

Modern Policing in the 21st Century- Time for Inclusive Cultural Shift: A Mixed Methods Study and Strategic Intervention with Merseyside Police

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Declaration

I declare that the content and research within this Thesis is the result of my own independent work and investigation, whilst studying as a doctoral researcher at Liverpool John Moores University, (2022-2025). I declare that all sources are accordingly acknowledged in the References. The material contained within this Thesis has not been previously submitted to any degree.

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The previous three years have been the most interesting and exciting period of my life. I have been exposed to a world that few members of the public get to see in person within the policing, law enforcement, and national security environments in the UK, the US, and Canada, and through remote meetings with policing and governmental organisations in Europe and the British Overseas Territories. It has opened the world to me, and I have gained a clear understanding of how neurodiversity can be a significant advantage in these domains internationally.

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In the UK: UK Intelligence Community, SO 15, Counter Terrorism Policing, Counter Terrorism Operational Command (CTOC), The Metropolitan Police, Police Scotland, Avon and Somerset Police, London Mayor's Office for Police and Crime, The Firearms Threat Centre, The College of

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This thesis is also dedicated to all neurodiverse people. I hope this thesis helps improve the lives of people with neurodiverse conditions in the police, national security, and government sectors.

With Thanks

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February 2026

Abstract

Policing has been through a turbulent period during this study, marked by the publication of the Baroness Casey Review and the Angiolini Enquiry in 2023 and 2024. In 2025, a Panorama exposé on Charing Cross Police Station and the College of Policing's commissioning of a Review into Police Leadership subsequently generated high-profile public interest in organisational cultures within the Policing sector. These reports and the ensuing media interest exposed a significant and harmful organisational culture, prompting the police to carefully consider their next steps to create a better, more inclusive organisational environment.

Furthermore, public interest in organisational development and cultural change has occurred internationally, including the signing of an executive order by President Donald Trump on the 20th January 2025, which ceased equality, diversity, and inclusion training across all federal government departments.

This mixed-methods study examines the effectiveness of neurodiversity support within Merseyside Police and the impact of its organisational change over three years. During the course of this research, I have interviewed 31 officers across the organisation's ranks, conducted four focus groups with different demographics, including policing students at the Merseyside Police Academy and specialist roles, had access to the highest levels of decision-making within the force and a survey which was open for six months in 2024 with a response rate of 130 people across the Response and Resolution and People Services strands.

The force, for the first time, has opened itself to a researcher to understand how it can adapt, innovate, and create positive organisational change, and has given me free rein and access to documentation, committees, data, and personnel to interview. Merseyside Police have also provided me with a laptop, keycard access to sites, and vetting to support this research. I have been in the field for three years, understanding the key challenges in supporting neurodiverse people within the organisation through an insider-outsider approach and by acclimatising through speaking with various points of contact in confidence to understand the organisation's main challenges.

There has been extensive literature on neurodiverse members of the public interacting with police officers. However, there has been little written about the support that officers who are diagnosed or have a diagnosis of neurodiverse conditions from earlier in life receive. This study aimed to evaluate this support within Merseyside Police, as well as the organisational culture, documents,

committee structure, and data on neurodiversity within the force, to identify any areas that could be improved for neurodiverse people within the force.

This has provided me with a deep insight into the organisational culture as well as outlining in the findings and discussion chapters crucial recommendations and findings which will hopefully influence the organisational culture of Merseyside Police regarding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for many years to come, to ensure that people can bring their whole selves to work in a psychologically safe environment. If people bring their whole selves to work and feel comfortable, this can enable organisations to achieve breakthroughs in innovation and creativity. With these safeguards and a positive organisational culture in place, neurodiverse people can work to their full potential and unmask, thereby increasing productivity and organisational effectiveness as well as fostering loyalty and helping people stay with organisations that they feel look after them.

I have also had access to various police forces across the world, including in America, Canada, Europe, and the UK, as well as to UK Government Departments, including the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, the Metropolitan Police, and the UK Counter Terrorism Network. These learnings from best practices and the challenges faced by other organisations have been applied in the thesis to provide a holistic overview of how different departments operate and what could work when used within Merseyside Police.

What will be outlined in the findings and discussion chapters is a new Culture, Inclusion, Public Sector, Human Equity, Educational and Relational (CIPHER) Model for Neurodiversity and EDI support across public sector organisations in the UK, which includes Policing, NHS, Fire and Ambulance Services, to standardise and unify approaches across the UK. This has resulted from time spent with these organisations throughout this study.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

There is a significant number of neurodiverse people living with different conditions in the UK population, according to Capita: '1 in 7 (15%) of people within the UK are neurodiverse' (Capita, 2023). Within policing, there is a significant advantage for neurodiverse people, particularly in specialist fields such as counter-terrorism, research and analytics and operational policing, due to their ability to make quick decisions. However, there are still some important factors that can create significant challenges for neurodiverse people, including sensory overstimulation and reasonable adjustment provision. Additionally, it is essential to consider whether assistive technology software effectively fits the operational domain of roles that involve handling sensitive information, and the applicability of assistive technology to information assurance policies and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This presents unique, unprecedented challenges unlike those faced by any other sector; however, if the conditions and technology are correct, the benefits to organisations outweigh the cost implications as people can excel and bring their unique strengths to organisations.

This thesis aims to evaluate the effectiveness of a strategic intervention and cultural evaluation of neurodiversity within Merseyside Police through the daily observations and qualitative data of an action researcher. The research methods deployed have included a mixed methods data collection approach of one-to-one interviews and focus groups with officers and members of staff across the organisational rank structure, and a targeted survey sent to the People Services and Response and Resolution strands within the force as well as targeted field visits through immersion within Merseyside Police of visits to stations and specialist capabilities including firearms and Counter Terrorism. Furthermore, the thesis will include additional research activities, including international best-practice field visits to America and Canada to observe and learn, bringing back to Merseyside Police unique insights that can be applied within the organisation. In addition to observations from these field visits, both domestically and

internationally. Extracts from conversations with law enforcement leaders around the world will be used and sometimes anonymised to highlight and contextualise the current approach to EDI and neurodiversity within policing and national security organisations worldwide.

Furthermore, the research will also address and evaluate the working conditions for neurodiverse people within Merseyside Police, the organisational cultural awareness of neurodiversity within the force and identify areas for adaptation, innovation, and positive cultural change to bring neurodiversity to the top of Merseyside Police's organisational priorities and focus moving forward.

This research has created a different interpretation of the world of policing action research and ethnographic literature. An example of this is Loftus' work (2008 p. 51) which states that:

Two broad and opposing perspectives on the working environment are presented. The first is characterised by resistance and resentment to the institutionalisation of diversity [.....]. A contrasting standpoint held by female, minority ethnic and gay and lesbian officers reveals the persistence of a dominant heterosexist male culture.

My PhD thesis juxtaposes these notions, where there have been some challenges with getting stakeholders onboard but once they understand the true impact neurodiversity can have on the organisation and the business benefits it brings, police officers and members of staff that I have spoken with at all levels inside the organisation and national governance and oversight groups have been receptive to change and supportive of this research.

Loftus's (2008, p.51) research suggested that there was a significant kickback to change management in relation to race and gender from 'heterosexual and white male colleagues'. Loftus's study took place after the publication of the Macpherson Inquiry in 1999 and examined a similar study of one chosen police force in response to these recommendations and findings, focussing exclusively on race, gender and sexuality.

Loftus also observed that a 'diversity strategy was considered to have made some changes to the interior culture, it was believed to be largely hampered by the persistence of white, heterosexual, male culture that was resistant to the revised ethos' (Loftus, 2008, p. 73) and that there is a clear 'resistance towards the institutionalisation of diversity' (Loftus, 2008, p. 33) showing that policing has resisted moves towards diversity and inclusion in this sector for decades.

Supporting the notion of discrimination within the police literature outside of racial discrimination is the notion of sexism and misogyny. Heidensohn (1998, p. 219) states that 'comparing US and British officers' accounts, [.....] that they all acknowledged male colleagues' opposition and unprofessional and abusive behaviour as features of their everyday environments'. This highlights that other sections of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda have faced, and continue to face, significant challenges within the policing and national security sectors. This was published in 1998 and remains the case today for female police officers and members of the public as highlighted by the appalling behaviour of Wayne Couzens and David Carrick in the Baroness Casey Review and Angiolini Enquiries, published in 2023 and 2024.

An observation this study has brought to the forefront is that society and policing within the last 28 years now regards neurodiversity as a competitive advantage and has invested significant resources to better understand and help improve customer service when interacting with neurodiverse members of society providing the best for people, contrasting with the notions Loftus had observed within his study in 2008 creating valuable lessons to police leaders who want to embrace diversity.

It has been a privilege to share the stories of the participants in this study for the first time, and to share confidentially the challenges and examples of good practice from officers and members of staff associated with Merseyside Police's organisational culture. Merseyside Police have been great hosts, enabling me to access everything I needed to conduct this research, as well as providing Non Police Personnel Vetting Level 2 (FULL) vetting, an ID Card, and email presence

within the organisation. This has opened up some exciting and unique opportunities for me to work with partner agencies and to immerse myself not only in the organisation but also to access other forces, both domestically and internationally. I cannot thank them enough for their support throughout this research, which has enabled me to explore different approaches to neurodiversity within blue light services, policing, and national security domains.

It is hoped that the force acts upon the recommendations and findings in this thesis to ensure that neurodiversity is at the top of the agenda and as crucial as the other protected characteristics, which have traditionally been an organisational focus. To date, there is still a predominant and visible presence in the organisation regarding race and LGBT rights, whilst enabling neurodiverse people to come into work feeling psychologically safe and to think that they can be themselves without any form of discrimination or prejudice, and to be able to unmask and reach their full potential, has attracted less attention and support.

There will be some uncomfortable aspects within this research for the force. However, Merseyside Police should use this to move forward and make positive, actionable changes by hearing both the best practices that have supported their colleagues and the areas where adaptation, innovation, and positive organisational cultural change are needed. Change is never easy, but this research has been undertaken to ensure that both the strategic and operational workplace environments are supportive. The force should consider and understand that environments need to be adjusted to reduce sensory overload and overstimulation in the workplace. This can be achieved by providing training and education grounded in lived experience to prevent inappropriate behaviours, and by creating a welcoming environment for neurodiverse people to work in.

There have been substantial organisational shifts regarding neurodiversity within Merseyside Police and the wider law enforcement domain in the UK, driven by organisations such as the National Police Chiefs' Council and the College of Policing, towards creating a neuro-inclusive

culture in policing. However, there is still a long way to go before policing, both locally and nationally, achieves this goal.

One of the main findings of this thesis, crucial for increasing awareness of neurodiversity, is the need for training and education on neurodiversity for officers and staff within policing, both for line management and for frontline operational officers. During the course of this research, I have attempted to raise awareness, understanding, and education through briefings and awareness sessions, which has been a significant undertaking on my part. This has acted in three different ways: by raising the profile of this research, serving as a tool for participant recruitment, and raising awareness.

During this research, I have frequently been asked to speak at police stations and at HM Government events on neurodiversity in policing and national security. Neurodiversity was not on the agenda in these domains before this research commenced but now is frequently discussed in high-profile forums I attend within the sector. This highlights a shift in perceptions of neurodiversity. However, a national neurodiversity in policing policy is needed to ensure foundational and systemic support for neurodiverse people across the 43 police forces in the UK.

It is commonly cited that Judy Singer, in her 1998 thesis titled *Odd People In: The Birth of Community on the Autistic Spectrum*, coined the term Neurodiversity. It is also noted in *The Guardian* in 2023 that “Neuro’ was a reference to the rise of neuroscience. ‘Diversity’ is a political term; it originated with the black American civil rights movement. ‘Biodiversity’ is really a political term, too. As a word, ‘neurodiversity’ describes the whole of humanity. But the neurodiversity movement is a political movement for people who want their human rights’ to be acknowledged and recognised’ (*The Guardian*, 2023). The term neurodivergence ‘emerged from an activist-based movement’ that is supportive of neuro-cognitive conditions and advocates for the social model of disability to be accepted as the norm (Walker, 2014). This debate has

generated multiple interpretations, as Dwyer and Buckle (2022) proposes that ‘unfortunately, defining “neurodiversity” is not particularly easy, which means it can be a highly subjective topic’.

The linguistic debate surrounding terms associated with neurodiversity has been a significant and notable phenomenon that has emerged in society as understanding has grown; other terms have evolved from the foundational term of neurodiversity, most notably neurodivergence, which has seen significant and monumental traction in the UK as private sector organisations have been using this to create support groups. Neurodiversity refers to the collective group in society that exhibits cognitive differences and ‘are natural variations – not deficits, disorders or impairments’ (The Brain Charity, 2022). Neurodivergence is the term ‘used to describe individuals whose brains process, learn or behave differently from what we may consider “typical”’ (The Happiness Index, 2024).

However, the definition of neurodivergence from the Cambridge Dictionary states that neurodivergence is ‘having or related to a type of brain that is often considered as different from what is usual’, (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025). In essence, deviating from the norm and reinforcing a medical model of stereotypes, conforming to biases presented by society that neurodivergent individuals are a neuro-minority group, as opposed to looking at ways to adaptively support people in society, the workplace, and education.

For the purposes of this thesis, the term neurodiversity will be attributed to the Singer Definition, which focuses on how humanity and people think, respect their human rights, and reduce discrimination. I believe that neurodiversity refers to diversity of thought and is an umbrella term for conditions such as Autism, ADHD, Dyspraxia, and other neuro conditions. Therefore, the term neurodiversity, in conjunction with a Social Model of Disability lens, will be the primary terminology used throughout this thesis; however, the terms neurodivergent or neurodivergence will be used in appropriate contexts to maintain sentence flow and structure.

Organisational culture has been a topic of considerable discussion within Policing in the UK, and the process of change can take a significant amount of time to become embedded within policing organisations operating at both strategic and operational levels. The definition of organisational workplace culture is the 'common norms, values, and perspectives among individuals within a group' (Scammon, et al. 2014). Within Policing, these values and perspectives, established by chief officers and disseminated across the entire organisation, are fundamental as they set the expectations, standards, and values of police officers throughout the organisation. McKinsey and Company states that the 'key elements of a high-performing culture include defining behaviour changes that align with business performance, uncovering and reframing root-cause mindsets, and creating coherent employee experiences through clear communication, leadership role modelling, skill building, and formal changes to processes and incentives' (McKinsey and Company , 2018). This can therefore set an example for the organisation to follow, with a high-level strategic vision and values that align with the organisation's perspective.

However, since the commencement of this research, there has been substantial research conducted on the culture of policing organisations with particular emphasis on misogyny and sexually inappropriate behaviour. For example, the publication of the Angiolini Enquiry and Baroness Casey Review. The reviews highlighted systemic failures and a lack of line management oversight, which failed to address the toxic culture and observe the activities of certain officers in their teams, which resulted in the murder of Sarah Everard. The dynamics of sexism and this lack of oversight created a 'breeding ground' for inappropriate behaviour (HM Government , 2023, p. 279), which then resulted in the activities of certain officers taking advantage of the warranted powers that have been bestowed upon them. This went directly against the standards and cultural expectations established by the Metropolitan Police Commissioner and was outlined in the 'Turnaround Plan' by the Commissioner, which stated that 'trust and support of communities is fundamental to reducing crime. Police have unique powers, and the consent of those we serve flows from the trust we build. This requires the highest standards' (Metropolitan Police , 2023).

Organisational change is an element of organisational culture that must be undertaken to enable a proposed change in an organisation or workplace environment with the aim of achieving a specific purpose. Organisational change has been extensively written about in the literature and is a key element of this thesis, with theories outlined in the following chapters, including the literature review, the findings, and discussion chapters. However, effective management of change is a significant skill within organisations and requires insightful managers to bring people along on the journey. This can be even more challenging for neurodiverse individuals, as disrupting their established routines and introducing new ones can create workplace conflict. This thesis aims to examine the level of support for neurodiverse officers and members of staff inside Merseyside Police during these times of change, as well as the support mechanisms such as staff networks and reasonable adjustments in place to support them. It also identifies areas to create an outstanding inclusive organisational culture with findings and recommendations that the force should consider to fully integrate neurodiversity into its organisational culture.

Merseyside Police is currently implementing cost-saving measures, and neurodiversity and EDI should be viewed positively, as neurodiverse individuals provide a competitive edge in the workplace, notably through team diversity.

Policing has undergone a significant cultural shift, both within Merseyside Police and nationally, with 'four Prime Ministers and seven Home Secretaries over the last 6 years' each wanting to make their own imprint and legacy on policing and law enforcement in the UK (Gov.UK, 2025). This has shaped policy and culture across each of the 43 police forces. This has led to a lack of consistency and lack of a concerted approach to setting the policing standard across the UK. Furthermore, there has been a significant crisis in trust, confidence and legitimacy in policing in 2025, being at an all-time low of '49%' compared with 2015, which was '62%' (Office for National Statistics, 2025). The notion of public confidence, trust, and legitimacy is important within policing with different interpretations of the matter. Banton (1964, p. 230) suggests that public

trust, confidence and legitimacy are related through 'judgements about cohesion, trust and moral consensus'. Furthermore, '...one way in which the police communicate the values that they espouse is through the dignity and fairness with which they treat people' (Banton, 1964, p. 230). Holdaway (2010, p. 260) suggests the notion of trust, confidence and legitimacy in policing to be 'to analyse moral dimensions of humanity, human dignity, and the meanings of phenomena that are regarded as and lead to action on the basis of moral views'.

To address this lack of trust and confidence, a unified approach to policing is needed to bring neurodiversity to the forefront of the agenda through a standardised approach to organisational culture across policing. Kassem and Erken (2025, p.131) state that 'strengthening accountability, integrity and officer training rebuilds public trust' and that training is the key to supporting this rebuilding of trust and confidence in the community.

There are complex and often challenging areas of Policing that are adapting to 21st-century challenges with a number of emerging threats that require a specific skill set. Utilising the diversity of thought that neurodiversity brings can help overcome these challenges, as people who are neurodiverse are needed to think outside the box and may, in turn, increase public trust and confidence.

The turning point for police culture in recent times was the publication of the Baroness Casey Review in February 2023 and the Angiolini Enquiry in February 2024. Policing had to respond to the recommendations and findings in the reports to improve the workplace environment for officers and staff, free from discrimination and harassment. Senior police leaders in forces around the country sat down to understand the monumental impact this would have on shaping their organisational response and culture for many years to come. Little did police leaders know that once the findings of the report were made public, this would start a significant momentum of misconduct cases and significant media interest in this topic, with policing in the media headlines and front pages frequently in a negative way.

Senior police leaders across the UK had to consider how to address this issue, and the same was true for Merseyside Police. The force had to respond by evaluating its approach to misconduct and vetting processes within professional standards, setting up committees associated with inclusion and organisational development, establishing cultural awareness training, creating detailed Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) action plans and ensuring that its organisational culture was inclusive and welcoming. This was to ensure that, when public scrutiny of localised issues that followed, the organisation was prepared and could respond accordingly.

On a national level, policing governing bodies, including the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) and the College of Policing (CoP), established nationwide neurodiversity and EDI cultural working groups in response to the findings of the Baroness Casey Review and Angiolini Enquiry. This national support from the largest academic bodies in Policing, e.g., NPCC, HMICFRS and the College of Policing, has sparked a UK-wide conversation, firmly placing neurodiversity on the national agenda. Neurodiversity has garnered the highest levels of support through senior officer representation within the policing, government, and national security sectors in the UK, with discussions on the future direction of EDI and neurodiversity, and on how it can be embraced within UK policing organisations.

The establishment of these groups has triggered a national cultural shift towards a more inclusive and responsive approach, but tangible actions are yet to come from them. A national policy across the 43 police forces in the UK should be developed, so that decision-makers can understand the benefits that neurodiversity brings to their organisations within the policing domain.

The national security and intelligence domain appears to be ahead of policing, which has already been appealing to the neurodiverse population for many years for their unique skills and qualities. These skills and qualities have been utilised in areas such as linguistics, analysis, cryptography, and intelligence gathering, where they have been recognised for their distinctive pattern

recognition and innovative thinking. Therefore, policing needs to catch up to this level and understand the benefits that neurodiversity can bring to their organisations in a unique and challenging field.

On a localised level within Merseyside police, the setting up of what was titled at the start of this research, the Inclusion Board and now titled Our Culture Board, has certainly enabled a confidential forum for discussion and debate of the most pressing issues facing Merseyside Police and has been a meeting for updating the senior leadership team on the development of this research. This forum enables conversations about programme management, change management, and the physical challenges facing the organisation in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Furthermore, the participants in the data collection have highlighted that Merseyside Police faces several challenges related to neuro-inclusion, which are discussed in the findings and discussion chapters of this thesis, and require immediate attention and review to support neurodiversity within the organisation.

As highlighted by the national reports and enquiries, cultural reform for police forces and national security agencies has been in the public interest. On a local level, Merseyside Police has gone through a challenging 5 years. This has included several periods of civil unrest, COVID-19, as well as several high-profile murders, a terrorist attack at the Liverpool Women's Hospital in November 2021 and two major incidents, which were the Southport Attack in July 2024, as well as the car driving into crowds at the Liverpool Football Club Homecoming Parade in May 2025. These significant events of national interest have also put pressure on the force, as Merseyside Police have been in the public eye and have therefore ensured their public reputation has been upheld under unprecedented media scrutiny.

Furthermore, significant cultural change occurred on the 13th March 2025, when Serena Kennedy, the then-Chief Constable of Merseyside Police, announced her resignation from the force, leaving on the 31st August 2025. This was followed by the appointment of Robert Carden as the new Chief Constable on the 13th May 2025, officially taking office on 1st September 2025. This change in leadership has shifted the direction of traction within the organisation. It is unclear at the time of writing what the full impact of these changes will be on the organisation and what other changes are forecast for the next 12 months but it is hoped these changes will significantly improve the experience of neurodiverse police officers and members of staff within Merseyside Police.

I have been highly privileged to speak with senior law enforcement leaders in the US, Canada, the European Union, NATO, as well as the UK Government and National Security Partners, and I truly appreciate their time and confidence in this thesis. I thank them for the time and resources they provided throughout this research.

Significant external factors have influenced the development of organisational approaches to neurodiversity in law enforcement worldwide. This has been implemented through the signing of an Executive Order banning EDI training and provision in the US Federal System, including law enforcement. This was an unprecedented move by President Donald Trump on 20th January 2025, which has sent shockwaves through public sector organisations worldwide and has affected the research to a lesser extent. The Executive Order has been felt within UK law enforcement, but EDI and neurodiversity support cannot be revoked due to the legal protections of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. This will be discussed in more detail in the findings and discussion section, which will address the impact and testimonials provided to me by law enforcement agencies worldwide.

There have been some interesting findings that have emerged from data collection, which are outlined in the findings chapter, but will hopefully shape cultural change within Merseyside Police for a long time to come. Some of the proposed strategic interventions are systemic and require

foundational changes to the entire policing system, which will take a long time. However, these changes can be beneficial for neurodiverse people, enabling them to bring their whole selves to work and be more productive, ultimately reaching their full potential. Some of these proposed interventions are smaller and can, on a localised level, be implemented quickly and effectively within Merseyside Police, which can help create a psychologically safe and neuro-inclusive environment, enabling people to feel comfortable and bring their full selves to work. These recommendations and findings are at a significant juncture in policing, amid very politically challenging times and unprecedented public scrutiny of the police.

Neurodiversity can impact someone throughout their entire life. Therefore, organisations within policing, law enforcement and national security need to be aware and supportive of neurodiversity throughout the recruitment, retention, and progression processes. This is essential to support adjustments and find ways to attract and support neurodiverse talent within their organisations, enabling them to further progress if they wish to do so.

Roadmap

This thesis is a roadmap towards a neuro-inclusive organisation within Merseyside Police, along with the wider policing and national security sectors. The following chapters will discuss and debate the notions of neurodiversity support, policing, and national security. Following this introduction, a review of the latest literature on neurodiversity in policing will be presented in the literature chapter, along with an explanation of the methods and data collection procedures used with the total of 193 participants, as outlined in the methodology chapter. Furthermore, a findings chapter will outline key insights from participants in interviews, focus groups and survey respondents and propose key findings and recommendations for Merseyside Police. The final chapter of this thesis will be a discussion chapter that evaluates the impact, reach, and significance of this research through international collaboration. It will then discuss the impact of these recommendations and findings, and propose a new model for policing and public sector

organisations, the CIPHER Model. This model aims to unify and standardise approaches to neurodiversity and EDI within the public sector, eliminating replication and fostering unity in EDI-related activities to ensure maximum impact and sustainability. Therefore, policing and national security need to implement the recommendations outlined in the thesis to enable neurodiverse people to utilise their skills and attributes for public protection.

Law enforcement leaders reading this thesis should be reflective of their own challenges inside their respective organisations and think about what measures they can take to increase neuro-inclusion inside policing to ensure that neurodiverse people can be in a psychologically safe environment, excel and unmask to be able to reach their full potential in a highly unpredictable and dynamic environment.

Reflections on being an ‘Insider/Outsider’ Researcher

This section outlines the significant journey undertaken during this PhD, the challenges encountered in this unique environment, and a timeline of events for the establishment of this research. The notion of insider and outsider research theories, along with reflective practice, given the unique and unprecedented level of access afforded to me by the force, will be evaluated. Additionally, some areas that could have been improved will be assessed, including my positionality and the reflexive nature of the research post, being engaged in the field with Merseyside Police and other law enforcement and national security partners for three years, and the impact this has had on myself, my biases and understanding of policing worldwide. Finally, the impact and cultural changes observed throughout this research will be summarised in a holistic overview.

Timeline of Events for the Research

A member of my family works for Merseyside Police in one of the force's specialist capabilities and was approached by the unit's Inspector after I gave a lived experience presentation to an

organisation. On 18th March 2022, I was invited by the Inspector for Counter Terrorism North West to undertake a briefing on my lived experience of neurodiversity and the business case for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace for a counter-terrorism unit based in Merseyside, comprising of over 60 staff and officers, at the Operational Command Centre for Merseyside Police.

The Inspector from Counter Terrorism was impressed by the briefing and subsequently wrote to the Chief Inspector of the Inclusion, Wellbeing and Engagement (IWE) Team for Merseyside Police. They then proposed me as a possible speaker at the force's conferences. During a meeting with the Chief Inspector for the IWE Team on 25th May 2022, I suggested that Merseyside Police be a partner organisation for my PhD to evaluate the approaches the force takes for neurodiversity and the support it offers. I was asked to submit a formal proposal for the Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) to consider and take forward for discussion at a more senior level.

On the 18th July 2022, the project was approved, and I was subsequently invited to present a proposal for formal confirmation at the Inclusion Board (now Our Culture Board) on the 16th August 2022 for 20 minutes. Following unanimous agreement by the Board, the project was authorised to proceed, and paperwork was started to onboard me to the organisation and obtain vetting clearance to access the relevant information and personnel.

On 16th August 2022, the Vice Chancellor's Bicentennial PhD Scholarship application was submitted, accompanied by a supporting letter from Merseyside Police to confirm that the project had received full authorisation from the senior leadership team. The supervision team was subsequently formed, comprising Professor Steve Finnigan CBE QPM DL, Dr Craig Hammond, and Pro Vice Chancellor for Student Experience Professor Phil Vickerman.

On the 26th August 2022, I was authorised to hold Non Police Personnel Vetting Level 2 (FULL) Status, which allowed me access to police premises, systems, personnel, and meetings and

committees. This clearance has also been used for visiting partner agencies in the UK and abroad during the course of the study.

On 2nd December 2022, I was awarded the Vice Chancellor's Bicentennial PhD Scholarship to commence research in January 2023. I started acclimatising to policing by speaking with many different departments within the organisation and understanding the culture and rank structure in January 2023. However, something monumental occurred with the publication of the Baroness Casey Review Part 1 on 21st March 2023, which was a few months after the research began.

This caused shockwaves for the organisation as policing was now under the cultural microscope with intense public interest. This caused police forces around the country to reflect on their organisational culture and invest in supporting protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

During the inception period of this research, which spanned the first 12 months of 2023, I embedded myself within the organisation by gaining access to the Inclusion Board (now Our Culture Board), the highest decision-making body in the force related to HR, Organisational Development, Change Management, and EDI. Furthermore, I conducted several observational visits to:

- Local Policing Command at Marsh Lane Police Station on the 13th January 2023.
- Merseyside Police Headquarters, Rose Hill, on the 16th January 2023.
- Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership on 18th January 2023.
- Custody Suite visit in Birkenhead on the 6th February 2023.
- Merseyside Police Academy observation of a Hydra Exercise on the 22nd April 2023.
- Initial Police Learning and Development Programme observation of the students and then following them through their course, which started on the 11th October 2023.
- Merseyside Police Local Policing Station in Speke on 13th October 2023.

Alongside the visits, I gave presentations on my proposed research, the business case for EDI in the workplace, and my data collection methods at these locations to identify the support available to people within the organisation and to scope potential participants for data collection in 2024. This was to understand and process the unique operational environment within which policing operates.

On 20th July 2023, I submitted the first of four applications to the University Ethics Committee for approval to undertake the data collection phase of this research. I encountered numerous obstacles within LJMU regarding ethical authorisation for data collection for this thesis from the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). This process was significant, as the committee requested granular details concerning the project due to the sensitive topic of police culture in the thesis. This resulted in extra scrutiny of the ethics application, including the creation of risk matrices to anticipate potential health and safety risks during the data collation stage, as well as a continuous feedback loop with the ethics application. This process took 11 months to complete, with the application requiring intense detail.

In addition to the ethical approval for GDPR reasons, I also required a Memorandum of Understanding, an Information Sharing Agreement, and a Data Management Plan (please see the appendix for more details about these documents). This took an incredible amount of time to negotiate in partnership with the university and Merseyside Police, including establishing strict project parameters through the creation of information-sharing agreements and data management plans in partnership with the LJMU Legal Department.

The pressures associated with this process are nicely supported by Westmarland (2015) and Baker (2007), who state that 'there can be a number of challenges to access. Police culture is a controversial topic, and researching such a topic that is seen as the cause of so many problems for the police is fraught with difficulties. These issues range from how to obtain funding, negotiate access and maintain an ethical stance throughout the study' (Westmarland, 2015, p. 163). 'Any

change may bring about difficulties for people, however enthusiastic they may be' (Baker, 2007 , p. 78). This process took four months to complete and was finally signed off by the force on 1st December 2023.

This proved challenging because the research was conducted in secure operational environments within Merseyside Police in which I was embedded. In December 2023, I finally received ethical approval from the University Research Ethics Committee to undertake data collection with Merseyside Police Officers and staff. Following this being authorised, I conducted data collection in 2024, involving over 193 participants across mixed methods which included undertaking surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews. There were no issues with participant recruitment due to the various visits outlined above and the establishment of the MOU, ISA, and DMP, which granted me keycard access and control over sites, as well as unescorted access to police premises. This enabled me to have freedom within the organisation and to conduct my data collection without breaching any participant confidentiality.

Additionally, in 2024, I was invited to participate in various forums within the force. I became so embedded in the organisation that I was tasked with work by senior officers, including actions from meetings I attended. This overstepped my boundaries as a researcher within the organisation, and discussions were held to enable me to progress unhindered and to recalibrate my boundaries and position within the force. This issue occurred several times throughout 2024 and had to be effectively addressed through advocacy from my supervisory team.

As a result, I became deeply embedded in the organisation. I was consequently invited into areas that an outsider had never been before, including the firearms training school, and given an extensive vetting process to access counter-terrorism and intelligence community environments to support neurodiverse people, as detailed in the discussion section.

In 2025, I began writing my thesis. I focused on developing what has become the CIPHER Model, (this was launched in October 2025 at a conference at the National Cyber Security Centre in

London). I have also delivered first- and second-line manager training to Merseyside Police and given several presentations to UK national security partners, the NHS, and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service. In addition to the work within the force, my research garnered significant international attention in June 2023 from the FBI Office of Diversity, in October 2024 from the Calgary Police Service, and in 2025 from the UK Counter Terrorism and HM Government communities. This has served as a platform for launching these PhD findings and has led to conversations with various departments within the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, as well as other HM Government departments, with which I continue to work.

The Notion of Insider-Outsider Research

‘The process underlying qualitative research involves a set of social interactions between myself and participants as well as between these parties and the broader context in which the research takes place’ (Savvides et al. 2014, P. 413). This raises an interesting notion: the outsider, when conducting research, may never be truly outside because of how close they are to their own research. The notion of ‘insider researcher refers to a situation in which the researcher is an integrated part of the topic being examined’ (Yanto and Pandin, 2023, p.437), which in my case is related to supporting neurodiversity within Merseyside Police. Outsider research is when researchers are ‘studying a group to which they are not a member’ (Dwyer, 2009, p.57). I am an outsider because I study police officers and members of staff within Merseyside Police, which I am not part of.

However, my approach has been interesting, as I increasingly adopted an insider-outsider research approach. Whilst I have not been working for the organisation, which makes me an outsider, I have a shared identity with the participants, not by being a police officer or by working for Merseyside Police, but through my personal diagnosis of Autism and Dyspraxia, which makes me an insider, as the participants were neurodiverse. This shared identity certainly helped the

participants feel psychologically safe, enabling them to be honest and to provide an accurate organisational cultural picture of the challenges they face daily in the workplace.

During the semi-structured interviews or focus groups, the questions were open-ended, giving participants autonomy and control over which information they disclosed to me. The open-ended questions enabled participants to control the narrative and sometimes to stray from the question. I found that these instances were probably the most interesting, as they gave me deep insight into the dynamics of the teams they worked in and the day-to-day organisational culture at an operational, not a strategic, level. The interviews and focus groups, in particular, highlighted challenges that would not have been considered from a strategic perspective, such as using assistive technology in office and more secure environments.

However, the organisation has embraced me and my research into its organisational culture, and given me unprecedented access not only to Merseyside Police personnel and their estates, but also to other relevant high-profile policing forums and government departments, both in the UK and internationally. They have shown interest in this research, as well as given me inside access to the relevant personnel and documentation, assisted by senior leadership support when things get challenging in the research. The rapport and trust that Merseyside Police and the other organisations with which I have engaged internationally have been significant. These agencies have, for the first time, shared their support mechanisms for neurodiversity and how this is impacting their organisational culture, which has been highly unique and unprecedented. This level of trust is highlighted by a forum I attended with these stakeholders from across Whitehall to launch the findings of this research on the 30th October 2025 in Central London, where I was given 40 minutes after the keynote speaker to speak about the development of my CIPHER Model, my PhD Findings, the benefits that neurodiversity brings to national security and law enforcement as well as insights that have been gleaned from my time with law enforcement agencies across the globe.

Milligan (2016) observes that 'a researcher is neither fully an insider nor an outsider but takes on different positions depending on their situation'. This has been the case, where I have been the Subject Matter Expert (SME) in the room and felt like an insider during presentations and briefings I have given to Merseyside Police and other national forums, including within the intelligence and national security community, as well as the observational visits to many different environments where departmental leaders have welcomed me in. Furthermore, the force has been providing me with the correct information, including policies, documents, and data, needed to undertake this research.

However, in some cases, I have felt like a true outsider inside the organisation. An example of this has been the Inclusion Board and, subsequently, the Our Culture Board, where I felt like an outsider. Even though I have positioned myself to gain access to this forum through the development of the MOU, I am not a senior officer within Merseyside Police and therefore do not carry the same decision-making weight as the other officers around the table. This has made me feel like an outsider researcher in this forum, and I think this has been a point of contention for the force, as the content shared in front of me during this research has had to be carefully considered, which I fully appreciate.

This has been an interesting observation, as access to this board has been heavily controlled by the force and even revoked at different points throughout this research. I have had to manage resistance and overcome these complications associated with meeting access, and I have had to win 'the hearts and minds' of the senior leadership and build trust and rapport to position myself into the committee meetings (Baker, 2007).

The board, in some cases, has given me deep insights into the development of the EDI organisational culture, and occasional participation has enabled me to share some of my insights and learnings from my research. However, the power dynamics have felt disproportionately weighted in the force's favour in terms of control. This is because an Assistant Chief Constable

chairs this forum, which consists of the most senior officers from Inspector to Chief Superintendent rank, and their decisions on the direction of the inclusion organisational culture are final pending consultation with their teams. Access to this forum has provided me with unique opportunities, including observing firearms training exercises and gaining access to specialisms within the force, such as counter-terrorism, multi-agency partnership units, and CROPS units.

This has created an interesting fine line that I have had to walk throughout the research, constantly wrestling with biases arising from the information I acquired through forums and documents I read during my time with the organisation.

Chen and Li (2019) describe perceptions within the organisation as ‘psychological distance as a perception, which was an individual’s psychological construction after interpreting and processing specific objective information’. This can apply to this research, as with the data processing and the embedding of myself into the organisation, which, through my personal life experiences, has influenced the perception of the data and, therefore, the outcomes of this research.

I had to ensure I was not too close to maintain this research objective and reduce biases arising from visiting and speaking with different stakeholders within the organisation. Building these relationships whilst spending three years in the field has been challenging, but I have needed to stay objective in my research, which is to evaluate the effectiveness of approaches to support infrastructure for neurodiverse officers and staff, as well as understand the challenges the force faces in terms of providing this support, from speaking with participants.

The importance of developing strategies to effectively create a balance in the researcher respondent relationship that ensures the researcher will remain critically detached in his or her analysis while also developing the close interpersonal connections needed to gather meaningful qualitative data. But it is not an easy task (Maier and Monahan, 2010).

This has been particularly challenging due to balancing how to obtain information from points of contact, build rapport and relationships, and ensure that the research met its goals and objectives, according to the methodologies section of this thesis.

Positionality and its effect on the Research

The definition of positionality is ‘the position that the researcher has chosen to adopt within a given research study’ (Savin-Baden, 2013, p. 71) and ‘the views, values, and beliefs about the research design, conduct, and output(s)’ of the research and how an individual positions themselves into certain mindsets (Holmes, 2020).

My personal lived experience of neurodiversity due to a diagnosis of Autism and Dyspraxia from four years of age means that there have been many challenges that I have had to face over the years. These challenges have informed this study, as have participants' experiences within Merseyside Police. However, throughout this research, my positioning has been unique. I have had the support of the most senior officers within Merseyside Police, including the Chief Constable, for this research. This has enabled me to access any department within the organisation. Furthermore, I have also built relationships with various stakeholders across the organisation's command structure to raise awareness and support the research, which is significant and has enabled me to conduct my research without inhibition.

However, with this support, there has been potential for biases to emerge, including the perception of information and data sent to me from various departments to support the research. Given my extended time in the operational environment, my positionality within the organisation has been challenging, as taking on additional projects would have helped develop the research. Furthermore, I also needed to collect the data, and turning these down proved to be a significant dilemma.

There have been significant and complex developments in police culture and practice since the commencement of this research. This has influenced my daily operational practice as Merseyside Police seeks to understand how culture is emerging and how support for neurodiverse officers is developing within the UK policing landscape. This has influenced my positionality through my daily perceptions and biases, when new information comes to light, and in how I have positioned myself as a researcher within the organisation, as documented above and below in this chapter.

Day (2012) states that 'while researcher positionality affects all such research, the impact is particularly pronounced when working in a comparative social context, where positionality tends to be more complex'. This has created an interesting juxtaposition, as I feel I am in two different organisations with very different cultures, each influencing my positionality in both: Merseyside Police and my University.

Even though this research generated challenges, the university has worked well in partnership with Merseyside Police, keeping them up to date on project development. Korotka (2015) states that 'universities accumulate and transfer knowledge to industry and develop qualified human resources'. The way the university and the force have interacted has created a partnership development opportunity. Due to the unique nature of this research, there have been tripartite meetings that differ from the usual ones for policing students. This has been at a more senior level and has also involved the university to ensure that the research agreements I signed were maintained.

My perceptions of policing have had to shift due to the 'fluid nature' (Savvides et al., 2014, p.413) of the profession, cultural development and significant enquiries being published during the course of this research, which has allowed me to reevaluate my understanding and challenge some perceptions that are currently within the mainstream media.

Reflexivity and my research with Merseyside Police and other agencies across the world

The following section will outline reflections on conducting research across local, national, and international domains. It has been an interesting and insightful learning experience that has enabled me to understand different approaches across the 43 police forces in the UK, several law enforcement agencies and think tanks in the US, a Police force in Canada, as well as governmental organisations within Europe and the international military domain.

The definition of reflexivity 'generally refers to the examination of one's own beliefs, judgments and practices during the research process and how these may have influenced the research. If positionality refers to what we know and believe, then reflexivity is about what we do with this knowledge. Reflexivity involves questioning one's own taken-for-granted assumptions' (Finlay, 1998).

This research has used the Gibbs Reflective Cycle, which outlines the following stages (Gibbs, 2013):

1. Descriptions outlining the challenges the force has undertaken through the use of data
2. Feelings of the change of leadership and the new organisational values that come with this.
3. Evaluation of the data through the data collection methods
4. Analysis of the data in the findings and discussion chapters
5. A conclusion which will outline the proposed way forward for policing in the 21st century and how to embed neurodiversity into police organisational culture.
6. An action plan has been developed, going forward with the findings and recommendations of the thesis in the interim report and in discussions with senior leadership in Merseyside Police.

The course of this research has been unique and has influenced me in different ways, some of which have emerged during reflection on how the research has been undertaken. Reflections

have included the way I approached participants, recruited them to this study, my methods and ways of operating in the environment, my points of contact, and the way I interacted with and attended forums across the policing and national security sectors.

This has challenged my biases and understanding of what policing and national security are and their place within the UK infrastructure, as well as the broader picture of how the culture fits within public sector organisations. However, I have had to be very mindful and continue to bias check myself throughout the course of this research, as policing has been continually in the media in a negative way. Furthermore, I think the organisation has left a lasting impression on me due to the amount of time I have spent on site. I have also become immersed in their own processes and cultural norms, which have been significant and I would say have influenced the direction of this research both in positive and negative ways.

For change to happen, particularly in the public sector, an understanding of Merseyside Police's cultural style is needed. Baker (2007 p.34) states that there are multiple types of culture; 'process and role (bureaucratic culture), power (strong, central or hierarchical based culture), task (project and goal orientated culture) and reward (recognising and rewarding talent and success)'. Law enforcement as a sector has an odd combination with a mix of power, task and reward cultures where there is rapid change happening with live investigations, tasking to individuals within teams, such as researchers and analysts with jobs and rewards, where if you excel at your job, you are rewarded with a promotion to the next rank within the system.

It has been interesting to research the force throughout this PhD, as a mix of the cultures highlighted above has been ever-present since the project's inception. I have experienced the power culture. I liaised with senior officers within the organisation to obtain signatures on key documents, including the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Information Sharing Agreement (ISA), and Data Management Plan (DMP). Furthermore, the role culture has also been ingrained within the research, with multiple stakeholders and systems having to be navigated.

However, there are still areas for improvement, particularly in the area of neurodiversity support, where biases towards people with these conditions are still present inside the organisation, which are outlined in the findings and discussion chapters of this thesis.

Outside of Merseyside Police, the leading project partner for this study, I have also spent time in various agencies and forums associated with policing and national security to understand different approaches to organisational culture related to neurodiversity from other perspectives. This is bound to leave an impression on me regarding the different perceptions and priorities within police forces and agencies, not just domestically but internationally. This has informed how I undertake my data collection, my perceptions of police culture in the UK, and its successes and failings regarding neurodiversity, and has identified gaps where policing in the UK could increase support for neurodiverse people. I have identified several best-practice examples from my international field visits that I hope to bring into UK Policing, and in particular to Merseyside Police. The environments I have been exposed to are unique and part of the ecosystem that protects the public daily within communities. This has therefore enabled me to understand approaches to neurodiversity within law enforcement communities, nationally and internationally, as well as the support systems and strategies in place for officers, both within the organisation and in communities. These strategies are outlined in more detail within the findings and discussion chapters.

However, substantial challenges outlined in this section have influenced the course of this research, as highlighted earlier in the chapter, the brokering of agreements for the research to take place, as well as having to fight for access to the Inclusion Board and now the replacement to this the Our Culture Board has proved problematic due to the information discussed in this forum being confidential. This is further compounded by exposure to so much information, data and developments from a national perspective, with the publication of the Baroness Casey Review and the Angiolini Enquiry.

A significant challenge in this thesis has been the obligation to maintain confidentiality and to receive sensitive data from both participants and the force. I have been given a vast amount of data by visiting organisations, some of which has been very sensitive. Therefore, I have had to be very careful in how it is written, in accordance with the Official Secrets Act and the Government Information Standards. I have had to be very mindful of my words and ensure that nothing is breached while writing this thesis. If I were not under an obligation, I would have included some of the agencies' names and some outstanding neurodiversity approaches within these sectors, which cannot be divulged for security reasons. Another challenge I face is that I wanted to be very specific about certain documents received, but I have had to generalise to protect data and information security.

The challenge I have faced is that I have had too much data at one stage: over 125,000 words of raw data, which was refined into dedicated themes. This mass of data, not just from data collection but also from the reports and government enquiries published, has led me to recalibrate the study and the themes presented in the findings and discussion chapters.

This was a challenging experience, as I had to choose the most refined and pertinent quotes to match the recommendation, which was influenced by my perception and interpretation of the data, which had been thematically analysed to ensure it made an impact on the study. Furthermore, the data were selected to demonstrate the business case for the point I was trying to make and its impact on changing organisational culture within Merseyside Police and across the wider policing and national security sectors in the UK.

In qualitative research, a power imbalance can arise between participants and the researcher during interviews. My perception was that, because I was an insider-outsider, the power imbalance was removed. If I were working and being paid by the organisation, this would have changed the research's positionality, as participants might have thought, "Where is the information going to go higher up in the chain of command?" Due to this independence,

participants were able to disclose confidential experiences, and some of these instances are depicted in the quotes from the findings chapter. Due to my autonomy within the organisation, I was able to make participants feel at ease, even when some officers pressed me for their identities. I maintained that organisational distance and kept the highest level of participant confidentiality.

The one-to-one interviews were the best methodological approach, as people felt more at ease and in control of the process in a confidential environment outside the operational domain. I made sure they were in private, out of the public eye, by utilising the private rooms at headquarters that did not have publicly accessible booking systems, and by ensuring they were fully contained so people could not see who was in the room, to provide the highest level of confidentiality.

However, the research needed to be conducted on-site due to the ethics committee stipulating this, which may also have made people hold back in their responses, thinking the interview or focus group was being recorded for the purpose of senior leadership. There was not a time, though, that this needed to be reiterated for confidentiality within the data collection, and it is hoped that the participants were comfortable speaking in the confidential room I was using at headquarters, away from the operational environment.

These interviews were interesting for officers, as the first few participants allowed them to offload their stories and give accurate accounts of the behaviour they witnessed. Emotion is an important aspect of this, as one interviewee became tearful while recounting their experiences, saying they had not had this opportunity before and that they were thankful for my time. Hoffman (2007) states that 'emotional labour in the interview should be included as important research data. She interprets emotional labour as shifts in the power relationship between interviewer and interviewee. In doing so, Hoffman characterises power as something that shifts back and forth: at one point, the interviewer has power, then the interviewee does, and so on' (Hoffman, 2007, p.

2). Bringing emotion into the interview room can create a significant, deep connection in conversations, leading to insights into the participant's lived experiences and a new line of enquiry, which, in this case, was a deep connection with myself due to the shared characteristics of neurodiversity and disability. This also gave them a space to tell me the accurate account of the events and challenges they have had, as well as the daily coping strategies they have developed to mask and blend into the workplace and how they operate day to day.

However, during data collection, some survey participants expressed distrust. This was because a senior officer within the force was used to help with survey dissemination, as detailed below, which led to cognitive bias among some survey participants. Data collected from the survey supports this notion by people stating that they were unsure of how much information was going to be fed back to senior leaders and whether it was going to be anonymous, which caused some concern with a small group of participants. I provided significant reassurance at the start of the survey, but this did not ease some people's concerns. Goldshtein et al. (2024) state that 'respondents to demographic questionnaires sometimes omit responses or do not respond truthfully, leading to missing or incorrect values. Trust or lack thereof can be a cause of non-disclosure'. I do believe there was an aspect of this in the survey data collection.

With the benefit of hindsight, I would not have asked the chief superintendent to encourage the strand for respondents, as it created an implicit bias among participants, leading them to think I was feeding the results back to them, which I was not, and ensured confidentiality at the highest levels. If I went back, I would change this and make sure respondents felt more comfortable during the survey's open period. This also created pressure to respond, as the Chief Superintendent sent a message encouraging engagement because the response rate to that point was so low. Furthermore, this created a power imbalance between the participants and me due to the perception of an authority figure, senior in rank, encouraging and promoting the research, and my position as senior in status within the organisation, who will be feeding the

unredacted findings to other departments and areas of the force. However, hundreds of people are within the survey's target demographics of the response and resolution, and people services stand, so it would have been challenging to reassure everyone within that strand and to encourage people to respond without the support of a senior member of the leadership team to endorse and support the data collection method.

My reflections on the data collection were that the participants in the interviews and focus groups were diverse in rank and neurodiverse diagnoses or self-diagnoses, and that they provided me with deep insight into the lived daily experience of people working in policing and the national security domain. Data collection also exposed me to many different departments and environments that the public never gets to see, and to see this diversity of thought protecting the public is a significant and valued asset within the UK national security and public sector infrastructure. These environments bring unique challenges for neurodiverse people, as they are open-plan and highly overstimulating due to the volume of sensory input; therefore, reasonable adjustments are needed.

However, the research needed to be conducted on-site due to the ethics committee stipulating this, which may also have made people hold back in their responses, thinking the interview or focus group was being recorded for the purpose of senior leadership. There was not a time, though, that this needed to be reiterated for confidentiality within the data collection, and it is hoped that the participants were comfortable speaking in the confidential room I was using at headquarters, away from the operational environment.

The insider-outsider research methodological approach enabled me to become so deep inside the organisation that on occasion, it seemed as though I was working for them due to the many visits to different departments, national units and government agencies and little oversight of my activities from Merseyside Police. In some instances, this caused some issues due to myself actively scrutinising but also being a confidant to some of the senior leaders as they put complete

faith in this research and the findings and recommendations. I navigated a fine line within the organisation during this research: I had no line manager and was outside the rank structure, yet I had a significant presence and attended senior meetings. This caused some challenges to emerge, which included where I officially sat inside the organisation when a high-ranked person questioned where I sat due to this extensive access.

What would I change if I repeated this research?

Data Collection on Police Premises

I might change the environments in which the participants were interviewed, as they were in private rooms away from the operational environment, but still on police premises. This may have caused hesitancy and power dynamics issues with their employer, and people may have wondered whether the data would be fully anonymised, even though assurances were made at the start of each interview or focus group.

Lee (1993) highlights that 'Issues of privacy and personal choice regarding how to disclose information may be particularly relevant when the focus of research is considered private, stressful, or sacred, where disclosure might cause stigmatisation or fear, or where there is the presence of a political threat'. This is particularly relevant to this research, which discussed sensitive information related to participants' neurodiversity diagnoses and their challenges during their varying lengths of service with Merseyside Police. Therefore, the environment in which they discussed these details was essential for participants to provide accurate and complete answers.

I had to conduct the interviews on the Police estate and face-to-face for wellbeing, which in some cases was fantastic as it gave the participants 'a sense of rapport [...] [which] was important to participants in order for them to experience a more personal connection during their participation in the research' (Heath et al., 2018). This enabled personal rapport-building and getting to know the participants and their roles through subsequent awareness-raising briefings and

presentations before recruiting them for this research, and the in-person interview allowed them to feel at ease in the environment, physically seeing me as the researcher in the room with them.

I ensured the environment for the in-person interviews was as private as possible by asking the participant where they wanted to speak. Several participants said they wanted to be interviewed in their private offices. However, the majority of the participants said they wanted to speak with me at Headquarters, which was outside their work environment. This ensured participants were comfortable and could focus on the questions rather than privacy and confidentiality.

My immersion within the organisation did support both recruitment and the depth of participants' responses to my questions during interviews or focus groups. I believe that conducting the interviews and focus groups on-site helped the research by demonstrating the organisation's level of trust, allowing me to be present, and strengthening the rapport between the participants and me, as they recognised how important the research was for positively influencing the organisational culture. From my perspective, participants also viewed their involvement in interviews or focus groups as an opportunity to bring about meaningful organisational change for neurodiversity within Merseyside Police culture, as well as to inform the findings of this study.

If it had been possible, I would have conducted the interviews outside the Merseyside Police environment, such as on University premises or in other settings. Doing so could have altered the responses and my perception as the researcher, by balancing the power dynamics and perhaps giving participants more freedom to speak. This might have made some participants more open, as in some cases they felt the broader organisation was watching them during the on-site interview.

Closeness to the Organisation

Another issue discussed in depth throughout this thesis, and this chapter, was that I was too close to the force and too deep inside the organisation. This was because of the stakeholders I had on board from the senior leadership within Merseyside Police, as well as significant

introductions to senior stakeholders in the British Government and intelligence services to support this research. This has enabled me with considerable access, which has, in some ways, benefited the positionality of this study.

This led me to embody some policing cultural norms in my daily work, and I became too comfortable within the organisation, with my identity merging with its culture and norms as if I were working with Merseyside Police. This occurred even when interacting with my supervision team; I would refer to the force as 'we' because my lines of demarcation had been blurred in my mind due to the way I acted within the organisation and the depth in which I was researching, scrutinising and accessing documentation which enabled me to understand the position the force was taking for inclusion within the culture.

Maier and Monahan (2010) state that 'one of the greatest challenges that qualitative researchers face is getting close enough to respondents to develop the strong interpersonal connections needed to gather deep, meaningful data without getting too close or becoming so intimately involved with respondents that the researcher's capacity for dispassionate inquiry or analysis is compromised'.

This has been precisely what I have been wrestling with throughout this research. Even though I do not work inside the organisation and sit outside of the rank structure, there has been a series of rapport-building activities conducted, including being invited to speak at conferences on the Force's behalf, briefing teams about the research during the course of the study and spending time with national security partners and UK Government departments throughout this research. Furthermore, not just embedded for the time I was undertaking data collection, but also during the acclimatisation and post-data collection phase, which has been a period of three years.

As I completed one briefing or engagement session, it unlocked the next, which led me to places, including through the door of Downing Street and into other agencies. It has been extraordinary and exciting to see the different perspectives it has brought to the research. However, it has also

led me deeper and deeper into the world of law enforcement, possibly influencing my perceptions and perspectives on EDI in UK law enforcement.

This deep connection with the organisational culture, as well as tracking the course and development of neurodiversity inside Merseyside police, has given me a unique and unprecedented insight into the force, not just from interviewing the participants and data collection, but also by embedding myself into the committee structure of the force, which has given me insights into the strategic direction of how the force is approaching the topic of neurodiversity since the commencement of this research.

This has created some of the ethical dilemmas highlighted throughout this chapter and shaped my positionality. This is due to the force's high level of support and enthusiasm for this project, as well as myself making some friends and allies in high positions, which made it uncomfortable when challenges arose due to the 'closeness-detachment conundrum' (Maier and Monahan, 2010), which has occurred during this research and this balancing act to ensure that I am close enough but not too close to the organisation.

Participant Recruitment

For participant recruitment, on reflection, I would not have used the same methods. This is because when I was sending out emails and intranet posts calling for participants, engagement was low. This was unaided by the force communications department, which denied my request for a callout to include participants in official communications going out across the force, which would have significantly aided the study.

However, as I established myself within the force, I created Specialist Points of Contact (SPOCs) in various departments and ranks, including support from the Merseyside Police Academy. Participants were then recommended to me by team leaders during project establishment, which may have introduced bias, as people with positive experiences were more likely to be recommended to me.

I tried to counter this bias by balancing the people recommended to me with those who were neurodiverse that I encountered during my numerous observational visits to stations and local policing teams, as well as attending the newly established neurodiversity peer support groups and conferences. These were regularly held during various celebration weeks within Merseyside Police at the start of this study. Some of these participants, recruited through this method, had faced significant challenges within the organisation, giving me an authentic picture of the culture and support ecosystem for neurodiverse people within Merseyside Police.

This qualitative research technique is known as 'snowball sampling' (Naderifar et al., 2017), which is a 'type of sampling that is a nonprobability method, which involves random selection of subjects' and also once one introduction has been undertaken, more follow for the individual to expand their networks (Naderifar et al., 2017). This was utilised in some aspects of this study by meeting people and expanding my contact base within the organisation, including other departments, as well as contacts in the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office, Downing Street, and the UK National Security Community, as highlighted throughout this thesis in the findings and discussion section.

What I would have changed is using this snowballing technique more frequently, as highlighted earlier in this section. When I started my research, my contact base was limited. My initial SPOC provided a list of contacts to have conversations with, who were prominent within the organisation in relation to neurodiversity, to see if they would be interested in the research. Once introductions were made, I was then left to conduct the research independently, and no feedback was shared with the SPOC who did the introduction.

Survey Data Collection

In the survey data collection, confidentiality and trust were highlighted as issues. Even though I tried to build trust by stipulating it on the survey form, it was mentioned a couple of times in the

raw data. The following outlines the main data collection protocols, which require that the data collected be repeatable.

There are three essential components to a qualitative data collection protocol: 1) developing a clear collection strategy, 2) appropriately identifying and sampling the population of interest, and 3) obtaining data (whether by observation, interview, or focus group) in a reproducible and “rich” (detailed and complete) manner (Ranney et. al., 2015).

The survey aspect of data collection can be repeatable, but may yield different respondents due to how it was set up and sent out to hundreds of people across two strands. Even I, as the researcher, did not know the names of the people who filled out the survey to ensure it was truly anonymous and confidential.

Furthermore, if I could have changed anything, I would have reduced the questioning to fewer open-ended questions, which gave some outlier responses, such as the ones outlined at the start of the section, in response to confidentiality and trust, which were only stated twice, but I would have utilised questioning methods which included using a Likert Scale to generate some percentages and charts. In hindsight, I would have changed how the survey was distributed within the force. Rather than using a senior officer, a Chief Superintendent, to distribute it across his officers, I would have included the survey link in my presentations to officers at stations. This would reassure officers and staff that it is confidential, as a senior officer sent it on my behalf; some might think I was going to feed this back to them directly, which was not the aim or intention of this research.

Acclimatisation to the Force, Establishing Rapport and Cultural Credibility inside Merseyside Police

During the course of this research, there was a period of what can be described as ‘establishing rapport, approachability and cultural credibility’ (Bukamal, 2022). Before entirely collecting data during the ethical approval stage, I spent time ‘acclimatising’ to the organisation during the first

year of this study. This was to understand how the organisation's processes worked and the rank structure within the force.

This was a significant undertaking on my part, which included speaking with the Inclusion Wellbeing and Engagement Team to understand the nuances of the organisational culture, as well as escorting the team leader on several visits to frontline policing teams. The visits included custody suites and visits to the local policing team at Edge Lane Police Station to understand the operational challenges they faced regarding neurodiversity within their own teams and when dealing with members of the public.

Furthermore, this 'acclimatisation' phase of the research also consisted of many meetings with senior stakeholders inside the organisation, most notably the previous Assistant Chief Constable for People Services, who invited me to present to the Inclusion Board (now Our Culture Board) as well as the Evidence-Based Policing (EBP) Team, who oversaw the administration of the agreements and the day-to-day running of the project.

Singer et al. (2001) state that 'without a certain level of trust and comfort between a subject and a researcher, it is unlikely the researcher will obtain the kind of intimate and detailed knowledge sought'. This certainly was the case for this research; the deeper I managed to immerse myself during the acclimatisation phase, the more this trust was built, and information was revealed to me, which helped during the data collection phase. This trust took a long time to gain credibility within the organisation and to win over middle managers and other lower-level points of contact.

However, with the support of the chief officers with whom I had already discussed this research and whom I had won over, I was able to do so. This was because I had approachability, as evidenced by granting access to force systems and on-site security clearance so people could ask me questions about the research. What aided the research was also conducting several neurodiversity training and awareness sessions to improve understanding of the research, and

my personal journey, helping this process and participant recruitment for the data collection phase.

Furthermore, there was a four-month period in the second year of the research during which it was uncertain how much access I would be granted to the force. This was because a manager told me not to get involved in other departments' neurodiversity projects, as they were outside my research remit. I was also approached by a senior member of police staff following a conversation and told to keep my distance from the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the then Assistant Chief Constable for People Services, as my research had been politicised after it was raised at a PCC Scrutiny Meeting. This put me in an extremely uncomfortable position because my research was being used for political leverage, and it made me wonder why. The reasons for this discussion that led to being told to keep my distance were never fully clarified by the force. Eventually, business as usual continued with the same level of organisational and senior leadership access and support for the thesis.

This unprecedented access has enabled me to gain the trust and confidence of the senior leadership team, and for them to provide me with any information required outside of the standard hierarchy. This freedom of the organisation has yielded some fascinating results and findings, which are outlined in the findings chapter of this thesis, due to the free rein to choose participants across the organisation, from junior officers to senior officers.

I became a Specialist Point of Contact (SPoC) within the organisation for neurodiversity, advising on changes to organisational culture, including developing recommendations and presenting findings in the findings chapter of this thesis. Furthermore, specialist teams and capabilities reached out to me for guidance and advice, including Matrix within Merseyside Police, the Specialist Firearms Bureau (SCO 19) within the Metropolitan Police, and the Force Intelligence Bureau (FIB) within the UK Counter Terrorism Network, to help them understand neurodiversity in their teams and complex investigations.

Distance from the Force

Being distant from the rank structure within the organisation was actually a positive, as participants felt there was confidentiality and therefore spoke more freely than if I worked for the organisation, and were able to give an accurate and honest account of the challenges some of them faced. Being an insider-outsider really worked, enabling complete transparency and confidence among participants. This has undoubtedly helped me to move with ease throughout the organisation and rank structure, as people understand that this research is taking place and that the people inviting me into teams were supporting their team's development and the research in different ways.

This distance ensured confidentiality and allowed me to go about my business without the problem of someone escorting me from building to building and knowing who I spoke with. This maintained the highest level of discretion and was aided by the force granting security clearance to enable this movement. The participants were thankful that they did not need to identify themselves further than to me, which enabled more extended conversations if required.

The distance from the force became more difficult over time as I became more familiar with the organisational culture and understood more about the rank structure within the force. There were several times when I had to meet with my SPOC, where we both had to re-establish the lines of demarcation. This was to enable me to continue with the research and to ensure that there was no conflict of interest or breach of discretion, and that my activity within the force remained confidential from any party involved.

Impact and Cultural Changes observed Throughout this Research

Through the unique positionality and level of acclimatisation achieved throughout the research, as well as reflexivity outlined in the previous sections. I do believe that there have been some

cultural changes throughout the research regarding approaches to neurodiversity within Merseyside Police.

The first and most notable change, within the organisational culture of Merseyside Police towards neurodiversity was the creation of the Neurodiversity Needs Assessment Lead role in 2023. This was the first time the organisation had actively mentioned the word neurodiversity in such a senior position within the Occupational Health Unit (OHU). This appointment has enabled officers and staff, as well as line managers within the organisation, to gain a better understanding of what neurodiversity is and how it affects workplace performance. Furthermore, it has sparked a meaningful conversation about the use of assistive technology in policing and the software that can be used in the secure environments of the Merseyside Police Estate.

This resource has been in soft launch since early 2023 and was officially launched within the organisation during National Inclusion Week in 2025. As of the 20th October 2025, the organisation had '521 needs assessments' which is 7.39% of the force (Merseyside Police, 2025), a high number for the soft launch phase. This has created a positive development inside the force and a snowballing effect which has caused a significant uptake in needs assessments which has reduced biases and enabled conversations within the organisation about the adjustments someone needs or how working environments affect them.

Following on from this role, and in more detail in the findings chapter, is the development of the Neurodiversity first- and second-line manager training. This has enabled line managers across the organisation to understand how to manage neurodiverse people effectively when leading teams. The training and subsequent feedback have been positive for many of the 235 managers trained during these sessions, with feedback indicating that knowledge, particularly in the areas of Irlen's Syndrome, Dyscalculia and Tourette Syndrome, moved from significant percentages being very poor to strong understanding. This training has broken the ice for these conversations in the workplace, enabled teams to create psychologically safe environments for neurodiverse

people to work, and helped them understand some of the biases and stigmas that have occurred previously and challenge misconceptions about conditions.

These training sessions have been a joint effort with Merseyside Police Academy, OHU, and the ND Needs Assessment Lead for the Force, with my research feeding into them. This has led to tangible and actionable organisational development since the start of data collection changing the organisational culture to become more inclusive.

Furthermore, a neurodiversity peer support network was set up in December 2023. This support group brought together neurodiverse people across the organisation to share their stories and support one another in a confidential, psychologically safe environment. However, meetings have not taken place in 2025 so far as the chair has been off sick and the momentum of this group has stalled. The staffing of this network has remained the same; however, before the publication of this research, a conversation was held with the Chief Constable to discuss my findings. The Chief Constable will consider what actions to take following a briefing with the senior leadership in April 2026.

These developments have driven organisational cultural change, positioned neurodiversity as an area of investment and development within the organisation. Merseyside Police have increased support for people who are struggling with sensory overload in the operational environment, enabling people to seek the proper support and guidance from qualified professionals within the OHU to get assessed for reasonable adjustment recommendations. Furthermore, conversations have emerged about how teams can perform at their best, and managers are now more emotionally in tune with their workers through the specialist training outlined above.

One crucial aspect in the progression of neurodiversity within Merseyside Police is the transition of senior leadership: the previous meeting chair of the Inclusion Board (now Our Culture Board) has retired, and a new Assistant Chief Constable has been appointed to lead the Inclusion Portfolio, with an emphasis on organisational culture. The programme management has been

changed with new Terms of Reference (ToRs), which emphasise HR and Organisational Development, evaluate people management within the organisation, including the Professional Standards Department, and hold the organisation to account for any EDI-related activity. Furthermore, the Our Culture Board meeting has been reduced from 5 hours to 3, resulting in fewer agenda items. Some of these items will be moved to a different workstream portfolio, which will then feed back briefly into the main Our Culture Board Meeting. This, in my opinion, will be a refreshing change, as the Our Culture Board meeting can focus on higher-priority items that will then drive organisational development and change. However, in some cases, it can be an issue, as it can lead to groupthink due to excessive meetings, impacting people's daily operational outputs and productivity, as the Trust and Confidence Board is on the same day. The frequency of the Our Culture Board meeting has also been changed to once every four months, rather than once every financial quarter, enabling the organisation to respond to the actions and outputs from the meeting.

The meeting structure addresses various topics, including culture, standards and ethics, leadership, the represented strand, and the Police Race Action Plan, which is a regular agenda item. It also covers communications related to inclusion, organisational development, and assessing the organisation's inclusive culture. Discussions focus on the overall organisational design and how to tackle issues related to organisational culture and the challenges Merseyside Police faces within this committee.

However, there is still a long way to go to embed organisational change fully inside the force, with more high-level discussions needed following the publication of this research on how to utilise the talents and skills that neurodiverse people possess inside the organisation. The above early formations of a neurodiversity support ecosystem is a good start, but there is more to be done to ensure that neurodiverse people bring their whole selves to work and feel psychologically safe. This has to be achieved through foundational changes from the Home Office, NPCC, and College

of Policing, including the provision of advice and guidance on standardised pathways for support for neurodiverse officers and staff across the 43 police forces in the UK. This systemic change is further detailed in the findings and discussion chapters later in this thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Introduction

Organisational culture related to Neurodiversity and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is a multifaceted and complex notion that needs to be understood, particularly in law enforcement. This study has evaluated the culture of one chosen police force, Merseyside Police. However, I have also used local, national and international best practices highlighted in the organisations listed in Figure 1 below to benchmark their approaches during this study. These organisations have provided me with information on their best practices regarding neurodiversity, informing the findings highlighted in the next chapter.

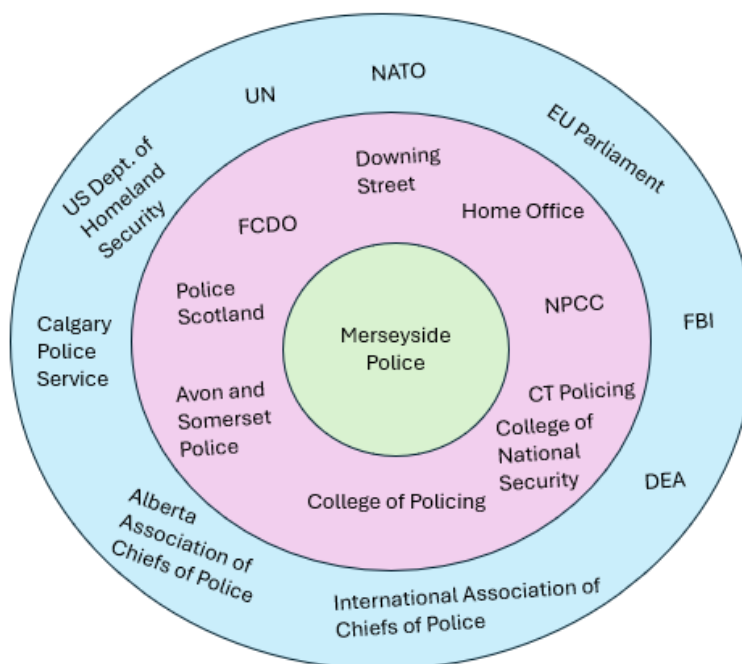


Figure 1: The ecosystem of organisations that have kindly invited me to examine their approaches to EDI and specifically Neurodiversity have during this study.

This literature review, relevant publications and where applicable, organisational policies and other references to legislation will be divided into the following categories: local contexts directly impacting Merseyside Police's organisational corporate culture, National contexts associated with policing in the UK, e.g., the Home Office or the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), and International contexts from field visits to Washington DC, Calgary, NATO, and the EU Parliament. These contacts have allowed me to highlight best practices, challenges and literature worldwide regarding cultural change, neurodiversity and equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) to improve trust and confidence in policing.

I have visited numerous police forces and law enforcement agencies, both domestically and internationally, to understand best practices associated with EDI and Neurodiversity organisational culture. The following paragraphs will explore and critically review key publications and organisational policies that identify best practices within the law enforcement community worldwide. Where appropriate, the policy-related information sources for this section have been acknowledged through agreements with the listed agencies above in Figure 1. The information sources are all from open-source information provided by these agencies.

Cultural Paradigm Shift in Police Culture

Pathak (2010, p. 62) states that 'Organisations cannot completely buffer themselves from this change. They must respond to the change in order to survive. In fact, the present-day philosophy is "change or perish'. This is the case for organisational change: due to the amount of scrutiny and public interest in policing in recent years, policing organisational culture has had to change in order to survive. These choppy waters of scandal, corruption, and misogyny have been exposed to the public and were high-profile. To facilitate this change among policing practitioners, there has been increased interest in the notion of inclusion, particularly in the areas of race and gender. However, another area which is more challenging has also seen significant growth which is

neurodiversity. Forces are recognising the business benefits of neurodiversity and are investing significant resources to ensure this talent is nurtured.

This has not come without its challenges, though, as there has been some resistance to these movements and to maintaining the status quo in policing, favouring traditional practices over adapting and creating radical, novel ways to move the sector forward. Reiner states that ‘Cop culture has been defined as a developed pattern of understandings and behaviour that help officers cope with and adjust to the pressures and tensions confronting the police’ (Reiner, 2000, p. 87). Culture is a subjective term and can be ‘shaped by wider chains of institutional, political-economic, cultural and social dynamics and structures’ (Reiner, 2016). This culture is unique due to the powers bestowed upon police officers. It can be a good thing, through the use of discretion when used correctly, or a breeding ground for misogyny, discrimination and harassment, as highlighted in the Baroness Casey Review and Angiolini Enquiry into the despicable behaviour of Wayne Couzens and David Carrick.

However, Adlam proposes that good leadership can reduce the number of officers who conduct misconduct and prevent malpractice (Adlam and Villers, 2003, p. 86) and that

Good leadership and good management are relative to the nature and goals of the occupation or organisation to be led or managed. Good managers facilitate the successful pursuit of the proper goals of the organisations they manage. By contrast, bad managers impede or undermine the successful pursuit of such organisational goals (Miller and Palmer, cited in Adlam and Villers, 2003, p. 105)

Strong leadership is needed to create a supportive, enabling culture that helps officers feel comfortable sharing the challenges and struggles they face, whether personally or professionally. This can therefore eliminate the challenges that are ever-present regarding organisational culture and corruption or criminal behaviour within the police service that have been highlighted above.

Ianni and Ianni (cited in Newburn, 2005, p. 310 -311) state that misconduct and malpractice are ‘a situation expected in any organisation in which authority and responsibility are dispersed, and a tradition of operation and procedure is being forced to respond to internal and external pressures for change’. This aligns with the notions highlighted above, which discuss the challenges imposed on policing by the Angiolini Review and Baroness Casey Enquiries. This mounting pressure for reform needs to be addressed to ensure that trust, confidence and legitimacy are maintained within the UK's policing-by-consent infrastructure.

Police officers hold unique powers of arrest and the use of force, but this has to be ‘proportionate and necessary’ (Legislation.Gov.UK, 2022) under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984. Furthermore, the use of proportionate force is defined by the College of Policing as ‘the interference does not go beyond what is necessary to achieve the legitimate aim’ (College of Police, 2013). However, in the cases of David Carrick and Wayne Couzens, these powers were used unlawfully and exploited, damaging public trust in policing.

Since the publication of the Royal Commission in 1960 and subsequent reviews, culminating in the latest publications of the Baroness Casey Review and the Angiolini Enquiry, there has been a significant shift in the paradigm towards a more inclusive model of policing. Public scrutiny is mounting on the police to change their ways to reflect 21st-century society. Haley and Burrell (2025) talk about a ‘paradigm shift [is occurring] in law enforcement and public health, fostering integrated approaches to address the multifaceted challenges of modern crime and its societal impacts’. For this to happen, a more inclusive police force must reflect the communities the police are patrolling: ‘being representative and inclusive is where the communities we serve can be seen across the organisation and where everyone is confident to bring their whole selves to work’ (Police Service of Northern Ireland , 2020).

Quinlan (2025) describes the traditionalist perspective of the police ‘as a monolith with a set of shared beliefs and approaches to policing, all looking and acting the same while wearing blue

police uniforms. To some extent this perspective is understandable, given that street police culture normalises particular shared values among officers, which they are all expected to uphold' enforcing the law with a 'lens of discrimination' (Quinlan, 2025). Examples can be demonstrated through 'covert undercover investigations into unlawful covert methods implemented on black justice groups, including the Stephen Lawrence Trust and other high-profile targets, including Black Lives Matter, and unlawful sexual relationships with suspects and targets of covert methods in the 1980s' (Undercover Policing Inquiry , 2023). The interim report into covert policing methods, highlighted above, was published on June 29, 2023, and has addressed the allegations mentioned above.

This discrimination and culture has been improved through Operation Countryman to reduce Masonic Influence in Policing (1978), the Macpherson Inquiry (1999), The Baroness Casey Review (2023), Public Standards and Culture: Restoring Public Trust (2023) and Angiolini Enquiry (2024) to ensure that the police are inclusive, respect citizens from different backgrounds and ensure that the public perception of the police is restored maintaining trust, confidence and legitimacy though there is still some way to go.

However, there is still a significant way to go before neurodiversity is understood and embedded within organisational culture. Even though monumental strides have occurred during the course of this research, there is a significant undertone which is resistant to change and this is the challenge. Pathak (2010, p. 92) states why this resistance to organisational change is still there: 'people resist change because it is easier to continue with what you are doing rather than learn something new. People resist change because it is difficult for us to understand one another.' Organisational change is about bringing people on a journey and ensuring that they understand the proposed change as well as the value it brings to the organisation which is vital in regard to changing the paradigm in police culture.

In order for my proposed findings to be fully embedded within police forces across the globe there needs to be a change in mindset from officers lower within the command chain to understand the change, as well as a monumental overhaul of the policing system to embrace reasonable adjustments and adaptation of operational environments to ensure neurodiversity is embedded into organisational cultures.

Local Perspective on the Cultural Paradigm Shift in Policing

Following the establishment of inclusion as one of the Merseyside Police force priorities in 2022. In January 2023, the organisation decided to establish a programme of works, which was titled the 'Inclusion Board' (Merseyside Police , 2024). This Programme Management Committee evaluated the organisational culture and direction through senior management meetings once every financial quarter to ensure a review and standardisation of all inclusion-related activities undertaken in the force. The Inclusion Board's emphasis on inclusion within the force's priorities signified a significant cultural change being undertaken within the force.

These high-level changes have led to a shift in thinking within the organisation, challenging senior leaders' ideas and fostering a confidential environment that enables the organisation to standardise and unify its EDI approaches. This has led to programmes of work to ensure that actions taken during the meeting are followed up on. The board primarily focused on the Police Race Action Plan and progress against these targets, as well as on other areas under scrutiny, including Stop and Searches and the use of restraints, which were Home Office- and HMICFRS-mandated areas of reporting.

Serena Kennedy also stated in a meeting with me that policing has faced significant challenges due to a lack of trust and confidence, which has been discussed at significant length throughout this thesis, particularly in relation to the high-profile incidents within the Metropolitan Police. However, Serena Kennedy also added that Merseyside Police is not without its challenges, and

Professional Standards Department Investigations linked to discriminatory language and behaviours are being addressed through the launch of the Call It Out System which is similar to what other forces across the country are doing to improve their organisational culture for their officers and staff.

There have, however, been clashes with belief systems due to leadership transitions, as each leader brings their own style, team, and impression to the force, shaped by their life experiences and the challenges facing the organisation at that time. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory can be used in this context as it 'examines the complex interactions and relationships between an individual and his/her multiple social and physical surroundings' (Hosek et al., 2008). The development of organisational culture can influence this, including the senior leadership team's experiences during their youth and development, such as schooling and parental influence, as well as their own perceptions of the world.

Since the resignation of Serena Kennedy as Chief Constable and the appointment of Robert Carden as the new Chief Constable, the organisation has adopted a new approach to inclusion, which was highlighted as a significant programme of pre-existing work inside the organisation before the arrival of the new Chief Constable. An example of the new changes is that the new chief constable is helping to improve interview conditions for neurodiverse people to reduce anxiety and improve performance in the interview room by providing the interview questions even further in advance.

The Inclusion Board programme of works has now evolved into the new 'Our Culture board', which focuses on addressing organisational challenges and issues arising from cultural change as well as inclusion and organisational development within the force. Neurodiversity has also featured heavily in the new Our Culture Board meetings, with monitoring of new data from the Neurodiversity Needs Assessor Lead for the force, providing a forum for conversations about neurodiversity support.

Furthermore, new boards have also been created to support the work of the Our Culture Board, such as the Learning and Development Board and the Trust and Confidence Board, to support the workstreams and actions arising from these meetings

There has been a significant shift within the force since the commencement of this research, moving from a transactional approach to leadership to the incorporation of transformational leadership within the organisational culture. As outlined by Cockroft (2014) 'transactional leadership' is the notion of promotion and being in receipt of things in order to progress within the organisation, 'transformational leadership' is where leaders inside the organisation 'transform the orientation of the worker to the desired behaviour, from one where they conform due to the expectation of reward or punishment to one where they conform because they share, and buy into, the organization's 'vision' (Cockroft, 2024, p. 5). Transformational leadership has won over the officers and staff within Merseyside Police to such an extent that neurodiversity under the inclusion value is now one of the priorities of the new Chief Constable. Within the first twelve months of his leadership, he has already begun making changes regarding neurodiversity to ensure neurotypical people within the organisation understand the challenges neurodiverse colleagues face and are there to support them, helping people reach their potential in the workplace.

The notion of transformational leadership, which Tom Cockroft has written extensively on, can be supported by Bill Bratton's view, who was the Police Commissioner for both Los Angeles and New York and was at the time being courted to be head of the Metropolitan Police between 2010 to 2011. However, he could not get the job because he was not a UK Citizen. Bratton stated that 'bureaucrats change processes, leaders change culture. I think of myself as a transformational leader who changes culture' (Dodd and Stratton, 2010). Showing that transformational leadership is about being pragmatic and supporting the mission and values set within the

organisation to help people achieve their potential, but also about supporting the values of ‘participation, consultation and inclusion’ (Silvestri, 2007, p. 9).

From a strategic perspective, transformational leadership can have a significant impact on the organisation. However, there is still a significant proportion of organisational cultural dynamics that are rarely discussed, including the notion of ‘canteen culture’ (cited in Newburn, 2005, p. 365), in which officers, during their breaks or time together, share a collective identity. This has been well documented by Waddington (cited in Newburn, 2005, p. 365), who states that ‘if the police act in a racist fashion when performing their duties, this can be readily attributed to racist motives produced and sustained by racist banter’. This behaviour occurs when the collective’s views converge; they begin discussing cases or ideologies they subscribe to, which can be part of the coping process through dark humour. Furthermore, some of these comments can be translated into practice, as has been the case with the misogyny highlighted in the Baroness Casey Review and the Angiolini Enquiry, with a local example highlighted below.

However, there have been significant, high-profile cases of misogyny at senior levels across several Northwest Police Forces, which prompted responses in 2023 and 2024, culminating in culture change programmes (BBC News, 2024; see also Miss Tracey Bocking vs. The Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police, 2023 which brought negative judgements to the previous Chief Constable and the Deputy Chief Constable). This prompted the emergence of wider conversations and strategies across the Force, such as the *Call It Out Campaign*, an initiative to ensure that all officers show respect and dignity to all staff. This has generated a shift in attitudes and respect for all within the organisational culture.

Within Merseyside Police, ‘Call It Out’ has been highly effective in enabling people to report discrimination, harassment, and sexism. However, from internal enquiries, the system is not built for filtering internal cases of Neurodiversity discrimination as ‘the number of records created per year is too low to teach a machine to review free text on complaints’ (Merseyside Police Internal

Email, 2024). Data on Neurodiversity complaints cannot be collated or provided due to the small number received.

In addition to the approaches within Merseyside Police regarding sexism, misogyny and racial discrimination, there has also been an attitudinal shift regarding neurodiversity approaches inside the organisation. This has been achieved through the appointment of a neurodiversity needs assessment lead for Merseyside Police and the appointment of 14 volunteers (Merseyside Police , 2024).

There have been over '521 referrals' (as of the 20th October 2025) (Merseyside Police , 2025) into the scheme to undertake assessments for neurodiverse conditions and then be given a report with recommended assistive technology suitable for the policing environment. The challenge that has been facing the force and policing more generally is finding assistive technology software which support neurodiverse people but have servers based in the United Kingdom. This was due to a previous provider, before the appointment of the new needs assessor team, providing recommendations that included equipment that was not suitable for the sensitive information-handling requirements under GDPR and Government Information Standards.

Furthermore, these neurodiversity needs assessment reports have been helping numerous people across the force with very detailed profiles of working styles and preferences as part of the assessments. This has enabled individuals to understand their working routines and productivity patterns, allowing managers to get the most out of them.

This has caused a paradigm shift in the way in which neurodiversity is approached inside the organisation and has enabled managers to get insights into the cognitive diversity of their teams and be able to say yes to the reasonable adjustments provided by the report findings, as it is specifically tailored to the operational environment of Merseyside Police.

National Perspective on the Cultural Paradigm Shift in Policing

In the UK, the Metropolitan Police is the most significant and problematic force in the country, with over '46,000 officers and staff' with 25% of the police budget for England and Wales' (Metropolitan Police, 2023). The force has faced significant cultural backlash and negative media coverage since 2021, with the Murder of Sarah Everard by Wayne Couzens, whose behaviour towards women over many years was disgraceful. This has led to substantial cultural evaluation and reflection within the Metropolitan Police and other forces during one of the most significant and problematic periods in the history of modern policing. In addition, the support provided to neurodiverse officers and staff with disabilities has also been in the spotlight, with references from the Casey Review and Angiolini Enquiry regarding the number of disability discrimination complaints being the highest demographic in the data. Furthermore, compounded by the publication of the BBC Panorama investigation into the Charring Cross Police Station staff who were discriminatory and abusive to neurodiverse people in custody and following the programme being aired '300 further complaints' emerged and reported following broadcast (BBC, 2025).

As shown in recent reports, sexism, misogyny, and discrimination still occur within police forces across the country but particularly the Metropolitan Police Service the largest force in the country. A fundamental shift is necessary to embed inclusion firmly within the organisational culture. This shift is only achievable from the chief officer level downward, setting the example, vision, and values for the entire organisation.

The role of rank and organisational structure can significantly influence the setting of organisational strategy and the direction of the force. Giddens (1986) explains this through his Structuration Theory, which explores the complex intersection between individuals' 'agency and structure' (Sheposh, 2023). 'Agency' refers to actions taken by individuals of their own free will, while 'structure' denotes the intricate network of forces, institutions, and norms within society that influence individuals' thoughts and behaviours (Sheposh, 2023). This presents a conflict, as

a specific rank structure exists in the police and national security domains in which chief officers or senior leaders set the strategic direction of the force through their vision, values, and behavioural standards. However, this can become challenging when it intersects with society and individuals' free will on the frontline. From an operational perspective, individuals are shaped by life experiences influenced by social institutions, including time spent with other police officers, which can be a breeding ground for inappropriate behaviour.

Giddens's view was that both 'agency and structure' (Sheposh, 2023) are interconnected and depend on the context. This can lead individuals to be discriminatory in their practices because they are in environments that share the same views or have toxic workplace cultures. An example of this was highlighted in the Angiolini Enquiry Part 1, which stated that there needed to be an elimination of 'so-called 'banter' that often veils or excuses malign or toxic behaviour in police ranks' (Angiolini, 2024). The report also emphasised the team culture in which Wayne Couzens and David Carrick were placed within the Metropolitan Police's Public Protection and Diplomatic Protection Units, as outlined in the Angiolini Enquiry below:

The group can become a breeding ground for poor behaviour. This is how radicalisation happens in any form; these issues can germinate and grow, and it is the senior officer's responsibility to address this (Angiolini, 2024).

This environment then became normalised through individuals exercising their agency, but it lacked structure and supervision. It is crucial for line management to help regulate this agency and steer their colleagues in the right direction and to prevent them from taking over and conducting these free will and undertaking the atrocious behaviour outlined above, and to ensure that any discriminatory comments are addressed and halted. This guidance and strong leadership is necessary to establish a structure that protects the public, maintains trust, confidence, and legitimacy, and promotes a more inclusive culture by eliminating poor behaviour,

fostering a more collaborative and united workforce aligned with the individual force's vision, values and expectations of behaviour.

Following these allegations and the exposure of the toxic workplace culture highlighted in both the Angiolini Inquiry and Baroness Casey Reports, cultural change was necessary and had to occur quickly. The Metropolitan Police have responded to the crisis of trust and confidence in their organisation by creating commander posts to address these cultural and organisational challenges. Commander Simon Messenger has been appointed to tackle the challenges and improve the Metropolitan Police's corporate culture by working with stakeholders to develop policies, procedures, and awareness training to ensure that people are aware of the signs of neurodiversity in the force and are educated about how to respond when approaching neurodiverse people in the community. This is further supported by the creation of the Culture Diversity and Inclusion Committee led by the Temporary Deputy Assistant Commissioner Claire Smart, who has convened a group of interested parties to evaluate the future of culture in policing and public sector organisations.¹

This cultural shift has led to a significant change in the organisation's direction, as the Home Office and other bodies within the UK Government were holding the most prominent police force in the UK accountable for widespread misconduct and unprofessional behaviour. This has resulted in the development of enhanced Professional Standards Departments reporting mechanisms, a review of vetting and misconduct practices, and the creation of a robust culture change plan led by senior leaders within the organisation. Consequently, this has generated important conversations about organisational culture, values, and attitudes, fostering a more inclusive environment and, hopefully, eliminating discriminatory practices within police forces

¹ This is similar to the CIPHER model discussed in depth in the discussion chapter.

across the UK during the five-year review period of the Baroness Casey and Angiolini Enquiry. Furthermore, the Metropolitan Police and forces across the UK have been given more powers to remove officers from vetting if there is suspicion that they are unfit for duty due to allegations of misconduct in their role, to 'restore public trust and Confidence' (HM Government, 2025).

There has been a paradigm shift within policing as the Policing Priorities Select Committee hearing highlights that there is a 'culture that supports those who call out misconduct', but it is in the early stages as stated in the report, 'witnesses highlighted how reporting of inappropriate behaviour needs to be embedded within the cultural norms of policing' (HM Government, 2023, p. 11). This must be substantially challenged to restore trust, confidence and legitimacy and ensure people call out inappropriate behaviour.

Westmarland states that cultural change in policing 'exists in the background of most discussions of policing and yet only comes to the fore when some misdemeanour or difficulty arises as a cover-all explanation or excuse' (Westmarland, 2008, p. 253). This means that investigations and reviews are only commissioned after something bad has occurred, and it is too late. Reviews are not preventive or proactive, discussing challenges before they reach a crisis point, as highlighted by the previous Charring Cross Police station review and the failure to implement its findings, which has resulted in another scandal breaking in October 2025 by the BBC.

The publication of Baroness Casey and Angiolini's Enquiry has caused a culture of transparency in policing in the UK, as the Professional Standards Department infrastructure has seen an increase in investment in vetting officers and accountability for those who have broken the rules. The Metropolitan Police, in particular, have been focussing on the development of their new culture due to these revelations and appointed a head of culture for the organisation who is a senior leader and is accountable and committed to implementing the findings of the enquiries before the 5-year deadline. However, there is still room for improvement with the culture as

headlines have highlighted in recent years following the Charring Cross Police Station Enquiry and other high-profile cases which have reduced trust, confidence and legitimacy since 2020.

Subsequently, high-level strategic conversations on the future of policing have taken place by the UK Government Home Affairs Select Committee, “Policing Priorities: A Force Fit for the 21st Century Enquiry”. The enquiry states that ‘improving policing culture means creating a safe space for personnel to raise concerns. All team members, especially supervisors, should have the skills and resources to nurture positive team cultures and support those coming forward with concerns.’ (HM Government , 2023, p. 12). These reflective conversations have led to some cultural change in policing, but there is still a long way to go before a genuinely inclusive culture is achieved.

International Perspective on the Cultural Paradigm Shift in Policing

Canadian law enforcement has experienced significant cultural change over the past 13 years since 2011, when the following incident occurred within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Canada’s national police force.

In late 2011, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) became the subject of serious allegations of gender discrimination and harassment (including sexual harassment) from current and former serving female police officers. Following internal and external pressure, an action plan was developed to address two primary areas: organisational culture and the composition of the workforce. (Workman-Stark, 2021, p. 10)

Calgary Police Service has addressed these problems through equality, diversity and inclusion training. They offer Level 1 and Level 2 EDI training for their officers, which is optional but immerses them in different cultures, religions, and disabilities at a basic level, providing an operational understanding when out on the streets (City of Calgary, 2024a). This provides officers with sufficient information for operational conduct and touches on neurodiversity lightly.

The Calgary 911 Call Centre and Animal Control have put together, through a trainer with personal lived experience of neurodiversity and other protected characteristics, a mandatory eight-hour Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) presentation covering Indigenous beliefs, race, sex, gender identity, neurodiversity and hidden disabilities and exercises to ensure empathy and understanding when on the phone to vulnerable people. The training covers ‘introductions, foundations, concepts and actions’ towards EDIB and how to respectfully engage with people’ (City of Calgary, 2024 b).

This training was developed and sponsored by City Hall to ensure that phone operators have a comprehensive understanding of the various issues affecting the daily lived experience of neurodiverse people when interacting on the phone (City of Calgary, 2024 b).

The Calgary Police Service, following a research visit conducted by myself, has implemented a Neurodiversity Peer Support Network, which is currently being established. Two leads with personal lived experience will support officers and staff members with any enquiries regarding neurodiversity. This is a proactive step to ensure the inclusion of all in the organisation and enable all to bring their full selves to work (Calgary Police Service , 2024). The biggest problem highlighted during a meeting with the learning and development teams was that the medical standards used to recruit officers are outdated by 25 years, and neurodiversity and disabilities were not included in the document. This is being worked on by the service. Concerns were raised about neurodiversity as highlighted from my meeting notes below:

Concerns with neurodiversity are emotional regulation, use of force, managing personal and work stresses, and the 24/7 responsive nature of the job. They assess and consider the impacts on the organisation and frontline and manage the expectations associated with the job. (Fitzpatrick, 2024)

This highlights that there is still a long way to go for neurodiversity to be fully embedded within the Calgary Police Service, but steps are being taken to improve the culture and create a paradigm shift within the organisation to enable people with neurodiverse conditions to reach their full potential.

Police Leadership and Change Management

Local Perspective on Police Leadership and Change Management

For inclusive cultural change to occur, a work programme must be developed to achieve organisational change. Hayes states that external factors trigger change: 'political, such as a change of government or legislation; economic, such as the cost of living; sociocultural factors, e.g. falling birth rate and technological factors, availability of new technologies (PESTEL)' (Hayes, 2014, p. 68). These factors can be forecasted, and some programmes and models, such as the one Strebel developed in 1996, suggest that there are 'evolutionary cycles of competitive behaviour and that different phases of the cycle have breakpoints' (Strebel, 1996). This model can be implemented to predict these factors, particularly technological and economic changes in the financial markets.

When setting up an organisational committee, a PESTEL Analysis is essential to take a snapshot of the organisational culture at that moment in time and understand where the challenges lie. A document is then created to track and measure changes in the culture.

Merseyside Police have taken a proactive approach to inclusive organisational change management. The force established an Inclusion Board with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and stakeholders in 2022, a year after the previous Chief Constable, Serena Kennedy, took office, to embed Inclusion into the force's organisational culture as a priority. The Inclusion Board meets quarterly to discuss the force's inclusive organisational agenda and set the Key Performance

Indicators (KPIs) for the next financial quarter. Then, an action tracker is used to monitor progress and provide an update at the following meeting.

However, this PESTEL analysis was not conducted at the point of inception for the Inclusion Board and confirmed in an internal email on the 23rd of July 2024, stated by a senior leader that 'I believe it was formed as the Chief Constable deemed it [inclusion] to be a force priority' (Merseyside Police , 2024). This means that there was no analysis done on the state of the organisation at the point of inception, which would have allowed for tracking the development of the organisational culture in relation to inclusion. Therefore, there is currently no document that captures a historic organisational cultural snapshot, posing a challenge to the Inclusion Board to measure this against organisational cultural development for inclusion. Regarding the PESTEL model, law enforcement is a rapidly evolving environment where decisions must be made quickly to preserve life and liberty, highlighting that all the political, social, economic, technological, environmental, and legal elements of the organisational culture contribute to its development, as well as protecting the public.

In July 2025, with the change in Chief Constable and the appointment of Robert Carden as the new Chief Constable, effective 1st September 2025, a series of changes occurred within the senior leadership team. A paper was written by the Head of the Inclusion, Wellbeing, and Engagement Team, commissioned by the previous Assistant Chief Constable, for the Inclusion Board to discuss the future of the board, with the anticipated outcome that the Inclusion Board programme would end. The paper discussed two options: 'option one, closing the board and integrating it into Business as Usual or option two – introduce an Our Culture Board or something similar, chaired by ACC People Services and managed through People Services' (Merseyside Police , 2025). The force went with option two and has closed the Inclusion Board due to the programme running its course and 'achieving 80% of KPIs that were set' (Merseyside Police , 2025). However, has decided to create the Culture Board, a new committee dedicated to

developing the organisational culture. This change has caused the organisation to recalibrate its approach and focus on cultural change and inclusion-related matters in one meeting.

To ensure change is managed correctly, the following steps should be followed:

- *Recognition and understanding of the needs of change in the organisation.*
- *Diagnosis of problems within the organisation, whether this is people, policies, procedures or behaviours.*
- *A plan is to be put in place for a structured change management approach with relevant KPIs for change to implement and review regularly.*
- *Sustaining the change*
- *Leading and managing people to bring them on this journey, and learning whilst going through this process.*

(Hayes, 2014, p. 68).

Merseyside Police are early in the journey of change management associated with neurodiversity and policing. They have recognised that change needs to happen in the organisation and have diagnosed the problems and areas that must be addressed. However, they are currently formulating their Culture and Inclusion Strategy 2025-2030 to identify the KPIs that need improvement over the next five years. This strategy will be driven and monitored by the Our Culture Board and will be changed as the KPIs are hit.

Egan refers to a 'culture of vigilance' within an organisation to ensure that a company or police force needs to keep evolving, not 'sticking to a winning formula too long and paying insufficient attention to how the situation may change over a longer period of time.' (Egan, 1988). In Merseyside Police's case, the winning formula was race and LGBT, not disability. This has led to what Nadler and Shaw describe as a 'death spiral': sticking to what the force does well, avoiding additional complex cultural challenges, maintaining the status quo, and becoming blind to

success (Nadler & Shaw, 1995, p. 11). It could be argued that too many resources have been allocated through the Home Office Directorate for the Police Race Action Plan. Insufficient time has been allocated to developing the space for Neurodiversity and support within the force. The force has focused on particular characteristics of race, gender and sexuality and there has not been enough expenditure or agenda slots in these meetings for disabilities and neurodiversity.

The Multicultural Organisational Development Model was developed in 1981 by Jackson, Hardman and Chesler to evaluate an organisational culture moving from a 'monoculture of exclusionary practices and dominance to a passive club of exclusionary practices' to the next phase, which is a 'transitional culture compliance and positive action' and then the end goal of a 'multicultural organisation redefining its definition of inclusion and actively promoting diversity' (Holvino, 2014). Merseyside Police acknowledges that there is still a significant way to become a truly multicultural organisation. This is because the organisation is at a transitional stage in its culture of compliance with the Home Office Police Race Action Plan and the Positive Action recruitment schemes that have run alongside this initiative to increase the representation of global majority groups in policing. What has been missed is the other dimensions within the organisation, such as LGBTQIA+ and disability.

Merseyside Police have responded well to the riots sparked by the Southport Attack in 2024, demonstrating outstanding leadership through tough times. The force has communicated messages through the internal intranet system on supporting people who have been injured or affected psychologically by laying on regular 'Oscar Kilo Wellbeing Vans' and 'free coffees for officers' at stations for mental health and launching a 'medical intervention fund' to improve morale and support frontline officers (Merseyside Police , 2024). The force has also provided updates on the investigation's progress. The force's initial response was for the former Chief Constable to attend Southport Police Station to understand the developing situation and provide

video briefings to the entire force. This demonstrated leadership, a clear understanding of the situation on the ground, and support for the frontline officers entering the public unrest.

Merseyside Police have also been responding clearly to media requests, briefing the media with the facts as they are presenting themselves, and have been factually correcting information which has been stirring hatred on social media, baseless rumours saying that the UK National, who was the main suspect for these murders, was an Asylum Seeker (Merseyside Police , 2024). The force has also had to deal with the release of information that the main suspect and perpetrator was autistic. This has presented challenges from an intersectional perspective due to the combination of factors of ethnicity and disability, and linking the neurodiverse community to these crimes. Work must be undertaken improve trust, confidence and public perception of policing.

The Institute for Government eloquently sums up the current situation in policing and how leadership is needed more than ever before:

The violent reactions to the Southport attacks may be the reaction of just a few hundred people, perhaps in some cases opportunistically trying to further a broader agenda. But it is a clear reminder of the most urgent tasks facing the new government on crime and justice: restoring community trust in the police, working constructively with them to improve culture and standards, and resolving the prison capacity crisis. But these are all long-term processes. (Institute for Government, 2024)

Merseyside Police has undergone substantial cultural change over the last three years of this PhD, as a result of the police's responsive nature. This has led to the promotion of individuals, the formation of new departments in response to civil unrest, and the departure of key gatekeepers from the organisation, which I regarded as crucial. This has caused a substantial shift in cultural

attitudes as new people establish their leadership and development in the organisation, and has been a significant challenge to this research.

This support for neurodiverse frontline officers has been questioned in data collection, where participants have said they have not always received the right level of support for their conditions and have particularly encountered challenges with the Disability Support Network (DSN), sometimes waiting months for a response or reasonable adjustment needs assessment. This was supported by officers and staff within the survey, focus groups and interviews.

National Perspective on Police Leadership and Change Management

Policing has faced many challenges since 2020 with Covid-19, the Israel-Palestine Conflict and the war in Ukraine. In 2024, shortly after the General Election, there were the murders of Alice Aguiar, Bebe King, and Elsie Dot Stancombe and the civil unrest in Merseyside and across the country. The riots have also been fuelled by right-wing extremism and other national issues, such as immigration. This has presented unique and unprecedented challenges to police leaders on local, regional and national levels. The Prime Minister has described the riots as ‘far-right thuggery’ and ‘announced a national capability to tackle violent disorder across police forces, focused on people who travel to take part in unrest’ (BBC News, 2024). Police leaders were meeting daily to explore how this impacts different forces across the UK.

A balanced scorecard is essential when approaching change management within policing. There are four areas of consideration:

1. Financial perspectives, examining the economic aspects of an organisation.
2. Customer perspective, assisting managers in understanding customer service.
3. Internal process perspective, evaluating the organisational culture.

4. Learning and growth perspective, examining training.

(Hayes, 2014, p. 77).

The most important aspects to look into for this research has been the internal process and learning, growth perspectives that focus on training, organisational development and processes and procedures, and how organisational culture can develop and change with the right stakeholders and public acknowledgement.

The College of Policing states that any change management programme must be considered in an operational context through ‘local, regional, national, and international dimensions’ (College of Policing , 2022). These contexts inform strategic decision-making and public perception and should be considered when starting any change programme to ensure it achieves maximum organisational impact and change management.

When evaluating corporate culture, consideration must be given to the impact of change on these different contexts. Any police change management programme must, from a national perspective, incorporate aspects from ‘the future operating environment 2040, the national policing vision, police collaboration requirements, the police funding settlement, the national police wellbeing service, the police uplift programme, HMICFRS’s PEEL inspection framework, and evidence-based policing’ (College of Policing , 2022). These various policy documents set out the national strategic policing objectives. Police forces need to consider these alongside other geographical contexts mentioned earlier to ensure they align with their own local values and challenges regarding organisational culture.

When considering police leadership, the Relationship Strategy Vision Performance (RSVP) theory is important when approaching effective Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) cultural change. The RSVP Model is based on ‘experiential learning theory (ELT); the RSVP Model is a typology of four essential functions Relationship Mastery, Strategy Mastery, Vision Mastery, and Performance

Mastery that represent an adaptive approach to leadership' (Rainey & Kolb, 2014). 'When leadership is absent, it is more difficult for organisations to adapt to change, sustain super-ordinate goals and values, and instil a sense of pride of belonging among its members' (Zaleznik, 1977). This model is essential to leadership in law enforcement due to how leaders need to have a well-rounded, expert and responsive attitude to change and the immediacy that comes with a career in policing due to the daily organisational challenges that leaders are presented with to ensure that the force is on track with a healthy and inclusive organisational culture.

Adlam (2003, p.40) describes police leadership as 'like no other form of leadership (in virtue of its specific tasks and functions)'. Rainey and Kolb (2014) also define leadership as 'a process of learning and adaptation resulting from the interaction between leader(s) and follower(s) who are guided by a shared value system in service of achieving mutually beneficial goals' (Rainey and Kolb, 2014). Within Policing, this could be defined as the leader as the Chief Constable and those in the Superintendent rank and above (senior leaders) who are leading and guiding the organisational culture through setting the vision and force values. The followers being the lower ranks of constable up to the chief inspector to disseminate the message of inclusion across their people and teams. Due to the nature of policing, it is a unique profession with the power of arrest, and progression through the rank and file of the force is the only way to promotion, as with experience comes power.

For officers to be promoted to the organisation's senior ranks, specific competencies must be met. This study draws emphasis on the competency of 'Inclusive, enabling and visionary leaders' from the College of Policing Competency and Values Framework for Policing (2016), with senior leaders acting as role models and 'enabling the organisation to use instances when things go wrong as an opportunity to learn' and 'foster an inclusive culture of personal responsibility, encouraging and supporting others to make their own decisions and take ownership for their actions.' (College of Policing , 2016). This framework enables leaders to set an example and lead

from their values and beliefs, setting the example for inclusion and Professional Standards for the rest of the force.

However, Adlam states that these competencies stifle thinking and generate leaders with a singular mindset focussed more on 'banal and strikingly obvious' competencies, which does not generate diversity of thought in senior ranks within policing and law enforcement (Adlam & Villiers, 2003, p. 40). A senior officer within Merseyside Police stated that Diversity of thought is needed to ensure change, progress and innovation in policing. This change only comes through breaking the traditional stereotypes associated with senior leaders in policing who have been certain demographics, such as male and white, which need to change for more diversity of thought to occur at the highest rank in policing.

The College of Policing (CoP) has produced a programme called Stage 5: Executive Leaders Course, which was implemented in September 2022. CoP teaches in this course to potential leaders in policing a change management model called COM-B, which stands for 'capability, opportunity, motivation, and behaviour change' (The Decision Lab, 2024). This model was developed by Michi, Van Stralen, and West in 2011 'in response to the many existing behaviour change frameworks that were either unsuccessful or ineffective' (The Decision Lab, 2024). Leaders need to develop inclusive leadership and build empathy and cultural intelligence with the people they lead.

However, a Deloitte review highlighted gaps in the talent development pipeline for senior officers in the programme. The documents produced by CoP and Deloitte use the term 'minority and underrepresented officers', focusing solely on race but not mentioning the impacts of the course for Neurodiverse, disabled or LGBTQ+ Officers and Staff (Deloitte and College of Policing, 2022). This highlights a significant gap in support for neurodiverse people and other minorities, as race seems to be the priority due to the government's Police Race Action Plan and targets that need to be hit set by the Home Office. 'The study of culture, whether it concentrates on a nation, an

organisation or a profession, has always involved a variety of theoretical and ideological premises' (Governance of Security Research , 2010).

In October 2025, the UK Government announced that a Police Leadership Review would be undertaken over a six-month period, from November 2025 to May 2026. The review will focus on police leaders' perceptions of different topical issues that are prioritised and 'assess current leadership capabilities, and identify the gaps and challenges facing the service now and in the future' (College of Policing, 2025). The review will be chaired by Lord Blunkett and Lord Herbert, who will report back to the government in April 2026 with the findings of the review. The reason why it was launched was to achieve the government's objectives of putting '13,000 additional officers back on the beat, and halve knife crime and violence against women and girls within a decade. Achieving these ambitious goals requires fundamental improvements in how policing is led and managed' as well as restoring trust and confidence in policing (College of Policing, 2025). These objectives are all related to leadership and organisational culture in an ever-challenging operational environment where leadership sets the standard of behaviour across the organisation.

Organisational culture is a complex concept with multiple interpretations from prominent researchers, leading to conflicting and messy understandings of how to lead change. This is particularly relevant in policing due to the profession's responsive nature, which has to be fluid to respond to the presenting situations but also adheres to the rank and file of the different roles in the organisation. Senn describes organisational culture as 'organisations become the shadows of their leaders. The leaders in the Chief Suite (C-Suite) or Senior Leadership Team (SLT) set the example for the organisation, and if the leadership is not on the right path of showing inclusion and diversity, then the organisation will follow the same direction' (Senn, 1970).

International Perspective on Police Leadership and Change Management

PESTEL has impacted many different aspects of law enforcement organisations worldwide. These political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal challenges have created new challenges associated with globalisation and interconnectivity. The world has become smaller and less prominent, and leaders must deal with other cultural customs, beliefs, and attitudes. Northouse describes that globalisation and interconnectivity 'have created a need to understand how cultural differences affect leadership performance' and 'has created the need for leaders to become competent in cross-cultural awareness and practice.' (Northouse, 2016, p. 427).

Chapter 3: Neurodiversity in Policing, Government and National Security

As mentioned earlier in the thesis in the introduction and the insider outsider researcher chapters. Neurodiversity was coined by sociologist Judy Singer in 1998 and ‘describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one right way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits’ (Harvard Health Publishing, 2021). ‘However, the language of neurodiversity is still not being used in a standard way, neither in the community, nor in practice, nor research.’ (University of Edinburgh, 2020). ‘From an academic point of view, neurodiversity is not yet well captured, suffers from poor and conflicting definitions, confusing, overlapping symptomatology and little guidance on practical support at work.’ (Doyle, 2020, p. 108). This linguistic dilemma has caused significant confusion in the literature and among the general population regarding what Neurodiversity stands for. Thus, more knowledge is needed within the workplace to understand Neurodiversity and disability.

The literature that I have found focuses on one or several conditions but does not cover the full neurodiverse spectrum of the six main conditions: Autism, Dyspraxia, ADHD, Dyscalculia, Dyslexia, and Tourette’s. Therefore, it does not give a holistic picture of police internal organisational culture. This can include how police officers are supported and what services they receive within the organisation. It has been a challenge to find literature that covers all of these conditions. The local, national, and international infrastructures discussed in the previous chapter will be continued in this chapter to explore neurodiversity in policing.

Local Perspective on Neurodiversity in Policing, Government and National Security

Merseyside Police have appointed a Neurodiversity needs assessor lead with 14 volunteers for a pilot scheme. As of the 20th October 2025, the force had '521 referrals' into the scheme for needs assessment and assistive technology recommendation (Merseyside Police, 2025). There has been a significant jump in referrals to the service from October 2024, from '268', with the majority of referrals coming from '10 plus years of service, 130 referrals', followed by 'less than one year of service 121 referrals' this could be because of young people coming into the organisation having more awareness and understanding of neurodiverse conditions throughout their education, and the highest referrals strand being 'response and resolution' (Merseyside Police, 2025).

This scheme has been effective in approaching neurodiversity in the organisation and has improved neurodiverse officers and staff by providing the right assistive technology to fit with police systems.

National Perspective on Neurodiversity in Policing, Government and National Security

National Research

Takeda published a report titled 'ADHD in the Criminal Justice System: A Case for Change' stating that 'an estimated 25% of offenders have ADHD and this is a five to tenfold prevalence increase compared to the general population rate' (Takeda, 2022). This statistic highlights that the prevalence of individuals in prisons is prominently neurodiverse, including those who had an engagement with the police. The report also highlights the need for neurodiversity training within the criminal justice system and how empathy and understanding can enable people to 'de-

escalate, understand the challenges that come with those who have ADHD face, and support individuals in their care' (Takeda, 2022).

The Another Sign Report by the Brain Charity states that 'individuals with neurodiverse conditions are three times more likely to come into contact with the Criminal Justice System (CJS)' and that 'many professionals themselves identified gaps in their awareness and limited access to training in this area – for example, 67% reported they would not be able to identify an individual with a neurodiverse condition.' (The Brain Charity, 2020). They also highlighted that the need for supporting people in the criminal justice system across the neurodiverse spectrum of conditions needs significant improvement, and a 'universal screening tool should be developed' to enable people to get the proper support from the moment they are in custody (The Brain Charity, 2020). These recommendations, including the statistics about identification highlighted above, emphasise the importance of raising awareness of neurodiversity in the criminal justice system and creating support services for suspects.

A significant part of the literature has been focused on Autism. Hepworth (2023 p.25) states that 'contact with the police can be intimidating for any individual, but for autistic people, it is riddled with opportunities for distress, misunderstanding and potential miscarriages of justice'. This has been supported through the publication of guidance from The Anna Kennedy Foundation, Metropolitan Police and National Police Chiefs Council Autism Stop & Search Guidance, which outlines ways to 'de-escalate a situation, conflict resolution, and ensure that the subject of the stop and search is not sensory overloaded' (Anna Kennedy Online, 2022).

Politics and cultural development also influence the culture of national security agencies in the UK. In an article written by Write (2025), she states that there is currently 'groupthink' in the agencies and that 'cognitive diversity' is needed in order for diversity of thought, knowledge exchange, and innovation. GCHQ has been a shining example of the initiatives that the national security community are undertaking to drive this cognitive diversity. This has involved ensuring

that neurodiverse conditions are supported and that an inclusive culture is designed to enable neurodiverse people to bring their full selves to work and to be in a psychologically safe environment. The diversity of thought is the epitome of their organisation, which values the 'mix of minds' which represent society and can bring different solutions to the most difficult problems (GCHQ, 2025).

Avon and Somerset Police

Avon and Somerset (A&S) Police are exemplary of best practices in EDI-related policing activities. They have an extensive strategy and have been regarded by many organisations, including the Disability Confident Scheme, as a Leader within the EDI Field. They have produced a front-facing website for the public that outlines their commitment to EDI within their culture.

A&S Police have been awarded National Equality Standard Accreditation by the Home Office, Human Rights Commission and the Confederation of British Industry for evaluating their people and culture (Avon and Somerset Police , 2019).

They have created an inclusive workplace environment for all, enabling people with neurodiverse conditions to feel accepted, respected, and included in the development of resources and training for officers and staff with neurodiverse conditions. They have hosted several events to raise the profile of neurodiversity, and this is precisely what Merseyside Police aspire to be in relation to neurodiversity.

Avon and Somerset Police won the Business Disability Forum 'Disability Smart Awards 2023' for best practices to support neurodiverse and disabled officers and staff in the built environment. This is a considerable achievement, demonstrating that the organisation is fostering an inclusive and respectful organisational culture for neurodiverse and disabled officers and staff. A&S Police has also adapted one of its custody suites in Keynsham to ensure that when a neurodiverse suspect comes into the suite, the room is light-adjustable and has neurodiverse-friendly colours

on the walls to ensure limited sensory overstimulation, wall art that is soothing and de-escalates situations and sky-lights in all cells and communal areas to enable some natural light to enter the cells and in the suites (Avon and Somerset Police , 2023).

Avon and Somerset Police have also been awarded the ‘National Equality Standard’ from EY, an accreditation created in 2011 ‘in partnership with CBI and the UK Government’ with ‘over 400 organisations signed up and a rigorous assessment against a competencies framework to ensure an organisation is inclusive’ (EY, 2024). This ensures that all areas of the organisation truly understand their part in creating an inclusive workplace environment and organisational culture. Following this, they also won the ENEI award for ‘best representative workforce’ in 2019 for data quality on neurodiversity and disability, as well as other minorities in the Equality Act 2010 (Avon and Somerset Police , 2019).

The force has also created inclusive traineeship schemes launched in 2022 for local special schools between 18 and 25 to enable all people to contribute to the workforce and create a talent pipeline coming into the force once they have finished their exams, as well as create solutions to difficult-to-solve problems, utilising this neurodiverse talent (Avon and Somerset Police , 2022).

To support officers and staff within the force, Avon and Somerset Police have developed the ‘Wellbeing Journey’ (Avon and Somerset Police , 2022) with access to Primary support to increase individual well-being, such as fitness trackers, secondary support that can be accessed through peers and their line manager for adjustments to the workplace, and then professional support with specialist interventions which can be accessed through occupational health and local GP services (Avon and Somerset Police , 2022).

College of Policing and National Police Chiefs Council

The College of Policing (CoP) and the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) have established a coordinated National Neurodiversity Working Group (NDWG), chaired by Assistant Chief

Constable Matt Welsted of West Midlands Police. This coordinated effort brings together the 43 police forces in the UK and its overseas territories to evaluate their cultures and best practices regarding neurodiversity.

The meetings are divided into actions from the previous meeting, updates from the CoP EDI Team, workstream updates from criminal justice and workplace adjustments, chair updates, NDWG Updates, and any other business (College of Policing , 2024). This provides a forum for discussion and unified actions to ensure that all police forces around the country understand what neurodiversity is and how this can positively impact their organisational culture.

The meetings are structured to enable discussion, reflection, and action regarding neurodiversity and policing. The Gibbs Reflective Cycle Model could be applied to the CoP and NPCC meetings, where a description of the experience is discussed through agenda items, and the committee's thoughts and feelings are then sought on a topic, with analysis and reflection in between meetings (University of Edinburgh , 2022).

Police Scotland

Police Scotland is a forward-thinking organisation that ensures neurodiversity is considered within its corporate culture. Currently, an Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) is assigned to work on the force's Neurodiversity portfolio. Police Scotland has, in 2024, established a Neurodiversity Peer Support Group with regular, confidential meetings to ensure that people receive proper support. These meetings have been interspersed with workshops for line managers and other specialist roles in the organisation, seeking information on how to support people in the workplace, keeping the two groups separate and ensuring confidentiality and discretion.

The organisation has established a specialist group called the Disability and Carers Association (DaCA) across Scotland to ensure that people can access support within the organisation. This group has been set up like a charity with a dedicated budget, senior support from the ACC for

Neurodiversity, and organisational acknowledgement in newsletters and other forms of communication across Police Scotland.

Furthermore, on a strategic and tactical level, an Area Commander has been appointed to lead the Neurodiversity Strategic Working Group for Police Scotland, which is looking at developing and re-evaluating the organisational culture for neurodiversity and disability. This working group has produced tangible outcomes with 'truth to power' sessions and a focus group looking into organisational challenges and problems related to neurodiversity. A neurodivergent custody pilot is educating staff, increasing support for offenders, and having a board presence on the new UK Police National Dyslexia Association.

Police Scotland has also been working on an appraisal support titled 'My Career' in the organisation. Areas which are for development have been broken down further for neurodiverse people, and small goals have been created to ensure that people feel as though they are achieving in the organisation.

Another pilot tested in Police Scotland was in Q Division, where 12 ambassadors for neurodiversity were trained, and a disability coordinator was appointed to signpost people to organisations for support, without making any medical recommendations or undertaking needs assessments. There has also been the development of intranet sites for Neurodiversity in the local division and this pilot is planned to be rolled out across Scotland shortly.

Police Scotland is currently reviewing its approach to disability and neurodiversity. It will build on policies that are already in place, but need more development to ensure that support for neurodiversity is documented and pathways are created in the organisation.

Police Scotland, during a meeting that I had with the strategic and tactical leads, stated that the most prominent organisational challenge to the culture at the moment is 'resources and finance, as well as getting the right stakeholders on board for projects'. This has been challenging because

people do this work for neurodiversity in addition to their day jobs. Sometimes, operational demand means they cannot fully commit their time to their secondary roles.

I also spoke at and attended the Scottish Women's Development Forum (SWDF) conference on Neurodiversity in Police Scotland in August 2024. As part of this conference, there was psychological safety in the room, and a participant sitting next to the ACC for Neurodiversity and Area Commander for Neurodiversity was speaking about her experiences of discrimination and Neurodiversity in the organisation and how she felt comfortable now disclosing an incident that happened to her in the office because of the discussions that had occurred during the day.

Since the event in 2024, I have received an update from the Assistant Chief Constable responsible for the Neurodiversity portfolio, which stated that:

Police Scotland, during the discovery phase, engaged with a range of partners and professionals who were actively working in and promoting positive working environments for those with neurodiverse conditions. This early work and support have helped to guide the vision and outcomes being sought to create a neuro-inclusive organisational culture within the force.

Police Scotland, as of 2025, has a dedicated online support page to help and direct colleagues. The page includes helpful information, lived experience videos from colleagues, and signposts to internal and external support and reference material. Police Scotland has also developed a peer mentoring programme for neurodiverse colleagues and is actively exploring ways to support neurodiverse offenders who come into police custody more effectively.

This work has undergone significant development in support within the organisation since it commenced in 2024, and has helped neurodiverse individuals within the organisation to reach their full potential.

International Perspective on Neurodiversity in Policing, Government and National Security

International research

A study started in 2014 in the US called the '21st Century Policing Task Force.' (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015). This was set up by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services to evaluate 'the aftermath of police uses of force in Ferguson, MO, Cleveland, OH and New York City.' (National Policing Institute , 2021). 'In May 2015, the task force delivered the final report with 156 recommendations and action items to law enforcement' There were 'six pillars – building trust and legitimacy, policy and oversight, technology and social media, community policing and crime reduction, training and education, and officer wellness and safety.' (National Policing Institute , 2021).

This could be considered the equivalent of the Baroness Casey Review, which examines police ethical behaviour and practice within the US. The report outlined Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion that 'crisis intervention training (CIT)' (the equivalent to EDI training in the UK) be rolled out further than trials to ensure that there is a 'move towards practices that respect all members of the community equally and move away from policing tactics that can unintentionally lead to excessive enforcement against minorities' and to develop the training to cover in more detail Developmental Disabilities. (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015). This highlights similarities between the US and UK law enforcement systems concerning training covering neurodiversity related issues with 'standards and programs [needing to be] established for every level of leadership from the first line to middle management to executive leadership.' (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015).

Federal Bureau of Intelligence (FBI)

On the 13th of June, 2023, I presented a neurodiversity input to the FBI Office of Diversity (FBI ODI) and discussed the benefits neurodiversity can have on performance in the workplace. A recent study about the Intelligence Community (IC) in February 2024 by MITRE stated:

As the IC calls for more diversity of thought to address an increasingly complex and dynamic threat landscape, the cognitive differences observed in neuro-distinct groups such as those with autism, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and dyslexia can be advantageous for intelligence work. Individuals with these neuro-distinct conditions bring exceptional strengths in areas such as visual processing and cognitive originality and constitute a considerable and growing portion of the general population (MITRE, 2024).

The FBI has embraced Neurodiversity and is now promoting this more across the organisation with the recent launch of 'Diversity Agent Recruitment' events and webinars tailored to neurodiversity and disability to promote a more diverse and innovative workforce (FBI, 2024). This alternative thinking can be an asset, enabling neurodiverse people to spot patterns that others cannot, making them a valuable asset to the IC. However, following the Executive Order on 20th January 2025, all neurodiversity and EDI-related activities have been halted which impacted severely on these schemes.

European Union Parliament

I met with the EU Parliament's Chief of Mission for Inclusion and Head of Occupational Health on 19th October, 2023. They highlighted the complexities associated with neurodiversity and managing adjustments as the EU Parliament employs thousands of people across the 27 member nations. The EU Parliament has had to centralise its employment legislation to align with German employment law, ensuring adjustments are consistent with a single host nation's laws

and streamlining the process for people to receive the right adjustments. The EU Parliament is, however, acting upon the outcomes of this meeting and has enacted a resolution to ensure Neurodiversity and Autism are regarded in society across all member states, as stated below:

The 2023 European Parliament Resolution on harmonising the rights of autistic persons marks a significant milestone in our advocacy efforts. This resolution underscores the importance of equal rights and non-discrimination for autistic people across Europe. Among the recommendations are a full inclusion of autistic people in society, a call for mutual recognition of autism diagnosis across all EU Member States, and a prohibition of forced sterilisation of autistic girls and women as well as other harmful practices (Autism Europe, 2024).

I have had exclusive access to this meeting online to observe the discussion in Parliament and the enactment of the resolution mentioned above. The EU Parliament described this in an internal email sent to me as unprecedented access, as these live streams are usually for internal staff only.

Ministry of Defence

On 1st March 2023, I met with the Welfare Support and Policy team at the Ministry of Defence (MoD). During this meeting, it was highlighted to me that Autistic People and Neurodivergent people cannot serve in the armed forces. A Freedom of Information Request submitted in 2015 to the Surgeon General of the MoD states:

Military personnel are expected to perform in multiple roles, which may be difficult for someone suffering from these disorders [Autism or Asperger's Syndrome]. Further, all military personnel are required to work in close-knit teams, and in operational environments where the pressures are such that anyone with significant disability in social interaction may potentially be a danger to themselves or their team. These two

diagnoses have significant disability in social interaction as part of their defining features
(Ministry of Defence, 2015).

This highlights medical model thinking within the organisation and does not consider the full potential of neurodiversity people and the strengths this can bring to the organisation. The organisation seems to operate on a shame culture basis, as medical discharge is used if people are found to have neurodiverse traits due to their deploy-ability, as highlighted in the FOI request above.

However, 'The British Army could sign up more recruits with autism or a history of depression under plans to address the military's hiring crisis, it has emerged. Capita, the outsourcing company behind Army recruitment, has drawn up plans to consider those who previously fell under a 'blanket ban' (The Telegraph, 2024). This highlights a significant cultural shift within the organisation over an 18-month period, becoming more neurodiverse -friendly and introducing outside-the-box thinkers into the organisation.

Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office

I have met with different departments in the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO), Russia Desk, South-East Asia Desk, and National Security Committee several times. This has provided an international perspective on Neurodiversity and the cultures and customs of other countries. The organisation has provided me with an overview of its culture and operational practices worldwide, as well as regular briefings on its EDI approach and the planned cultural changes for the next financial quarter. I have also provided speeches on my personal story and research development to the organisation.

The FCDO Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy 2022-2030 outlines the organisation's inclusion vision for supporting its staff internationally and utilising diplomacy to achieve strategic and tactical interventions in countries with less developed EDI practices than the UK. The

diagram below presents a vision for the organisation and movement from minimum engagement to high-equality cultural transformation. This has been achieved through the use of key performance indicators to ensure the organisation is on track to meet its inclusivity goals and does not ‘leave anyone behind’ (FCDO, 2022).



Figure 2: FCDO, Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy 2022-2030

The FCDO, in their strategy, also highlights the use of assistive technology development for their people across the world, including in countries with low Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and provides software to improve access for all people. This can link with law enforcement due to improved educational outcomes, reduced inequality, reduction of crime in communities and achievement of goals ‘4- quality education, 10 - reduced inequality and 16 - peace and justice and strong institutions’ (UN Sustainable Development Goals , 2023) of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), thus improving communities and outcomes for people inside and the communities that the FCDO supports.

The above case studies highlight that the inclusivity agenda in other sectors, such as the UK Civil Service, Intergovernmental Organisations such as NATO and the EU Parliament, the UK Military, the Intelligence Community, and the NHS, is ahead of policing, but policing is gradually catching up through the work outlined above, particularly with the NPCC and College of Policing supporting the Neurodiversity portfolio. What makes the other sectors unique, particularly the NHS, is that government-mandated training has been rolled out to ensure that patients get the best service they can due to a fatality in 2016 which happened to Oliver McGowan who had

‘cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism and learning disabilities’ and died aged 18 following ‘a seizure as a reaction to antipsychotic medication Olanzapine’, but he was also Autistic and his family have campaigned for this training to be rolled out to every NHS Trust in the UK (INQUEST, 2018).

As highlighted above, the UK Civil Service, particularly the FCDO, Intergovernmental Organisations such as NATO and the EU Parliament, the UK Military, and the Intelligence Community have designed approaches, such as neurodiversity staff networks, to support neurodivergent people in the office. These networks serve as a support mechanism for staff to seek help within the organisation, and also as a significant tool for awareness-raising to ensure a more inclusive culture. Policing is developing and maturing its approach to neurodiversity, both in supporting officers and staff within the organisation and in engaging with members of the community but is not to the level that the above organisation are in terms of support yet.

Models of Disability

The Medical and Social Models of disability need to be considered alongside Neurodiversity within law enforcement. The Medical Model approaches ‘neurodiversity as deficits to be corrected; the intervention strategies on this approach are directed primarily at the Neurodiverse ‘seeing autistic differences as faults that need correcting.’ (Jurgen, 2020). This could be seen as neurodiverse people needing treatment to fix their conditions, and therefore, the world is designed for the Neurotypical person, not with Neurodiversity in mind. The Social Model of Disability is ‘how society responded to or failed to respond to the needs of people with impairments’ (Cameron, 2014, p. 137).

Another way of perceiving disability is the Affirmation Model, which was proposed by the Disabled Feminist Movement and is ‘essentially a non-tragic view of disability and impairment which encompasses positive social identities, both individual and collective, for disabled people, grounded in the benefits of a lifestyle of being impaired and disabled’ (Swain, 2008, p. 596). The

Affirmation Model can relate to corporate culture because an individual's perceptions of culture within an organisation and the collective goals and culture may be very different. This can impact the individual due to their neurodiversity and whether they are a cultural fit within the organisation.

Neurodiversity can present challenges in terms of communication, leadership, and line management, as well as writing reports, working as part of a team, and operating within an operational police environment, which can lead to sensory overload. Developing dedicated staff networks for neurodiversity is an example of advocacy and leadership within policing and national security, helping to create a supportive space that is confidential and highlights conditions through events promoting diversity of thought and workplace awareness of neurodiversity. This approach also informs senior leadership discussions and identifies areas for adaptation, innovation, and positive change supported by the neurodiverse population.

Local Perspective on Models of Disability

Merseyside Police support neurodiverse people in the workplace through the aforementioned needs assessor scheme. This has encouraged people to disclose and seek support from the organisation. However, the force has dropped inclusion from a high-level value being visible in the one-page vision and values document and rolled it into the values of healthy people and healthy organisation as one of their force strategy objectives.

Furthermore, the force has also challenged stereotypes through the Merseyside and Me Campaign, which was very successful, with a 'high engagement percentage of 66%' and 'confidence in my manager being 76%' (Merseyside Police , 2023). These statistics highlight that many officers and staff find their manager supportive in the organisation and have the trust to disclose and create environments with respect and dignity. Trust and confidence are high within the organisation, and officers can go to their manager if they need adjustments. This challenges

the medical model due to adjustments now being considered in the organisation in line with the social model of disabilities, where society is willing to change to help neurodiverse and disabled workers to thrive in the workplace through the provision of the right conditions and adjustments.

National Perspective on Models of Disability

The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) and the College of Policing (CoP) have collaborated to establish a workstream on neurodiversity, chaired by a senior officer. The purpose and terms of reference (ToR) are to ensure that national best practice is documented and highlighted among the 43 forces in the UK and ensure that standardised practice is achieved and that Neurodiverse people are best supported. This is a priority for the NPCC and CoP to ensure that there is equity and support for neurodiverse people in the workplace.

International Perspective on Models of Disability

The Medical and Social models of Disability can be applied to NATO, an organisation of over 32 member nations. EDI was officially launched in 2020 at NATO, with high-level discussions taking place to understand and set strategic organisational goals. The organisation's first strategy was published in 2021.

'Diversity in all its forms' is the closest NATO has come to agreeing to Neurodiversity and Disability as of 2024 due to the complexity of political perceptions regarding different countries' beliefs of EDI and Neurodiversity (NATO , 2024). This can relate to the medical model, as some countries see disability as something to be cured and not as benefiting society.

Physical disabilities from a medical diagnosis or injury were originally the only type of disability considered inside the organisation from 2020-2024, looking at supporting operational staff who were injured in operational front-line roles and those with physical disabilities from birth (Nato Panel Session, 2024). In September 2024, work began to establish a Neurodiversity Staff

Resource Group. A panel discussion titled 'Breaking Boundaries, Celebrating Resilience: Disability, Inclusion and Accessibility' was held on 10th December 2024 (Nato Panel Session, 2024). The purpose of this event was to start conversations on Neurodiversity.

The panel consisted of me, the PA to the Deputy Permanent Representative and Political Councillor to the UK Joint Delegation to NATO, the Digital Outreach Officer and the Archivist for NATO; all panel members had Neurodiverse Conditions (NATO Panel Session, 2024). Following this, events have been scheduled for 2025, focusing on how the social model can be implemented at NATO and how reasonable adjustments can be made for neurodiverse individuals in their workforce.

The organisation has welcomed this move towards the social model, as there has been a culture shift towards supporting neurodiversity and evaluating the reasonable adjustments needed for neurodiverse people inside NATO. The organisation hopes to move toward a unanimous agreement on Neurodiversity and Disability in the next two years, 2026-2027, with a motion hopefully being carried (NATO , 2024).

Neurodiversity and Change Management Approaches to Policing

Neurodiversity needs to be integrated into an organisation's corporate culture in order to harness the competitive advantage it provides. A report by Deloitte in 2011 highlights the need for neurodiversity and how this should be appreciated and understood 'from the factory floor to the boardroom and with the weight of firm conviction. There appears to be more head nodding about the business case than rolling up sleeves to take action' (Deloitte , 2011). Significant investment and stakeholder input from the top must be made so that an organisation can recognise the talents that Neurodiverse people bring. The Harvard Business Review states that 'Neurodiversity is a competitive advantage' and that teams can be '30% more productive than neurotypical

teams' concerning quality and quantity of output (Harvard Business Review, 2017). There are many assets neurodiversity can bring to the workplace, including:

Solving problems in innovative, creative or unprecedented ways; critical detail-oriented and routine and repetitive work; designing technical tasks such as IT, planning and logistics; high levels of sustained concentration; strong memory and ability to recall information and higher than average reliability and perseverance honed through a lifetime facing challenges and barriers not faced by neurotypical colleagues (Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, 2023).

The Department for Work and Pensions reviewed Neurodiversity, chaired by Sir Robert Buckland, the former Justice Secretary. This report was published on the 28th of February 2024, stating that '3 in 10 young people are in employment', highlighting that '7 out of every 10 people are not in employment with a neurodiverse condition' (Department for Work and Pensions , 2024). Neurodiversity can lead to engagement with the police due to a lack of work opportunities and then engagement with the criminal justice system. The report highlighted several recommendations to support Autistic and neurodiverse individuals in the workplace, including:

Increasing the number of employers seeking Disability Confident Employer Status, developing a new universal support programme, creating the Autistica Neurodiversity Employers Index to ensure that the public is informed on how FTSE 500 companies support neurodivergence, increasing the level of access to work funding for employees as well as the creation of a task force to keep these recommendations in check (Department for Work and Pensions , 2024).

If organisations experience a significant challenge to their organisational culture, one that will take considerable time and resources to change, such as the publication of the Baroness Casey Review. It will have to rethink its entire approach and the values it wants to convey to express the

new doctrine. An example of this is the FBI leadership development programme, which emphasises ‘character, courage, competence and collaboration’ (FBI, 2013). Alternatively, the McKinsey & Company (2018) report ‘Delivering Through Diversity’ states that there are four areas for inclusive cultural development success:

1. **‘Commit and cascade.** CEOs and leaders must articulate a compelling vision, embed it with real accountability for delivery, and cascade it down through middle management.
2. **Link I&D to growth strategy.** The I&D priorities must be explicitly defined based on what will drive the business growth strategy—leading companies to do this in a data-driven way.
3. **Craft an initiative portfolio.** Initiatives pursuing the I&D goals should be targeted based on growth priorities and investments made to both hard- and soft-wire the programs and culture of inclusion required to capture the intended benefits.
4. **Tailor for impact.** To maximise local buy-in and impact, I&D initiatives should be tailored to the context of the relevant business area or geographic region.’ (McKinsey & Company, 2018).

Different leadership approaches can help improve the culture and enable everyone to bring their whole selves to work. Neurodiversity is not a new topic in the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) sector and has been around for decades. However, within policing and the broader law enforcement sector, it is a new concept. John De-Hayes, lecturer on the Professional Policing Degree and consultant on the development of the Degree Holder Entry Programme for the Home Office, states that ‘there seems to have been much work done on the visible differences that impact on police recruitment, retention and progression, but relatively little has been done to look at hidden differences’ with the focus being on dyslexia as ‘approximately 10% of the population have this.’ (De-Hayes, 2023).

De-Hayes also published in 2023, *Neurodiverse Student Officers: A Study into the Extent of Neurodiversity within a Body of Students and an Examination of the Support They Receive*. His findings indicate that ‘the proportion of police officers with Neurodiversity is approximately the

same as the general population, based on a survey of over 1,700 officers. Support varies depending on the Neurodiversity disclosed. The level of awareness of Neurodiversity is high, but knowledge of what would work is much lower' (De-Hayes, 2023, p.1). This highlights that although there is awareness of what Neurodiversity is, forces are not taking any demonstrable action to enable neurodiverse people to thrive in the workplace. More needs to be done to accommodate the needs of neurodiverse officers and staff within police forces nationwide.

However, 2023 was a year in which action is starting to occur, with significant publications, including 'the establishment of the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) dedicated Neurodiversity workstream led by Alexis Poole' (College of Policing , 2021). Furthermore, most importantly, the 'Baroness Casey Review' publication highlights disability discrimination within the Metropolitan Police. (HM Government , 2023). This has highlighted the need for reform in law enforcement within the UK, and efforts are being made to improve the workplace for neurodiverse individuals.

The Baroness Casey Review into the conduct of the Metropolitan Police states that '33% of those with a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity have experienced bullying. Claims for disability discrimination are the most frequent type of claim brought against the Met. However, there is no willingness to learn from these cases.' (HM Government , 2023). This can be substantiated by serving officer testimonies that the Casey Review interviewed: 'When your face does not fit, a line manager will use every possible tactic to get rid of you. So, your work life becomes a constant battle to keep your job (frequently to higher standards than able-bodied staff) whilst discrimination and processes are used against you.' 'There is an attitude in the Met about people with disabilities, especially hidden ones, being lazy, and it destroys you. We do have a culture of bullying...People have questioned if you are that ill, why don't you leave the job?' (HM Government , 2023). This highlights that the most significant force in the country, with 48,000 officers, needs substantial reform and can be discriminatory towards officers with a hidden or unseen disability.

This can only be achieved through gradual and managed cultural reform and training towards a more inclusive, respectful, and reflective police force that mirrors the communities it represents. As supported by Heidensohn (2005, p.756), who states that ‘any controlled agency will have difficulties if its staff do not ‘represent’ the local community. Moreover, if they do not draw on all that community’s talents, they will be less effective’. This highlights that if cognitive diversity is deployed effectively, representing a cross section of the society that the force is policing, as well as valuing the diversity of thought, it can significantly increase innovation, representation and trust and confidence improving the quality of service delivered by officers and staff to members of the public.

The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) 2018-2025 EDI Strategy states that ‘embedding diversity, equality, and inclusion into all that we do is an essential ingredient for success, and fundamental to this is an effective coordination committee that influences our work within the NPCC and through to individual organisations’ (NPCC , 2018). This is essential to build trust and confidence in ‘our communities, partners and organisation’ (NPCC , 2018). Furthermore, it enables people to feel confident and maintain the policing-by-consent model within the United Kingdom. This highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to EDI, where an intersectional approach should be taken by embracing the differences in the workforce through the lenses of neurodiversity, disability, gender, age, sexuality, and race.

A report by the College of Policing (CoP) and NPCC, published in 2021, titled ‘Discovery Report into Workplace Adjustments,’ highlights the need for reasonable adjustments in the workplace and the lack of understanding. The report also highlights that EDI and Reasonable Adjustment training are not going far enough and ‘feedback from the surveys suggests that while training provision offers legal guidance, it does little to raise awareness of how to discuss workplace adjustments and support the individual with a disability or neurodiversity’ (College of Policing , 2021, p. 20). This highlights the need for more extensive, lived-experience-informed training. One

area that the report highlighted is that ‘awareness around Neurodiversity is much lower than that of disability. Some of the D&I strategies reviewed did not specifically mention disability or Neurodiversity’, and the CoP research survey showed ‘a third of these high-level strategies only referenced disability, with (18%, 7) responding that the D&I strategy did not reference either disability or neurodiversity’ (College of Policing , 2021, p. 21). The report also highlights an important quote from an interview participant: ‘Disability feels a bit like Cinderella. I do not think it gets enough traction compared to gender. The D&I stuff I have seen is always about the #MeToo campaign and #BlackLivesMatter. Of course, these are important, but it does feel that disability is not the focus of the D&I strategy’ (College of Policing , 2021, p. 21). This is important to note as most of the research I have read so far has been focused on ethnicity and sexuality, usually tied into an intersectional perspective for a disability, sexuality or ethnicity focus.

Training

As highlighted in the previous section regarding the College of Policing Discovery Report, training is a vital tool for fostering awareness and tolerance in the workplace, ensuring the inclusion of all individuals within the protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010. Since the commencement of this research, training has become a foundation for developing an understanding of neurodiversity within the law enforcement and national security domains. I have conducted several research-related activities, including giving presentations to various policing and national security sectors, as outlined in more detail in the impact and discussion chapter of this thesis.

Training has been a vital part of this research, as it has aided participant recruitment, the dissemination of findings, and increased awareness of how neurodiversity can be a competitive advantage for people working in the law enforcement and national security domains.

I have had unprecedented access to law enforcement partners worldwide, enabling them to disseminate their research and raise awareness of neurodiversity. There have been some innovative and unique practices that will be documented in the impact and discussion chapter; however, the theory will be discussed in the section below.

Local Perspective on Neurodiversity Training

The Home Office and College of Policing set the curriculum standards, and EDI is featured; however, neurodiversity and learning disabilities are not. I know this from personal experience, having observed the officers at the Merseyside Police Academy. The following is an extract from my day diary when I conducted observations on their EDI training:

The standard of EDI and Neurodiversity training received covered the topics of geographic diversity and the different communities based in Liverpool, but the trainers did not explain the terms 'equality', 'diversity', and 'inclusion' or cover neurodiversity. When it was pointed out, they invited me to give input about my personal experiences of having Autism and Dyspraxia and the challenges faced. The feedback from this session was that the officers took a great deal from the session and will hopefully apply this when they are on the street (Fitzpatrick, 2023).

Following this, the training is currently under review, with the design and content of the slides being revised to ensure that high standards are met in relation to neurodiversity training. However, in 2025, through consultation with the Merseyside Police Academy, a gap was identified in the leadership training provision for first- and second-line managers within Merseyside Police regarding neurodiversity awareness, and a training package was jointly developed. The training consists of a foundational knowledge of neurodiversity conditions, including ADHD, Autism,

Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, Tourette Syndrome and Irlen's Syndrome, followed by a personal lived experience section from an officer inside the force, my lived experience journey where things have gone right and inputs from the Occupational Health Unit and the Neurodiversity Needs assessor. Currently, over 235 first and second-line leaders have received the training, and positive feedback has been provided (Merseyside Police , 2025).

A study in 2023 by Neurodiversity in Business found that 'career progression and psychological safety were critical for retention and wellbeing, more so than the provision of accommodations alone' (McDowall, 2023). Educating managers about neurodiversity can help reduce some of the shame and stigma associated with neurodiversity, enabling individuals to reach their full potential in the workplace. It also allows managers to recognise and identify signs of neurodiversity, provide additional support and adjustments, and offer clarity on projects. This creates an environment where neurodiverse individuals can overcome challenges, actively engage with the workplace and broader society, and unapologetically be their authentic selves without fear of discrimination. The above highlights the business case for training managers to understand neurodiversity, as it can bring numerous advantages to the workplace, increase productivity, and facilitate cognitive diversity inside organisations.

National Perspective on Neurodiversity Training

Holloway, Munro and Crossburn et al. state that 'research has suggested providing autism training to police forces would help improve the support of autistic people, but there is a distinct lack of appropriate autism training available' (Holloway et al., 2022, p. 434). The training of police officers is essential in terms of raising awareness about neurodiversity. There are many routes into policing, including the 'Police Constable Entry Programme (PCEP), Degree Holder Entry Programme (DHEP) and Professional Policing Degree Holder and Police Now Graduate Programmes ' (Police Be the Difference , 2024), which range in duration between '2-3 years''

(College of Policing, 2025). These programmes equip trainee officers with the skills to operate professionally on the frontline, which includes a module on EDI during the programme and also touches on neurodiversity during this lecture.

As highlighted in the introduction there have been a number of innovative practices which have been implemented into neurodiversity training within UK policing. An example is the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), which has implemented Autism Training with the Senior Leadership Team using a 'virtual reality experience simulating sensory overload' through a training provider called Training 2 Care UK Autism Virtual Reality Experience Bus. (ITV News , 2024). The Chief Constable of PSNI, Jon Boutcher, stated that 'those with autism have been failed in the past due to a lack of understanding of such conditions' (ITV News , 2024) and also stated that:

Autism and Asperger's are conditions that, for most of us, are things that we read about in newspapers. Still, we have to deal with people who are going through crises, and to have an experience such as I have just had that gives you a very brief glimpse into the world of people who suffer from autism experience, can only help our officers understand what people are going through, that they would otherwise have no clue. (ITV News , 2024).

This highlights the need for training to adapt, innovate, and change police officers' approaches when engaging with neurodiverse members of the public and ensure that the situation does not escalate.

Another innovative practice I have observed during my time visiting other police forces is Leicestershire Police's use of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) goggles to simulate overstimulation through a video provided by the National Autistic Society. The invite to this training was sent to the NPCC Neurodiversity working group to observe their Police Constable Entry Programme (PCEP) Students' session (Leicestershire Police , 2025).

The use of technology to immerse individuals in this training has been a pragmatic and innovative approach, which has been employed increasingly over the last 18 months, particularly in the neurodiversity space, to facilitate a connection with neurodiverse people for neurotypical people, both when engaging with members of the public and when working in teams who could possibly have neurodiverse needs. This has immersed people in the learning environment and also enabled neurotypical people to experience and understand what it is like to have neurodiversity in the workplace through appealing to different learning styles.

The business case for VR training is demonstrated by a PWC study that states that memory retention and interaction-based activities enabled learners to have ‘confidence in applying acquired skills by 275%’ and ‘were up to four times more focused than e-learners’ on training through VR (PWC, 2020). This highlights the business case for using VR technology in Neurodiversity, EDI, and HR training within policing and law enforcement, as it provides experiential, immersive learning for police officers and staff. This is to ensure that people engage proportionately with neurodiverse people in the office and in the community, dealing with situations as highlighted by Leicestershire Police above. The use of VR technology in training can be supported by Brydon et al. (2021) who state that:

VR facilitates the simulation of cross-cultural interactions, which is increasingly vital in today’s globalised workforce. By interacting with virtual characters representing different cultural backgrounds, users can enhance their intercultural competence and deepen their understanding of diversity (Brydon et al., 2021).

The VR scenarios developed for neurodiversity training are not tailored for police officers and depict sensory overload, but rather those of a young person. As Brydon et al. (2021) state above, diversity and neurodiversity scenarios need to be developed to demonstrate a range of police-appropriate interactions, such as stop-and-search, managing neurodiverse officers and staff in the office environment when they experience a meltdown or shutdown, and other scenarios,

including sensory overload. These scenarios should be set in police-appropriate settings, including stations, custody suites, and out in the community, with attention to sensory elements such as lighting and noise. This would be to create an environment appealing to different learning styles, utilising ‘visual learning through inputs such as presentations’, ‘auditory through hearing’, kinaesthetic through feeling and connecting with physical objects’ and ‘reading, which is having takeaways from the day’ (VARK, 2022). A balance of these is needed to accommodate all learning styles in the delivery of this training. This balance can enable people to feel connected to the training through various points throughout the course, ensuring it is inclusive for everyone.

VR Training can align with the Cognitivist point of view, where the learner is an active participant in processing, storing and retrieving information, as well as using visual tools to aid retention and recall (Cardiff Metropolitan University, 2025). The engagement in these scenarios would help officers and staff members gain deeper emotional intelligence and also aid recall for when it is needed to de-escalate situations based upon the learning and information received during the neurodiversity training. This is due to actively learning and immersing themselves in the process to understand how they could improve through the training and supported documentation.

International Perspective on Neurodiversity Training

An example of de-escalation training to aid law enforcement responses to Neurodiverse members of the public and other mental health conditions is within the American Law Enforcement system, which has developed the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) model of intervention. The ‘CIT training equips participants with a broader understanding of mental illness, helps to encourage empathy and rapport building, and teaches de-escalation and active listening skills. CIT prides itself on treating individuals with dignity and respect while reducing the stigma of mental illness’ (Arlington Virginia, 2022). This training covers aspects of neurodiversity

presentation and how to support someone in significant distress during a meltdown. More detail on this training is covered in the impact chapter later on in this thesis.

The Arlington County Police Department was one of the first forces in America to try this training. It has positively impacted the organisation's culture, with over 50% of ACPD patrol officers being CIT-trained as of March 2023. CIT Officers can now assist with mental health emergencies 24/7' (Arlington Virginia , 2022). This training has enabled the officers to develop emotional quotient (EQ) when approaching situations, due to increased empathy and understanding. This training offers insight into the daily experiences of neurodiverse individuals.

Politics and the Police

'All public services are inherently political, none more so than the police service, which is often at the sharp end of the controversies in both formal and informal politics, given the range of services which policing provides' (Bowling et al., 2019). Politics is intertwined with policing and national security organisations, both at the institutional and national levels.

Roberts and Hartley (2025) eloquently state that the notion of politics in policing is not about alignment to a political party or 'advancing the interests of a political party' but having negotiation skills in complex situations which could result in both parties being unhappy and impacting society but working in 'a professional, impartial and ethical way to create, in the case of public servants, public value' (Roberts, 2025).

This is particularly important in turbulent times, when policing and national security are undergoing cultural changes to enable inclusion within their organisations, and are under mounting public pressure to understand complex societal problems such as climate change and immigration. Furthermore, the Executive Order by President Trump in the United States, signed on January 20, 2025, banning all federal EDI training, has also put inclusion and EDI in the

spotlight through its continued and complex international ramifications. A further, more detailed section about this topic is discussed in the discussion chapter of this thesis. Worrall (2014) supports this notion by stating:

The police, perhaps more than any other government entity, function in a complex political environment. Sources of political influence range from citizens to interest groups, from professional associations to other departments, and from the media to other governmental actors. This array of sometimes competing interests makes law enforcement a difficult, sometimes contradictory, and above all else, political profession (Worrall, 2014).

This can make policing a complex, multifaceted, and politically charged environment, both within the strategic and operational fields, with interference from multiple sources, as stated above, as well as public interest if the case is high-profile. Additionally, it operates within a legal and regulatory framework governed by the Home Office and HM Government which sets the standards for neurodiversity and EDI regulation across the 43 police forces in the UK.

Furthermore, Chief Officers are having to deal with complex and mounting political pressure to reform their forces or services in line with the prevailing political agenda of the day, due to the successive Home Secretaries over the last five years seeking to imprint their own mark and agenda on policing as well as other organisational challenges such as AI and reforms including organisational development and change regarding neurodiversity as it has become a very public issue. As documented below from the Institute of Government in 2023:

The police service faces an array of challenges. Levels of public trust are at historically low levels – a consequence of a litany of scandals (and repeated failures to address these) and a general and widespread belief that the police cannot adequately deal with crime. While overall levels of reported crime have declined over the last 10 years, so too have

charge rates. In the period, police resources have been stretched by the combination of increasing crime complexity and growing non-crime demands (Institute for Government, 2023)

Manning (2010, p.40) states that the police ‘are the ‘face’ of civil government and the primary contact point between citizens and the government’. There is a fine line to tread between being impartial and being in touch with the public to restore trust, confidence, and legitimacy in policing, a complex and multifaceted notion, particularly in communities in the 21st Century.

From a strategic perspective, politics has heavily shaped this research through the publication of the Baroness Casey and Angiolini Enquiries, which exposed discriminatory behaviour within police forces across the UK, as well as highlighting the despicable actions of David Carrick and Wayne Couzens. This emphasised the need for organisations to reform their cultures and set a dangerous precedent that a lack of leadership and oversight can result in such behaviour. Furthermore, the UK Government should allocate sufficient funds to establish an effective reporting mechanism for professional standards departments to reduce harassment, bullying, misogyny, and other forms of discrimination. Additionally, ensuring that staff network support infrastructures are in place to support neurodiverse individuals is vital, as disability discrimination was the highest complaint category highlighted in both the Baroness Casey Review and Angiolini Enquiry reports.

HMICFRS were commissioned to undertake an ‘inspection into activism and impartiality in policing’ which included reviewing policies, processes and the role of staff networks in supporting the organisational culture, as well as defining the line on what is politically impartial (HMICFRS, 2024). The review stated that it was ‘one of the most challenging inspections we [HMICFRS] have carried out. It deals with complex legislation and regulations. It deals with policing’s sometimes invidious role in maintaining the peace, balancing the needs of individuals or groups with opposing views, and simultaneously upholding everyone’s rights. And it involves

contentious, emotive issues', and the issue of neutrality (HMICFRS, 2024). This was challenging, as policing is a delicate balance of upholding the rule of law and where it encroaches on political expression, e.g., wearing a poppy during Remembrance services. The review concluded that the government should publish clear guidance on clarifying operational independence, as well as the NPCC producing guidance on how staff networks should be managed, aiming to centralise and standardise their formats (HMICFRS, 2024).

At a local level, within Merseyside Police, the HMICFRS review has had a significant impact upon the cultural development where an internal communication from Merseyside Police in November 2025 stated that 'lanyards expressing affiliation, such as rainbow lanyards not issued by Merseyside Police or staff networks, should not be used and should not be worn externally, including when speaking to partner agencies. One pin badge is allowed, and rainbow epaulettes, which were worn for pride, should not be worn. The only exception would be the officially authorised staff network lanyards. Apart from these, staff should wear the standard black lanyard, reducing the variety available to them but standardising the uniform policy' (Merseyside Police , 2025).

On a national level, politics in policing would be from a Home Office and Home Secretary perspective, setting mandates and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These have included the Police Race Action Plan (PRAP) owned and developed by the NPCC and College of Policing and monitored by the Home Office, which has seen targets set for the number of police officers to be recruited as part of Operation Uplift. Currently, at this moment in time, there is not a mandate for neurodiversity or disability on the same level as Race or LGBT, which have been previous action plans developed by successive Home Secretaries.

There is significant momentum within other areas of policing, both from a governing body perspective (from the NPCC and the College of Policing), who are supporting neurodiversity with dedicated working groups, senior officer support from a national level and workstreams

specialising in certain areas, including special operations, as well as the UK intelligence community setting up specialist neurodiversity support groups within their own organisations (NPCC , 2018). Highlighting that the business case is there for the Home Office to officially support and change the curriculum for the training and development of police officers to ensure that neurodiversity is on the agenda during EDI training, and ensuring that there are reviews and refresher courses provided to officers at suitable periods of time.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Policing by Consent: A Crisis of Culture

The policing by consent model within the United Kingdom is based on creating and maintaining a valuable ecosystem of trust, confidence and legitimacy regarding law enforcement. However, in recent years, especially since the 1999 Macpherson Enquiry into police standards after the brutal murder of Stephen Lawrence, and more recently, as a result of revelations of inappropriate behaviour within the Metropolitan Police². The ecosystem of trust has been damaged and brought into question. As incidents and revelations continue to emerge across the Met and other Police Forces³. The extent to which the public will continue to withdraw their confidence in the policing by consent system remains to be seen. More recently, the Baroness Casey Review has further contributed towards a crisis of faith by questioning the extent to which UK law enforcement can be seen as inclusive. The Casey Report highlighted that:

² See the Baroness Casey review (2023)

³ 64 Northumbria Police Officers Accused of Abuse, Data Reveals – <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tyne-68049294>

More than 1,100 under investigation for sexual or domestic abuse in England and Wales – <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/dec/23/more-than-1100-officers-under-investigation-for-sexual-or-domestic-abuse-in-england-and-wales>

Merseyside Police Officer arrested over drug driving after car smashes into a home - <https://www.itv.com/news/granada/2023-12-13/police-officer-arrested-over-drug-driving-after-car-smashes-into-home>,

To Catch a Copper Avon and Somerset Police – <https://www.gazetteseries.co.uk/news/24065307.avon-somerset-police-channel-4-catch-copper/>,

Police Officer who assaulted women quit force before she could be sacked – <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/01/21/police-officer-quit-her-job-before-sacked/>,

West Yorkshire Police Officer charged with sexual offences – <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leeds-68061292>

Bullying in the Metropolitan Police	
Overall total	22% Met Respondents
Protected Characteristics Bullying in the Metropolitan Police	
Women	25% of respondents
LGBTQ+	30%
A long-standing illness, disability or infirmity	33%
Asian	36%
Black	35%
Faith or Religion	16%

Figure 3: HM Government (2023), p. 236

The Casey Review highlights how trust and confidence have been significantly eroded by the communities officers represent and are at an all-time low. The first HMICFRS State of Policing Report by Sir Andy Cooke His Majesties Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Fire & Rescue Service, stated, ' The public's trust and confidence are unacceptably low. The fundamental principle of policing by consent, upon which the service is built, is at risk' and also suggests that confidence in the police 'is hanging by a thread' (HMICFRS , 2022, p. 3).

However, this systemic problem has lasted longer than the high-level media coverage of recent years. The following reports highlighted the use of powers, discretion, discrimination, leadership, culture, standards of behaviour and conduct, attitudes, integrity and ethical issues. The Lord Scarman Report into the Brixton Riots in 1981 highlighted the racial discrimination of police forces; the Macpherson Report into the murder of Stephen Laurence in 1999, which highlighted problems associated with racism and discrimination within the Metropolitan Police, The Hillsborough Independent Enquiry 2012 revealed police misconduct and criminality, The Strategic Review of Policing in 2022 by the Police Foundation highlighting the lack of trust and confidence from the public and the possible withdrawal of the policing by consent model in the UK and the Policing Priorities Report by the Home Affairs Select Committee 2023 highlighting that UK Police Forces are not fit for purpose in the 21st Century (HM Government , 2023). These reports

have all called for change, but this has yet to occur within the law enforcement sector, and change needs to happen.

Kleinig states that police officers 'are held to high personal standards by a community that they often perceive as hypocritical. They are expected to be moral exemplars in a social environment that breeds moral cynicism. This tends to reinforce the values of peer group membership and to erode the demands of individual morality' (Kleinig, 1996, p. 67). The above quote highlights the notion of cynicism within policing and some of the multifaceted demands placed upon police officers. However, broader society is increasingly suspicious of the police and tends to overlook the protective elements that the police provide.

Culture within Policing is currently facing a crisis of confidence, with cynicism, discrimination, and abuse of power evident within law enforcement, as highlighted in the Baroness Casey Review and Angiolini Enquiry. These issues highlight and reinforce the timeliness and need for this study, as policing and police forces across the country are going through an existential crisis. The media regularly features cases and incidents of the appalling internal behaviour of officers and staff, such as the recent murder of Sarah Everard by Wayne Couzins, a serving Police Officer. As a result, nothing short of fundamental culture change is needed. This study aims to address and tackle some of these issues to create a new inclusive, reflective and neurodiverse workforce that respects everyone for the attributes they bring to policing, enabling people to bring their whole selves to work.

Police Culture & EDI

Within the above context, this study's emphasis and particular remit is on Neurodiversity, along with how culture change can be encouraged and instigated within and across Merseyside Police. As such, it is hoped that the study will contribute towards an incremental step-change by initiating a more inclusive and dynamic culture across Merseyside police. Within the ever-growing

and critical spotlight on Policing, this research is unique, focusing on Neurodiverse officers and staff within Merseyside Police. As part of this, the study aimed to understand the current and established cultural values and practices (along with what officers and staff perceive Neurodiversity to be); beyond this, the existing values, assumptions and practices that inform notions of EDI across the workforce will also be critically and constructively engaged with, to explore new ways forward.

This study encompasses the ethos stated in a recent article by Fletcher, Smith and Johnson (2023): 'If members of an organisation do not feel safe, how can those it serves feel any safer? It is clear there is a connection between valuing diversity internally and embracing it externally'.

Therefore, engaging in transformative cultural change within an organisation is vital to maintain trust, confidence and legitimacy. This notion also connects with the fundamental Peelian Principle: "To recognise always that the power of the police to fulfil their functions and duties is dependent on public approval of their existence, actions and behaviour and on their ability to secure and maintain public respect (Home Office , 2012).

'Managing diversity involves developing and implementing inclusive strategies through which a network of varied individuals are integrated into a dynamic workforce' (Chartered Management Institute , 2014). The workforce in any sector needs to have diversity of thought for businesses to thrive. This chapter will focus on developing cultural identity within the chosen police force, Merseyside Police, and on past cultural change within a private sector organisation, to demonstrate how inclusive change can impact individuals, the broader organisational culture, and society.

Judy Singer coined Neurodiversity in the 1990s, referring to the different ways the brain works and interprets information, 'aiming to increase acceptance and inclusion of all people while embracing neurological differences' (Baumer, 2021). According to the National Symposium on

Neurodiversity, it is a 'concept where neurological differences are to be recognised and respected as any other human variation. These differences can include those labelled with Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, ADHD, Dyscalculia, Autistic Spectrum, Tourette Syndrome and others (National Symposium on Neurodiversity at Syracuse University, 2011). As highlighted in this chapter, Neurodiversity can be an advantage within the workplace. It can enable people to see the world in a different light, creating solutions to the world's most challenging problems.

There are multiple definitions of inclusion within the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) sector, which can intersect political, geographical and psychological interpretations. Inclusion within this study will be based on the Inclusive Employer's definition of inclusion, which is 'about ensuring that everyone feels valued and respected as an individual within the workplace' (Inclusive Employers , 2023). Another definition of this was by CIPD, which states that inclusion is 'when people feel valued and accepted in their team and in the wider organisation, without having to conform' (CIPD, 2019). The definitions above ensure that people bring their whole selves to work and reach their full potential. Inclusion will be explored in more detail, particularly in relation to workplace culture, organisational development and change management.

A theoretical position to consider in relation to changing culture within an organisation is the notion of Social Justice. The sociologist John Rawls states that there is:

An original position to determine the principles of justice. Individuals are considered rational and capable of making rationalistic decisions as a priority. There is a 'veil of ignorance' which 'creates an environment in which the individuals are ignorant about their social status, gender, age, ethnicity, abilities, level of intelligence, level of education and likewise (Ekmekci, 2015).

Within an organisation, this could be ageism, sexism, disability discrimination and harassment for those who have not been educated on EDI or Neurodiversity. This notion can cause discrimination and harassment, as the Baroness Casey Review recently highlighted.

The nature of social justice within policing is essential to consider in relation to a changing culture. The ethical dilemma concerns topics such as the use of force, stop and search, and cultural beliefs within law enforcement organisations. EDI practices intersect all of these social justice decisions; an example of this is the people the police stop and search. Decisions involving discretion, race, and Neurodiversity must be made in a split second. This assessment could be influenced by unconscious biases stemming from individual experiences throughout their lives and by a lack of knowledge about neurodiversity. This can be improved through training and lived experience inputs on police interactions with neurodiverse individuals during stop-and-searches. The NPCC has produced a guidance document to help, with contextual examples and scenarios throughout.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, where Officers 'microsystem of work, school, family, colleagues and friends' and the 'macrosystem of culture' can affect an individual's decision-making over time, and this could be present within the law enforcement environment (Office for Multicultural Learning , 2020). Reiner states that the 'police make a clear distinction among the public between the rough and respectable elements, those who challenge, those who accept the middle-class values of decency which most police revere' (Reiner, 1992, pp. 117-118). Therefore, making judgments and assertions about people based on their presentation and characteristics could be seen as different and warrant a stop and search.

Unconscious biases associated with individual and organisational belief systems can be ever-present within teams due to the makeup of the workplace. Biases and stigmas have been tackled recently by guidance produced by the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC), College of Policing (CoP), Anna Kennedy Foundation and the Metropolitan Police associated with Autism Stop and

Search, an extensive document with examples and case studies of how to deescalate individuals with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC). The guidance highlights that:

Building respect and trust is a two-way process. It is essential to consider this because it is unquestionably the case that there are likely to be times when all autistic people will need the help of the police service. The police have made a clear commitment to ensure that police officers act impartially, professionally, and sensitively when they interact with members of the public who are autistic. Furthermore, in cases when this does not happen, they have pledged to act decisively to ensure that Professional Standards Department are upheld (Anna Kennedy Online, 2022).

This study aimed to build upon previous research, increase respect and trust, and reduce the unconscious bias associated with the protected characteristic of Neurodiversity.

The Notion of Power within Policing

Filstad (2021, p. 1905) states that ‘power and politics will always be present in the establishment, development and implementation of change’ and that ‘in change processes, the boundaries between and within the established leadership practices are challenged and must be renegotiated’ Filstad (2021, p. 1906). This confronts the notion that in order to change processes and organisational vision and values, leaders need to be pragmatic in their approaches to change management, ensuring people are on board, as well as ensuring the organisation is protected in the process, to ensure that if there is resistance, the proposed changes do not damage the reputation of the police force. Police leaders have a very tough job balancing this, ensuring their people are on board, limiting resistance, and keeping people motivated through the change processes outlined later in this thesis as well as ensuring that the proposed changes to the organisational culture are embedded in a timely manner. Furthermore, if changes are associated with inclusion, neurodiversity or disability, this can be a political minefield to ensure that people

are supported through this process, with leaders needing to show strong leadership and emotional intelligence to understand their perspective of how anxiety-provoking change can be for people who are neurodiverse.

The role of power dynamics within policing inside the organisation can cause people to fear their roles when they disclose their Neurodiversity or hidden disability. Hill suggests that:

Disabling attitudes are commonly experienced by officers in the police service. This study does not imply that a disablist culture is endemic within the organisation. However, their findings do suggest that fears of discrimination inhibit disclosure. A significant proportion of officers who did disclose felt that their competence was subsequently questioned, thus indicating some residual cultural disablist attitudes (Hill, 2013).

Power has been traditionally used towards women within the police as a tool of oppression, as highlighted by DeKeseredy's 1997 Male Peer Support Model, to reinforce the masculine culture through 'patriarchy and misogyny, which leads to stress and then abuse of women' (Franklin, 2005). Policing can be influenced by 'membership in social group settings, use of alcohol to deal with the job, sexual objectification of women, group secrecy, a narrow conception of masculinity and absence of deterrence' within policing (Franklin, 2005). The behaviour highlighted above has been referenced in the Baroness Casey Review into the conduct of the Metropolitan Police and misconduct hearings within the force.

The notion of neurodiversity is similar to the aspect of gender outlined above in the Male Peer Support Model because both misogyny and neurodiversity stem from the same structural oppression of avoiding standing out or raising one's head above the parapet. If support is lacking, this can have harmful effects on well-being and mental health, including burnout. Supporting this idea, the 300-page Baroness Casey Review briefly mentioned disability support, which

downplayed the issue. The report explained that the information on the number of neurodiverse and disabled officers in the UK was so limited that percentages could not be calculated.

Disability or a neurodiverse condition can have a detrimental impact on the individual's career due to systematic, institutional or personal unconscious biases towards disability and the capacity of an individual to undertake their job. There is currently a glass ceiling in place for people with disabilities within policing, as the data from January 2023 within Merseyside Police shows that from the start of Operation Uplift, above the rank of Inspector within the force, of those who have declared their disability, there is 0% at the rank of Chief Inspector, Superintendent and Chief Superintendent (Merseyside Police, 2023a). Highlighting that there is currently a lack of disability representation within the senior management of the force.

This power can cause officers and staff to feel ashamed of their disability and can cause them to feel demoralised and unproductive in work or to be deterred from applying to the force or for promotion. McDonald and Cosgrove published a journal article about Dyslexia and Policing; their findings suggested that 'a respect for difference concerning learning disabilities/difficulties is not yet culturally embedded within the police organisational culture' (MacDonald, 2019, p. 647). This is due to power imbalances occurring through residual discrimination from line managers, senior leaders, and the shame and stigma still exist within the policing and law enforcement sector.

The paper concludes by suggesting that, to foster an inclusive working environment within the police service, key barriers must be recognised and removed to allow officers/civilians to achieve their full occupational potential. The authors suggest that by doing this, the police service will comply with employment legislation, which may also improve staff retention and help staff retain valuable occupational experience and skills (MacDonald, 2019, p. 635).

Merseyside Police is early in its journey towards a genuinely inclusive organisational culture that reflects the society it represents. The force has created a significant decision-making infrastructure by developing staff networks, including the disability support network (DSN), the Inclusion Board, chaired by an Assistant Chief Constable and establishing the Inclusion, Wellbeing and Engagement (IWE) Team. Merseyside Police have invested significant time and resources in developing Neurodiversity and the Inclusion Pillar of their strategy, which includes 'tackling organised crime, wellbeing, community engagement, preventative policing and protecting vulnerable people' (Merseyside Police , 2020). They have also created a sub-team to bridge Occupational Health and the IWE Team to undertake Neurodiversity Assessments, with a specific emphasis on dyslexia screening. The role will see 14 people be trained to conduct assessments and advise on Neurodiversity. There has been a substantial effort to push Neurodiversity inclusion onto the organisational agenda through these resources. However, the impact has yet to be tracked due to the role still being in trials and yet going fully live within the organisation.

The allocation of NPPV Level 2 (FULL) Security Clearance, a laptop, an email address, and unrestricted, unescorted access to every department within Merseyside Police brought immense expectations and responsibilities to my work. The force also benefited from this research, and, in my opinion, it has helped the force legitimise decision-making associated with neurodiversity by providing a significant evidence base to shape Merseyside Police's organisational culture for many years to come. I feel this level of trust and access has provided the force with insights, helping to shape policies and the organisational culture going forward, as these consultancy activities, which included providing neurodiversity presentations as well as providing advice and guidance on the development of neurodiversity activity, including force events and conferences, have helped provide significant impact activity within Merseyside Police.

There were different layers of this power dynamic which came into play, which have been significant as the relationship has developed and matured over time. The allocation of the above resources from the force has shown a significant commitment to the research, and as part of the process, I have been in two roles: one as a researcher and the other as a neurodiversity consultant to the force, reviewing their approaches to neurodiversity, finding areas for adaptation, innovation and positive change. This has also given me access to the Chief Officer and Strategic Command Teams, which comprises the Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable, ACCs, Chief Superintendents, and Superintendents, as well as senior members of staff across the various strands within the force. Furthermore, I have had several meetings with the new Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable and the ACC for the People Services Strand within the force to discuss the findings and recommendations of this thesis to enable positive organisational change going forward.

I have had to deal with significant challenges throughout the data collection process with the force. This has included limited access to some data sets, which have proved difficult to obtain. An example being the unredacted Call It Out report data outlining cases of neurodiversity coming through, and also the Inclusion Board (now Our Culture Board), which have been navigated sometimes with senior leadership intervention to help navigate the challenges along the way. There were times when I thought obtaining some of this information was nearly impossible, due to the power dynamics being controlled by the force. However, through negotiation and by building trust with key stakeholders throughout the organisation over time, this was achieved.

Furthermore, the notion of power dynamics within the organisation that have had to be overcome during my time researching and providing consultative impact work on neurodiversity within the force can be linked to Evidence-Based Policing (EBP). ‘In the late 1990s, Lawrence Sherman, inspired by the evidence-based movement in the field of medicine, introduced evidence-based policing as ‘a new paradigm for police improvement and for public safety’ (Sherman, 1998, p. 2).

The EBP Team was part of the mechanism to ensure the project was on track and that I received the resources needed to complete my research which were regularly briefed as part of my MOU to showcase progress within the PhD.

As part of the MOU, I undertook a final briefing outlining the impact of the evidence-informed practice and work going forward to improve the organisational culture within Merseyside Police. These briefings have helped disseminate findings across the force. However, there were limitations with this board in regard to the way in which the briefings were set up, with the panel consisting of many different middle managers and limited representation from senior leadership, making an impact at this level was hard, as outlined in the methods and demographics section below. I found alternative ways to disseminate my knowledge by immersion within the organisation, ensuring that other forums heard about the research and findings. The briefings with the EBP Board were only 15 minutes long, with the board hearing many different research projects within a two-hour meeting, primarily community-facing, focused on crime prevention, making this project an outlier on the agenda due to the scale of the review I was undertaking, which needed slightly more time to discuss.

Change Management Approaches

The role that organisational culture plays in hierarchical systems is vital to consider, as it influences whether people feel comfortable disclosing their neurodiverse conditions in the workplace. Thus, there needs to be disruption for change to occur and for people to bring their whole selves to work. 'A true change requires a commitment that is more than tokenistic, as it needs to be sustained and anticipatory', and long-lasting for the neurodiverse community (Smith and Kirby, 2021). For a truly inclusive organisation, the organisational culture needs to be 'understood from the factory floor to the boardroom and with the weight of firm conviction? Truth

be told, there appears to be more head-nodding about the business case than a rolling up of sleeves to take action' (Smith and Kirby, 2021). For cultural change to occur within law enforcement, there needs to be a substantial overhaul of the current system, and inclusion must be at the heart of decision-making at all levels of the organisation.

Policing is a perfect environment for Neurodiverse individuals to thrive, with skill sets in pattern recognition, structure and routine in a quick-thinking climate. Neurodiverse people can be very good at their jobs in law enforcement, as these skills are an asset. However, the culture needs to change to ensure that there is flexibility and accommodation for people with neurodiverse conditions, with suitable and reasonable adjustments in place. The goal for Merseyside Police is to have 'an adaptive culture where the organisation is forward thinking and [tends] to be guided by positive change' and change 'as the external environment changes the organisation' can respond to and reflect the society that the police represent (Baker, 2007 , p. 34)

Merseyside Police appears to have a hybrid between 'power culture and role culture' (Brown, 1998). The Power Culture consists of 'a single source of power from which rays of influence spread throughout the organisation' in a weblike structure where currently accountability is on the Chief Constable (Brown, 1998). The Role Culture is where 'rules, procedures and job descriptions dominate the internal environment or role culture, and promotion is based on the satisfactory performance of individuals in their jobs. Examples of role culture include the Civil Service and the Oil Industry' (Brown, 1998). Another culture theory is The Deal and Kennedy Typology, which breaks culture into 'the tough guy macho culture, the work hard/play hard culture, the bet your company culture and the process culture' (Brown, 1998). Within the Metropolitan Police, the Baroness Casey Review stated that there were:

Evidence of a culture of toxic masculinity, sexual harassment and misogyny. During the investigation, the IOPC found evidence of teams dominated by macho officers using discriminatory, misogynistic and offensive language. When challenged by colleagues,

those who reported the behaviour were ostracised, harassed and humiliated (HM Government, 2023, p. 270).

In addition to this, there were certain limitations within the report, as the Casey Review highlights:

Accounts provided during the Review and comments following the Interim Report indicate that some officers, staff and others believe there is also unfairness in the system related to disability, sexuality and other factors. We do not dismiss such views. Indeed, this is highly likely. Nevertheless, neither the data we examined nor the recording practices on which the data is based were of sufficient quality to allow such factors to be evidenced to the same extent as the systemic bias evident on race and gender. (HM Government, 2023, p. 205)

As highlighted above, neurodiversity and disability are not thoroughly discussed within the Baroness Casey Review and are only briefly mentioned. It could be argued, given the extensive focus on sexism and misogyny related to the tragic murder of Sarah Everard, which initiated the enquiry, that the review primarily concentrated on sexism and misogyny rather than other forms of discrimination. This included disability discrimination, which, as the quote above indicates, was among the few references to disability in the 300-page report, which is disappointing.

To achieve a truly inclusive organisation, the concept of organisational behaviour should be considered. Mullins (2019, p.4) states that organisational behaviour is ‘the study of individual and group behaviour and patterns of structure and management in order to help improve organisational performance and effectiveness’. Thus, it creates an organisational culture where individuals ‘share values and norms and encourage development and change’, developing solutions to some of the most complex problems in society (Mullins, 2019, p. 46). This can link to the notion that innovation can occur with the right people, who are neurodiverse and can think outside of the box.

The role of the manager is critical to the organisation's culture. McGregor's theories X and Y could be considered concerning creating the organisation's culture. X managers perceive their employees negatively, believing that 'the average human being has an inherent dislike of work and will avoid it if possible' and must be forced to work hard, indicating micromanagement with constant prompting and close supervision (Chartered Management Institute , 2015). X managers create a toxic workplace environment for employees, not enabling them to bring their whole selves to work, contribute to shaping the workplace environment and culture, and can stifle innovation. Y managers believe that 'the average human being does not inherently dislike work. Depending upon controllable conditions, work may be a source of satisfaction or punishment' (Chartered Management Institute , 2015). Workers are keen and want to be at work, and 'external control and the threat of punishment are not the only means for bringing about effort toward organisational objectives' (McGregor, 2006). The best way to engage workers is to offer them continuous professional development and give them development opportunities in the workplace. Y managers also believe that workplace environments should promote employee cohesion and cooperation.

Within law enforcement, this encouragement to work could be considered the Sergeant's role, arguably the most crucial rank and role in policing, as it is the first position of line management authority over teams. This is an essential role, as they oversee a team, and the manager should lead by example, demonstrating inclusive, respectful, and non-discriminatory behaviours towards their team. Sadly, there have been high-profile cases in the media where people have been X managers rather than Y managers, particularly within the Metropolitan Police and the Baroness Casey Review, where inappropriate behaviour was rife within the force. According to the Baroness Casey Review, there is a stereotype associated with policing where it is perceived as macho and mainly white being the enforcers of the law. This stereotype needs to change to ensure diversity of thought within policing.

Establishing a Y culture within law enforcement creates an open, tolerant, and respectful environment for all staff members, officers, and volunteers. Human Relations Theory can also be intertwined with Y managers. The theory states that 'personal investment in employees' wellbeing, ideas and achievements from management can increase happiness rather than treating the employees as machines driving productivity' (Forbes , 2019). Y managers across Merseyside Police considered the goal of this research to ensure that all employees feel that their management can support them in challenging inappropriate behaviour and for people to confidently seek support with their Neurodiversity if they need reasonable adjustments. Furthermore, management would then act on this information and refer to the relevant services for support to ensure their employees excel in the workplace.

Neurodiversity and change management are intrinsically linked; for inclusive change to occur, there needs to be an understanding of how the proposed change affects neurodiverse people. This is only achieved by leaders speaking with them to understand the challenges it will pose and its potential impact on their operational effectiveness and productivity during the proposed change. Leadership also need to consider the positives that Neurodiversity in policing can bring, and that this is still a relatively untapped talent pool within the law enforcement domain. If leaders within law enforcement understand neurodiversity, a truly inclusive organisation can be achieved, built on deep emotional intelligence and inclusion, making inclusion not just a mission statement or organisational value but part of the foundations of the organisational culture.

There are two aspects to consider when approaching change to make the workplace more neuro-inclusive: 'the first is to raise awareness of neurodiversity in the workplace, and the second is to inspire more employers to action – to take steps to encourage neurodiverse job applicants, remove potential 'friction points' in the hiring process and to support their staff to achieve their potential' (CIPD, 2018).

The recruitment process is crucial to ensure that people with neurodiverse conditions thrive in the workplace and reach their full potential. The Harvard Business Review (HBR) published an article in 2018 titled 'Neurodiversity as a Competitive Advantage' (Harvard Business Review, 2018). They claim that alternative recruitment strategies and the removal of interviews can improve the performance of neurodiverse candidates. This is because some 'autistic people often do not make good eye contact, are prone to conversational tangents and can be overly honest about their weaknesses' (Harvard Business Review, 2017) and can ease the challenges faced by people with neurodiverse conditions, enabling them to excel in diverse environments.

The HBR also states that people can thrive through alternative strategies, including empowerment weeks, now used by Ernst Young (EY) and their Neurodiversity Centre of Excellence (NCoE). These Empower Weeks provide Neurodiverse people with problems to solve during their trial week and provide opportunities to work with a team within EY. This scheme has proved very effective, giving many Neurodiverse people a chance at employment. It has changed the organisational culture to be more diverse and developed proactive solutions to some of the company's most challenging problems. Thus, studying human behaviour within an organisation is essential and can contribute to disseminating inclusion and respect across the organisation, given the nature of collaborative work to achieve a common goal within society.

Another aspect to consider is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which:

Covers the relationship between corporations (or other large organisations) and the societies with which they interact. CSR also includes the inherent responsibilities on both sides of the relationship. CSR defines society in its broadest sense and, on many levels, includes all stakeholder and constituent groups that maintain an ongoing interest in the organisation's operations (Werther, 2011, p. 5).

CSR goes hand in hand with organisational culture and EDI, as it is an organisation's impact when interacting with wider society. 'CSR, therefore, embraces the range of economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary actions that affect the economic performance of the firm' (Werther, 2011, p. 8), and the actions a firm undertakes, including practices within its internal culture, can impact its performance. A significant part of a firm's fundamental responsibilities is complying with the legal or regulatory requirements that relate to the day-to-day operations (Werther, 2011, p. 8).

CSR can relate to EDI through firms having to comply with UK laws and regulations, including employment law and governmental legislation, including The Equality Act 2010 and the protected characteristics associated with this and international legislation, including the European Court of Human Rights introduced in 1953 and the Human Rights Act introduced in 1998, which emphasised proportionality. If the country of operation's laws are not followed, fines will be incurred, and potentially significant reputational damage may occur.

CSR interplays with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) of 'Gender Equality goal 5, reducing inequalities goal 10, sustainable cities and communities goal 11 and peace, justice and strong institutions goal 16' (UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2023). These goals are of particular note for this study, given the importance of setting an example for law enforcement within the communities the organisation interacts with and represents.

Within Policing, CSR has been implemented through forces trying to put their house in order in regard to ethics, inclusion and professional standards through the implementation of Codes of Conduct and, further down the line, the production of the College of Policing Code of Ethics as well as the government inquiries such as the Macpherson Enquiry, which were highlighted earlier in this chapter.

Research Methods & Demographics

Action research has played a significant part in the formation of this thesis because I have been engaged in and committed to a continuous strategic dialogue of knowledge exchange and organisational cultural improvement within Merseyside Police. This has ranged from meetings to negotiate partnership agreements to knowledge exchange activities, including presentations as outlined later in the thesis, and unrestricted access to departments, documents, personnel, and meetings, including the Inclusion (now Our Culture) Board.

Action Research is defined as ‘scientific social research which is participatory and practice-oriented, which aims to find solutions to social problems and to emancipate individuals and groups confronted with such problems’ (Boog, Keune and Tromp, 2003, p. 419). The desired outcome for this research was the improvement of the organisational culture for neurodiverse people inside Merseyside Police throughout their time with the force, for both officers and members of staff as well as help to attain the best level of customer service for neurodiverse people in the community through awareness being raised inside Merseyside Police.

Throughout this research, I have engaged with senior leadership at Merseyside Police to ensure that the voices of neurodiverse people are heard and that the organisation achieves the best possible culture. The process of Action Research has been undertaken, which is ‘a self-reflective spiral of planning, acting, observing, reflecting and re-planning’ (McNiff, 1998, p. 7). This method has enabled deep immersion within the organisation, acclimatising to the structure of policing and understanding the rank structure and departmental layout within Merseyside Police. Furthermore, as part of the initial aim of the study, I identified the areas of adaptation, innovation, and positive cultural change outlined in the findings and discussion chapters of this thesis.

The expectations of Merseyside Police were clearly communicated from the outset, where they would provide me with all of the relevant documentation, access to personnel, email address,

vetting and access and control ID card. This ensured that I could access the relevant departments inside the organisation. However, in return, I briefed them on the development and timeline of events throughout the project, as well as interim and final briefings for the research of my findings and recommendations for the force.

From an Action Research perspective, this would be seen as immersion and ensuring that the partner was on board before the commencement of the data collection methods. Furthermore, the organisation started the partnership by appointing Specialist Points of Contact (SPoCs), with one person initially responsible for onboarding me to the organisation.

This then developed organically as I spent more time with the organisation, as my network built the Evidence-Based Policing (EBP) Team became involved with the project. Leading to the agreement and negotiation of the MOU, ISA and DMP documents, as well as a panel of officers receiving briefings alongside the Inclusion (now Our Culture) Board and helping with chartering some of the more difficult areas of receiving documentation and ensuring I abided by the agreements as well as the commitment to the Official Secrets Act. The force first saw me as a researcher and eventually welcomed me as a peer as I became more immersed, which will be explored in greater detail later in this section.

This positionality shifted from that of an action researcher to that of a researcher-consultant as a result of the activity above. As my knowledge base broadened throughout my time within the organisation and during time spent with other agencies, domestically and internationally. I became the person people came to within the organisation for advice and insights, drawing on my lived experience, research and data to help improve the organisational culture. This activity is detailed in the discussion and international perceptions chapters.

Regarding participants' perceptions of the research, I think they saw me in a split role within the organisation. The first being the development of this thesis, how I collected data and stories for

its publication to understand the perceptions of officers within Merseyside Police, and to identify areas for adaptation, innovation and positive change within the force. The second, and more important, role I think participants saw me as was a catalyst for foundational policy change within the organisation. I had a substantial platform with the support of the Chief Constable and this was their time to be able to tell their story for the first time about their experiences, both positive and negative, anonymously which would be heard in significant forums not just inside Merseyside Police, but with the external research-related activity with the UK Government. Participants wanted to seize this and were very honest and open about how important it was to get their story told to senior stakeholders as widely as possible. However, I think participants also respected the level of anonymisation I was promising them and were confident in what they told me in this split role as both researcher and change-maker.

Participants were also keen to introduce their friends who were neurodiverse to me and this enabled a natural variation of perception and also rank in many cases. This level of trust has been imperative to the development of this study and has been in part how I have managed to immerse myself into the organisational culture of Merseyside Police so easily.

During my time planning the research activity (Phase 1 of Action Research), the Baroness Casey Review and the Angiolini Enquiry both published their findings within the first six months of this study. This changed policing forever and has impacted the way I have undertaken research, as the findings have shaped the impact within the organisation. Furthermore, during the course of the thesis, there were developments happening daily, and each supervision meeting with the PhD team was interesting, ranging from discussions on ethical approval, data collection, policy developments from the UK Government and other research-related conversations with policing stakeholders both domestically and internationally, to understand and build a picture of the areas for development for my research, Merseyside Police and UK Policing.

After data collection, I acted on the findings (Phase 2 of Action Research) identified in the acclimatisation phase. Furthermore, I undertook data collection by interviewing officers and staff at various levels, created focus groups that were more targeted to specific demographics, and launched the survey in the People Services and Response and Resolution Strands. I also conducted research-related briefings and various meetings with stakeholders across the organisation to fully understand specialist areas, including the Professional Standards Department, their data, and their approaches to Call It Out reports involving neurodiversity.

Phase 3 of Action research was then initiated, with observations conducted through field visits to various stations and departments within Merseyside Police, as well as to specialist capabilities such as the Firearms and Counter Terrorism departments within the force. Furthermore, I conducted other research-related activities, outlined in the discussion chapter, including visiting police forces across the country and internationally, enabling police forces worldwide to showcase novel and innovative approaches to neurodiversity and inclusion to be brought back and implemented within Merseyside Police.

International field visits have also been conducted to gather best practices from around the world and bring them back to Merseyside Police. There were two levels to this research activity: the first was observing the best practices with a variety of stakeholders in the US and Canada which are discussed in detail later in this thesis, and the second reason for myself being immersed in these police forces internationally was also to disseminate knowledge and my findings to these forces, educating and helping improve support for neurodiverse people in policing worldwide. These dissemination activities included speeches to forces to highlight the business case and attributes of neurodiversity, some of which had not considered neurodiversity before this point. These field visits will be discussed in more detail in the findings and discussion chapters.

The other aspect of this research was ethnography and how it interacted with my immersion in policing. The definition of ethnographic research is, according to Bacon, Loftus and Rowe (2020, p. 4)

To explore and gain rich information on the way of life of groups within particular enclaves of society. Ethnographers study people by becoming immersed in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' for a prolonged period of time. They enter certain aspects of the lives of 'others', learn to speak their language, appreciate their customs, and attempt to view reality through their eyes.

My research has given me unparalleled access and enabled me to penetrate 'the inner world of police organisations, examining the working rules, tacit understandings, and underlying assumptions that operate beneath the presentational canopy' (Holdaway, 1983 cited in Bacon, Loftus and Rowe, 2020, p. 4), immersing me in the world of policing. This immersion of my action and ethnographic research approaches created different layers at local, regional, national, and international levels, also allowing me to go deep inside the organisation.

This enabled me to go so deep into the sector that I was regarded as a peer, and it was at this point that some challenges arose, including senior colleagues within the organisation tasking me with work, the UK intelligence community introducing me at a conference as working for Merseyside Police and being on minutes within national committee meetings with other representatives of Merseyside Police as part of the force. My identity was slowly morphing into being part of the force, even using the term 'we' for research-related activity inside Merseyside Police and at national security and government-related events. As discussed with the supervision team after the initial submission of the thesis, they identified this and subtly tried to intervene, which helped preserve my role and research objective.

The opportunities that the Action/Ethnographic Research gave me were significant, as I was able to navigate the organisation with ease and tailor my communication styles to the relevant stakeholders. An example of this is being concise when interacting with the Chief Officer and Strategic Command Teams, and elaborating on research points and the frontline impact of this research when interacting with Operational Leadership. Furthermore, another opportunity arose when I engaged in my daily activities in the environment. I was approached to help develop the job description for the now-live Neurodiversity Lead for Merseyside Police, which has subsequently led to the development of neurodiversity line management training within the organisation. This was an example of the impact the research has had on the organic development of the organisational culture within the force during my time in the organisation.

By working in this environment before, during, and after data collection, I learned which stakeholders I needed to consult for insights, which documents were needed to support my data collection, and the impact the research was having on cultural development within the force. Leaning into the culture and fully committing myself to research helped me understand the development of committees, value changes, and even the opportunity to speak with senior leaders within the organisation during the 2025 leadership transition with the appointment of the new Chief Constable.

The challenges I faced were significant during the action and ethnographic research phase. I had to walk a tightrope with the organisation to ensure that my research was objective and produced the findings outlined in the findings chapter. My supervisory team were a significant help in this, ensuring that I remained firmly positioned as a researcher within the organisation. I did, on occasion, end up being too close to the organisation and too immersed in the organisational culture and in my thinking, making it hard for the supervision team to pull me out of the field. This was overcome by the support of the Supervision Team, who significantly helped me by holding tripartite conversations with the force to reestablish these lines of demarcation through the MOU,

ISA, and DMP signed at the start of this research, as well as reading the progression of the work and supporting data analysis. As each challenge arose, we used Game Theory to overcome it by clarifying the options that could occur and helping us achieve the best outcome for each stakeholder: LJMU, UREC during Ethical Approval, the force, and me, the researcher.

Tresch (2001, p. 303) highlighted the notion of deep immersion within the organisation 'By actively taking part in the systems of knowledge being studied. This possibility takes the notion of "participant observation" beyond its usual limits'. My experiences within Merseyside Police have been as my supervisor stated to me in preparation for the Viva 'part of the furniture'. People saw me inside the organisation as one of them and experienced the same politics and daily work and tasks as well as challenges people with neurodiversity within the force have faced and is similar to the notion of the insider-outsider that is talked about earlier in this thesis. This has exposed me to significant aspects of the law enforcement domain; people who have worked in this sector for years never get to see, e.g., Counter Terrorism and Firearms environments.

I have utilised game theory to my advantage, anticipating the challenges, preparing for each stage of the negotiations, and creating a strategy to achieve the desired outcome. Game theory can be applied to the research negotiation process. This theory was developed by John Von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern in 1944 as 'the outcome for each participant or player depends on the actions of all. If you are a player in such a game, when choosing your course of action or strategy, you must take into account the choices of others (Dixit and Sherrerd, 2023). These challenges have included:

1. A meeting with Merseyside Police Inclusion Wellbeing and Engagement Team and Evidence-Based Policing Team, where they questioned the research and then gave me the information sharing agreement to fill out. I anticipated this scenario, as I had requested that the supervision team be present during the meeting, which provided additional support and weight to my argument and allowed me to remain on site.

2. A presentation was given to the Evidence-Based Policing Team, where the supervision team and I presented any areas of specific contention to get the Memorandum of Understanding signed off, and for the data collation stage to begin, asking in advance for the issues to base the presentation on and allay any fears.
3. LJM UREC were a more difficult body to predict, and this was 'sequential as players were making their decisions one after the other' (Aligned, 2023). They returned to the research team with different recommendations each cycle. This cycle was broken through the supervision team crafting responses to UREC on Neurodiversity and my disabilities and lack of consultation. This was then followed by a meeting with UREC to finalise a decision on the primary researcher's ethics and the commencement of data collection.

Game theory was utilised by some of the stakeholders, particularly Merseyside Police, during the project inception because 'individuals and groups make decisions that affect their social position and reputation' (Dixit, 2023). This is to ensure that the research has defined parameters for on-site data collection and that damage limitation is achieved. However, during the negotiation stage, the supervision team and I allayed potential concerns and presented my position. The supervision team and I told Merseyside Police that the research should give an accurate organisational picture. This can only be achieved by conducting unescorted research to ensure no bias. Merseyside Police, through negotiation, agreed and signed the documents on 20th November 2023.

I have had access to unique datasets within the organisation that the partner has made public for the first time. This has included:

1. Call It Out: High-level data from Merseyside Police's anonymous reporting line on harassment and discrimination of neurodiverse employees.
2. Access to Inclusion Board (now Our Culture Board) meetings with senior leadership staff
3. Access to officers and staff at all levels within the organisation

4. Access to the 32-week training process of police officers through the Academy.

Following the successful negotiation of the ethical approval and project management documentation from both the University and Merseyside Police, and their signing off, data collection could commence.

During Cycle One, I initially conducted four focus groups with eight participants each, comprising Senior leaders within the organisation, Sergeants and line managers, Neurodiverse Officers and Staff, and students from the Merseyside Police Academy.

The demographics of these groups is below⁴:

Focus Groups: Neurodiverse Participants, 11 out of 27 people

Focus Group Number	ND Diagnosis	Gender Demographics	Total males and Females
1 Students in the Academy	3 out of 8	Male, Male, Female, Male, Male, Female, Male, Female	Males – 5 Females – 3
2 Sergeant and Line Managers	3 out of 8	Male, Female, Male, Male, Male, Male, Female, Male	Males – 6 Females – 3
3 Neurodiverse people inside Merseyside Police	3 out of 3	Male, Female, Female	Males – 1 Females – 2
4 Senior Leaders	2 out of 8	Female, Female, Female, Male, Male, Female, Female, Female.	Males – 2 Females – 6

‘The benefits of focus group research include gaining insights into people’s shared understandings of everyday life and the ways in which individuals are influenced by others in a

⁴ Participant data will be coded as follows: Interview Participants will be IP, Focus Group Participants will be FG, and Survey Respondents will be SR, with a corresponding number for each, depending on when the interview took place.

group situation' (Gibbs, 1997). Focus groups can elicit valuable information and recommendations through group discussion, as people from different areas discussing a topic can educate others and gain additional perspectives for the research. However, 'Problems arise when attempting to identify the individual view from the group view, as well as in the practical arrangements for conducting focus groups. The role of the moderator is of great significance. Good group leadership and interpersonal skills are required to moderate a group successfully' (Gibbs, 1997). Gibbs's viewpoint can present challenges in focus groups, as discussions can sometimes become stilted due to group dynamics and because arranging a time and place for the group to meet can be difficult when officers are pulled away due to operational commitments. The moderator must also be skilled enough to discreetly adjust the conversation structure to ensure outcomes are achieved with the group. The focus groups aimed to discuss shared experiences, not to elicit intimate information, as communicated in the Participant Information Sheet. Energy will be considered and will work within the focus groups through participants' reactions to questions being posed to them on Neurodiversity and inclusion of disabled officers and staff within the organisational culture. Energy will inform how I handled the groups and how I understand the different energies of participants.

The second cycle of this research was to interview 31 people face-to-face on Merseyside Police's estate, including individuals with different ranks and roles within the force. The interviews were to generate detailed insights into employees' awareness and perceptions of existing EDI mechanisms and strategies and their experiences of neurodiversity in the force. As a result of these activities, I explored and developed ideas for developing new and alternative diversity and inclusion initiatives within Merseyside Police.

The demographics of the interviews with the various levels of leadership within the organisation are as follows:

Participant Number	Neurodiverse Condition	Gender	Rank
1	Yes	Female	Frontline Officer
2	No (Family ND)	Male	Operational Leadership
3	Yes	Male	New Recruit
4	Yes	Female	New Recruit
5	Yes	Female	New recruit
6	No	Male	New Recruit
7	Yes	Female	Frontline Officer
8	Yes	Female	Staff Team Lead
9	No (Family ND)	Female	Strategic Command
10	Yes	Male	Frontline Officer
11	Yes	Male	Operational Leadership
12	No	Female	Tactical Command
13	Yes	Female	Operational Leadership
14	Yes	Female	Operational Leadership
15	Yes	Male	Operational Leadership
16	Yes	Male	Operational Leadership
17	No (Family ND)	Male	Operational Leadership
18	Yes	Female	Operational Leadership
19	No	Male	New Recruit
20	No	Male	Operational Leadership
21	Yes	Male	Tactical Command
22	Yes	Female	Operational Leadership
23	Yes	Male	Frontline Officer
24	No	Male	Operational Leadership
25	Yes	Male	Operational Leadership
26	Yes	Male	Operational leadership
27	No	Female	Operational Leadership
28	No	Male	Frontline Officer
29	Yes	Male	Frontline Officer
30	No	Male	Staff Team Lead

The interviews were semi-structured and lasted between 30 minutes and an hour. They were expanded with the participant's consent depending on what was discussed. 'The flexible interview structure allows me to prompt or encourage the interviewee if they are looking for more information or find what they are saying interesting' (Barclay, 2018). This method gave me the freedom to probe and enabled me to dig deeper into the topic if it was relevant to the research and to generate additional data. The interviews aimed to understand levels of engagement and participation and associated perceptions of the impact of EDI on existing policies and structures. With participants' consent, qualitative data were collected by recording interviews and transcribing them using recording and transcription software. The recordings were stored in a secure location that adhered to LJMU's Research Methods Guidelines, the British Educational Research Association Ethical Regulations, and the General Data Protection Regulations. I worked with the individual to establish their feelings about the organisational culture associated with Neurodiversity and attitudes towards disabled officers and staff within the force. I then structured the questions to understand the individual's drivers and motivations, as well as their personal experiences, positive or negative, within the organisation.

After the series of recorded interviews and focus groups took place, a 'thematic analysis' and codification process was then initiated to make sense of, analyse, and report back on the accumulation of responses (Nowell et al., 2017). 'Thematic analysis looks for trends and patterns within qualitative data' (Nowell et al., 2017). Thematic analysis was undertaken by inputting the recordings into transcription software such as GLEAN and then coding the recordings by hand to identify common trends and patterns.

The final cycle of this research was to survey initially at the force-wide level. However, because the force had collected a more comprehensive data sample through a survey earlier in 2023, this had to move to the final cycle of data collation, with a more targeted approach focused on the Response and Resolution Officers and the People Services Strand.

I used surveys for the primary purpose of ‘obtaining information describing characteristics of a large sample of individuals of interest relatively quickly’ (Ponto, 2015). This enabled me to survey a population of roughly 2,000 Merseyside Police employees with a response rate of 130 people. I used resources that Merseyside Police already have, such as newsletters, to promote and share the survey widely. I visited stations to promote the survey and enabled people to understand why I was asking the survey questions.

I worked closely with gatekeepers across Merseyside Police in accordance with the MOU, ISA and DMP agreed by the force, which were wide-ranging across departments and strands within the force, enabling access to documents, personnel and the Merseyside Police Estate. As stated within the MOU, I did let the core gatekeepers, which were the Strategic Command Team, be given ample time to read my findings chapter prior to the publication of this thesis and I gained their views on the recommendations and findings in this research, which they commented on.

Participants were selected as part of both convenience and stratified samples. The focus groups were largely convenience-based samples, whereas the participants selected for 1-2-1 interviews, were stratified, in order to best reflect the different ranks and groups across the force. The 1-2-1 interviews featured staff from the IWE Team, related committees and structures (e.g., the Inclusion Board), police officers, staff and Senior Leadership Team members.

The test for impact in this work was to understand and speak with the officers and staff of Merseyside Police to understand what was currently working well and what were the areas for innovation, impact and full inclusion within the organisation and collaborate with chosen best practice forces.

The impact of the cultural change was hypothesised to be:

1. All people within the force, officers, staff, and volunteers, can bring their whole selves to work.

2. All feel supported in their role and socially and emotionally due to the job's demands.
3. Neurodiverse officers, staff, and volunteers are supported and given the suitable personalised reasonable adjustments for their roles, including assistive technology, working hours, and conditions to thrive in their roles.
4. Needs assessments are conducted within the correct time frame, and access to work is implemented.
5. Ensuring that the proper training, development and Continuous Professional Development are provided to officers, staff and volunteers from day one.
6. Ensuring that sensory toys such as fidget spinners and pop fidget toys are available to all staff, officers and volunteers.

The methods used within this study were Qualitative, Quantitative, Anthropological and Experiential research. Qualitative research involves 'the study of natural phenomena including their quality, different manifestations, the context in which they appear and the perspectives from which they can be perceived' (Busetto, 2020, p. 1). Within this study, qualitative and quantitative research was utilised to understand, from officers and members of staff, perceptions and interpretations of the organisational culture towards Neurodiversity within Merseyside Police, and whether the force was providing sufficient support for the needs of its neurodiverse employees. This epistemological belief was tested during the data collection phase with the hypotheses stated above, and the honest reflections of police officers and staff within the organisation are reflected in the quotes within the findings chapter.

Quantitative research is the 'collection of numerical data that must be analysed to help draw the study's conclusions' (Albers, 2017, p. 215). Quantitative methods were deployed during this study to support the findings through having access to force data/summary reports, which included the organisation chart, a demographical breakdown of neurodiversity complaints coming into the Professional Standards Department through the Call It Out reporting tool and the

breakdown of neurodiversity data within the force. The data was signed off and authorised through the Memorandum of Understanding and Information Sharing Agreement from the Chief Constable and Head of Professional Standards.

During the acclimatisation stage of the research, in the early stages of the fieldwork, I reviewed documents, committee meeting minutes, and archival data associated with The Inclusion Programme (TIP) to understand the force's rank structure, organisational processes, and the development of its culture regarding inclusion and neurodiversity. The format of these documents provided to me was clear in some respects; successive force strategy iterations showed changes in values over the years and historic meeting minutes of the Inclusion (now Our Culture) Board highlighted the initial terms of reference and contents of previous meetings before I joined the force. These documents together gave me a broad picture of the current organisational culture associated with neurodiversity, inclusion as a force priority and insights into the thought processes of the senior leadership's cultural direction before engaging with participants in data collection.

However, some of the other documents that were sent over were far more complex and detailed, such as the force protected characteristics demographic breakdown of Officers, Staff, PCSOs, and Volunteers. To understand this complex dataset, I needed to speak with the researcher who compiled the document to help me interpret it. Once this conversation took place, I was granted access to these datasets, produced every few months. This particular document has been crucial for understanding the disclosure rate for neurodiversity and disability across the rank structure within Merseyside Police.

Anthropological and Experiential research methods were also utilised during the research and data collection process. Anthropological research 'represents certain fundamental insights concerning the human condition, applicable in many everyday situations' (Eriksen, 2004, p. 3) and Experimental research is learning through experience. These methods have been

constructed during the study through consultative activities for Merseyside Police, where I have participated in the everyday culture of the organisation and contributed knowledge and expertise in the form of advice and recommendations.

To facilitate the advisory/consultancy aspects of this project and involvement, I have been afforded Merseyside Police office space, a Merseyside Police laptop, an email address, access to a wide range of organisational structures, and access to very senior police officers. These have consisted of ad-hoc opportunities, eclectic meetings, including attending Inclusion Board and other senior management meetings, impromptu conversations and other unanticipated scenarios which have provided data richness to the project. This access has enabled me to offer recommendations, potential solutions and proposed improvements for policy and practice aimed at constructively shifting Force culture towards effectively recognising the needs of staff with neurodiverse conditions.

This authorisation approved the methods of data collection, which included interviews with officers and staff, access to their estates, ensuring the software used for the survey was compatible with their systems, and unrestricted access to relevant documentation through the MOU, ISA, and DMP following the project's inception. Oversight by the Specialist Point of Contact (SPOC) has proven valuable. They have been essential throughout the project, helping me obtain the correct documents and data when requested, and assisting in the preparation and signing of the relevant documentation including the MOU, ISA and DMP as highlighted above.

Participants & Informal Education Sessions

As part of the methods used within this study, I have been using informal educational sessions to raise my profile and awareness within the organisation. These sessions have been a helpful recruitment tool, and people have approached me rather than me cold-calling them for their participation. The presentations have included the Borders Terrorism Assessment Centre,

Merseyside Police Inclusion Board, Violence Reduction Partnership, Local Policing Command and several of the other Local Policing hubs and an international presentation to the Federal Bureau of Intelligence (FBI) in Washington DC, as well as Mount Juliet Police Department in Tennessee and the Institute for American Policing Reform. I have had positive and negative experiences when presenting within their home force, but mostly positive, inclusive responses to presentations and inputs, and positive feedback.

I have also worked with the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), whose remit is Neurodiversity within their portfolio of work. We have had detailed conversations about the state of policing and neurodiversity, and also spoke about how support can be provided inside the force for people with these conditions. I have also been working with the Brain Charity and PCC through the Another Sign Report's findings to increase awareness of neurological conditions within the force.

These activities have provided me with contacts and additional context to my study giving a deeper understanding of neurodiversity within the organisational culture.

Initial theoretical principles: Adapting the Neurodiversity

Organisational Maturity Model to Police Culture

I aim to relate aspects of the study's findings (and recommendations) to elements of the work on the 'Neurodiversity Organisational Maturity Model' (Tomczak et al., 2021 p.660). This approach conceptualised and proposed radical new practices for organisational development using neurodiversity as a competitive advantage.

There are two elements to this model 'propensity, and then it requires readiness. It is not possible to reach maturity by bypassing one of the components. According to the social model of disability, the presence of individual determinants within propensity and readiness promotes the

reduction of barriers to employment within existing structures and environments and brings the company closer to being mature for effective employment and full inclusion of neurodivergent individuals' (Tomczak et al., 2021 p.670).

These two elements, working together, are a fundamental part of what this study is trying to achieve. Merseyside Police are at a stage of maturity where they want to ensure that support is available for neurodiverse people, while also maximising their potential in the workplace. The force has done this through the development of the Neurodiversity Needs Assessor role. The role has been successful in screening for neurodiversity, but also in providing recommendations for assistive technology compatible with police systems, which has helped to remove barriers and enable neurodiversity to thrive inside the organisation.

In my opinion, the formation of this role mentioned above and the subsequent conversations I have had with the new chief constable highlight a propensity for change. The organisation is now in a position to start implementing the outcomes and findings of this PhD thesis. However, a readiness assessment has yet to be conducted regarding neurodiversity, and this would need to be undertaken to establish a baseline before initiating any workstreams.

It has been interesting as the Neurodiversity Organisational Maturity Model highlights that there is a 'dynamic continuum where elements within and across both categories interact in shaping an organisation's path towards neurodiversity inclusion' (Tomczak et al., 2021 p.670). I personally feel that this research has been a catalyst for moving Merseyside Police towards the readiness area of this model, which in turn will create a neuro-inclusive organisational culture. The work of this thesis has not only contributed to identifying areas of adaptation, innovation, and positive change, but it has also initiated a movement where conversations are now more open within the organisation regarding neurodiversity and support for reasonable adjustments.

I have observed that there has been a steady and significant shift within the Organisation Culture towards neurodiversity and other protected characteristics. This has been highlighted in 2023 with Merseyside Police investing significantly in the Anthony Walker Foundation (AWF) Anti-Racism Training. A mandated training course that every officer and staff member must have undertaken by the end of 2024. This training is aimed at increasing understanding of what racism is and reducing instances of workplace discrimination in the workplace within Merseyside Police as part of the Police Race Action Plan from the Home Office. The AWF training related to race has now been completed across the force in 2025 with a positive attendance rate. However, it has opened the door for other sessions to be run, covering different topics, including neurodiversity, which is being considered in the next tranche of funded training to be rolled out across the organisation. This was implied following a conversation with the new Chief Constable in November 2025.

Inclusion is essential within Merseyside Police and is one of the core values alongside 'tackling organised crime, community engagement, wellbeing, preventative policing and protecting vulnerable people' (Merseyside Police , 2020). Managers of teams need to lead by example and be inclusive of diversity of thought. Additionally, within the organisation, a campaign called 'Call It Out' was launched in 2024 to reduce discrimination and promote an organisational culture of inclusion in the workplace, aligning with the organisational vision and values that Merseyside Police set to ensure ethical and good policing conduct. However, challenges have arisen with data recording and standards for neurodiversity in this system, which are outlined in more detail in the findings and discussion chapter of this thesis. This is an area that needs to be urgently addressed and outlined in more detail within the findings chapter of this thesis.

'The Neurodiversity Organisational Maturity Model' (Tomczak et al., 2021) could be adapted for law enforcement to ensure a reflective, diverse, inclusive, and collaborative organisational culture is implemented within Merseyside Police. This theory focuses on the development of the

‘propensity and readiness’ for systemic and inclusive organisational change regarding neurodiversity in policing (Tomczak et al., 2021).

However, strong leadership from Chief Constables is needed to embed neurodiversity into the organisational culture. They also need to be in tune with their people and understand that there is an organisational need to invest in neurodiversity, either through their own personal experiences or by being exposed to the benefits that neurodiversity brings during their tenure. Johnson (1998), who is a commentator on the nature vs nurture debate, argues that Leadership studies have concluded that leadership is about ‘two-thirds made or developed and one-third nature’ (Johnson, 1998). There are many different conflicting viewpoints on this debate, with other commentators arguing the opposite, posing the question, Are leaders born or made? This highlights that for Chief Constables to lead law enforcement organisations and create inclusive organisational cultures, they must have some natural leadership tendencies that they are born with, but also develop and mature into as their roles progress over time.

Greenleaf (2011) also highlights that ‘men and women of a stature equal to the greatest prophets of the past are with us now addressing the problems of the day and pointing to a better way to live fully and serenely in these times’. This highlights the importance of appreciating the past in order to make informed decisions for the future. Greenleaf (2011, p.22) states, ‘We are the prophet of our history; we see current prophecy with the context of past wisdom’. Views of senior leaders within Merseyside Police have evolved, and this has occurred during challenging times and circumstances, including the 1981 riots, the murder of Oliver Pratt Korbel and Ashley Dale in 2022 and more recently the Southport Attacks in 2025, highlighting that general beliefs and values within the force have organically changed over the decades. The current Chief Constable has recognised this, and significant expenditure has been invested in the value of neurodiversity within Merseyside Police, ensuring that neurodiversity is at the heart of all decisions made within the force since his tenure began in September 2025.

Between 2019 and 2022, I worked with Aggregate Industries to evaluate their organisational approach to Neurodiversity. The outcomes from the initial audit and subsequent internships were a radical approach to EDI where the establishment of networks to support staff from diverse backgrounds, listening circles for staff to share their stories, and a different approach to hiring senior managers within the organisation occurred. This worked effectively, and the areas of recommendation included accessibility, employee experience, a review of processes and procedures, employees' cultural perceptions of the current stage of progress within the organisation, the creation of inclusive workplace environments, and areas of further research. These themes have been in place for five years and remain effective in approaching diversity and inclusion within the organisation. These improvements have had organisational challenges, but they have been scaled back due to cost implementation and the long-term feasibility of projects. They worked in the short term, but additional work is needed to implement the longer-term key performance indicators proposed to the company in the initial report.

This study has taken a slightly different approach, where I have spoken with staff and officers directly to understand their views on Neurodiversity and the current stage Merseyside Police are at concerning their EDI culture. A survey and multiple focus groups have been conducted to take the organisation's pulse and understand their views and perspectives on EDI-related issues, topics and operational-related issues.

In order to achieve a truly inclusive and high-performing organisation, the notion of organisational energy must be considered. The definition of Organisational Energy is "the extent to which an organisation (or division or team) has mobilised its emotional, cognitive and behavioural potential to pursue its goals" (Vogel, 2017, p. 5). The main aim of this study is to ensure that Merseyside Police are energised and actively promoting Neurodiversity and disability within their organisational culture. Andrew Dyckhoff states, 'Organisations with high levels of positive energy are resilient and constantly deliver good results' (Dyckhoff, 2023, p. 168). This can relate to

organisational culture due to a formula '(strategy + execution) x energy = results' (Dyckhoff, 2023, p. 169) where energised and proactive leaders can drive an organisation forward and enable the wider workforce to buy into the idea of the shared vision and values. This positive energy then cascades down, creating 'innovation, teamwork, trust, engagement, respect, customer focus, competitive advantage and profitability' (Dyckhoff, 2023, p. 171). A high-energy and high-performance workplace has excellent outcomes for the entire organisation.

The main issue in ensuring that high energy and high performance are achieved within an organisation is the role of the Sergeant or Police Staff Band E, as this is the first rung of line management responsibility and arguably the most critical rank as this shapes many officers careers due to the ethics, standards and behaviour they are meant to impress upon other colleagues in their department. This is important because 'to strategically manage the deployment of collective human resources toward performance, managers must recognise, interpret, and align the volatile resources of productive organisational energy to their workplace' (Vogel, Raes and Bruch, 2022, p. 1).

Middle Managers can become discontented with the corporate vision and cause negative energy for their teams. Forbes describes middle managers as 'sandwich leaders' because they 'are in a tough place, trying to balance the day-to-day team tasks with the company vision that they often did not help shape, but need to promote to their teams' (Forbes, 2019). This is a challenging area to establish positive energy as this group is lower decision makers who make decisions locally and feel away from the setting of organisational strategy; getting them on board can make a real difference to the organisational values as they are on the front line. This has been a significant challenge that has occurred throughout the course of this research, where individuals who are in the middle of the rank structure are discontented and not on board with the organisational strategy due to their work being mainly operational and very busy.

Middle management and organisational change can create a mixture of energy within an organisation. This can be overcome through 'active and visible executive sponsorship, frequent and open communication about change, structured change management approach, dedicated change management resources and funding, employee engagement and participation' (PROSCI, 2023). The quote in the last sentence comes from the Professional Science (PROSCI) change management model, which ensures that middle managers are on board with change and that change is effectively communicated across the organisation. However, this may prove an issue to implement and could be considered easier said than done.

Conclusion to Methods Chapter

To conclude, this chapter has covered many theoretical approaches, including exploring Neurodiversity and its impact on individuals, teams and organisations within the workplace, X&Y Managers, organisational energy, game theory, psychological safety, social justice and change management approaches. The chapter has also outlined the foundational methodological and epistemological approaches for the focus groups, one-to-one interviews and the survey that has been circulated to Response and Resolution Officers and People Services Teams. There have also been a number of other themes explored within the chapter, consisting of anthropological research, project inception and the negotiation of an MOU, ISA and DMP with the force and university, exploratory presentations and sessions to Merseyside Police Officers and Staff. The combination of these themes has contributed to the accumulation and development of research design, methodological approach and development of theory. This study could not have come at a more significant time for Policing, and I hope it will lead to the development of neurodiversity change management approaches that will impact the law enforcement sector both domestically and internationally.

Chapter 5: Findings

Strategic Priorities: Inclusion, Neurodiversity & Disability

Organisational Culture

Why are Police, Governmental Departments and Private Sector Organisations Moving Away From DEI?

My research on international and national security and law enforcement has brought to attention that organisations such as NATO, the FBI, and the Cabinet Office are all moving away from the words "Inclusion" and "Equality." Several factors are associated with this, including political, social, and environmental factors that will be explained later in this section.

EDI has been politicised; the trend to move away from the term started with President Donald Trump's inauguration in January 2025 as the 47th President of the United States. He signed several executive orders, the most high-profile one being 'the first EO (14151) ending radical and wasteful government DEI programmes and Preferencing' and the requirement to terminate all 'discriminatory programs, including illegal [DEI] and [DEIA] mandates, policies, programs, preferences and activities in the Federal Government, under whatever name they appear' (Skadden, 2025). It requires that federal agencies, departments or commission heads terminate all (i) DEI offices and positions, (ii) "equity" plans, actions, initiatives or programs and "equity-related" grants or contracts, and (iii) DEI or DEIA "performance requirements for employees, contractors or grantees" (Skadden, 2025).

DEI has been hijacked in America with President Donald Trump rebranding it for discriminatory purposes, with the Whitehouse tweeting on May 2nd, 2025, that ‘the only DEI we support: Deport Every Illegal’, which highlights that President Trump is not for the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Agenda (Lewis Silkin, 2025).



Figure 4: The White House, X Account, 'Deport Every Illegal' Tweet 2nd May 2025

This poses a precarious question: What will replace it? This question is difficult to answer. I have had access to high-level discussions with law enforcement agencies worldwide, and the trend has been to cloak EDI practices. Job titles have been changed to gear towards organisational development or design and have moved away from directly referencing the EDI movement.

In the UK, a rebranding effort is underway, following the trends and patterns highlighted above, but not a scrapping of initiatives due to the protections afforded by current legislation under the Equality Act 2010. Scrapping such initiatives would open up legal challenges in UK courts. Words such as ‘wellbeing’, ‘culture’, ‘inclusion’ and ‘people’ are terms for EDI or DEI without directly referencing this and have changed the landscape of roles in the profession and law enforcement. Merseyside Police rebranded their team as the ‘Inclusion, Wellbeing and Engagement Team’ in 2024, from the EDI team, signifying the trend highlighted above of moving away from overt terminology.

The New Chief Constable and Senior Leadership Movement

From now on, in the document, participant data will be coded as follows: Interview Participants will be IP, Focus Group Participants will be FG, and Survey Respondents will be SR, with a corresponding number for each, depending on when the interview took place.

Participants in the interviews highlighted how significant bKennedy, the Merseyside Police Chief Constable, has been within the organisation, driving inclusion as one of the organisation's core values. Since the commencement of this research, Robert Carden has been appointed following Serena Kennedy's resignation on the 13th March 2025.

Participants highlighted that inclusion as a force priority during this transition period will be uncertain; a new Chief Constable will bring new organisational values. IP 15 highlighted the following:

Chief Officer Groups changed very quickly. So we've had our current Chief Constable for a couple of years. She will likely go in the next 12 months. So, the piece of work that she has basically led in terms of cultural change. We're three years into a process, and then we get a new chief constable. After that, there's a 50-50 split on whether that individual runs with it or puts it to bed. We're up to, perhaps, step number five of Kotter's model. I can't remember the exact steps, but we're probably two-thirds of the way up. Then you're back down to number one again [when the new chief comes in]. (IP: 15)

However, following a meeting with the new Chief Constable, Robert Carden, on 7th November 2025, Inclusion, with a particular emphasis on neurodiversity, has been guaranteed to continue in some form after the completion of this thesis, addressing the uncertainty stated above. The new Chief Constable has assured me that neurodiversity support will continue within the organisation and has committed to setting up a meeting with chief officers and myself to share the findings of this research. Following this meeting the Chief Constable will consider the

recommendations and opportunities for investment and allocation of resources to implement the most appropriate findings into the organisational culture, ensuring that the conditions are right for people to thrive within the organisation.

Kotter's Model was developed in 1995. The model outlines eight steps to organisational development and change⁵. Merseyside Police are currently at stage five in this model, which is 'enabling action by removing barriers', removing obstacles and creating collaboration rather than 'siloes' working, generating impact quickly (Kotter , 2025). The new Chief Constable coming in could take the organisation to the next level in this model, which is stage six 'creating short-term wins to build momentum', which he has pledged following the publication of this thesis to create an authentic and inclusive organisational culture (Kotter , 2025).

IP 13 further supports this statement by stating that inclusion is at the heart of the previous Chief Constable (Serena Kennedy's) decision-making through introducing diversity of thought and increasing trust and confidence in members of the public.

Inclusion is extremely important because that is what the Chief Con is trying to do to the whole community as well trying to include everyone and if you have a police force that everyone is feeling included you then you will be able to work with the community a lot

⁵ The eight steps for Kotter's Model are as follows:

1. **Create a Sense of Urgency** – Creating a window of Opportunity.
2. **Build a Guiding Coalition** – A guidance Committee from All Ranks.
3. **Form a Strategic Vision and Initiatives** – Targeted and Coordinated Activities Executed in Fast Succession.
4. **Enlist a Volunteer Army** – Larger-Scale Change Needs to Have the Masses Behind it, Giving People a Reason to Join the Movement.
5. **Enable Action by Removing Barriers** – Removing inefficient Processes to enable Employees to work across Boundaries and Create Real Impact.
6. **Generate Short-Term Wins** – Track Progress and energise Volunteers to Drive Change through Visible and Tangible Change.
7. **Sustain Acceleration** – Increasing Credibility can Improve Systems, Structures and Policies, initiating Change after Change until the Vision is a Reality.
8. **Institute Change** – Define and Communicate the Connections between Behaviours and the Organisation's Success to sustain Long-Term Change Management.

(Kotter , 2025)

better because there will be people from different cultures, different religions and different diversity backgrounds. I think by building that it will speak to the public a lot better as there will be people inside the force from the same culture, religion, speaking to them, understanding what they are going through and having insight. (IP: 3)

As of 1st September 2025, Robert Carden has been appointed as the new Chief Constable of Merseyside Police, and as part of this there will be a period of transition and planning that the force must undertake to ensure that the service delivery of neurodiversity as a force priority is achieved. Robert Carden was the Chief Constable of Cumbria Constabulary, and the force's organisational mission, vision, values and priorities are heavily focused on inclusion and diversity. Outlined in the Cumbria Police's Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Strategy 2020-2025 which states that:

A workplace that embraces the diverse communities it serves will help us attract, retain, and develop the best people from a broad range of backgrounds. Diverse teams bring a variety of thoughts, innovation, and creativity and will help us better understand the needs of our communities. Independent research highlights a link between greater diversity and inclusion and higher organisational performance. (Cumbria Police, 2020)

The new Chief Constable, as highlighted above, has a significant emphasis on EDI in Policing. The change in leadership can be linked to the Bridges Transition Model's Stage Two, 'The Neutral Zone' (Bridges, 2025). This stage of organisational development presents a period of opportunity for Merseyside Police, as the new Chief Constable brings a new organisational identity, including new values and a tone. This is a period where the new Chief Constable will create a new organisational culture where neurodiversity and inclusion will sit at the heart of this.

IP 29 highlights how important neurodiversity is to the organisational culture and values, which will continue with the new Chief Constable: 'I think the police should be an employer of choice

for neurodiverse people. I think we employ bright people, and I think these are issues that bright people can come up with solutions to hard-to-solve problems' (IP: 29)

Leadership, Career Mapping and Reasonable Adjustments

Participants highlighted that the roles of first- and second-line leaders, as well as direct line management, were significant positive or negative factors in their careers. Participants across the interviews, focus groups and surveys highlighted the following.

I think [neurodiversity] is still just a little bit lost between the ranks, though, between the command team ranks and the first and second line manager ranks. I think that's where it's fallen down a little bit. (IP: 7)

Interview participant 7 highlighted above that there is a gap between frontline officers and senior command teams, as well as within these teams regarding understanding of neurodiversity. This has been addressed through training for first- and second-line leaders on neurodiversity.

The Merseyside Police Academy, in collaboration with me, have developed a full-day voluntary training programme to address this imbalance and increase confidence and support for neurodiverse team members in disclosing to their line managers. This programme has been attracting people with a common interest in this area, whether through personal lived experience or through family members with conditions. The programme should be mandated, as the current offering is inadequate due to the course's demographic targeting being too narrow. This is to ensure that every officer has a baseline knowledge and understanding of neurodiversity and its signs and symptoms, and can confidently de-escalate situations with neurodiverse people in the workplace and when in the community. The course content covers a foundational knowledge base of what neurodiversity is, including personal stories and scenarios where neurodiversity has led to misunderstandings, as well as occupational health support and reasonable adjustments needs assessments offered within the force.

This course should be rolled out in the same manner as the Anthony Walker Foundation Anti-Racism Training, with a broader remit and a mandated programme resource allocation to train all officers in understanding neurodiversity, both within their teams and when engaging with members of the public. I am currently collaborating with the National Police Chiefs Council to explore how this initiative can be funded and resourced across the 43 forces in the UK.

The neurodiversity training provided by the force is trying to equip management with the skills to have uncomfortable conversations, as highlighted by interview participant 10.

It's not always obvious that someone might have additional needs, but how to approach it, I think like I remember when I've had to ask questions, when they become relevant about people's mental health, sexuality, any additional needs, it can feel like an uncomfortable conversation. (IP: 10)

This can relate to Adair's Action Centred Leadership Model, which highlights the triumvirate of 'achieve the task, build and maintain the team and develop the individual' (Chartered Management Institute, 2015). Managers need emotional intelligence to be on the same level as their teams and to have these challenging and sometimes emotional conversations.

Emotional Intelligence comes into the Action Centred Learning Theory through the notion of the team, where 'if the team lacks cohesiveness, then performance of the task is impaired and individual satisfaction is reduced, and if individual needs are not met, for team members, then the team will lack cohesiveness and performance of the task will be impaired' (Chartered Management Institute, 2015). The team needs to be maintained to ensure productivity and performance. In order for this to happen, managers need to understand the importance of neurodiversity and how to adjust their behaviour in order to ensure they support their colleagues to reach their full potential in the workplace, creating an intrinsic link between the aspect of the team and the psychological safety of the individual in order to flourish inside the organisation.

The first-line leaders in the audience, who are sergeants and police staff equivalents, have the greatest cultural impact due to their cultural touch. A sergeant might have 12 staff members. Well, they can be massively influential as role model in terms of how their staff behave and in their mindset. (IP: 15)

In addition to Adair's Model highlighted above, managers also need to influence the diversity in their teams in order for innovation to be achieved and there needs to be a mix of minds to ensure that work is done. The Myers-Briggs Personality Test identifies six personality types that describe how individuals work, and diversity of thought is essential for teams to achieve maximum productivity. These are 'Extroverts which are energised by interacting with other people, Sensors are pragmatic realists who focus on the facts, Thinkers who are logical and highly analytical, Judgers who make plans and lists and are highly organised, Introverts ' who are energised by ideas and working alone, Intuitivism which spot patterns and future possibilities, Feelers which make decisions carefully and Perceivers which are spontaneous, flexible and highly adaptive' (LeadX, 2019). This can relate to teams in law enforcement and policing. If a manager is pragmatic in their approach, they will make sure there is a combination of personality types in their teams and this will evolve and improve productivity and organisational culture inside the organisation.

Merseyside Police have been addressing neurodiversity reasonable adjustments by appointing a dedicated neurodiversity lead to oversee reasonable adjustments assessments for the force, which has been effective since 2023. Since the commencement of the role, 14 needs assessors have been appointed and are working with individuals to undertake needs assessments and source suitable equipment in-house for people once the reports have been produced. Line management is a critical part of the process, where, if the individual consents to the report being shared with their line manager, the neurodiversity lead will then meet with them to share relevant information on how to support people and provide adjustments in their department. Focus Group

participants particularly emphasised how their reasonable adjustments had benefited them, as stated below.

If I did need the help, I know it's there. And as someone coming into something like this who does have autism, Asperger's, it was difficult, but I was given the support I needed in order to do the role. That's good again, it's great that the academy has provided that. (FG: 1)

I'm not trying to be better than them; I'm just trying to get to a point where I can work to my full ability, just like them. So it's just given me the tools to do that. (FG: 3)

It's about facilitating equality of opportunity for everyone and equity in terms of accessibility and just doing what is reasonable, which can sometimes be very, you know, something very small, even trivial changes for somebody that just allowed them to perform their role to the best of their ability and kind of see their potential. (FG: 3)

The Neurodiversity Reasonable Adjustments Lead for the force has been collaborating with the IT department to develop a database of reasonable adjustments, which includes assistive technologies available for use in police systems. This has been very difficult for the force, as the organisation is seeking assistive software with servers based in the UK due to GDPR, and this has resulted in some reasonable adjustments not being able to be fulfilled due to complex information security issues. Focus Group participants highlighted this.

Sometimes the two don't see eye to eye. Because what I might think is reasonable might not be what the organisation sees as reasonable (FG: 4)

IP 17 states that the need for neurodiversity training to be embedded into the curriculum at the start of officers' careers is essential to ensure that neurodiversity awareness is present from the point of entry to the organisation.

Make neurodiversity an essential part of the curriculum. Have a substantial part and not just throw in a lesson on neurodiversity. Pick up the neurodiversity question in every lesson. You have to factor it into everything because it's all-encompassing. (IP: 17)

Currently, there are no unified approaches to decision-making on neurodiversity within the force, nor is there a clear understanding of who the decision-maker is, which can cause significant confusion and lead to information being shared confusingly across multiple departments.

Multiple documents enable individuals to document their support arrangements from the point of entry into the workforce. This includes an AP 11 form, which states any disabilities or health conditions at the start of their policing career. This form is then sent to HR to be added to their file, but it is not currently shared with all parties within the Academy and Tutor Constables, which should be shared with the individual's consent in accordance with information assurance and GDPR Regulations . There is also a significant stigma associated with checking the neurodiversity box on this form due to possible biases that may occur at the recruitment stage or during job-related fitness tests and medical standards.

Interview participant 9 states that there is distrust in the system about these documents.

So at the moment, what we're saying to people who may have been diagnosed with autism, age three and actually they've been diagnosed, but they've now got coping mechanisms in place that allow them to do the job that they are applying for.

Our system says, yeah, but you've been diagnosed with autism; therefore, the computer says no. And what I'm challenging this nationally, through the wellbeing team, we've now got a national medical officer in place.

What I've discussed with Andy Rhodes is that neurodiversity needs national guidance, so that computers aren't automatically saying no. However, we also need to have some parameters upon which we operate. (IP: 9)

Wellbeing is an integral part of policing to ensure that people can function with the daily pressures of the job, and neurodiversity can create significant anxiety in a very stressful profession. This could be due to masking or increased anxiety due to decision-making or attending scenes, which might be very unpleasant. The Oscar Kilo (OK) Wellbeing Vans go out to forces across the country to support officers' physical and psychological well-being. The OK charity also runs a number of events, which have included 'psychological safety and neurodivergence' (Oscar Kilo, 2024) and have awards for organisational cultural development to ensure that neurodiversity, wellbeing, and EDI are promoted as core values of the organisation.

The National Wellbeing Service is part and parcel of the driving force behind changing our culture, improving our services and, most importantly of all, listening to the people who actually do the work to find out what it is that needs to be done so that they can continue delivering a fantastic service to the public. (Oscar Kilo, 2025).

Furthermore, based on conversations with Andy Rhodes, the Chief Executive of Oscar Kilo, neurodiversity appears to be a significant aspect of the services they offer. These include an annual survey on the state of EDI in policing. Furthermore, gathering specific datasets and research on neurodiverse burnout, and undertaking research with the UK's Chief Medical Officer on neurodiverse medical standards for people entering the profession and the development of specific guidance for neurodiverse people during their initial training. However, Andy also said that neurodiversity support across the UK is patchy and should be standardised in line with national policing policy and localised guidance, as each police force has a unique operating model, which presents a unique challenge. These initiatives help police officers feel supported

and able to cope with their daily work by providing conversations in a psychologically safe, confidential environment, ensuring they are fit for duty and able to protect the public.

A further document for neurodiversity support is the wellbeing passport, where individuals can record their needs and adjustments, which include parental responsibilities and other, much broader requirements. However, this is voluntary, and not all managers read this document, which can cause difficulties further on in officers' and staff members' careers, lead to repeated misunderstandings or unmet needs for neurodiverse people and create barriers to progression within the organisation. This goes directly against Kotter's Model, 'removing barriers and blockades,' which was referenced earlier in this chapter (Kotter , 2025).

Focus Group 2 highlighted how these documents were effective to a degree when managers do read them, as diagnosis information and challenges are all in one place.

My team's had five line managers in the last two years. And for somebody to have to repeatedly tell new line managers, at least if you've got it documented somewhere, they can see it and go, right, I understand. Somebody's told me, you don't have to bare your soul again to somebody you don't know. (FG: 2)

However, there is no standard, unified form that allows for information sharing to take place, whether that is from a needs assessment, disclosure at the point of entry, or diagnosis further into the individual's policing career. The wording of this form needs to be approachable for all to access. This is to ensure that there is trust and confidence in officers and staff joining the organisation, who are encouraged to disclose their conditions on their application form. Additionally, GDPR and information sharing protocols for data protection must be considered to ensure that information is shared securely with managers, thereby enabling people to receive the right support in their role.

Accompanied by the standardised form, there needs to be a conversation during the Tutor Constable stage to ensure that all managers who will come into contact with the neurodiverse person coming into their team short-term are briefed and understand their strengths and challenges to enable them to thrive in the short time they are spending with the team during the carousel stage. This is similar to the Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) and the Independent Student Learning Plan (ISLP) meetings at Liverpool John Moores University, which enable individuals to be the best they can be in the workplace. These meetings should be run in tandem with the ISLP provided by the University.

Furthermore, many participants highlighted that there was no standardised guidance or documentation on neurodiversity nationally. Participants in the interviews and focus groups stated that 'I can't remember anything that I've been sent for guidance' (IP: 19), 'I can't think of any documents' (IP: 22), 'I don't think I have had anything you know. Not that I can think of.' (IP: 27), 'I would need guidance first on exactly what neurodiversity is and how to deal with it and approach those affected or fit into the criteria of neurodivergence' (SR: 70) and 'I am unaware of specific guidance but am aware of the DSN' (SR: 94). Despite the existence of documents such as the Takeda Report, Another Sign report, and the Neurodiversity Stop and Search Guidance by the NPCC and Metropolitan Police. I believe that there should be a broader awareness of neurodiversity, as management would be more attuned to their employees and the challenges faced by neurodiverse individuals every day.

Inclusion Board

Chronology – Inclusion Board under the Serena Kennedy Leadership

With the change in leadership from a strategic, tactical and operational point of view, there have also been changes to the committee structure inside Merseyside Police.

When Serena Kennedy was Deputy Chief Constable, she declared a critical incident regarding the organisation's low proportion of black people (only 0.5%) and then led a gold group on this topic. When Serena Kennedy took office as Chief Constable in April 2021, this matter stated above then prompted the formation of the Inclusion Board, and inclusion became one of her six priorities. The focus of the Inclusion board was initially to monitor the Police Race Action Plan, which was published by the government in May 2022, with targets set by the Home Office.

However, as discussed in detail later in the thesis, a PESTEL Analysis was not undertaken at the point of inception for the Inclusion (now Our Culture) Board. I personally feel that it would have been a baseline marker that could have been referred to chart organisational progress for Merseyside Police and showcase the positive practices the Board had undertaken.

This Board then evolved towards a wider strategic remit that covered other protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010, including Gender, Disability, Race, Religion, and Sexuality. It actively tracked initiatives across the organisation through actions, minutes, and Red Amber and Green (RAG) rating scales. The committee was chaired by an Assistant Chief Constable and included senior leadership from the rank of Inspector and above on the board. Participants provided significant evidence that they were aware of the Inclusion Board's (now Our Culture Board) existence. However, officers not sitting on the board did not know how it approached its programme of work.

Interview Participant 10 supports this statement, stating that 'I think the force as a whole is broadly speaking, [...] is getting inclusion right. It's just kind of, it's extending that out across the rest of the inclusivity agenda' (IP: 10).

This suggests that the broadening of the remit to include all protected characteristics has been successful making more people feel included and respected in the organisation.

The mobilisation of people and resources is also highlighted by Interview Participant 8 who states that:

The organisation has started to come together to support the inclusion agenda by rapidly responding to cultural issues. It's something that we have a whole inclusion board set up that looks at this and tracks that data and thinks about things that we can do differently to get us to the point, you know. I think it's put inclusion right up there, visible for people, and, you know, we've got all the kind of top people in the organisation who are involved in that, talking about it. It mobilises all different people. From across the organisation to come together, to look at a challenge and to seriously devote some time and thought energy into how we're going to solve it. (IP: 8)

The Inclusion Programme (TIP) was initially scheduled for 12 months to chart progress, but has been running for over three years. The force claims to have made significant strides for inclusivity within the organisational culture. Participants across the interviews, focus groups and surveys stated that TIP for the inclusion board has achieved significant strides towards embedding EDI and Neurodiversity inside the organisation, but there is still significant work to do in order for this to be fully achieved and at the heart of the organisational values, and it's too early to come to that conclusion in this current iteration.

The broader view of the EDI approach within Merseyside Police is that officers do know about The Inclusion Programme (TIP), but their understanding of what it actually does is lacking. However, there is an understanding of staff network activity in particular and the relevant points of contact, as well as some understanding of the support offered by the IWE Team, which has been more active and going out to stations to support activity from these networks. The above seems to be the level of support provided to officers and staff within the force on a frontline level. However, frontline officers do not seem to understand the strategic decisions that occur in the Inclusion (now Our Culture) Board meetings to set the priorities for the next financial quarter. I personally

think that it is really important that all officers and staff understand the force priorities and the activity of this committee to fully grasp the organisational cultural development.

Focus Group 4 highlighted that there is currently an action tracker for the work done under the Inclusion Board (Now Our Culture Board) programme, to track the progress of the various workstreams and project work that occur outside of the meetings. However, it appears that this good work is only discussed at the highest strategic levels within the Inclusion Board (Now Our Culture Board) Meetings and not necessarily distributed down to a tactical and operational level through briefing papers or sways. Arguably, this is essential to cascade and circulate the impact the board is making to the organisation and highlight the significant wins and contributions that the board has in changing the organisational culture.

These reports, when written, could be sent out via an IForce notification, which people do read, to showcase the work of the IWE Team, the Inclusion (now Our Culture) Board, and best practices undertaken by officers within frontline practice. This can enable the connection and bridge the corporate-frontline divide, showcase strategic and operational best practices, and the reports be engaging through the use of pictures and colour to ensure people maintain attention.

So, the Inclusion Board will produce an action tracker. That covers a few elements [.....] and all those actions that come out of those boards in terms of achieving the goals around DE and I, and stuff will be tracked and will be controlled really well.

That is great. If you are part of that board, and obviously if there are pieces of work to go away and do in your particular areas, then whoever represents at that board goes and carries on that work. But going back to the conversation before. Does it. Does it filter down? Probably not. Do we issue a sway or a paper every quarter to indicate that the inclusion board is reviewing this, what it has done, and what it plans to do?

No, we don't. That's probably an easy and quick win. Quick win. However, we do not do that to get it, you know. To get it through the organisation. So in terms of understanding where we go and what we need to do, I think. I think we have got that down really well, and we have well-controlled action trackers around that. (FG: 4)

Within the data collection phase of the research, there was evidence that the Inclusion Board (now Culture Board) existed. However, from a frontline perspective, the officers and members of staff that I spoke with did not know the activity that was coming out of the meeting. The board is positioned from a strategic perspective and is not filtering activity down to the wider force on a tactical or operational level as highlighted by Focus Group 4 above.

As highlighted earlier in this section, greater awareness of what the board produces would be beneficial to all officers within the organisation, ensuring that inclusion is embedded into all decision-making processes across the organisation. This will bring about authentic and ongoing cultural change. This has also been supported by Interview Participant 11, who states that:

I think people view headquarters as a foreign land.

So, would you say that there's like an operational and a frontline divide? [interviewer]

Yeah, well, I'd say an operational and a corporate divide. (IP: 11)

Highlighting that messages from the corporate side of the organisation are not filtering properly to frontline officers and their teams, specifically. There seems to be an organisational blockage in relation to facilitating cultural change. This could be easily remedied through the production of reports as highlighted by the quote earlier in this section.

Leadership Transition Period: Culture Board Establishment

In January 2025, a review paper was written internally to evaluate TIP's effectiveness, yielding two options. The first was an expansion of the committee, chaired by an Assistant Chief Constable, to cover culture and inclusion in the same meeting and chart organisational development and change management approaches to EDI in force. The second option was to disband the committee and return to business as usual.

The organisation decided to go with option one, keeping the committee to continue charting progress due to the significant impact that the force has achieved over the last three years. This decision also involved expanding the meeting to incorporate cultural change and leadership, thereby broadening the agenda and scope for the committee.

This change can be related to Lewin's Change Management Model, which outlines three phases to change. 'Phase one is unfreeze, which is to prepare for change and challenge existing beliefs; phase two is change, which is to implement the new committee/structures; and the final stage is refreeze, which is to reinforce and stabilise the new structure' (Lewin, 1947). The Inclusion Board have gone through these phases several times as outlined above, with the initial changes to the organisation in the first iteration, then the second version which opened up the wider protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010, and now in 2025, with the adaptation of the terms of reference to include culture.

I proposed at the new Culture Board meeting on 9th July 2025 that a PESTEL Analysis (PESTEL stands for political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental) be conducted before fully implementing these changes to the committee to chart progress from the start of the new iteration of the board and programme, and to show organisational development is happening. This is something which had not been conducted by previous iterations of the board when it was inclusion-specific. The response from the ACC, the meeting chair, and other senior

officers to this recommendation was positive, but I will have to wait to see how it will be incorporated going forward.

Merseyside Police Culture and Inclusion Plan 2025-2030

At the point of writing this thesis, the organisation has refreshed its values, embracing the Healthy People, Healthy Organisation areas, which are further outlined in this chapter.

The first Culture Board meeting was held on 9th July 2025 and chaired by ACC Matt Smith, the new ACC for People Services. During the course of this meeting, a Culture and Inclusion Plan 2025-2030 was discussed, covering five priority areas for the organisation. The force has created and launched this document from this meeting. The document outlines the areas for EDI that Merseyside Police will focus on over the next five years. The first is 'Involved', which looks at 'involving communities so we [the force] can demonstrate how community engagement informs planning' (Merseyside Police , 2025). The second is 'respected', which evaluates being 'fair and respectful in our [the force's] processes and procedures, including use of powers' (Merseyside Police , 2025). The third is 'protected', which focuses on 'diverting marginalised groups from harm because these communities often face systemic inequalities and higher risks of victimisation. By actively working to safeguard all communities (Merseyside Police , 2025). The fourth aspect of this plan is 'represented', which focuses on 'Improving workforce representation' (Merseyside Police, 2025). The final area of the plan is 'inclusive culture', 'where all individuals feel valued, respected, and accepted regardless of their backgrounds, identities, or differences. This culture encourages diversity in all forms, including race, sex, age, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, disability' (Merseyside Police , 2025).

The plan states that these four strategic areas will be achieved through 'Central oversight and governance for external scrutiny', 'Increased meaningful community engagement that creates

action’, ‘Improved reporting of Use of Force - data, gaps, and risk identification and mitigation’, ‘Review and apply recommendations from reviews and reports such as the Casey review, local HMICFRS inspections, and Angiolini enquiry’, and ‘Improving inclusive practices for Disability & Neurodiversity’ (Merseyside Police , 2025). These areas within the plan aim to foster a culture where everyone can bring their full selves to work free of discrimination or marginalisation to work.

Inclusion as a Force Priority

The following sections and participant data will comment on the old Merseyside Police Force Values document 2020-2025 as this was the document in place at the time of data collection and writing where Healthy People and Healthy Organisation were force priorities.

Healthy People

Inclusion was part of the previous Merseyside Police Strategy (2020-2025), but it has now been moved to a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) under the Healthy People section. Participants in focus groups, interviews, and surveys interpreted the concept of inclusion in various ways, and it holds different meanings for different individuals.

Merseyside Police has changed its strategy to move towards the strategic models of the ‘Healthy People’ and ‘Healthy Organisation’ models across the organisation to be in line with the ‘National Decision Making Model’ (College of Policing, 2012) and new ‘Code of Ethics’ by the College of Policing and creating an organisational culture which promotes diversity and inclusion as well as increasing public trust, confidence and legitimacy in policing (College of Policing, 2024) .

Neurodiversity and EDI come under the Healthy People model within the organisation. It is unclear at this time why the Merseyside Police Organisational Strategy Vision Statements have removed the term ‘inclusion’ from the 2020-2025 plan. The following two sections will discuss the

removal of the word "inclusion" from the 2020-2025 force strategy and then the following section will then evaluate the changes in the new 2025-2030 strategy.

Participants within the interviews, focus groups and surveys had very mixed views on the understanding and depth of knowledge of the strategy changes. Participants still believed that Inclusion was part of the Merseyside Police Strategy 2020-2025 document, which had been subsequently revised during the five-year cycle to focus on a healthy people, healthy organisation. Many participants also stated that they had not received briefings regarding these organisational strategy and values changes and that the communications strategy on this was poor.

Interview Participant 15 stated:

Now you sit down, 10 people, and ask them to explain how the strategy works, what I will tell you is this, they will not be able to do it because the cultural cascade sessions haven't happened. Yeah. Because that's a cultural issue, it hasn't cascaded to the right people. It's not done that. the strategy changed 12 months ago. So when you asked that question, so you've interviewed 14 people before me, did anybody tell you what I've told you?

No. So there's a bigger worry, isn't there? But people aren't aware of the change because the first thing they should pick up is the strategy; it doesn't look like that anymore, Jack. So that says something. (IP:15)

IP 15 highlights that the information regarding the new values has not been appropriately cascaded among the organisational strands. However, senior leaders currently understand this, whereas frontline police officers do not, as this is currently operating at a strategic level.

IP 7 highlights below that if well-being is not considered, the other targets in the force strategy and values will not be achieved.

if you don't include everyone, you can't look after everyone's wellbeing, everyone's not going to perform, you're not going to hit the rest of your strategies, you're not going to be tackling serious and organized crime, you're not going to be out in the community, because if you haven't got the well being, then you haven't got anything else. (IP: 7)

IP 8 focuses on the Merseyside and Me Survey, which outlines the current cultural and strategic performance of the Healthy People Objective within the organisation and examines how trust, confidence, and legitimacy are currently operating between officers and their confidence in line management.

Inclusion was one of our six priorities for the force. On our recent fourth staff survey. I think we were around 78% or something like that in terms of inclusive culture. And people talk about their line manager was very positive overall. But I think when it comes to just the mechanisms at the moment around neurodiversity and disability, you know, it is a gap for us. (IP: 8)

It is my opinion is that there is still significant work, particularly in the inclusion, disability and neurodiversity spaces, that needs significant and longer-term improvement. Although significant progress has been made, the organisation should still be mindful of this and has a long way to go to ensure there is complete parity between neurodiverse and neurotypical colleagues' experiences, free from discrimination and biases in the workplace.

IP 12 appears to reinforce this by highlighting that *'Inclusion is a bit of a broken thread almost. I can't honestly say I think inclusion is woven into this tapestry of Merseyside Police'* (IP: 12). A number of participants also supported this statement, highlighting that there is still a long way to go in developing a truly neuro-inclusive organisational culture.

I just don't think it is, and I think there are still those dinosaurs out there that we've alluded to, people's mindsets. You will never change. Before I come to work at headquarters, obviously, I've been an operational police in all the years before that.

I think it was brought alive by it becoming one of the Chief's priorities. That's what brought inclusion or diversity into equality. Because whatever you want to call it, that's what brought it alive for me. That's when I started to talk about it with my teams' (IP: 12).

This suggests that inclusion has not yet been fully embedded within the organisation's culture, in part because many officers and staff historically had limited awareness of the importance of inclusive practice. However, as the force has continued to prioritise inclusion over the past decade supported by enhanced training and a clearer organisational focus, levels of understanding have strengthened and sustained progress is now becoming evident. Furthermore, the Previous Chief Constable (Serena Kennedy) described in a meeting with me that 'there are pockets of good practice inside the organisation. We need to sew them together to make a good three-piece suit'. The previous Chief Constable (Serena Kennedy) clarified that a unified approach is not yet entirely in place. However, with the next generation of officers, who through inclusion training and anti-racism training are more culturally aware and aware of social issues, achieving senior officer status in the organisation will create truly authentic change.

Today, youth are more politically aware and have the potential and the will to contribute to cultural and civic life. Connected to each other like never before through digital technologies, they already contribute to the resilience of their communities, proposing innovative solutions, driving social progress and inspiring political change (UNESCO, 2023)

Forbes states that 'over 50% of young people today identify as neurodiverse' and that 'Young professionals today are not just challenging this; they're embracing identities and differences

that older generations often kept hidden in the workplace' (FORBES , 2025). The youth of today are more politically aware of societal challenges, and interviews with officers early in service highlighted a strong awareness of neurodiversity, either through personal experience or through contact with people with neurodiverse conditions during their educational journey. Furthermore, young people understand neurodiversity better, as there has been a significant presence of this within the media, and the acknowledgement of diversity of thought is being encouraged more. This new generation coming through is more intuitive and will be the leaders of tomorrow's police forces, but this will take time as they go through the ranks, hopefully changing attitudes and organisational culture to become more inclusive, diverse and representative of society.

The previous Chief Constable (Serena Kennedy) also highlighted that this will take some time to emerge and may take over ten years to be fully realised, as officers and staff who have been exposed to inclusion training, anti-racism training and understand the impact on trust and confidence due to national critical incidents, it is as these officers and staff move into senior positions that I expect we will really see inclusion being fully embedded.

IP 15 supports this notion that organisational cultural development is generational, as evidenced by a comment made during their interview.

This is how I teach people. This is how I discuss cultural change. You've got to weed out the poor culture. You just have to wait it out. Wait for the poor eggs to crack. Ultimately, they go either via being disciplined at the organisation because they do something wrong or by retiring because they come to the end of their tenure, and all we can hope is that the forward-thinking younger generation coming into the organisation starts to hop the ranks, and then we may see the change that we want to see. (IP: 15)

As generations develop and join the organisation, different cultural beliefs are introduced through their varied experiences and their cognitive diversity. This brings new attitudes, standards, and

improvements to the organisational culture, creating a workforce and senior leadership team that reflects the society within the Merseyside geographic area.

With the changes to the senior leadership team, the new chief officers will bring fresh perspectives, guiding the organisation in a new direction that will hopefully be positive, and some may bring personal lived experience of neurodiversity or have family members who are receiving support.

Healthy Organisation

The notion of a Healthy Organisation is the other side of the Merseyside Police Strategy (2020-2025), which addresses organisational development and change. This area evaluates the budgets and strategies within the organisation and supports individuals in reaching their potential through the promotion process and investment in protecting communities. An example of this is to improve the 'quality of financial support and business acumen to all strands and departments, resulting in a higher graded assessment from the CIPFA Financial Management Review' and 'priority-based budgeting' (Merseyside Police, 2025).

McKinsey and Company define a healthy organisation as 'the way in which you run your organisation to effectively deliver against your performance goals, much as you would with physical health. You want to have an exercise regime that allows you to achieve a level of mental and physical health, enabling you to deliver against your own ambitious goals as an individual. Organisations need to do the same thing' (McKinsey and Company, 2019).

Underpinning this work is the Leadership and Me Framework, which highlights the Just Principles inside the force, which are 'Just Lead, Just Think, Just Talk and Just Listen' brought in under Sir John Murphey in 2015 (Merseyside Police, 2015). This model aligns with the One Team approach, a framework that promotes an open culture where everyone can be their true, authentic self and call out discrimination, harassment, and bullying, as well as other organisational problems. This

was highlighted by Interview Participant 3, who shared their experience of enjoying being a part of the organisational culture inside the force.

The organisation is bringing people together and bringing change through this diversity of thought. The bigger the mix of people the better the organisation will be as you will get to learn new things from other people as its about working as one team and obviously the bigger the team and the more diversities [and protected characteristics you have] will make your opinion stronger and more well-rounded when you are on the front line (IP: 3)

Merseyside Police launched a communications plan in 2022 to highlight a reinvigorated version of the 'Just Principles' supporting the 'Call It Out Initiative' and promote zero tolerance approaches to discrimination, harassment and bullying in the workplace. This was through posters in Merseyside Police Academy as well as adverts on the intranet promoting the new approach to the wider organisation as well as cascade sessions to highlight the new values and what will happen if you breach these standards of behaviour.

Furthermore, a mandated e-learning course titled 'Our Culture' (Merseyside Police , 2025). This course was rolled out to every member of staff and officer, outlining the Just Principles, One Team Approach, Angiolini Inquiry, Baroness Casey Review, being an active bystander and Call It Out, positively promoting the standards and expectations for police officers. I have had the opportunity to review this course and found it covered these topics well and in depth, but it does not address the Inclusive Culture in Merseyside Police or where to seek support from the staff networks and the skills diversity brings to the organisation.

I believe that the training course and communications campaigns discussing organisational cultural changes and the Professional Standards Department's expectations for police officers have increased awareness of the organisational expectations and values for the role of a police officer. Furthermore, what officers should be doing to foster a positive workplace culture free

from sexism, misogyny and harassment. The course aims to restore trust and confidence in policing internally, following the damage caused by reviews into the actions of police officers who acted inappropriately on duty, which led to the reviews outlined above.

Staff Networks Inside the Force

In this section, the voices of participants from interviews, focus groups, and surveys are the most important perspectives. Participants highlighted very valid concerns about the support provided by the Disability Support Network (DSN) within the force, which need to be addressed as a matter of urgency to ensure the proper service delivery for neurodiverse and disabled staff and officers within the force.

The data consistently highlighted that the Disability Support Network (DSN) lacked sufficient resources and support compared to other staff networks within the force. More investment is needed to support requests for help from the organisation. Below is one quote from Interview Participant 2, but multiple respondents highlighted this issue:

On IForce with tabs for staff networks, Disability Support Network (DSN) has a slide within the tab and is publicised there. As to how overtly publicised, not greatly, I would say very rarely on any screensavers, presentations briefings, or any visibility, very rarely do you see from day to day any representation of the DSN. They do have bespoke days in the calendar and are publicised internally on social media, with partners invited in, but the day-to-day stuff, you very rarely see or hear of the DSN. (IP: 2)

The DSN has been described to me as the 'poor relation' of staff networks and has not been given the same platform within the organisation as the other networks. This has been highlighted by Interview Participant 7, who stated:

The networks are being pushed; they clearly are being pushed. But I do think that the DSN falls far below all the other networks, like LGBT, BAME and the women's network, it's all, all there, and it's all doing stuff all the time. And the DSN's a little bit kind of, we're here, we're here if you need us, as opposed to coming along and seeing what we're about.

And this is what we're doing. And we're running this, we're running that. We're having this coffee morning. We're having that coffee morning. The women's network running The menopause. Cafe, LGBT are doing stuff all the time, you know, BAME are doing stuff all the time. And I think the DSN, as I say, is a little bit. We're here if you want us just sat in the corner. (IP: 7)

The above quotes highlight the severity of the situation regarding lack of support from the DSN, which is exacerbated by the pressure of time, resources, and other work commitments of fully operational police officers who are on the executive committee. Further, supporting this point, a number of survey respondents also stated that the main DSN Committee have been poor in responding to people with neurodiverse needs:

I don't think we get a lot of info or updates from the DSN (SR: 16)

Personally I have found the DSN to be closed and, at times, disappointing (SR: 27)

I have attempted in the past to email individuals from network and got no response. Eventually got to speak to someone. But what's the point of being in a network and not responding to individuals (SR: 8)

I was a member for many years although have not been for some time due to trying to better manage my work commitments. I am sad to say, I find them ineffective. Regularly staff tell me that they do not ever get replies to emails, particularly from the autism lead and the chair. (SR: 15)

However, it must be noted in this thesis that there was a small minority of people who did manage to get support from the network. They have highlighted their experiences below:

I think the DSN is a fantastic support network and great place for advice. They are fantastic for advocacy and ensuring that people get the support that they need. however, I also think that culture change goes beyond the networks (SR: 31)

I think they have an important place but I do not necessarily think they get the support of the Police Service to promote the facilities they offer. Also they may not get the funding required for the networks to be successful. The Networks should have a full time staff member to manage it. (SR: 42)

Furthermore, a Neurodiversity Peer Support Network has been established within the force to provide informal peer-to-peer support to neurodiverse individuals, this initiative has proven effective. The group has a small but significant impact within the organisation, as people know of its presence and have been supported through it.

However, unlike the DSN, the group does not have an executive sponsorship. Therefore, there is no representation at senior leadership meetings, which can be problematic and has resulted in a lack of resources due to sharing budgets with the DSN. It is also run by one dedicated volunteer with no contingency plans in place if that member goes off sick, which has happened, resulting in no meetings taking place in 2025.

Participants highlighted the effectiveness of this group from 2024.

Networks across the force -I think they're very proactive and certainly for me, within my role, they are a kind of pillar of support, but also a pillar of challenge, which I think is fantastic. So they challenge us, they hold us to account, and they ask the tough questions. (IP: 8)

I don't really see much promotion [of DSN]. However, I joined Andy Golightly's [ND Peer Support] meeting and found this an amazing source of support. (SR: 24)

The support network is a great benefit; however, it is run by volunteers with a heavy reliance on the force to deal with requests, which can have implications on the staff taking on that workload. (SR: 33)

The above quotes highlight that there have been mixed responses from people accessing service provision and receiving support from the networks. This has led to an information breakdown, as there are too many parties involved in neurodiversity, which needs to be reviewed and standardised. In addition, I believe that a dedicated, standardised neurodiversity network should be established within the organisation to streamline all activities related to this, with a dedicated budget for events and awareness-related activities.

If a dedicated neurodiversity network separate from the DSN network were to be established, it would give neurodiversity a more prominent presence within the organisation. The group could organise more dedicated activities that educate and raise the profile of neurodiversity within the organisation, as well as create a psychologically safe environment to support neurodiverse people, enabling them to unmask and feel secure.

Another aspect that was significantly commented upon was the time dedicated to different inclusive priorities within the organisation. Interview Participant 15 commented on this, stating:

Currently, a lot of focus is on the race action plan. Absolutely. Please don't think for one minute I'm saying it's unimportant because it's massively important. Yes. Hugely important. But that is the political hot potato at the moment. A lot of it is due to historical failings, as highlighted in the McPherson report, and some issues that were brought to light in the Casey report regarding inclusivity.

But that's the drive. We've got the Anthony Walker Foundation coming in to do some work. So, all the drivers are around that area. And it's almost as if there's only so much capacity within the organisation for something inclusive. (IP:15)

This suggests that resources are aimed and dedicated to certain central government-mandated areas and topics, such as the Police Race Action Plan and eliminating sexism and misogyny in policing. The focus of long-term strategic planning is to ensure that all groups and staff networks are supported, and that resources are fairly distributed and allocated to each staff network. The current focus of resources in the broader organisational culture is currently dedicated to racism and the elimination of misogyny in policing, creating a gap in support for neurodiverse officers and staff members, which is not fully considered in the network infrastructure.

Participants in the interviews highlighted that the DSN Staff Network needs significant improvement in its approach to Neurodiversity. Neurodiversity is a new topic of development and organisational focus; more resources and investment are needed to ensure that all officers and staff members feel included, respected, and have a voice.

Organisational Direction and Transition

Since 2020, inclusion has been an organisational value and a strategic priority, but it evolved into 'healthy people and a healthy workforce' in an unprecedented value shift in 2024 (Merseyside Police, 2024). This could have been due to a senior organisational shift, as referenced below in 2025, when the strategy iteration ended its cycle.

IP 15 brought the values shift to my attention. The previous 14 participants I interviewed did not highlight this substantial organisational value and operating model shift. I conducted an internal and external word search on the Merseyside Police Strategy 2020-2025, and the old wording

appeared in both searches. The terms 'inclusion and wellbeing' were still present in these documents, both publicly and privately available to all officers and staff within the organisation.

IP 15 highlighted significant support for this point in the quote below:

However, for me, there is an issue when we start to lose visual representation in terms of wording, because if the words are there, inclusivity and wellbeing, people will look at it and go, it's there now.

However, it's gone. It's not there. It's not on it. So what we're then into is, well, where is that picked up? It's in healthy people, isn't it? Yeah, and a healthy organisation. Yeah. So, I'm not sure if we're taking a step backwards. So now you're aligned in your interpretation, and people are cascading the information correctly. Yes, the Chief wants us to be inclusive and a welfare-oriented organisation, but we're not there yet, Jack.

No. Not in either of those things. We've definitely come on selling from a well-being point of view, but not massively. However, it's about people truly understanding how that strategy works. (IP: 15)

IP 15 also highlights above that a significant linguistic and organisational cultural challenge is occurring. This problem is associated with the distribution of information across the force regarding standards, values, and organisational developments. If this important information is not distributed properly, officers could inadvertently breach these expectations.

I believe that the shift in values signals a change in the direction of the force, with a focus on the health and well-being of their people. This could be due to trends and patterns across America, Europe, and the UK that are associated with the shift away from the concept of inclusion towards health and wellbeing as highlighted earlier in this chapter.

Change in the Organisational Values since the new Chief Constable arrived, moving away from Healthy People and Healthy Organisation in 2025-2030 Plan

However, the change in Chief Constable appears to have led to a notable shift in the organisation's approach to linguistics. Within the new 2025-2030 Force Values document, which was launched in December 2025, inclusion is back in the document under the topic of 'Our Culture' as a subcategory stating 'inclusivity: we value difference and treat everyone with respect. We foster a culture where everyone feels seen, heard and empowered' (Merseyside Police, 2025). This shows that there is a resource drive again to ensure that diversity and inclusion are essential to the organisation's ability to be inclusive and reflective of the society it represents. The shift within the committee structure to Our Culture Board has demonstrated that Merseyside Police is driven to support organisational development and inclusive cultural change to support colleagues across the organisation. I have had sight of an internal report outlining the achievements and options available to the board to continue moving forward with organisational development and change. It indicates that '80% of KPIs associated with the Inclusion Board have been hit' (Merseyside Police, 2025).

This signals a positive change occurring with significant support and investment on the horizon for neurodiversity and EDI organisational cultural change as well as commitment to invest in ensuring colleagues are supported in the workplace and able to reach their full potential in a psychologically safe environment. In stark contrast to the Healthy People and Healthy Organisation values where inclusion was not as explicitly stated within the last iteration of the values documents causing confusion as stated by participants above.

Open Plan Offices

Merseyside Police launched their Estate Strategy in 2023. The new plan states that the force is saving £2.37 million through reducing the running costs and extent of the estate by 14 buildings.

The strategy outlined the creation of four main hubs:

1. Rose Hill Merseyside Police Headquarters,
2. The Operational Command Centre in Speke,
3. Edge Lane Police Station
4. The Matrix Training Centre (Merseyside Police, 2023)

As well as developing new police hubs, which are centralised stations in a bigger location in Wirral, St Helens and Knowsley (Merseyside Police, 2023).

However, 11.5% of respondents in the survey, 38.7% of participants in the one-to-one interviews and 59.3% of focus group participants highlighted that the open-plan nature of the new buildings, which have been used to migrate people from the smaller stations, has caused significant sensory overload and reduced productivity for neurodiverse people. People working in these buildings have said that the increased exposure to harsh lighting, conversations, phones ringing, and other people conducting their work around them has caused them to be overwhelmed.

For example, one participant highlighted that, 'If I've got to do a file build, I've got to go and hide somewhere, but there are no rooms to do that anymore' (IP: 7). Furthermore, Focus Group 4 contributors noted that, 'Everybody finds it challenging to concentrate, and then you've got the likes of people who have neurodiversity issues, who really do struggle to concentrate and are easily distracted' (FG: 4). Another interview respondent stated, 'I had a colleague who, when they found out they were going to an office that was open plan, said they would have to leave the organisation because they couldn't cope' (IP: 13).

In addition, 6.2% of survey respondents, 19.4% of interview participants, and 22.2% of focus group participants highlighted that there is nowhere to consistently work with undisturbed focus due to the well-being breakout spaces and meeting rooms that have been created for private conversations, which are usually occupied.

Further complicating the logistical challenges of using these rooms is the force's hot-desking and clear-desk policy. This causes anxiety, stress, and a sense of overwhelm for neurodiverse officers and staff. Respondents in the survey highlighted the need for workplace zoning across Merseyside Police's Estate. For example, Survey Respondent 37 noted that, 'I have been a voice for quiet zones in open-plan offices. I have raised concerns about the lack of work done having open plan offices and the impact on colleagues' (SR: 37).

Moving forward with a view to tackling and remedying this problem, a pragmatic approach should be taken, involving neurodiverse officers and staff as part of any consultation when redesigning the office environment to ensure it is sensory-friendly. Not only would this be good practice, it would also reflect and reinforce existing research, such as the Building Standards Institution Design for the mind guidelines, which state:

Environments that are unpredictable, large, open plan and involve a lot of people are more challenging but smaller spaces also sometimes feel too busy and become crowded – each environment should be assessed independently. Adequate space circulation should be provided but people should not be forced to sit in the middle of a large space with their backs to an activity or to people moving around which triggers anxiety. Where a large space exists, the flexibility for creating smaller areas within the space, e.g. for different activities or to provide retreat areas, should be taken into account. The provision of zones should be used to aid wayfinding and provide a sense of scale and belonging. This can be achieved with high back seating, or internal walls to mid or head height rather than full-height partitioning (BSI, 2022, p. 46).

Outline of Professional Standards Department in the UK

All police officers within the UK have to adhere to the Code of Ethics from the College of Policing, and if they make a seriously wrong or unethical decision, they may be referred either internally to the Professional Standards Department (PSD) or if the allegations are severe enough, the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) will investigate. The seriousness of the complaint is adjudicated to determine whether it should be referred to the IOPC or PSD, as outlined in The Wedge of Misconduct which is the tool used by Merseyside Police to determine unethical behaviour, Misconduct and Gross Misconduct pathways. I asked for the diagram but I have been unable to access this as the department said they could not share it due to the sensitivity of the information.

Since the commencement of this research, several high-profile incidents related to Professional Standards within policing have led to thorough investigations, resulting in the publication of the Baroness Casey Review, the Angiolini Enquiry, and the Operation Hotten reports. These reports have exposed misogynistic, unethical, and discriminatory conduct in public offices and mandated a review of officer vetting across the UK. An example of this was Wayne Couzens' despicable behaviour as an active serving police officer (Angiolini, 2024), culminating in the murder of Sarah Everard (HM Government, 2023). Furthermore, the Operation Hotten Report was published in 2022 regarding the Charing Cross Police Station WhatsApp groups and the sharing of indecent images (IOPC, 2023). Interview Participant 8 highlights why the Baroness Casey Review was needed:

So, Baroness Casey, we know that report is on the Met, but it does bring life a lot of issues, institutional, that we know exist. You know, I don't think there's a single force in the UK that could say this isn't applicable here. And accountability and standards, that type of thing, too.

You know, you said about the culture, there's that kind of flexibility piece as well, which would massively support people from all different walks of life, if we get that right across policing. But, yeah, I think it's shone a Light on issues that people probably were already mindful of to some extent and perhaps, you know, had turned a blind eye to that. (IP: 8)

IP 8 highlights the business case for change, noting that people were turning a blind eye to discrimination across the entire policing system. There needs to be a systemic and radical overhaul of the system to ensure that a cultural change occurs, becoming a truly inclusive organisation that understands and is mindful of neurodiversity and inclusion-related matters across the 43 police forces in the UK.

Call It Out and Data Collection from the Professional Standards

Department

Due to the Baroness Casey Review and its reference to complaint data relating to EDI and protected characteristics, I repeatedly requested that PSD provide organisational data on neurodiversity-related investigations and complaints. This was to ascertain the categories of complaints related to disability and neurodiversity, and which, if any, were the most prevalent.

The data provided by the PSD identified several categories, but none of these categories related to neurodiversity. The category closest to Neurodiversity is Learning Disability. This suggests that training on Neurodiversity needs to take place for the department, with a view to recognising and understanding the important differences between learning disabilities, learning difficulties, and other neurodevelopmental conditions.

For example, Mencap states that a learning disability is 'a reduced intellectual ability, usually identified soon after birth or in the early years, and will last a person's whole life' (Mencap, 2025).

The National Autistic Society defines neurodivergence as ‘having a ‘neurocognitive’ experience (to do with how information is processed by the brain) that ‘diverges’ from (is different to) what is considered typical. Neurodivergent people experience and react to the world differently to ‘neurotypical’ people’ (National Autistic Society , 2025). However, the term is subject to interpretation, Judy Singer states in her thesis, ‘Odd People in the Birth of Community amongst People on the Autistic Spectrum’ (Singer, 1998). Furthermore, neurodiversity means ‘neuro, meaning brain’, ‘diverse, meaning different’ (Singer, 1998). The linguistics of neurodivergence are ever evolving, with a non-descriptive definition and an ever-growing list of conditions that fall under this term.

The NHS defines a neurodevelopmental condition as ‘one that affects brain function and development. They range from mild impairments, allowing those affected to live fairly normal lives, to severe disorders that require lifelong care. Examples of neurodevelopmental disorders include attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), conduct disorders, cerebral palsy, and impairments in speech and language’ (NHS, 2024).

The data pack received from the PSD indicates that the unit received complaints in the following categories: Unknown (1,333), Prefer not to say (603), and Other (147). These could be complaints relating to neurodiversity that are not appropriately categorised. However, based on current reporting categories, it is difficult to differentiate.

As of March 2025, only one complaint regarding neurodiversity had been officially logged in the data (recording started in 2023). The complaint was regarding how a supervisor treats officers with neurodiversity issues and was filed through Call IT Out in September 2024. The data collection tool had not been adapted before March 2024 to collect these reports. This highlights a significant area of development for the department to understand, be trained in neurodiversity presentation and how to support neurodivergence when it presents in investigations.

Hearings during the Professional Standards Department's Process

Within the Professional Standards Department and the Misconduct Process, police officers who face allegations undergo a section of the proceedings that involves a public hearing to present evidence against the individual in question. The individual can have legal representation in the meeting with them, and it is an opportunity to 'explain their conduct and the circumstances surrounding the allegation. Witnesses may also be called to give evidence' (Merseyside Police , 2025). The evidence against the individual could be hundreds or thousands of pages long and may take several days to review, explaining their behaviour at the scene or in the workplace, which can be overwhelming for neurodiverse individuals.

Interview Participant 30 stated that the hearings can be a very stressful, difficult, and anxiety-provoking process for neurodiverse people. The amount of information can create sensory overload. Therefore, training and awareness building within the Anti-Corruption Unit and the Professional Standards Department are needed to present information in a sensory-friendly manner.

I don't think neurodiversity training is specifically offered that I'm aware of. There's another part of our team that deals with the post-investigation phase and takes it to the hearing.

There are probably areas where that could be difficult for neurodivergent people when we present certain bundles of evidence. Sometimes they can be hundreds of pages, if not thousands. And you think they then have to sit down and work their way through that and provide a response. And clearly, that could be a difficult process. Even if they have staff association support and peer support (IP: 30).

Furthermore, a neurodiverse specialist should be present at hearings to ensure that the individual in question is given a fair and adjusted hearing in relation to their neurodiverse conditions.

Call It Out

Several participants raised questions about the effective use of the Call It Out reporting system and the extent to which the Professional Standards Department meaningfully investigates complaints about Neurodiversity; (the department for Professional Standards will be referred to as “PSD”, in order to differentiate the departmental entity from general references made by respondents in relation to ‘professional standards’).

The research has identified several PSD issues during the data collection phase of this research. Examples have included people being called ‘a thick bitch’ (IP: 1) in the context of both disability and gender discrimination, and also being called a ‘retard’ (IP: 1). Another participant was also being called comments, which included ‘I am bringing “Rain Man” into the interview room’ (IP: 10) and ‘you certainly see things around misogynistic views all the time. I can walk down a corridor with a female colleague of the same rank, and even student officers will say good morning, sir; they won’t acknowledge the female’ (IP: 15). This highlights that there are still ingrained male-dominated and disability discrimination views within policing, where people are uneducated or say things to shock and offend.

The use of the Call It Out System has been a point of controversy within the organisation where people are using it for less serious issues; for example, as the following respondent notes, ‘in some cases, I think people are often using call it out when it’s an issue that should be discussed with their line manager’ (IP: 9). This is further supported by another interview participant who states that ‘you have to understand the cultural issues within the organisation where people still get vilified for shouting up about stuff. As a platform, it’s great, but people need to stop using it for silly things that they should just be able to say and making PSD’s life busier’ (IP 16). This issue was reinforced by another participant who stated

The danger with an anonymous system like that is that it gets abused as a tool to settle personal disputes. It has the potential to be misused, used as a leverage tool or a way of very strongly expressing an opinion.

You know, you leave with a bad taste, and there isn't anything stopping you from, you know, from doing a call-it-out kind of as a way of one-upping in an argument. (IP: 17)

These arguably minor incidents, which were never the primary target or focus of the Call It Out system, have created what the PSD would refer to as a 'logjam', caused by resources being directed at addressing minor complaints. This also means that the PSD's ability to target and address major issues and complaints effectively is likely to be negatively impacted.

Peer Supporters and Allies in the Workplace

Within the interviews, focus groups, and surveys, an intriguing theme emerged: how people can provide support to one another and offer allyship within Merseyside Police and the broader law enforcement and national security sector.

An ally, according to the IMI Task Force, is someone who will 'Stand up for other people, whilst ensuring that they do not speak for or over other people, Take steps to advocate or vouch for the person who is not present in the room and take steps to support those from under-represented or disadvantaged groups actively' (IMI Diversity Task Force , 2023).

Allyship enables officers to make reasonable adjustments to interactions or workspaces that allow people to thrive and reach their full potential. Officers interact with their team members who may have neurodiversity or with members of the public daily, and it is really important to have emotional intelligence to understand the signs. Interview participant 6 raised a thought-provoking point: Allyship is necessary to support colleagues, but before that, there needs to be education on neurodiversity and a way for colleagues to correct one another when mistakes are made. This

will enable people to foster a deeper understanding during interactions and build connections with colleagues.

So, say I said something to imply that I was part of the team with you, and I'd mention something to you about your condition.

So I would like you to say, well, Interview Participant 6, listen, this is because of my condition, and I think, I think we can sort of, sort of teach each other.

Educate each other a little bit more than going straight towards, sort of like I'm telling my supervisor, you know, and I would like that.

Like, oh no, I do not say anything to you to offend, but I like to say, " Interview Participant 6, I'm doing this because and it's because I have these sorts of behaviours, and I go okay, Jack. I did not realise that, mate, sorry. Okay, I understand that behaviour and presentation now. (IP: 6)

Merseyside Police invested several years ago in a programme called Clarity 4D which outline what type of person you are across four colours: 'water (blue) – reflective, analytical and cautious, fire (red) – focussed, decisive, direct, challenging and assertive, action-orientated, earth (green) - empathetic, concerned, supportive, patient and air (yellow) – talkative, expressive light-hearted and enthusiastic' (Clarity 4D, 2025). This helped people in the organisation understand their strengths and weaknesses, as well as the diversity of thought in teams.

In our team. I get told constantly, you think differently to everybody else because I'll go, that thing over there, why don't we do this? Why don't we look at this and people go, where did that come from? The way my brain works slightly differently to everyone else.

Do you see numbers or do you see words? [Interviewer]

I see pictures. Okay, so my husband sees numbers and they have colours, interestingly.

I think the force needs these different, diverse thinkers who bring these solutions to challenging problems. But I will have people constantly say to me, I need to borrow your green. Could you please take a look at this for me? How do I do this? Or how should we approach this? Because you're so green, you need to give me that skill when I don't necessarily have it to the same extent. (IP: 14)

Interview Participant 14 highlights above that the diversity of thought they possess is important, and for teams to work together effectively, the diversity of profiles is necessary to support one another and create breakthroughs in cases.

This tool has disappeared for new starters to the organisation, and it would be beneficial to renew this license so people can understand their strengths and weaknesses in a team, both from an individual and a management perspective, regarding the people in a manager's team.

Training

I have spoken with various police forces across the UK and internationally, and it was highlighted that a significant knowledge gap exists in neurodiversity training and awareness, which has become a substantial issue in this research. It has been highlighted numerous times that neurodiversity training needs to be put into the curriculum during the early stages of a police officer's or member of staff's career, and then frequently refreshed throughout.

Furthermore, if people take on line management responsibilities or move into senior leadership positions, bespoke neurodiversity training specific to their role is required. Qualitative and quantitative data produced as part of data collection for my PhD research can support this: 35.5% of interview participants, 22.3% of focus group participants and 14.6% of survey respondents

highlighted that this knowledge gap exists and that the awareness of Neurodiversity inside the organisation could be improved greatly through the provision of mandated training.

Interview participant 10 spoke about the need for unified neurodiversity training: 'We need to standardise it. Absolutely. It's a very positive step' (IP: 10). Focus Group 2 highlighted that 'I have to say that I think the training is pretty shocking' (FG: 2) and Survey respondent 10 states, 'I've not received any structured training, other than a computerised 'PowerPoint' type exercise and other communications via email' (SR: 16), another survey respondent stated 'the standard of [EDI] training is poor and never focuses on neurodiversity' (SR: 104).

Organisations want the competitive advantage that neurodiversity brings to their workforce. In a 2018 article, the Harvard Business Review highlighted that neurodiverse people can be, on average, '30% more productive than neurotypical people' and have a 'competitive advantage' over others, which can make them great and loyal employees (Harvard Business Review, 2018). IP 21 highlights this advantage stating that: 'Use those gifts, you know, you have to, you almost weaponise that individual's gift and celebrate it and support them. So that is what I think we should do actually' (IP: 21). Neurodiversity can be a significant advantage to organisations, especially within law enforcement and national security domains, due to the outstanding pattern recognition and analytical skills that neurodiverse people possess, which can aid investigations and help progress cases.

Further compounding the knowledge gap for neurodiversity training inside the force, participants across the interviews, surveys, and focus groups highlighted that 'over the last 10 years, probably not more than a few hours [of EDI Training]. There is a definite gap in training and awareness. What we can't have as an organisation is the response a caller gets depending on which Bobby happens to turn up' (IP: 10). Multiple participants across the data sets during data gathering highlighted the need for neurodiversity training to be mandated across the organisation. Thus, an empathetic and insightful response can be used when addressing or managing incidents involving members

of the public or their teams related to neurodiversity. The above quotes highlight the need and importance of this training, as well as its lack of provision in the correct format to the broader population of officers and staff within the force. Training within the organisation previously focused on racism and misogyny through the Anthony Walker Foundation's mandated training for all officers and staff, as well as Call It Out training by the Professional Standards Department following the Baroness Casey Review. The organisation also required attendance at this training.

Participants in interviews, focus groups, and surveys highlighted that resources have been disproportionately allocated to certain government-mandated training areas aimed at addressing potential controversies within the organisation and meeting the centralised Police Race Action Plan Targets set by the force. Focus Group 1 stated: 'We've spent a lot of time talking about racism, misogyny, and homophobia, and we've looked at case studies relating to it. We haven't spent a lot of time talking about neurodiversity as much' (FG: 1).

Furthermore, neurodiversity training across the 43 police forces in the UK is not standardised or unified by national policy or guidance from the National Police Chiefs Council or the College of Policing at this time. Interview Participant 7 highlighted, 'I don't feel that there is any standardised guidance on how to deal with somebody with neurodiversity. There's very little that I've seen around dealing with colleagues and supporting colleagues' (IP: 7).

Six out of 31 participants in the interviews, one focus group, and three respondents in the survey highlighted the business case for neurodiversity training as being face-to-face, lived-experience-led, personalised to the business area, and covering both supporting members of staff and engaging with members of the public. Interview participant 8 stated the need for this training to be face-to-face: 'It's got to be about lived experience. And that's why I loved it when you came in. That's one of the reasons I'm here today to help you: I think what you're doing is really good' (IP: 8). Furthermore, survey respondent 27 also supports this business case: 'Better training, which involves a human being rather than a series of difficult-to-understand slides and videos' (SR: 27).

Further compounded by Interview participant 25 who stated: I don't think we have had anything face-to-face. It's probably self-learned stuff with its own merits, advantages, and disadvantages (IP: 25).

Neurodiversity training provided to officers needs to outline the realistic side of neurodiversity, highlighting the challenges, such as anxiety, that neurodiverse people face daily. The training should include scenarios based on real experiences inside the force and show how neurodiversity can be a significant challenge and advantage to an individual both inside the force and when engaging with members of the public. Interview participant 22 states:

I think as a force, people will have been arrested previously purely because they've got some sort of neurodiverse condition when it wouldn't have been necessary. And perhaps if the officer dealing with them had a better understanding, then it could have been dealt with differently and probably better. (IP: 22)

29.0% of participants in the interviews, 22.3% of participants in the focus groups and 13.0% of respondents in the survey highlighted the need for first-line and second-line leaders inside the organisation to receive neurodiversity training, as they are on the frontline dealing with large teams. Interview Participant 27 states: 'First-line managers need better knowledge to support the staff and know what is available to help them. Neurodiverse people can carry on doing their job perfectly well; they need a few adjustments' (IP: 27). This would involve understanding how neurodiversity can be a competitive advantage, the daily challenges faced by neurodiverse people, and what adjustments can be made to enable those individuals to thrive and excel in the workplace.

Furthermore, leadership training has also been raised by Interview Participant 9, who raised the important point of adjustments in significant training courses which included the leadership course provided by Merseyside Police and the College of Policing.

I have recently undertaken five leadership modules over a prolonged period. All sat in the classroom, engaging in different tasks, flip charts, and PowerPoint presentations on boards. Nowhere in any of those five sessions, chaired by inspectors, chief inspectors, full five, eight-hour sessions, spread out over many weeks and months, was Neurodiversity mentioned, or the question is, 'Is there anyone here who needs assistance or adjustments?'. It should be covered. (IP: 9)

Summary of Recommendations and Findings from the Research

The findings and recommendations outlined above will require investment, whether in terms of time, finances, or personnel, which all incur costs for the organisation. The Force needs to consider which of these recommendations is the most urgent and act upon them. The following is a summary of the points highlighted throughout the chapter above, outlining the details required for these recommendations to be implemented.

High Priority Issues

Tangible Recommendations:

- I. **Training** – To address the imbalance in resource allocation and knowledge within the organisation, the force should respond to the findings from the above data and create a mandated, lived-experience training course. This mandated training was highlighted in the data, where 12 out of 31 one-to-one interview participants and two out of four focus groups showcased the need for mandated neurodiversity training across the organisation.

This training should be rolled out to all officers within the organisation through a phased approach, targeting the most significant groups first, including first-line and second-line leaders, as well as areas with a higher proportion of neurodiverse

employees, such as cyber and counter-terrorism departments. Feedback from these pilot sessions will then be assessed, the course content adjusted, and the new content made mandatory for the entire organisation.

- a. **Neurodiversity Toolkit Production** – To supplement the training, there should be two toolkits produced, one for staff and one for managers. This would be available in both digital and physical formats, so people can easily access and refer to it. However, the digital version would need a significant presence on the intranet for easy access and points of review to be updated.

Within the staff toolkit, there should be resources and points of contact for support within the force, as well as other relevant agencies and charities. Furthermore, Easy Read information should be available on how to discuss your neurodiversity diagnosis with your manager and broach the conversation, as well as how to access funding from Access to Work and the Neurodiversity Needs Assessment pathway.

Within the Manager Toolkit, information should be included about how to then progress support once an initial conversation has happened, reports that have been published about how to support people inside the law enforcement profession and a signpost document for access to services such as the Neurodiversity needs assessments, workplace passport documents and templates to outline reasonable adjustments in the workplace. Additionally, information should be provided about unusual requests for reasonable adjustments and how to seek clarification and guidance on these requests.

This would also help with long-term information retention, enabling managers and officers to have a guide or toolkit to the support infrastructure inside the

organisation at their disposal, which they can quickly reference and help officers and staff to provide the proper support to allow people to feel psychologically safe and bring their whole self to work.

This toolkit, once produced, has universal applications for various sectors, including national security, policing, and the civil service. I have already been approached by the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) to help shape their organisational culture through a review, pending the publication of these findings, to help them develop this toolkit for the Civil Service as well as be involved with a review team comprising of members of the senior leadership team (SLT) to improve the organisational culture in the FCDO and across the wider Civil Service incorporated into their new People Plan concerning neurodiversity and how to manage this in highly neurodiverse teams within Desk areas⁶ as well as Private Offices⁷.

- b. **Use of Innovation and Technology in Training** – I have had the privilege of speaking with high-ranking police officers across the 43 police forces across the UK. Within these conversations, many pragmatic and innovative approaches have been employed to enhance awareness of neurodiversity in the fields of policing, law enforcement, and national security. Examples have included Leicestershire Police, which has utilised virtual reality headsets to help participants understand sensory overload. The Civil Service and the Police Service of Northern Ireland

⁶ FCDO terminology for localised geographic area desks focusing on different topics, e.g. migration and national security.

⁷ FCDO terminology for Embassies, Governors, Senior Civil Servants and Ministers' teams which manage their commitments and diaries as well as public appearances.

(PSNI) have also employed sensory overload buses to enable people to physically experience what it is like to have neurodiverse conditions.

It is my recommendation that Merseyside Police utilise these technological advancements to their advantage and incorporate them into the development of a training package that immerses individuals in understanding what sensory overload looks like and physically experiencing this. The experience and training will then enable officers when out in the community to de-escalate situations, and also for members of staff and line managers to understand how to approach situations when managing teams in the workplace.

II. **Our Culture Training Package** – The force in 2025 has developed a training package outlining the expected standards and values of police officers and members of staff within Merseyside Police. I believe that the training package has outlined the basics of EDI and neurodiversity within the existing training, but has not gone far enough in examining how to create an inclusive and diverse organisation that respects neurodiversity and other protected characteristics, ensuring people can bring their full selves to work and are free from discrimination and misogyny.

To be added to the training: another module should be included to explore how EDI is supported within the organisation and provide more detailed information for individuals seeking to contact the staff support networks.

III. **Operational Policing**— In operational Policing, EDI should be the golden thread running through all frontline practices. An example is the Calgary Police Service's integration of Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB) Moments, which focus on a topic or wellbeing exercise in all shift briefings for frontline officers, where Neurodiversity could be a topic of discussion.

- IV. **Estates Audit regarding Neurodiversity** – many participants highlighted that open-plan working was a significant problem for productivity, mental health, and neurodiverse burnout due to sensory overstimulation. Urgent investment should be made to review the entire estate based on neurodivergence, in consultation with neurodiverse officers and staff, to gather their views on lighting, acoustics, and operational effectiveness for productivity. This review should also consider the placement of private workspaces, such as booths, to ensure that privacy and space optimisation are achieved.

Strategic recommendations:

- V. **Lack of Awareness of Current Guidance on Neurodiversity** - When I asked interview and focus group participants about what local or national guidance on Neurodiversity officers or staff received during their careers, many participants highlighted that they had never received anything.

Current guidance included Autism Stop-and-Search Guidance produced by the Metropolitan Police and NPCC, Takeda [an ADHD Drugs Company] Report on their Round Table for Neurodiversity in the Criminal Justice System, Neurodiversity Custody Guidance produced by the ADHD Alliance and The Another Sign Report produced by the Brain Charity by the Force's own Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner.

- a. A guidance pack should be developed as a matter of urgency to ensure that officers are equipped and have the emotional intelligence to deal with neurodiversity when presented with a staff member who is neurodiverse or a member of the public. This will complement the training recommendation.

- b. This highlights an urgent failure to distribute this information to frontline officers and staff members and should be considered by the force with immediate effect.

Tangible Recommendations:

- VI. **Career Mapping** - Several participants in the early stages of their careers during their Carousel Tutor Constable Phase of Training highlighted to me that they felt exhausted by repeating their challenges and neurodiversity diagnosis to each line manager they had. Participants also highlighted that the Workplace Wellbeing Passport was not always the correct document to record their neurodiverse conditions. Some line managers did not read this, and people had to explain their diagnosis verbally as they were only in departments for short periods.
 - a. Participants highlighted that there is currently no coordinated approach to their Carousel about understanding Neurodiversity. A joint meeting similar to the Individual Student Learning Plan (ISLP) and Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) from their partner university or college should take place by the Student Support Team at the academy. This would coordinate and standardise the adjustments offered to the student across their probation stage. The meeting and coordinated approach would assist people in reaching their full potential in the workplace, reduce anxiety or stress, get the reasonable adjustments they need. This would also give managers a warm handover to understand the needs and adjustments of the person coming to their team and increase student retention. Therefore, this will reduce the attrition of neurodiverse police officers and increase diversity of thought in the workplace.

Tangible Recommendations:

- VII. **Professional Standards Department**

- a. **Smaller Reports on the System**—Many participants highlighted the inefficient use of the Call It Out System for smaller offences or less serious incidents. However, it is a matter of perception regarding how serious these smaller reports can be. This is because people have not had the courage to directly address and challenge colleagues when they hear or do something inappropriate. This has caused a logjam in the system of smaller offences, taking up time and resources of the Professional Standards Department and delaying the progression of more urgent cases.

- b. **Difficult conversation training** needs to take place to give people confidence in going to their line manager rather than immediately reporting to professional standards Department, easing the pressure on the systems and teams working on the Call It Out Reports.

- c. **Neurodiversity Training for Professional Standards Department Hearings** – This needs to urgently take place as participants highlighted that neurodiverse people feel anxiety, stress and sensory overload when presented with hundreds and sometimes thousands of pages of evidence relating to misconduct or gross misconduct.

PSD Hearing Panels require neurodiversity training to recognise the signs and presentation of neurodiversity and to understand the reasonable adjustments needed, such as providing information in alternative formats to the officer under investigation.

- d. **Publicity also needs to be refreshed about the system** and its use only for issues related to misogyny, sexism, corruption and other discrimination in the workplace which was the original intention of launching the system. There needs

to be more campaigns about neurodiversity and disability related reporting to increase confidence and support for the system. This is a very sensitive issue when using this system, and it is a delicate balance between leaders and supervisors who have the knowledge to share with teams.

- e. **Update and Follow-Up Post Report**— Some participants highlighted that the reporting system did not update them after they entered the Call It Out Report. This is because the system is anonymous, and follow-ups are done by the reference number given at the end of the report. Not everyone is aware of this, and people feel let down that they have not been followed up. This should be stipulated and clearly laid out at both the beginning and end of the form to keep hold of the reference number to follow up for updates.
- f. **An end page should be created to ensure people note the reference number** and regularly log in to see if any more information has been requested or if the case has been resolved.
- g. **Availability of Call It Out Data for Neurodiversity** – During this study, there have also been difficulties obtaining Call It Out Data from the Professional Standards Department regarding Neurodiversity. Below was the statement from the team:

‘The Anti-Corruption Unit IBase has a keyword search, and there have been no reports around neurodiversity or disability/ the matter was referred to the Corporate Support Department as they had previously done work around Storm Logs and computer systems that could review and produce a one-word description of what the call was about, but it was advised that this would not work for IBase as the number of records created per year is too low to teach a machine to review the free-text.’

In 2024, I was advised that due to the small percentage of complaints involving neurodiversity, they hand-searched the results, and none were found. This urgently needs to be addressed, and investment in the system is necessary to break down the categories further. Neurodiversity can sometimes lead to disciplinary proceedings due to misinterpreting information, body language, and social situations.

The system in 2025 has been updated and now breaks down complaints into the following categories:

Learning Disability – 313

Mental Health – 769

Long Illness – 237

Physical – 327

Sight – 29

Hearing – 71

Unknown – 1333

Prefer not to say – 603

Other – 147

Total = 3,829 reports through Call It Out.

This has been significant progress from the start of the research. Now, disability data is collected on the Call It Out System and is available for review to understand the organisational culture in the force. However, 59% of the data is other, prefer not to say, or is unknown. Confidence in the Call It Out System regarding disability and its confidentiality needs to be reinforced.

Currently, Neurodiversity is under the learning disability category. The system needs to be urgently changed to understand what neurodiversity-related Call It

Out complaints come in, as the definitions of Learning Disability and Neurodiversity are very different and do not represent the same condition.

The fact that neurodiversity complaints are categorised under the learning disability category suggests that urgent training on neurodiversity is needed for the department to recognise and understand the important differences between learning disabilities, learning difficulties, and other neurodiverse conditions.

Strategic Recommendation:

- VIII. **Standardisation of protocol for the force on Neurodiversity**— Within the 43 police forces across the UK, there should be a standardised decision-making protocol and escalation map that the NPCC and COP produce to ensure that decisions associated with adjustments and neurodiversity are developed and supported, to track the progress of support in forces around the country.

On a localised level, Merseyside Police should have a unified approach to information sharing inside the organisation to ensure that officers are not having to disclose their conditions multiple times in the process in order to access support. This standardisation protocol should include the forms used for officers and staff, eradicating duplication in the AP11 forms, Wellbeing Passports and documents as evidence for adjustments sent to managers. A document should be produced in multiple formats, including Easy Read and large print, in order to accommodate all neurodiversity conditions. The document should be available to be readily shared to all line managers with the consent of the individual and in line with information assurance standards to avoid confusion and replication or the officer needing to tell their story to every line manager they have constantly. This could possibly trigger

burnout or have a detrimental impact on the officer or staff member's mental health having to disclose all the time continually their neurodiverse condition.

The word 'standardisation' was used frequently in the interviews and focus groups. Participants highlighted many ways in which neurodiversity has been approached in Merseyside Police. I recommend urgently developing a policy on Neurodiversity to address the pathways to support in force provided in a policy document. The policy must include the needs assessment pathway, reasonable adjustments, the employer's responsibilities to provide support, the disability and neurodiversity support commitment from the force and points of contact for the peer support group for neurodiversity and the Disability Support Network.

The policy must also stress the duty as an employer under the Public Sector Equality Duty as part of the Equality Act 2010. Establishing this documentation will aid the force in achieving Disability Confident Leadership Status.

Tangible Recommendation:

- IX. **Culture Committee creation** — In addition to a policy on Neurodiversity, another area for standardisation is establishing a culture committee to address the Force's challenges and the recommendations established in the report. This committee should be actionable and accountable to the Inclusion Board.

This has been adopted but in a different way within Merseyside Police to broaden the scope of the previous Inclusion Board to look at wider challenges to the organisation as well as unifying other committees. The initial foundations of this came from a conversation had with the head of Organisational development in 2024.

Medium-Term Priorities

Tangible Recommendation:

- I. **Employee Staff Network for Neurodivergence** – The current offer could be improved for neurodiverse people inside the force through the Peer Support Group, chaired by Andy Golightly. However, as a volunteer, he can only dedicate so much time to the Disability Support Network (DSN) and the Neurodiversity Peer Support Group. With the group currently lacking an executive sponsor, there is no senior-level oversight.
 - a. **Participants across the interviews, focus groups and survey highlighted the need for a dedicated budget** and resources to establish a more substantial network with a permanent chair as a designated point of contact in the Force for Neurodiversity. There is a growing demand for this to become a more permanent fixture, as evidenced by the ever-growing number of needs assessments conducted by Neurodiversity Needs Assessors.

I have had the privilege to spend time with the support networks for neurodiversity at the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) Disability Inclusion and Accessibility Network (DIAN), UK Counter Terrorism Policing (ND in CT), UK Intelligence Agencies and Cabinet Office Cross Civil Service Neurodiversity Network (CSNN) all of which have significant presences in their respective organisations. These networks host events, conferences, and summits, and have a significant investment in time and a senior leadership team representative behind them.

This support gives them a voice in senior organisational development conversations and a seat at the table. These organisations are shining examples of what could be implemented in Merseyside Police, and if managed properly,

could lead to substantial organisational change and improvement in support for neurodiverse people within the organisation. I have had the privilege to speak with all of these networks throughout the course of this PhD, and it has been interesting to see their pragmatic approaches to neurodiversity. I believe it would be beneficial for the force to engage with these groups before proceeding with this in-house initiative to gain a deeper understanding of best practices.

Tangible Recommendations:

- II. **The Force should conduct a more in-depth cultural review and evaluation.** This involves understanding and capturing best practice case studies, given that the percentage of the force I interviewed was a small population. This further piece of research would be in the form of a detailed report and would aim to publish the outstanding work being done for neurodiversity within the force, highlighting best practices and facilitating storytelling that aligns and could be embedded within the mandated neurodiversity training recommendation.

- III. **PESTEL Analysis for the Culture Board**—To chart progress for the board and how Inclusion has been contributing to extensive organisational cultural change, a PESTEL Analysis should be conducted once yearly to show development. The analysis would help the force understand the political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental (PESTEL) challenges they face regarding organisational culture and neurodiversity. This analysis will demonstrate the committee's effectiveness and chart progress.

Longer-Term Priorities

Strategic Recommendations:

- I. **Governmental Review and National Policy Creation** – I have been working with the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) and the College of Policing (CoP) to develop a standardised policy for neurodiversity across the 43 forces across the UK. This would be to enable people with neurodiverse conditions to receive the right support to reach their full potential. However, this needs to be a joint effort between the NPCC, CoP and the Home Office, as well as HM Government, as part of a national review commissioned into neurodiversity support in policing.

This review would involve laying out a unified and standardised pathway for policing, enabling the development of a substantial ecosystem for neurodiversity support that can be accessed for advice and guidance by the 43 police forces across the United Kingdom. This would not be in the form of a royal commission but a task force looking to improve organisational culture and support for neurodiverse police officers and members of staff across the UK.

Tangible Recommendation:

- II. **Pathways into Policing and Career Development for Neurodiverse Talent** – Many participants highlighted that the current pathways into the profession and developmental routes to progress during promotion processes are not suitable for neurodiverse talent and have caused significant anxiety. As referenced throughout this thesis, the Harvard Business Review wrote an article in 2018 titled ‘neurodiversity has a competitive advantage’ (Harvard Business Review, 2018).

This article presents pragmatic, alternative recruitment and progression routes tailored to neurodiverse individuals. This has involved removing significant challenges to the recruitment and progression process, such as the panel and assessment centre, and utilising ‘empower weeks’ (Harvard Business Review, 2018). Empower Weeks involve

placing people in the organisation on a trial basis to see if they fit in with the team. This initiative has been implemented by some of the world's leading companies, including EY and their Neurodiversity Centre of Excellence, Caterpillar and Dell and has yielded significant results, nurturing innovation and saving them millions of pounds.

I am proposing that this innovative and inclusive approach be applied to policing by still including some aspects of the traditional process, but launching a similar approach for specialist roles, such as cyber. This would enable this alternative talent to come into the organisation, thrive, and drive innovation by offering alternative perspectives and employment opportunities to an underemployed area of the community.

This alternative recruitment approach has been undertaken by Police Scotland, with a specialist neurodiversity charity brought in to support the selection process and offer insight placements to enhance recruitment and talent identification. This has had a significant effect and should be rolled out to the wider policing community across the 43 forces in the UK, enabling neurodiverse talent to thrive and be employed, thereby contributing to public safety and protection.

Strategic recommendation:

- III. **Neurodiversity and Vetting for DV and SC Clearances** – As outlined in greater detail in the discussion chapter I and a team of national security professionals who approached me after briefing at the FCDO have identified a gap in the literature and support for Neurodiverse people who are going for Developed Vetting (DV) and Security Clearance (SC) for people working in the highest security environments in policing and national security.

The pathway for this clearance needs to be clearer and more transparent to enable neurodiverse people to understand the obligations and commitment, as well as the level

of information required to be submitted to the UK Security Vetting Service (UKSV), such as financial information.

Further research is needed in this area on the number of reasonable adjustments provided by the service, as well as on the creation of packages that can be shared with sponsors and individuals in an accessible format. This would help create an environment of psychological safety and reduce anxiety during the application and interview process.

Tangible Recommendations:

- IV. **Neurodiversity Comfort Kits** – This idea is inspired by observations made during a visit to the Arlington County Police Department in Washington, DC. Each crew had a bag, sponsored by a local charity, consisting of pin-wheels, sensory toys, weighted blankets, noise-cancelling headphones and bubble timers to regulate breathing and de-escalate situations when attending scenes and dealing with members of the public. However, before this could be implemented, substantial training and awareness-raising activities would need to be conducted, as highlighted as one of the highest-level priority findings of this thesis, before these could be truly established and embedded.
 - a. In addition, these bags would help neurodiverse people process information when officers attend a scene, which is usually the worst day of someone’s life. However, before these bags are deployed, a significant cultural piece must be undertaken through education, training, and organisational cultural reform towards neurodiversity.
- V. **Utilising Outside Advisors**—Through this study, the force has used my research to make positive cultural change. Following the publication of this report, the recommendations outlined in the high and medium-priority sections above should receive the appropriate resources and time. This could be done by utilising the experience of external experts to

form a working group to implement these findings. However, I am aware that this will require additional expenditure.

Chapter 6: Evaluation of Findings

Introduction

Since the commencement of the research, I have observed significant attitudinal shifts towards developing a neuro-inclusive police force within Merseyside Police (MP) and wider law enforcement, embracing the skills and attributes that neurodiverse (ND) individuals bring to the workforce. Furthermore, showcasing talent through various organisational innovations and activities.

In relation to MP, I have been directly involved in developing and implementing many of these initiatives. I have done this by utilising my research findings documented and explored in the previous chapter alongside adapting my neurodiverse knowledge gleaned locally, nationally and internationally, through the creation of working partnerships with government, law enforcement, and national security agencies in the UK, the US, Canada, Europe, and British overseas Territories. This has enabled me to gain a holistic understanding of perceptions and practices regarding neurodiversity and law enforcement worldwide. My own neurodiverse conditions have also helped me to understand the challenges faced by police officers and the staff members in their respective operational and strategic roles.

I have also participated in several high-profile committees, including the NPCC National Neurodiversity Committee and the Metropolitan Police Culture D&I Committee, which covers knowledge sharing across the 43 forces and other UK National Security Partners. Furthermore, I have engaged with the Ministry of Defence in the UK via a member of the senior leadership team who leads the training portfolio to understand their approaches to neurodiversity, and I serve on the Neurodiversity in Special Operations Committee for the NPCC, where I have contributed to raising awareness of neurodiversity within policing.

I have been granted security clearance and access to the leading decision-makers worldwide in the political, national security, intelligence, and law enforcement domains. As such, I am incredibly grateful for the time that key people within these organisations have spared to enable me to understand the global direction of neurodiversity and EDI within and across these spheres.



Impact on Merseyside Police Since Project Inception

Since the commencement of the research, I produced and circulated an Interim Report to Merseyside Police in January 2025. This report outlines numerous recommendations (highlighted in the previous findings chapter); in response, the Force has begun implementing a number of these recommendations. It is exciting and rewarding to see demonstrable impacts occurring as a direct result of the research, along with its active influence on organisational culture change and ND-related practice within Merseyside Police.

A significant finding related to the development of organisational culture change emerged during an informal conversation with Edward O’Grady⁸ in late 2024, prior to the circulation of the Interim Report across the organisation. Within this conversation, I suggested the need for the creation of a Culture Board to operate alongside the existing Inclusion Board. Since the conversation, a robust governance model has emerged, with the following approach:

The Strategic Management Board oversees the Strategic Performance Board, sitting underneath this, three committees have been established: the ‘Culture Board’, which scrutinises the organisational culture; and the ‘Trust and confidence and vulnerability boards’, which evaluate the work that officers are doing with members of the public (Merseyside Police , 2025). These boards will now operate to scrutinise and hold the force to account for the actions of officers and all EDI and culture-related activity inside the force.

The MP Senior Leadership Team invited me to sit on the previous iteration of the Culture Board (the Inclusion Board) to observe the decision-making protocol associated with inclusion-related activities inside the organisation. This enabled me to access and contribute towards neurodiversity-related activities that the board was planning; I also presented the content of my Interim Report to the board. My wider involvement with the Inclusion Board has presented several opportunities to undertake other research-related activities and presentations to specialist departments and frontline local policing teams. In total, I have given over 40 presentations across the organisation. In addition to this, I was invited to speak at the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) Culture and Inclusion Conference, which was attended by over 400 people at IBM HQ in London in January 2025, to highlight the good work on inclusion taking place within the force.

In addition to the lived experience insights I provided within the organisation, the force approached me in April 2025 to consult on the development, of neurodiversity training for First-

⁸ The Head of Organisational Development for Merseyside Police

Line and Second-Line managers, this was in conjunction with the Merseyside Police Academy. The sessions consist of a full-day training that covers the basics of what neurodiversity is, including lived experience stories from individuals in service and me, input from occupational health, and real-life scenarios that have occurred during operational duties. This has been a significant step inside the organisation, leading to the training of over 250 line managers and resulting in substantial increases in understanding of neurodiversity and emotional intelligence.

Due to the level of access I had during my time with Merseyside Police since project inception in January 2023, the Inclusion, Wellbeing, and Engagement (IWE) Team approached me on the 3rd April 2023 to request their assistance in recruiting a Neurodiversity Needs Assessment Lead for the force. This was a first for the organisation as before this point there had not been any dedicated role for neurodiversity within Merseyside Police. The first iteration of the job description required HR, Occupational Health and Neurodiversity qualifications as well as experience in these fields. This created a very small talent pool of people to recruit from who were not applying for the job when it first went live. I proposed recommendations for adaptation of the job description, including transferring some occupational health aspects of the role, which initially included ergonomic assessments, back to the Occupational Health Unit. These recommendations were taken on board, and the IWE team lead then contacted me to express gratitude. I was also kept informed about the recruitment process. The person is now in the role and oversees the team, which has 14 volunteers from across the force undertaking needs assessments.

Furthermore, I was invited by a Counter Terrorism Unit based in Merseyside to give a briefing about the research to their researchers and analysts. The presentations then led to contact with Northwest and national networks related to neurodiversity in the intelligence domain.

This resulted in an introduction to the EDI unit in Counter Terrorism Policing North West, who invited me to give several briefings during National Inclusion Week 2024 and attend 'Safe to Say

Briefings' about proposed cultural changes to the organisation of Counter Terrorism Policing. I received a Certificate of Appreciation for my work from Chief Superintendent Sarah Kenwright in March 2025.

In addition to the partnerships with the UK Counter Terrorism Network, I have also been working with the specialisms within Merseyside Police, which has included the firearms training academy. I was approached by a Superintendent in Matrix, who suggested that observing the tactics used and briefing the trainers at the Firearms Training School would be beneficial. This would ensure they understand neurodiversity before a recruitment drive for firearms the following month. It was an immense privilege to gain this level of access to the firearms training school. According to the trainers at the firearms training academy, I was the first independent observer outside of the Independent Office of Police Conduct (IOPC) to observe at the training school.

This visit resulted in tangible outcomes for the Firearms Training School, including more inclusive recruitment initiatives and efforts to attract neurodiverse individuals to the firearms field, recognising the hyperfocus, intuitive decision-making, and attention to detail that neurodiverse people can have. Additionally, based on the briefing I provided, the trainers are becoming more aware of neurodiversity and the skills and qualities it brings to this work, adjusting their approach when working with a neurodiverse student.

Domestic Partnerships and Work in the UK

As highlighted in the introduction, I have had privileged access to some of the most significant law enforcement and national security partners in the UK. This has included spending time with specialist units and the national governing bodies associated with policing, including the College of Policing and the NPCC. This access has afforded me some unique and unprecedented opportunities. I have visited several other organisations during my PhD, but I will not name them in the final thesis due to security concerns and my obligation to respect their privacy.

London

I have spent extensive time in London with law enforcement and government departments.



The first has been with the Metropolitan Police in New Scotland Yard (NSY). I have been given access to the ADHD Alliance, which is now one of the largest public service neurodiversity support groups in the UK, as well as the annual Neurodiversity Conference, held at New Scotland Yard. This has been through the work of the Commander for EDI at the Metropolitan Police, who is leading the effort on neurodiversity within the 48,000 officers and staff within the Metropolitan Police, and the chair of the ADHD Alliance.

I met the UK Police Advisor for Downing Street at the College of Policing in Ryton during a conference. They were part of the executive leadership programme and kindly invited me to a meeting with the head of operations for No. 10 in September 2024. This was a privilege that I never thought would happen, but I ended up walking through the door of Downing Street. The Head of

Operations received a briefing about the research, took on board some of the recommendations and findings, and has been a valued partner throughout this research.

This research has also included work with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The FCDO has brought me in to offer presentations and advice to specific teams on exploring the impact of neurodiversity in the workplace and how to manage teams with a higher proportion of neurodiversity. This has included research briefings and presentations by me to multiple desks within the FCDO.

This work has led to my collaboration with the FCDO as an advisor on Neurodiversity, where I am frequently asked to present on my lived experience and research to address specific neurodiversity issues that arise within teams or departments.⁹



⁹ Examples of the recommendations taken on board have included how reasonable adjustments, such as assistive technology, can be implemented in such a secure environment and office design to be more inclusive of neurodiversity through the workplace zoning approach, as well as the development of the EECAD People Plan, which was developed following a briefing to senior leaders inside the organisation in September 2025.

HMICFRS

I had the privilege to present at a town hall event on 31st July 2025 for His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), introduced by Sir Andy Cooke. Sir Andy invited me to present my PhD findings as a subject matter expert, aiming to raise the profile of the topic, particularly when inspectors are commissioned to report on the performance and culture of the 43 forces in the UK. There were over 100 people on the call.

The presentation received positive feedback, with many saying it resonated due to personal lived experience of family members who are neurodiverse .

National Committees

In addition to this thesis, I have been allowed to sit on numerous national committees, including the NPCC National Neurodiversity Working Group, and participate in several workstreams as part of this group, such as the Connecting People, HR, and Specialist Operations workstreams. This has enabled me to stay up to date with progress made by the 43 police forces across the UK, including policy updates from parliament and developments in leadership, culture, and organisation.

I also serve on the Metropolitan Police's Culture, Diversity, and Inclusion (CD&I) Peer Support Committee, which the Deputy Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police chairs. The committee comprises high-ranking members from the emergency service community, the armed forces, and other third-sector charities and academics.

The FCDO has also helped me collaborate with the Cross Civil Service Neurodiversity Network, on which I have a seat. The meetings discuss the challenges of incorporating neurodiversity in the civil service, covering various departments, including the Department for Vehicle Licensing

Agency (DVLA), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Cabinet Office, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), and FCDO Services, among others.

This work at a national level has informed my findings, as highlighted in the previous chapter, for implementation within Merseyside Police. Additionally, it has contributed to sharing best practices observed with the Inclusion Board (now Our Culture Board) and in the interim report produced for the force, which included a briefing dossier on national activity from various agencies within law enforcement and national security domains in the UK.

International Collaboration: Law Enforcement & National Security

Agencies

United States – FBI

I searched LinkedIn and found the deputy director of the FBI's Office of Diversity, and I sent him a message. He replied, offering to discuss the FBI's diversity culture with me. At the end of the call, he invited me to present to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion as part of a broader trip.

Eight weeks later, my university arranged a trip to Washington, which included visits to the Drug Enforcement Agency, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Arlington County Police Department, and the Arlington County Police Department's 911 call centre. I successfully negotiated to participate in this tour and access the FBI during my visit, presenting my research outline to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.



During my time in Washington, DC, I was granted clearance to access the FBI headquarters on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington DC, to deliver a presentation to 35 individuals in the Office of Diversity. The presentation outlined my research, the business case for neurodiversity in intelligence, and the adjustments that can make the workplace culture more neuro-inclusive.

The FBI was a very generous host and provided me with the background and context relating to neurodiversity and DEI within the FBI, as well as a private tour of the FBI museum, which helped me understand the organisation's history.

I have since been informed, however, that the executive order signed by the new President of the United States, Donald Trump, banning EDI in American Federal Government departments came into effect on 20th January 2025 (which is highlighted in more detail in this chapter), the FBI has had to close its operations. I will not be working with them until the political statute is changed.

Arlington County Police Department (ACPD)

During the wider trip, my university organised a number of educational visits for other students taking an undergraduate policing course, which included awareness sessions. One of these visits was to the ACPD and their call centre.



I was speaking with members of the ACPD and asked them for a contact, who then organised the following follow-up meetings with specialists in:

- Arlington County Police Department
- Arlington County 911 Call Centre – Crisis Intervention Team and Mental Health liaison.
- US Department of Homeland Security – Attaché for Arlington, who led the specialist interventions for neurodiversity in the area.
- Arc of Northern Virginia – A specialist neurodiversity charity that works with neurodiverse people and people with mental health conditions to ensure they do not go into a life of crime.

Each of the meetings outlined above aimed to understand the approach of each agency to neurodiversity and the mechanisms in place to support neurodiverse individuals, both within the organisation and among suspects and perpetrators.

Innovative Practices from the United States

Comfort Kits for People with Disabilities

I observed some innovative practices that are not yet embedded in policing practice in the United Kingdom. An example of this was the officers on patrol in the ACPD, a relatively small force of over 300 officers in Arlington, Virginia, near Washington, DC. They had three comfort kits for suspects, detainees and witnesses with disabilities, one for each vehicle on patrol at any time. These bags were provided by a charity called Strengthening the Sixth. They consisted of seven items: ‘noise-cancelling headphones, pinwheels, bubble timers to control breathing, sensory chew necklaces which can be sterilised in a dishwasher, pop fidgets, click fidgets and a weighted blanket’ (Strengthening the Sixth, 2022). These items align with the de-escalation methods used by police

officers to reduce aggression and increase public engagement, thereby increasing trust and confidence.

This pragmatic approach is not currently in use in the UK. I have attempted to contact Merseyside Police on several occasions regarding this issue, but securing funding for these requests has been a challenge. This is an area of research that I might pursue after the publication of this thesis.

Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training

Another area for innovative practice was within the ACPD 911 Call Centre. When speaking with one of the call handlers, I inquired about the training provided for individuals with neurodiversity and disabilities. They replied that there is a specialist programme called the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT), which is trained to understand and handle calls from people with disabilities and neurodiversity, and to help respond to calls and situations effectively in a more professional manner (Arlington Virginia , 2022).

The Crisis Intervention Teams were introduced following a culture shift within the organisation between 2010 and 2013, as there was a rise in mental health cases. During this period, the Arlington County Police Department initiated training for small first responder teams, utilising a trial sample. This initiative has now expanded to teams across the county, receiving much support (Arlington Virginia , 2022).

The CIT methods utilise tools and mechanisms to implement training in real-life practice, using the Silver Alert for Dementia and Autism (Arlington Virginia , 2022). This system is a GPS wristband that tracks individuals who wander off or are reported missing, providing officers responding to the scene with an accurate location. The family have to pay for this, similar to the emergency pendant mechanisms in the UK.

ACPD are also in partnership with the Department of Human Services to deliver this training. The CIT training is a '40-hour course that includes both legal and practical exercises to complete the qualification; (Arlington Virginia , 2022).

ACPD also has a mobile outreach support team that provides drug services and mental health services. This team is a small, dedicated squad that provides immediate assessment, intervention, and targeted support. This mobile unit is similar to the Mental Health Triage Car used by Merseyside Police, which is deployed in situations involving mental health and provides access to treatment facilities and a qualified nurse.

Marcus Alert

When speaking with ACPD, they highlighted that within their systems for their 911 Call Centre, families can register for the Marcus Alert system, which is a flag put on the system which highlights that officers need to take more time and understand that the person might have disabilities or might be having a mental health crisis.

The Marcus Alert is named after Marcus-David Peters, a young, Black biology teacher who died following an incident with Richmond police in 2018 amid a mental health crisis. The goal of the Marcus Alert is to provide a behavioural health response to behavioural health emergencies.

Marcus Alert enhances services for people experiencing a crisis related to mental health, substance use, or developmental disability. Marcus Alert facilitates coordination between 911 and regional crisis call centres and establishes a specialised behavioural health response from law enforcement when responding to behavioural health situations.

(Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Development Services , 2025)

Silver Alert

Another alert system in use by ACPD was the Silver Alert, which is for when people who are vulnerable go missing. 'The Silver Alert system was initially created to help protect missing persons who have cognitive impairments, particularly the elderly' (Wasser and Fox, 2013, p. 421). It is a subscription service that the family pays into. The vulnerable person is equipped with a GPS tracker, and the ACPD 911 Call Centre has all their information and a picture on file, which can be activated if the person goes missing.

An example of this was recounted to me by an ACPD officer who issued a Silver Alert for an Autistic eight-year-old girl who ran off from her mother in an apartment complex, and her mother could not find her. The 911 Call Centre activated the GPS beacon, which showed her moving up and down in the lift (indicating she enjoyed the movement).

I have helped implement some of this technology in the UK through collaborations with Devon and Cornwall Police and the National Neurodiversity Youth Council, of which I was a member at the time. The representative and lead for the project was on a call with the council in 2024 when I mentioned the Silver Alert System, as he was looking for ideas on how to support people who are neurodiverse in the community. The representative of the force went away and consulted other stakeholders, and then generated a new piece of technology incorporating Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology called the 'Neurodiversity Identification (NDID)' in consultation with another neurodiverse individual and other localised stakeholders (National Police Autism Association, 2025). During a further call with the Youth Council in November 2024, they inquired about the colour of the band, and I suggested it should be green, similar to the colour of the sunflower lanyard for neurodiversity. They agreed that it should be similar. This band is now in use across the county.

Ongoing research

Upon returning to the UK from the trip, I attempted to engage with Merseyside Police and the Home Office regarding the transfer from the Police National Computer (PNC) System to the Law Enforcement Data Service (LEDS)¹⁰ to create an alert or flag system similar to ACPD for neurodiversity and vulnerability. However, despite speaking with multiple departments, I was unable to find a point of contact.

I believe this would be extremely useful for officers attending jobs, as it would give them more information to adjust their behaviour or interactions, knowing that a person requires reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010. This is an area I am still eager to explore further after the publication of this thesis.

Innovative Practices from Canada

Introduction

Through my work in the United States, I was introduced to the American Institute for Policing Reform, a think tank dedicated to transforming police culture by educating police officers on social issues in America. I delivered a presentation to the executive committee of the organisation about my research on neurodiversity in policing, an area of development for the team.

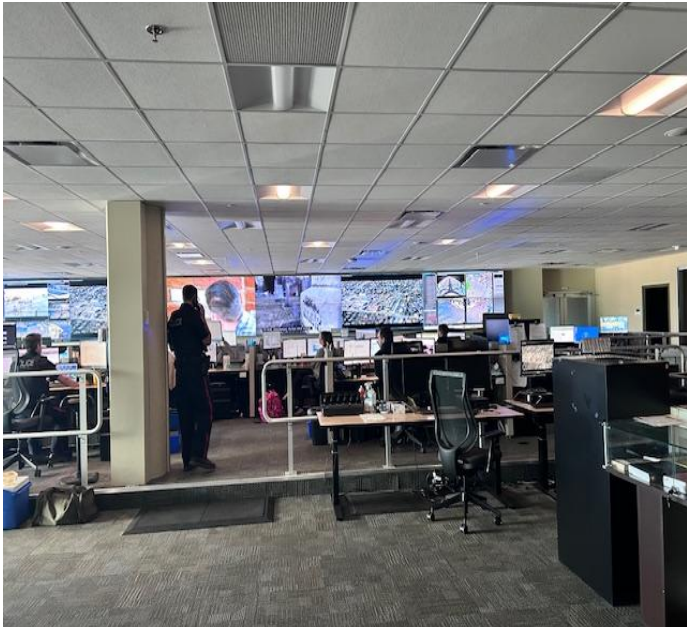
In conversation after the presentation, the American Institute for Policing Reform suggested that I consider visiting Canada, as a group of academics was undertaking research in police culture

¹⁰ The Police National Computer (PNC) System which is now the Law Enforcement Data Service (LEDS) is the main data base which holds all information relating to persons of interest, human intelligence provided by covert sources and the arrest records of people that have been in contact with the police across the United Kingdom. It is an impressive piece of technology that allows officers to conduct on the spot checks of the records of individuals and if they are wanted or have breached bail conditions when engaging with police officers.

with the Calgary Police Service (Cal PS). This led to my introduction to the Cal PS, where I undertook 10 days of observational research in 2024.

This consisted of an itinerary that included several presentations to police forces across the state of Alberta, a focus group with high-ranking officers, including those from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and a guest lecture to the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning at the University of Calgary. The observational visits consisted of meetings with Professional Standards Department Learning and Recruitment, Human Resources, the Helicopter Watch for Air Safety, Chief Crowfoot Learning Centre, Arrest Processing Service, Bureau of People Development, Office of Culture, Inclusion and Belonging, Real Time Operations Centre and a meeting with the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police.

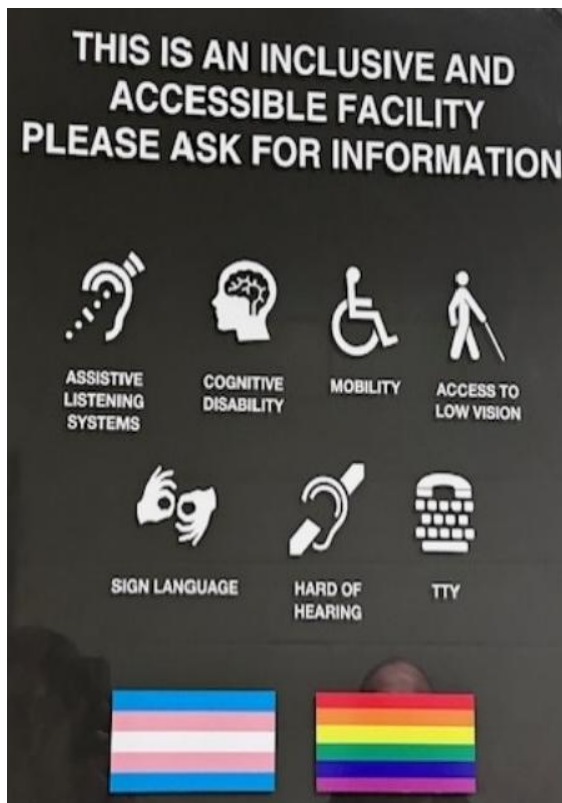




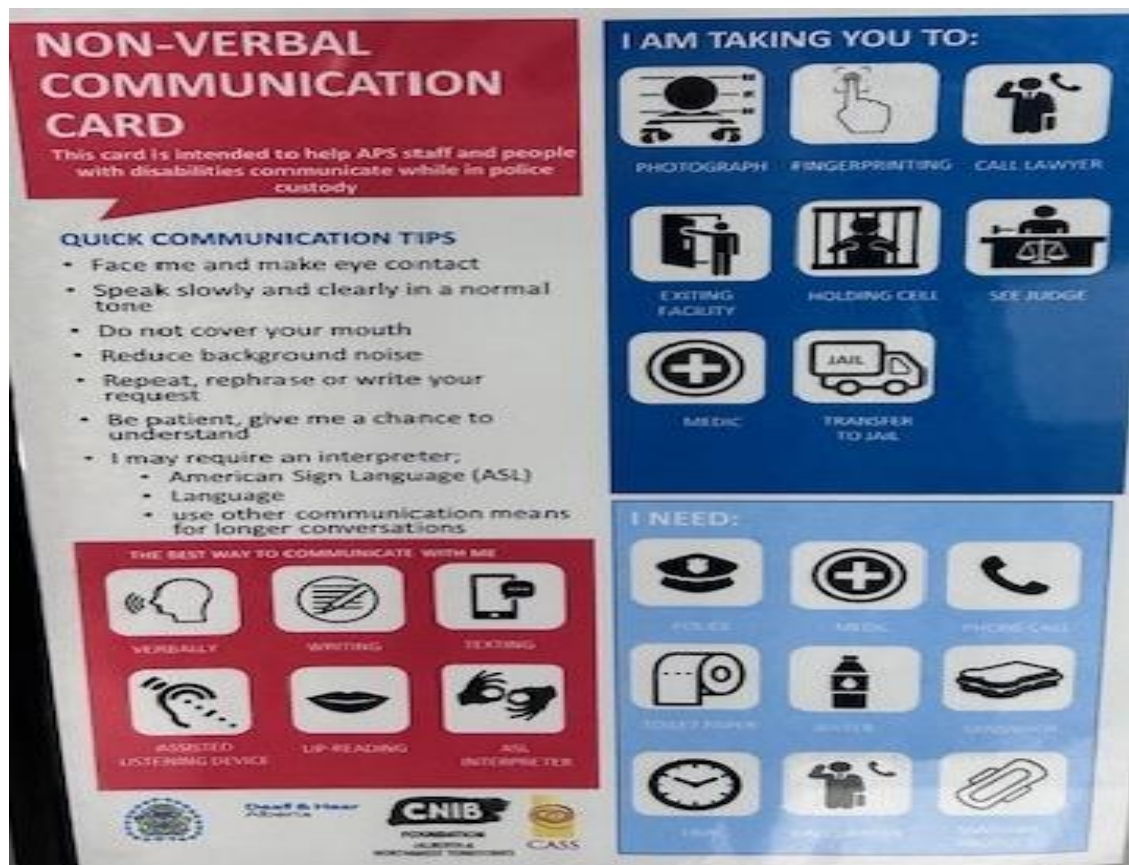
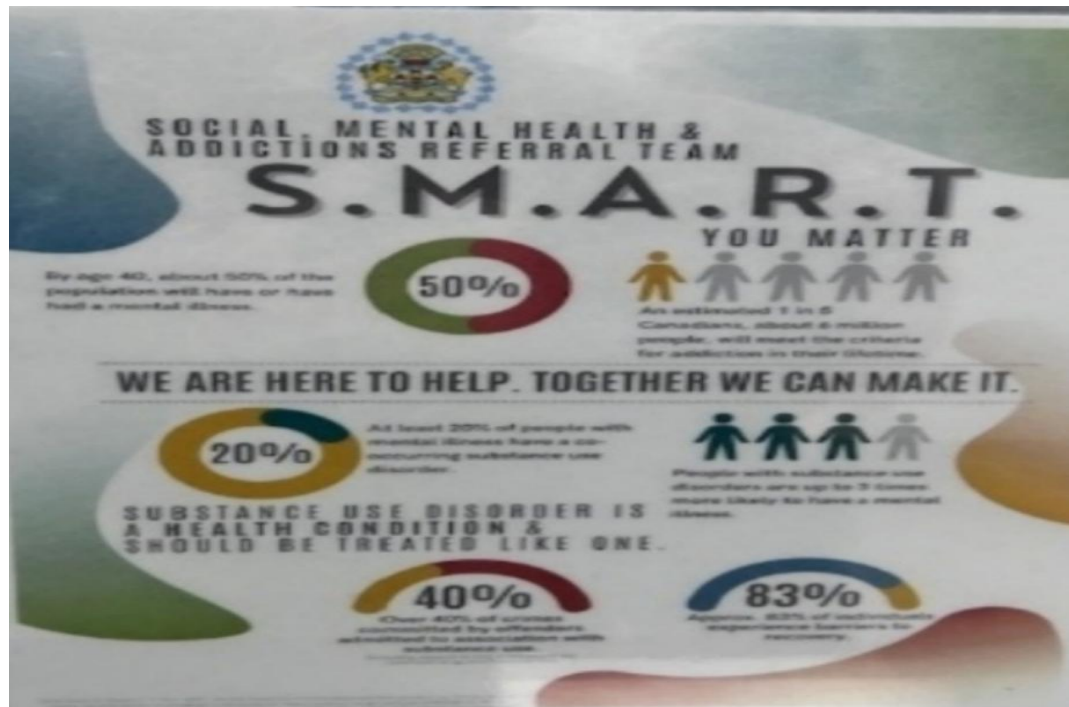
Neurodiversity within the Cal PS: Arrest Processing Centre

The Cal PS requested information about neurodiversity during these meetings, as they wanted to learn more about the topic. This was before I gave the research briefing and chaired the focus group for the organisation and partner agencies across Alberta.

The Cal PS is considering making its buildings accessible for people with hidden disabilities and impairments. One example is for visually impaired people, the Cal PS has adapted its information to braille and large print and conducted walk-throughs to examine pinch points in hallways and other obstacles, as well as to determine whether areas such as toilet cubicles and walkways are wide enough for a wheelchair to navigate. The Arrest Processing Centre has been designed to be as inclusive as possible, minimising sensory overstimulation during the process and allowing individuals to remain calm, thereby reducing the number of people who become overwhelmed in the environment.



It is a respectful facility and is also part of the Social, Mental Health and Addictions Referral Team onsite (SMART), which helps with addiction and mental health. The centre has an on-site psychologist and doctors to help people in the short term with their addictions and to receive dignified treatment.



The centre also has nonverbal communication cards for American Sign Language to help all get the care they need. It can dim the lights to the person's preferred sensory needs. It can also play calming music to help alleviate the sensory overstimulation that can occur in custody.

Learning and Development Department

One of the conversations with the Learning and Development (L&D) Department was that the Cal PS has Medical Recruiting Standards provided by the state of Alberta.¹¹ The department is lobbying to refresh these, as they were last updated 25 years ago. They are pleased to announce that a review has been agreed for 2025 on an exceptional basis. This review aims to make explicit localised adjustments to the recruiting Medical Standards to make them more neurodiversity-friendly, as this aspect is currently not addressed in the document, and to explore how to support neurodiverse officers.

These medical standards define the recruitment process, and Cal PS are fighting to include neurodiversity. The L&D Department stated that the most significant concerns associated with neurodiversity among their staff are emotional regulation, the use of force, managing personal and work-related stresses, and the 24/7 responsive nature of the job. They assess and consider the impacts on the organisation and the frontline and manage the expectations associated with the job.

Another innovative practice, touched on during the meeting with the L&D Department, that I have since explored further upon returning to the UK, is the 'Road to Mental Readiness Programme' (Government of Canada , 2009). This programme is provided to officers during training and at other career stages. 'This training is to ensure that members of the military or blue light services

¹¹ Medical Recruitment Standards are the regulations provided to recruit officers in Canada and other parts of the world and for them to be fit to be able to go out on the streets and be able to hold a firearms licence or ticket. Some neurodiverse conditions that need medication such as ADHD pose complex problems for active service as highlighted in the point above.

in Canada, and Calgary more specifically, can cope with the challenging and sometimes horrific situations they attend and to be able to manage outside of their job when at home with their families and to avoid burnout and PTSD’ (Government of Canada , 2009). The programme is based on ‘stress management, resilience, mental health and adult education’ to ensure that officers can perform their best and also uses ‘principles of sports psychology and cognitive behavioural therapy’ (Government of Canada , 2009).

This has been effective at preventing officers from burning out and suffering mental health difficulties due to their work in Canada. I am currently part of an advisory group led by Dr Sarah-Jane Lennie from Anglia Ruskin University for a study that aims to implement the Road to Mental Readiness programme in the UK, with the goal of reducing sickness, burnout, and PTSD in the UK law enforcement community. This can link to the Oscar Kilo (OK) wellness programme (which is highlighted in great depth in the findings chapter) provided by the charity to support blue light services and reduce stress, pressure and PTSD in the workplace.

Calgary 911 Call Centre

I met with the Calgary 911 Call Centre during my visit to Canada. The call centre is a separate organisation to the main police force and has a different operating model. Although the force and the call centre both communicate, they have very different policies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)¹² regarding EDI and being in geographically different locations. I discovered during the visit that there was a training programme for EDI and Neurodiversity, a full-day programme for Cal 911 Call Centre employees joining the organisation, along with regular refresher courses focused on Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB). Following this

¹² Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are a frequent occurrence in policing. SOPs are guides produced that outline legislation and approaches to tactics or policies that affect policing on a daily basis, which EDI does due to interaction with members of the public and diversity of teams.

discovery, I mentioned the course to the officers I met with for the rest of the week, and the main Cal PS did not know about it, being surprised that it had been in existence for several years.

Unfortunately, the trainer was not available to speak with me at the time I was at the Cal PS 911 Call Centre to explain the course details. However, when I returned to the UK, I managed to arrange a meeting with the training lead for this course and subsequently met regularly with the point of contact to review the course content and make adjustments. I consulted on the development of new course content and assisted with procuring sensory toys related to neurodiversity, which helped create a culture of psychological safety for course participants.

When mentioning this to the Cal PS Police Officers, due to the other Call Centre being run slightly differently, they were unaware of its existence. A collaboration agreement has been brokered to expand the reach of this training to the police service, and it is now being conducted in conjunction with Cal PS 911 Call Centre employees.

Calgary Office of Inclusion and Belonging

The office's internal focus within the culture is on psychological safety in the workplace, where people can bring their backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, and diversity, and actively contribute and bring their whole selves to work without fear or prejudice.

The office has also established an award category for Inclusion Advocate of the Year to encourage respect and inclusivity in the workplace. This has been working well, with the first award highlighting outstanding contributions to the organisation's vision and values this year.

Whilst this is an excellent initiative, the organisation needs to examine how its HR systems and processes record neurodiversity and how people disclose. Getting people to disclose has been difficult.

The Office is planning on developing the following:

1. An Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) framework is being developed. This framework will outline the inclusion priorities for the Cal PS.
2. The EDIB Framework and an ND Strategy are being built with deliverables, actions and outcomes through KPIs.
3. Global Benchmarking—Cal PS is using this to aggregate data from the local population in the Alberta region. One hundred twenty experts and academics worldwide are studying neurodiversity and how to become a progressive organisation. In 2023, the city conducted employee surveys across the organisation. This was the first time something like this had been done in the region, and it had the highest number of respondents of any other survey conducted in the area. The survey provided disaggregated data for ND, serving as a benchmark for future work (City of Calgary, 2024).
4. Cal PS Maturity Index—The police service is taking the organisation's pulse and looking into the disaggregated data across Calgary through City Hall. They also conduct a gap analysis to examine the local area, identify areas where they are failing, such as the use of force or stop-and-search, and develop action plans for all regions and strands within the organisation.
5. Access Audits – the Cal PS are looking at how accessible all of their buildings are and is looking to change small things, such as how toilet towels are dispensed, moving slowly to automatic dispensers to remove barriers to inclusion in the organisation. The organisation aims to implement universal design principles, ensuring that everyone feels welcome in both physical and digital spaces, including video conferencing facilities and its website, which will be made accessible to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 standards.
6. Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) —Accessibility and ND groups have been approved for development, and the budget has been approved to pay chairs full-time. These are expected to go live towards the end of 2025 and the start of 2026. The current ERGs have

been well attended. Once the entire portfolio is created, the plan is to have them run events. Cal PS said that each group has an executive sponsor in the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). It has created a quick path to raise issues at the senior level, eliminating the need to navigate multiple levels of management. This enables individuals to raise these issues during high-level meetings and generate outcomes that foster a more inclusive culture.

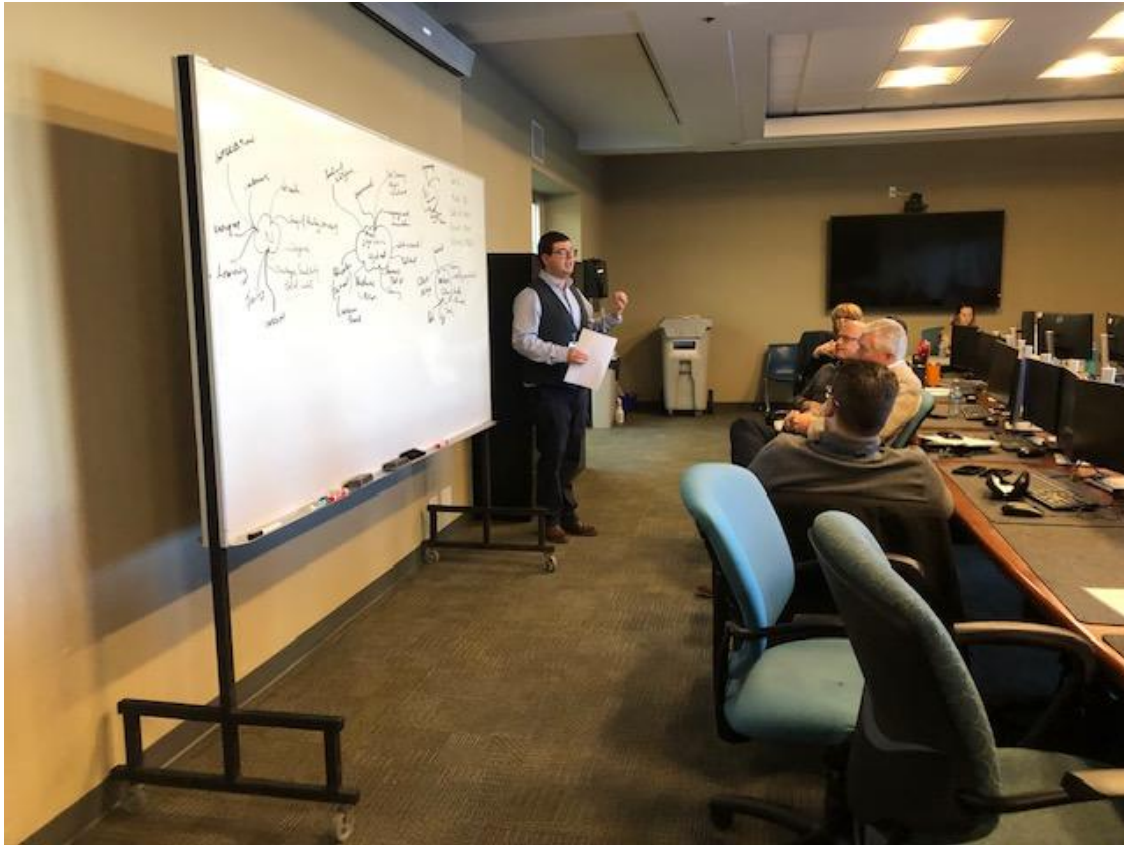
7. Inclusion Alberta—The City of Calgary is working with this charity, as 80% of the people who attend the centre do not have jobs. The City is working in partnership to hire individuals with neurological disabilities and provide them with work experience and internships, enabling them to make meaningful contributions to society.
8. Resource guides for Managers – These guides have been produced on several topics for managers, including neurodiversity.
9. Hiring—During the conversation, the topic of hiring was mentioned, as well as how the process works for neurodiverse people wanting to become officers or staff members. It was noted that the situation was challenging, and no accommodations or adjustments were offered.
10. Organisational Survey—The Cal PS recently surveyed the force in relation to inclusion culture. The team noted that their current situation has improved significantly compared to this time last year, thanks to the establishment of the ERGs. The survey achieved a 50% engagement rate, which is a good result (Calgary Police Service , 2024). They obtained this engagement score through outreach to departments across Calgary, in-person sessions, and targeted marketing efforts designed to attract participants to the study. Departments must implement this as part of their orders and secure executive buy-in through sponsorship, providing monthly updates to the Chief Constable on their progress. The Cal PS survey was launched last year, following its success, and the 2024 survey achieved good engagement.

Focus Group Outcomes: Alberta, Canada

As part of the negotiation with the Calgary Police Service, they wanted two things in return for hosting me. The first was a research briefing where I outlined neurodiversity approaches to change management and some of the interim findings of the PhD and the other was a focus group with the other police forces in the region of Alberta, Canada to help understand local and regional perspectives towards EDI and Neurodiversity. The following are the findings from the focus group discussion with 27 members of police forces across the Alberta Region.

The questions were broken into the following categories: neurodiversity, data entry, recruitment awareness, Best Practices, EDI Training, Access to Organisational Adjustments, and Organisational Inclusive Culture.

Some interesting areas were discussed, including the management and disclosure of data, as well as the inclusivity of IT systems for neurodiversity and assistive technology, such as screen readers. Furthermore, access to organisational adjustments was also discussed, highlighting that boards such as the Culture Board in Merseyside Police should be established to programme manage EDI and Neurodiversity from a Senior Leadership perspective, holding the organisation to account and exploring what constitutes a reasonable level of adjustments within the organisation. The key area discussed in great detail was the Inclusive Culture aspect, as shown in the mind map available in the appendix of this thesis.



Calgary Conclusion

The outcome of these meetings over the 10 days I spent in Calgary was that I now have a working relationship with the Calgary Police Service (Cal PS) to improve Neurodiversity within their organisational culture. Furthermore, the force sent me an email, which highlighted the impact I had made and emphasised that I had created a lasting organisational impact. Following the briefings and focus group, the organisation informed me that they had established a neurodiversity staff network as a result of my work in October 2024 and the information that I presented to them in a report produced for the force.

Additional Contacts and Continued Work Going Forward

Overseas Territories

I attended the NPCC Culture and Inclusion Conference in January 2025 at IBM's HQ in London, where I met the head of Professional Standards Department from the Bermuda Police Service (BPS). I had several meetings with the Police Service, which is interested in educating its officers and staff members on neurodiversity. I have prepared a one-page pitch and a pitch slide deck to hopefully secure the force's sign-off, with an anticipated start date for the training in August 2026.

In the interim period, before I met with the Deputy Governor and Bermuda Desk Officer, I met with the Head of Policing for the Overseas Territories at the FCDO. The possibility of developing the service through a bespoke and tailored training package on EDI and Neurodiversity for the BPS was discussed. The FCDO indicated that they would then consult with the director of the Overseas Territories Department, based in Miami.

During the meeting with the Deputy Governor, which was arranged following the previous meetings with the FCDO. The Deputy Governor liked the idea of the neurodiversity training and wanted to curate an itinerary for me to branch out and cover all public service agencies, including the fire service, ambulance services, the education system, courts, and the prison system.

At the time of writing, the contract is pending sign-off following a briefing to the Commissioner of the Bermudan Police Service.

Europe

I was introduced to the Chief of Mission for Inclusion and the Head of Occupational Health for the EU Parliament. I was privileged enough to have a meeting with both of them. They both highlighted the complexity of neurodiversity and disability related conditions within the 27

member states, as well as how the Occupational Health mechanisms work in such a complex political ecosystem.

The laws governing disability-related reasonable adjustments within the EU Parliament are subject to French and Belgian law, which are in conflict due to differing societal approaches to neurodiversity and disability-related conditions. Consequently, the organisation has had to choose between them and opted for Belgian law, as it is more progressive in relation to neurodiversity and disability-related conditions.

I was scheduled to attend the EU Parliament to deliver a speech. Unfortunately, a complication arose due to a larger geopolitical issue, necessitating that all representatives convene on the scheduled date in Brussels. Therefore, I was unable to go due to the parliament being on lockdown.

NATO

I was also introduced to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Lead for Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility. I had several meetings with him to understand the organisation's approach to neurodiversity and disability.

This resulted in me being allowed to present my research and personal story to NATO directors virtually, as the building was in lockdown due to the Russia-Ukraine Summit happening the same week. This event launched their first-ever Neurodiversity Staff Resource Group. Currently, NATO has Staff Resource Groups (SRGs) titled Proud at NATO, Elevate, Parents, Under 30s, and Disability, as well as a recently launched Neurodiversity SRG, which was introduced at the event mentioned above in December 2024. The organisation is early in its development for Neurodiversity, but its organisational culture is constantly evolving.

Chapter 7: Discussion

The Relevance of International Field Visits for Merseyside Police's Organisational Culture

The above highlights the broad reach and extensive contact network I have established to understand the state of policing in the UK, Europe, US, and Canada, both within the domains of law enforcement and the national security sector. This has enabled me to build a well-rounded knowledge base that has informed the development of the thesis and the formulation of recommendations. As highlighted in the findings chapter, this chapter will assess the impact I have had on Merseyside Police's culture, drawing on the aforementioned research activities worldwide.

Organisational Development since Research Inception

Merseyside Police has substantially changed its organisational culture towards neurodiversity since the commencement of this research. When I started the study, the organisational knowledge and awareness of neurodiversity was limited to the Disability Support Network (DSN), which covered all conditions and disabilities inside the organisation. Neurodiversity was not frequently discussed or mentioned, except for awareness-raising activities on dedicated celebration days, as decided by the centralised Inclusion Wellbeing and Engagement Team or mentioned in conversations amongst senior officers.

I have gained access to the highest decision-making committees through my rapport-building with various leaders within the organisation, including the Inclusion Board (now the Our Culture Board) and the Senior Leadership Team. This led to a shift in conversation in early 2023, and a ripple effect spread throughout the organisation, enabling a culture of psychologically safety and structured conversations throughout the data collection phase. This has brought neurodiversity

onto the organisational agenda and given the topic a substantial platform after presenting the PhD research at the Inclusion Board (Now Our Culture Board). This, in turn, led to subsequent awareness-raising activities inside the organisation, where I was brought in to broaden knowledge on the topic and get neurodiversity on the agenda.

Following these inputs, the Inclusion, Wellbeing, and Engagement Team approached me to assist with the hiring process for a Neurodiversity Needs Assessment Lead and with establishing a Neurodiversity Peer Support Network, chaired by Andy Golightly. Furthermore, following multiple inputs to the Inclusion Board (now Our Culture Board), neurodiversity also became a standing action which was discussed in many meetings throughout this PhD research period.

Neurodiversity has become a topic for discussion, debate, and review within the organisation, generating interesting insights through informal conversations with me in the operational environment and data collection about the force's response to support neurodiverse individuals seeking help within the organisation. This has become a point of conversation that has sparked deep and reflective discussions on how to develop the organisational culture moving forward to ensure the right service provision is in place for neurodiverse people and managers to support them when they disclose their conditions or need support in the workplace.¹³

¹³ I followed each interview during the data collection phase of research by asking the participants what they felt about the conditions of the interview and the questions. Interview Participants, particularly in the first group of 10, stated that 'it was refreshing and that no one had ever asked their opinions about what could be improved for the organisational culture of Merseyside Police in relation to neurodiversity support' (IP 1, 2 and 3).

This highlights how neurodiversity is now openly discussed within the organisation, and something that should not hold any stigma or shame, as neurodiverse people bring immense benefits to organisations, raising productivity and work output when the conditions are right for them.

Neurodiversity Related Decision Making and Governance Models

However, this significant cultural and attitudinal shift inside the organisation has come with its consequences. This is because there are now multiple networks and departments specialising in neurodiversity, as well as a Neurodiversity Needs Assessment Lead for the Force. Information sharing has become confusing regarding who decides if there is a problem. This is due to a governance model that spans departments and strands, as outlined in the diagram in a few pages time.

The Our Culture Board oversees the highest level of decision-making regarding neurodiversity within the organisation. This board addresses organisational development issues and challenges from a strategic perspective, convening every financial quarter to update the action tracker on any developments. Neurodiversity is also discussed at these meetings. The level below is a singular point of contact, which is the Head of Organisational Development, overseeing the People Services strand for the force. This includes speaking to two different pathways: one for support networks and the other for Occupational Health formal services.

The first pathway is the Inclusion, Wellbeing, and Engagement Team, which evaluates the organisational culture within the force and supports initiatives that promote protected characteristics and support for people. It also oversees the governance of staff networks, including the DSN and Neurodiversity Peer Support Network. The second pathway is the Occupational Health Unit (OHU), which includes the Neurodiversity Needs Assessors underwritten by the OHU and also in partnership with the Student Support Team in the Academy.

However, neither is communicating effectively within the organisation. The challenge is how to communicate effectively among all these departments and feed back up the command chain to the Our Culture Board and the senior leadership team. Each department frequently

communicates and operates across different areas of the force, each with its own remit. The Neurodiversity Needs Assessor often refers to the DSN, IWE Team, Neurodiversity Peer Support Group, and Student Support Team in the Merseyside Police academy if the person is a Student Constable, four different but similar groups.

This has led to confusion about where information should be directed, particularly during the student stage of the Merseyside Police Academy and the Tutor Constable stage of a person's career, due to the presence of multiple managers during the Carousel stage of training as students move regularly. Furthermore, the mass of systems and lack of standardisation regarding neurodiversity have led to replication and confusion in the system, as people do not fully know where to go for advice. Merseyside Police needs a standardised policy that helps to unify and streamline the process for neurodiversity support inside the force. This was highlighted multiple times by participants and further detailed in the findings chapter, where participants expressed exhaustion from trying to contact different networks to find the one that best met their needs.

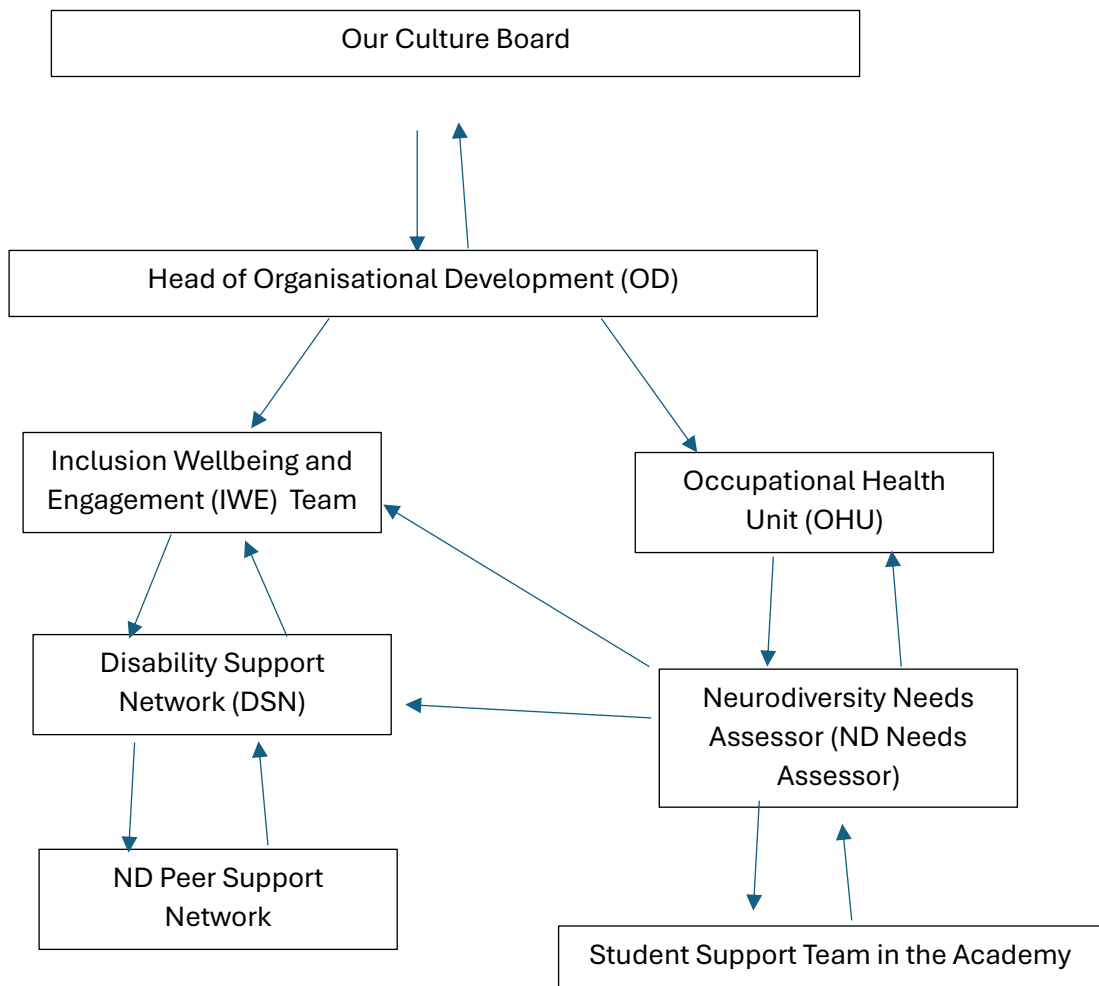


Figure 5: Flowchart of Decision Making associated with Neurodiversity within Merseyside Police

Based on my conversations with law enforcement leaders worldwide, I have identified several areas that could help develop a more structured and effective communication model for Merseyside Police. This might involve a standardised staff network to address issues within the organisation, and dedicated points of contact. Furthermore, more than one full-time employee is needed to handle neurodiversity related Professional Standards Department complaints, legal matters, and neurodiversity needs assessments. This is currently a pinch point for the individual who is doing all of this on their own. This has been highlighted to me on multiple occasions by the

FCDO, the Cabinet Office, NATO, and the EU Parliament, all of which have their own dedicated support infrastructure for neurodiverse people.

Staff Networks

Staff networks have become increasingly popular in recent years, serving as a lifeline for support within organisations across both the public and private sectors. The role of a staff network is, according to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD);

For some, this is primarily a discussion forum, where staff can come together to share their experiences and support one another. For others, it serves as a platform for raising awareness of or advocating for issues affecting these groups within management and the broader workforce. In practice, networks can fulfil any or all of these functions. However, they are to be effective tools in improving inclusivity and tackling discrimination at work. In that case, networks need to function as real vehicles for employee voice at an individual and collective level. They need to be able to support organisations in delivering real change, not just existing as a tokenistic nod towards inclusion. (CIPD, 2021)

Merseyside Police has established two support networks for individuals with neurodiversity. The first is the leading staff Network, titled the Disability Support Network (DSN), and the second is the Neurodiversity Peer Support Network. The two mechanisms are a source of support across the organisation. However, multiple participants across various data collection methods have highlighted a significant issue, indicating the need for urgent reform of the Disability Support Network. Specifically, participants noted a lack of timely responses to emails and requests, and that the network's communication strategy is in urgent need of reform. Participants highlighted that their queries had been left unanswered for months, and some had not been addressed at all. This is due to the demand for resources, as being part of the executive committee is a voluntary

position. Consequently, people must balance their day jobs with their commitments to the staff network. This issue is further detailed in the findings chapter of this thesis.

The pressure on people working in these roles within the staff networks can be very high due to the demand for support from the wider workforce. This can cause neurodiverse people to burn out, leading to a service gap for those who need it most during times of crisis.

The Neurodiversity Peer Support Network is a voluntary group within the organisation that aims to support individuals with neurodivergence in policing. It is currently unfunded by the force, and even though it is classified as a staff network, it is not part of the formal EDI force infrastructure. This could be classified as a 'shadow network' (Ng et al., 2025, p. 141), which is unregulated, informal, and lacks a senior sponsor within the organisation, thereby unintentionally bypassing official channels and lacking support.

As the participants highlighted in the data presented in the findings chapter, there is a need for more support from the organisation for people who are neurodiverse and chairs of the DSN or Peer Support Network to ensure they receive adequate support. Contingency measures should be implemented to support the chair in the event of a leave of absence from the network. This needs to be supported by the organisation to ensure seamless business-as-usual service delivery and support throughout these periods.

Furthermore, participants in Merseyside Police had a high level of awareness of the Disability Support Network (DSN). However, the services offered by the staff network need clarification, as participants were unclear about the issues they could be supported with. In my opinion, the DSN should produce a pamphlet to highlight the offer and clarify any misconceptions or myths surrounding network access, as well as the areas they do not support, and the methods to contact the network. This would reduce the stigma and increase trust and confidence inside the organisation and would help clarify the work undertaken by the network, identifying other areas

that can offer different support, such as Occupational Health, the Neurodiversity Needs Assessment Lead for the Force, and the Inclusion, Wellbeing, and Engagement (IWE) Team.

The Culture, Inclusion, Public Sector, Human Equity, Educative and Relational (CIPHER) Model

The Culture, Inclusion, Public sector, Human Equity, Educative and Relational (CIPHER) Model is based on the multi-agency collaboration model developed by the City of Calgary and the Calgary Police Service, who utilise aspects of the operating model detailed later in this section. This has been adapted and built upon during the course of this research to implement in UK Policing. UK Policing does not currently have a unified tri-service operational model for approaches to Neurodiversity and EDI. I have built upon this to incorporate local (Bronze Command), regional (Silver Command), and national (Gold Command) approaches, ensuring unity for neurodiversity in policing.

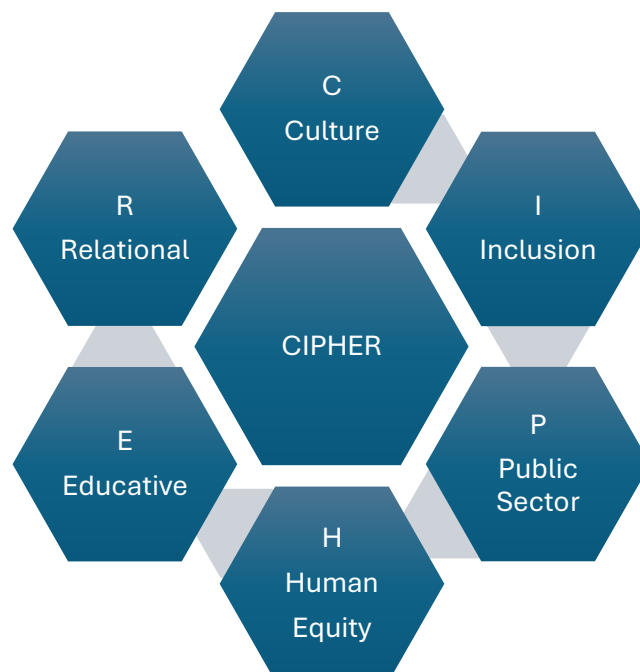


Figure 6: High-Level Diagram of CIPHER Model

Participants within the data collection phase highlighted during this research the low knowledge about information and reports published on neurodiversity, operational policing, and its impact on the criminal justice system by the NPCC, College of Policing, and other third-sector charity partners. When interviewing officers and staff members, the understanding of neurodiversity guidance for managing teams, in particular, was very low. The government should produce guidance that outlines a standardised policy for neurodiversity in policing, detailing support from the point of application through progression in the promotion process and into senior leadership roles. This guidance should also cover how to provide support to neurodiverse individuals in teams and when engaging with members of the public. This will clarify processes and establish a unified, strategic operating model to neurodiversity across the 43 Police forces in the UK.

I also observed that across various blue light services in the UK, including Policing, Fire Services, the NHS, and Ambulance Services, neurodiversity initiatives, such as support groups, are being duplicated at a local level. Currently, there is no unified or standardised approach to neurodiversity across these services. This is due to several successive changes in government approaches to neurodiversity, resulting from the varying stances of multiple Home Secretaries on political expression.

Furthermore, there have been major governmental reviews which have included the Baroness Casey, Angiolini Enquiry and the Home Affairs Select Committee Police Force Fit for the 21st Century Enquiry into standards and expectations for Police Officers. These enquiries have resulted in the exposure of appalling behaviour from officers within the Metropolitan Police and across the wider policing and law enforcement sector. Recent reports in The Telegraph, published in November 2024, highlighted the 'over-bloated EDI infrastructure in the UK Police service, suggesting that UK Police Forces waste £15 million annually on EDI jobs' (The Telegraph, 2024). I personally do not support this, but I agree that there has been some replication and duplication

in police forces across the UK, leading to an uncentralised, ununified approach to EDI and Neurodiversity across the policing system.

I have developed a model based on best practices I have observed worldwide to standardise neurodiversity practices across these services. Thereby preventing duplication and conserving resources, time, and support service expenditure.

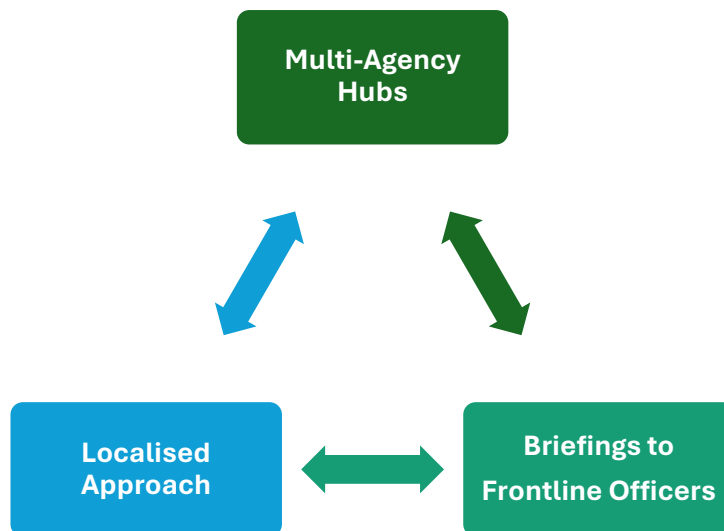


Figure 7: Overview of the operational implementation of the CIPHER Model

The CIPHER Model outlines that currently, each service has a committee on both local and national levels, which outlines a strategic and operational approach to neurodiversity across the Policing, Fire Service, and Ambulance community. The CIPHER Model, which I have developed throughout this research, consists of the following, as outlined in the diagram above.

The first stage of this CIPHER Model is at a strategic level, which involves establishing multi-agency hubs comprising Police, Fire, NHS, and Ambulance Service Leads for Inclusion and Neurodiversity. These hubs would serve as a resource and forum for knowledge exchange across the country, enabling the standardisation of approaches towards neurodiversity. Currently, these organisations collaborate on an operational level when protecting vulnerable members of the

public, but not on a strategic approach to EDI or Neurodiversity. This cross-service group would help standardise the approach and unify the EDI and Neurodiversity operating models collaboratively across different Police Forces, Fire Services, NHS Trusts, and Ambulance Services nationwide, providing best practice learnings to one another. These groups and programme management meetings would happen once every financial quarter to ensure that people can share and learn from each other's experiences in blue light services.

The second element of the model would be a tactical approach, which involves a regional rollout of tailored neurodiversity training tailored to specific agency needs. This would be a significant undertaking to train trainers on this content across all blue light services in the UK, and it would require a substantial amount of time, effort, and resources to be effective. Once trainers are trained to deliver content in accordance with a national framework set by the multi-agency hub of EDI leads. This would be rolled out to every Police Officer, Fire Fighter, Doctor, Nurse, Ambulance Worker and all support staff in these agencies to ensure that neurodiversity is present both when managing teams with neurodiverse people and interacting with members of the community to provide the best customer service.

This then leads into the final phase of the CIPHER Model: the operational phase. When I spent time with the Calgary Police Service. I learned that at the start of the Officers' shift, the team lead would incorporate into the briefing a Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) moment of reflection or CPD input. When officers go into the community, they are mindful and respectful of all people, no matter their different characteristics. Once the multi-agency hubs are established and the training delivered, incorporating this EDIB moment of reflection periodically should provide a better understanding of peers and community members.

This model can be broken down into local (Bronze Command), regional (Silver Command), and national (Gold Command) approaches. During the inception phase, there could be localised and

regional hubs for the leads of each service, as well as a national hub to ensure a Gold Command governance model is established and managed for these hubs.

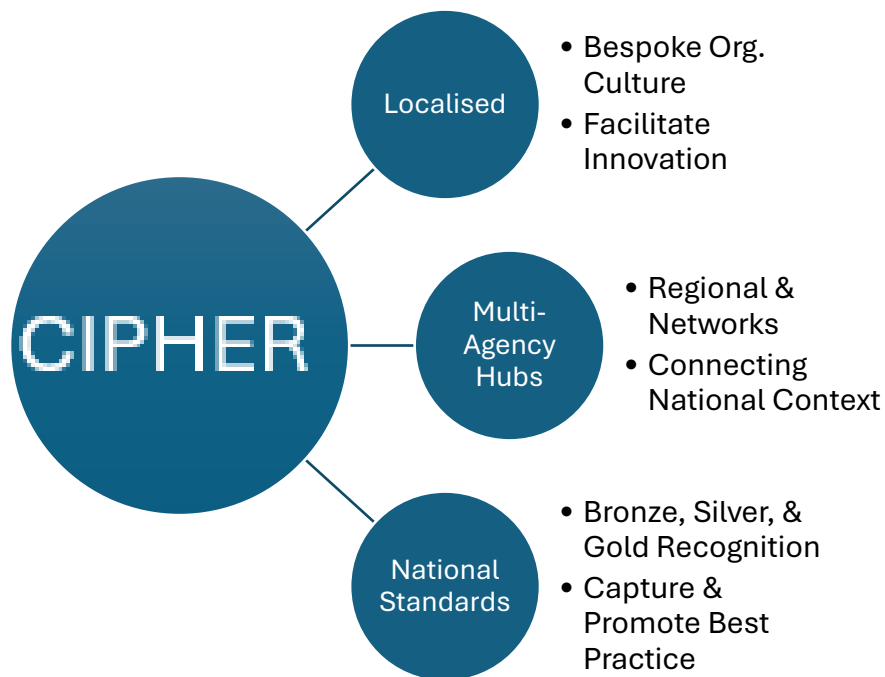


Figure 8: CIPHER Strategic Implementation Model

This model can also be applied to the national security domain, including specialisms such as Counter Terrorism and Intelligence Services. Currently, there is no standardised approach among these agencies, with some performing better than others.

For this model to work, it would have to be programme-managed from the Home Office, Department of Health and Social Care and other government departments which support the blue light community in the UK. Furthermore, government funding would be required to ensure that there is a practical and unified approach to neurodiversity within the Blue Light and Intelligence Community. This would also ensure the best service delivery and a collection of good practices to be effectively distributed to various stakeholders across the country.

Line Management and Leadership

This topic arose repeatedly across all the data sets during data collection. It was outlined in the findings chapter as an essential aspect of a career for neurodiverse people, as a line manager can make or break the experience for the individual.

Line management requires significant skill, as it involves ensuring that people are supported in the workplace. However, this can be challenging if the manager of a neurodiverse individual lacks personal experience with neurodiversity. This can lead to problems which can result in someone handing in their resignation due to a lack of understanding.

Merseyside Police has been pragmatic in its approach, acting upon feedback and tribunal cases to develop neurodiversity training for first- and second-line management leaders, which was created in partnership with me, the Merseyside Police Academy, and Occupational Health.

A key piece of information, which is in the course and is also in the Neurodiversity Line Management Tool Kit made by my own university, is that 'it is not your responsibility to suggest to someone that they are neurodivergent' (Liverpool John Moores University , 2023). This has happened in the past, and it has caused tension between line managers; therefore, it is included in the training the force provides.

However, there is one area that is not currently accompanying the training: a neurodiversity toolkit that could be developed for officers, staff, and line managers to support the training and aid recall. This would be utilised for different purposes, including supporting neurodiversity among team members or when dealing with members of the public.

There should be two toolkits developed to support this line manager training: one for team members with pathways to support and access reasonable adjustments, including routes into the Student Support Team or the Neurodiversity Needs Assessment pathway, and signposting to

local charities for parents of neurodiverse children. This would help line managers have the right information to hand and point people in the right direction when they reach out for support.

The other possible utilisation of the toolkit would be for frontline officers, containing:

- The basics of each of the more prominent conditions for neurodiversity, e.g. Autism, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and ADHD, as well as other conditions.
- Equipping officers with a deeper understanding of the linguistic aspects associated with the terms neurodiverse , neurodiverse and neurotypical.
- Person-centred language
- Guidance on de-escalating situations involving neurodiversity or on stopping and searching a person. There has already been national guidance produced on this, and so it would be very easy to include and adapt to include in the toolkit.

Other documents that could be included in the toolkit would be for specialist units:

- Information for officers when dealing with situations to help neurodiverse people process what is going to happen through Easy Read information.
- The BUGGY principles, to give neurodiverse and vulnerable people more space when interacting with them during firearms incidents, as well as examples of case studies where things have gone wrong and gone well.
- How to access reasonable adjustments in secure environments for people in counter terrorism or intelligence departments.

Furthermore, Merseyside Police, from a localised perspective, and the NPCC and College of Policing, from a national perspective, should produce these toolkits to ensure that information is standardised. This could be a significant benefit for line management and frontline officers, as it ensures they have a toolkit they can continually refer to and utilise in their daily operations.

During the research for this chapter, I have found several examples of these toolkits in existence, primarily from other blue light services, including the NHS, Fire Services and Ambulance Services, but not for Policing, which has highlighted a gap in the literature which should be addressed from a standardised national perspective for the 43 forces in the UK.

Aspects of the toolkit can be personalised for more secure environments and used more widely than just within Merseyside Police on a local level. The toolkit could be applied to organisations outside the law enforcement domain, including the wider Civil Service through the Disability Inclusion and Accessibility Network (DIAN) in the FCDO, and broader national security and law enforcement agencies, including UK CT Policing and Specialist Operations, as well as intelligence partners.¹⁴

Another area lacking in understanding within Merseyside Police, from a line manager's perspective, is the provision of reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 and the Access to Work Scheme by the UK Government. A common misconception I have encountered in the national security and law enforcement domains is the belief that an organisation cannot provide reasonable adjustments in the absence of a diagnosis. This is not correct under the Equality Act 2010 and Access to Work guidelines; a person who is waiting for their diagnosis or self-diagnosed can receive adjustments. Participants in the data collection phase, as outlined in the findings section, stated that managers do not know how to apply for Access to Work funding

¹⁴ Other organisations, including the FCDO, have brought me in to evaluate their approach to neurodiversity and line management during their cultural evaluation period in September 2025. I presented a gap analysis in partnership with colleagues from the FCDO to senior management, ensuring they understood the areas for adaptation, innovation, and positive change for neurodiversity. This enabled their organisation to develop approaches to understanding neurodiverse staff members and how to manage neurodiverse teams to ensure that team members reached their full potential in the workplace.

from the UK Government, nor do they understand the amount of organisational funding contribution required to deliver the equipment.

Throughout this thesis, several key themes have emerged to highlight the topic of leadership. This is not just at the lower levels of the organisation but across the strategic, tactical and operational levels. People in the rank of inspector and above have a duty to contribute to the organisation's strategic direction, shape policy, and help improve the culture to become more inclusive. This can be achieved by sitting on the new Our Culture Board within Merseyside Police, which comprises these ranks.

There are distinct points of responsibility from a strategic perspective, which can be summarised through the Gold, Silver, and Bronze Command structure. Gold Command oversees the highest strategic decisions and plans. Silver Command oversees the operational deployment of strategies and programmes within the organisation, and Bronze Command deals with operational deployment on the ground to help implement policies and strategies in either operational or organisational contexts (College of Policing, 2013).

The Inclusion Board (now Our Culture Board) structure aims to unite leaders from Chief Inspector to Chief Superintendent and ACC ranks. It provides a confidential forum for discussing challenges to organisational culture related to inclusion and for examining the culture from a strategic perspective. Policing is a dynamic profession which comes with its own unique challenges and cultural obstacles. Having this confidential forum has created significant and impactful conversations to take place in a psychologically safe environment to push forward the organisational priorities and discuss the setting of appropriate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for each financial quarter. The board is also governed by a programme manager for inclusion, who holds the organisation to account for EDI-related decision-making. This approach has proven highly effective since its introduction in 2022. The Board has provided a forum to address

challenges, including stop and search, use of force, and the Police Race Action Plan, ensuring significant airtime and meeting the Home Office's set areas of focus for all 43 UK forces.

Furthermore, Merseyside Police from this Inclusion Board (now Our Culture Board) has created a strategic document titled the Inclusion Strategy 2025-2030, utilising this forum to inform decision-making protocols. This roadmap outlines a strategy for the next five years, sets the organisational direction for inclusion with clear and defined goals. However, the change in the senior leadership team (SLT) could alter perceptions, as a new Chief Constable brings a new set of organisational beliefs and values. Inclusion will be tailored to their mandate and shaped to align with their organisational direction. It is up to the new Chief Constable to make their mark on the organisational culture, determining whether to pursue an inclusion culture from a strategic and policy-driven perspective.

Due to the trends and patterns highlighted worldwide in the Executive Order section, which is discussed later in this chapter in more detail, there are also significant challenges facing law enforcement and public sector agencies worldwide. There have now been changes inside Merseyside Police to the organisational vision and values towards 'healthy people' and 'healthy organisation' (Merseyside Police, 2025), moving away from inclusion as a force priority, signalling an organisational shift. At the time of writing, the new chief constable has only just taken office on the 1st September 2025, and at this current moment, I do not know what he will do during his tenure as Chief Constable to the organisational culture.

Professional Standards Department

As outlined in the findings chapter, the support provided by and to the Professional Standards Department (PSD) regarding neurodiversity is crucial for establishing awareness and achieving appropriate outcomes for neurodiverse people under investigation or who have been reported through the Call It Out System. The PSD has informed me that several cases regarding

neurodiversity have been referred to their department, leading to action taken due to inappropriate behaviour and misunderstandings of neurodiverse conditions by officers in the academy, as well as line managers.

This has led to conversations with the officer under investigation, who has then been offered training on the standards and expectations of the police officer role and subsequently monitored to ensure this does not happen again. This has led to a pragmatic approach from PSD, recognising that someone is neurodiverse, but not condoning the poor behaviour; instead, they are given a written warning.

However, participants during data collection made me aware that there are still substantial gaps in knowledge within the Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) and PSD departments regarding how to approach adjustments, particularly in hearings. An example of this was highlighted in data collection in the interviews, where a case regarding a neurodiverse person going through the misconduct system was brought to my attention and they were struggling with the amount of information presented to them and going into sensory overload with no reasonable adjustment offered.

As outlined in the findings chapter, presenting information to the officer under investigation about the proposed misconduct is challenging, given that the data pack could run to hundreds, if not thousands, of pages. Alternative formats should be considered, such as plain English, large print, and easy read, to help the person alleged to have behaved unacceptably understand the process and evidence presented to them. This could cause sensory overload because the information is presented in a non-neuro-friendly way.

Furthermore, since recording began in 2023, only one complaint regarding neurodiversity discrimination has been reported through the Call It Out System. This highlights that trust in the system is very low. This issue requires attention to enhance trust and confidence in the system,

particularly regarding the data recording under the categories of Learning Disability, Other, and Not Known, as detailed in the ACU dataset provided to me (as detailed in the recommendations section of the findings chapter). This can lead to misrepresentation of the number of complaints coming in from other categories. Due to the issue highlighted above, I hypothesise that, as complaints come in, they may be miscategorised because the disability categories (outlined in the findings chapter) are very prescriptive, not classifying neurodiversity as a separate category. I have been concerned since the start of fieldwork and the introduction of the Call It Out system that the allocated categories do not cover neurodiversity in data recording and do not go far enough to classify neurodiversity as a separate category. A proposed way around this, as mentioned in the findings chapter, would be to reclassify the categories within the system to specifically highlight neurodiversity complaints as they come in, thus improving data quality.

The Importance of Neurodiversity Training for the Organisation

The business case for neurodiversity has been repeatedly stressed throughout this thesis. However, I wanted to explore in this chapter the methods and tactics to disseminate neurodiversity awareness across the organisation which are mandated and repeatedly stressed throughout the organisation at various points of service and a criterium for HMICFRS inspections as part of the cultural evaluation.

Merseyside Police are currently running the aforementioned full-day Neurodiversity Line manager course across the organisation, which is currently voluntary. However, I believe that there are more effective ways to present the information covered in this course, which could benefit the organisation and save on force expenditure, time, and resources, as discussed in the findings chapter. This section provides further details on the methods for distributing information and effective training techniques to ensure long-term retention of information. The current format

Merseyside Police uses is very slide-heavy, and feedback from sessions undertaken so far has reflected this.

Mezirow's theory of transformative learning enables people to change their behaviour 'through informed experiential learning, creating a shift in beliefs and values' (Cardiff Metropolitan University, 2025). It also aims to challenge beliefs and biases, with the ultimate goal of practical application in real-world settings.

I believe that this is not the best way to convey this information to line managers, as according to Continued Professional Development (CPD), 'the average learner forgets 70% of their learning in 24 hours and 90% within a week if efforts were not made to retain the knowledge' (CPD, 2022). Currently, the information conveyed during the training provided by Merseyside Police to line managers employs two primary methods of communication: PowerPoint presentations and discussions on scenarios and sensory stimulation. This approach only incorporates two of the four ways of learning, which could be improved upon through the use of innovative technologies or kinaesthetic learning, as detailed below, enabling the participant to fully immerse themselves in what it is like to have a neurodiverse condition.

However, I am aware of several other forces that use innovative approaches to neurodiversity awareness training. I observed training by Leicestershire Police, which utilises augmented reality technology through headsets to portray neurodiversity sensory overload. These headsets were provided to the force by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). Still, the training video required authorisation from the National Autistic Society, as they were the copyright holders.

This use of assistive technology enables people to understand and physically experience what sensory overload looks like. It can be linked to Mezirow's theory of transformative learning through the person's experience of a new situation while wearing the headset.

This experience can foster emotional intelligence and challenge any preconceived notions people may have about neurodiversity as they physically experience the distortion and overwhelming feelings that accompany sensory overload, providing managers with new skills that they can bring back to their teams. This equips managers to recognise signs, such as heavy breathing, and support neurodiverse team members in their teams by providing space and support when needed, and helping them navigate challenging moments.

This physical experience, combined with the immersive aspect of the training, supports the four senses by providing visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic learning through physical engagement. It enables participants to reflect on the material covered throughout the training and gain valuable insights. This approach helps engage individuals with different learning styles, improves information retention, and enhances the overall impact of the training. When a similar situation arises, the line manager will have the tools to effectively support, identify, and structure conversations and interactions with other team members, leaving with a higher level of knowledge than at the start of the training.

Another innovative approach to Neurodiversity training that I have come across, through having a conversation with the Police Advisor for Downing Street on secondment from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), was the development of an Autism Experience Bus.

The experience enables people to understand what neurodiversity looks like through the use of strobe lighting, training videos bespoke to public service and blue light industries, and through the use of distortion glasses, sounds and tasks to fully immerse someone to highlight what sensory overload looks like (Training2Care, 2025).

Furthermore, the Autism Experience Bus has travelled to various police forces, including Avon and Somerset, Metropolitan Police, PSNI, and Police Scotland. Additionally, it has been utilised

by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, Liverpool Women's Hospital, and other local blue light organisations in Merseyside.

These more interactive training sessions help engage the officers or emergency service members being educated. This is because they are more immersive and interactive, engaging people with the learning content through experiential learning. This will have a lasting impact, enabling people to understand what the presentation of neurodiversity looks like physically and how to support their staff when needed.

Neurodiversity: Competitive Advantage in Law Enforcement

I have a saying that 'Diversity drives difference, difference drives change.' Diversity is a crucial element in organisational culture, which has emerged as a key theme during the data collection phase of this study. Participants indicated that diversity is essential to accurately reflect the communities that the police serve, particularly in Merseyside, where there is a high percentage of diverse communities from around the world, especially within the Liverpool City Region. Therefore, the force needs a variety of perspectives to become truly representative. Neurodiversity is especially important, as individuals who think differently, as statistics show, can offer significant benefits to Merseyside Police.

Cloverpop wrote in a 2017 article titled 'Hacking Diversity with Inclusive Decision Making' that 'Inclusive decision making leads to better business decisions up to 87 percent of the time. Business teams drive decision-making twice as fast with half the meetings. Decision outcomes can improve by 60%. (Cloverpop, 2017). These factors include age, gender and geographic diversity, but do not include neurodiversity. I believe that the percentage would be even higher if the research had examined this aspect in greater detail for team diversity.

I believe that diversity is essential to team success in major organisations. This includes law enforcement, when deadlines and decisions are critical, and requires neurodiverse and diverse

outside-the-box thinking to drive innovation and breakthroughs in cases. Supported by statistics from the Harvard Business Review, which highlight the competitive edge that neurodiversity brings to organisations (Harvard Business Review, 2018).

Neurodiversity can be a significant advantage to both the law enforcement domain and the national security arena. I have read extensively and had access to the US Intelligence Community (IC), particularly the US Department of Homeland Security and the FBI, regarding how national security challenges have been solved through the use of neurodiversity. Research and Development (RAND), a government think tank in the US, has published one of the most comprehensive reports about the IC community in 2023, highlighting the diversity of thought needed within the IC. The recommendations in the report align with those outlined in the previous chapter of this thesis, specifically the career mapping and mandated neurodiversity training recommendations. This is because neurodiverse people require additional support to navigate career progression paths, and IC officers and staff need to have an understanding of the challenges faced and the presentation of neurodiversity in the workplace.

RAND within the report states that 'we found a paradigm that shapes this issue in the government. This paradigm of how the government approaches accommodations sets the tone for the entire employer-employee relationship' (RAND, 2023). This aligns with my findings, highlighting a lack of awareness of reasonable adjustments and Access to Work funding provided by the UK Government in UK Policing. I am hopeful that things will change with the appointment of the Neurodiversity Needs Assessor in Merseyside Police.

Neurodiversity can be a significant advantage in the law enforcement and IC domains. There are multiple examples, including the 'unit 9900' Israeli 'Visual Intelligence Division' that exclusively hires neurodiverse people (The Atlantic, 2016). Moreover, GCHQ in the UK, in partnership with Made by Dyslexia, promotes neurodiversity hiring schemes and fosters inclusion both publicly and internally through staff networks. (GCHQ, 2021). Furthermore, the Office of National

Intelligence in Australia has partnered with an organisation called 'RecruitaAbility' to hire neurodiverse talent, enhance its workforce, and adjust its recruitment process to facilitate entry into the organisation and support career progression (Australian Office of National Intelligence, 2024).

Recruitment

These organisations within the IC and national security domain are setting the standards for neurodiversity with the recruitment schemes mentioned above. Currently, there are no neurodiversity recruitment schemes within Merseyside Police. This is something to be considered by the force, as it would be beneficial to establish one to publicly demonstrate the force's commitment to neurodiversity and attract talent that may not typically be interested. This talent could then be utilised for specialisms such as cyber, counter-terrorism, and firearms, which are vitally important to support public protection and the safety and security of Merseyside and the UK.

This neurodiversity recruitment scheme applies to the 43 forces in the UK. It could also be rolled out centrally from the NPCC and College of Policing, producing a standardised and unified approach to neurodiversity recruitment and use of talent. This could be included in the policy for neurodiversity mentioned earlier in this chapter and in the findings chapter.

Some neurodiverse individuals exhibit unique abilities, including enhanced pattern recognition and special interests and expertise, which are often not found in neurotypical individuals. This can be a significant advantage in the IC and police domain in roles such as Researchers, Analysts and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who collect data, look for patterns and then produce reports, briefing papers or briefings presentations to the relevant stakeholders, which could be up to ministerial level depending on the time pressure and severity of the situation. Neurodiversity can give people that edge over their neurotypical peers due to the hyperfocus that neurodiverse individuals can experience when working on detail-oriented and deep work. RAND also state in

the report that ‘We heard from managers of an autistic employee that the organisation has trouble keeping him assigned to projects because we give him a month-long project to work on and he finishes it in two weeks’ (RAND, 2023).

This talent must be harnessed; recruitment should be tailored to ensure that this talent comes through the door. This can happen through positive action, which is a ‘range of measures and initiatives that organisations can lawfully take to actively encourage people from communities that are under-represented to bring their talent, experiences and expertise to organisations’ but is not positive discrimination, which ‘means employing someone just because they come from an underrepresented group, giving an unfair advantage and is unlawful’ (Devon and Cornwall Police, 2024).

Positive action can maintain a competitive advantage in the policing and national security sector by employing methods such as targeted recruitment campaigns, adjusted recruitment practices, such as providing training to recruitment panels so that assessors understand neurodiverse presentations, and Empower Weeks mentioned earlier in this thesis, to combat crime and foster innovation within the policing and national security sector. This can then make policing more representative of the communities that forces across the country police.

Vetting & Neurodiversity: Law Enforcement and National Security

A key aspect of working for law enforcement and national security organisations is the mandatory security clearance or vetting checks conducted during employment, which typically begin with the recruitment process. Then, refreshed every 3, 5, 7, and 10 years, depending on the level of clearance required for the environment in which the person is working.

A lot has been written about neurodiversity in the intelligence community (IC) and the attributes that they bring to these organisations. However, little literature has been produced regarding the

actual vetting system and the support for neurodiverse candidates going through this process, as well as the lifetime commitment for the individual not to divulge anything that could compromise the UK's public interest.

The commitment and level of information required to acquire Developed Vetting (DV) security clearance is extensive, with the requirement of providing 'nationality, employment history, health and wellbeing, friends and associates, alcohol and substance use, travel, sexual history, finance, internet history, criminality, lifestyle and beliefs for the past 10 years' (HM Government, 2024). This can be a complicated and overwhelming task for neurotypical people, but for neurodiverse people, this can be really difficult and take time. Following this, an interview is usually conducted to gather and clarify any necessary information, assess your honesty, and determine whether you can handle sensitive and classified information.

Currently, the only publicly available documentation on reasonable adjustments from the UK Security Vetting Service is a guide that outlines some minor adjustments. However, it is unclear how to request these. A significant gap in the literature has been identified, indicating that there are limited reasonable adjustments to the vetting process, particularly during the DV and Security Clearance (SC) process.

A team of national security professionals approached me after I gave several briefings at the FCDO, which led to the early formulation of a research project on this issue and the formulation of a Neurodiversity in Security Charter. This project aims to improve neurodiversity support during the DV and SC application pathway. The anticipated output from this research would be the creation of lived-experience-informed resources to support the vetting pathway, as well as guides and outlines of reasonable adjustments available, and a Social Use of Stories to help people understand the vetting interview. However, this is a substantial piece of work yet to be undertaken and the project is in the early stages.

The purpose of these products is to work in conjunction with the public and private sectors to ensure that anyone needing national security vetting from the UK Government who is neurodiverse has the resources to understand the pathway to these clearance levels. Furthermore, support the process by incorporating a range of learning styles into the guides to ensure that neurodiverse people feel comfortable. The toolkit and report will help make the vetting process more inclusive, open, and transparent for all applicants.

The Ripple Effect of ‘Executive Order 14151’ Ending Radical and Wasteful DEI Programmes and Preferencing’ Worldwide

As highlighted in the findings chapter in detail, the ripple effect of the transition of government in the US on 20th January 2025, has caused significant and detrimental reputational damage to the EDI culture for Federal agencies in the US and those that operate overseas. By ending these initiatives, my efforts to support neurodiversity in US Law Enforcement were undone for the foreseeable future.

These ripples can be felt worldwide, particularly in organisations within the national security and law enforcement domains that regularly engage with America on information and intelligence sharing, necessitating the adaptation and recalibration of their approaches.

President Trump’s anti-DEI agenda had a profound and far-reaching impact on DEI efforts, creating a climate of fear, exacerbating existing inequalities, intensifying political polarisation, and having ramifications beyond the borders of the United States. [There are] indirect and unintended consequences, such as the chilling effect on private sector DEI initiatives and the rise of “shadow” DEI programs (Ng et al., 2025, p. 137).

As part of benchmarking approaches internationally regarding neurodiversity in national security and policing environments, I spoke with a member of a large organisation that provides security-

cleared personnel to sensitive national security environments with international operations. The response that they have had from head office in regarding the new executive order is that they will have to be careful in their approaches to neurodiversity and EDI commitments, and that the overall feeling is that ‘for now, it is not the time or place to launch any significant campaigns or initiatives regarding EDI inside the organisation’. The stance in the US towards EDI and Neurodiversity has had a monumental impact on the approaches adopted by organisations in the national security and law enforcement domains operating domestically and overseas.

Furthermore, as part of this benchmarking of neurodiversity practices worldwide, I also spoke with other individuals from high-level governmental organisations that operate across multiple countries, who report having to alter their job descriptions in the EDI space to eliminate and cloak EDI initiatives and activities. This individual implied to me that American interference contributed to the scaling back of their organisational EDI program. This highlights the impact that the executive order has had upon the geopolitical domain with the scaling back of EDI within government and national security organisations.

I spoke with a law enforcement agency in Canada in June 2025, and they have been issued guidance regarding this Executive Order. This guidance requires them to change the name of the EDI committee of law enforcement professionals, both in the US and Canada, to which they belong, and to stop using EDI terminology in any outputs.

I have been picking up on an undertone from these conversations that the ripples of this Executive Order have been felt far and wide throughout the world. It is my personal view, and has not been overtly expressed by any of the agencies with which I have engaged. That any country or governmental organisation currently in an information-sharing agreement with the US has had to evaluate its EDI practices to maintain these agreements and continue receiving intelligence from the US. There has been a subtle but noticeable scaling back of organisational efforts with EDI, making it unfashionable to have these initiatives due to the trends and patterns mentioned above,

which have occurred in Canada and Europe to a great extent, and the UK to a lesser extent, as highlighted in the findings section due to the protection of legislation in the UK.

Lewis Silkin, a law firm based in the UK, wrote an article that highlighted this growing trend in the UK. 'Additionally, the UK often adopts trends and language from the US workplace - this was the case when the concept of DEI was originally introduced. We could well see any US shifts, for example, a preference for the word "inclusion" over "equity", or even a return to "equal opportunities" over "diversity" being adopted within the UK. We may also see a move away from DEI-specific roles (e.g. Diversity and Inclusion Officer) towards more general HR roles' (Lewis Silkin, 2025). The article also states that any contractors that are working with suppliers in the UK government and national security domain that are linked with the US 'recommend taking advice as you may need to adjust your practice' in line with the recalibration of linguistics and the Executive Order stated above (Lewis Silkin, 2025).

Before this point, these countries and organisations above had thriving neurodiversity and EDI approaches, which I was privileged enough to have access to and spend time in person in the US, Canada and Europe, as outlined in the impact chapter at the start of this section. A journal article published in 2025, focusing on another blue light service, stated that 'without a commitment to EDI, we risk exacerbating systemic inequities [...]'. This type of executive order has the potential to alter action plans and priorities for research institutions and funding agencies. (Lapum, 2025, p. 5).

Efforts to Reduce EDI in the UK 2023-2024

Before the Executive Order regarding EDI was signed in the US, the UK also had an effort to reduce the amount of EDI in the workplace. In 2023, the Home Office commissioned HMICFRS to produce a report into political expression in policing, and in the same year, Ester McVey was appointed to the Cabinet with a portfolio to evaluate impartiality and expression within the Civil

Service. Her colleagues nicknamed her ‘the minister for common sense’, eliminating the wokeness in the civil service by banning expression through lanyards to demonstrate being part of or an ally to a protected characteristic (Centre for Policy Studies, 2024). The lanyard ban included ‘LGBT lanyards, support for the Ukrainian Conflict and unofficial lanyards’ (The Guardian , 2024). This resulted in Ester McVey stating that ‘government employees should leave their personal political views at the building entrance,’ which is not encouraging and condones the rollback of DEI that was attempted (BBC News, 2024). It resurfaced again in August 2025, when a Christian group attempted to ban the rainbow lanyard, deeming it a political expression through a court case to remove the lanyard from civil service guidelines (BBC News, 2025).

This highlights that the trend toward EDI initiatives and support was less prevalent under the previous UK government but has changed under the Labour government, as evidenced by the government-supported neurodiversity events I have attended during the course of this research.

Ideal Working Conditions for Neurodiverse People

The working environment is crucial to the productivity of neurodiverse people. This was highlighted by multiple participants throughout data collection, who noted that the open-plan office environment does not work, as they are unable to work productively due to the excessive sensory stimulation around them. According to the data, colleagues of participants resigned due to the open-plan working conditions.

The working conditions in offices within Merseyside Police and across other organisations within the wider national security and law enforcement sector have highlighted that significant expenditure has been undertaken to create open-plan offices and design these environments. However, conversations I have had within these organisations, as well as formal data collection, has highlighted that these environments are not conducive to productivity, mental health and overall operational effectiveness. This has been highlighted as a high priority within the findings

chapter of this thesis and should be urgently considered to ensure a good workplace culture and healthy organisation.

I have spent extensive time working with various departments within the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The FCDO uses the Government Workplace Design Guide, which utilises the workplace zoning approach using the following methodology:

Home Zone – Consisting of work settings dedicated to routine work with customers and departmental systems, suitable for longer durations.

Collaboration Zone – A variety of work settings ideal for group tasks and activities that can be carried out most effectively in an environment away from a focused setting.

Do Not Disturb Zone – Work settings that provide space in which individuals can concentrate, consider and work with complex information or conduct confidential activities, without being distracted or disturbed.

Amenities Zone – Amenity spaces provide the shared facilities required to support the work settings and building users (Government Property Agency, 2022)

The diagram below is an example of what a proportional workplace zone map looks like. This is a conducive working environment for neurodiverse people, as it enables them to work in areas of their choice and access more private and confidential zones when handling classified information.

Typical zoning strategy:

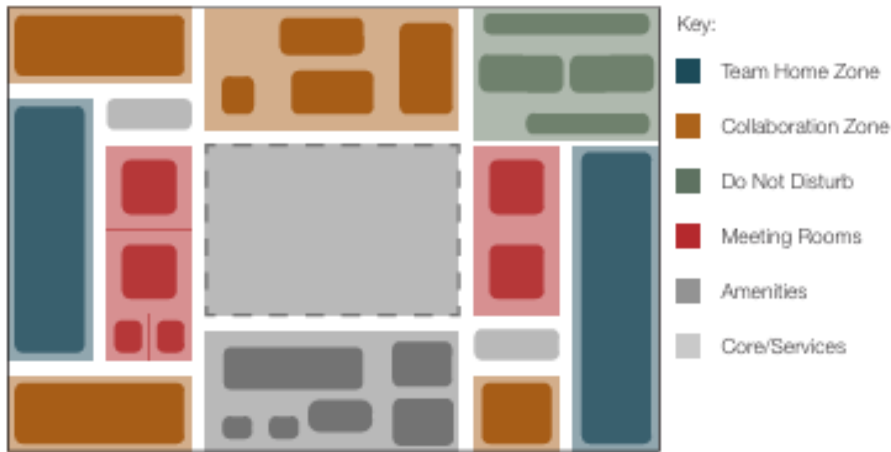


Figure 9: Example of Workplace Zoning from the Government Property Office Inclusive Design Guide (2022) [online]

Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-government-workplace-design-guide>

[Accessed: 19th October 2024]

This balance of different environments enables people to work in various spaces. In addition to the zones, there are workplace booths which enable confidential work away from the busy environment. Still, the person is available if needed, with acoustically dampened surroundings that allow for the handling of confidential information and provide a quiet space for colleagues who need time for deep work. This is particularly important for law enforcement agencies that require private areas for sensitive conversations to occur.



Figure 10: Example of a workplace booth from Hush Office (2024) [online]

Available at: <https://hushoffice.com/en-gb/get-accessible-with-hushfree-access-m-and-hushfree-access-l/>

[Accessed: 10th June 2024]

Merseyside Police already have a number of these booths inside the force, particularly in the Operational Command Centre (OCC), which is where the specialist operations and Counter Terrorism Units are based. Due to the level of information discussed, the need for workplace booths is crucial to minimise sound leakage into the broader working environment. In the office design and plans, these booths are acting as confidential spaces, not quiet spaces. However, across the rest of the Merseyside Police Estate, the only other location with workplace booths is the HQ at Rose Hill, but only one booth is available in the building. This is due to the high expense of these booths and the need for space optimisation, given the number of people working in the building.

There are still significant challenges to Merseyside Police becoming a neuro-inclusive employer. These include an ever-ageing estate, which has created access issues for neurodiverse people, and the new multi-million-pound buildings, including the new HQ, being designed for neurotypical people. This has been highlighted by participants in the findings and during the data

collection phase of this thesis. Participants in the interviews and focus groups highlighted that neurodiverse and disabled people were not consulted during the development and design phase of estate regeneration, creating the open-plan working operational environment that is causing sensory overstimulation and overwhelm.

As recommended in the findings chapter, an audit for the Merseyside Police Estate should be conducted to improve aspects of acoustics, lighting, sensory overstimulation, and office layout, thereby enhancing the operational efficiency of the organisation. Furthermore, as highlighted above, Merseyside Police should also consider applying the workplace zoning model described above to ensure that neurodiverse people have a balance of areas in which to work.

As highlighted multiple times throughout this thesis, neurodiversity brings significant advantages to any organisation in which a person works. However, this thesis had outlined several challenges and factors, including political, individual, line manager awareness, and organisational cultural barriers, that hinder neurodiverse people from working to their full potential. Moving forward, organisations within the policing and national security domains need to recognise the talent that people bring to their organisations and look to implement the recommendations outlined in the findings chapter.

Towards a More Inclusive Future: Cultural Development

According to Autistica, 'only 22% of autistic people are in full-time employment' (Autistica, 2023). This discovery shocked me, revealing a vast untapped talent pool of people who can bring significant advantages to law enforcement and national security. Research by Autistica highlights that if the UK doubled the recruitment of neurodiverse people, this would bring in '£1.5 billion' into the UK economy (Autistica, 2023). The Office for National Statistics recorded from April to June 2025, the number of job vacancies was '727,000' (Office of National Statistics, 2025). This highlights that there is a highly skilled workforce looking for jobs, but due to the barriers

highlighted in this section, such as a non-inclusive culture, it limits people from working to their full potential.

So how do law enforcement and national security organisations create an authentic and inclusive culture? This is the £1.5 billion question. It is through taking on board the recommendations and findings within this thesis that blockages and barriers, such as the awareness of neurodiversity, can be eliminated through training, understanding, and spending time with employees, enabling them to feel welcomed, respected, and understand their strengths and weaknesses.

The challenge that has presented itself is how these obstacles, once removed, create sustained, meaningful, and impactful organisational cultural change through longer-term organisational change management theories outlined in the findings and discussion chapters. This has to include long-term senior leadership buy-in to ensure that the organisation's culture is neuro-inclusive and respectful of neurodiversity.

Merseyside Police have the option of selecting which recommendations proposed in the findings chapter will best support their cultural development, which falls outside the scope of this research. The force has the final say on which recommendations and findings will have the most organisational impact, creating systemic and impactful change, and improving the experience for neurodiverse people in the force to increase productivity and harness the neurodiverse talents people bring to the organisation.

However, from a strategic perspective, several significant leadership and cultural changes have occurred within the organisation and across the UK and US politically, impacting approaches to EDI and causing issues with neurodiversity initiatives. There has also been a multifaceted and complex attitudinal shift within the organisation in relation to changes in the senior officer team, following the arrival of the new Chief Constable and the departure of other senior leaders. I wonder what direction the force will take the findings of this PhD research and how the

organisational culture will adapt this research to take the organisation to the next level and increase support for neurodiverse people inside the organisation.

To create deep-rooted and long-term commitments to neurodiversity in policing and national security environments, it takes time. It can take several years for a recommendation and finding to be effectively embedded, depending on the organisation's stage in the Capability Maturity Model, which goes through the following stages:

Level -1 initial starting point

Level 2 – repeatable and managed, where basic processes are established, defined and documented

Level 3 – defined training processes, but there is still a silo structure

Level 4 – predictable, where the analysis of training is measured

Level 5 – optimising training processes is continuously improved through innovation

(Pauli, 1993)

This is due to the organisational culture needing to catch up to the point where neurodiversity is widely accepted and infrastructure is in place to support people who need it properly.

The previous chapter highlighted the need for cultural and environmental change for neurodiverse people in Merseyside Police and the wider national security and governmental sectors; however, change is hard for neurodiverse people, particularly when it disrupts their established routines and affects their daily working conditions. Therefore, to instigate a managed, smooth change process, neurodiverse people need to be informed of the stages and have clear communication about how the change will impact their work, so they can respond positively to the process and adapt their routine to a new pattern. An example of this was transitioning from a

Secondary School environment with small class sizes to a sixth-form college, which was significantly larger, and it heightened my anxiety as I adjusted to a new routine and environment. However, an individual who was part of the Special Educational Needs team explained the steps of the transition and walked me through the environment, as well as using strategies such as visualisation through a map of where my classes would be, utilising only a small area of a much larger campus, enabling me to cope and move forward with my studies.

Furthermore, when a recommendation is implemented at the point of maturity, it can produce a psychologically safe environment that enables people to reach their full potential. Once it is demonstrated that an inclusive culture is truly embedded in the organisation, it can increase organisational and public trust and confidence in the police force. However, implementing neurodiversity and change management can be challenging because the proposed changes disrupt a person's structured routine, which can be a significant struggle for neurodiverse individuals to adapt to, as this disruption can cause anxiety. Therefore, any significant changes to organisational culture should be communicated as clearly as possible.

An example of the aforementioned maturity index was the Neurodiversity Needs Assessor role within Merseyside Police. This role has taken time to develop correctly and mature, effectively embedding itself into the organisation, as it involved a substantial cultural change, moving away from the standard operating procedures (SOPs) currently in place. This was achieved through the creation of the lead post and the recruitment of 14 volunteers. This approach has been highly effective, but it is still in its early stages, having entered the soft launch phase. Understanding is key for this to work, but the knowledge of neurodiversity needs to improve significantly, particularly amongst line managers, before it is fully integrated as a permanent fixture within the organisation.

To ensure a profound institutional shift towards embedding neurodiversity at the heart of Merseyside Police's values and those of the wider law enforcement and national security

community. A cultural review by the UK Government is needed to shift the dial, remove biases, increase organisational awareness and create organisational cultures which are truly inclusive towards neurodiversity. The review should encompass the entire employee lifecycle in policing and national security domains across the UK, from recruitment and interview through to vetting, workplace environments, reasonable adjustments for police and national security workplace systems, progression, and strategic approaches to neurodiversity, as well as policy and governance models in these domains.

This comprehensive and substantial review will help win over 'hearts and minds' and ensure senior leaders are fully committed to neurodiversity. However, it will require significant time and effort, as well as a paradigm shift, to allocate resources, budgets, and enable systemic cultural change across all 43 police forces and the wider UK national security domain.

Future Research

Throughout this research, several other areas of future research have emerged that fall outside the confines of this thesis. This section outlines the reasons these areas need to be addressed and how to undertake this research. These areas will be linked with the findings and discussion chapters in this thesis.

Replication of the Research Tracking Cultural Development

This research has proposed many recommendations and findings; therefore, it will take Merseyside Police a substantial amount of time and resources to undertake and implement.

There is scope for me to undertake another study in two years to repeat data collection to understand the organisation's cultural development and the changes made to support neurodiversity.

This would replicate the same research methodologies to understand officers' and staff viewpoints, once some cultural change has been undertaken, to track any changes in opinion

among participants, and to assess whether neurodiversity is further embedded in organisational culture following the transition of leadership and any development in approaches to neurodiversity support inside the force and policing in the UK.

This review would enable a PESTEL Analysis of the current perceptions of neurodiversity at the time of publication of this study, and assess whether there has been any development using this matrix.

It is timely that this study has been published. A review by the College of Policing has been commissioned into Police Leadership and Cultural Change. Furthermore, in October 2025, allegations from Charring Cross Police Station in the Metropolitan Police of misogyny and disability discrimination against a neurodiverse person in their custody (BBC News, 2025).

Training

The most significant area for consideration is training on neurodiversity for officers and staff. The data collection highlighted that this area needed development. Research should be undertaken to evaluate the current effectiveness of neurodiversity training across the 43 forces in the UK, as some may not have undertaken it, as highlighted in the findings and discussion chapters. This is an area for further research.

Furthermore, research on the development and implementation of neurodiversity training within UK police forces is needed and is currently a gap in the literature. This research could be a mixed-methods study including interviewing people leading this training and evaluating data from feedback from a sample of forces across the country, as well as considering what innovative approaches are being used, such as virtual reality and sensory experiences and how these can impact the retention of content and impact practice in frontline policing.

Professional Standards Department Research

A scoping study should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of support for neurodiverse people under investigation by Professional Standards Departments, and to identify reasonable adjustments to the misconduct hearing process.

Furthermore, another study should be conducted into the development and collation of Professional Standards Department reports and quantitative data regarding neurodiversity from complaints systems, as highlighted in great detail in the findings and recommendations, as well as the discussion chapters of this thesis.

Another area for future research is the processes involved in applying for Developed Vetting (DV) and Security Clearance (SC) for neurodiverse candidates, as well as the provision of support from forces across the UK, both in policing and in the intelligence and national security domains. To achieve this, a qualitative study will be conducted to interview national security practitioners and other members of the UK intelligence community to understand their experiences and challenges as they navigate this process, and to identify reasonable adjustments that would help people. The end goal of this research will be to enable a more unified and practical approach to neurodiversity support throughout the application process.

Operational Effectiveness and Open Plan Environment

As highlighted extensively and in depth throughout the course of this research, open plan offices were raised significantly in the data collection and are a topic which is difficult due to funding restraints within Merseyside Police

Research should be conducted across UK policing to understand the impacts of open-plan office environments on the operational effectiveness of neurodiverse police officers and staff.

This would be conducted through a qualitative study that would interview a sample of officers and staff across the 43 police forces in the UK.

The outcomes of this would be the development of a matrix to ensure that, when building an environment for policing and national security purposes, neurodiversity is considered in line with British Standards Institute Design for the Mind Guidelines, which cover conventional office space but not secure work environments.

Scoping Review on the Effectiveness of Neurodiversity Staff Networks in UK Policing and Intelligence

Throughout my research and data collection for this thesis, I have noted that an increasing number of public-sector policing and national security organisations have established dedicated neurodiversity networks.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) stated in their report into 'activism and impartiality in policing' that the role of staff networks 'found those representing networks were trying to improve the working environment for those they represent' and providing a voice to people under the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 (HMICFRS, 2024, p. 123). Furthermore, the PEEL inspection 2023-2025 by HMICFRS for Merseyside Police stated that 'staff networks in the organisation play an important part in helping underrepresented groups. The networks understand specific needs and provide good support' (HMICFRS, 2023, p. 43).

As highlighted in depth throughout the findings and discussion chapters, organisations such as the Civil Service, Fire Services, the UK intelligence community and NHS Trusts have been allocating budgets to support these networks and to give them a presence within the organisation. Currently, Merseyside Police has a peer support group but no dedicated staff network for neurodiversity.

A consideration for future research is a scoping review of these networks, interviewing the chairs, and understanding how they were established, funded, and how network activity is organised, with the anticipation of creating a neurodiversity staff network to Merseyside Police on a trial

basis and then a longitudinal study to judge its effectiveness inside the organisation at various points in time.

Career Mapping

Another aspect highlighted and discussed at length in the other chapters is career mapping.

A longitudinal study could be undertaken to examine the implications of career mapping for neurodiverse officers and staff within Merseyside Police or another UK police force over 5 years. The sample would be taken from early-career police officers before they go onto the Carousel rotation.¹⁵ The study aims to understand how career mapping can benefit or hinder neurodiverse officers' development and support provision, as well as how effective the key document, which would be their career map, is within the operational domain.

Scoping Review on Current Literature for Neurodiversity provided to Officers across the UK

Another area which emerged from data collection was that officers were not provided with documentation or guides on neurodiversity presentation when out in the community. There have been several publications over the last 5 years outlining signs of neurodiversity in the criminal justice system, but these documents have not been distributed to line managers and frontline teams.

Therefore, a content analysis study could be undertaken to examine the quality and effectiveness of receiving this information versus not receiving it when interacting with neurodiverse members of the community.

¹⁵ The Carousel is the initial 18-month training period once police officers are qualified to go out into the community. During this period, officers are rotated across a number of departments and capabilities to understand how the force operates as well as gain universal experience to increase their confidence and deal with a variety of situations.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This section concludes one of the most interesting periods of my life so far. It has been a pleasure to work with Merseyside Police and other law enforcement and national security organisations, as listed in the impact and findings chapter, to develop the recommendations and findings of this PhD. This project has been challenging but enjoyable and has broadened my organisational understanding of neurodiversity in law enforcement. I believe that this research will have a lasting impact on the development of neurodiversity-related organisational development and cultural change within the law enforcement and national security sectors.

This research aimed to evaluate approaches to neurodiversity within Merseyside Police and has achieved this, also contributing to the national conversation in several significant sectors. These have included HM Government, Civil Service, National Security, and bodies such as HMICFRS, the NPCC, and the College of Policing, with myself being highly active in these organisations. Hopefully, discussions will continue post the publication of this thesis to help as many neurodiverse people as possible within the law enforcement and national security professions.

Police research literature focusing on inclusion of different groups in society has primarily focused on the role of women in policing, 'beginning to use a new freedom in a very conventional masculine institution' (Heidensohn, 2005, p. 255). This has been of significant public interest through the Baroness Casey and Angiolini Enquiries, highlighting that sexism and misogyny are still prevalent within policing through the 'social-control system or the agencies which formed parts of it may have forms but styles as well as personnel which are gendered' (Heidensohn, 2005, p. 255). Further compounding, the ways in which roles for males within the profession are used as stated above as a method of control over gender in policing and wider society, and have been a significant topic of discussion within the media and government regarding sexism and misogyny within policing.

This has been supported by Loftus (2008, p. 189) who states that ‘the study of police culture involves examining the ways officers think about the world around them. Yet recent discussions about the inner world of the police have focused almost exclusively on racism and other forms of discrimination’. The outcomes, recommendations and findings from this research are anticipated to help start a conversation about the benefits neurodiversity can bring to the work of policing and national security and to form ‘the beginnings of multiple identities and styles of policing’ which can support neurodiverse people in the workplace, enabling them to reach their full potential and to fill a void in the research literature which I hope can be developed positively after the publication of this thesis (Loftus, 2008, p. 127).

Challenging the gender and ethnicity discourses discussed above, neurodiversity is also a valid and legitimate area of the field within the literature. It is hoped that this thesis has opened up the field for subsequent publications to help increase the presence of neurodiversity within police organisational development and cultural change. Confronting some of the historic perspectives presented within the literature of the traditional ‘rank and file culture’ that ‘continues to exert considerable influence on the day-to-day functioning of operational policing’ (Loftus, 2008, p189). Outside-the-box, novel thinking applied to neurodiversity can bring unique strengths to the workplace and impact organisational culture within policing and national security organisations.

Organisational culture and development have been a prominent theme throughout this thesis, influenced by various approaches, perspectives, strategic changes within Merseyside Police, and global political changes. Baker (2007, p.1) states that ‘change is no single event but an ongoing process that may seem like, or be punctuated by, a series of occurrences or activities that are perhaps perceived as finite, time-limited moves from one state to another’. A practical example, as highlighted in the literature review chapter, is the response following the publication of the Baroness Casey Review, in which the Metropolitan Police has committed to providing an enhanced support portfolio for the organisation regarding EDI. This has included multi-agency

collaboration through the establishment of committees, chaired by a Temporary Assistant Commissioner (the equivalent of a Deputy Chief Constable), to benchmark the cultural landscape associated with neurodiversity across policing, public sector organisations and the latest academic research, highlighting innovative approaches within different organisations and identifying best practices with continuous dialogue and stages to help improve the organisational culture of one of the biggest police forces in the country.

The CIPHER Model proposed in the discussion chapter is also an integral part of this, from a local, regional, and national perspective, to enable unity across the policing, law enforcement, and national security sectors. This is to avoid replication, increase collaboration, and facilitate information sharing managed from Gold, Silver, and Bronze Commands across the country, creating standardisation and enabling neurodiverse people to be supported in the workplace.

Another area of positive practice since the inception of this research has been the establishment of the neurodiversity portfolio for the NPCC, which has now evolved into a substantial meeting with workstreams examining dedicated areas to support neurodiverse people within the 43 forces in the UK. This has also led to significant cultural change nationally, towards more informed police forces, led by a portfolio lead for the NPCC, who is an Assistant Chief Constable at West Midlands Police.

These national senior committees serve as examples and areas for development within Merseyside Police. They should be carefully considered on a local level throughout Merseyside Police to ensure collaboration, information sharing, and unity among public sector organisations. Furthermore, the new Our Culture Board should consider the CIPHER Model, the Culture, Diversity and Inclusion Committee within the Metropolitan police and the NPCC National Neurodiversity Working Group to have a strategic lead at senior officer level sitting on them. This would be to help with the transition over to the new board's terms of reference, as well as map out every neurodiversity, disability and EDI initiative in the force currently ongoing.

The change in Chief Constable to Robert Carden within Merseyside Police, and a meeting with him within his first two months of leadership, have given the organisation a period of reflection to understand its current position on neurodiversity and inclusion as an organisational priority. This reflection has led the new Chief Constable to fully commit to improving the conditions for neurodiverse individuals within the organisation and to making Merseyside Police the preferred employer for neurodiverse individuals to utilise their unique skills for public protection. Robert Carden, in a meeting with me, said he wants to ensure that the conditions are right within the organisation to support people with neurodiversity in reaching their potential.

Furthermore, Merseyside Police have achieved the final phase of the Multicultural Organisational Development Model, which involves actively promoting diversity. The most significant development for neurodiversity within organisational culture has been the appointment of the Neurodiversity Needs Assessor Lead for Merseyside Police, which has actively changed the culture to help support officers and staff with neurodiverse conditions in the workplace.

The aim of this thesis has been to ensure that the best environments are there for neurodiverse people within law enforcement and national security agencies, with a focus on the culture of Merseyside Police. As highlighted above, significant changes have been implemented to improve the culture and initiate the change management process, but there is still a long way to go before it is fully implemented. Kotter (2025, p.1) eloquently supports this notion by stating that ‘the most general lesson to be learned from the more successful cases is that the change process goes through a series of phases that, in total, usually require a considerable length of time’. However, conversations are now underway on how to take the outcomes of this work forward and make truly inclusive organisational change.

Trust and confidence in policing among police officers and the general public are at an all-time low. ‘In October 2024, 52% of adults told a YouGov survey of Great Britain that they had no/not very much confidence in the police to tackle crime locally, compared to 39% in October 2019’

(UK Parliament, 2024). This study aimed to address this issue from an independent outsider-insider researcher perspective, maintaining an unbiased and objective approach to the research. The recommendations and findings, from my perspective, offer a true reflection of the organisation's current approach to neurodiversity and provide areas for organisational development through adaptation, innovation and positive change. This has led to progress in supporting neurodiverse officers and staff.

Significant cultural events have occurred from 2020 onwards, including the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter Movement, which led to more cultural awareness within organisations and substantial investment in infrastructure and development. This accelerated the development of policies and support for people in the workplace. Furthermore, support groups and a robust infrastructure for EDI were developed to support people across all protected characteristics, encompassing both the private and public sectors. This saw a surge in progress due to these groups and staff networks discussing organisational challenges and taking on projects to improve awareness and support for different groups from an intersectional perspective.

Five years later, due to geopolitical shifts, economic challenges, and resource demands, support for this movement has waned and stalled. The political landscape remains uncertain for EDI and neurodiversity provision. Governments worldwide, particularly in the US, have begun to turn their backs on specific aspects of EDI, especially in debates around trans and racial issues, which have sparked significant societal discussions. This shift was most recently driven by the Executive Order signed by President Trump in January 2025, reversing 'longstanding federal commitments to DEIA initiatives, restructuring legal protections, and eliminating diversity-driven hiring mandates', which has caused a detrimental impact to EDI-related programmes in the US (Bowker, 2025, p. 363). This Executive Order has now been subsequently expanded to contractors of the federal government on the 26th March 2026 under the new Executive Order titled

‘Addressing DEI Discrimination by Federal Government Contractors’ where this new piece of legislation focusses heavily on race and clauses to be inputted into federal contracts stating ‘a clause addressing racially discriminatory activities’ (The White House , 2026).

The Executive Order has signalled a trend in which organisations within law enforcement and national security are moving away from formal roles and departments towards reliance on support staff networks, creating informal support structures. Several US national security agencies, including the FBI, DEA, and NSA, have implemented this order because it is based on US law. Moreover, this trend is spreading internationally; law enforcement and national security organisations around the world have reported to me that they are scaling back efforts to EDI outside the US. Guidance on the executive order has also been provided to Canada and the European Union. This position is supported by credible sources from senior figures in high-profile political and law enforcement agencies, with whom I have spoken. It is discussed in greater detail in the impact and discussion chapters.

This has demonstrated that the ripple effect of this executive order has resulted in an upward trend and forecast reduction in the use of EDI terminology in documents worldwide, as well as among teams that support the EDI function, who are using this title. This view can be supported on a local level by the fact that Merseyside Police’s Inclusion Board has been rebranded as the Our Culture Board, and the team that supports the EDI function within the force was renamed in 2024 to the Inclusion, Wellbeing, and Engagement Team.

This trend of EDI being turned away from has also affected the private sector, with many organisations that have an international presence, such as ‘Harley Davidson, McDonald's and Meta’ (Forbes , 2025) Many have started to reduce their EDI efforts, both in the US and globally, following this trend, with the reversal of significant efforts that occurred under the Biden administration. With increasing efforts and expenditure being poured into the war in Ukraine, different priorities have emerged in 2025, affecting the direction and prioritisation of resources

allocated by national security and law enforcement organisations due to other ongoing operations, leading to a strategic shift.

However, support is still needed for neurodiverse people, and, contrary to the narrative depicted above, which is trending in the HR and Organisational Development domains, organisations working in the law enforcement and national security sectors can gain a 'competitive advantage by bringing diverse and unique perspectives to the table' (Harvard Business Review, 2017). These organisations want to learn more to support colleagues in the workplace when people are diagnosed with neurodiverse conditions. Furthermore, one thing is sure: organisations in the UK cannot fully withdraw from this commitment due to the Equality Act 2010, which prohibits organisations from reducing or eliminating support for the nine protected characteristics listed under the act. Even though efforts were made to reduce political expression from the civil service, through Ester McVey's ministerial portfolio, which advocated for the reduction of woke in the civil service through banning the wearing of political lanyards associated with the expression of LGBT views and other protected characteristics under the Rishi Sunak Prime Ministerial premiership.

This thesis claims to have answered this question by presenting arguments that highlight that the tide is turning against the reduction of EDI within society, as commitments are being diluted due to shifts in political and cultural attitudes. However, rather than eliminating EDI efforts in the policing and national security domains, the discussion chapter proposes standardising approaches to reduce replication and multiple expenditure across departments within the sector, through the use of the CIPHER Model.

The research has uncovered several insightful topics throughout my time with the force, and while spending time with agencies internationally. These findings have included mandated training for police officers, staff and members of the law enforcement and national security community worldwide. Training has been a foundational theme that has run throughout this research. This is because there was a substantial need to educate departments and specialist units, which have

reached out to me for inputs to their teams, and the feedback has been significant (please see the appendix for the feedback and testimonials).

The business case for training can be supported through Al-Khouja et al. (2021) which state that:

training initiatives should be embedded within organisational culture. An example in practice is the engagement of key decision makers (leaders) in solving problems of inequity, diversity or inclusion through participation in mentoring, advocacy or recruitment drives (Al-Khouja, et al., 2021, p. 3).

The quote highlights the need for substantial support to develop an inclusive training package that is lived-experience-led, enabling decision-makers to see the business case for EDI and neurodiversity and then act to ensure their organisational cultures are inclusive and welcoming for all.

The presentations I have delivered to many different stakeholders have combined lived experiences, academic practices, and best practices that I observed as my research developed. This was new to the organisation following the Anthony Walker Foundation-mandated training conducted at the beginning of this research on racial discrimination within Merseyside Police. As a result, I provided over 40 inputs based on their lived experiences as a neurodiverse individual to various levels and roles within Merseyside Police, including operational and local policing, strategic command teams, specialist units such as firearms, the senior leadership team, and numerous external agencies ranging from HM Government to national security partners. Additionally, these inputs were complemented by training from the Merseyside Police Academy and my contribution to the development of these sessions for first- and second-line managers.

One area of significant feedback from the training with Merseyside Police was that the information delivered to line managers during the course was perceived as being very slide-heavy

in its delivery style¹⁶. I have come across some training being offered to other forces across the country that utilises technology (a significant priority of the new chief constable's agenda) through virtual reality goggles and sensory-overstimulation vans, highlighting how people can experience sensory overload from excessive stimuli. These practical approaches enabled participants in the training course to become fully immersed and understand the daily challenges faced by neurodiverse people.

This has led me to consider future feasibility studies that examine the impact of this training on a neurotypical person, their teams, engagement with members of the public, and the broader organisational culture, to determine whether there is any improvement in interactions with neurodiverse people. This technology-enhanced training can enable people to experience what it feels like to be neurodiverse and to actually feel what it is like to have a condition, as well as sensory overstimulation, equipping managers with deep emotional intelligence. They can then take this back to their teams.

In addition to this training, another recommendation is to develop a national toolkit for neurodiversity with standardised support pathways for officers and guidance on how to approach team members they believe are neurodiverse. It should also include resources and pathways for accessing support at a local level within each police force and the national security sector.

This toolkit has universal relevance, enabling managers and team members to understand neurodiversity presentations and to adapt them to local contexts, incorporating support networks and services that can be integrated. Currently, at the end of the line manager neurodiversity training sessions provided by Merseyside Police, a guide to assistive technology is

¹⁶ Feedback from these training sessions indicated that the day was very long and relied heavily on PowerPoint to convey critical information. As highlighted in other parts of the thesis, technology and more collaborative group work or experiential learning are better at helping learners retain information and is an area for future research following the publication of this thesis.

included; however, there are no routes to accessing support or internal policies for neurodiverse people during a crisis. This could be improved by providing a handbook that highlights key points from the sessions and makes it readily available when people approach their line manager to inquire about the neurodiverse support offered by the force.

The tangible impact of the recommendations outlined in this thesis has already begun to be effective, as I have assisted the FCDO and civil service in developing training for use within their organisations. Briefings are scheduled to take place for senior leaders within the FCDO in September 2025, which will then lead me to participate in a working group focused on the Civil Service's People Plan. This involvement aims to highlight tangible, long-lasting impacts before the final thesis is published.

There are challenges with the development of a toolkit outlined above, this can be particularly challenging due to conflicting ideas among stakeholders and can take significant time to get signed off. Vanhengel et al. (2026, p. 113) state that 'change is necessary to manage any organisation, but executing change in the public sector is especially difficult owing to its stringent legal framework, bureaucratic structure, stakeholder complexity, and risk-averse character'. In relation to diversity and inclusion-related activity, this can be challenging due to the risk-averse nature of public sector organisations, managing, for example, reputational damage when implementing new initiatives which could substantially change the nature of their operations or organisational culture.

'In the United Kingdom, vetting is a key point during recruitment for filtering out candidates who are ineligible because of prior crimes, or unsuitable because of risks or vulnerabilities that would prevent them holding the office of police constable' (Watson, et al., 2025, P. 1). Every police officer, member of staff, and volunteer working for a police force in the UK must undergo a level of vetting to ensure they are not susceptible to any form of exploitation during their time with the

force. Vetting has been a topic of national discussion¹⁷, given the outcomes of national reviews that highlighted gaps in provision and allowed officers to serve in the police force despite significant and lengthy intelligence indicating they had broken the law. This was highlighted in the Baroness Casey and Angiolini Enquiries into the behaviour of David Carrick and Wayne Couzens, who behaved despicably whilst holding warrant cards, and in the case of David Carrick, held Developed Vetting (DV) Clearance, the highest level of security clearance in the UK. A significant gap was also identified through research-related activities and briefings I undertook as part of this research: the challenges faced by neurodiverse people during the vetting process, particularly in DV and SC vetting, and the lack of reasonable adjustments offered.

I was approached by a group of national security professionals exploring this issue, and a feasibility study will follow the publication of this research to evaluate how neurodiversity is supported in this process and the awareness of the lifelong commitment to protecting information of a high government classification level for neurodiverse people. These significant recommendations will take time, as foundational institutional change is needed to improve and standardise neurodiversity approaches across the entire policing and national security system in the United Kingdom.

I have concluded that, for systematic change to occur within the policing and national security sectors, a fundamental review of the UK policing and national security systems, with an emphasis on neurodiversity, is necessary to assess the effectiveness of organisations in these sectors. There have been significant reviews, including the Royal Commission in 1960, the Macpherson Inquiry in 1999, the Ellison Review in 2014, and the Angiolini Review and Baroness Casey Enquiry in 2023 and 2024. These reviews have repeatedly called for changes in behaviour regarding misogyny, racism and cultural change. However, this has not occurred; therefore, there should

¹⁷ Particularly when the Prime Minister went against the security services recommendations that Peter Mandelson not be appointed due to information disclosed in the vetting interview and were subsequently removed from the post of UK Ambassador to the United states.

be another review that focuses on the broader issues, factoring in neurodiversity and disability in the data collection. Charman states that:

Many of the specific recommendations for change contained within these reports, however, did not outline how cultural reform could be achieved but instead called for structural and policy change. Although this is nonetheless important, it fails to grasp the distinct nature of culture as being something that organisations are rather than have, and is not an entity easily measured and managed (Charman, 2024, p. 444).

This has been supported by Baroness Casey in her review, which states that ‘problems with culture and attitudes cannot be addressed by developing a new policy, changing the rules or developing a new process’; a foundational shift is needed to improve the policing system in the United Kingdom (Casey, 2023, p. 14).

The review should comprise a committee with senior leaders from the policing and national security domains, as well as representatives from the Home Office, portfolio managers for Neurodiversity from the NPCC, senior management of the College of Policing, and senior leadership of HMICFRS. This committee would scrutinise and effectively develop ideas through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, utilising data, surveys, interviews, and focus groups. These methods include submitting Freedom of Information Requests, conducting interviews and focus groups, providing testimony to the committee through hearings, and reviewing data on neurodiversity across the 43 police forces in the UK. The result of this data collection would be a standardised and unified approach to neurodiversity across the law enforcement and national security domains in the UK, enabling collaboration and information sharing across the sector.

The result of this review would be a final report published by HM Government submitted to the Home Office along with a series of recommendations and reforms proposed by the Home Office,

NPCC, CoP, and HMICFRS, to ensure that police forces have sufficient support and funding to assist neurodiverse officers and staff across the UK.

This conclusion is based on the fact that the last Royal Commission for Policing was established in 1960, and further calls for one to be established on the 26th March 2019 by Stephen Lloyd MP and supported by the Police Federation looking into ‘improving demand, capacity’ and ‘the entire structure, function, roles and funding of the service’ have not yet come to fruition. (Police Federation, 2019). Furthermore, given the lasting impact on organisational culture, the Baroness Casey Review and the Angiolini Enquiry have highlighted that foundational institutional cultural reform is needed to get policing back on the right track, in line with the Peelian Principles.

The findings of this thesis have also further highlighted the need for change regarding neurodiversity, EDI, and the necessity of foundational organisational culture change to bring modern policing into the 21st Century. The time is right to initiate a substantial and inclusive cultural shift in policing. This would not be a royal commission but rather a task force aimed at improving organisational culture and support for neurodiverse police officers and staff across the UK.

The voices of the participants have taken centre stage in this research, informing its findings and recommendations, as highlighted in the findings chapter. Participants have highlighted the significant challenges and benefits that neurodiversity presents to law enforcement and national security. These have included the need for reasonable adjustments and the challenge of finding assistive technology that meets the United Kingdom's security requirements, given the sensitive nature of policing information. Additionally, participants highlighted unacceptable workplace behaviour, which is discussed in the findings chapter, as well as access to the dedicated neurodiversity staff network and another dedicated to the broader topic of disabilities. However, it is crucial to be mindful that when given the right conditions, people can thrive and reach their full potential, unmask and feel psychologically safe.

It has been a privilege to provide, for the first time, a platform to highlight the challenges associated with Neurodiversity within Merseyside Police and across the wider policing and national security sectors. It is not feasible to only focus on one police force when there are so many different approaches to neurodiversity across the sector. For widespread, meaningful change to take place, neurodiversity and policing need to be considered part of an ecology of concentric, interconnected spheres of local, national, and international approaches that have collaborated to support this research.

Participants have felt heard and have kindly taken the time to take part in this study. Participants described the interviews with me as refreshing and proactive, offering an external, unbiased, and neutral perspective on the research and giving an accurate picture of the support provided by Merseyside Police for neurodiverse officers and staff. The recommendations and findings presented in the findings chapter accurately reflect the current state of inclusion and neurodiversity within the force. The organisation is at a crucial turning point in its organisational direction, with the leadership of Robert Carden, the new Chief Constable and the managerial and external political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal (PESTEL) challenges that come with policing in the 21st century (as per the title of this thesis) such as the challenges Serena Kennedy faced on a public order and terrorism level during her final months as Chief Constable.

Merseyside Police has also afforded me the freedom of the organisation. This is unprecedented access, never previously given, through the provision of Non Police Personnel Vetting Level 2 (FULL) security clearance, an email, a laptop, access to systems, and an ID Card for access and control. This was necessary to enable me to understand, observe, learn, and shape my recommendations and findings independently of the rank structure. This clearance also helped me access relevant personnel, locations, and committees to gather their opinions and understand the organisational infrastructure and challenges associated with the organisational

attitudes and culture surrounding neurodiversity, a truly unique and unprecedented move by the force, which has been outlined in the ethnographic and action research approaches section of the thesis, stating how the mechanics of the research agreements worked.

Participant recruitment was also independent of any force influence, as the research awareness and dissemination briefings were provided to the organisation. Participants volunteered independently or were recommended for participation and then contacted for a semi-structured interview, a focus group, or a survey. The force also provided access to relevant documentation, which informed the thesis's recommendations and findings.

It has been a wonderful experience to see the great work Merseyside Police has undertaken to protect the people of Merseyside, as well as the diversity of thought within the organisation, which has been shared during the data collection phase and outlined in the findings and discussion chapters. These pragmatic ideas, both from Merseyside Police and the visits I have been able to arrange with law enforcement and national security partners worldwide, have influenced the development of the recommendations and findings presented in the findings chapter. This has led to a unique and unprecedented network of law enforcement and national security professionals worldwide who have been consulted and are confidants to understand the challenges in the EDI arena facing law enforcement and national security organisations during this turbulent and challenging time, both organisationally and culturally, due to political, internal and external organisational changes and attitudinal shifts.

The sheer range of access I have had through speaking with different law enforcement leaders worldwide has been remarkable. I am deeply grateful for the time taken to discuss neurodiversity and the approaches their organisation has taken to address it, as well as the challenges they are facing during this turbulent and challenging time. I am also very thankful for all the support provided by these agencies, for the access my contact network has afforded me to visit many

locations that the public never gets to see, and for the fantastic work being carried out to support neurodiverse people within these organisations.

I have documented numerous areas of good practice through my visits to the US, Canada, and Europe, and these best practices are demonstrated in the discussion chapter. Many of the recommendations documented in the impact chapter have not been implemented in the UK, particularly the autism comfort kits and the alert system used by 911 and Calgary 911 for vulnerable people, which is currently not embedded into the PNC or LEDS computer system as part of the UK Government reforms to implement a new system. These pragmatic insights can increase awareness of neurodiversity inside the organisation and help protect vulnerable people.

This multi-agency partnership, established during the PhD, has opened avenues for feasibility studies with these agencies worldwide. Following the publication of this thesis, I hope to spend time with these agencies to implement some of the more universal recommendations tailored to their organisational cultures. This can then lead to subsequent publications evaluating the impact of these change management and organisational development approaches for neurodiverse people working in law enforcement across different countries, such as those listed in the paragraph above.

The research has presented some unprecedented organisational challenges which have included organisational access to the Inclusion Board (now known as Our Culture Board), access to internal documentation at the highest levels of the organisation in relation to neurodiversity and EDI and access to personnel on police premises as well as engagement with any other EDI related activities within the force a first for a law enforcement organisation to open up their organisational culture for review to an outsider.

There have also been instances in the research where discussions have had to be held about my role within the organisation, given that I do not work for it, despite my immersion in its structure

and culture, and the tightrope I had to walk to ensure that I was still conducting my research. This was due to senior leaders assigning me work that other departments should have handled. These conversations were held to ensure that the study remained independent of force control and maintained its impartiality. These challenges have arisen from the close working relationship I have had with the force.

As highlighted multiple times throughout this thesis, neurodiversity brings significant advantages to any organisation in which a person works. However, the thesis outlined several challenges and factors, including political, individual, line manager awareness, and organisational cultural barriers, that hinder neurodiverse people from working to their full potential. Moving forward, organisations in the policing and national security domains need to recognise the talent people bring to their forces and units, and implement the recommendations outlined in the findings chapter.

Another area explored in depth in the findings and discussion chapters is the notion that open-plan office environments may not be suitable for neurodiverse individuals, as they can significantly affect mental health, productivity, and operational efficiency. This can cause a serious problem both on a local level within Merseyside Police, where most of their offices are open-plan, and on a national level within the national security and law enforcement domain, where a large proportion of their environments are also open-plan, as supported by numerous people during data collection.

As highlighted in the previous chapters, the concept of workplace zoning should be utilised, and many participants in the data collection phase of this research highlighted this. This is to ensure there are various sound-differential environments, such as quiet zones, confidential government classification workplace zones, and busy zones, thereby providing choice and maximising productivity for neurodiverse individuals.

The Professional Standards Department has been discussed at length throughout this thesis, and significant issues with data collection within Merseyside Police have been raised regarding the department's practices following the categorisation of data under the learning disability, unknown, and other categories which do not fit the neurodiversity category. When complaints are received under this category, they are often assigned to the incorrect title, resulting in incomplete data collection for statistical analysis of complaints. Several recommendations have been proposed in the findings and discussion sections. However, Merseyside Police should urgently address this as a matter of priority to ensure that statistical analysis is possible.

Members of the Disability Support Network (DSN) and other senior officers have highlighted to me that the existing DSN already has adequate representation of neurodiversity across the force and see no need to create a separate staff network for neurodiversity. However, participants disagreed with the above statement. Also, they highlighted that the DSN does not clearly promote or publicise its activities within the organisation, nor does it utilise promotional materials to highlight the support it provides and what it does not.

I fundamentally disagree with the suggestion that there is adequate support within the broader DSN within the force. The findings of this research and data collection strongly suggest that a dedicated budget is needed for a neurodiversity support network within the force.

There is substantial evidence of the success of dedicated neurodiversity networks in other agencies listed in the discussion chapter. Several agencies visited during the course of this thesis have dedicated networks with senior leadership support for a dedicated neurodiversity staff network across the law enforcement and national security sectors, both domestically and internationally. Sponsors include Director Generals and Ministers within government departments.

This recommendation has proved significantly challenging throughout the research, as there is substantial evidence supporting the establishment of a neurodiversity staff network with a dedicated budget within Merseyside Police. However, there has been opposition within middle management to establishing this within the force, due to concerns that budgets and finances would be diverted from the leading disability support network (DSN) if it were set up.

I believe that the networks should work collaboratively and take an intersectional view, but this has not been the case due to a siloed working culture and a tendency to be very protective of their projects, refusing to share events or budgets with other groups. The participants and I agree that they have found the DSN difficult to engage with, and some participants have contacted the network and waited over six months for a response.

I also believe that Merseyside Police should establish a project working group associated with the promotion and recruitment processes. I have extensively researched neurodiversity recruitment schemes across the public and private sectors, including pragmatic approaches to attracting neurodiverse talent into organisations. These approaches have included the formation of 'empowerment weeks' (Harvard Business Review, 2018). This has removed the interview panel and assessment centres and provides on-the-job, ongoing assessment, giving the individual the opportunity to work on a live problem within the organisation. At the end of the week, colleagues are interviewed to assess if they are a good fit for the team.

If these empowerment weeks were implemented within Merseyside Police and the wider law enforcement and national security sector, this could be transformative for the recruitment, retention, and progression of talent into specialist roles, enabling neurodiverse talent to progress quickly within the organisation, become valuable assets, and reach their full potential. Furthermore, recruitment needs to be appealing to the neurodiverse population through effective, strategic marketing, outreach, and accessible campaigns that cater to this demographic, making the organisation an employer of choice.

I hope that this PhD research will remain significant for a long time and will significantly shape organisational development, design, and cultural change for neurodiversity across the national security and law enforcement domains.

Police leaders reading this thesis should seriously consider the implementation of the recommendations documented in the findings chapter, the impact chapter and the discussion chapter, and think carefully about how their actions impact the neurodiverse community, consider the benefits that neurodiversity can bring to their organisation, and understand that neurodiversity is needed to solve some of the most challenging problems. Police leaders should feel empowered by this thesis to act positively on neurodiversity within their organisations and have the knowledge and understanding gained from this research to be equipped to change their organisational culture through thoughtfully considering the changes they can make to increase and nurture the talent neurodiversity can bring to their organisation, leaving a lasting legacy for years to come.

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Appendix

1. MOU, ISA and DMP

Memorandum of Understanding:

[Click here to access a copy of the MOU](#)

Information Sharing Agreement:

[Click here to access a copy of the ISA](#)

Data Management Plan:

[Click here to access a copy of the DMP](#)

2. Letter of support for PhD from Merseyside Police



Dear Professor Keith George,

Merseyside Police are submitting this letter of endorsement to reflect the contribution and support the organisation will input regarding the completion of the PhD research of Jack Fitzpatrick entitled; *"Modern policing in the 21st century, time for inclusive cultural shifts"*.

Inclusion is a Force priority for Merseyside Police, creating an inclusive culture and making Merseyside Police a great place to work is at the heart of that. The results and recommendations of which, will directly contribute towards defining and establishing the strategic and tactical development of an even more diverse and inclusive culture to the benefit of our workforce and the communities we serve.

Merseyside Police has an already established working relationship with Liverpool Centre for Advanced Policing Studies (LCAPS) at Liverpool John Moores University and look forward to participating in this collaboration with Jack.

Merseyside police will offer the required resource and access to information as required to assist this research and are keen to offer the strongest support.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely



Head of Performance & Analytics
Evidenced Based Practice Strategic Lead
Corporate Support & Development
Merseyside Police

3. Testimonials from Organisations Engaged with during the course of the PhD

Chief Inspector, Local policing

Jack

Thanks for coming. The staff and I found the input to be very useful and it was great to see so many products available to support our staff. The staff and I were engaged throughout, and it did achieve what I was hoping for, to encourage staff to engage in conversation, to openly discuss neurodiversity and have staff look out for each other which I believe because of you raising awareness has been achieved.

On a personal note, I found you both inspirational and very intellectual. You should be proud with just how far you've come with still so much more to achieve.

I will be in touch soon as I'd like to have you present this across all of local policing and I will support you along the way.

A UK Intelligence Partner

Thank you very much for coming and giving your presentation. I was approached after the event by several people giving very positive feedback, and I'm sure there will be more when we release the video recording out shortly. You are natural at presenting and engaging the audience, your passion for promoting neuro-inclusion radiates off you which is so good to see!

Thank you, I am glad you enjoyed your visit and thank you again for your inspiring speech, you have achieved so much to be very proud of.

UK Couter Terrorism Policing

Jack played a vital role in the success of the most recent CTP Borders Analysis and Research Working Group. Jack's input focuses not only on the importance that should be placed on neurodiversity in the workplace but is able to blend this with lived experience and practical tips/tools that not only managers but also colleagues should be considering when working with others. Jack's future research project will, without a doubt, bring about a cultural shift that puts EDI at the forefront of policing and law enforcement agencies more broadly.

Institute for American Policing Reform

The executive team from the Institute for American Policing Reform enjoyed hearing a presentation from Jack on Neurodiversity. During the presentation, we learned about his diagnosis, journey, and challenges he overcame. He discussed the importance and benefits of including Neurodiversity in EDI principles and hiring and how police departments can build EDI principles into their cultures. Jack's presentation was very well organized, informative, and engaging. His personal experience and perspectives in the conversation deepened our understanding and connection with his presentation. Jack left us with an understanding of Neurodiversity, how people with different neurological conditions can make significant contributions to law enforcement, and the importance of not overlooking or dismissing the skillsets and contributions they can add. It was an excellent presentation, and we were impressed with Jack's knowledge and skills. We later discussed that young people like Jack, with passion and innovative thinking, will be the future of public safety.

Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership

Good afternoon Jack,

Firstly, I want to say a MASSIVE thank you for coming in to deliver your presentation. It was by far one of the most impactful presentations we have ever had as a team and it has resonated with us all so much. We had our strategic planning meeting yesterday and we definitely used the insight gained from your presentation and speech to explore how we can make simple changes which support an inclusive cultural shift across all of our workstreams.

I will definitely get a couple of lines over to you by the end of next week from all of the partners around the table, including myself. However, please see the below, which has already been provided regarding the impact of your presentation:

“Absolutely brilliant presentation. Content, pace and ability to answer the breadth of questions for you was very impressive. My key take-aways from your presentation are:

- Understanding the difference between a medical approach vs. practical/social model approach to treating symptoms such as anxiety derived from stressors which affect neurodiverse individuals.

- Awareness of the sunflower symbol as a visual marker for hidden diversity and disabilities
- Solutions which focus on coping strategies and providing the right support at the right time should be prioritised
- There is no blanket one size fits all response or approach. Your quote about meeting one neurodiverse person with means that you've met one neurodiverse person really resonated with me
- I will be using the RGB for the peach colour you told us about on all of my presentations and documents from now on, and will research further on the British Dyslexia Association for guidance on accessibility

I will take all of this learning into my personal and professional life, and will share this learning with all of my friends, family and colleagues. Incredibly informative and it's also made me reflect about my own "super powers and skills" and neurodiversity."

Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership Manager

I am following up after your fantastic input to MVRP, and apologies this has taken me a bit of time to get written down and sent to you.

I just want to echo the points I made after your presentation really. It was a stunning input, firstly your delivery and openness was a joy and we are really gratefully for your time. The content of the presentation was brilliant, extremely well structured, and covered a huge amount of information. The impact of your presentation was wide ranging from considering the necessity and impact of early support and diagnosis, the difference consistent and strong support can have and the experience you had both with friends, family and in the public environment with or without your lanyard. All of which are important to understand for us as we will be working with, or on behalf of, children and young people who have, or area, experiencing similar feelings or interactions that you have. The practical part of the presentation was also extremely useful to shape how we are the MVRP shape our outputs, how we communicate and engage with people. We will be build in some of your presentation / findings into our website design to ensure it is

accessible and will be reviewing the colour and text of our digital and printable documents to ensure we are accessible and inclusive.

On a personal note, I loved your last slide too, what you wanted us to think, feel & do. I will be taking this approach going forward where appropriate. We often close presentations or inputs with a summary but this is so much more interesting, appealing to those who process information in different ways and keeps people engaged and thinking right until the very end of a session, and beyond.

Thank you again, and please let us know if there is anything we can do or help with.

Office of Diversity and Inclusion FBI

The FBI's Office of Diversity and Inclusion welcomed Jack Fitzpatrick to listen and learn from his Neurodiversity: A Personal Journey presentation. Jack's presentation was insightful and incredibly engaging. It was a pleasure to learn from him, and in turn learn how to make the FBI a more accessible workplace.

North East Asia and China Directorate FCDO

I just wanted to drop you an email to say a massive thank you for your presentation on Wednesday. It was super useful and we really learnt a lot which we can implement at the FCDO.

EU Parliament Inclusion Department

Thanks again for your time and for the interesting hints given during your talk. It was great to meet you, and we learned a lot.

FCDO DIAN Network

I am the Co-Head of the Disability, Inclusion and Awareness Network at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), and I previously led the neurodiversity section of the network. Our aim is to make the FCDO as equitable and inclusive as possible for all staff, both in the UK and overseas. We address a wide range of disability-related issues affecting staff across the organisation.

Jack delivered a presentation on neurodiversity for our network, which was well-structured, engaging, and thoughtfully presented. He brought a personal touch to the topic, which helped humanise the subject and made it more relatable for the audience. His presentation offered practical takeaways and insights that were both informative and actionable.

Jack's event was well attended across the whole FCDO network, which includes multiple overseas posts. He was able to present to a wide variety of individuals who have a mixed understanding of neurodiversity in the workplace.

Events like Jack's are especially valuable because they shine a light on neurodiversity and help our wider network better understand what it means to be neurodiverse, as well as how best to support neurodiverse colleagues. I received a great deal of positive verbal feedback from network members following the session, which speaks to the impact and relevance of Jack's contribution. His presentation demonstrated both depth of knowledge and emotional intelligence, qualities that are essential in advancing inclusive practices in the workplace and beyond.

Russia Ukraine Directorate FCDO

Jack has delivered a series of compelling and insightful presentations on neurodiversity to FCDO colleagues. His sessions are consistently engaging and thought-provoking, offering practical recommendations that have meaningfully shaped conversations around how best to support neurodiverse individuals in the workplace.

His comprehensive approach has significantly enhanced institutional understanding and awareness, equipping people with the tools to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for all. Jack's commitment to driving meaningful institutional change has been both evident and deeply appreciated.

His insights and recommendations have played a pivotal role in empowering colleagues and enabling line managers to better support their teams. Jack's active engagement throughout every stage of this process has been warmly welcomed by myself and many others.

The impact of Jack's work continues to be tangible—encouraging colleagues to seek support, shifting mindsets, and embedding inclusive practices across the organisation.

Sergeant Safer Schools

Jack has been a great support to me and I have utilised his knowledge and experience on several occasions. He has been a guest speaker on courses I have run to PCSO's and police officers which provide guidance on how to deliver in schools. His input and advice on delivery to neurodiverse children and assistive technologies is not only very insightful but very useful when supporting young people in this context. It also transfers over to supporting colleagues in the work environment and has been useful to myself as a supervisor.

Jack also delivered a session on the Safer Schools Conference in 2024. This was attended by a mix of head teachers, senior leaders, behaviour managers and safeguarding leads who work in schools across Merseyside along with our team of safer schools officers. Jack was inspirational to the audience and was an example of what can be achieved when adequate support and understanding is in place. All too often we have lessons learned by things that went wrong, Jack is a voice for what can go right and its very refreshing.

Matt Welsted – Previous NPCC Lead for Neurodiversity

Jack has been a member of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) National Neurodiversity Working Group since its inception and actively contributed to multiple workstreams aimed at enhancing neurodiversity awareness and inclusion across all 43 police forces in the United Kingdom. His involvement has been powerful and influential in shaping national understanding and approaches to neurodiversity within law enforcement.

In addition, Jack has regularly briefed Chief Officers on his academic research and international engagements, offering valuable insights derived from his work with law enforcement and national security agencies worldwide. His evidence-based perspectives have highlighted pragmatic and transferable strategies for advancing neurodiversity within UK policing organisations.

Jack was also a featured speaker at the launch of the NPCC Culture and Inclusion Strategy, an event attended by senior law enforcement leaders from across the UK and British Overseas Territories.

Furthermore, Jack's doctoral research has directly informed several recommendations submitted to the national working group. These proposals have contributed to tangible improvements in support for neurodivergent officers and staff across UK policing, reinforcing the importance and impact of this vital work.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Welsted', written in a cursive style.

NATO Inclusion Department

Hello Jack,

Thanks again for attending the event, and apologies that we ran over a little. It was well attended – 36-40 people, which is very good amount for this type of event, and the feedback we had afterwards so far has been excellent.

Really great interventions from yourself – much appreciated, came across really well in the room.

EDI Director, Counter Terrorism Policing North West

Jack has worked closely with us at Counter Terrorism Policing North West and has become a critical friend to many of our processes around Inclusion for our Neurodivergent colleagues, including providing in person support at one of our recent Safe to Say briefings. He gave a presentation within National Inclusion Week to our region, which was opened up online to our national network and the acknowledgement of thanks for Jack was overwhelming. Jack has made such a positive impact within the CT network, that our Head of Unit made the decision to formally recognise Jack's enormous contribution to our Inclusion work and presented him with a Certificate of Achievement & Thanks and a Challenge Coin. We understand that the world of law enforcement and national security is a naturally attractive workplace for Neurodivergent individuals and that we will also have contact with many Neurodivergent people within the community, as such Jack's work is imperative to our success of working to our Peelian principles.

Prof Steve Finnigan CBE QPM DL - LJMU

I am a co-supervisor of Jack Fitzpatrick, as he works towards his PhD at Liverpool John Moore's University (LJMU) and I have found him to be an extremely conscientious student, who has worked extremely hard to better understand issues relating to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in the workplace. His passion for this very important piece of work stems from his own lived experience of neurodiversity. What I have been particularly impressed by is the range of contacts and collaborations within the law enforcement sector that Jack has been able to forge (with some assistance from me and his other supervisors - Dr Craig Hammond (Jack's Lead Supervisor) and PVC Phil Vickerman), whilst engaging in his research, both here in the UK and abroad.

However, he has also been able to explore this topic more fully by securing many contributions from government departments (again, in the UK and abroad) which have given his work a much broader perspective. I think, as a former Chief Constable of twelve years standing, that Jack's research and the recommendations that will follow will assist all police forces, not just Merseyside Police, which he has worked very closely with over the last couple of years, to put EDI on the elevated platform that it deserves. This will ensure that not only do the police officers and staff of all forces benefit from Jack's recommendations, but also members of the public whom all forces serve. Jack is a credit to himself, his extremely supportive parents, LJMU and all people with neurodiverse conditions who deserve to be treated differently and better, if they are to bring their best selves to the workplace, and to those members of the public who deserve the same.

A National Security Partner

I have had the pleasure of meeting and working with Jack to raise awareness of neurodiversity in the security sector, bringing his story to many in the government and private sectors. The feedback I had from those who attended was all positive, and in some cases led to acquaintances and colleagues seeking further proof of a suspected diagnosis for themselves or family. Jack is a very proactive, exciting and engaging individual, who has turned his neurodiversity challenges into a strength. I look forward to developing a long working relationship with Jack as we both continue to bang the drum to raise awareness of neurodiversity in security.

4. Mind Map from Calgary Visit

