

# Learners who are neurodivergent in clinical practice in Cheshire and Merseyside; what are their requirements and what resources are available to them? A scoping exercise.

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**Background:** Neurodiversity is an umbrella term for neurological conditions including autism, dyslexia, and attention deficit hyperactive disorder [1]. Healthcare learners are among the 15%-20% of the UK population who are neurodiverse [2]. When learners engage in work-based learning the number of people leaving the workplace is high [3]. Further research is needed to explore neurodiversity in the healthcare workforce and the support needed to reduce attrition of learners and staff [4].

## Aims and Objectives:

- Identify what resources are available in Cheshire and Merseyside NHS to support neurodivergent healthcare learners and identify gaps.
- To investigate methods of reducing healthcare staff turnover and promoting positive impact and engagement in healthcare practice.

**Methodology:** A scoping exercise and gap analysis were carried out on electronic resources, ranging from charities and large organisations to specific Facebook groups. Focus groups (4 neurodiverse nursing students) were conducted to analyse the participants' experience of neurodiversity in clinical practice.

## Gap Analysis:

- Online awareness of promoting neurodiversity and how to seek support on resources via organisations such as, Autistic UK and Disability Confident.
- Examples of much needed resources that aid healthcare learners within the workplace. Example: a toolbox that contains colour overlays and coloured paper for learners.
- Neurodiversity leads signpost support and promote an inclusive culture.
- Support groups for the neurodiverse or curious promote staff and learner engagement.

**Conclusion:** The key factors that affect neurodivergent learners in healthcare include setbacks, resilience, impact on duties and mental health, stigma, insensitivity, person centred approach, resources, neurodiversity leads, training and openness to ideas. The findings increase awareness and inform the development of high-quality resources available to healthcare learners in clinical practice.

**Recommendations:** The findings inform the development of a neurodiversity toolkit which will be available to clinical practice across Merseyside and Cheshire NHS.

- IT hardware and non-IT hardware should be available for learners in clinical environments screen overlays, Dictaphone, and written guidance.
- Online resources accessible to healthcare learners in terms of language and accessibility.
- Tone of educational resources should be sensitive and positive.
- Peer support should be encouraged.
- Lived experiences of neurodivergent learners in clinical practice should be shared.

## References:

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