



Ministry
of Justice

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HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary and HM Chief Inspector of
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Dear Charlie, Justin and Andy,

12-MONTH UPDATE TO THE CROSS-GOVERNMENT NEURODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) remains committed to improving support for neurodivergent people encountering the Criminal Justice System (CJS). Since publishing the six-month update to the Neurodiversity Action Plan in January 2023, we have continued to make progress in several areas. However, to deliver system wide change, some commitments in the Action Plan will take longer to embed, which is why we intend to work with our partner agencies beyond the 12-month mark to continue delivering these actions.

In recognition of this, and as discussed with your Inspectorate leads, we have provided a brief outline of our progress against the commitments in the Action Plan below and will commit to publishing an additional, substantive 18-month update. This final update will consolidate the significant and wide-reaching developments across the CJS, ensuring that we are fully delivering on the commitments set out in the Neurodiversity Action Plan.

Since January 2023, the Cross-Government Operational-Level Working Group met four times to review provision for neurodivergent individuals across policing, justice, and health. To ensure we are delivering the highest quality support and hearing from a diverse range of voices, we also hosted third sector roundtables and a lived experience forum. We know that historically it has been harder for women and black people to receive a diagnosis or access the right support for their neurodivergent needs. To tackle this, we have engaged heavily with stakeholders to understand how these issues play out in the CJS, and we will continue to raise awareness around this important issue, working with our partner agencies to address disparities and ensure we can better identify and support everyone that needs it.

To improve an individual's first contact with police, progress has been made over the past six months to increase training for staff and raise awareness around neurodiversity. The College of Policing has produced a Neurodiversity Glossary of Terms, which is available on its website, and all police officers have access to a neurodiversity e-learning package. To ensure neurodivergent needs are identified at the earliest opportunity, City of London Police are trialling Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) screening in custody. These changes will help to improve frontline staff's understanding of neurodiversity and the resources available to them to support people in their care.

Across courts and sentencing, HMCTS launched the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme in July 2023. Lanyards are available at all public facing buildings for court and tribunal users, as well as staff and judicial office holders. Wearing a lanyard allows a person to discreetly identify that they may need extra support, and staff are trained to recognise the lanyard and will ask how they can help someone. In partnership with NHS England, work is underway to embed key recommendations for supporting neurodivergent people who have a Community Sentence Treatment Requirement (CSTR). As part of the first implementation phase of the neurodiversity recommendations, more accessible assessments and fidget aids are being rolled out to criminal courts for individuals sentenced to CSTRs. These recommendations aim to improve accessibility and appropriate interventions for those with neurodivergent needs.

In prisons and probation, we have now recruited more than 100 Neurodiversity Support Managers (NSMs), which means we are ahead of schedule to have one NSM in every prison in the adult estate by 2024. We have already seen the considerable positive impact these roles are having in prisons across the estate, for example:

- introducing 'Neurodiversity Rep' jobs within some prisons, a paid role undertaken by neurodivergent prisoners to raise awareness of the support available;
- working in partnership with the prison and mental health provider to create a space in the prison that focuses on the sensory and mental health requirements for prisoners with complex needs;
- producing Easy-Read versions of key prison documents, including a Prison Induction Handbook for prisoners with low literacy; and
- embedding neurodiversity training into the staff induction process to ensure every new member of staff is knowledgeable and able to provide the right support.

To improve continuity of care for neurodivergent individuals leaving prison, NHS England's national Health and Justice team are promoting and embedding the new RECONNECT neurodiversity pathway within these respective services. This will help to ensure a standardised approach, giving individuals with neurodiverse needs equal access to RECONNECT services and equal outcomes from these services.

As you can see, encouraging progress has been made over the past six months to increase support for neurodivergent individuals at every stage of the CJS. We are committed to maintaining this momentum and will continue to work alongside our colleagues in policing, justice, and health over the next six months to strengthen actions and fulfil the commitments set out in the Neurodiversity Action Plan. In particular, we will focus on:

- identifying gaps in provision and where further support may be required, including during a person's first contact with the CJS;
- understanding barriers to diagnosis;
- further embedding increased join-up between agencies; and

- reviewing neurodiversity training and resources in light of race and gender differences.

We look forward to publishing our final, 18-month update to the Neurodiversity Action Plan in early 2024.

Yours sincerely,

ROSS GRIBBIN