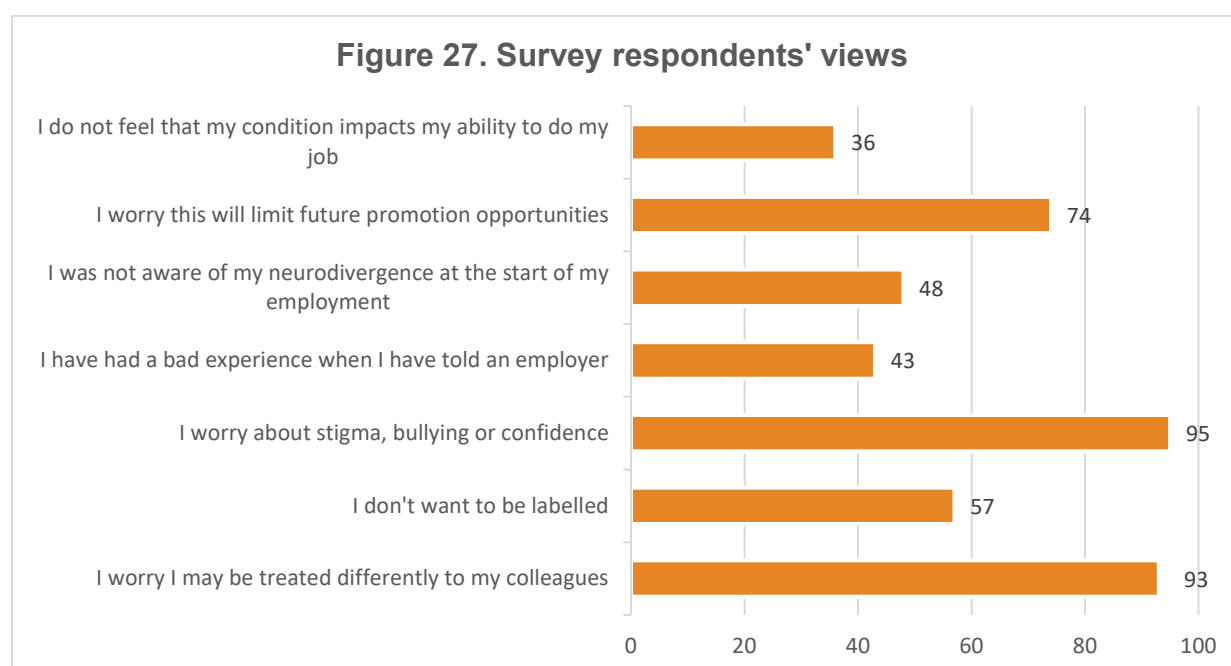


86 of the survey respondents have always or sometimes disclosed their ND to employers, whilst 33 have not (the question was not applicable to many respondents). 83 people feel as though they have been always or sometimes accepted at work by other employees and managers, whilst 36 do not. Looking at the data there is a very strong correlation between these answers. Those who disclose their ND feel accepted and those who haven't disclosed do not. Only 11 of those who have disclosed always or sometimes don't feel accepted. 75 of the 86 respondents in work do not feel that they can be their "true self" in the workplace. This is a shame, but it would be interesting to compare this result to a broader workplace survey. Is it common for people to feel they must adopt a workplace presentation of themselves that does not reflect their full or true nature? For comparison, Personnel Today report that 41% of people felt they could "bring their whole self to work" in 2024 (a drop from 66% in 2020). A similar survey by Hays in 2023 found that 37% of people hide aspects of themselves at work due to fear of judgement.

Only 9 survey respondents feel that their needs, as someone with ND, are met at

work and the same number feel their needs are understood. A further 39 survey respondents feel their needs are sometimes met and 45 believe their needs are sometimes understood. More people (on average 68 people or 35% of all survey respondents) don't feel their needs are understood or met.

To explore experience of ND within the workplace survey respondents were asked how they feel about their ND in relation to work and workplace relationships. Figure 27 displays the response. Very high numbers of survey respondents worry about stigma, bullying or confidence (95) and that they may be treated differently to other colleagues (93). 36 are confident that their ND doesn't impact their ability to do their job. Sadly 43 of the survey respondents have had a bad experience when they have disclosed ND to an employer, and 74 believe that their ND could limit future promotion opportunities. An open comment box was included for any other concerns and 16 people added a comment. All comments are shown below.

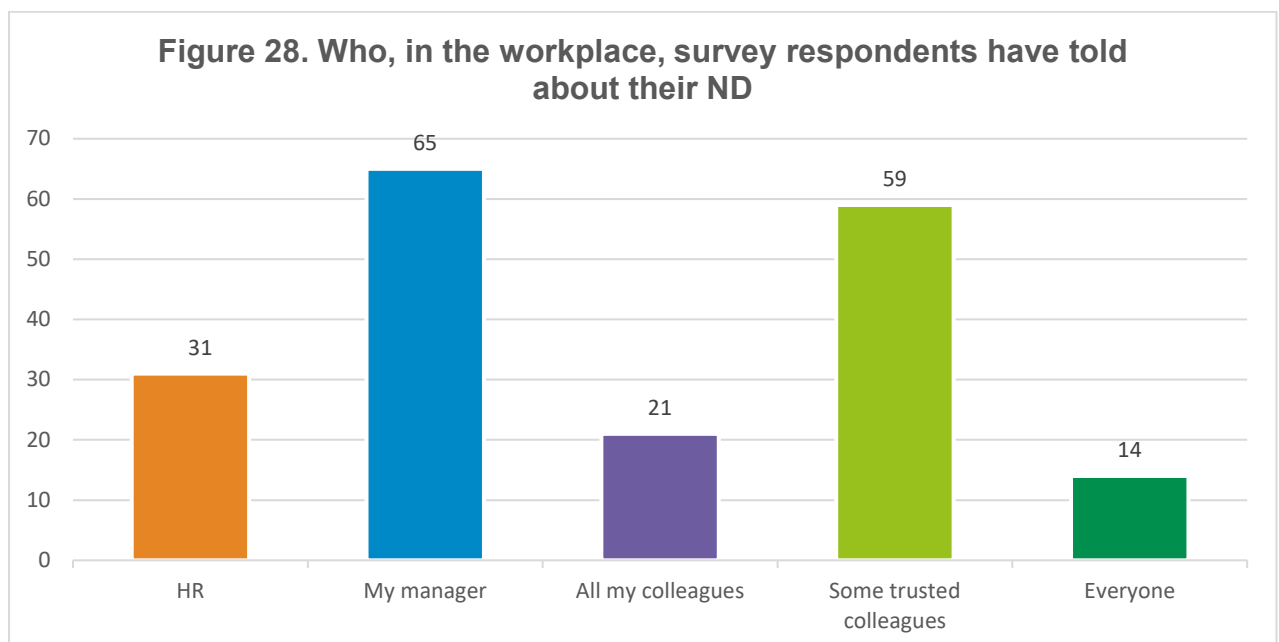


Comments – ND and workplace relationships

- *"I actively sought a role at Shropshire Council knowing that they were a Disability Confident Leader before I moved to this county. I have held several roles at SC and have moved up levels/grades with each new role, however, I am struggling more and more with sensory overwhelm after I've finished a day's work...."*
- *"I am isolated at work by my diagnosis."*
- *"I am treated differently, and it has affected my confidence."*
- *"Don't feel I'd could cope with working without ongoing support."*
- *"I don't want to be treated differently because of it, although it would be helpful for employers to know to be aware of why I may respond / communicate / act in certain ways."*
- *"I feel pigeon-holed into jobs which do not reflect my interests or capabilities. This leads to not being able to do the job properly."*
- *"I have experienced assumptions from other people about what autism is, and how it affects me, which means it's hard to change people's opinions of what autism is, which means I have given up in a lot of areas."*
- *"I need patience and understanding."*

- *"I would never get promotion or managerial responsibilities as I cannot read people."*
- *"In previous jobs I was not yet aware of why I felt different. But my differences certainly caused frictions. I am now self-employed, and this suits me very well."*
- *"It largely depends on the employer and workplace culture - it's important to understand that just because an employer cannot treat you in a derogatory way due to your neurodivergence, doesn't mean that they won't."*
- *"My condition affects my ability to travel outside my comfort zone."*
- *"My needs change depending on my level of anxiety."*
- *"Previously been treated poorly due to a lack of experience dealing with ND on a supervisor's part and stereotyped by said supervisor and employees on a different work experience placement to current placement."*
- *"My employer is not interested in anything to do with my autism."*
- *"There is a lack of understanding of the benefits of ND. It is a difference that needs accommodating not a disability, in many roles it is a superpower, but most systems and application processes are set up against it. Many roles would be better employing "geeks and odd balls" as the best person for the job instead of those most likely to mirror the person interviewing them. It is about getting the job done not fitting in, and employers should bend more to accommodate people who are effective at the job albeit not always the most likeable or personable personality."*

The comments are helpful in understanding how people feel about their ND and workplace relationships and the concerns and challenges that it brings. To find out more survey respondents were asked 'Who knows about your neurodiversity?' Figure 28 shows that a large proportion of survey respondents in work have told their manager about their ND (65) and 59 have told some trusted colleagues. Much smaller numbers have spoken to HR, a wider group of colleagues/all colleagues or 'everyone'. Only 14 people have told everyone.



The next question read 'If you have not been able to disclose your ND at work, please explain why (for example, did you want to disclose but didn't feel able to?)' There were 46 comments made and 57 mentions of key themes within those comments. The summary is shown in Table 4 below. The most common concern was a feeling that the employer would not be supportive or make reasonable adjustments followed by not wanting to be bullied or discriminated against. A significant proportion of the comments also relate to

not wanting to be treated any differently to other employees/colleagues as a result of disclosing ND. Example comments are also shown to better illustrate the concerns highlighted.

Table 4 Disclosure of ND at work

Theme	Count	%
Don't want to be labelled / treated differently to peers	11	19%
Embarrassed / don't want others to know of my diagnosis	9	16%
Don't want to be discriminated against / bullied	12	21%
Don't feel employer will be supportive / make reasonable adjustments	13	23%
Awaiting a formal diagnosis / self-diagnosed	9	16%
Other	3	5%
Total	57	100%

Example comments – Disclosure of ND at work

- *“Embarrassed, don't like people to know.”*
- *“I have tried speaking in the past about it; they don't understand.”*
- *“Worried about stigma attached and also being treated differently or worse, not being taken seriously.”*
- *“Often judged because of disclosure.”*
- *“I thought it would go against me. A reason to not hire me or blame it for difficulties when it may be other human error.”*
- *“Didn't want other employees looking or labelling me as difficult or different. I have had bad experience from home and at school with my condition.”*
- *“When disclosed no interviews are offered. When not disclosed I get interviews. If disclosed during employment sympathetic initially, no amendments to accommodate, or knowledge and understanding of ND at all.”*
- *“Told previous manager, new one not very PC whatsoever.”*
- *“Not accepted in the legal profession despite autistic people making excellent lawyers.”*
- *“When I did, I was, either deliberately or ignorantly misunderstood, ostracized, bullied, and ultimately pushed out or actively made redundant due to people not being prepared to listen / adjust / see things from another perspective.”*
- *“I didn't feel comfortable sharing as I feel it will impact my job prospects.”*
- *“I have disclosed to two employers about my ND; however, one had no idea how to treat myself, and more or less worked off stereotypes, whilst the other made through enable disclosed this clearly, and was a great placement.”*
- *“I am only self-diagnosed at the moment and haven't had a formal diagnosis, so I'd feel silly informing without a definitive diagnosis. I've also got so far already without needing to tell them so again would feel silly doing it.”*
- *“I've been triaged and awaiting assessment - though I strongly suspect I will get a diagnosis, I wouldn't disclose until that point. Unfortunately waiting times are measures in years rather than months.”*
- *“Self-diagnosed, fear of ramifications.”*
- *“Never diagnosed, but most people can tell pretty quickly.”*

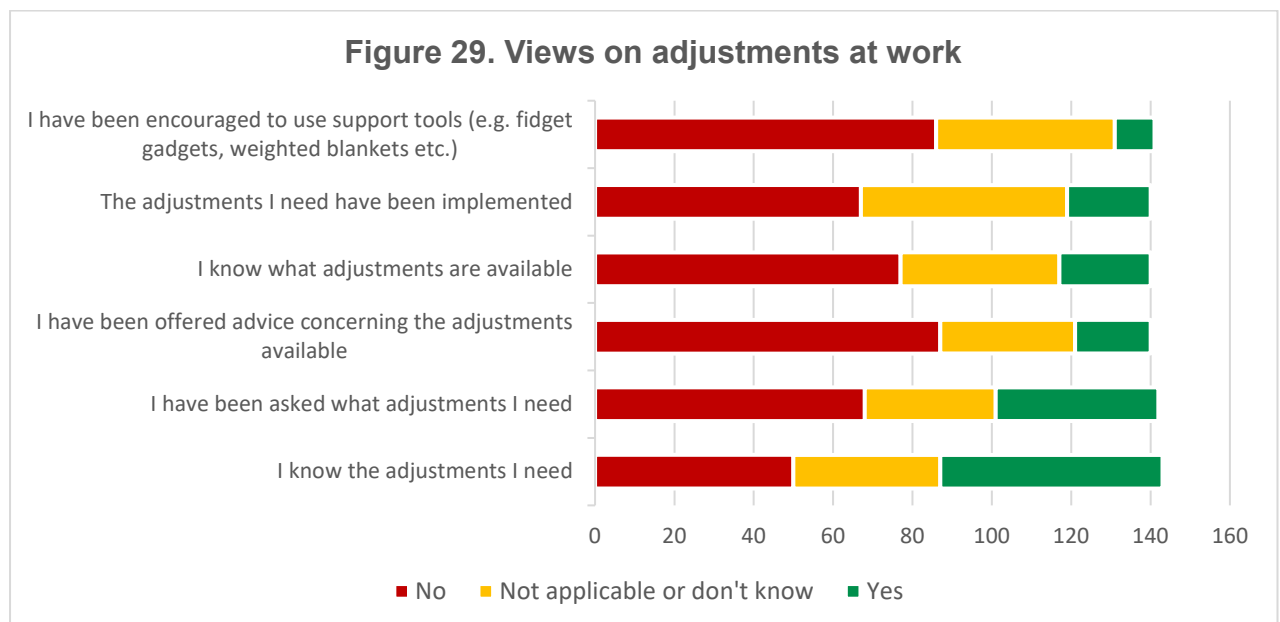
The comments highlight the challenges faced and some describe experiences that have not been positive. Some of the comments highlight additional concerns when people are self-diagnosed rather than have a formal diagnosis.

The next question within the survey was used to take a closer look at the issue of reasonable adjustments in the workplace. Survey respondents were asked about the use

of reasonable adjustments from a variety of perspectives. 6 statements were used, and respondents asked to indicate whether this was true in their experience ('yes'), not applicable or false ('no'):

- I know the adjustments I need
- I have been asked what adjustments I need
- I have been offered advice concerning the adjustments available
- I know what adjustments are available
- The adjustments I need have been implemented
- I have been encouraged to use support tools (e.g. fidget gadgets, weighted blankets etc.)

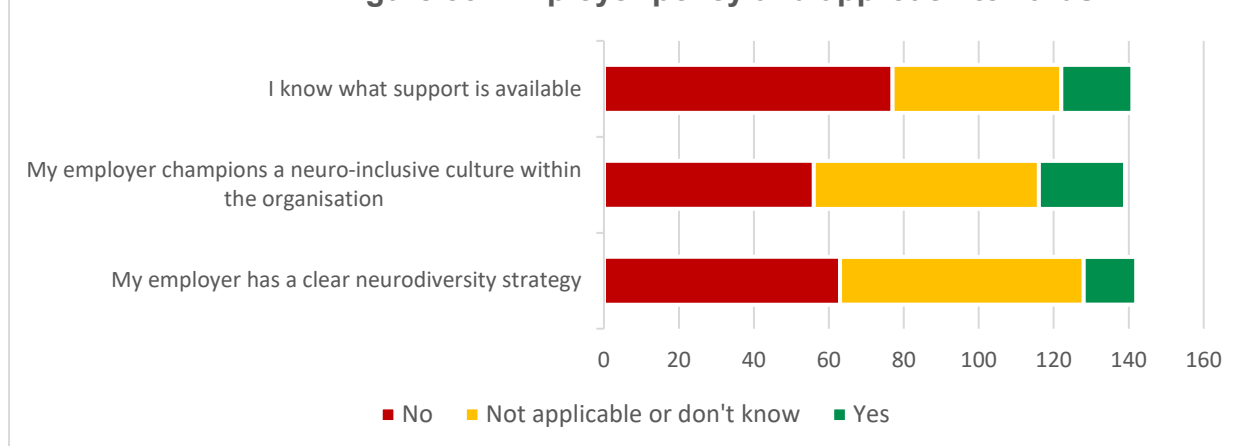
On average 55 survey respondents didn't respond to the question but more selected don't know or not applicable (on average a further 40 respondents). The results are shown in Figure 29.



The feedback highlights that 56 respondents (29%) know what adjustments they need compared to 50 (26% of all respondents) who don't. 41 of the survey respondents have been asked which adjustments they need at work (68 haven't). There is more of a slant towards a lack of action to put reasonable adjustments in place compared to small numbers who have been encouraged to adopt adjustments or offered advice and support. Only 10 of the survey respondents have been encouraged to use support tools and only 19 of the survey respondents have been offered advice on available adjustments. Slightly more have had adjustment implemented (21) or know what is available (23). Overall, the feedback suggests that employers have more to do before there is a more standard or robust offer of reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

The survey also explored employer policy around ND within the workplace. The feedback obtained is displayed within Figure 30. The results highlight that 14 respondents have an employer with a clear neurodiversity strategy, 19 know what support is available and 23 have an employer that champions a neuro-inclusive culture within the organisation. On average 65 respondents reported that none of these things are in place (a significant proportion didn't know).

Figure 30. Employer policy and approach towards ND



The survey concluded with an open comment question encouraging feedback on employment experience to help inform Shropshire Council's All Age Autism Strategy. There were 47 comments in total covering a wide range of themes, many comments covered more than one main theme. The feedback has been read and categorized below in Table 5. Table 5 shows that the theme most commonly referred to was the importance of understanding neurodiversity and many people suggested that additional training is required to increase understanding (28%). The second top theme was linked to comments describing negative experiences with employers (20%). A significant proportion (19%) described a need for improved support for individuals with ND within the workplace. The example comments better help to illustrate these results.

Table 5 Comments to inform the All Age Autism Strategy

Theme	Count	%
Negative experiences with employers	15	20%
Importance in understanding Neurodiversity and additional training	21	28%
Lack of practical implementation of policies by employers	4	5%
Need for reasonable adjustments for ND employees	9	12%
Being treated differently / disadvantaged / bullying	10	13%
Improved support for ND individuals in the workplace	14	19%
Other	2	3%
Total	75	100%

Example comments - Comment to inform the All Age Autism Strategy

- *"A good manager who understands and doesn't stereotype makes all the difference. I talk about my autism and ADHD regularly in an attempt to normalise neurodiversity. I haven't always been in such a good situation that I am now."*
- *"Although my employer has a strategy/policy in place, there is no evidence that of it in practice and so it is just a piece of paper. If I disclose my ND, they will require me to explain everything to them and explain what adjustments I need exactly. I do not feel prepared enough on my own to discuss this with them, and I doubt I will get much help anyway. I am also scared of being bullied, as this has happened in the past and my previous manager made me feel completely worthless. I think it is better not to share anything personal at work."*
- *"Being in employment was very difficult for me. There was a lot of pressure to be social and that took energy I didn't have. People would also assume sometimes I wasn't capable, and I was. Bullying was a big thing. It knocked my confidence hugely."*

- *“Businesses do not want the expense in accommodating, nor support any adjustments that may impact productivity in a way that is deemed a “normal routine” to other staff. It’s an inconvenience and annoyance to have to accommodate the most basic of requests. Even when a manager has training and is to follow company policy and HR advice, on the ground level it is not accommodating, cared about or even tolerated. I have been treated with contempt, disrespect and intolerance on such a scale I became extremely unwell, driving me to experience suicidal ideation....Explaining the accommodations and why they are needed would be helpful to integrate and prevent the misunderstanding of why they are required, that it’s not special treatment. Perhaps even a work buddy to meet and greet at the door, befriend and support with any questions. A role that may only be required during the initial settling down period any new team member requires but with extra support until a ND person has settled and integrated into the new role and new team. Becoming a valued colleague.”*
- *“Current systems have let down undiagnosed people with any kind of difference as adequate facilities for identifying and diagnosing true autism are not in place. This leads to extreme psychological distress as the person does not fit the current parameters and becomes mentally burnt out from masking.”*
- *Employers do not want someone who cannot move between tasks. There should be more opportunities for neurodiverse people to volunteer or for employers to try before you buy so both parties can see if they are suited.*
- *“I had a pre-assessment for autism and ADHD privately. I told my manager it was very likely I would be diagnosed with both. I asked if there could be any reasonable adjustments if I had a diagnosis and she said “the job’s the job”. I didn’t bother pursuing my diagnosis.”*
- *“I have given my employer my reasonable adjustments, but they don’t seem to want to put the help in place, only things. So, they are buying me items, but simple things like having time off the phone has not been implemented.”*
- *“My employer claims to be neuro inclusive but they are a million miles away from it. It’s all for show to the public and has no substance as an employee with autism.”*
- *“Luckily, I had my diagnosis while working with my employer, but I feel they would never have hired me knowing I was autistic. I have had severe bullying at work due to being different and no help with this. I have always felt left out and on my own. I don’t even bother to ask for help because I’m put down constantly by being told I’m awkward or being a pain, so I try to just get on with my job. I’ve never been offered any reasonable adjustments. I feel very alone and bullying towards me has actively been encouraged in the workplace.”*
- *“I think more needs to be put out about it what support is in place in the workplaces for neurodiverse people and how it can be beneficial to tell your employer. Maybe to have some tips about how to communicate with your employer about being neurodiverse as it can be hard to bring this up.”*
- *“I would like there to be greater support for people on the autism spectrum get support for both self-employment and job opportunities. I would like to see all business in the area whether they are local or a national company to undertake training to understand autism better. Half the problem is that most business have no clue when it comes to understanding disability or autism. It all very well the government wanting autistic and disabled people to get into work, but it will not change until you address the ignorance around autism and disabilities.*
- *“More awareness how autism impacts people in work and how to best support them.” Especially awareness regarding autistic people that can speak sometimes but not always due to tiredness, overwhelm, etc. and help with giving them options to communicate this with their employer or be able to use Makaton or sign language at work. Opportunities to learn Makaton or sign language for autistic adults. I cannot find anything anywhere, its only for people supporting autistic people and super expensive? It should be free or at least reasonable for autistic people, even if they learn it as adults. Also, more awareness about autistic adults in general for employers, like Autism is not a learning disability, spiky profile and how to work best with an autistic employee.”*

The last section of this report summarizes the feedback received through the survey highlighting key findings and next steps.

7 Summary and Conclusion

Shropshire Council's Neurodiversity Employment Survey was conducted from March 3 to May 2, 2025, targeting individuals who identify as neurodiverse, either through diagnosis or self-identification. The survey aimed to gather insights on employment experiences, including recruitment practices, workplace support, and preparation for work. It was promoted through various channels, including the Shropshire Council website, newsroom, surveys mailing list and local networks. The survey was accessible in different formats to accommodate diverse communication needs.

A total of 195 individuals participated in the survey, with 97% identifying as neurodiverse. Among those, 72% had a formal diagnosis of neurodiversity, while 26% were self-diagnosed. The majority of respondents identified as having Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), followed by ADHD, dyslexia, and sensory processing difficulties. The gender breakdown showed 33% male and 62% female respondents, with a diverse age range represented. The survey respondents live across Shropshire but there were far more from the Shrewsbury area than from other parts of the county (111 of the 195).

The survey also assessed the education and employment status of respondents, revealing that 52% were employed, while others were students, self-employed, or unemployed. Only 16 respondents were receiving support from employment services.

Preparation for Work

When asked about their readiness for employment, 55% of respondents felt prepared, while 39% did not. This lack of preparation was noted across various age groups and employment statuses. Considering employment status shows 16 full time students don't feel ready for work, 15 unemployed respondents are not ready for work and 14 people who are already employed don't feel prepared for work. There were smaller numbers spread across the other categories. The additional analysis suggests there isn't a clear pattern linked to gender, age or employment but educational achievement is a factor (those educated to degree level or above are more likely to feel prepared for work).

All survey respondents were asked whether they have an EHCP or have been statemented. A large proportion answered 'no' (74%). The survey results show that the older survey respondents were much less likely to have been statemented/have an EHCP or equivalent support. A significant proportion of the survey respondents are already in work. When asked about work experience, a significant proportion of the survey sample do have work experience with only 20 people answering 'no' (10%). Additionally, 70% of respondents understood the concept of reasonable adjustments, but 49 individuals were unaware of it, indicating a need for greater awareness.

Job Applications

The survey explored the application process, revealing that 64% felt capable of writing a CV and 63% completing application forms, though only 39% felt comfortable participating in taster days. Feedback indicated significant barriers in understanding job descriptions and advertisements, with many respondents expressing that employers often do not clearly welcome applications from neurodiverse individuals. Of those who have searched for jobs and made applications, most have applied for between 1 and 3 jobs (43 people). 10 respondents have applied for more than 15 jobs, perhaps suggesting that the process has been challenging for them.

Job Interviews

Feedback on job interviews showed mixed experiences, with only 36 respondents having interviews for most or all their applications. Many reported not receiving interview questions in advance or being offered a choice of interview formats. A significant number of respondents felt uncomfortable discussing their neurodiversity during interviews (only 26 of the survey respondents had discussed their needs), which may hinder the implementation of reasonable adjustments.

Being in Work

Approximately 145 respondents provided feedback on their workplace experiences. While 86 reported disclosing their neurodiversity always or sometimes, only 9 felt their needs were met at work. 75 of the 86 respondents in work do not feel that they can be their "true self" in the workplace. A large number expressed concerns about stigma and bullying, with many indicating that their neurodiversity negatively impacted their workplace relationships and opportunities for promotion. Despite this, a proportion of survey respondents in work have told their manager about their ND (65) and 59 have told some trusted colleagues. Much smaller numbers have spoken to HR, a wider group of colleagues/all colleagues or 'everyone'. Only 14 people have told everyone.

56 respondents (29%) know what adjustments they need compared to 50 (26% of all respondents) who don't. 41 of the survey respondents have been asked which adjustments they need at work (68 haven't). There is more of a slant towards a lack of action to put reasonable adjustments in place compared to small numbers who have been encouraged to adopt adjustments or offered advice and support.

Conclusion

The findings from the survey suggest there is a significant need for improved understanding and support for neurodiverse individuals within the workplace. Key themes identified include the necessity for additional training for employers, better implementation of policies, and the provision of reasonable adjustments to enhance the employment experience for neurodiverse individuals. A significant issue highlighted within the comments made is that many individuals don't feel able to disclose their neurodiversity as a result of previous experiences or understand the reasonable adjustments they may request/ actions available. This creates the challenge that employers are not aware of needs and are therefore unable to respond.

The feedback collected will be critical in shaping future strategies and support mechanisms for neurodiversity in Shropshire, including the further development and implementation of the All Age Autism Strategy. The research findings will be considered by Shropshire Council and its partner organisations working to design and deliver improvements in workplace support for neurodiversity.

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Analysis and reporting by:
Feedback and Insight Team, Shropshire Council
Email: TellUs@shropshire.gov.uk

Shropshire Council Lead Department:
Commissioning



Shropshire
Council