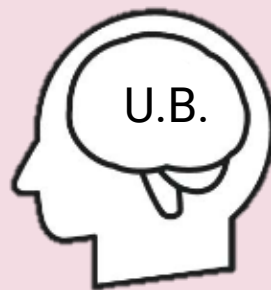


Neurodivergence & Unconscious Bias

This factsheet is for:

- Neurodivergent Adults,
- Parents & Carers and
- Professionals



Summary:

Neurodivergent people may be held back by unconscious bias as a result of mistaken beliefs that neurodivergence is an entirely negative conditions and that all Neurodivergent people are very similar. We all have a responsibility to reduce our unconscious bias through education and self-awareness.

Unconscious bias is the impact on our thoughts and judgements of our experiences and sometimes our beliefs that takes place without us realising. Unconscious bias can lead us to subconsciously attribute strengths and weaknesses to someone based on one or more aspects of who they are based on our views and experience of others with that characteristic. For example, we may assume that a man will be interested in football and a woman will not, or that someone that uses a wheelchair may be unable to carry out tasks which are completely unrelated to mobility impairment.

Unconscious bias can have a significant impact on the opportunities offered to and treatment of neurodivergent people. There is still an enormous lack of understanding and education about what neurodivergence is and its impacts among many people.

Neurodivergent people may suffer unconscious bias from others assuming that they have learning difficulties or generally less competent. This may be part of the reason that unemployment rates among neurodivergent people are so high, with ~78%* of neurodivergent adults in the UK not in full time paid employment, ~85%* in the US.

There is also a general lack of understanding of how diverse neurodivergence is. Many people subconsciously assume that any neurodivergent person will be very similar to another neurodivergent person that they know or have seen in the media, even in a fictional setting.

Neurodivergence is also generally believed to be an entirely negative conditions, which is just not true. Neurodivergent people are just different, and have strengths and challenges just like everyone else. While they may have difficulties in thriving in a world not designed for how their brains work, they often have unique strengths which can be overlooked by others whose unconscious bias is that neurodivergence implies 'less than'.

The general unconscious bias against neurodivergence in society prevents many neurodivergent people from thriving, like benefitting from the same opportunities as others or being their true selves. The answer is education and awareness. We all have a responsibility to learn more about neurodivergence, particularly if we are making decisions that impact neurodivergent people. The best way to learn the truth about neurodivergence is to talk to neurodivergent people about how neurodivergence affects them.

*as of 2022

