

**Plus Value  
Awareness**



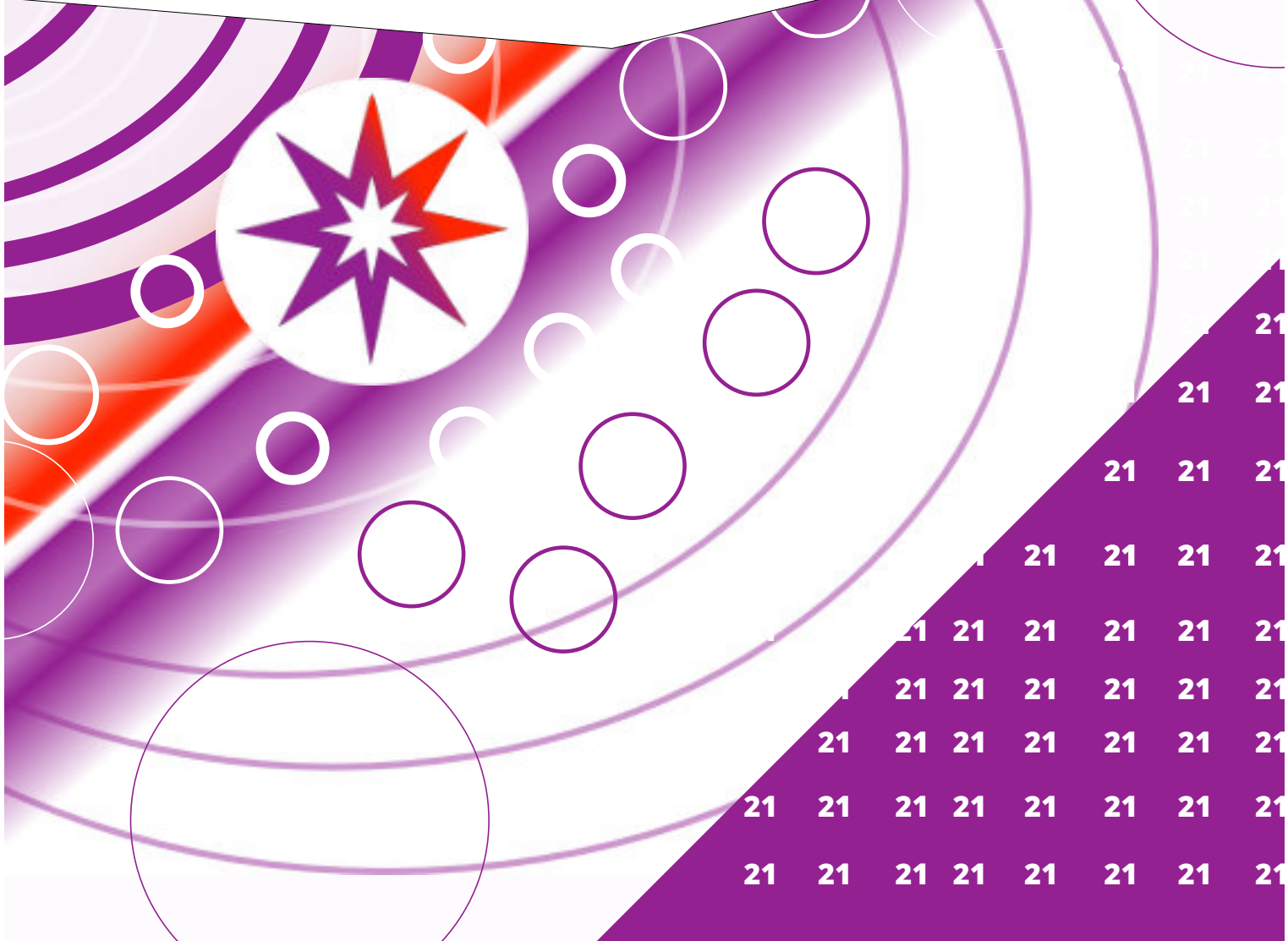
# Twenty-one insight

**Bitesize edition Part 2**

**An insightful analysis of Hidden Differences  
During the twenty-one year of the project director  
in providing awareness projects**

**Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia  
and Social Anxiety**

**Written by Keith Mckenzie,  
Project Director**



**Bitesize edition**



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# Introduction

**This document marks twenty-one years since the project director Keith Mckenzie started a variety of awareness projects, campaigns and activities.**

**This includes Differences Originals projects (formally Differences & Autism Challenge) with Plus Value Awareness since 2015.**

**The purpose of this document is to provide objective analysis and observations over two decades from the project director. It covers the progress of understanding, examples of valuing the setbacks and suggestions of positive ways forward.**

**Please note the project doesn't cover every single issue but only matters through the project director's observation. Also, the projects mainly cover the human aspects related to able-bodied, independent and intelligent adults with hidden differences associated with autism (mild & moderate level), ADHD, Dyslexia (short term memory), Dyspraxia and Social Anxiety. However, the document does not apply to the classic or severe symptoms of the conditions mentioned.**

**This document covers a family of different topics with analysis in different scenarios & situations.**

**The method of this document is through observations of ground-level expressions from hidden differences from social media, blogs and news articles and other sources online. Also the project director observations through society along with articles and research materials.**

**Please note the Analysis & conclusions to the issues covered are available in a special supplementary documents. See Page 26 for details.**



# Differences and Society

## Health care & NHS: Hospitals

There is a major concern of trust, especially when there have been many challenges for Hidden differences especially those living in the autistic spectrum. Recently, this has become more of a problem when accessing services in hospitals. Due to inadequate profiling and generalisation, some patients on the autistic spectrum have lost their lives due to poor decision-making, mental health presumptions and over-medications. Some of the wrong treatments have damaged a person's intelligence levels with extreme examples of epileptic fits. The project director attended a seminar at Birmingham City University by autistic parent Paula McGowan on how badly his son Oliver was treated to a level when he unnecessarily died because of bad decision making and mistreatments in hospitals. She has campaigned and has succeeded for the department for help to improve guidelines in hospitals to make reasonable allowances. However, because of the stigma caused by these and similar incidents, it can lead to a situation where an autistic person will not likely trust any hospital or health-related services. Therefore an autistic person can be reluctant to seek medical help.

## Health care & NHS: Specialist phone lines

Depending on where you live there are some specialist services including mental health. However, it is not necessarily available to everyone. For example, if you are an autistic person living in Birmingham and you may be not eligible to access free mental health services by the NHS. Read further details of this matter within this chapter under well-being.

For medical advice, everyone is encouraged to phone the NHS helpline 111. However, because these services are performance-related in providing a quick service it can lead to greater pressures when a person with differences is communicating. This is especially if there are struggling to articulate the point or to get their point across effectively.

## Health care & NHS: Health Centres & Clinics

Depending on where you live that can be a different level of services when accessing health centres and surgeries. Because of escalating demand for the services within recent years, this can affect how a patient with hidden differences can be treated.

The project director received some negative experiences when accessing the 111 services. In addition the project director has mixed experiences at health centres & surgeries especially with reception staff and specific doctors. Detailed examples are available through the supplementary insight by the author. (Ask for details)



# Differences and Society

## Emergency services & the Police

When accessing emergency services on the phone, certain people with hidden differences can face challenges when they can be misinterpreted and misjudged. If a person with differences faces a series of discrimination, physical abuse discrimination or hatred they can be wrongly judged as the offender, especially if an incident is reported more than one day in a row, they can be also seen as a nuisance and branded as wasting police time.

Some police forces in the past used to provide a specialised database to prevent mistreatments when hidden differences are when contacting the police especially via telephone. However, since the data protection rules changed, this procedure isn't permitted which means there is no system in place to make sure individuals with hidden differences be protected against discriminatory mistreatments.

Certain people in particular with the autistic spectrum can even face obstacles as there can be automatically ignored and use their difficulties to dismiss their experiences at the discredited witness. This has occurred when a Herefordshire man was killed after escalating amounts of hate crimes which were ignored and undervalued when reporting to the police at the time.

There have been news articles of autistic persons who are not convicted has been imprisoned simply because there is no support available to cater for them during crisis. In addition there have been reports of police staff physically abusing certain people with the autistic spectrum at police stations.



# Differences and Society

## Transport

**Many challenges can affect a person with hidden differences accessing and using public transport.**

### **Transport: Prejudice and mistreatment**

Some people living with differences can experience attitudes by certain members of public their place in society. Some will go one step further with verbal abuse, heckling and make verbal abuse and insults.

### **Transport: Intimidation**

The expectation of multitasking and quicker abilities can cause a damaging effect on a person with hidden differences. This can lead to situations including intimidation physical abuse & assault.

The project director has experienced his changes when he had faced physical intimidation and sometimes gets walked into pushed, shoved and knock into. This can occur when getting on and off particular transport vehicles when moving along the station or at a transport interchange or concourse including when going up and down staircases and escalators.

Detailed examples are available through the supplementary insight by the author. (Ask for details)

### **Transport: Ability speed expectations**

A person with hidden differences can face many challenges when expected to have the ability to speed beyond what they can manage. This ranges from getting through a crowded bus without having clumsy accidents. Also going through train station ticket barriers and manage through extremely packed crowds. This can lead to impatient attitudes and hostility not only by other passengers but also transport staff and officials. The pressures can also occur when using digital ticket machines efficiently.





# Differences and Society

## **Retail & consumer services: at General retailers, banks, focus service centres**

If a person with differences is at a particular retail branch and is struggling to comprehend when receiving information, it takes longer for them to be convinced. This can lead to hostile attitudes nearby when another customer is waiting nearby to be served and becomes impatient towards a person with differences. An insulting allegation can occur including taking too long with a particular sales staff. This can lead to the impatient customer waiting starts shouting or yelling including "come on, there are other customers who want to be served". This occurs at any retail locations such as Banks, booking stations at railway stations, travel centres and general retailers.

Certain people with hidden differences can face distraction style discrimination when they are being served. The examples include being heckled and face deliberately disruption including making mocking offensive hand gestures while playing particular music loud on their mobile phone or other music players with particularly music lyrics to cause celebrate offence. The prejudiced person is intended to disrupt a person with differences over what they are communicating. However, the retail sales staff does not take any action if a person with differences is unfairly distracted with discrimination. In some cases, a person with differences would be told off if they appear upset because of the discrimination they face while being served.

## **Retail & consumer services: The changes on how services are delivered**

The ever-changing levels of how can work, services and businesses are delivered. It can cause many obstacles to how a person with hidden differences access a particular service. This can occur especially with a performance-related target of completing customer enquiries within a short amount of time.

For example, when a person with differences is struggling to articulate their point (when the matter is complicated to explain or when they are stressed) can lead to situations where a person with differences receive impatient and disrespectful attitudes. Without realising the difficulties a person may live, they can be wrongly categorised as an irritant and a nuisance by staff and management.

This can affect a person with hidden differences in conversations to access helplines and reporting telephone numbers.



# Differences and Society

## **Retail & consumer services: General retail**

This can be a pressurising environment for a person with differences when trying to find the right item. There can be an expectation for a customer to have knowledge of any items of interest. This is on top of the pressures of being decisive in purchase without wasting sales staff time. It can also be a nightmare for some people with differences at department stores with loud music in the background and other visual distractions.

## **Retail & consumer services: Supermarkets**

At supermarkets, there is an expectation for a customer to be efficient and decisive.

At automated tills, it can take longer for a person with differences to complete their purchase and can lead to impatient attitudes by nearby customers. At other self-service facilities, it can be very complicated for a person with differences to use without supervision. However, if the staff nearby are busy they can face situations when they either wait too long or feel they have to abandon and leave.

Some people with differences are likely to avoid attending discounted supermarkets to prevent discrimination. This is because of the risk of discrimination, due to the expectation to have a very high speed of ability. This is related to using the customer tills including packing, unpacking, putting items into bags and paying. Also, it can lead to higher levels of anxiety if pushed to the edge. Also, if the person with differences feel they are pressurised to rush can lead to physical accidents and clumsiness.

## **Unplanned impatience and hostility**

Some people of the general public would treat hidden differences as camouflage if they appear slightly slower in how their physical appearance and body language. This means they can be walked into, shoved and be deliberately collided when walking along with using escalators, travelators and moving walkways.

Some people would face bullying pranks for instance when queuing to access an automatic till appraise person nearby why would use a person deliberately cut in front of them and to block their access to particular till which they had the right to access.

Major obstacles for people with differences is that if they've been bullied deliberately physically mistreated or bullied then they can't stop it. This is because when they reporting these matters the guidelines has a technicality which states the staff is not responsible for other customers behaviour. This means a person with differences can be an easy target to be mistreated at every level and don't have to ability to stop it. This limits their choice of where they go or what time of the day to attend to prevent any form of mistreatment.





# Differences and Society

## The additional digital expectation

One of the other expectations the consumer needs to have is to access various comparison services online. This enables a consumer to shop around services they received or intended to join. This is related to utility services, subscriptions and many more. For some people with hidden differences, they may find these comparison services confusing. This means they are likely to be stuck with particular utility services or subscriptions at a disadvantage with paying more than an average person that can access comparison services. For example, a person with differences try to take control of the utility services and attempting to access help in using a fixed tariff to save money they are more likely to be rejected simply because they are wrongly categorised as inefficient when accessing call centres and helplines.

## Seeking help on life issues

Depending on where you live, if a person with hidden differences is facing discrimination, physical abuse or hatred their voices can be taken less seriously. In a conversation as mentioned elsewhere the project director has communicated with a local politician on this matter, he was informed that the process on the local communities and local authorities does not cater for any voices from minority experiences.

Also in recent years that the police forces have been discouraging to act on misogyny, discrimination or abuse as this is seen as less priority compared to other serious criminal offences. This can mean if a person with hidden differences don't have a supportive surrounding when facing discrimination abuse with their voices will be ignored. Sadly a person with differences can lack any voice and influence and can lead to situations that they can be helpless and hopeless. This is because as they cannot have the ability to do anything about any kind of mistreatments. When these occur, a person with differences have to live with suppress thoughts and feelings where they are being made to feel at their difficulties at fault over the way they have been treated.

What makes it worse a person with differences would be discouraged to speak to anyone including their friends, acquaintances, families and even listening services and counselling. This is because a person with hidden differences would be easily discredited and can be accused of imposing personal problems onto others. The discouragements can damages a person with differences confidence, self-worth and that can lead to dangerous levels of depression and even suicidal feelings. Despite the high profile issues of mental health, a person with differences can be undervalued when they experience mental health challenges.

(Find out more by referring to the special supplement document to this insight report.)



# Differences and Society

## Support and care sector

Depending on the condition and where you live how the support provides will vary and there inconsistent. Some have funded support through the local authority social services or social care. These are supported to match the differences they live with.

Some people are not able to access any support at all. This means if some people with differences are likely to access specific services in the community who will not likely have a good understanding of the difficulties of specific hidden differences.

Through the project directors experiences, there is inconstancy in how hidden differences are treated when receiving certain services.

Detailed examples are available through the supplementary insight by the author. (Ask for details)



# Differences and Society

## Multitasking expectations

Within recent years, there has been a changing expectation to have faster abilities to be accepted (This includes multitasking). In the past decade, the expectation was mainly affecting young people. The pressures has expanded in recent years to all ages making life very difficult for an adult with hidden differences. This can affect their ability to function.

In the past, if a person with hidden differences attempted to be self-aware and pragmatic while attempted to be adjustable would have been accepted. However, the pendulum has changed with greater expectations on not only to have smarter abilities but also strong presentation and personality. This makes life extremely impossible for some people with differences to make any adjustments without their difficulties being exposed negatively. For example, a person with hidden differences might have slightly slower abilities but can be judged as visually toxic against their identity to a level where they can be easily disrespected and discredited. Even if a person with differences tries to improve their appearance can be discredited and disrespected as "fake" due to their perceived ability speeds is not the same as everyone else.

## Scrutinisation Influences

Within the past two decades how entertainment is consumed is changing how we judge a person with differences.

The emergence of reality TV has enabled viewers to have detailed scrutinisation of contenders and celebrities in every minor detail. Unfortunately, this type of scrutinisation is now transferred to society to how a person with hidden differences are judged and observed. This means a person with differences face similar scrutinisation in every minor detail. This includes body language, facial expressions, how they walk, communicate and how they handle items on the spot. Sadly some people with differences can be constantly looked and stared at.

This type of scrutinisation makes it easy for a person with differences to face discrimination and disrespect. This is similar to how political leaders & public figures are judged by journalists and analysts when they are scrutinising how charisma they have they can be as well as how natural and how desirable they appear on their body language facial expression and physical appearance.

This type of observation is very intrusive for a person with differences and can cause psychological and emotional harm, making life harder to function and to have a space to be themselves, relaxed and natural.



# Differences and Society

## **Intrusive discrimination and abuse**

The scrutinisation mentioned in this chapter can make some people with differences be an easy target to be drawn attention to negatively. This kind of inappropriate attitude can occur such as derogatory heckling, misogyny harassment & trivialisation remarks. This can go even further with intrusion kind of judgement on their intelligence and dialect based on how and where a person with differences look. For example, if a person with differences is seen looking at a particular notice or signage too long they can face heckling verbal harassment against their intelligence.

## **Preceptive trait**

How a person walk on the street and at public places can be wrongly judged on a person's characteristics regardless of their difficulties.

This can be very damaging for individuals with difficulties who struggle with physical appearance and body language. For example, if you appear less decisive then you are likely to be a certain event negative characteristic trait which is associated with high neuroticism



# Differences and Society

## Popular trends & expectation to fit in

Ever-changing expectations and social trends can affect the credibility of a person with differences for the wrong reasons. Over the two decades, there has been general progress in recognising the difficulties of Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Social Anxiety.

Public attitudes slightly started to improve for general disabilities since the Paralympic games during 2012. However, during the same period, the project director observed that time society's attitude seems to become more negative towards hidden differences. This was due to when society becoming much more perceptive and can affect a person with differences identity and their place in society.

The project director has certain negative experiences personally with the changing attitudes during this time. More details are available through the supplementary insight to ask for details.

Sadly some key public figures have wrongly politicising people's difficulties against their circumstances. For example, because the autistic spectrum is highlighted to be a disadvantage to access work can be wrongly categorised as work-shy and avoiding work. If a person with differences including autism are accessing disability benefits they can face negative stigma. There have even been comments from high profile figures with demonising comments on those accessing the welfare for the disabled.

Also, a Church leader in the United States made an offensive analysis using Dyslexia inappositely to disrespect the level of intelligence of a particular public figure.

As mentioned elsewhere certain differences especially with autism can be less accepted when they appear articulate when they communicate. They can get constantly disbelieved when disclosing to others with unhelpful responses such as "You don't look autistic" or "You're very intelligent and you're not thick" as a way of encouraging them to mask or hide their difficulties to be accepted.



# Differences and Society

## Perceptive image

As mentioned on the first bitesize document, despite there is a lot of positivity with hidden differences how their place in society can be generally seen as negative. This is mostly related to old fashioned stereotypes, and how certain hidden differences can be portrayed. During the twenty-one years, a lot of perceptive factors are related to hidden differences including mental health, medical aspects and criminally caused by a small minority of individuals with differences. With viewpoints tend to be addressed by scientists, awareness experts, parents and public figures.

This leads to negative stigma with particular conditions with the Autistic spectrum and ADHD. Despite there are no strong association of criminality those living with ADHD and Autism can be wrongly judged to have some sort of suspicions and falsely perceived to be a danger to commit criminal offences in the future. This can mean they can be automatically this penalised just for existing.

Resentment of attitudes can occur especially those who are highly jealous and would disapprove of any type of allowances and accommodation made towards hidden differences at specific inclusive environments such as workplaces, education and local communities. The prejudiced people with make inaccurate allegations of those with differences are making special treatment.

This kind of prejudice mindset can expand further with comments of accusing hidden differences are being overprotected with languages such as wrapped in cotton wool. Leading to assumptions that people with differences need to be challenged and pushed with the perception that they are seen as not trying enough. This type of language is dangerous and lacking any reality. There is no regard for any limitation of abilities and coping mechanisms which can lead to negative side effects to their health and well-being (such as anxiety, mental burnouts, mental health and depression) This is especially if they are pushed beyond what they can cope & manage.





# Differences and Society

## Negative Misrepresentations

One of the greatest challenges a person with differences faces is when their difficulties and adjustments are judged negatively against their identity and characteristics.

Not only this kind of misjudgment can occur during an inclusive environment but also when a person with differences is applying for any type of life opportunities. The negative judgements can escalate if a person with struggle with socialising and with specific communications with the expectation of qualities has charisma along with the ability to convince and influence others. This can lead to some people with differences face many obstacles with rejection and missing out many opportunities in social groups and dating.

One of many examples is when some people with differences when struggling to socialise can be wrongly singled out with facing offensive labels such as toxic and undesirable. There was concerning levels of processes that use perceptions as a form of negative characteristics. This is associated with specific characteristics languages such as neuroticism & neuronarcissism

This associates with character traits with some people have of the Autistic spectrum and ADHD. This can divide certain people with differences as widely unaccepted even if they are aware and attempted to be considerate and adjustable. This also applies if a person with differences attempted to make a social effort to be more interesting or entertaining to others with can backfire with rejection with undesirable judgement.

Some individuals, businesses and services can use Neuroticism & neuronarcissism to discriminate, discredit and exclude hidden differences from social and inclusive opportunities. One example with some people with differences is at a disadvantage in dating. Because of perceptions, anyone displays highly neurotic or Neuroticism as seen as undesirable and highly likely to be rejected.

This makes it harder for some people with differences to make adjustments to avoid their difficulties exposed to prejudice and shame. It also damages life opportunities and their confidence to be inclusive with sustainability.



# Differences and Society

## **Simplistic presumptions**

Who is a lot of myths and misperceptions against a person with hidden differences. Some of the public attitudes can make simplistic judgement without having any context and insights. One of the examples implies that a person's difficulties would disappear if they take part in regular physical activities. Even though physical activity is positive for an individual's health and wellbeing, it will not make any difficulties disappear.

Unfortunately, some unhelpful attitudes cause many with an ultimatum, unless a person with differences attempt to hide their difficulties they can be wrongly be accused of lacking self-worth with unhelpful language such as hiding behind their difficulties. The reality is a person with differences haven't got a choice but to live with the difficulties they live with and accept what they have and don't have with specific abilities.

A reminder that a person's difficulties don't disappear when accessing specific opportunities for employment, education and even gaining social friends. They are a sad reality that there is an increasing amount of dehumanising attitudes against how a person when their difficulties display. They have been a situation when a group of young people make trivialisation jokes between each other by saying "I'm spastic" and laughing at each other. The project director has observed this kind of behaviour in public places. Detailed examples are available through the supplementary insight by the author. (Ask for details)

## **Rejection of assistance**

If a person with differences is seeking help when appearing articulate they would be wrongly accused of being lazy and can face unrealistic and inappropriate suggestions such as attend specific courses which require a strong amount of one the spot ability and improvisations (such as comedy classes).

These suggestions are inappropriate for those especially with short-term memory when they're more likely to struggle and be at risk to face mental health changes when pushed beyond their ability limitation. Also, these environments are highly likely not to have a supportive structure to make the sure a hidden differences with shorts term memory would not be a disadvantage.



# Differences and Society

## Challenges towards a positive sense of value

The ultimate five areas on how a person with differences can move forward can face many challenges and boundaries we must be aware of and find improvements on.

### Challenges towards a positive sense of value : Dignity

The most important area of a positive sense of value with respecting dignity and human rights as well as choices and prerogatives. As mentioned elsewhere, when a person with differences is exercising their dignity and basic human rights they can be wrongly credited as awkward, rocking the boat or very difficult. Attitudes of discrediting can occur towards certain people with differences when they are challenging something with seems to be not right. For example, if a person with hidden differences faces escalating amount of discrimination and hatred, their voices can be easily ignored simply because it is seen as a minority experience.

In comparison to general disabilities and other diverse groups of society, there is no consultancy in respecting and protecting the human rights of a person with differences when accessing varying services healthcare and public services. This means a person with differences can have their human rights violated and ignored against their wishes.

### Challenges towards a positive sense of value: Inclusion & integration

One of the important areas we're being seen and having contact with other members of society. However, there are outdated attitudes still which has not improved over two decades.

Some people are negative when they noticed a person's difficulties as suspicious and irritant. This can lead to rejection can face trivial discrimination or hostility and hatred forcing a person with differences to reduce to integrate or be completely excluded. Another example of a negative inclusive issue is when a person with differences are wrongly underestimated when a damaging amount of mistreatment. For example, in communities, if a person with differences are constantly underestimated then when responded against how they are defined can face hostility against them with aggressive threats against their safety.

Also if a person with differences is attempted to be considerate can face hostility which implies they are a nuisance and faces unfair accusations of interfering in other people's business. This sort of prejudice forces a person with differences to be excluded to maintain their self-worth.



# Differences and Society

## **Challenges towards a positive sense of value: Participation**

There are many positive advantages for a person with differences to be a participant in a variety of ways. Depending on the environments, participation in communities and related activities can be a positive way for certain people with differences. But this depends on how understanding and supporting other people are.

As mentioned elsewhere, some people with differences have taken part in surveys and scientific research. The surveys can vary with some involve greater emphasis on ground-level insight with others are filter with limited options. There are challenges with certain medical and scientific researchers where a person with differences when asked to participate but then hear nothing on the findings with their voices and expressions could be wrongly taken advantage of.

Some people with differences have represented well in employment which means they can have help shape Society. However, as mentioned elsewhere because of low numbers of autistic people in employment means they are not well represented at ground level. This can mean any future decision making which shapes society that could be made may go against them.

## **Challenges towards a positive sense of value: Well represented**

An imbalance can occur on how a person with differences is well represented. Some people with differences are well presented in employment and able to have a representative voice for a fairer society. However other people with differences can be wrongly discredited through ill-informed perceptions and myths.

## **Challenges towards a positive sense of value: Adjustment & consideration**

Because of how a person with differences lives have to make a series of adjustments to make sure their difficulties are not a burden or disadvantage. However for some people depending on their difficulty find it harder to make adjustments because the environments won't make reasonable allowances.

Also, some people with differences would be wrongly discredited for their adjustments against unrealistic expectations to display the same abilities as others without allowances



# Differences and Society

## Life Opportunities: Education

Some young people with differences can access special education needs during their education. However, this is not widely available and it can affect any progress during education.

The other issues in education include, performance-related targets and can cause a high amount of pressure towards a person with differences

In recent years schools have the introduction of the behaviour csar to impose standards and clamp down on disruptions. However, these guidelines do not necessarily make reasonable allowances to make sure a young person with hidden differences is not disadvantaged. This can affect a person with differences if they are being psychologically and emotionally compromised through expectations, pressures or in the receiving end of bullying discrimination and abuse. This can also means that a person with hidden differences can be easily demonised with disciplines, sanctions and exclusions.

Also, there have been some extremely worrying developments that certain young people with differences are facing extreme levels of interventions such as manhandling and being arrested over any minor sign of anxiety and emotional despair. This paints a very dangerous conclusion that the education environment can be extremely intolerant and hostile against any signs of difficulties especially when being psychologically and emotionally compromised.

Unless there is any sort of adjustment procedures, then a person with differences are in high danger of exposure to be constantly be brought the worst out of for the wrong reasons. This can make it easier to punish a person with differences when pushed beyond the limit for their ability and coping mechanisms. This is not only extremely damaging for young people but also potentially harmful for adults of all ages when accessing any services which require officials and assistance.

In the long term can lead to potentially damage future prospects beyond school and sixth Form education into colleges, employment and university.



# Differences and Society

## Life Opportunities: Employment

The progress of employment and career aspirations depending on the specific conditions and how supported and well understood. Some people with hidden differences can face many obstacles in accessing employment. Articulate individuals with hidden differences who live with short-term memory (Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Autism) can face a life of rejection opportunities in employment despite if their skills match or are above the required standards. Some people have studied university education and achieve a specific or a family of qualifications. However with regardless of any university education, if a person with difference those with short-term memory difficulties have struggled to gain traditional academic qualification such as GCSEs and A-levels ( due to short-term memory difficulties) can have the door of opportunity closed in their face. No allowances or flexibility are usually made, even if they gained alternative qualifications such as City and Guilds or RSA. This means a person with hidden differences with short term memory face damaging stigma and is unfairly branded as illiterate or ennumerate. This does not mean a person with hidden differences can't read, write or calculate. They may have certain gaps in specific areas of abilities but this does not mean we should make a broad-brush approach that discredits the abilities of a person with differences.

Some people with differences are under pressure to omit their difficulties to avoid any stigma. For some, this might work very well but those who don't share their differences but can also cause damaging consequences as any gaps of the expected qualifications of an incompetent applicant if they display their difficulties. Avoiding disclosure to employers can be a dangerous risk against their prospects with disruptive legal consequences. A public service manager in Leicester faced legal action as the person failed to disclose any previous experiences of depression. So action was taken based on health and safety. The person lost their battle and ultimately was fired. Legal battles & sackings can also apply for existing employees (including hidden differences) if they face demands beyond what they can manage especially if they had a previous history of mental health and depression.





# Differences and Society

## **Life Opportunities: Employment**

There is an expectation of high standards and efficiency. These examples also apply to education, training and support programmes for the starting-up enterprise. This can make it impossible especially with the autistic spectrum and rejected at the first hurdle of any type of application.

The progress of employment and career aspirations depending on the specific conditions and how supported and well understood. Some people with hidden differences can face many obstacles in accessing employment.



# Differences and Society

## Life Opportunities: Employment

Out of all of the hidden differences, the autistic spectrum is the most disadvantaged with a very low percentage of accessing employment, not only in the UK but anywhere in the world. Despite autistic people have a series of strengths as well as their difficulties they are talents are not recognised. A lot of voices with descriptions of "Wasted talent" the often left behind.

Unless the autistic person have a supportive surroundings or has relevant know-how, they will face numerous amount of obstacles for applying and staying in employment. Firstly is to match their abilities and strengths against the expected skills and qualities. Secondly how accommodating the application process is made for those with short-term memory if don't have expected academic qualifications. Thirdly whether their identity would be adequate to the working environment they're applying for. Even if these qualities are approved, others can use technically to reject a person with differences. This can happen on something that may not make any sense to a person with differences. There is no guarantee for an employer to have a good level of understanding or to make allowances. This is especially when they are an expectation of high standards and efficiency. These examples also apply to education, training and support programmes for the starting-up enterprise. This can make it impossible especially with the autistic spectrum and rejected at the first hurdle of any type of application.

This can cause damage the self-worth of an autistic person. Despite the obstacles and autistic person faces, they can be made discouraged to integrate into society until they access employment. This leads to some being forced to be excluded to prevent being discredited or shamed.

However, being excluded and out of work is very damaging to an autistic person. This can harm any skills and abilities they have learnt in the past and make it harder to socially relate to others.

This means being socially discredited and could face an endless amount of loneliness and damaging consequences such as depression. Also, exclusion causes long term harms to any life opportunities with easily profiled as having imbalance qualities, despite having positive technical abilities they will continue to have the door of opportunities in their face in the long term.



# Differences and Society

## **Life Opportunities: Volunteering**

Volunteering can be beneficial for those with hidden differences who have been denied employment opportunities. However, there are many challenges and obstacles which comprises any prospects.

Within the two decades, the procedures have changed for volunteering with a formal job style application approach. Also with some organisations an expectation for applicants to provide flexibility of skills and abilities and to be more adaptable to different volunteering roles, beyond the particular role they are applying for. This has can be much harder for certain hidden differences and become an unfair disadvantage especially if it does not have support mechanisms and there is no guarantee for reasonable adjustments. With the expectation of efficiency, a person with differences can be pressurised to meet the efficiency requirement. This can backfire through unplanned and uncertain situations beyond their control and can lead to damaging side effects. For some people with differences, they can face a damaging and disruptive amount of prejudice discrimination. Unless key teams or members of places of volunteering have a strong understanding and have full support then it leads to a person with hidden differences being discouraged from volunteering or in some cases been forced to withdraw because of the damaging side effects to their well-being including mental health, stress and anxiety.

In conclusion, some people with differences can be only limited to opportunities roles informally through someone they know or have organisations they have regular access to. This is prevented them to be exposed to situations to harm their self-worth.

## **Life Opportunities: Participation**

Depending on locations there are some opportunities for a person with differences to access specific community groups & forums to address issues that affect their local Society. This depends on the guidelines on attached and memberships.

If a particular activity involves other people a person with differences can face unexpected challenges included heated arguments when disagreeing and would be discredited when appear to know more than an average person and face resentment and hostility if they are seeking extra assistance if struggling.



## Differences and Society

### **Life Opportunities: intimate Relationships**

Some people with differences can have happy and fulfilling relationships. However, within the hidden differences, an autistic person is the most disadvantaged with many not likely to be in any relationships. Some would face obstacles because their difficulties can be misinterpreted against their characteristics with labels such as toxic or undesirable.

What makes it more difficult is the changing expectation make it harder for an autistic person to with negative risks of rejection. Beyond a young person, a middle-aged person with autism this can be very demoralising if not having any relationships. Daily life can make the particular inadequate especially if any contact has marriage or a loving relationship.

Overall or there is a lack of distinction between the difficulties a person may live with and any strengths and personal attributes they may have. This means many people with differences faces imbalanced representation and therefore unfairly misjudged in any opportunities.



## Other information

This document is a special insight document to mark twenty-one years since the project director Keith Mckenzie started awareness projects, campaigns & activities.

It started back in 2000 under the Autism Challenge brand with a number of awareness activities including a UK wide Asperger Syndrome Survey, exhibition displays and presentation talk and visual art. Then in 2006, the awareness initiative become online with an expansion to cover different differences two years later with an introduction of Differences projects. A major milestone in 2015 with the introduction of Plus Value Awareness. The original family projects became part of the plus Value Awareness family as Differences Originals from 2020.

This awareness initiative has developed projects with different awareness organisations around the UK. In 2008 the team at Google nominate Plus Value Awareness the Thrive Mental health Awards as the awareness initiative supported an ADHD staff member at a Birmingham based Google Digital Garage.

The pandemic did not stop the progress, so in 2021 a special online feature called “Unity Forward” of information and encouragement during the worldwide pandemic and beyond. A special insight document was based on the “Unity Forward” feature.

### Other awareness developments

Plus Value Awareness initiative has provided a family of joined-up information & guideline documents with concise information customised to varying roles of salsa classes & events organiser in Birmingham. In addition, a detailed information guide was developed for managing roles.



## Further details of the twenty-one insight

**Further insight into the twenty-one insight is available by reading part one of the bite-size document.**

**There is also a full version of this document available with a total of 50 pages. Visit the back page of this document for details**

### **Twenty-one Analysis**

The analysis and conclusions of the subjects covered in this insight documents is available in a separate Twenty-One analysis document.

### **Twenty-one Supplement**

In addition an examples of person experiences from the project director Keith Mckenzie are available as part of a talk presentation in for awareness events, conferences and webinars. An insight supplement is to be also presented as a document

To receive a copy of the analysis document and to access the personal supplement for awareness events, conferences and webinars get in touch via the Plus Value Awareness Website

Also get in touch via Keith Mckenzie profile on Linked-in via the website [keithmckenzie.weebly.com](http://keithmckenzie.weebly.com)





## About the Author

This document is written by Keith Mckenzie project director of Plus Value Awareness.

For over the past two decades Keith has developed a variety of awareness projects, campaigns and activities. His projects have been involved with different awareness and support organisations across the UK and have participated in several presentation talks different events around two decades.

Outside awareness, Keith has been involved in behind-the-scenes we've and music project with involved filming and behind-the-scenes assistance with developing video documentaries and music events that involves music artists DJs and producers.

Also, Keith is a participant in salsa dancing classes in the community as a helper along with volunteering and a participant for a major salsa dancing conventions based at Birmingham's NEC.

Keith has a background of art & design and has been involved and number of projects related to Graphic design, selected photography and visual art.



**The project director would welcome any organisations, media or support groups who would like to feature extracts from this insight document and the online feature as part of a presentation talk, interview report or article.**

**If you are interested to feature “Twenty-one insight”, please get in touch.**

**You can fill the online contact form via the website [plusvalue.dudaone.com](http://plusvalue.dudaone.com)  
Follow on social media**

**Also follow the links to Keith Mckenzie profile on Linked-in via the website [keithmckenzie.weebly.com](http://keithmckenzie.weebly.com)**



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The contents of this document provide a series of observations and insights. So you are advised to be cautious before adopting any information. Therefore the initiative cannot accept responsibility if any errors which may occur.

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