

## 35% of Managers Lack Confidence on Neurodiversity Adjustments as Tribunal Cases Hit Five-year High

2 months ago



More than a third (35%) of HR and compliance professionals say managers in their organisation lack confidence when discussing reasonable adjustments for neurodivergent employees, according to a survey of 495 workplace professionals by compliance eLearning provider, [VinciWorks](#). Almost a third (30%) described managers as “not very confident” and only five per cent said they were “not confident at all.”

The picture at the other end of the scale tells its own story. Only 6.5% said managers in their organisation were very confident in these conversations. With at least one in seven people in the UK estimated to be neurodivergent, the confidence gap among those responsible for managing them carries significant workforce implications.

The findings arrive as analysis of His Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service data by employment law firm [Irwin Mitchell](#) reveals that tribunal claims involving neurodiversity discrimination have risen 95% over five years. In the last year alone, 517 cases were recorded, up from 265 in 2020, with a sharp 19% increase between 2024 and 2025. Autism and ADHD were the most commonly cited conditions. The average cost of defending a single tribunal now stands at £8,500 in legal costs alone, before any settlement or award is taken into account.

### The self-assessment paradox

More than half (57%) of respondents said their organisation was neurodiversity friendly. Yet more than a quarter (28%) said they were unsure, and over one in seven (16%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Those figures sit uncomfortably alongside the barriers data. Almost a third (31%) of the same group identified staff lacking awareness as the single biggest obstacle to improving support for neurodivergent employees, and over a fifth (22%) cited manager confidence. The data suggests organisations may be measuring intent rather than outcome, rating themselves on the existence of policies rather than on whether those policies are reaching the one in seven employees who are neurodivergent.

Nick Henderson-Mayo, Head of Compliance at VinciWorks, said: “There is a pattern here that should concern HR and compliance leaders. Organisations who say they are neurodiversity-friendly should have the evidence to back this up. With the Employment Rights Act putting more power in the hands of workers, firms should be prepared to show a tribunal how supporting neurodiversity in principle aligns with practice.”

### The training gap

Fewer than four in ten (39%) organisations have delivered any neurodiversity training at all. Of those that have, only around one in five (21%) have embedded it within ongoing programmes rather than treating it as a one-off exercise. Almost two in five (38%) said their organisation had not yet trained on neurodiversity but wanted to. Almost one in seven (14%) said there were no plans to do so.

Henderson-Mayo continued: “A single standalone session is unlikely to change how a manager behaves when a neurodivergent employee comes to them with a problem. What changes behaviour is repeated exposure, practice and the confidence that comes from knowing what effective support for neurodivergent staff looks like. Effective training covers how to open the conversation, how to approach a needs assessment, and how to review adjustments over time. That is how employers can evidence support.”

### Awareness as the core barrier

When asked to identify the single biggest barrier to improving support for neurodivergent employees, almost a third (31%) of professionals cited a lack of staff awareness. Manager confidence came second, named by over a fifth (22%). Together, barriers directly linked to training and awareness accounted for more than half (53%) of all responses.

Time and budget constraints were cited by around one in six (16%) respondents. Unsupportive workplace culture was identified by nearly one in seven (14%), and unclear or inconsistently applied policies by over one in ten (11%). Only 6.5% said their organisation faced no major barriers.

Henderson-Mayo said: “Like any workplace issue, a policy is useless on its own. It has to be backed up by strong and regular communication, training for managers and employees alike, and effective routes for accessing support. This is what an employment tribunal will look for, and we can expect to see a lot more neurodiversity at work issues being adjudicated in the future.”

### The legal context

Recent tribunal decisions illustrate how readily a failure to make reasonable adjustments can become a legal liability. In *Duncan v Fujitsu*, an employee with oral communication difficulties was found to have been discriminated against after being required to telephone in when sick rather than communicate in writing, and after being denied written agendas ahead of meetings. Reasonable adjustments can extend beyond physical changes to the working environment into the day-to-day practices, including during the

recruitment process..

The Employment Rights Act will soon reduce the two-year qualifying period for unfair dismissal claims, alongside more rights from day one of employment, and a doubling of the timeline to bring a tribunal claim from three to six months. The removal of the compensation cap also means high earners will be more likely to bring a claim, potentially adding even more cost to claims of neurodiversity discrimination.

Henderson-Mayo said: “The Employment Rights Act increases the likelihood that an employment dispute, from performance to pay, will reach a tribunal. Where neurodiversity forms part of the claim, employers will be expected to evidence that support worked in practice, not just on paper.”