User Guide

Psychological and Cultural Safety Rating Service

Making the world a safer place for everyone

We all thrive when being given the opportunity to work with our most trusted peers. In a good company everyone is acutely aware of all the collective intelligence and capability that is available in the form of trusted colleagues, friends, and family.

No large organisation can claim to have a genuine commitment to diversity and inclusion if it does not subscribe to independent oversight by marginalised segments of the population.

This intersectional community-powered service enables employees to rate their employers in terms of psychological safety, cultural safety, and inclusiveness for all staff.

Companies can subscribe to intersectional community powered independent oversight via an Employee Wellbeing / Employer Rating Service.

Individuals and companies can engage with the the Employee Wellbeing / Employer Rating Service via two anonymous surveys in conjunction with the related Bullying Alert Service:

1. The psychological safety baseline database ➜ The survey ➜ Background, which does not collect data on specific employers but does collect information on the location (country) and the economic function/sector of the employer.

2. The employer rating survey, which collects data on specific employers. Employers are encouraged to subscribe and to use the service for regular psychological safety audits. Please note that in order to maximise the protection of employees, neither information about who participated in the survey nor any of the anonymous individual responses will be shared with employers nor with any other party.

Background

The service design for the Employee Wellbeing / Employer Cultural Safety and Psychological Safety Rating Service emerged two years ago out of the autistic community and is available in the public domain. The design rationale easily translates to all marginalised groups, which has led to the implementation described in this document.

Neurodivergence is at **the core of creativity**. Not wanting to be popular is what allows autistic and artistic people to act as agents of a healthy **cultural immune system** within human societies. Autism and other forms of neurodivergence are genetically-based human neurological variants that can not be understood without the social model of disability.

In the broadest sense, the social model of disability is about nothing more complicated than a clear focus on the economic, environmental and cultural barriers encountered by people who are viewed by others as having some form of impairment – whether physical, sensory or intellectual. – (Mike Oliver 2004).

Undercover autists as well as all other weird non-conformists are compromising their mental and physical health in toxic school and work environments on a daily basis. Management by fear is still the norm in many organisations, and often groupthink is celebrated as a virtue.

The journey towards healthy work environments and ultimately a healthier relationship with the ecosystems which we are part of starts with new ways of thinking about diversity and the human species.

The objectives of the autistic and neurodiversity civil rights movements overlap significantly with the interests of those who advocate for greater levels of psychological safety in the workplace and in society in general.

Creating and maintaining a psychologically and culturally safe environment is fundamental for the flourishing of all staff, yet in many organisations psychological and cultural safety is still the exception.

A disproportionate numbers of autists take their lives before receiving a "diagnosis". This points to a violation of human rights, to institutionalised discrimination and bullying in our society, and not just to a lack of adequate crisis support services and healthcare services.

Many so-called "Autism at Work" programmes for example are predominantly focused on specific industries and professions that reinforce the stereotype of the autistic engineer and the stereotype of the autistic savant. This contributes to the creation of corporate 'ghettos' of officially diagnosed autists, who are confined to working in specific roles – often for very small salaries, who must at all times be appropriately "managed".

This social climate has two effects:

1. Firstly, many undercover autists who are more or less successfully clinging to a job that provides them with a livelihood will strive to remain undercover at all costs – that is until they reach breaking point and fall off the cliff.

2. Secondly, virtually all undercover autists who are working in non-stereotypical roles, for example as social workers, clinicians (often highly competent in their areas of specialisation), as carers, nurses, teachers, administrators, etc. will remain undercover until they fall off the cliff or exit the workforce. This group hardly ever gets mentioned because the stigma is so extreme, and because the bullying in the healthcare sector is pervasive, and not limited to autistic people.

There is a need for a trustworthy service that enables employees to rate their employers in terms of psychological safety, cultural safety, and inclusiveness for:

1. **all staff**

2. **autistic and otherwise neurodivergent staff in particular**

3. **LGBTQIA+ staff in particular**

Employee Wellbeing Assessment

The Design Justice Network and the Autistic Collaboration Trust engage with the wider neurodiversity movement and other minority groups to catalyse trustworthy and globally accessible employee wellbeing services that are supervised by volunteers from minority groups.

The Design Justice Network and the Autistic Collaboration Trust can also offer relevant software tools (via S23M) and assist with establishing an intersectional team of independent volunteers that represents various locally relevant minority groups.

If you would like to promote and establish the Employee Wellbeing / Employer Rating Service and the Bullying Alert Service in your geography, please contact the Autistic Collaboration Trust via the form at https://autcollab.org/projects/employer-rating-service.

Both services are coordinated at a regional level by groups of volunteers from the Design Justice Network and the Autistic Collaboration Trust.

How does it work for staff?

Nothing about us without us

Staff are invited to submit feedback on psychological safety and inclusiveness of their current and past employers via an anonymous survey at any point in time.

This results in a database of anecdotal information that is screened by volunteers from the Design Justice Network and the Autistic Collaboration Trust on a regular basis:

1. Responses are grouped by the names of employers.

2. All employers that not yet actively participating in the Employee Wellbeing / Employer Rating Service are identified.

3. The employers that don't yet actively participate are prioritised based on the level of psychological safety and inclusiveness that they seem to provide – with top priority given to employers that seem to operate environments that are less safe or inclusive than average and to employers that seem to operate environments that are much safer and more inclusive than average.

4. Employers are contacted by volunteers with an invitation to enrol in the Employee Wellbeing / Employer Rating Service to monitor and improve their workplace culture.

5. The Autistic Collaboration Trust maintains a non-public list of employers that have chosen not to enrol in the Employee Wellbeing / Employer Rating Service or not to disclose the results, so that this information is available when employees contact the Autistic Collaboration Trust with a request for assistance via the Bullying Alert System.

6. The Autistic Collaboration Trust also maintains a public database of employers that have enrolled in the Employee Wellbeing / Employer Rating Service and that have explicitly given permission to share the aggregated overall results as a reference for others and as a public signal of transparency towards people looking for employment opportunities.

The core of the Employee Wellbeing / Employer Rating Service is an anonymous assessment of psychological safety, cultural safety, and overall inclusiveness. As an employee you can submit feedback on your current and past employers.

How does it work for employers?

Employers that are committed to providing a psychologically and culturally safe and inclusive workplace can register their interest in the Employee Wellbeing / Employer Rating Service by submitting an inquiry via the the form at https://autcollab.org/projects/ employer-rating-service.

1. Employers are contacted by a volunteer from the Design Justice Network or the Autistic Collaboration Trust to confirm the size of the organisation, and to ascertain whether the organisation qualifies for enrolment free of charge (the service is free for SMEs and only incurs a charge for organisations with more than 150 staff).

2. The employer is given a unique employer code so that anonymous survey responses from staff can be associated with the employer without any ambiguity.

3. The employer invites staff to submit feedback on psychological safety, cultural safety and inclusiveness via an anonymous survey.

4. Staff submit feedback via an anonymous survey using the unique employer code to associate their response with the organisation.

5. The employer is notified once at least 10 responses have been received.

6. The employer asks all employees who have participated in the survey to independently register their name and email address directly with S23M (the company contracted by the Autistic Collaboration Trust to manage the anonymous survey data), to confirm participation. Please note that in order to maximise the protection of employees, S23M

will never share information about who participated in the survey nor any of the anonymous individual responses with employers.

7. The employer is notified once at least 70% of staff have confirmed participation in the survey.

8. Once a confirmed participation rate of at least 70% is reached, volunteers from the Design Justice Network and the Autistic Collaboration Trust select a small random sample of participating employees to verify employment and survey participation via a phone call or email and via online tools such as LinkedIn. This step is necessary to discourage employers from submitting responses on behalf of employees.

9. The employer only receives aggregated results from the survey (the individual anonymous responses are never shared with employers), with the overall participation rate, and when available, with benchmarking data in relation to other organisations in the same country or economic sector.

10. The employer decides if and when the aggregated results are shared with employees or are made available to the public via the Autistic Collaboration Trust. Under no circumstances will the Autistic Collaboration Trust share the individual anonymous responses with employers or with any other party.

11. Employers are encouraged to commit to a genuinely safe and inclusive workplace culture by enrolling in the Employee Wellbeing / Employer Rating Service on a quarterly or annual basis.

The employer psychological and cultural safety rating survey

The survey consists of 15 questions and is sponsored by S23M. The survey data is reviewed by volunteers from the autistic community and other minority groups appointed by the Autistic Collaboration Trust.

Results are only made available to employers who subscribe to the service via the Autistic Collaboration Trust, and subject to the limitations described above, i.e. the individual anonymous responses are never shared with employers or with any other party.

1. **Employer**

   Organisation : *either the name of the organisation (for employees of organisations that do not subscribe to the Employer Rating Service) or the unique code assigned to the organisation by the Autistic Collaboration Trust to keep the identity of the employer private and to minimise cybersecurity risks (for employees of employers that subscribe to the Employer Rating Service).*

   Country : *the country in which the employee works, to allow unambiguous identification of employers and, as needed, to differentiate country specific differences within multi-national organisations.*

2. **Your relationship with the organisation**

   • The organisation is my current employer

   • I left within the last 12 months

   • I left 1 - 3 years ago

   • I left 4 - 6 years ago

   • I left 7 - 9 years ago

   • I left more than 9 years ago

Dimensions of psychological safety within your organisation

In this section 'customer' refers to external people or organisations that your organisation serves and 'supplier' refers to external people or organisations that your organisation relies on to deliver its services or products.

3. Be your authentic self

Effects of fear: inability to learn
Indicators of a lack of fear: freedom to explore new approaches

Possible answers: Never, Sometimes, Often, Always, N/A

- Are you afraid to be yourself amongst your peers?
- Are you afraid to be yourself amongst your superiors?
- Are you afraid to be yourself amongst customers?
- Are you afraid to be yourself amongst suppliers?

4. Take risks

Effects of fear: unhappiness, social friction
Indicators of a lack of fear: trusted relationships

Possible answers: Never, Sometimes, Often, Always, N/A

- Are you afraid to take risks and openly discuss risks with your peers?
- Are you afraid to take risks and openly discuss risks with your superiors?
- Are you afraid to take risks and openly discuss risks with customers?
- Are you afraid to take risks and openly discuss risks with suppliers?

5. Make mistakes

Effects of fear: oversimplified perspectives on reality, misrepresentation of results
Indicators of a lack of fear: freedom to learn about the limits of applicability of established approaches

Possible answers: Never, Sometimes, Often, Always, N/A

- Are you afraid to make mistakes and share lessons with your peers?
- Are you afraid to make mistakes and share lessons with your superiors?
- Are you afraid to make mistakes and share lessons with customers?
- Are you afraid to make mistakes and share lessons with suppliers?

6. Raise problems

Effects of fear: recurring and cascading problems
Indicators of a lack of fear: encouragement to investigate root causes of problems

Possible answers: Never, Sometimes, Often, Always, N/A

- Are you afraid to raise problems amongst your peers?
- Are you afraid to raise problems amongst your superiors?
- Are you afraid to raise problems amongst customers?
- Are you afraid to raise problems amongst suppliers?

7. Ask questions

Effects of fear: spurious complexity
Indicators of a lack of fear: encouragement to minimise spurious complexity

Possible answers: Never, Sometimes, Often, Always, N/A

- Are you afraid to ask questions amongst your peers?
- Are you afraid to ask questions amongst your superiors?
- Are you afraid to ask questions amongst customers?
- Are you afraid to ask questions amongst suppliers?

8. Disagree

Effects of fear: social groupthink and resulting recurring or cascading problems
Indicators of a lack of fear: appreciation of creativity

Possible answers: Never, Sometimes, Often, Always, N/A

- Are you afraid to disagree with your peers?
- Are you afraid to disagree with your superiors?
- Are you afraid to disagree with customers?
- Are you afraid to disagree with suppliers?

9. Avoid sensory overload

Effects of overload: stress, irritability, inability to process information, meltdown, shutdown
Indicators of a lack of overload: ability to hyper-focus, flow

Possible answers: Never, Sometimes, Often, Always, N/A

- Are you exposed to overwhelming or distracting conversations, sounds, or noises?
- Are you exposed to overwhelming or distracting lights, contrasts, or visual patterns?
- Are you exposed to overwhelming or distracting smells or tastes?
- Are you exposed to overwhelming or distracting air draughts, hot or cold temperatures, or surface textures?
- Are you exposed to overwhelming or distracting constraints (desk/screen that is too small, too little space to move)?

10. Avoid overload and burnout

Effects of overload: stress, irritability, inability to process information, meltdown, shutdown
Indicators of a lack of overload: ability to hyper-focus, flow

Possible answers: Never, Sometimes, Often, Always, N/A

- Are you exposed to overwhelming or distracting messages?
- Are you exposed to overwhelming or distracting meetings?
- Are you exposed to overwhelming or distracting priorities?
- Are you exposed to overwhelming or distracting deadlines?

11. Social categories you identify with

- Neurodivergent
- LGBTQIA+
- Disabled
- Non-white / non-European origin
- Member of a marginalised culture (ethnicity and/or religion)
- None of the above apply

12. Please assess the inclusiveness of your workplace

- It is safe to openly identify as LGBTQIA+
- You identify as LGBTQIA+ but not openly
- You openly identify as LGBTQIA+
- You are aware of other staff who openly identify as LGBTQIA+
- It is safe to openly identify as neurodivergent
- You identify as neurodivergent but not openly
- You openly identify as neurodivergent
- You are aware of other staff who openly identify as neurodivergent
- None of the above apply

13. Level of support and appreciation you experience at work

Effects of lacking support and appreciation: stress, frustration, disengagement, isolation, depression
Indicators of a lack of support and appreciation: inability to complete tasks, not knowing who to ask for help, high error rates

Possible answers: Never, Sometimes, Often, Always, N/A

- Do you have a good understanding of whether or not you are meeting the expectations of your job?
- Do you have access to the resources and tools you need to develop your skills and grow professionally?
- Do you understand how decisions are made at the company, especially those that affect your job?
- Do you feel lonely at work?

14. The fears you experience at work are ...

- entirely due to your experiences with this employer
- mostly due to your experiences with this employer
- mostly due to your experiences with customers, external social environments, or previous employers
- entirely due to your experiences with customers, external social environments, or previous employers
- N/A (you don't experience any social anxiety at work)

15. Compared to other employers the organisation offers ...

- more psychological safety and inclusiveness
- average psychological safety and inclusiveness
- less psychological safety and inclusiveness

Putting the results to good use

Metrics

To understand psychological and cultural safety within your organisation, we recommend that you focus on a small set of numbers that reflect the dimensions that are relevant to the context of your organisation (the local community/culture, your staff, customers and suppliers). Our default recommendation for an organisation that aims to be inclusive is to focus on the following numbers:

A. Safety in relationships with peers (aggregated across all responses)

B. Safety in relationships with superiors (aggregated across all responses)

C. Safety for neurodivergent staff (aggregated into one number across peers and superiors)

D. Safety for staff with non-normative gender and sexual identities (aggregated into one number)

E. Safety for staff who consider themselves as disabled within society (across all forms of disability, aggregated into one number)

F. Safety for staff from marginalised cultures (non-white, marginalised ethnicity, marginalised religion, aggregated into one number)

This allows everyone to observe trends in these dimensions, and these can then be used to act accordingly.

Sharing results

The results of the survey can only be put to good use if they are shared with those who are affected by the psychological and cultural safety within your organisation.

1. **Committing to community powered oversight** and regularly inviting employees to participate in an independently administered survey of psychological and cultural safety is significant signal of genuine commitment to staff wellbeing, diversity, and inclusion in and of itself. You can make this commitment visible by advertising it to staff, job seekers, and to your customers and suppliers.

2. **Depending on the level of trust within the organisation, you can decide to remove all "firewalls"** between AutCollab and your staff, so that the results from each survey run are shared with all those who participated in the survey. Such a decision visibly demonstrates to your employees that (a) you have great trust in them and appreciate their contribution to workplace culture, and (b) that the organisation is fully committed to independent oversight of workplace culture.

   One of our first subscribers, Ultranauts in the United States, has opted for this level of transparency, and we encourage other subscribers to follow their example.

   Alternatively you can run the survey once, and review the results, before deciding if and when to share them with staff and other stakeholders. Openly sharing the results with staff is an excellent tool for maintaining a healthy workplace and for stimulating the discussions that are needed to address any areas of concern. Depending on the results, it may also be beneficial to visibly publicise the results to your customers and suppliers, and to your local community.

3. **Sharing results also allows all those involved to observe trends** from one survey to the next. Trends can not only be used to address emerging areas of concern in a timely manner. Even if earlier metrics signalled significant challenges, any visible improvements achieved hold great potential for building up confidence that (further) improvements are possible. Visible changes in metrics provide employees with a sense of genuine agency – an awareness that all staff contribute to the culture of the organisation.

4. **A healthy workplace culture based on mutual trust and an appreciation of all forms of diversity has profound effects on all aspects of the organisation**. Employees who feel safe and appreciated at work are not only more productive and healthy, they are also able to extend greater levels of trust to their colleagues, and are much more likely to share their tacit knowledge, allowing collective intelligence to flourish, resulting in greater levels of confidence and agility in collective decision making.

Frequently asked questions

1. **How is the survey data secured? What safeguards exist that would prevent someone from exporting an individual survey respondent's data?**

   At this stage we use SurveyMonkey to store the survey data. Only the trustees of the Autistic Collaboration Trust have access to the SurveyMonkey account. Even though all responses are anonymous, if desired we can agree to delete all the individual survey responses after the survey is completed. This then only leaves the aggregated results for the employer as permanent records.

2. **Is it fair to say that the Employer Rating Service is designed to be inclusive of all team members, not only neurodivergent team members?**

   Yes, this is the whole idea, and this is also why we are recruiting volunteers for coordinating the the Employer Rating Service and the Bullying Alert Service in collaboration with the Design Justice Network. Employers can tell us which specific marginalised groups are relevant to their context, and we will actively seek to find volunteers from these groups.

3. **Can we assure our team that no AutCollab community members associated with our organisation would have access to or would be involved in reviewing / auditing survey results (to protect staff anonymity)?**

   Yes, certainly. Furthermore:

   - All responses are anonymous, so no response is traceable to any specific individual.

   - The responses are only accessible to the 6 trustees of the Autistic Collaboration Trust, and not to any members of the wider AutCollab community.

   - We can make available to your team the list of volunteers who will be available as independent peers as part of the Bullying Alert Service, and these volunteers may also be involved in receiving and counting the confirmation emails from people who have participated in the survey. These confirmation emails are independent from the survey responses. Staff may consciously delay their confirmation email by several hours, by a day, or by some random time as needed, to feel comfortable that there is no obvious link between the received survey responses and the received confirmation emails.

   - We will verify that the total number of survey responses received match up with the number of confirmation emails counted by the volunteers. The volunteers may then contact a few random staff who have sent confirmation emails to verify the responses are genuine.

   - We only provide aggregated responses data back to employers if we have received at least 30 responses. As needed, we can raise that number as far as needed, so that everyone is confident that their individual inputs can't easily be deduced from the data provided back to the employer.

- We will not provide employers with any individual response records, because we realise that this might allow a few responses to be mapped back to specific individuals, for example via a potentially unique neurodivergence, gender identity, disability, and ethnicity combination. Employers will only receive aggregate data.

4. **By "aggregate data", do you mean for data aggregated for specific categories of respondents, i.e.** *all, neurodivergent, LGBTQ+*, **etc.**

   Yes, this is correct. This is why we work with adequately coarse categories – so that the results aggregated by category are unlikely to yield categories for which there is just one response, which would enable readers to de-anonymise the result for single response categories.

5. **Some team members might not be "afraid" but might be uncomfortable and/or reluctant. Should we broaden the questions to "Are you uncomfortable/reluctant or afraid..."?**

   Rather than complicating all questions, the survey includes one question that asks people whether overall they think their fears are based primarily on their earlier experiences (previous employers etc.) or whether their fears are based primarily on experiences made at their current employer.

6. **Most of our employees don't interact with suppliers, can we remove the "suppliers" related questions from the survey?**

   While we are open to extending the survey with specific questions that are relevant for specific contexts, we want to avoid an unnecessary proliferation of survey variants. Employees can respond with N/A and we can ignore the data for these questions.

7. **Could we add more specific questions related to "superiors" by splitting up the question into more specific labels to make the results more actionable? For example: "... with your project managers ","…with your line manager ","…with your senior leadership team".**

   We advise against this idea. This would result in a fine grained categorisation of responses that could assist with de-anonymising individual responses. The answers to the questions, i.e. *never / sometimes / often / always* should be chosen to reflect lived experience. All reporting lines may reflect relationships that may involve social power gradients, and they can all become potentially problematic for the employee. Also, please note that in a high trust environment, project managers etc. may be considered as peers rather than as superiors. Before asking staff to respond to the survey we recommend clear communication regarding the locally applicable distinctions between "peer" and "superior" relationships.

8. **Can we add the question "What is your gender?"**

   This can be done if desired, but we would recommend consulting with your employees whether they are comfortable with such fine grained categorisation. The survey does cover broad social categories, but intentionally stays clear of more detailed categorisation could assist with de-anonymising individual responses.

9. **Can we add the question "What is your race?"**

   This can be done if desired, but we would recommend consulting with your employees whether they are comfortable with such fine grained categorisation. The survey does cover broad social categories, but intentionally stays clear of more detailed categorisation could assist with de-anonymising individual responses.

10. **Is there a single metric that could be calculated based on the survey results, i.e. an overall index for psychological safety?**

    It is always possible to calculate a single metric, the question is whether a single metric still provides meaningful insights into changes / trends. We recommend focusing on a small set of numbers (between 2 and 7) that reflect dimensions that are viewed as important by the organisation.

11. What frequency would you recommend for the survey? Most of our performance metrics are tracked monthly or quarterly, but we do have a couple annual metrics.

The non-commercial volunteer administered surveys are envisaged to be used annually for the purpose of a basic level of independent oversight. Employers can of course run the survey more frequently and we can provide you with the numbers quarterly, but without external sample based validation / auditing.

We do not recommend running the survey more than once every quarter, as people would quickly get tired of the survey routine. Instead we encourage staff to make use of the Bullying Alert Service, to reach out to external peers to report any psychological safety issues they are experiencing. The survey provides organisations with overall trends, but it does not surface specific problems experienced by specific individuals.

Even running surveys quarterly and including open questions to report problems would not be nearly as effective as a Bullying Alert Service that is always available on demand. Having external peers available to report problems is very important. It allows reports to be appropriately anonymised / depersonalised – in consultation with the person reporting a problem, before communicating it back to the organisation – as needed to the preferred contact of the person who reported the problem.

12. How many companies are currently participating in the Employer Rating service?

As of April 2021 we have one active subscriber (in the United States), and we are in the process of signing up further organisations. In April 2021 we have partnered with the Design Justice Network to actively promote adoption of the service globally.

In New Zealand:

- At least one District Health Board that works with 6,000+ healthcare professionals is actively considering subscribing to both the Employer Rating Service and the Bullying Alert Service.

- A regional disability support service provider that offers employment assistance would love to sign up some of the organisations they work with. They fully understand the value proposition. Their feedback is included below.

  This is brilliant.

  I have just checked out the links and read the survey.

  Its exciting and just so positive, intelligent and well thought out. What a great company/trust.

  It would be interesting to see if <customer 1> would do it….

  <customer 2> may do it if they had the time but it's a bit of a bureaucracy with paperwork and head office there.

  It is such an honest approach. Rather than employers just hiring a couple of people with disabilities to get the ticks they need to be a "diverse friendly" employer etc, this actually asks the employees themselves.

  It will certainly separate the wheat from the chaff.

  I just love hearing about these companies who are actively trying to educate and learn and thereby create less fear and ignorance around "disabilities."

- We are regularly running pro bono education courses on psychological safety and neurodiversity for MBA students, and we have started to give them an optional homework assignment to sign up their employers. This is bound to yield further active subscribers in New Zealand over the course of 2021.

Bullying Alert Service

Improving and maintaining safety

A genuinely safe environment allows all employees to be themselves, take risks, make mistakes, raise problems, ask questions, and disagree.

Creating and maintaining a psychologically safe environment is fundamental for the flourishing of autistic and otherwise neurodivergent staff.

Elevated rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide apply across the entire autism spectrum. These co-morbid conditions are a reflection of experiences made in the social environment rather than a reflection of autism specific neurology. The latest research confirms that bullying plays a major role, reflecting the strong consensus within the autistic community that bullying is one of the most important issues that needs to be addressed. Due to differences in social cognition non-autistic people are less willing to interact with autistic peers based on thin slice judgements.

Creating safe collaborative work environments is as much about unlearning traditional management techniques from the industrial era, as it is about reacquainting ourselves with our innate collaborative tendencies and relearning how to be curious and how to think critically.

The Autistic Collaboration Trust assists organisations to reduce their implicit (and sometimes explicit) bias against neurodivergent staff. Neurodiversity is the at the core of creativity, and organisations can benefit immensely by supporting neurodivergent staff in suitable ways and by providing an environment that is safe for all employees.

Lack of cultural and psychological safety is common

More than 90% of diversity and inclusion initiatives fail.

In an unsafe environment the individuals that find themselves at the receiving end of discrimination and various forms of bullying do not have access to any trusted party that is in a position to assist and address the situation with effective measures. For organisations in which staff experience unsafe environments this means that the organisation is not in a position to address the problem without external assistance.

Often discrimination, bullying and exploitation occurs as part of programmes that claim to assist neurodivergent and vulnerable employees. There is no shortage of highly concerning examples.

A bullying alert service for employees

If you find yourself in a work environment where you frequently have to mask or tend to be penalised for taking risks, making mistakes, raising problems, asking questions, or disagreeing with your colleagues, you are in an unsafe environment.

You can use the form at https://autcollab.org/projects/bullying-alert-system/ to report the context of your situation in anonymised form. Reporting of unsafe work environments allows us to undertake the following actions:

1. Get in touch with the organisation (and specific contact person if specified) to discuss the concerns you raise in a way that does not identify you as an individual. In some cases, especially when the nominated contact person is someone who genuinely cares about staff well being and is in a suitable position within the organisation, this may lead to an incremental improvement in the workplace culture.

2. We can introduce the organisation to the Employee Wellbeing / Employer Rating Service that helps employers with a genuine commitment to establishing a psychologically safe and inclusive workplace to identify areas that require attention based on anonymous staff feedback.

3. We can introduce the organisation to the Creative Collaboration service and related education that S23M provides to help establish and maintain psychological safety on an ongoing basis.

4. If you have provided an email address we may be in a position to provide you with initial feedback and suggestions from an independent perspective after we have contacted the organisation.

5. Expand our database of concrete examples of psychologically unsafe work environments, which in turn helps us to ensure that our advice considers all the situations that neurodivergent staff experience in practice.

As needed you can use a temporary email address to protect your identity.

Tip: When describing your environment, think about the context information that is essential (a) to understand the impact of the environment on you and your productivity at work and (b) to initiate positive changes.

For immediate mental health support, please also reach out to dedicated services in your local area, such as Lifeline in New Zealand and Beyond Blue in Australia.

Frequently asked questions

1. **Is the Bullying Alert Service designed exclusively for neurodivergent team members, or is it designed to be inclusive of all team members?**

   Just like the Employer Rating Service, this service is also designed to be inclusive of all team members, and the same group of volunteers will be involved in administering both services.

   For the Bullying Alert Service we assign a buddy pair of volunteers to attend to any alert. Beyond telling us which specific marginalised groups are relevant, in case an employee does not have enough confidence in our team of volunteers, the employee can also contact us directly, as needed anonymously, to nominate a specific advocate who is happy to act on their behalf in relation to the Bullying Alert Service. In this scenario the nominated advocate is one of the two members of the buddy pair assigned to the alert.

2. **Is there anything we would need to do to "sign up" for the Bullying Alert Service as a company, or do we simply introduce the service to our team, i.e. share the link, and include reminders during trainings, in our employee handbook, etc.?**

   There is no need to sign up for the Bullying Alert Service. We want the service to be accessible universally without any barriers. Reminding employees of the availability of the service as part of trainings and within employee handbooks is certainly a good idea.