

Institution: Heriot-Watt University		
Unit of Assessment: C17: Business and Management Studies		
Title of case study: Improving equality, inclusion, and workplace justice for professional neurodiverse employees		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: Aug 2012 – present		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
James Richards	Associate Professor	Sep 2003 – present
Katherine Sang	Professor	Apr 2012 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2013 – Dec 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Neurodiverse people face disproportionate inequality, exclusion, and injustice in employment. Richards and Sang’s research – based on two projects (2012/2016) funded by Transport Salaried Staffs’ Association/Union Learning Fund – addressed an urgent need to improve working lives and career opportunities and reduce discrimination for professional neurodiverse employees working in the UK transport industry. Over eight years, through informing of a range of training packages, the research led to improved sector-wide awareness, individual-based advocacy, improved policies and line manager training and line manager training on neurodiversity. The research influenced ACAS guidance, advocacy for autistic police employees, raised the profile of neurodiversity across the UK labour movement, particularly in the education sector.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Prior to the research presented here (see Section 3), there has been very little understanding of the employment experiences of neurodiverse people (neurodiverse conditions in this instance relates to dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, attention deficit disorder, and autism) and their typically historically problematic employment outcomes. Richards and Sang’s research (with Marks) improved understanding of the experiences of neurodiverse employees [3.3, 3.4] and their line managers [3.1] to identify a strategy to improve working lives, an area which has received scant policy or research attention. The original research [3.5] was commissioned by the Transport and Salaried Staffs’ Association (TSSA) to modernise organising activities to reduce the discrimination members reported within the transport industry, including being denied professional development and promotion opportunities. The TSSA reported that they were ill-equipped to support their growing numbers of neurodiverse members.</p>		

To improve the working conditions of neurodiverse workers, and reduce the discrimination and injustices they experience, a two-part research project was completed. Firstly, the research aimed to inform the TSSA about workers' experiences of being neurodiverse and working with neurodiverse colleagues [3.3, 3.4]. Secondly, the research examined everyday challenges faced by individual neurodiverse workers, their line managers and trade union representatives [3.1, 3.4].

The research revealed that there was limited knowledge of conditions such as autism and dyslexia [3.3, 3.4], and limited support for line managers with responsibility for neurodiverse employees [3.1]. There was an opportunity for trade unions to fill this gap to improve the working lives of neurodiverse employees [3.3]. The research identified key areas in need of development, including raising line manager awareness of and everyday practical skills related to neurodiversity [3.1], the disabling effects of working practices [3.4] and the positive role for trade unions in representing the needs of neurodiverse workers [3.3], especially in terms of improving working lives through both individualistic and collective forms of representation. The research created a clear roadmap for how employers and trade unions could reduce discrimination against neurodiverse employees and members. Crucially, the research also represents the basis by which the TSSA could sell a new agenda on neurodiversity in the workplace to an as very recently, reticent body of employers.

3. References to the research

[3.1] Richards, J, Sang, K, Marks, A & Gill, S 2019, "I've found it extremely draining": Emotional labour and the lived experience of line managing neurodiversity', *Personnel Review*, vol. 48, no. 7, pp. 1903-1923. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-08-2018-0289>

[3.2] Richards, J, Sang, K & Marks, A 2019, *Neurodivergence in Transport and Travel: Line Manager Support and Training*. Transport Salaried Staffs' Association, London.

[3.3] Richards, J & Sang, K 2016, 'Trade unions as employment facilitators for disabled employees', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 27, no. 14, pp. 1642-1661. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2015.1126334>

[3.4] Sang, K, Richards, J & Marks, A 2016, 'Gender and Disability in Male-Dominated Occupations: A Social Relational Model', *Gender, Work and Organization*, vol. 23, no. 6, pp. 566-581. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12143>

[3.5] Richards, J, Sang, K & Marks, A 2012, *Neurodiversity in the transport and travel industry: An exploratory study of knowledge and attitude towards neurodiversity, and perceptions of support and the management of employees with dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, ADD/ADHD and Asperger syndrome*. TSSA.
<<http://tssa.org.uk/en/Equalities/dyslexia/neurodiversity.cfm>>

4. Details of the impact

Research led to multiple levels of direct and indirect/hidden impacts across the UK transport industry (employs circa 250,000) and beyond. The impact relates to improved and increased prevalence of awareness raising, individual advocacy, policy development and line manager training on a sectoral scale [5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9] Substantially, the novelty of the

research/neurodiversity work of the TSSA [3.5] filled gaps in HR practitioner knowledge via ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) [5.4]. The research inspired a national trade union conference motion circa 2015, leading to neurodiversity work conducted by National Education Union, GMB, Unite, Unison, National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, Communication Workers Union, Public and Commercial Services Union, Chartered Society of Physiotherapists) [5.2]. Most notable is NASUWT (National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers) scaled up replication of the TSSA's neurodiversity project (circa 315,000 membership compared to 20,000 TSSA membership) [5.1, 5.3]. The research also influenced associations set up to support autistic police employees (National Police Autism Association) [5.5]. Details of impact are unpacked below based on key facets of impact and further detailed in corroborating evidence noted in Section 5.

Building awareness

The research led to the TSSA's most successful campaign in 20 years [5.1] and was central to awareness raising for TSSA, NASUWT and other trade unions. The research launched at two high-profile events – House of Commons (3/12/2012) and Trades Union Congress Conference (10/9/2013). 1000 physical copies of article 1 distributed in the UK transport industry to reps, employees, HR managers. (research available on TSSA website). TSSA seen as source of expertise on neurodiversity due to research [5.1]. In 2015 Unite raised a disability conference motion on awareness raising/promoting role of equality reps in such processes (21-22/5/2015) [5.2]. The research informed ACAS's generic guidance on neurodiversity in 2016 [5.4], leading to 18,000 downloads of advice in three months following launch. Equality reps trained by TSSA built 'ground-level acceptance' of neurodiversity in numerous other ways, e.g., 'lunch and learn' sessions, stalls, screening for dyslexia, information sessions [5.1, 5.7], with reps learning more about their own neurodiversity through such methods [5.7, 5.8].

Advocacy and representation

Building on the research findings, TSSA trained 50 specialist reps [5.1]. The reps work for major transport organisations, e.g., Network Rail, Amey, Northern Rail and Transport for London (TfL). Indirectly, the research is linked to training over 200 NASWUT equality reps on neurodiversity since 2016 [5.3]. Further substantial levels of rep training, indirectly inspired by the joint work with TSSA, has been conducted by Public & Commercial Services Union [5.2]. Drawing specifically on this research, TSSA has been able 'to represent people effectively in performance, disciplinary, and discrimination issues' [5.1]. The research has helped reps secure adjustments for members, ensured transport organisations are inclusive of neurodiverse employees, and led to successes in employment tribunals related to neurodiversity issues [5.1]. A TSSA equality rep, acting in a broader capacity, has used specialised training to influence police employers in better supporting and protecting neurodiverse employees [5.5].

Policy development and bargaining

According to article 5, the TSSA used the research to build a bargaining programme to fully realise the Neurodiversity Project [5.6] and in doing so change policies on neurodiversity across the transport industry. TSSA, through equality reps, helped amend 'company performance criteria' for neurodiverse employees [5.1]. Further, specialist equality reps have been used to '...bargain and negotiate policies and practices related to neurodiversity...' at Network Rail [5.9]. For example, such rep expertise has fed into Network Rail's 'Everyone Matters' policy [5.7], a policy that sets targets on key areas of diversity and inclusion,

including neurodiversity. In the report [5.10], there is a pledge to work with trade unions on neurodiversity (p. 25), including a plan to train all line managers in neurodiversity. An indirect consequence of research has been the TSSA amending its own HR policies and practice to better support neurodiverse employees [5.1].

Line manager training

Part two of the research directly informed line manager training [3.2] TSSA is unique as no other trade union fulfils such a key/extended role. Such training influences policy development, boosting TSSA interactions with transport organisations regarding processes and procedures [5.1]. The subsequent training has been used by transport organisations, e.g., Network Rail, Eurostar, Virgin Trains, TfL. A line manager quote reveals the impact of training: 'It's brought a new awareness of how I line-manage. For example I changed how I delivered information and spent more time coaching and developing the ND person. Who then went on to a promotion and is doing well for the business' [3.2].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[5.1] Letter from General Secretary of TSSA, stating the full and positive impacts of the research for the TSSA (September 2020).

[5.2] Letter from trade union disability activist and neurodiversity tutor and author, concerning how the combination of the research and the TSSA raised the profile of neurodiversity in other trade unions (September 2020).

[5.3] Letter from National Official for Equality & Training for NASWUT (signed on behalf of NASWUT's General Secretary), detailing the influence of and work with TSSA in developing a scaled-up version of the original neurodiversity programme for reps working in primary, secondary and sixth-form school settings (February 2021).

[5.4] Letter from Policy and Content Adviser at ACAS, stating how Article 5 in Section 3 was drawn on to design best practice guidelines on neurodiversity in all workplaces (September 2020).

[5.5] Email from British Transport Police Chair of the National Police Autism Association, and, TSSA Equality Representative, detailing the influence of the TSSA neurodiversity programme in advocating for the rights of neurodiverse police employees (September 2020).

[5.6] Neurodiversity at Work: TSSA Equality Bargaining Standard

[5.7] Email from TSSA Equality Representative, manager at Network Rail (employs 40,000 employees) and neurodiverse employee, detailing the influence of TSSA neurodiversity rep training in relation to becoming an effective staff rep for neurodiverse employees, to use such information to feed into national-level policy agendas related to neurodiversity, be a better manager and being key to seeking a personal diagnosis of autism and dyspraxia (September 2020).

[5.8] Email from TSSA Equality Representative, line manager at Network Rail and neurodiverse employee, detailing the influence of TSSA neurodiversity rep training in relation to becoming an effective staff rep for neurodiverse employees, a better manager

and helping to explain differences in personal behaviour as an autistic adult (September 2020).

[5.9] Email from TSSA Equality Representative and line manager at Network Rail, detailing the influence of the TSSA neurodiversity rep training in relation to becoming an effective staff rep for neurodiverse employees, improving line manager skills related to managing neurodiversity, and, to bargain and negotiate on neurodiversity policy at national level of her employer (September 2020).

[5.10] Everyone Matters: Network Rail's diversity and inclusion strategy for 2019-2024