

National College of Ireland

Project Submission Sheet

Student Name: Mary McLaughlin

Student ID: X23301163

Programme: Master of Arts in Human Resource Management **Year:** 2024/2025

Module: Dissertation

Lecturer: Robert MacDonald

Submission Due Date: 15/08/25

Project Title: Employee Perceptions on Neurodiversity Inclusion in the Workplace: A Qualitative Study Focused on the Irish Civil Service

Word Count: 19,947.....

I hereby certify that the information contained in this (my submission) is information pertaining to research I conducted for this project. All information other than my own contribution will be fully referenced and listed in the relevant bibliography section at the rear of the project.

ALL internet material must be referenced in the references section. Students are encouraged to use the Harvard Referencing Standard supplied by the Library. To use other author's written or electronic work is illegal (plagiarism) and may result in disciplinary action. Students may be required to undergo a viva (oral examination) if there is suspicion about the validity of their submitted work.

Signature: 

Date: 15/08/25

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Please attach a completed copy of this sheet to each project (including multiple copies).
2. Projects should be submitted to your Programme Coordinator.
3. **You must ensure that you retain a HARD COPY of ALL projects**, both for your own reference and in case a project is lost or mislaid. It is not sufficient to keep a copy on computer. Please do not bind projects or place in covers unless specifically requested.
4. You must ensure that all projects are submitted to your Programme Coordinator on or before the required submission date. **Late submissions will incur penalties.**
5. All projects must be submitted and passed in order to successfully complete the year. **Any project/assignment not submitted will be marked as a fail.**

Office Use Only	
Signature:	
Date:	
Penalty Applied (if applicable):	

AI Acknowledgement Supplement

[Insert Module Name]

[Insert Title of your assignment]

Your Name/Student Number	Course	Date

This section is a supplement to the main assignment, to be used if AI was used in any capacity in the creation of your assignment; if you have queries about how to do this, please contact your lecturer. For an example of how to fill these sections out, please click [here](#).

AI Acknowledgment

This section acknowledges the AI tools that were utilized in the process of completing this assignment.

Tool Name	Brief Description	Link to tool

Description of AI Usage

This section provides a more detailed description of how the AI tools were used in the assignment. It includes information about the prompts given to the AI tool, the responses received, and how these responses were utilized or modified in the assignment. **One table should be used for each tool used.**

[Insert Tool Name]	
[Insert Description of use]	
[Insert Sample prompt]	[Insert Sample response]

Evidence of AI Usage

This section includes evidence of significant prompts and responses used or generated through the AI tool. It should provide a clear understanding of the extent to which the AI tool was used in the assignment. Evidence may be attached via screenshots or text.

Additional Evidence:

[Place evidence here]

Additional Evidence:

[Place evidence here]

**Employee Perceptions on Neurodiversity Inclusion in the Workplace: A Qualitative
Study Focused on the Irish Civil Service**

**Mary McLaughlin
Master of Arts in Human Resource Management
National College of Ireland**

Submitted to National College of Ireland, August 2025

Abstract

Background: An estimated 20% of the population are neurodivergent, and yet many struggle to enter and retain meaningful employment.

Literature Review: Research has focused on the challenges neurodivergent employees experience within the workplace, to explore why they experience challenges and what can be done to support them. Research has looked at the impact that workplace accommodations and workplace relationships have on a neurodivergent employee's experience, with each having different effects on neurodivergent employees. A full understanding of neurodiversity in the workplace, and best practice approaches, has yet to be established.

Research Gap: Neurodiversity in the workplace is an emerging research area with very few studies conducted within Ireland, resulting in a blind spot of knowledge in how support can be provided to neurodivergent employees in Ireland.

Research Aim: This research aims to understand the perceptions of employees on neurodiversity inclusion within the Irish Civil Service, to contribute to the gap in awareness on neurodiversity in the workplace. To explore this aim, the research questions will consider the awareness of neurodiversity, the knowledge of challenges and supports available in the workplace, the experiences of working alongside neurodivergent employees, and the perceived impact of neurodivergent employees.

Method: The research followed an inductive qualitative methodology; a combination of purposive and convenience sampling was used to conduct 11 semi-structured interviews. Interview transcripts were coded and analysed using Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis approach to reveal the four research themes.

Results: Four themes emerged from the study: changing times, responsibility for accommodations, progress through open conversations, and the individual nature of neurodiversity.

Major implication: The research contributes to the limited studies on neurodiversity in the workplace within Ireland, providing a unique insight into employee perceptions of neurodiversity inclusion in the Irish Civil Service. Organisations are recommended to increase awareness of neurodiversity across all levels of employees, individualise accommodations, and work towards a strengths-first workplace practice.

National College of Ireland
Research Students Declaration Form
(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

Name: Mary McLaughlin

Student Number: x23301163

Degree for which thesis is submitted: Master of Arts in Human Resource
Management

Title of Thesis: Employee perceptions on neurodiversity inclusion in the workplace: A
qualitative study focused on the Irish Civil Service

Date: 15/08/25

Material submitted for award

- A. I declare that this work submitted has been composed by myself. ☒
- B. I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been
distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically
acknowledged. ☒
- C. I agree to my thesis being deposited in the NCI Library online open access
repository NORMA. ☒
- D. I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other
submission for an academic award. ☒

Signature of research student: M. McLaughlin **Date:** 15/08/2025

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to everyone who has supported me to produce this dissertation.

I would like to thank my research supervisor, David Mothersill, who provided invaluable guidance and advice throughout the dissertation process.

I am grateful to all the participants in this study, who were generous with their time, and enriched this research with their personal experiences.

I would also like to thank and acknowledge my employer and colleagues, within the Irish Civil Service, for allowing me the opportunity to undertake this dissertation project, and for providing a constant source of support and encouragement.

Lastly, I would like to thank my parents, Cornelius and Evelyn, for being my biggest supporters in life. You have provided a safe haven for me during my own journey of neurodivergent self-discovery. I will be forever grateful to you both.

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Submission of Thesis and Dissertation	4
Acknowledgements	5
List of Appendices	9
Chapter 1. Introduction	10
1.1. Introduction	10
1.2. Research Context	10
1.2.1. Neurodiversity Definition	10
1.2.2. Neurodiversity in the Workplace	11
1.2.3. Current and Present Research	12
1.3. Research Structure	14
1.4. Conclusion	15
Chapter 2. Literature Review	16
2.1. Introduction	16
2.2. Ireland and the Irish Civil Service	17
2.3. Neurodiversity Movement	19
2.4. Neurodivergent Challenges in the Workplace	22
2.5. Neurodivergent Accommodations in the Workplace	24
2.6. Difficulties with Reasonable Accommodations.....	27
2.7. Other Influences on Neurodivergent Employees	30
2.8. Benefits to Neurodivergent Employment	33
2.9. Current Recommendations for Organisations	35
2.10. Critical Evaluation of the Key Research	36
2.11. Research Gaps	37
2.12. Present Study	38
Chapter 3. Research Aims	40
3.1. Research Aims.....	40
Chapter 4. Methodology	43
4.1. Introduction	43

4.2. Study Methodology	43
4.2.1. Study Design	43
4.2.2. Research Sample	45
4.2.3. Recruitment Process	48
4.2.4. Interview Process.....	48
4.2.5. Data Analysis	51
4.3. Critical Considerations	52
4.4. Methodology Limitations	53
4.5. Researcher's Position	55
Chapter 5. Results	56
5.1. Introduction	56
5.2. Theme (1): Changing Times	57
5.3. Theme (2): Responsibility for Accommodations	62
5.4. Theme (3): Progress Through Open Conversations	69
5.5. Theme (4): Individual Nature of Neurodiversity	73
Chapter 6. Discussion	77
6.1. Introduction	77
6.2. Theme (1): Changing Times	77
6.2.1. Language and Social Stigma	77
6.2.2. Neurodiversity Diagnosis	79
6.2.3. Workplace Barriers	81
6.3. Theme (2): Responsibility for Accommodations	82
6.3.1. Burden of Disclosure	82
6.3.2. Colleague Inclusion	83
6.3.3. The Role of Leaders	84
6.3.4. Business Priorities	84
6.4. Theme (3): Progress Through Open Conversations	85
6.4.1. Visibility and Representation	85
6.4.2. Sharing Experiences	86
6.5. Theme (4): Individual Nature of Neurodiversity	87
6.5.1. Tailoring Accommodations	88
6.5.2. Strengths-First Approach	88

6.6. Strengths and Limitations	89
6.6.1. Strengths	89
6.6.2. Limitations	91
Chapter 7. Conclusion	92
7.1. Introduction	92
7.2. Key Findings	93
7.3. Advancement of the Research Field	94
7.4. Future Recommendations	95
Reference List	97
Appendices.....	108
Appendix (A): Study Information Sheet	108
Appendix (B): Consent Form	111
Appendix (C) Interview Questions	112
Appendix (D) Debrief Sheet.....	113

List of Appendices

Appendix (A): Study Information Sheet

Appendix (B): Consent Form

Appendix (C): Interview Questions

Appendix (D): Debrief Sheet

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.1: Introduction

This research study aims to explore employee perceptions of neurodiversity inclusion in the workplace, within a single Department of the Irish Civil Service. This introduction section will provide a background understanding of neurodiversity from the research literature, and discuss the current research gaps in understanding neurodiversity in the workplace, that this study will aim to address. The structure of the project will also be presented.

1.2: Research Context

1.2.1: Neurodiversity Definition

Neurodiversity terminology was first introduced in the 1990s, and within academic research it is a relatively new field of research. As a developing terminology, the definition of neurodiversity has yet to be agreed amongst academics, activists and psychologists (Doyle, 2020). Recent attempts to define neurodiversity often include understandings of a natural variation of brain processing (Antony *et al.*, 2024), or an irregular pattern of executive functioning (Doyle, 2020), and where there is a difference to what is common or normal within society (LeFevre-Levy, *et al.*, 2023), in comparison to other individuals, termed neurotypicals. For the purposes of this research, the working definition of

neurodiversity will be: the variation in thought processing that can affect the executive functioning or behaviour of an individual.

1.2.2: Neurodiversity in the Workplace

Prior to the introduction of the neurodiversity terminology, individuals would have been diagnosed as having learning difficulties (Ratten, 2024) or a neurological disorder (LeFevre-Levy *et al.*, 2023), they would have been stigmatised and viewed as being in need of treatment that reduces their disabilities or negative behaviours, to normalise (Kapp *et al.*, 2023) or fix them (LeFevre-Levy *et al.*, 2023). Society's historical attitude viewed neurodivergent individuals to be deficient in some way, but this has changed in the last 30-years, largely due to a revolutionary effort, known as the neurodiversity movement (Doyle, 2020). This movement advanced the changing neurodiversity terminology and has helped shift attitudes towards a more positive acceptance of neurodivergent individuals, viewing them to have alternative cognitive functioning, instead of lesser cognitive functioning (LeFevre-Levy *et al.*, 2023).

The progression towards more positive and inclusive attitudes in society has resulted in increases in societal and educational supports for neurodivergent individuals, enabling more neurodivergent individuals to seek and enter employment, and this is important in view of the number of individuals who identify as neurodivergent. A current estimate places 20% of the population as being neurodivergent (Thompson & Miller, 2024), and with shortages in the Irish labour

market, it is essential that such a significant proportion of the population is supported in accessing and maintaining employment. Statistics on the number of neurodivergent individuals currently employed have not been fully established, but research into the employment of autistic individuals by the Irish autistic charity, As I Am, and Irish recruitment organisation, IrishJobs, suggests that up to 85% of autistic individuals may be unemployed or underemployed (As I Am, 2022). This demonstrates the need for research on neurodiversity in the workplace, to understanding the challenges that neurodivergent individuals face in gaining access to employment and to successfully maintaining long-term employment, so that changes can be made to support them.

1.2.3: Current and Present Research

Current research on neurodiversity in the workplace is limited, especially in Ireland, where very few studies have focused on individual organisations, or on the perceptions of neurotypical employees. This has created a gap in the knowledge of neurodiversity in Irish workplaces, that prevents Irish organisations understanding how best to support their neurodivergent employees.

What has been found in research globally, is that neurodivergent individuals seeking employment may face a range of difficulties in the workplace environment that include, challenges in the recruitment stages preventing them accessing employment, difficulties with communication, social inclusion or sensory sensitivities (Wiater & Karcz-Ryndak, 2024), barriers to accessing workplace accommodations, or

a burden of disclosure that could still be stigmatising (Davies *et al.*, 2022). Further academic studies are needed to understand more about the challenges and understand how neurodivergent employees can be best supported in the workplace.

To date, research has typically focused on collecting data from neurodivergent individuals in employment, to learn from their experiences. However, due to the limited access to neurodivergent employees, and the realisation that experiences of neurodivergent employees are shaped by individuals connected to them, researchers have expanded the focus to include those surrounding neurodivergent employees, to consider what their experiences are, and to develop a rounded understanding of the experiences of neurodivergent employees in the workplace.

This research intends to add to the limited research of neurodiversity in the workplace, in Ireland, by exploring the perceptions of employees who help create the environment neurodivergent employees experience. The research will focus on the Irish Civil Service, one of Ireland's largest organisations. The research aim is to understand employee perceptions of neurodiversity inclusion in the workplace, with a focus on a single department within the Irish Civil Service. To help answer this aim, the research will question the level of awareness that employees have of neurodiversity, the knowledge of challenges and supports for neurodivergent employees in the workplace, their attitudes towards working alongside neurodivergent employees, and the impact they believe neurodivergent employees make to the workplace.

1.3: Research structure

The research project will follow the below structure:

In chapter (1), the introduction will present the research topic with an overview of the research project and why the research is important.

In chapter (2), the literature review will examine previous research in the area of neurodiversity in the workplace, exploring what we understand so far, and what gaps still remain in our understanding.

In chapter (3), the research aim will be set out, and the research questions will be explained as to what they hope to reveal in support of answering the research aim.

In chapter (4), the methodology will detail the process of data collection, including why choices were made to conduct the research in this way, noting the ethics and limitations guiding the process.

In chapter (5), the results will detail the themes found following the process of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis.

In chapter (6), the discussion will review the research results in relation to previous studies from the literature review, and describe how this study adds to this field of research.

In chapter (7), the conclusion will review the research project, position the study in the research field and discuss what was revealed by this study, and propose recommendations for future research.

1.4: Conclusion

An overview of the research project has been addressed in this section. The purpose of this research study has been outlined with a brief discussion on the research context, research aims, and the structure of the research project has been set out.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

2.1: Introduction

Neurodiversity is the concept that people have variations in thought processes that can affect an individual's executive functioning or behaviour (Antony *et al.*, 2024). Neurotypical is the terminology referring to the larger proportion of society who have similar thought processes. Neurodivergent is the terminology referring to an estimated 20% of the population (Thompson & Miller, 2024), who differ in some way in their thought processes, compared to neurotypicals.

Prior to the neurodiversity terminology, individuals who would now be termed neurodivergent, were often stigmatised by society, leading to a culture that was unaccepting and unsupportive of variations to the status quo. The social stigma around a neurodivergent identity extended to the workplace, and neurodivergent individuals may historically not have been supported to find employment, or to be successful within employment roles.

Progression in the last 30-years has changed attitudes towards a more positive and accepting view of neurodivergent individuals, and consequently more neurodivergent individuals are seeking employment. Researchers believe that the natural development of workplaces, with advancements in technology and automation, will lead to future workplaces that are well suited to neurodivergent employees (LeFevre-Levy *et al.* 2023), the sub-context being that current workplaces

are not suited to neurodivergent employees, and are perhaps more suited to neurotypical employees. The hope for natural changes in the future does not currently help neurodivergent employees, or employers trying to support neurodivergent employees, and difficulties remain for neurodivergent employees trying to succeed and maintain meaningful employment.

Limited neurodiversity awareness from employers and managers can create challenges for neurodivergent individuals in the workplace (Wiater & Karcz-Ryndak, 2024), and as a developing area of research, studies are trying to identify best practice approaches to create a future where neurotypical and neurodivergent employees are equally successful in their careers. This research project aims to add to the current studies on neurodiversity in the workplace, and this following literature review section will position the need for research to be conducted within Ireland, and explore the current understanding of neurodiversity in the workplace from academic literature.

2.2: Ireland and the Irish Civil Service

As of 2024, Ireland has a current population of 5.38 million people (Central Statistics Office, 2024), and with a working age rate at 65.7% (Central Statistics Office, 2025a), over 3.5 million people are at a working age. An estimated 20% of the population are neurodivergent (Thompson & Miller, 2024), and in perspective of the working age population, potentially over 700,000 people in Ireland could be neurodivergent employees. This is a significant number of people that may currently

be experiencing challenges in the workplace, with employers unaware of how to support them. Collective data on neurodivergent employment rates are unknown, but research conducted into the employment of autistic individuals by the Irish recruitment organisation, IrishJobs, and the Irish autistic charity, As I Am, suggested that up to 85% of autistic individuals may be unemployed or underemployed (As I Am, 2022). When compared to the Ireland's Central Statistics Office (2025b), who published a 4% unemployment rate in Ireland in June 2025, a stark difference can be seen, and a clear indication that employment supports for neurodivergent individuals are needed. Limited studies conducted in Ireland has created a gap in knowledge for Irish organisations seeking to understand how to support neurodivergent employees. Increased research in Ireland can specifically incorporate the unique culture and practices within Ireland, to understand neurodivergent employees in Irish workplaces.

In terms of the number of employees, the Irish Government is one of Ireland's leading employers, with one of the largest sections being the Irish Civil Service, with over 50,000 employees (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2025). In view of the 20% neurodivergent population (Thompson & Miller, 2024), statistically, up to 10,000 employees within the Irish Civil Service could be neurodivergent. However, as discussed above, the difference in employment rates, between the general population and the autistic population, suggests a far lower number of neurodivergent employers to be in the Irish Civil Service. What it does show is that the Irish Civil Service has the capacity to employ a large number of neurodivergent employees, and therefore, understanding how to support neurodivergent employees

is vital to enable the employee demographic to reflect the demographic of the population in Ireland. Understanding the perceptions of neurodiversity inclusion within the Irish Civil Service, has the potential to impact a large number of managers, colleagues and neurodivergent employees, and could help support future policies and practices that improve the experiences of neurodivergent employees within the Irish Civil Service.

In addition to the benefits to the Irish Civil Service, other organisations may benefit from the research. As one of the largest organisations in Ireland, and as a government organisation, any policies or practices that implemented by the Irish Civil Service may set an example to other organisations in Ireland. Therefore, the more knowledge that can be gained from researching the Irish Civil Service, the more support can be given to neurodivergent employees across Ireland. To the researcher's awareness there are no published studies on neurodiversity in the workplace within the Irish Civil Service, and the perception of neurodiversity inclusion within the Irish Civil Service is unknown.

2.3: Neurodiversity Movement

The neurodiversity terminology came from the recognition that, just as biodiversity supports ecosystems to thrive, so too can variations in brain processes enable society to thrive (Doyle, 2020). The introduction of the neurodiversity terminology was the start of advocating to reject the medical attitude that saw individuals as having a deficiency that needed to be medical fixed, towards a social

model that considered an individual's neurodivergence to be inherent to their identity, not something that could be cured medically, and that their challenges were triggered by their relationship with external factors (Chapman & Botha, 2023). The social model also seeks to focus an individual's strengths, and not just on an individual's challenges.

The historical medical language was often disparaging in nature, focusing on deficiencies or impairments, and seeing a neurodivergent diagnosis as regretful. The neurodiversity movement has encouraged a shift towards more positive language being used alongside the positive attitudes, with relatively small changes in language choices becoming positive. An example is changing from 'person with autism', to 'an autistic person', and this recognises that identity is integrated with neurodiversity, not a separate part of the person (Bottema-Beutel *et al.*, 2021).

What the neurodiversity movement has not attempted to change, is the terminology of individual categories within neurodiversity. Types of neurodiversity are named based on the identified leading challenges, with common neurodiversity types including ADHD (attention), autism (communication and behaviour), dyslexia (reading or writing), dyspraxia (coordination), and Tourettes (involuntary sounds or movements). This method allows for a clear distinction between diagnoses, but it remains focused on a person's challenges rather than their strengths, which does not necessarily follow the neurodiversity movement's social model.

Some critics have contested the complete move away from the medical model considering the clinical evidence for biological differences associated with various types of neurodiversity (Hutson & Hutson, 2023). Additionally, there were objections to the social model's focus on high-functioning neurodivergent individuals, and the perceived distancing from lower-functioning individuals, whose challenges are arguably inherent and merely increased by their surroundings (Hughes, 2021).

The neurodiversity movement has progressed towards a biopsychosocial model of understanding, where neurodivergent individuals can be affected by biological, psychological and social factors, and in turn, these areas can also be opportunities for developing support (Whelpley *et al.*, 2023). The benefit of this biopsychosocial model is that it allows the recognition of variations in significance between each factor, where some neurodivergent individuals may be affected by all factors, and others only affected by one or two, but also that individuals can be affected by different factors in different situations. When proposing the use of the biopsychosocial model within neurodiversity, Doyle (2020) said, "the individual is not disabled, but the environment is disabling", and it is upon this concept that employers have a responsibility to ensure their workplace provides a supportive environment for neurodivergent employees.

2.4: Neurodivergent Challenges in the Workplace

Under the definition of neurodiversity, neurodivergent individuals will have a variation of executive function compared to a neurotypical individual (Antony *et al.*, 2024). Demetriou *et al.* (2019) defined executive functioning as the “overarching regulation of goal-directed, future-oriented, higher-order cognitive processes”, therefore, neurodivergent variations will include the way they think or process information. As Doyle (2020) explained, the variations may include a high capability in one area and a high challenge in another area, creating what is termed a ‘spikey profile’. Collections of spikey executive functions can indicate towards a particular type of neurodiversity.

In a journal article on neurodiversity in the workplace, LeFevre-Levy *et al.* (2023) discussed the common spikes, or strengths and challenges, associated with ADHD, Autism and Dyslexia, referencing the most recent American Psychological Association’s book of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. While LeFevre-Levy *et al.* (2023) uses the most up-to-date version of the diagnostic book, it warrants noting that this book was published in 2013, and neurodiversity research has increased significantly within the last 12-years, and the neurodivergent traits detailed may need amending to align with current understandings.

LeFevre-Levy *et al.* (2023) describes ADHD challenges as difficulties with attention, time management and procrastination; autism challenges were considered difficulties with flexibility, interacting socially and sensory issues; and

dyslexia challenges included spelling difficulties and a slower pace of read or writing. The challenges detailed can affect a neurodivergent employee in different ways, and what can affect the level of challenge will include the environment the individual is in or expectations of work performance, therefore the challenge itself may only prevent successful employment depending on the employment itself.

For ADHD, a strict workplace management style without flexibility or autonomy may intensify any attention, time management or procrastination challenges. For autism, sensory challenges can include sensitivity towards the level of light, noise or smell in a workplace, but in the right environment, this challenge may not present at all. Flexibility challenges can be exacerbated by work cultures without routine or structure, or where plans change frequently. Challenges socially interacting can include a range of difficulties, some autistic individuals may have difficulty keeping eye-contact, engaging in small talk, or being involved in large teams, others can have difficulties interpreting social cues, like when to stop talking. Any of these social difficulties can challenge autistic employees when building relationships at work. For dyslexia, reading, writing or spelling challenges may lead to difficulties in work involving reading or producing long and detailed documents, but in a job focused on creativity, they may not encounter any workplace challenges.

Another frequently discussed challenge for neurodivergent individuals is communication difficulties (Doyle, 2020). Communication challenges can present as a difficulty in verbally speaking, misinterpreting audible information or needing information to be clearly explained without any sub-context. Communication

difficulties in the workplace can include instructions being misunderstood, or conversations being misconstrued. The array of challenges across only three neurodivergent categories, indicates how complex and singular a neurodivergent employee experience can be, and how support and accommodations may be needed in many, or only a few, areas.

2.5: Neurodivergent Accommodations in the Workplace

Awareness of personal challenges could enable neurodivergent individuals to choose career paths that do not intensify their challenges. A dyslexic individual choosing a career in creative arts instead of a career reading long documents may seem reasonable, or advisable, however, it would not be reasonable to expect an autistic individual to eliminate themselves from a role because the office light bulbs were too bright. A level of responsibility from employers is needed to create workplace environments that support neurodivergent employee, and this comes in the form of workplace accommodations.

Within Ireland, The Employment Equality Act, 1998, legally requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to disabled employees, defining disability as a “condition...which affects a person’s thought processes” (Government of Ireland, 1998), and as previously discussed, the definition of neurodiversity revolves around an individual’s cognitive patterns (Antony *et al.*, 2024). Though neurodiversity may not always be viewed as a disability, the neurodiversity movement shifted the perception of neurodiversity as a medical disability, towards a

social disability (LeFevre-Levy *et al.* 2023), and individuals have embraced the disability identity with the association of illness removed (Chapman & Botha 2023). This shift in attitude changes the need to fix the individual, to needing to fix the social environment (LeFevre-Levy *et al.* 2023), and legally, neurodiversity as a disability entitles neurodivergent employees to reasonable accommodations, to fix their social environment.

Employers of disabled employees, who request accommodations, have a duty to conduct a workplace assessment to understand how the workplace environment or work expectations may present a challenge to the disabled employee, and seek an accommodation to overcome this (Ryan & Bell, 2020). The reasonable requirement relates both to what the neurodivergent employee reasonably needs, and what the employer can proportionately provide (McGrath & O’Sullivan, 2022). Reasonable accommodations are therefore situation and person specific.

In the study by Remington and Pellicano (2019), research was conducted on a three-month internship for autistic graduates at Deutsche Bank, UK. The purpose of the longitudinal research was to explore the experiences and challenges faced by autistic employees, in the hope that the results can inform what accommodations can provide support to autistic employees. A qualitative research method was conducted using semi-structured interviews, that were 30-minutes long, to allow the participants and the internship process to naturally reveal themes of importance. The interview process included eight interns, eight managers and 17 colleagues, providing a 360-degree understanding of the internship programme. In preparation,

employees at Deutsche Bank involved in the internship, were offered training on working and communicating with autistic individuals.

Remington and Pellicano (2019) detailed examples of accommodations used in this internship study but also discussed how the accommodations could not overcome all the challenges. To address social challenges, the standard recruitment process was adapted and the initial face-to-face interview was replaced with a written question list that interns completed within a week, while this is an accommodation based on general awareness of neurodiversity, and not the specific needs of the interns involved, it is not known if interns would have chosen not to applied without this adjustment.

Themes were coded using Braun and Clarke's (2006) analysis approach, and before and after the internship themes were created. The sub-theme, awareness of strengths and weaknesses, from before the internship, noted that quiet areas and interview rooms were arranged for the interns, as well as a specific desk allocation in a hot-desk office, addressing sensory and flexibility challenges respectively. However, in the theme, challenges along the way, from after the internship, an intern describes how evening dinner events were too noisy to enjoy, and another spoke of the standard office noises being a distraction. Themes after the internship did not mention the success of the allocated desk in the hot-desk environment, but it was noted that a conflict between accommodations and a desire to be treated the same as everyone else presented the risk of othering an individual.

In addition, Remington and Pellicano (2019) adapted their semi-structured interviews to be either face-to-face or over the phone, based on the individual's preference. The study provides examples of the wide variety of challenges that may need to be addressed for a single type of neurodiversity. Additionally, it shows the mixed responses to implementing and receiving accommodations, demonstrating how accommodations for one person, in one situation, may be successful, but that for another person, or in another situation, it may not be as successful. What was importantly highlighted, was the need for managers and employers to be proactive when implementing accommodations, but that consultation with the neurodivergent employee was also needed to find the right balance in accommodations.

2.6: Difficulties with Reasonable Accommodations

Without having a clear guidance as to how to support neurodivergent employees, employers have encountered challenges when attempting to implement reasonable accommodations. The study by Remington and Pellicano (2019) revealed how proactive behaviour of an employer can alleviate many challenges faced by a neurodivergent employee, however, it also noted the challenges that were not able to be addressed by this proactive approach. Social burnout from overstimulation in the workplace was not addressed, with the intern feeling it would be unreasonable to expect time-off as an accommodation. A sense of othering was perceived by some interns in being set apart from other non-autistic interns, who then rejected the need for accommodations at this expense, showing that even good intentions can backfire. It was raised by one manager that the internship was not reflective of other

workplace environments, and they were reluctant to make accommodations and risk creating an unrealistic expectation for the intern's future career. The study revealed the complexity around accommodations and how no-one-size-fits-all, but also how successful some accommodations can be. It was recommended that all employees working with autistic employees should receive awareness training to further the current success achieved. Additionally, it demonstrates that when an accommodation is considered not reasonable the result may be the neurodivergent employee suffering.

The internship study of Remington & Pellicano (2019) represents an organisation with a proactive dedication to accommodating autistic employees, and while it is important to demonstrate successful accommodation practices, this environment is not necessarily reflective of the vast majority of organisations with neurodivergent employees. A key study on the experiences of neurodivergent employees requesting accommodations across a range of employers was conducted by Davies *et al.* (2022). This study researched 181 autistic adults, using a mixed quantitative and qualitative research method, with the quantitative part allowing for statistics that can be generalised across a larger population, and using an inductive qualitative approach for the second section, allowing for themes to be revealed from the participant's experiences.

What the research in Davies *et al.* (2022) found was that 83.9% of participants felt accommodations were important, but that 38.7% of accommodation requests had been refused or insufficiently implemented,

demonstrating the disparity between the need for accommodations and the providing of accommodations. Of the accommodations requested, they included changes to the physical environment, job role, and to social or cultural practices (Davies *et al.*, 2022). Within the qualitative findings, two themes emerged: challenges in identifying accommodations, and challenges in implementing accommodations. Within these themes it was noted that challenges in receiving accommodations included a lack of awareness on the side of the manager, to understand that support was needed and how support can be offered, resulting in the burden falling to the neurodivergent employee to understand and explain, and the presence of stigmatising attitudes towards neurodivergent employees (Davies *et al.*, 2022). The study highlighted the reality that most neurodivergent challenges are invisible, and that gaining accommodations require a disclosure from the neurodivergent employee (Davies *et al.*, 2022).

Like other disabilities and diversity groups, neurodiversity shares the challenges involved in stigmatising attitudes and a lack of understanding, however, unlike surface-level diversity groups, such as physical disabilities or race, neurodiversity is also disadvantaged due to a typically invisible nature (LeFevre-Levy *et al.* 2023). Neurodiversity may therefore compare more closely to other invisible conditions, such as mental health conditions, in relation to challenges. In an Irish study on knowledge, attitudes and behaviour towards Schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and autism, it was found that awareness, in Ireland, was a strong indicator of behaviours (Mothersill *et al.*, 2023), supporting the belief that a lack of awareness can lead to stigma or dismissive attitudes towards neurodiversity (Antony *et al.*,

2024). What Mothersill *et al.* (2023) also shows, is the differentiation of knowledge, attitudes and behaviours between Schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, suggesting a variance of potential stigma within mental health, rather than a collective stigma of mental health. Though not studied in Mothersill *et al.* (2023), this understanding could be reflected with neurodiversity, with some types of neurodiversity facing more stigma than other types, and so individual types of neurodiversity may need to be considered in terms of what challenges they encounter.

As part of the challenge as a hidden disability, it is suggested that even after a disability has been accepted, it can be harder to understand the implications or challenges involved when the challenge cannot be seen (Davies *et al.*, 2022). Within the workplace, a neurodivergent individual will need to make a disclosure of their neurodivergence to access accommodations to support their employment, but due to the invisible nature, it becomes a choice the individual has to make, and this can be difficult if they fear being stigmatised against or unsupported after the disclose (Hutson & Hutson, 2023).

2.7: Other Influences on Neurodivergent Employees

Workplace accommodations are typically functional or physical, however, those are not the only ways in which neurodivergent employees require support or have their employment experience influenced. Research has shown that inclusivity is essential in a working environment, where a culture of acceptance and support for

neurodiverse employees creates a space of psychological safety (Hutson & Hutson, 2023).

In a scoping review of research articles regarding inclusion of neurodiversity in the workplace, Wen *et al.* (2024) detailed the importance of colleagues in helping create an inclusive environment. Regarding inclusion and colleagues, it was discussed that the basis of a successful relationship between neurodivergent employees and their colleagues is an understanding of neurodiversity by the colleague, this was deemed to enable them to be more accepting and supportive (Wen *et al.* 2024). The study by Wiater and Karcz-Ryndak (2024) where neurodiversity experts were questioned on the organisational management of neurodiversity, it was found that an inclusive workplace was influenced by the level of awareness of neurodiversity held by colleagues. There are few studies that have looked specifically at the inclusive perceptions of colleagues of neurodivergent employees, or at how colleagues can create an inclusive culture beyond awareness of neurodiversity. But an increasing number of studies have looked at the relationship between neurodivergent employees and their managers.

An inclusive culture will only be successful if there is inclusive leadership (Ashikali *et al.*, 2021) that encompasses the values of openness, availability and accessibility, to establish a fair diversity climate (Lee & Shin, 2024). Two key studies have explored the experiences and the relationship between neurodivergent employees with their managers. The first study, by Richard *et al.* (2019), explored the perceptions of line-managers of neurodivergent employees, particularly in

relation to emotional labour, using a qualitative research method. This approach was appropriately chosen for a relatively unresearched area, to allow the research data to be enriched by the participant's experiences, that would not be possible in a quantitative approach. 28 semi-structured interviews were conducted, in two stages of research, over a four-year period. The findings of the study showed that managing neurodivergent employees needed a high level of emotional labour, and for effective management of neurodivergent employees the manager needs to be skilled in emotional labour, and be trained and willing to manage a neurodivergent employee (Richard *et al.*, 2019). If these requirements are not met, the manager is likely to experience frustration or decreased health, and the neurodivergent employee is unlikely to receive workplace accommodations or support (Richard *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, the study shows how essential the role of a manager is to providing workplace accommodations, and how training and support is needed for the manager to perform effectively.

The second key study in understanding the manager's influence over a neurodivergent employee's workplace experience, is the exploration of neurodivergent employees and neurotypical managers by Szulc (2024). The research involves a two-phase qualitative research method, with 12 semi-structures interviews with neurodivergent employees and an unstructured focus group of 15 neurodivergent professionals (Szulc, 2024). What was initially intended to be a one-phase study using data from 12 interviews, was turned into a two-phase study after the analysis stage of the 12 interviews revealed the important theme of the manager-employee relationship (Szulc, 2024), demonstrating the benefit of using

qualitative research methods. After both phases were complete, an extended analysis was used to incorporate all the data. The study found that managers successful at supporting neurodivergent employees have empathy and understanding, that they need to ensure they receive support themselves in their management role, and that they face a challenge of balancing the implementation of workplace accommodations with inadvertently stigmatising the neurodivergent individual (Szulc, 2024). These studies explore the importance of work relationships that neurodivergent employees need to gain successful and meaningful employment.

2.8: Benefits to Neurodivergent Employment

The number of challenges a neurodivergent employee can face in the workplace and the challenges faced by the employers, managers and colleagues, renders the question why it is important that research studies continue trying to solve this dilemma and ensure neurodivergent individuals can succeed in the workplace. There many benefits of having neurodivergent employee within the workforce, for the organisation and for the individual.

Coinciding with the social movement, organisations have gradually increased recognition of the benefits to having a diverse workforce that includes neurodivergent employees ((Kirby & Smith, 2021) as cited in (Hamilton & Petty, 2023)). With diagnoses and awareness of neurodiversity increasing (Rollnik-Sadowska & Grabińska, 2024), and a current estimation that 20% of the population

are neurodivergent (Thompson & Miller, 2024), organisations are realising they can address sustainability and labour markets concerns by investing more resources into their neurodivergent workforce (Rollnik-Sadowska & Grabińska, 2024). The focus has shifted from the negatives, to embracing the unique strengths of neurodivergent individuals to produce a competitive advantage derived from the increased organisational performance (Hutson & Hutson, 2023), benefiting from alternative perspectives, and innovative and creative approaches to problem-solving (LeFevre-Levy *et al.*, 2023).

When organisations successfully overcome accommodation barriers, research shows that neurodiverse individuals benefit from an increase in their quality of life (Renty & Roeyers, 2006) and higher self-esteem (Hutson & Hutson, 2023). This in turn adds to organisation's employer brand and corporate social responsibility (Rollnik-Sadowska & Grabińska, 2024). However, the business case for employing neurodiverse individuals has been criticised for focusing on superpowers that only some neurodiverse individuals can provide, potentially diminishing inclusivity objectives, and questioning the authenticity of any social justice claims (Silver, *et al.*, 2023). Whether an organisation's intention behind employing and supporting neurodiverse individuals derives from a capitalist or moral standpoint, taking a proactive approach that seeks to address the challenges that the research has established, but not resolved, will need to include a combination of studies that have looked at different methods of interventions.

2.9: Current Recommendations for Organisations

The need to integrate neurodiverse employees into the workforce is a priority for organisations (Antony *et al.*, 2024), and yet as a newly developing field of interest, research currently has a limited understanding of this area (Rollnik-Sadowska & Grabińska, 2024), and a definitive best practice approach has not been developed yet. Organisations are not recommended to wait for fully established frameworks and guidance before acting, as they may risk losing potential profits and human capital if they do (Sumner & Brown, 2015).

Based on the current key findings in the research, employers, managers and colleagues each play a role in supporting neurodivergent employees to succeed in the workplace. To increase the likelihood of successful neurodivergent employment, recommendations include a proactive approach in providing accommodation supports, by identifying neurodivergent challenges and adjusting workplace processes and environmental factors to accommodate them (Remington & Pellicano, 2019). Providing support to managers of neurodivergent employees through neurodiversity awareness training, and supporting managers balance the implementing of accommodations without unintentionally stereotyping the neurodivergent employee (Szulc, 2020). Employers should also provide training to develop emotional labour skills in managers, and support managers in their role ensuring managers have a positive attitude towards neurodivergent employees (Richards *et al.*, 2019). For colleagues, raising the awareness of neurodiversity to

help create an inclusive environment is recommended (Wiater & Karcz-Ryndak, 2024).

For organisations, acknowledging that neurodiverse employees suit distinct conditions and environments (Roberson *et al.*, 2021), does not necessitate that the suggested conditions would not also be suitable for neurotypical employees who may also benefit (Antony *et al.*, 2024). But without sufficient research focusing on organisations and their role as employers, a full understanding of neurodiversity in the workplace is not currently possible.

2.10: Critical Evaluation of the Key Research

The key research studies discussed above have been critical in developing the researcher's current understanding of neurodiversity in the workplace. However, it should be noted that the research has limitations in its use and reliability in reference to the researcher's own study, and these need to be acknowledged. The first limitation is that all the studies were conducted outside of Ireland, in either the UK or Poland, preventing the Irish culture, laws or organisational practices being taken into consideration, and therefore, there may be different experiences felt by neurodivergent employees in Ireland (Davies *et al.* 2022; Remington & Pellicano, 2019; Szulc, 2024; Wiater & Karcz-Ryndak, 2024). Secondly, in Remington and Pellicano (2019) and Davies *et al.* (2022), only autistic individuals were included in the study, and in Szulc (2024) only ADHD, autism and dyslexia were included, therefore the experiences of other types of neurodiversity were not explored, and

an understanding of their experiences has not been furthered and cannot be assumed based on these studies. In Wiater & Karcz-Ryndak (2024), a small sample size was used, with only three experts were interviewed, limiting the expert knowledge, additionally, the interviews were structured due to the audience present for the interview, and this limited the researcher's ability to explore key points more deeply. Despite their limitations, they do provide key information that can be adapted in future research.

2.11: Research Gaps

Research into neurodiversity in the workplace is an emerging research field. There is limited research currently available, but it is encouraging that recent years have seen a dramatic increase in studies being conducted. Understanding the full neurodivergent employee experience has not yet been established, and so neurodivergent employees still struggle in employment, and employers, managers and colleagues still struggle to understand how to support them. Progress has been made in understanding elements of this field, but many gaps remain that need further research.

Within Ireland, research on neurodiversity in the workplace is limited. Irish studies into neurodiversity are increasing, but many are focused on the early years or educational years of neurodivergent individuals, and there are limited peer-reviewed studies that focus on neurodiversity in Irish workplaces. This is problematic, because without research into neurodiversity in the workplace,

specifically in Ireland, it will be hard to fully understand the experiences of neurodivergent employees, or those they work with, within Irish organisations. Irish organisations are reliant on research from other countries to understand neurodiversity in the workplace, and this negates the individual culture within Ireland. Therefore, future research needs to address this, and more studies need to focus on Irish organisations and neurodivergent employees in Ireland.

2.12: Present Study

New areas of research that still are developing an understanding of individual experiences, can benefit from using inductive qualitative research methods as it allows new ideas and theories to emerge, helping to develop the limited understanding in a new area of research. Each of the key studies mentioned above, used qualitative research methods, and this allowed the researcher to interpret the findings to establish themes, and develop an understanding based on the participants' data, which was important, as each study attempted to take a unique view and understanding of neurodiversity in the workplace. As neurodiversity in the workplace remains a developing field of research, more research is needed in a qualitative nature, and therefore, this study will use a qualitative research method in an attempt to develop the understanding of this field of research.

This study seeks to address some of the aforementioned limitations in understanding within neurodiversity in the workplace. Firstly, the focus of this study will be in Ireland, as discussed above, there is limited research on Irish organisation

on the topic of neurodiversity in the workplace, and this study will contribute to the studies and further develop the research field's understanding of Irish workforces. Secondly, the research will focus on a single Irish organisation to gain a unique perception from within a single workforce, narrowing the research gap in the lack of knowledge on specific organisations and their neurodiversity practices. Thirdly, the research will seek to understand employee perceptions of neurodiversity inclusion and contribute to the minimal research that has focused on the colleagues of neurodivergent employees.

As previously stated, research on perceptions of neurodiversity inclusion is lacking in the Irish Civil Service, which is a particularly useful case study, given that it employs over 50,000 employees (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2025), and has the potential to influence other organisations across Ireland, therefore, this project will specifically focus on single Department in the Irish Civil Service.

CHAPTER 3: Research Aims

3.1 Research Aims

Research within the field of neurodiversity, particularly neurodiversity in the workplace, is relatively recent and limited (Rollnik-Sadowska & Grabińska, 2024), and it is not yet fully understood how neurodivergent employees can be effectively supported in the workplace. Research has typically explored the subjective lived experiences of neurodivergent individuals and persons directly connected to them, personally and professionally. What studies have identified to date, is a range of challenges faced by both neurodivergent employees, and of the organisation in which they are employed. As an emerging research area, studies need to develop more theories and ideas, in this can be most effectively done through qualitative research. In Davies *et al.* (2022), a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative research was conducted, and the qualitative data allowed for new ideas to emerge of neurodiversity in the workplace.

There are very few studies conducted in Ireland, and this is problematic for Irish organisations seeking to understand how to support neurodivergent employees. Research is needed to further the understanding, and to propose organisational practices that can be implemented to support neurodivergent employees. It is especially important for Irish organisations that studies are conducted in Ireland, so that the unique culture and practices within Ireland are included in how neurodiversity in the workplace is understood.

As one of the largest organisations in Ireland, the Irish Civil Service is an important organisation to study, and understanding employee perceptions on neurodiversity inclusion can further the research field in the understanding of neurodiversity in the workplace in general, and specifically in Ireland. This research study aims to contribute to reducing the research gap, by exploring a single Department in the Irish Civil Service to further develop the understanding of neurodiversity in the workplace, with an overall aim to understand:

How is neurodiversity inclusion perceived by employees in the Irish Civil Service?

Current research within the topic of neurodiversity in the workplace provides guidance on different areas of exploration to help answer this question, including; the awareness of neurodiversity, the challenges faced and the accommodations available to neurodivergent employee, the relationship between neurodivergent and neurotypical employees, and the inclusion or stigmatising attitudes towards neurodivergent employees (Remington & Pellicano, 2018; Richards *et al.*, 2019; Szulc, 2024). These areas of explorations have formulated five questions to help answer the overall research aim.

Question 1

What level of awareness do employees in The Department have of neurodiversity?

Question 2

What level of awareness do employees in The Department have of the challenges neurodivergent employees face in the workplace?

Question 3

What level of awareness do employees in The Department have of the accommodations available to neurodivergent employees in the workplace?

Question 4

What perception do employees in The Department have of working alongside neurodivergent employees?

Question 5

What perception do employees in The Department have of the impact neurodivergent employees make in the workplace?

As an emerging research field that is seeking to understand subjective experiences, studies have typically been conducted using an interpretive qualitative research method using interviews, such as in Remington and Pellicano (2019) where semi-structured interviews enabled new ideas to emerge. On the same basis, this research will follow an inductive qualitative research methodology, using semi-structured interviews.

CHAPTER 4: Methodology

4.1: Introduction

Gathering data to answer the research aim and questions, requires thoughtful consideration of an appropriate method, and through this consideration, honest expectations of what can be achieved through a chosen research method can be determined, with an awareness as to the quality of the research gathered (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012). This research was conducted as an interpretive, qualitative study, with a cross-sectional focus. A combination of purposive and convenience sampling was used, before conducting 11 semi-structured interviews. The interview transcripts were then inductively thematically analysed as per Bruan and Clarke (2006). This section will explore the research method choices, and justify why methods were chosen for this research project. This section will include an exploration of the study design, research sample, recruitment and interview process, data analysis, ethical considerations and limitations of the study design chosen.

4.2: Study Methodology

4.2.1: Study Design

Saunders' research onion was used to understand the variety of research designs and determine the most effective design for this research study, where each layer of the onion poses an option of how the research can be conducted (Saunders

et al., 2019). The first decision is the choice of philosophy, or paradigm, that considers how the world is viewed by the researcher to create a pathway of how the research study should be conducted (Khan, 2014). An interpretivism paradigm was chosen to allow the subjective personal perceptions and experiences of participant's be explored (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

Deductive research uses academic theories to direct the research process, where hypotheses based on theories are tested and verified (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Alternatively, an inductive approach uses the process of observation and identifying themes to create new theories (Kumar, 2024). Neurodiversity in the workplace is a relatively new research area with limited theories or frameworks established that have been tested (Rollnik-Sadowska & Grabińska, 2024), therefore an inductive approach was deemed the most suitable for this research study, where themes based on the data gathered from participants can be established, in the hope that it can contribute to the research gap on neurodiversity in the workplace.

Inductive research of a qualitative nature are typical methods of an interpretive philosophical approach (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Inductive analysis methods enable understanding to be developed that is closely linked to the data with and overall view of the data, in contrast to theoretical analysis that provides a deeper description of fewer parts of the data, and less description of the overall data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Inductive analysis can therefore be particularly beneficial in new research areas, when new ideas and theories need to be developed for the whole data collection, and will be used in this research project. A qualitative

approach is beneficial in research areas where information on the phenomenon is limited, and using exploratory methods to gather information can add to the theories and understanding of the phenomenon (Taherdoost, 2022). In addition, qualitative research may be particularly useful in new areas of research to gain insights into experiences that can then be the basis of future research (Sutton & Austin, 2015) and has been predominately used in the area of neurodiversity in the workplace (Rollnik-Sadowska & Grabińska, 2024). Research on line-managers of neurodiverse employees used a qualitative research method due to the lack of previous exploration of this demographic of participants, allowing new ideas to emerge (Richards *et al.*, 2019).

A small sample of qualitative interviews was deemed suitable in consideration of the researcher's restricted timeframe for conducting research, acknowledging the limitation in gathering a breadth of research, but ensuring a large enough sample to gather in-depth research (Fugard & Potts, 2015). Longitudinal research that looks at long-term information gathering (Saunders *et al.*, 2019), would also not be possible given the researcher's timeframe, and therefore the interviews were focused on gathering cross-sectional data, seeking to understand the current themes with The Department.

4.2.2: Research sample

Neurodivergent employees can be a difficult participant pool to access given their minority status and lower employment statistics. Given the focus within a

single Department in the Irish Civil Service, it was recognised that accessing neurodivergent employees would be too difficult, therefore, the chosen target sample is inclusive of neurodivergent and neurotypical employees, where an overall perceptive of neurodiversity inclusion within The Department will be explored.

Research academics have been unable to agree on a specific quantity of interviews that should be conducted across research fields, instead, saturation of thematic analysis of the interviews is a more important consideration for researchers (Guest *et al.*, 2006). Without the time allowance to explore thematic saturation, the guide of between 6-12 participants to gain near full saturation of themes was used (Guest *et al.*, 2006).

A combination of purposive and convenience sampling was used. Purposive sampling identified relevant and suitable candidates in considering of the research aims (Campbell *et al.*, 2020). The sample were required to be aged 18 or over as per ethical standards (European Union, 2013), currently employed by The Department at the time of the interview ensuring an authentic representation of The Department, must be working at the grade of either, Clerical Officer, Executive Officer, or a Higher Executive Officer. These grades were expected to reflect the majority of employees within The Department and include a range of positional levels in the hierarchal structure of The Department, and constitute roles that typically involve working in teams. After purposive sampling, convenience sampling was used, on a first-come, first-served basis (Luborsky & Rubinstein, 1995), due to the limited timeframe to complete the data collection. 12 candidates volunteered to participate in the

research, 11 within the timeframe and one after the timeframe, therefore only 11 interviews were conducted.

Conducting interviews online would have enabled a sampling pool from across all The Department's office locations across the Republic of Ireland, however, ensuring full confidentiality of interviews conducted during standard working hours, on work laptops, proved difficult. Therefore, using in-person interviews, where the researcher could ensure a confidential environment, and not require the use of any Department devices, was considered to be the best approach to ensure confidentiality for this research. A geographical restriction was imposed to facilitate the researcher travelling to Department officers. The study was restricted to a single county, in which various Departmental sections were invited to participate. Having participants from the same environment was not considered as a limitation on the data analysis due to the interpretive research approach and an understanding that experiences or opinions are subjective (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

11 semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted, all of whom complied with the three eligibility requirements. The interviews process was conducted over a three-week period, between June – July 2025. Participants came from four different sections within The Department. The research demographics were made up of, three male Clerical Officers, four female Clerical Officers, two male Executive Officers, and two female Executive Officers. Zero Higher Executive Officers are included in the research.

4.2.3: Recruitment Process

A recruitment email was distributed to employee's work email addresses, with full transparent study details provided in an attached study information sheet (see Appendix A). Employees received a recruitment email based on their geographical work location, with the approval granted from their area manager in advance. Email distributions were facilitated by the Department's internal distribution lists, using the workplace's internal facilities email account. The recruitment email stated the contact details of the researcher and of the research supervisor, with the instruction to contact the researcher to volunteer to participate in the research. Emails were used to arrange the interview time and location, and candidates were sent a copy of the consent form (see Appendix B) in advance of the interview, to ensure that participants had informed consent.

Based on the knowledge that employee lunchtimes were for a minimum duration of 30-minutes, the interview questions were designed in anticipation of interview completion within this approximate timeframe. A 30-minute interview follows the interviews conducted by Remington and Pellicano (2019) on neurodivergent employees, their colleagues, and managers.

4.2.4: Interview Process

During the interview sessions, prior to the recording, the researcher verbally explained the study information sheet, consent form and the interview structure, to

ensure the participant had an informed understanding before signing the consent form. Participants were reminded that free consent must be given to participate, and that they were not obligated to answer any question they did not want to and could pause or withdraw from the interview at any stage.

As the curated interview questions were untested for their clarity and understanding, as well as for the testing of the time duration of the set questions, a pilot interview was conducted (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). The clarity of the questions were deemed successful, but the short time duration and the researcher's perceived gaps within the breadth of the questions resulted in further questions being added to the list. A second pilot interview with an increased number of interview questions was deemed successful. The 19 questions used in the second pilot interview, were then used for the remaining nine interviews (see Appendix C). Despite pilot interview one not including the full set of questions, the questions that were asked remained the same throughout all the following interviews, and therefore, both pilot interviews were included in the research results.

Semi-structured interviews have benefited previous studies in giving flexibility to deepen the conversation when needed (Richards *et al.*, 2019), therefore semi-structures interviews were conducted. Participants were asked all 19 pre-chosen questions, unless answered within other questions, allowing the interview to be guided by the research topic, but using open-ended questions to not allow flexibility in exploring participant's personal experiences (Bloor & Wood, 2006). The questions aimed not to lead the participant in any particular direction or reflect any

bias from the researcher. Through actively listening, further questions were asked to allow for a deeper exploration of a participant's individual experience (Bolderston, 2012), and space was held for participant to reflect on their answers and elaborate (Bloor & Wood, 2006).

Interviews were conducted in a private room at the participant's work location, to ensure confidentiality. The interviews were recorded and initially transcribed on the Teams App, using the researcher's personal laptop and student Teams account. The recordings were security held on the researcher's Teams account, where a password was required to access. After being held for one-week, to allow participants to withdraw from the research, the transcriptions were meticulously checked for accuracy, before the recordings were deleted, with any identifiable data removed from the transcriptions.

The transcript data of the 11 semi-structured interviews were included in the research results, with only the interview questions and answers recorded. Interviews ranged in durations from 8-47 minutes, with an average duration of 23 minutes. The range in duration is reflective of the personal experience and awareness of the research topic.

After the interviews, participants were given a debriefing sheet (see Appendix D), and asked to complete a short Microsoft Forms questionnaire to gather their demographic information, regarding their gender and employment grade. An

option to not disclose this information was offered to participants, all participants chose to disclose this information.

4.2.5: Data Analysis

Once the interviews were conducted and transcribed, a six-step process was used for thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Familiarisation of the data began during the reading of the Teams app transcription of the interview and repeatedly listening to the interview to ensure the transcriptions were accurate. It was at this point that the data was anonymised with identifiable information removed.

Absolutely anonymity has been described by academics as impossible due to the researcher being at least one person that can connect the data to a participant, however, anonymity is expected to be attempted to the point at which the information can still be useful to the research analysis, without unduly allowing participant's to be identified by anyone other than the researcher (Saunders *et al.*, 2014).

The fully anonymised transcriptions were then used as the basis for analysis, where Microsoft Word was used to code the data. This included both reducing the quantity of data and analysing the meaning and understanding of what was said in the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The next steps included using the coded data to look for themes and patterns, and to then review these themes in the context of the full transcriptions, to ensure that they were an accurate evaluation of the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The final stages of the analysis included

connecting the themes to each other and formulating a small number of themes that incorporate and describe the stories told by the participants, and writing up a description of the themes in connection to previous research projects (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.3: Ethical Considerations

Approval for this research study was first sought from The National College of Ireland, through the submission of a research proposal and ethics application, and approval was granted. Further approval to focus this study on a specific Department of the Irish civil service was sought from The Department itself. This included submitting a description of the research study aims to The Department before permission was granted to conduct this research, including permission to recruit voluntary participants from within its employees. The recruitment email and information sheet distributed to employees were also pre-approved before being issued.

Preventative measures were taken, to ensure the questions or the interview process did not distress participants, including not asking personal questions. The recruitment email, study information sheet and consent form, that were provided in advance of each interview, clearly stating that participants would not be required to answer any question they did not want to answer, and that they could pause or withdraw from the research within a specified timeframe, and this was verbalised at the start of every interview, before written consent was obtained. The debriefing

sheet provided to participants after each interview, included the contact details for a support organisation, should they need additional support.

Due to the focus of the study on a Department in the Irish civil service, through the interviewing of its employees, consideration was given to the potential for participants to feel vulnerable in participating in the study due to any perceivable repercussions in their employment. The recruitment email and information sheet clearly stated the research was not conducted by The Department, and that The Department's involvement was limited to the permission of the research, facilitation of access to employees, and access to the final research paper, with participation being both voluntary and confidential with no employment consequences, positive or negative.

GDPR ethics were followed regarding data collection and storage, with signed consent forms locked and secured on the National College of Ireland premises, and electronic transcript and demographic data stored on the National College of Ireland's server, in line with the National College of Ireland's data retention policy. Data will be stored for five years in accordance with the National College of Ireland's data retention policy.

4.4: Methodology Limitations

The research was limited by the scope of participants who were all Clerical Officers or Executive Officers, zero Higher Executive Officers are included in the

research, despite the recruitment efforts, rendering the perception of the study to be restricted to the lower sections of the civil service hierarchy structure, which may not be reflective of the whole Department.

The depth in which participants were questioned was restricted by the researcher's limited interviewing and research experience. This may lead to missed opportunities to explore deeper opinions or experiences from participants that may have changed the direction of the research.

The research process and analysis are limited by the researcher's personal interest in the topic of neurodiversity and a potential for an unconscious bias to have influenced the study, despite all effects taken to prevent this.

A sampling bias is recognised regarding the potential for the participants' personal interest in the study of neurodiversity. A deliberate choice to not explain neurodiversity within the recruitment process was due an effort to not influence or change participants' awareness before the interview, however, this may have created an unintended bias against person unfamiliar with the terminology 'neurodiversity' from volunteering to participant.

The research was conducted through an inductive qualitative approach, and it is acknowledged that this prevents a generalisation of these experiences across The Department.

The research was constrained to a limited timeframe for data collection and analysis to be completed, reducing the level of in-depth analysis on the research data and the choice of sampling methods.

4.5: Researcher's Position

To ensure full clarity of the potential unconscious bias and personal influence of analysis related to the researcher, the researcher's demographic details are: female, neurodivergent, aged 34 at the time of the dissertation submission, and an employee in the Irish Civil Service.

CHAPTER 5: Results

5.1: Introduction

This section will explore the findings from using Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis on the data collected from 11 semi-structured interviews. Four salient themes were identified, with supporting subthemes, these four themes are, **(1)** changing times, **(2)** responsibility for accommodations, **(3)** progression through open conversations, and **(4)** the individual nature of neurodiversity. Figure 1 details each theme with the related subthemes.

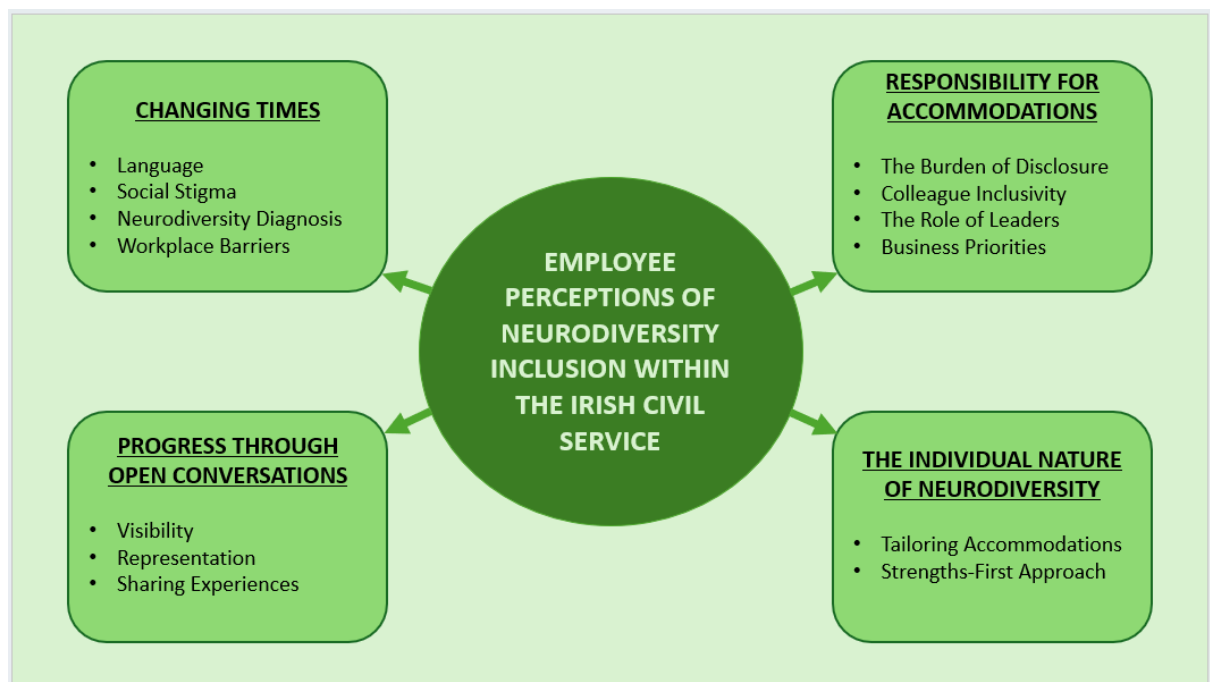


Figure 1. Themes and Related Subthemes

5.2: Theme (1): Changing Times

Within the first theme of changing time, the subthemes are, **(1a)** language, **(1b)** social stigma, **(1c)** neurodiversity diagnosis, and **(1d)** workplace barriers.

(1a) The language used when discussing neurodiversity provided insights into participant's awareness and attitudes. Neurodiversity terminology was expressed by participants as being new to their understanding:

Until a couple of years ago, I would not really have been aware of neurodiversity as a thing...that phrase or term didn't really exist until quite recently (Participant 2).

Prior to the neurodiversity terminology becoming more mainstream, the description language chosen focused on the perceived deficiency of a person:

...[Historically] anybody that was seen as neurodiverse may be seen as having special needs or they would have been categorised in that particular way (Participant 11).

A pattern across many interviews was that participants struggled choosing words to describe neurodiversity, they hesitated, not wanting to say the wrong phrase or misrepresent their opinion. Six of the eleven participants used the word 'normal' in reference to what neurodiversity was not, although a reluctance to use this

terminology was evident. One participant said, “I don't want to say normal person, but...” (Participant 9), while others prefixed the word ‘normal’ with, “supposedly” (Participant 2), or “what is considered” (Participant 10). This use of language could suggest a limitation in their knowledge about what alternative terminology is available.

(1b) The changes in societal attitudes towards neurodiversity was discussed by participants, who noted the historical stigma around neurodiversity was changing into a more supportive and accepting attitude, but suggested that the effects from historical stigma were still present in the workplace. One participant remarked that historically, a neurodivergent individual “often wouldn’t have been seen as someone who could be functional in normal society” (Participant 11), and another participant described society as adapting and changing:

It’s not that it’s become more popular, just that people are learning to live with it better...It’s not hidden away...the way it was in years gone by
(Participant 3).

Progressive attitudes were suggested to increase support for neurodivergent individuals:

...my [participant’s relative], who would be a lot older, so he wouldn't have got as much help when he was younger. People wouldn't have been as

understanding...how he was treated and viewed compared to now...is different (Participant 4).

Years of stigma as suggested as a reason why neurodiversity within the workplace is limited, that has led to a loss of talent:

...it's probably untapped potential because of what has happened for so long...it used to be...they have to be over there...they'll never be employable (Participant 11).

Participants expected and hope that increased awareness would further reduce any neurodiversity stigma, and for neurodivergent employees to “become very normal in the workplace” (Participant 4), and to “not [be] stigmatised by it...that it meant that little or as much to somebody as dying their hair” (Participant 2). Participant’s positive and progressive attitude towards neurodiversity indicates to an acceptance of neurodiversity in workplaces.

(1c) Participants discussed the significance of a neurodiverse diagnosis in benefiting their life experiences but noted the difficulty and complexity around access to a diagnosis can prevent this benefit. It was noted “how poorly diagnosed [neurodiversity] is, and getting diagnosed is very difficult for people” (Participant 2). The boxed categorisation of diagnosis was observed to be confusing, with the suggestion for further exploration in the future:

Dyslexia...ADHD...Autism needs to be diagnosed. I imagine there are much more complexities within that, that it doesn't fit within those four or five areas. Surely there's more diversions that isn't strictly diagnosed and I think it should be explored more (Participant 10).

A neurodiverse diagnosis was used by participants to distinguish differences between neurodivergent individuals. Individuals unaware of their neurodiversity were considered to be disadvantaged, it was noted that "...a lot of people are neurodivergent, and they don't know that themselves" (Participant 4), with the suggested that they used "coping mechanisms...to fit in...just managing to get through their lives" (Participant 2). Several participants self-identified as being neurodivergent without having an official diagnosis but recognised they were different in some way. Individuals with a neurodiverse diagnosis were described as benefiting from "a sense of relief" (Participant 11), and that they now have the means to "understand themselves and accept themselves" (Participant 2). The benefits of a diagnosis were also implied as extending to employers, suggesting that a diagnosis could "point out areas that that person will need support in...[and] be a greater investment than a lot of the training [provided]" (Participant 2). The findings suggest that although attaining a diagnosis can be difficult, it is worthwhile for the individual.

(1d) Participants commented on the traditional procedures within The Department restricting change, that contrasted to The Department's values to

promote change. When describing long-standing institutional systems, one participant noted that moving away from the status quo is not valued:

...sometimes I will suggest a way that's different from the standard protocols...But there are some...well-established processes, and they're not looking for change. They don't want to embrace change. You're almost vilified at some points for even suggesting things (Participant 5).

Resistance to change and adapting work methods was considered a particular challenge for neurodivergent employees:

They might be able to do it, but in a different way. And there often is this, like this is the way it's done, this is the way it's always done, instead of...having that understand like we're going to get to the same result (Participant 11).

Participants perceived recruitment and promotion processes in The Department as discriminating against neurodivergent employees, where systems don't "accommodate them...it's an unnecessary barrier" (Participant 2), and noted a lack of clarity on whether supports are available, "I don't know what happens at that point if you are struggling" (Participant 10).

In contrast, The Department's values of innovation and engagement were positively viewed by participants:

I think the potential is there... [The Department] encourages us to learn. It encourages...innovation and engagement...even if they're not there now, it doesn't mean that they're not open to the idea of it (Participant 11).

The values of The Department could be the mechanism in which to enable change to the traditional processed, to evolve into a more neurodiverse inclusion workplace.

5.3: Theme (2): Responsibility for Accommodations

Within the second theme of responsibility for accommodations, the subthemes are, **(2a)** the burden of disclosure, **(2b)** colleague inclusivity, **(2c)** the role of leaders, and **(2d)** business priorities.

(2a) Disclosing a neurodivergent diagnosis was considered by participants as a difficult process but perceived as a necessary step in acquiring accommodations and supports. The findings suggested there was an expectation on neurodivergent individuals to know what accommodations and supports were needed. Participants spoke about undisclosed neurodiversity creating pressures to perform like everyone else:

...some managers can be a little bit kind of ignorant to that fact that it can take someone a lot longer to do one thing than someone else (Participant 6).

The difficulty of disclosure was described as, “hard to admit that they need help” (Participant 9), combined with the uncertainty that “you don't know what way they're going to take it” (Participant 6), and that “it could be used against them” (Participant 9). Therefore, “some kind of the level of trust” (Participant 11) was described as necessary for disclosure, with three participants expressing gratitude for the indication of trust.

The findings indicated a consensus that a disclosure would not automatically result in accommodations, with five participants stated the need to ask how they can help. One participant explained, “I can't offer any particular help unless there was something that they could ask themselves” (Participant 11), and another said the variations within neurodiversity meant they would “need to understand that person, and what they need” (Participant 2). A fear of offending a neurodivergent individual was also noted as a reason to only offer support if explicitly requested, to prevent the neurodivergent employee from feeling “that they're different” (participant 8).

Participants welcomed the idea of disclosures and knowing “everybody's little tweaks and quirks” (Participant 9) and discussed the appropriate timing for it. Early-on disclosures were suggested for “somebody who's just joined an office” (Participant 2), but the pressure on new employees was highlighted, and may need to wait until they develop their “confidence, and as people [get] to know [them]” (Participant 5). Disclosure, therefore, was considered to bring varying challenges for a neurodivergent employee in addition to the challenges their neurodiversity brings.

(2b) The behaviour of colleagues was discussed as having an important impact on inclusion in the workplace, where adapting to neurodivergent employees was a support that could be increased with awareness. Proximity was suggested as why “colleagues are the most important” (Participant 8), and it was broadly discussed how a lack of awareness in colleagues can lead to exclusions that “won't be out of malice” (Participant 9) but can create “fraught [environments]...for the individual and the team” (Participant 10). The possibility for perceptions of unfairness resulting from accommodations being given to neurodivergent colleagues indicated the need that for an inclusive workplace, “[e]verybody has to be on board” (Participant 11).

The inclusion of neurodivergent colleagues within teams was raised by participants who regarded diversity as being important for teamwork, suggesting the need for “adapting with them” (Participant 10), and the importance of “always focused on people's strengths because they fulfilled my weaknesses and vice versa” (Participant 9). The findings showed a positive perception of inclusion amongst colleagues within The Department, employees were described as “they’re so good here” (Participant 5), and praised The Department as being:

...the most accommodating and welcoming environments...because of the nature of the people that work in it...they genuinely want to help people (Participant 2).

Participants demonstrated a willingness to support neurodivergent colleagues through being “kinder...more patience” (Participant 1), “understanding” (Participant 10), and would change their behaviour “unwittingly, whether you intend to or not” (Participant 4) from a desire to support and include them, and “only for their benefit” (Participant 7). But some participants demonstrated a limitation to any change of their behaviour, adapting only if it was “going to make a massive impact” (Participant 11), or a willingness to change in a professional capacity but not “in an informal setting” (Participant 3). These varied reactions suggest a mixed level of responsibility felt by participants to personally accommodate colleagues, but increased awareness and experience could change that.

(2c) All participants discussed managers as capable of influencing a neurodivergent employee’s workplace but suggested different ways this happens. Direct access to accommodations from managers was discussed, as well as their influence over awareness, attitudes and inclusion. Participants said the level of support for neurodivergent employees “comes down to your supervisor” (Participant 2), but only three participants named managers as a direct access route to accommodations within The Department, indicating a lack of confidence this channel would provide, as only “some of the managers would have had training” (Participant 4), and “it depends on who they work with” (Participant 5).

Participants discussed how managers can increase neurodiversity awareness training if they think “that it is an important course” (Participant 8), and ensure communication within general training is inclusive and can “be understood by

everyone” (Participant 5). They commented that inclusive managers were capable of finding “a role for someone...that they best suit” (Participant 7), and adapting work expectations to be person-specific and “not the one work output for everybody” (Participant 10). The attitude of managers was described as essential to whether neurodivergence was viewed as an advantage or disadvantage:

...[neurodivergence] can be a good thing and a bad thing depending on the situation...you are judged on things...and it just depends on where you are (Participant 5).

The findings showed an expectation for managers to be neurodiverse aware, for managers to be neurodiverse inclusive, and that “to manage a neurodiverse person, you have to have some understanding of it” (Participant 11). Participants with experience of managing neurodiversity, outside of The Department, noted how training had been critical for their understanding; they “would have had to do...training...just to become aware of [neurodiversity] (Participant 2), with one participant stating that when training was not provided, they voluntarily had “to go and learn” (Participant 11). The findings showed how participants in line-managers roles, as Executive Officers, had not received training for managing neurodivergent employees, suggesting that the responsibility for seeking awareness had been given to the managers.

The array of responsibilities that managers have was noted as problematic to ensure neurodiversity inclusion, when “[y]our line manager has their workload”

(Participant 9), and can have too “much focus is on statistics...and if your office isn't doing as well as another office” (Participant 6). The difficulty with mixed priorities was described by one participant:

Line managers have their own agenda, they have their own performance management issues to take care of, and they're not always very kind towards people who can't quite cut the grade on the performance side (Participant 1).

The findings suggest that neurodiversity inclusion is subjective to the manager, and their own work pressures can prevent them being inclusive.

(2d) The findings implied a strong commitment to neurodivergent customers from The Department, but a commitment to neurodivergent employees was less evident when considering supports, training and environmental factors.

Eight participants attended an online Just A Minute (JAM) training, two were voluntary and six were mandatory. Two participants also attended mandatory customer service training that included neurodiversity awareness. The mandatory requirement was commonly attributed to “directly dealing with the public” (Participant 10), indicating The Department’s commitment to train employees and ensure their ability to support neurodivergent customers. Several participants noted how the public area of their workplace was empathetically designed for neurodivergent customers, with “a quiet room for customers” (Participant 4), and “plants in the middle section...[to] makes it more open” (Participant 9), demonstrating The Department’s commitment to public service.

The commitment to neurodivergent employees is less evident in comparison to the same factors, with participants recommending neurodiverse accommodations to include having a “quiet room or a quiet area” (Participant 5), that employees “could go to and settle themselves for a few minutes” (Participant 3). Participant 5 noted that the office canteen felt like a “wall of noise” and the employee offices were “sterile...cold and hostile and...not a welcoming environment”. When discussing inclusivity within The Department, one participant said, “[The Department will] talk about a fully inclusive workforce...the department could do more” (Participant 11).

Participants described a lack of clarity in what neurodiverse supports were available within The Department, expressing a “hope there are [supports], but it's not something I'm aware of” (Participant 10). Participants said that they “don't think there's much regard given to [supports]” (Participant 7), that “it's not really talked about. It's not really high on the agenda in my opinion” (Participant 1), and that accessing support information requires “actively looking for it...it's not in your face what is actually available to you” (Participant 6).

When discussing access to support in The Department, two participants said, “I don't know” (Participant 3), and the other nine participants' suggestions included a combination of the civil service employee assistance service (CSEAS) and/or HR. Three participants also suggested managers. CSEAS and HR were noted to be beneficial sources for an “anonymous conversation” (Participant 10), however, not having a

permanent presence on site reduced a willingness for some participants to contact them:

I don't see myself talking to HR. Because HR...could be somewhere all over the country and you wouldn't see them (Participant 8).

The findings show that The Department has awareness of neurodiverse supports, and their commitment to neurodivergent customers could be extended to neurodivergent employees with similar supports and considerations.

5.4: Theme (3): Progress through Open Conversation

Within the third theme of progress through open conversations, the subthemes are, **(3a)** visibility, **(3b)** representation, **(3c)** sharing experiences.

(3a) Participants discussed the challenges and stigma around neurodiversity due to the often invisibility of neurodiversity, comparing it to the stigma around mental health and physical disabilities. Participants discussed how understanding a neurodiverse challenge was more difficult when it could not be seen, compared to visible physical disabilities, using the example, "if I come in here in a wheelchair, there will be a ramp" (Participant 11). But similarly to invisible mental health challenges, the often-invisible nature of neurodiversity contributes to the misunderstanding and stigma within workplaces and society, and if "we can't see that, so we don't really know what it is, and it's kind of pushed out (Participant 11). This invisibility also suggests that everyone you meet could potentially be

neurodivergent as you “don't know what's behind, what they're thinking” (Participant 9), and “you don't really know anyone [is neurodivergent] until they tell you, because obviously you can't see it” (Participant 6). The invisible nature was indicated as why a disclosure is often needed.

Participants praised The Department's ability at accommodating physical disabilities, with participant 1 noting there are “as far as disability, physical disability goes, there are no limitations...you're well taken care of” but noted less accommodations for disabilities “harder to spot, but are just as important”. Further praise was extended to The Department's approach to mental health and the encouragement to talk about issues, and it was suggested that neurodivergent employees should be encouraged to do the same, sometimes “people just need to talk about the situation” (Participant 9). Becoming “comfortable enough with the communication” (Participant 11) was considered key to overcoming the visibility of neurodiversity.

The lack of visibility within The Department regarding neurodiversity information or supports was discussed as adding to the general unawareness of neurodiversity, “even on looking for a search, I couldn't find anything” (Participant 10). Participants suggested more “visual awareness” (Participant 1) was needed, and that ad-hoc emails were not enough, and it would be better to highlight neurodiversity with a “focus for a day, or week, or month” (Participant 5). While the invisible nature of neurodiversity cannot be changed, awareness can be made more visible to help open the conversation and invisible challenges.

(3b) Participants discussed how representation of neurodiversity in the media or in the workplace is important for relatedness and in opening conversations about neurodiversity, raising awareness and removing stigma. Participants discussed different TV and social media instigators for opening up conversations about neurodiversity, saying that once a conversation about neurodiversity has started, a person can find it “a lot easier to talk about it” (Participant 9). Visual representation on TV shows, including “The Last Leg” (Participant 11) and “The Big Bang Theory” (Participant 5), were described as enabling individuals to broaden their understanding of neurodiversity, and connect traits of neurodivergent characters with themselves or others to instigate conversations.

The findings show that a feeling of relatedness can happen from individuals opening up about their neurodivergence, where others can relate to them when “they were describing their symptoms” (Participant 2), and from knowing other people experience similar things can prevent a person feeling “that it’s just [them]” (Participant 5). The findings indicate how important relating to others is for neurodivergent individuals, and this connection can encourage them to speak about their own neurodivergence.

(3c) Participants discussed different methods they have developed their awareness of neurodiversity, and the findings shows that the most effective method is by experiencing neurodiversity directly or learning about the lived experiences of neurodivergent individuals. Participants displayed different levels of neurodiversity

awareness, with many claiming their awareness was “limited enough” (Participant 11). Participants with the most knowledge described how their awareness was gathered through “personal experiences” (Participant 10) and were specific to “the environment that I've experienced people” (Participant 11). When asked if The Department had increased their awareness, one participant said:

No. But my circumstances have actually helped me greatly...I probably had that advantage more than other colleagues (Participant 9).

Employees without personal experiences attributed The Department to increasing their awareness through “doing some courses” (Participant 8) and from “[s]eeing more people and coming across it more often at work with different colleagues” (Participant 7). Many participants that received JAM training, noted the lack of interaction as limiting its effectiveness, requesting more open discussions about neurodiversity to allow participants to be “more engaged” (Participant 6), that “it would mean more if it was in a room with people to talk as a team” (Participant 1), and requested courses to include “people with a neurodiversity...[to] show their own examples...To give people the chance to talk about it” (Participant 8). Participant 9 described The Department’s courses as “helpful”, but that sharing experiences can provide a “completely different understanding”.

Across the eleven participants, all of the most common types of neurodiversity were spoken about, ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Tourettes, as well some of the less common types. This demonstrates the collective breadth of

awareness currently within even a small group of people within The Department, indicating that there is knowledge to be shared within The Department if the opportunity is provided.

The Department was described as having a positive learning culture that is “always open to and encourages people to take as much learning opportunities” (Participant 11). The Department’s training had “opened bigger thoughts about neurodiversity” (Participant 1), similar to the research interview:

You’ve really kind of opened the question about, how can this be more thought about within this environment? You’ve opened up the question for me to think, how on earth could something like that be explored here? (Participant 10).

The findings suggests that training and open discussions on neurodiversity can increase the interest in wanting to understand neurodiversity, and may provide the first opportunity for someone to consider neurodiversity.

5.5: Theme (4): Individual Nature of Neurodiversity

Within the fourth theme of the individual nature of neurodiversity, the subthemes are, **(4a)** tailoring accommodations, and **(4b)** a strengths-first approach.

(4a) Participants discussed how different neurodiversity can be for each person, and how accommodations need to be tailored to individuals to be supportive. It was commented that a disclosure was not enough information to know how to support someone, “[b]ecause a lot of people are different, and it shows up in different ways” (Participant 2). Seven participants used the term ‘different’ to not only distinguish between neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals, but also to note the variation across “the spectrum” (Participant 5) and within the umbrella of neurodiversity, “there's no one clear specific definition of being neurodivergent, that there are so many (Participant 2).

Many participants stated their initial reaction to hearing a disclosure of neurodiversity would be to seek further information from the individual to understand their specific needs, and tailor the support to them. When describing an experience of working with neurodivergent individuals, one participant said:

I sat down, one-on-one...they were all...able to communicate what they were struggling with, and how I could help them. I was able to find solutions for them...But that just came by sitting down and communicating with them, understanding their specific needs and requirements (Participant 11).

Neurodivergent characteristics were said to have “no kind of one-rule-fits-all...no two people's brains are the same” (Participant 10), and this was highlighted by participants describing opposing neurodivergent traits and challenges.

Neurodivergent traits described included, “creative” (Participant 11) and “single-

mindful” (Participant 10), “focused” (Participant 8) or suffering from “procrastination” (Participant 2), “struggle with numbers...really good at maths” (Participant 6), “punctual...reliable” (Participant 7) or “no concept of time” (Participant 11), having the ability to “multitask” (Participant 5) or “need to just focus on the one task” (Participant 2). The variation demonstrates the importance of gaining further information by asking “how it might impact their life” (Participant 11), and it was noted as a challenge when it came to receiving accommodations. This could be contributing to the lack of clarity of how to access supports, with the type of accommodations needed to indicate who to turn to for support, but this was not fully explored during the interviews.

(4b) The findings show a positive attitude towards neurodivergent employees in the workplace and in receiving accommodations, with the main recommendation to focus on the strengths of the individual, not the weaknesses, and that this could also be extended to neurotypical employees.

Participants positively stated that neurodivergent employees in the workplace were “absolutely needed” (Participant 10), that “they add so much” (Participant 6) to a team, including offering a “[c]ompletely different way of looking at problems” (Participant 11). The increased diversity enables “a good workplace” (Participant 11), and their experiences are “great for when you’re working with the public” (Participant 8). Regarding accommodations, the common recommendation was for “leniency towards where their strengths lie” (Participant 10) and accommodations “based on their skills...finding a role...that they best suit”

(Participant 7). Participant 11 said to “see the ability” and not the disability would prevent “a huge amount of talent and potential...be just wasted”.

Participants expanded the discussion of a strengths-first approach to neurotypical employees, saying “whether they're neurodivergent or not...Everybody's not good at everything” (Participant 2), and that everyone should be “accommodated better” (Participant 7). It was suggested that all employees could utilise The Department’s Performance Management and Development System to “point out what people's strengths” (Participant 5).

A strength-first approach was discussed as accommodating professional strengths and weaknesses, but participants did not expressly mention whether social challenges could be addressed in this manner. It was raised that accommodation for social exclusion can be difficult, “there's not much I think an employer can do...you don't like to force things” (Participant 9). However, when describing past experiences working with neurodivergent colleagues, one participant noted how positively those colleagues were accepted socially “because they were made, from day one, to feel like they were contributing a lot” (Participant 11). Therefore, a strengths-first approach that supports neurodivergent employees to find meaningful roles they can be successful in, could help them accommodate professional and social challenges.

CHAPTER 6: Discussion

6.1: Introduction

The aim of this research is to explore the perceptions of employees on the subject of neurodiversity inclusion in the workplace within a Department in the Irish Civil Service. The research was conducted using qualitative research methods, with 11 semi-structured interviews conducted and transcribed. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis was used to explore the transcribed interviews, and four themes were revealed: **(1)** changing times, **(2)** responsibility for accommodations, **(3)** progress through open conversations, and **(4)** the individual nature of neurodiversity.

6.2: Theme (1): Changing Times

Within the theme of changing times, participants discussed the progressive changes in neurodiversity terminology and social attitudes, the increase and importance in neurodivergent diagnoses, and how traditional workplace procedures are presenting difficulties to neurodivergent employees.

6.2.1: Language and Social Stigma

Participants demonstrated their awareness of the changing societal attitudes towards neurodiversity, and their own personal agreement with the positive

progression and the desire to see more progression in the future. This is important, as it demonstrates how the revolutionary aims of the neurodiversity movement to mainstream neurodivergent acceptance (LeFevre-Levy *et al.*, 2023), is working. As described in the literature review section, awareness can affect behaviour (Mothersill *et al.*, 2023), and with the awareness demonstrated by participants, it suggests that behaviour is changing also.

Participants' use of the term 'normal' is consistent with Bottema-Beutel *et al.*, (2021), who in a commentary article on avoiding ableist language, said if the terminology used was suggestive of othering the individual, and something that would not be directly said to the individual, then the language is likely to be ableist and should be changed. Bottema-Beutel *et al.* (2021) also said that language influences attitudes, and in combined with the previous finding regarding attitudes, it suggests that the language used by the participants may be ableist and preventing further progress of the neurodiversity movement. A clear implication of this for organisations and individuals need to assess their own language and terminology, and that despite desiring progression in the future, recognise their own contribution in preventing a fulling inclusive language and attitude towards neurodiversity.

The findings show a perception of historical stigma as negatively impacting the number of neurodivergent employees in workplaces and a loss of talent in the labour market. This concurs with the study into autistic employees receiving workplace adjustments, where neurodivergent employees were found to not request support in fear of stigma from managers or colleagues resulting in fewer

successful employment experiences (Davies *et al.*, 2022). This is important to recognise for organisation, that if a perception of historical stigma is still seen within the workplace, the workplace cannot be neurodivergent inclusive as neurodiversity employees may not feel accepted enough to make a disclosure in request of accommodations, resulting in unsupported employees, and a false organisational understanding of the number of neurodivergent employees they have.

6.2.2: Neurodiversity Diagnosis

The research found receiving a neurodivergent diagnosis was perceived to be an important step for a neurodivergent individual to truly accept themselves, and in understanding what supports they might benefit from. This concurs with Huang *et al.* (2022) where 19 autistic individuals were interviewed about their experiences after receiving a formal diagnosis, where it was found that after a diagnosis some individuals experienced a desire to change themselves before a journey to self-acceptance. Neurodivergent individuals without a diagnosis, were observed by participants to develop coping strategies to get through life. This is consistent with previous studies, where it was found that neurodivergent individuals may mask or compensate their characteristics to fit in (Hull *et al.*, 2017).

It was noted how neurodivergent diagnoses are increasing, but that access to a diagnosis remains difficult in Ireland and can prevent organisations providing support. A number of participants identified as neurodivergent, without a formal diagnosis, which prevented them from accessing supports within The Department.

This supports previous research that describe the challenge of requiring a formal diagnosis to access adjustments and suggests that the perfect inclusive organisation would not require a diagnosis or disclosure, instead, adjustments could be accessible to all employees (Davies *et al.*, 2022). An alternative was suggested in this study, with the suggestion that organisations could proactively invest in employees to access a diagnosis, benefiting both the employee and organisation to understand an individual's specific needs. Quantifying the value of such an investment is unclear, but previous studies have shown that organisations with neurodivergent employees have seen increased revenue and performance (Rollnik-Sadowska & Grabińska, 2024).

What is revealed by the diagnosis findings is the clear need for individuals to receive a diagnosis to improve their lives and careers, and as an access way to support. Organisations need to act upon the knowledge that they may have undiagnosed neurodivergent employees within their organisation in need of support, and that they can help facilitate a formal diagnosis for employees or remove the barrier of needing a diagnosis for accommodations to be provided, working towards a fully inclusive workplace where all employees can be supported based on their individual strengths and challenges. It also highlights the need to implement awareness training for all employee, to enable employees, who may be struggling and not understand why, to become aware of neurodiversity and their connection to it.

6.2.3: Workplace Barriers

Traditional processes and structures were found to benefit neurotypical employees at the expense of neurodivergent employees. This supports the current literature on challenges with neurodivergent recruitment, with neurodiversity experts recommending that recruiters must change their standard recruitment processes to accommodate neurodivergent applicants (Wiater & Karcz-Ryndak, 2024), and was suggested to be successful by Remington and Pellicano (2019) during their radically reformed recruitment process for autistic interns at the Deutsche Bank internship programme. The findings also revealed a perception of internal resistance to change from traditional processes. A theory on resistance to change describes if a dominant group is benefiting from current systems, that will seek to retain consistency rather than accept change, ensuring their continued success at the expense of minority groups (Ratten, 2025).

The workplace barrier findings revealed that employers have a responsibility towards creating a neurodivergent inclusive culture through recruiting neurodivergent employees with appropriate assessments. Additionally, the findings reveal that changing employee and manager attitudes will not be enough for a neurodivergent inclusive culture to succeed, and that organisation traditions or policies need to be reviewed and restructured to be neurodivergent friendly.

6.3: Theme (2): Responsibility for accommodations

Within the theme of responsibility for accommodations, a burden of disclosure for neurodivergent employees was established. Participants also discussed how different supports are needed from colleagues, managers and employers, discussing how they each played an important role in contributing to neurodiversity inclusion.

6.3.1: Burden of Disclosure

The perception of challenges in disclosing a neurodivergent diagnosis that was found is consistent with the research of Hutson and Hutson, (2023) who highlighted that employers need to create a culture of psychological safety and generating trust to reduce the challenges in disclosing a neurodivergent diagnosis.

Limited awareness of neurodiversity awareness was found to limit the support offered to a neurodivergent employee after a disclosure, concurring with the study on 181 autistic adults by (Davies *et al.*, 2022) that found how increased awareness of neurodiversity can alleviate some of the burden on neurodivergent individuals. However, it was also found that accommodations cannot be implemented without consultation of the neurodivergent employee, due to their individual challenges and support needs. This is line with Remington and Pellicano's (2019) study on an autistic internship, that some accommodation made without consulting the autistic intern were not welcomes.

6.3.2: Colleague Inclusion

This research found that colleagues were central to a neurodivergent employee's feelings of inclusion, due to their close and regular contact. This is reflective of the research conducted that found line-managers were a significant source of support due to their direct connection to a neurodivergent employee (Szulc, 2024). Participants of this study were office based and proximity referenced the environmental closeness, the research by (Szulc, 2024) does not specify environmental proximity, only the direct relationship involved, it remains unclear whether colleagues can significantly impact a neurodivergent employees if they are remotely working with had virtual teams, but it does show the impact in-office colleagues have. A lack of neurodiversity awareness was perceived to lead to unintentional exclusion by colleagues, aligning with Wiater and Karcz-Ryndak's (2024) studies of neurodiversity experts, who said that neurodiversity inclusive organisational cultures are created through increased awareness of neurodiversity. These findings are important for organisations to understand, as neurodiversity awareness needs to be promoted to all employees.

The organisational nature of public service was perceived as an indicator to a more naturally helpful workforce. There is limited research on the attitudes of neurotypical colleagues towards neurodivergent employees. One study noted peers of neurodivergent interns feeling an overwhelming need to be supportive during the three-month programme (Remington & Pellicano, 2019), however with limited research, it is unclear if indefinite support would be given the same amount of

energy or inclination, or whether a professional or personal distinction would emerge similar to the present research.

6.3.3: The Role of Leaders

The perceived effect of leaders, aligned with the research conducted into neurotypical leaders and neurodivergent employees, where managers were found to need empathy to create an inclusive culture, but that managers themselves needed support through training to raise their awareness (Szulc, 2024).

Managers were perceived to have conflicting priorities preventing them supporting neurodivergent employees, similar to the study of emotional labour of leaders of neurodivergent employees by (Richards *et al.*, 2019), where managing neurodivergent employees was found to require more time and energy, demonstrating the need for organisations to support leaders of neurodivergent.

6.3.4: Business Priorities

A strong commitment to neurodivergent customers was perceived, with accommodation following the current research recommendations to address sensory challenges (Wiater & Karcz-Ryndak, 2024), suggestive of a neurodivergent supportive organisation. However, evidence that the same sensory challenges were considered for neurodivergent employee was less evident.

Participants revealed a preference for support to be in-person, regardless of whether it was related to neurodiversity. This may imply support for previous studies that demonstrate the importance line-managers have due to their direct relationship with employees (Szulc, 2024). Alternatively, it may imply that off-site support is not perceived by employees as being as accessible as in-person support, regardless of whether a direct relationship can be established. This is especially important to address considering the increasing digital and hybrid working practices, where virtual teams are increasing, and the supportive element of a team may need to be addressed.

6.4: Theme (3): Progress through open conversation

Within the theme of progress through open conversation, the invisible nature of neurodiversity was discussed as a barrier to talking and understanding neurodiversity, and that visible representations can help bridge the gap and open conversations. Personal and direct experiences of neurodiversity were determined to be important in raising awareness of neurodiversity.

6.4.1: Visibility and Representation

Neurodiversity was more similarly compared to mental health issues, that can also be invisible, and The Department was praised for their campaigning to talk about mental health issues. In Davies *et al.* (2022), qualitative research on autistic adults discussed the idea of the invisible nature of neurodiversity adding to support

difficulties and the continuing stigma of neurodiversity. Following mental health campaigns to speak about neurodiversity may be needed.

This study and other studies have shown that a reluctance of disclosure can derive from the fear of stigma from the recipient (Davies *et al.*, 2022), this research suggests that opportunities to open the conversation may help bridge the gap of uncertainty.

6.4.2: Sharing experiences

Participants generally felt that their awareness was limited and that they would benefit from more neurodiversity awareness training, with a strong consensus that effective training needs to include interactions between participants, and an opportunity to exchange stories and experiences of lived experiences of neurodiversity. The importance of personal experiences was discussed within a previous study on the sources of information for neurodiversity awareness training, however, in addition to personal experiences, consulting external experts were also needed to ensure that there is evidence for what is being taught (McDowell *et al.*, 2024). This needs to be taken into account by organisations creating or implementing training for employees.

The research found that participants were typically only aware of a small number of neurodiversity types, with no participant able to demonstrate knowledge across the five most common types of neurodiversity, ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia,

Dyspraxia and Tourettes. However, it was positively found that across the small number of participants in this research, there was an awareness that covered these five most common types of neurodiversity, as well as some of the more uncommon types. This shows that there is a collective awareness within The Department, and this is an important foundation that can be built upon. There is limited research into the level of neurodiversity awareness held by employees to compare this finding to.

To the author's knowledge, previous studies have not discussed the impact on neurodiversity inclusion in the workplace when neurotypical employees were given the opportunity to consider their own views and understanding of neurodiversity and its challenges. But based on discussions above about the important role neurotypical colleague and managers can make to a neurodivergent employee, creating opportunities for them to become self-aware of their own knowledge or limitations can only help towards a more neurodivergent inclusive culture.

6.5: Theme (4): Individual nature of neurodiversity

Within the theme of the individual nature of neurodiversity, tailed accommodation and a strengths-first approach were recommended to create a neurodivergent inclusive workplace.

6.5.1: Tailoring Accommodations

It was perceived that neurodivergent individuals are unique and therefore their support needs would need to be tailored to their challenges. It was perceived that effective communication of specific struggles, could enable understanding and solutions to be achieved. This is similar to previous studies that have discussed the communication issues some neurodivergent individuals have, and how successful communication can increase a neurodivergent employee chance at receiving workplace accommodations (Davies *et al.*, 2022). Recognition of a neurodivergent employee's individual nature and help prevent stereotyping and lead to accommodations that suit the individual.

6.5.2: Strengths-first approach

The research found that across the participants there was a positive attitude to having neurodivergent employees within The Department, particularly emphasizing their importance in creating diverse teams and diverse ways of thinking. The strengths-first approach was considered to not only benefit a neurodivergent individual's work performance, but it was also suggested to potentially give the neurodivergent individual a sense of purpose, which may positively filter into their social interactions. The strengths-first approach is not new and has been previously recommended as a useful employment tool in relation to neurodiversity, and to mental health disorders (Wiklund *et al.*, 2018). It is also reflective of the biodiversity understanding of neurodiversity (Doyle, 2020). These findings follow previous

research that has recommended emitting the need for a disclosure by offering accommodations for everyone, to create a neurodiversity inclusive workplace (Davies *et al.*, 2022). Benefits of the strengths-first approach

6.6: Strengths and limitations

6.6.1: Strengths

This research considers the perceptions of employees in the Irish Civil Service on the topic of neurodiversity in the workplace, and uniquely contributes to the field of research into neurodiversity, by focusing on a single organisation within Ireland, of which there are minimal other studies, and by exploring the Irish Civil Service, which to the author's knowledge, no previous neurodiversity study has focused on the Irish Civil Service.

This study concurs with a variety of previous studies, adding to it from the perspective of the Irish Civil Service, on findings including how society is progressing towards more neurodivergent inclusive workplaces, but that more awareness and understanding is needed to achieve fully inclusive environments. The collective agreement of this study, and of others, suggest how society is at a momentous point, where a collective change is needed to push through to a more neurodivergent inclusive society and workplace.

The finding from the study presented themes and ideas not previously discussed in the academic literature on neurodiversity in the workplace, uniquely contributing the field of research. This study highlighted a potential connection between the business nature of an organisation and a predisposition to neurodivergent inclusive behaviours. Another unique finding was the perceived differences in current supports offered to customers in comparison to employees, raising the question whether organisations are selective in implementing neurodiversity inclusive practices.

The finding from the study developed certain topics within the field of neurodiversity in the workplace research, that previous studies have not discussed. This study raised the topic of potential limitations to the type of support offered to colleagues, whether professional or personal. The study highlighted the importance of in-person proximity, in relation to the significance a colleague can offer, and in how on-site supports are needed for effectiveness. The study also raised the suggestion of organisations supporting employees to attain a formal neurodiversity diagnosis.

The research was conducted using a sample size appropriate for an effective qualitative research study, allowing for near full saturation of themes (Guest *et al.*, 2006).

The used of Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis strengthens the research, as it is a widely used and effective method of thematic data analysis,

and puts it on level with other key studies in the research field of neurodiversity, like Remington and Pellicano (2019).

The use of individual interviews allowed participants the freedom to share personal experiences in a confidential manner, that may not have happened in a group with peers, and it also granted participants the time to fully express themselves without needed to share the conversation in a group dynamic.

6.6.2: Limitations

In addition to the methodology limitations, this research was limited in several way. The research's cross-sectional design prevents causality of connections, in the way that future experimental research could, by randomising participants to groups that either receive training or are in a control group, and this would help to understand in more detail how to influence awareness and attitudes.

The cross-sectional design limits the understanding to a single time, unlike longitudinal research, which could allow an exploration of awareness and attitudes over a period of time and show if there are developments or progression over time.

The qualitative research method cannot generalise to a wider population in the way that quantitative research methods can. A quantitative research project using a large sample of employees across the Irish Civil Service would be helpful to understand an overall awareness or attitude within the Irish Civil Service.

CHAPTER 7: Conclusion

7.1: Introduction

Neurodiversity in the workplace is a developing field of research exploring the challenges and realities of the employment experience of neurodivergent individuals. Previous research has sought to understand the needs of neurodivergent employees and identify how employers and neurotypical employees can support or adapt the workplace to become more neurodiversity inclusive. The purpose of this research study was to further the understanding of neurodiversity in the workplace, by exploring employee perceptions of neurodiversity inclusion within the Irish Civil Service, thereby adding to the limited studies of neurodiversity within single organisations in Ireland, and adding to the limited understanding of colleague perceptions of neurodiversity inclusion in the workplace.

Due to nature of the research aim, an inductive qualitative research method was developed, and 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted. The interview transcripts were used for analysis, and Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step thematic analysis was followed, where four main themes emerged: **(1)** changing times, **(2)** responsibility for accommodations, **(3)** progress through open conversations, and **(4)** the individual nature of neurodiversity.

7.2: Key Findings

The findings from this research support concepts and theories from previous studies about neurodiversity in the workplace, showing how they are also applicable within The Department in the Irish Civil Service.

The research concurs with previous studies regarding how societal changes are positively progressing towards a more inclusive neurodivergent society, supported by updating language to be inclusive, increasing access to diagnosis, and acknowledging how traditional workplace procedures that often do not support neurodivergent individuals need change, to ensure neurodivergent individuals have access to employment and workplace accommodations. Further improvements in the choice of language used regarding neurodiversity are still needed, in addition to adapting workplace practices to accommodate neurodivergent individuals and create a more inclusive workplace.

The research highlights the differing roles colleagues, leaders and employers take in supporting neurodivergent employees to feel supported, receive accommodations, and disclose a diagnosis. Crucially showing the need for every person to take responsibility in helping to create a neurodivergent inclusive environment, and that for this to be successful, individuals need to increase their awareness of neurodiversity. Notably, awareness was found to be generally only acquired by default of personal experiences or mandatory workplace training. A shift in attitude towards shared responsibility is needed to further develop a

neurodivergent inclusive culture, with individuals voluntarily seeking to raise their awareness of neurodiversity.

The findings note the visible nature of neurodiversity as a hindrance towards understanding and acceptance, and overcoming this requires open conversations, and sharing experiences and knowledge. The research found neurodivergent individuals are considered as have unique strengths, challenges and experiences that necessitates their need for tailored supports, and that the recommended approach to supporting neurodivergent individuals in the workplace is through a strengths-first approach. Seeing the ability of an individual and supporting their development is key to enriching the employment experience of neurodivergent individuals. It was also suggested that a strengths-first approach would benefit neurotypical employees also and, in concurrence with previous studies, it is suggested that truly inclusive workplaces will accept a neurodivergent employee's individuality through accepting the individuality of all employees.

7.3: Advancement of the research field

This study contributes to the research field of neurodiversity in the workplace, providing a focus on employees within a single Department in the Irish Civil Service. Limited studies in the past have focused on single organisation or industry area, especially in Ireland, and this study offers a uniquely focused perspective within a small pool of studies. To the researcher's knowledge, no other study on neurodiversity in the workplace has explored the Irish Civil Service.

The research has also established new ideas within neurodiversity in the workplace, not previously explored in the research field, including the relationship between the nature of the organisation and employees' natural inclination toward inclusive behaviour, the limitations and distinction between professional or personal support offered to neurodivergent colleagues, the difference in organisational responsibility towards neurodivergent employees and neurodivergent customers, and the possible benefits in organisations supporting employees' access a formal neurodiversity diagnosis. In addition, the study highlighted the significance of proximity for colleague relationships and support sources, that had previously only been studied in relation to line-managers.

7.4: Future recommendations

The field of research around neurodiversity in the workplace, is relatively recent, with many gaps in need of further research. This study narrows the gap in understanding neurodiversity in the workplace, but notes a number of areas that were not discussed or explored, that could be researched in the future, to further reduce the gaps in understanding neurodiversity in the workplace.

- 1) This qualitative study into neurodiversity inclusion in the workplace could be repeated within an alternative Department of the Irish Civil Service, with the inclusion of participants within higher management positions, to compare whether there is a consistency of perceptions across the Civil Service.

Additionally, this study could be repeated in other industries in Ireland to compare perceptions across industries. More studies that focus on single organisations can develop an understanding of the relationship between the nature of a business and the inclusive behaviour of employees.

- 2) Longitudinal research studies could be developed in the future within single organisations, to follow the progression of neurodiversity inclusion and develop the understating of how societal stigma and attitudes are changing. The use of neurodiversity awareness interventions could explore how effective different methods of raising awareness are, to develop a best practice approach for neurodiversity inclusion.
- 3) Quantitative research on the levels of awareness and inclusion of neurodiversity in the workplace could be developed, that could enable replicated studies across different organisations, industries or countries, to gain a more statistical measurement of understanding neurodiversity in the workplace, that can be generalised more widely than qualitative research.
- 4) Future research should look at organisations that have implemented the recommended strengths-first approach for neurodivergent employees, or for all employees, to explore whether this proposed approach achieves neurodiversity inclusion in the workplace, and develop an action-plan for other organisations to follow, and deepen the research field's understanding of neurodiversity inclusion in the workplace.

Reference List

Alharahsheh, H. and Pius, A. (2020) 'A Review of key paradigms: positivism VS interpretivism'. *Global Academic Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(3), pp 39-43. Available at: https://gajrc.com/media/articles/GAJHSS_23_39-43_VMGJbOK.pdf [Accessed 28 July 2025].

Antony, S., Ramnath, R. and Ellikkal, A. (2024). 'Empowering neuro-diversity: A neuroaffirmative approach to workplace coaching'. *International Coaching Psychology Review*. 19(1) pp 49-59 DOI:10.53841/bpsicpr.2024.19.1.49

As I Am. (2022). *Employment*. Available at: <https://asiam.ie/what-we-do/employment> [Accessed 12 August 2025].

Ashikali, T., Groeneveld, S., & Kuipers, B. (2020). 'The Role of Inclusive Leadership in Supporting an Inclusive Climate in Diverse Public Sector Teams'. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 41(3), 497-519. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X19899722>

Bloor, M. and Wood, F, (2006) 'Interviews. In: Keywords in Qualitative Methods'. 1st ed. London: *Sage Publications Ltd*, pp. 105-109. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849209403> [Accessed 28 July 2025].

Bolderston, A. (2012) 'Conducting a Research Interview'. *Journal of Medical Imaging and Radiation Sciences*, 43(1), pp. 66-76.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmir.2011.12.002>

Bottema-Beutel, K., Kapp, S.K., Lester, J.N., Sasson, N.J. and Hand, B.N. (2021). 'Avoiding Ableist Language: Suggestions for Autism Researchers'. *Autism in Adulthood*, 3(1), pp. 18-29. <https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2020.0014>

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp. 77-101.

<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Bywaters, D., Young, S. and Walker, K. (2020) 'Purposive sampling: complex or simple? Research case examples'. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 25(8), pp. 652–661.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206>

Central Statistics Office. (2024). *Population and Migration Estimates, April*. Available at: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-pme/populationandmigrationestimatesapril2024/> [Accessed 14 August 2025].

Central Statistics Office. (2024). *Population and Migration Estimates, April*. Available at: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-pme/populationandmigrationestimatesapril2024/> [Accessed 14 August 2025].

Central Statistics Office. (2025). *Monthly Unemployment June*. Available at:
<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-mue/monthlyunemploymentjune2025/> [Accessed 14 August 2025].

Chapman, M. and Botha, R. (2023). 'Neurodivergence-informed therapy'.
Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology. 65(3) pp 310-317.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/dmcn.15384>

Clough, P. and Nutbrown, C. (2012) 'What is Methodology?'. In: 3rd edn. A
Student's Guide to Methodology. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. Available at:
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529682564.n3> [Accessed 28 July 2025].

Davies, J., Heasmasn, B., Livesey, A., Walker, A., Pellicano, E. and Remington,
A. (2022). 'Autistic adults' views and experiences of requesting and receiving
workplace adjustments in the UK'. *PLoS ONE*, 17(8).
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0272420>

Demetriou, E., DeMayo, M. and Guastella, A. 'Executive Function in Autism
Spectrum Disorder: History, Theoretical Models, Empirical Findings, and Potential as
an Endophenotype'. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*. 10(1) pp 753.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2019.00753>

Doyle, D. (2020). 'Neurodiversity at work: a biopsychosocial model and the impact on working adults', *British Medical Bulletin*, 135(1) pp 108–125
DOI:10.1093/bmb/ldaa021

European Union, (2013) *Ethics for researchers*. Available at:
<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/68d86ebd-332f-46c0-8474-49fd93ba098f/language-en> [Accessed 2025 July 23].

Fugard, A. J. B. and Potts, H. W. W. (2015). 'Supporting thinking on sample sizes for thematic analyses: a quantitative tool'. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 18(6), 669–684.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2015.1005453>

Government of Ireland. (1998). *Employment Equality Act*. Available at:
<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1998/act/21/enacted/en/print#sec8> [Accessed 12 August 2025].

Guest, G., Bunce, A. and Johnson, L. (2006) 'How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability'. *Field Methods*, 18(1), pp. 59-82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>

Hamilton, L.G. and Petty, S. (2023). 'Compassionate pedagogy for neurodiversity in higher education: A conceptual analysis'. *Frontiers in Psychology*. 14(1) pp 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1093290>

Houses of the Oireachtas. (2025). *Civil Service*. Available at:
<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2025-04-03/146/> [Accessed 13
August 2025].

Huang, Y., Arnold, S.R.C., Foley, K.R. and Trollor, J.N. (2024). 'A Qualitative Study of Adults' and Support Persons' Experiences of Support After Autism Diagnosis'. *Journal of Autism Development Disorders*. 54(1) pp 1157–1170.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-022-05828-0>

Hughes, J.A. (2020) 'Does the heterogeneity of autism undermine the neurodiversity paradigm?'. *Bioethics*. 35(1) pp 47-60. DOI: 10.1111/bioe.12780

Hull, L., Petrides, K.V., Allison, C., Smith, P., Baron-Cohen, S., Lai, M.C. and Mandy, W. (2017). "'Putting on My Best Normal": Social Camouflaging in Adults with Autism Spectrum Conditions'. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 47(1), p. 2519–2534. DOI 10.1007/s10803-017-3166-5

Hutson, P. and Hutson, J. (2023). 'Neurodiversity and Inclusivity in the Workplace: Biopsychosocial Interventions for Promoting Competitive Advantage'. *Journal of Organizational Psychology*, 23(2), pp. 1-16. DOI: 10.33423/jop.v23i2.6159

Kapp, S.K., Gillespie-Lynch, K., Sherman, L.E. & Hutman, T. (2013). 'Deficit, Difference, or Both? Autism and Neurodiversity'. *Developmental Psychology*, 49(1), pp. 59–71. DOI: 10.1037/a0028353

Khan, S.N. (2014) 'Qualitative research method-phenomenology'. *Asian Social Science*, 10(21), pp. 298-310. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v10n21p298>

Kumar, D.S. (2024) 'Inductive and deductive approaches to qualitative research'. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research*, 13(1), pp. 58-63. Available at: [https://ijmer.s3.amazonaws.com/pdf/volume13/volume13-issue1\(4\)/9.pdf](https://ijmer.s3.amazonaws.com/pdf/volume13/volume13-issue1(4)/9.pdf) [Accessed 28 July 2025].

Lee, J. and Shin, H. (2024). 'Effects of Inclusive Leadership on the Diversity Climate and Change-Oriented Organizational Citizenship Behavior'. *Behavioral Sciences*, 14(6), pp. 491. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs14060491>

LeFevre-Levy, R., Melson-Silimon, A., Harmata, R., Hulett, A. and Carter, N. (2023). 'Neurodiversity in the workplace: Considering neuroatypicality as a form of diversity'. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, Volume 16, pp. 1-19.
DOI:10.1017/iop.2022.86

Luborsky, M. and Rubinstein, R. (1995) 'Sampling in Qualitative Research: Rationale, Issues, and Methods'. *Res Aging*, 17(1), pp. 89-113.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0164027595171005>

McDowell, A., Doyle, N. & Kiseleva, M. (2024). 'Is a little knowledge a dangerous thing? A stakeholder perspective on the use of evidence about neurodiversity at work'. *International Journal of Business*, 5(1), pp. 143-151.
Available at: <https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/170648/1/final-WEB-12-june-MARKET-VOLUME-5-2024%20%281%29.pdf> [Accessed 15 August 2025]

McGrath, D. and O'Sullivan, M. (2022). 'What is Reasonable? The Operation of 'Reasonable Accommodation' and 'Disability' Provisions Under The Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015'. *The Irish Journal of Management*, 41(1) pp 37-51.
<https://doi.org/10.2478/ijm-2022-0004>

Mothersill, D., Loughnane, G., Grasso, G. Hargreaves, A. (2023) 'Knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours towards schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and autism: a pilot study', *Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 40(4), pp. 634–640.
doi:10.1017/ipm.2021.81.

Ratten, V. (2025). 'Neurodiversity and inclusive social value management practices'. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 31(1), p. 298–306.
DOI:10.1017/jmo.2024.76

Remington, A. and Pellicano, E. (2019) "Sometimes you just need someone to take a chance on you': An internship programme for autistic graduates at Deutsche Bank, UK'. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 25(4), pp. 516–534.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2018.66>

Renty, J.O., and Roeyers, H. (2006). 'Quality of life in high-functioning adults with autism spectrum disorder: The predictive value of disability and support characteristics'. *Autism*. 10(5), pp 511-524.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361306066604>

Richards, J., Sang, K., Marks, A. and Gill, S. (2019) 'I've found it extremely draining': Emotional labour and the lived experience of line managing neurodiversity'. *Personnel Review*, 48(7), pp. 1903-1923.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-08-2018-0289>

Roberson, Q., Quigley, N., Vickers, K. and Bruck, I. (2021). 'Reconceptualizing Leadership From a Neurodiverse Perspective'. *Group & Organization Management*, 46(2), pp. 399–423. DOI:10.1177/1059601120987293

Rollnik-Sadowska, E. and Grabińska, V. (2024) 'Managing neurodiversity in workplaces: A review and future research agenda for sustainable human resource management'. *Sustainability*, 16(15), pp. 6594. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16156594>

Ryan, D. and Bell, M. (2020). 'Disability, Reasonable Accommodation and the Employer's Obligations: Nano Nagle School v Daly'. *Modern Law Review*. 83(5) pp 1059-1071 <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2230.12553>

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2019) Research methods for business students. 8th edn. Harlow: *Pearson Education Limited*. Available at: <https://r1.vlereader.com/Reader?ean=9781292208794> [Accessed 28 July 2025].

Saunders, B., Kitzinger, J. and Kitzinger, C. (2014) 'Anonymising interview data: challenges and compromise in practice'. *Qualitative Research*, 15(5), pp. 616-632. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794114550439>

Sumner, K. E. and Brown, T. J. (2015). 'Neurodiversity and human resource management: Employer challenges for applicants and employees with learning disabilities'. *The Psychologist-Manager Journal*. 18(2), pp 77–85. <https://doi.org/10.1037/mgr0000031>

Sutton, J. and Austin, Z. (2015) 'Qualitative Research: Data Collection, Analysis, and Management'. *The Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy*, 68(3), pp. 226-231. <https://doi.org/10.4212/cjhp.v68i3.1456>

Szulc, J. (2024) 'Leading with understanding: cultivating positive relationships between neurotypical leaders and neurodivergent employees'. *Employee Relations: The International Journal*, 46(9), pp. 97-114. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-12-2023-0621>

Taherdoost, H. (2022). 'What are different research approaches? Comprehensive review of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method research,

their applications, types, and limitations'. *Journal of Management Science & Engineering Research*, 5(1), pp. 53-63. Available at:
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4178694 [Accessed 28 July 2025].

Thompson, E. and Miller, J. (2024). 'Neuroinclusion at work'. Survey report. London: *Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development*. Available at:
<https://www.cipd.org/globalassets/media/knowledge/knowledge-hub/reports/2024-pdfs/2024-neuroinclusion-at-work-report-8545.pdf>

Wen, B., Van Rensburg, H., O'Neill, S. and Attwood, T. (2024) 'Autism and neurodiversity in the workplace: A scoping review of key trends, employer roles, interventions and supports'. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 60(1), pp. 121–140.
<https://doi.org/10.3233/JVR-230060>

Whelpley, C.E., Holladay-Sandidge, H.D., Woznyj, H.M. and Banks, G.C. (2023). 'The biopsychosocial model and neurodiversity: A person-centered approach', *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 16(1), pp. 25–30.
doi:10.1017/iop.2022.95.

Wiater, M. & Karcz-Ryndak, J. (2024). 'Neurodiversity in organizational management in Poland – Expert perspective'. *Organization & Management Scientific Quarterly*, 195(1), pp. 601-616. DOI:10.29119/1641-3466.2024.195.37

Wiklund, J., Hatak, I., Patzelt, H. and Shepherd, D. (2018). 'Mental Disorders in the Entrepreneurship Context: When Being Different Can Be an Advantage'.

Academy of Management Perspectives, 32(2), p. 182–206.

DOI:10.5465/amp.2017.0063

Appendices

Appendix (A): Study Information Sheet

Study Information Sheet

NEURODIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE:

You are invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, please take the time to read the following information carefully to understand why the research is being done, and what it would involve for you. If you need any more information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, my contact details are at the bottom of this Information Sheet.

WHO I AM AND WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT?

My name is Mary McLaughlin, I am an employee of the Department of Social Protection, and I am currently studying for an MA in Human Resource Management at the National College of Ireland. As part of my degree, I will undertake a research project, and I have chosen to carry out my research on neurodiversity in the workplace, with a focus on the civil service.

All employees can be impacted by their workplace environment, both positively and negatively, however, neurodivergent employees can often experience workplace environments differently to neurotypical employees. Through this research I hope to learn about the workplace environment within the civil service and consider it in relation to the needs of neurodivergent employees.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?

To participate in this study, you must be:

- Over 18
- A current employee of the Department of Social Protection
- Currently working at the grade of Clerical Officer (CO), Executive Officer (EO), or, Higher Executive Officer (HEO)

Please note, it is NOT a requirement to be neurodivergent to participate in this study.

WHAT WILL TAKING PART INVOLVE?

If you choose to participate in this study, it will involve a confidential 1:1 conversation, with myself, for approximately 30-45 minutes, on the topic of neurodiversity in the workplace. This meeting will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for you, and it will be carried out in a private room in the Buncrana DSP building or an alternative private location.

The conversation will be entirely voluntary, you will not be asked to answer any questions that you do not want to, nor provide information that you are not willing to share.

WILL TAKING PART BE CONFIDENTIAL?

Your participation in this research is entirely confidential, and any data collected will only be accessible to myself and my dissertation supervisor at the National College of Ireland. No data will be shared with any individual in the Department of Social Protection. The data will be reported in an aggregate format, and your participation will remain anonymous.

During the research process, should information be disclosed regarding a danger to you or another person, I will be obliged to report this to the relevant authorities.

HOW IS DSP INVOLVED IN THIS STUDY?

My research into neurodiversity in the workplace will focus on civil service employees, and therefore, the nature of the study may inform DSP of any recommendations that may lead to improvements in support for neurodivergent employees and a neurodiverse-friendly workplace. While I do have the support of the DSP Career Development Unit to focus my project on this research area, and to engage with staff in this research, it is being conducted in a personal capacity as part of an academic project, therefore, participation is voluntary and confidential. Choosing to participate, or not, will not affect your job in any way.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART?

No. Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you can choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you have the right to change your mind at any time before or during the scheduled interview, by notifying the researcher, after this, you can also withdraw your data from the research up until one week after the interview, after which, the results will be written up for submission for my dissertation. To request for your data to be withdrawn, you can contact me, or my supervisor, via email, using the contact details at the end of this information sheet. Interview recordings will be transcribed, and potentially identifying information will be removed from interview transcripts. At this point, interview recordings will be deleted. At this point, it will not be possible to withdraw your data.

HOW WILL INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE BE RECORDED, STORED AND PROTECTED?

Signed consent forms will be kept in a secure and locked filing cabinet, in a locked room, by my supervisor, at the National College of Ireland. The interviews will be audio-recorded using Microsoft Teams; this is to enable an accurate transcription for the data collection. As soon as the audio-recording has been transcribed, the audio-recording will be destroyed. Should you, or any other person, be identifiable from the information disclosed during the interview, this will be anonymised in the transcription. All transcripts will be stored on a National College of Ireland OneDrive account that only the researcher and their supervisor will have access to, and they will be password protected. Anonymised data will be stored on the National College of Ireland servers in line with National College of Ireland's data retention policy. It is envisaged that anonymised data will also be uploaded to a secondary data repository to facilitate validation and replication, in line with Open Science best practice and conventions. Participants must give informed consent for this. Each participant will be assigned a unique

reference number, and transcripts will be stored by this reference number. As per the National College of Ireland's data retention policy, transcripts will be securely stored for five years, before being destroyed.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

The results will be written up and presented as part of my dissertation project and submitted to the National College of Ireland for review. As a qualitative study, direct quotes from interviews may be included in the presentation of results, but these quotes will be anonymised without any information that could identify a participant. If successfully reviewed by the National College of Ireland, the completed research paper will be accessible through DSP's HR Learning and Development Thesis Library, and through the National College of Ireland Library. Results may also be submitted for publication in academic journals or presented at conferences.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS AND RISKS TO TAKING PART?

BENEFITS: There will be no direct benefit to the participants in this study. However, research gathered through this study may be of benefit to future research in this area, it may also contribute to a greater understanding within DSP, that may influence future decisions.

RISKS: Every attempt will be made to ensure participants suffer no negative effects by participating in this study, however, should a participant feel distressed at any time, they are free to pause or end the interview.

WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

If you have any questions or would like to know more about my study before participating, please contact me at my student email address x23301163@student.ncirl.ie, or contact my supervisor, Dr David Mothersill, at david.mothersill@ncirl.ie.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to read this information. Please contact me via at my email address, x23301163@student.ncirl.ie, to volunteer to participate in this study.

Thank you,

Mary McLaughlin

Appendix (B): Consent Form

Consent to participate in research

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences by notifying the researcher.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within one week after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves a 1:1 interview with the researcher, for approximately 30-45 minutes.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that any report of the results of this research, my identity will remain anonymous. This includes changing my name and disguising any details that may reveal my identity, or any other person discussed.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the researcher's final written dissertation paper.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and interview transcripts will be retained in a secure storage, that only the researcher and dissertation supervisor can access, and that this data will be destroyed after five years, as per the National College of Ireland retention policy. Signed consent forms will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, in a locked office, in the National College of Ireland, and interview recordings and transcripts will be stored on a password protected National College of Ireland OneDrive account that only the student and their supervisor will have access to. Anonymised data will be stored on National College of Ireland servers in line with National College of Ireland's data retention policy. It is envisaged that anonymised data will also be uploaded to a secondary data repository to facilitate validation and replication, in line with Open Science best practice and conventions. Participants must give informed consent for this.
- I understand I can contact any person involved in the research to seek further clarification or information.

Signature of research participant: *Date:*

The Researcher: Mary McLaughlin

- I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

Signature of researcher: *Date:*

Appendix (C): Interview Questions

Interview Questions

- 1) What is your understanding of neurodiversity?
- 2) Are you familiar with any particular types of neurodiversity and the characteristics of them?
- 3) Where has your awareness come from?
- 4) Has working in DSP added to your awareness of neurodiversity? If yes, can you describe in what way?
- 5) Have you received any formal training or awareness from DSP?
- 6) What was the method of training or awareness?
- 7) Was it voluntary or instructed by DSP?
- 8) What was the purpose of this training?
- 9) Have you been able to bring the information gained from this training into your workplace? In what way?
- 10) Can you think of anything more that DSP could do to increase awareness of neurodiversity?
- 11) What challenges do you think a neurodivergent employee faces in a workplace?
- 12) What supports or adjustments might be available to a neurodivergent employee?
- 13) Do you think there are supports for those challenges in DSP?
- 14) Are you aware of how support for neurodivergent employees can be accessed in DSP? Who should employees ask for this support?
- 15) How would you respond to a colleague telling you they were neurodivergent?
- 16) Would you change your behaviour towards them? Why?
- 17) What impact do you think neurodivergent colleagues make in the workplace?
- 18) What strengths or weaknesses do you think a neurodivergent employee offers to a team at work?
- 19) Is there anything on the topic of neurodiversity in the workplace, that you feel we haven't discussed, that you would like to say?

Appendix (D): Debrief Sheet

Debrief Sheet

Thank you for choosing to participate in this research study. The purpose of this study is to learn about the workplace environment of employees in the civil service, and from this consider how supportive the workplace environment can be for neurodivergent employees.

I will be conducting confidential interviews with a number of employees in the Department of Social Protection, and I will analyse the collective transcripts of these interviews to identify common themes.

The results of this study will be written up in my dissertation for my MA in Human Resource Management degree and will be submitted to the National College of Ireland for review. If my dissertation is successfully reviewed, it will then also become available to read by the Department of Social Protection. The results will not contain any identifiable information about participants, or any other person discussed.

If you wish to withdraw your data from this study, you can request this up to one week after the interview has been conducted, after which the data will be written into my dissertation analysis. Please contact me on the details below if you wish for your data to be withdrawn.

If you have any further questions about this study, please contact me or my supervisor on the contact details below. If you have been distressed by any part of this study, a list of support organisations is listed below.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

Contact Details

- Researcher: Mary McLaughlin
x23301163@studnet.ncirl.ie
- Research Supervisor: Dr David Mothersill
david.mothersill@ncirl.ie

Support Organisations

- **Samaritans**
Phone: 116 123 (Available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year)
www.samaritans.org/ireland/samaritans-ireland/