

Neurodiversity training to better support the public

Published on 3 December 2022 Written by Sarah Gardner, Project Manager, Metropolitan Police Service

My idea: Training officers to respond to neurodivergent people

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In my work with the Metropolitan Police Service, I led a listening circle focusing on supporting colleagues who are neurodiverse. That discussion underpins my idea to focus on developing two neurodiversity training programmes. These are:

- management training to support neurodivergent colleagues
- training for frontline police officers to improve outcomes at incidents involving neurodivergent individuals

To support this, I have set up the Neurodiversity Tasking Action Group (NTAG). This is a national working group that aims to develop national guidance and training through expanding partnership working around neurodiversity.

It is important for all managers to have training, so that they can get the best from their staff and so everyone can benefit from being in a supportive work environment.

A recent study suggests that around one in three people moving through the justice system are thought to be neurodivergent (Kirby, 2021). The focus on training for frontline officers should be about understanding neurodiversity and how it can affect an individual's response to orders and actions during interactions with the police.

Sensory overload can lead to physical resistance, which may be wrongly interpreted by some officers as resistance or a lack of compliance. This can result in the use of force, which could exacerbate – rather than resolve – the incident. In turn, this can lead to an individual or officer being harmed, can undermine confidence in the police and can criminalise neurodiversity.

The training will be aimed at all police officers and staff to increase awareness around neurodiversity, minimise conflict escalation and offer better support to the public, while also

increasing public confidence.

Alongside training, initiatives such as guidance to call handlers will be considered, so that appropriate information is provided to officers when attending incidents where neurodiversity is a consideration. We will also consider pin badges to increase public confidence that officers are trained appropriately in dealing with neurodivergent individuals.

- Sarah is the lead for NTAG, if you are interested in joining, please email Sarah.Gardner@met.police.uk.
- This article was peer reviewed by Sergeant Lee Johnson, Lincolnshire Police.

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References

- Kirby A. (2021). [Neurodiversity – a whole-child approach for youth justice](#). HM Inspectorate of Probation Academic Insights. Academic Insights 2021/08.

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