

KEY MESSAGES



GIVING A VOICE TO SCOTLAND'S COMMUNITY LINK WORKERS

SCLWN: Neurodiversity Workshop 01 April 2025

Introduction

Voluntary Health Scotland and the Scottish Community Link Worker Network hosted a workshop on Neurodiversity in partnership with Nelly Whaley, Training Manager at [Salvesen Mindroom](#). This was in response to many Community Link Workers (CLWs) reflecting on the increase in the number of their patients presenting with neurodiversity.

The purpose of the workshop was to introduce CLWs to neurodiversity, looking at its definition and prevalence, providing an overview of neurotypes with a particular focus on ADHD. Participants were able to discuss practical strategies for supporting neurodivergent patients in small breakout groups as well as find out more about diagnostic pathways for both children and adults.

Neurodiversity - Understanding Brain Function Variation

Nelly discussed the concept of neurodiversity, defining it as the natural variation in human brain functioning. She emphasised that every person has a unique cognitive profile and challenged the idea of a "normal" brain. Nelly explained various terms related to neurodiversity to the group, including neurotypical, neurodivergent, and neuronormative. She stressed the importance of using respectful language and respecting individual preferences when discussing neurodiversity. The discussion also touched on cultural differences in perception of neurodivergent traits and the challenges faced by neurodivergent individuals in accessing support services.

Neurodiversity - Statistics and Support Needs

Nelly presented some statistics on neurodiversity, highlighting that 15-20% of the population is estimated to be neurodivergent, which equates to about 10 million people in the UK. She discussed various neurominority groups, their prevalence

rates, and the importance of recognising co-occurring conditions. Nelly emphasised the need for a person-centred approach in support, as individuals with the same diagnosis can have very different profiles. She also shared diagnostic ratios between males and females for various conditions and presented statistics on the challenges faced by neurodivergent individuals in different settings, such as education, workplace, and the criminal justice system.

ADHD Diagnosis and Coping Strategies

Nelly discussed the prevalence and diagnosis of ADHD, noting that it is more commonly diagnosed in males but is becoming more common in females. She mentioned that the diagnostic pathway may change as individuals mature and develop coping strategies. Nelly also highlighted the importance of family support and the use of coping strategies like planning ahead, breaking tasks down, and taking regular breaks. The team was encouraged to reflect on these points and consider how they could support individuals with ADHD in their work as community link workers.

ADHD Types and Challenges

Nelly discussed the three types of ADHD: hyperactive, inattentive, and combined. She explained that the inattentive type is more commonly diagnosed in women, while the combined type is the most frequently diagnosed overall. Nelly then delved into the challenges associated with ADHD, including executive functioning difficulties, memory issues, and hyperactivity. She emphasised the importance of recognising both visible and invisible struggles of individuals with ADHD, as well as their strengths, such as long-term memory and problem-solving skills.

Supporting Neurodivergent Individuals

Nelly introduced six common differences in neurodivergent individuals and asked participants in breakout groups to consider practical strategies for supporting them in their roles. The group discusses various strategies to support neurodivergent individuals across different areas. Group One shared that their group discussed using headphones to reduce external noise and community initiatives like relaxed sessions at theatres and supermarkets. Group Two emphasised the importance of following up appointments in writing and using visuals to help clients process information. Group Three highlighted the need for personalised approaches to emotional regulation, including planning ahead and identifying coping strategies. Group Four discussed the importance of flexible meeting locations and alternative activities for well-being. Group Five focused on executive functioning, suggesting extra reminders, personalised communication methods, and reviewing strategies

regularly. Group Six emphasised the importance of adapting communication styles and methods to suit individual needs, including using video and audio resources for those who struggle with reading.

Diagnostic Pathways and Challenges

Nelly finished the workshop by discussing the diagnostic pathways for children and adults, emphasising the importance of gathering evidence and involving relevant professionals. She highlighted the challenges of the diagnostic process, including waiting times, stigma, and the lifelong nature of the diagnosis. Nelly also addressed the issue of private diagnosis, noting its potential benefits but also the significant cost involved. She encouraged the use of screening tools and peer support groups for individuals on the waiting list.

More information

For more information about the Scottish Community Link Worker Network, please contact Roisin Hurst, Project Manager at roisin.hurst@vhscotland.org.uk

Voluntary Health Scotland
18 York Place, Edinburgh EH13EP 0131 474 6189
mail@vhscotland.org.uk vhscotland.org.uk

Registered Scottish Charity SC035482 A company limited by guarantee SC267315