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inclusive
neurodiverse
campuses



inclusive neurodiverse campuses

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Darcy Neilson, Brianna Ralston, Kay Turner, & Christian Hanser - Research Associates

Stephanie Petty - Associate Professor, Chartered Clinical Psychologist



PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH WITH AUTISTIC CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS

- Hamilton, L.G. (2024). Emotionally based school avoidance in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic: Neurodiversity, agency and belonging in schools. *Education Sciences*. 10.3390/educsci14020156
- Hamilton, L.G., Kelly, L., & Mesa, S. (2023). "I'm able to function better when I know there's a beginning and an end time": Autistic adolescents' experiences of lockdowns during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Autism & Developmental Language Impairments*. 10.1177/23969415231119552
- Lewis, K., Hamilton, L.G., & Vincent, J. (2023). Exploring the experiences of autistic pupils through creative methods: Reflections on a participatory approach. *Infant & Child Development*. 10.1002/icd.2467
- Mesa, S., & Hamilton, L.G. (2022). "We are different, that's a fact, but they treat us like we're different-er": Understandings of autism and adolescent identity development. *Advances in Autism*. 10.1108/AIA-12-2020-0071





Centring first-person perspectives from neurodivergent children and young people is crucial – and can be done using accessible, flexible communication methods.

The pandemic provided an alternative to mainstream education for autistic pupils, and some have not returned to school since.

Educational experiences shape identity development.


REIMAGINING NEURODIVERGENT CHARACTERISTICS AND MENTAL HEALTH

- Petty, S., & Ellis, A. (2024). The meaning of autistic movements. *Autism*. 10.1177/13623613241262151
- Petty, S., Lambarth, S., & Hamilton, L. G. (2023). Rethinking anxiety and depression for autistic adults through personal narratives: mixed-method analysis of blog data. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*. 10.1002/capr.12729
- Petty, S., Tunstall, L., Richardson, H., & Eccles, N. (2022). Workplace adjustments for autistic employees: what is “reasonable”? *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. 10.1007/s10803-021-5413-x
- Petty, S., Bergenheim, M-L., Mahoney, G., & Chamberlain, L. (2021). Adapting services for autism: recommendations from a specialist multidisciplinary perspective using freelist. *Current Psychology*. 10.1007/s12144-021-02061-3



Some movements are stigmatised and censored. Stimming, dancing and physical exercise can enhance thinking/focus, regulate senses, increase body connection... Movement is natural and harmless.

Emotions are misrepresented by ‘anxiety’ or ‘depression’ labels. Emotions interact with sensory tolerance, pain, and fatigue. Think about an ‘overwhelm meter’.

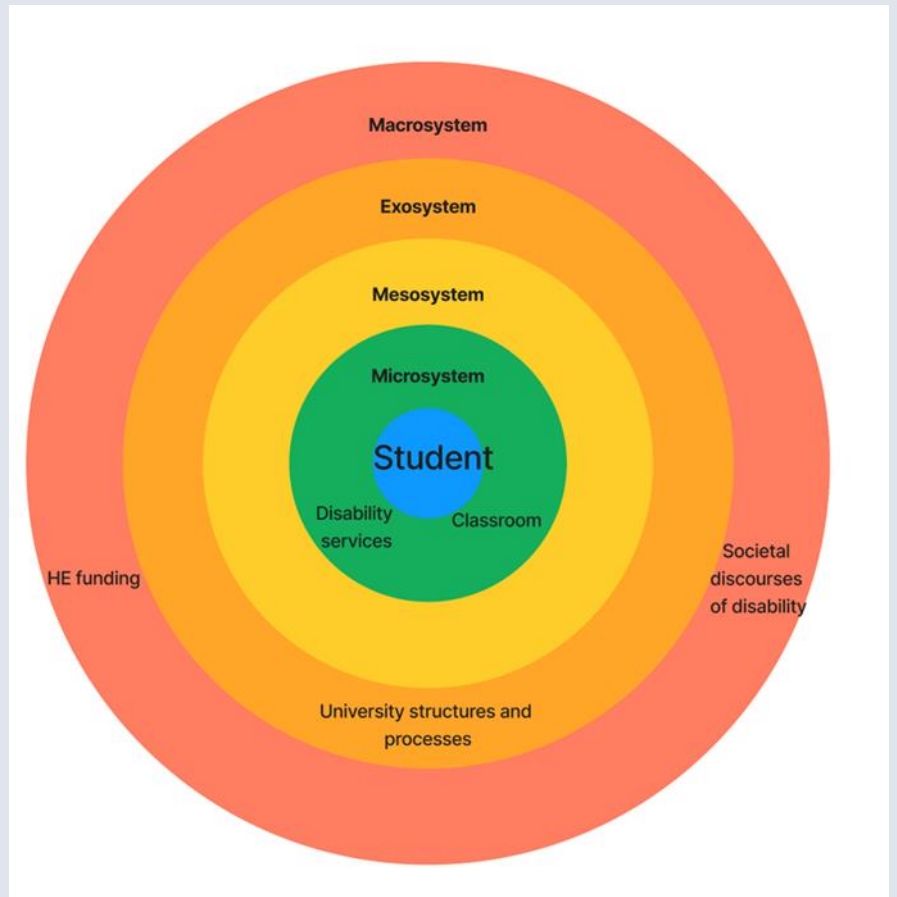


Employers need low cost, easy solutions that benefit all employees.

TURNING TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Hamilton, L.G., & Petty. S. (2023). Compassionate pedagogy for neurodiversity in higher education: A conceptual analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. 10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1093290/full

Compassion means proactively considering the experiences of another without judgment, whilst acting where possible to alleviate marginalisation and suffering. Differences are noticed, welcomed and accepted.



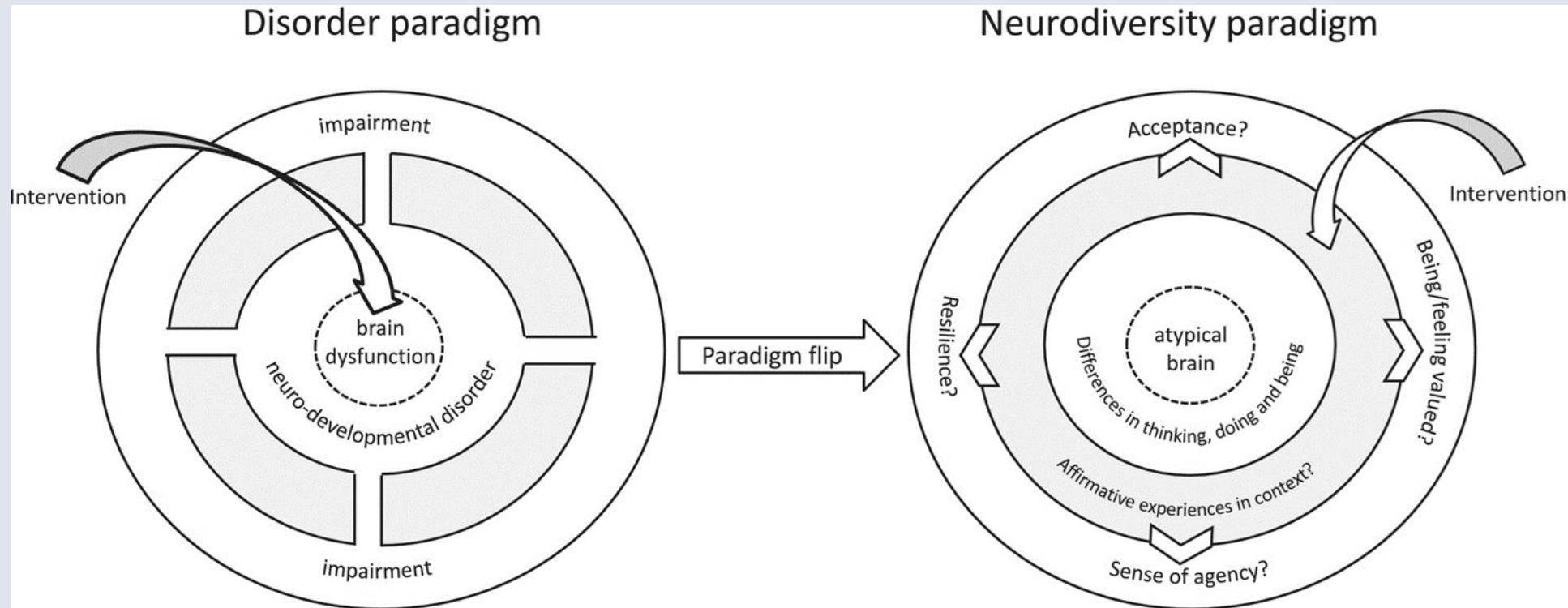
Adapted from: Bronfenbrenner & Ceci (1994)

WHERE TO INTERVENE?



Mapping neurodiversity-affirming practice across campus.

Where, when and why do neurodivergent members of the university community thrive?

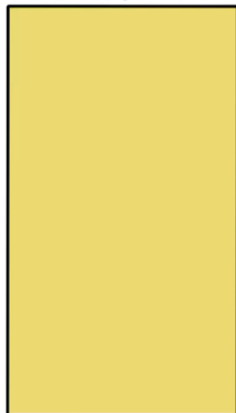


PAG GROUP

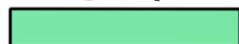


POWER DYNAMIC

Researcher



Advisory group



Do you struggle with deadlines?

Do you easily lose track of time?

Do you find it **daunting** to try new things with little information?

Do you have intensely **vivid** daydreams and a rich inner life?



We're asking for your opinion on how the university caters to you. Scan the QR code to have your say.



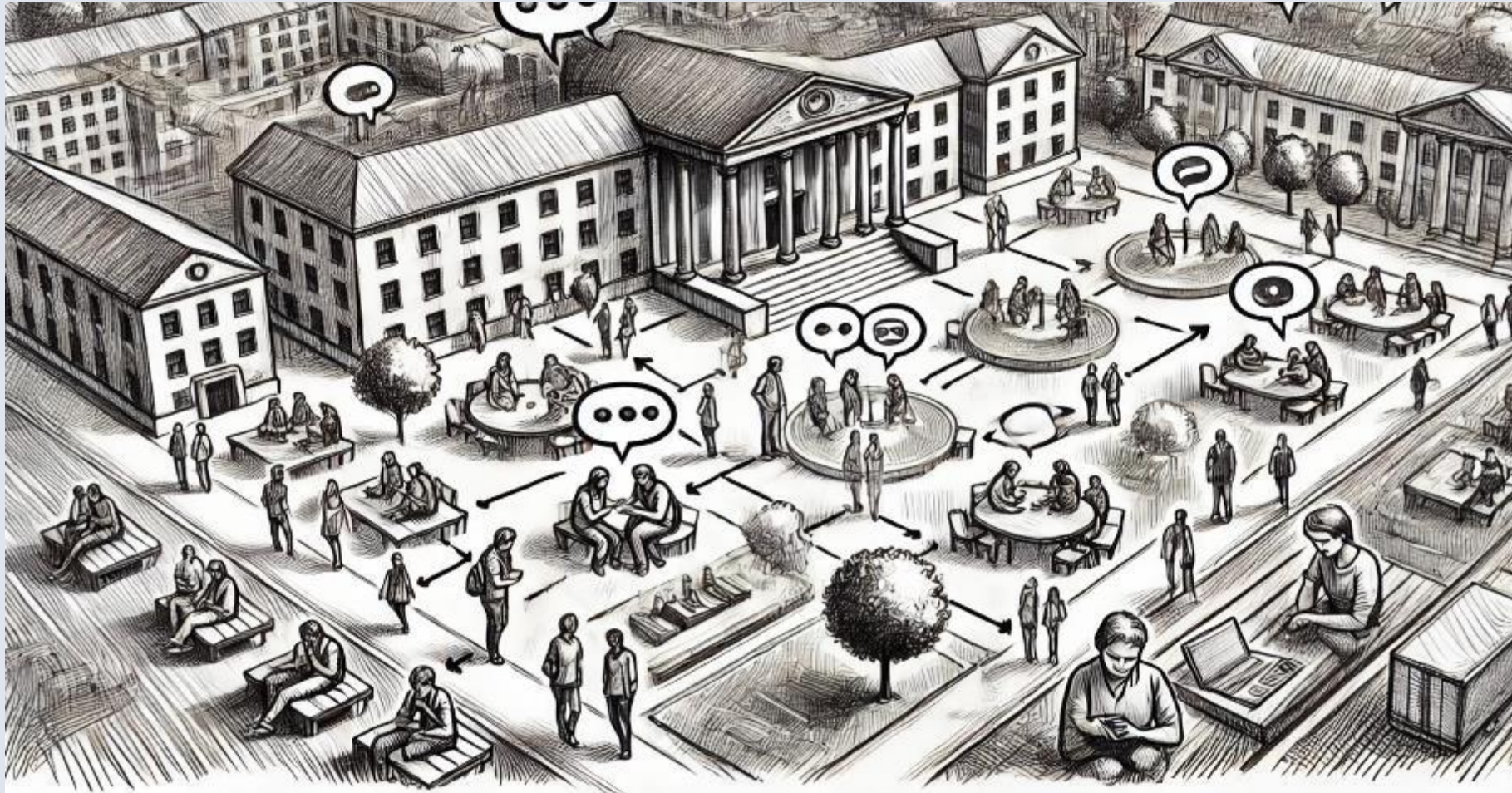
Does social interaction drain your energy or stress you out?

Managing often?

We're asking for your opinion on how the university caters to you. Scan the QR code to have your say.



DATA COLLECTION



Do you experience rejection more deeply than other people?

A project exploring what you need for a truly inclusive university experience*

*no diagnosis required



Scan the QR code to join us on padlet to share your views



EST. 1841

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Do you have intensely vivid daydreams and a rich inner life?

A project exploring what you need for a truly inclusive university experience*

*no diagnosis required



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We are asking for your opinions on how the university caters to you.



Does social interaction stress you out?

A project exploring what you need for a truly inclusive university experience*

*no diagnosis required



Scan the QR code to join us on padlet to share your views



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We are asking for your opinions on how the university caters to you.



Do you get so into things you lose track of time and forget to eat or drink?

A project exploring what you need for a truly inclusive university experience*

*no diagnosis required



Scan the QR code to join us on padlet to share your views



EST. 1841

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Do you struggle with loud spaces and weird textures?

A project exploring what you need for a truly inclusive university experience*

*no diagnosis required



Scan the QR code to join us on padlet to share your views



EST. 1841

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We are asking for your opinions on how the university caters to you.



Does the campus feel too loud, too bright, and too much sometimes?

A project exploring what you need for a truly inclusive university experience*

*no diagnosis required



Scan the QR code to join us on padlet to share your views



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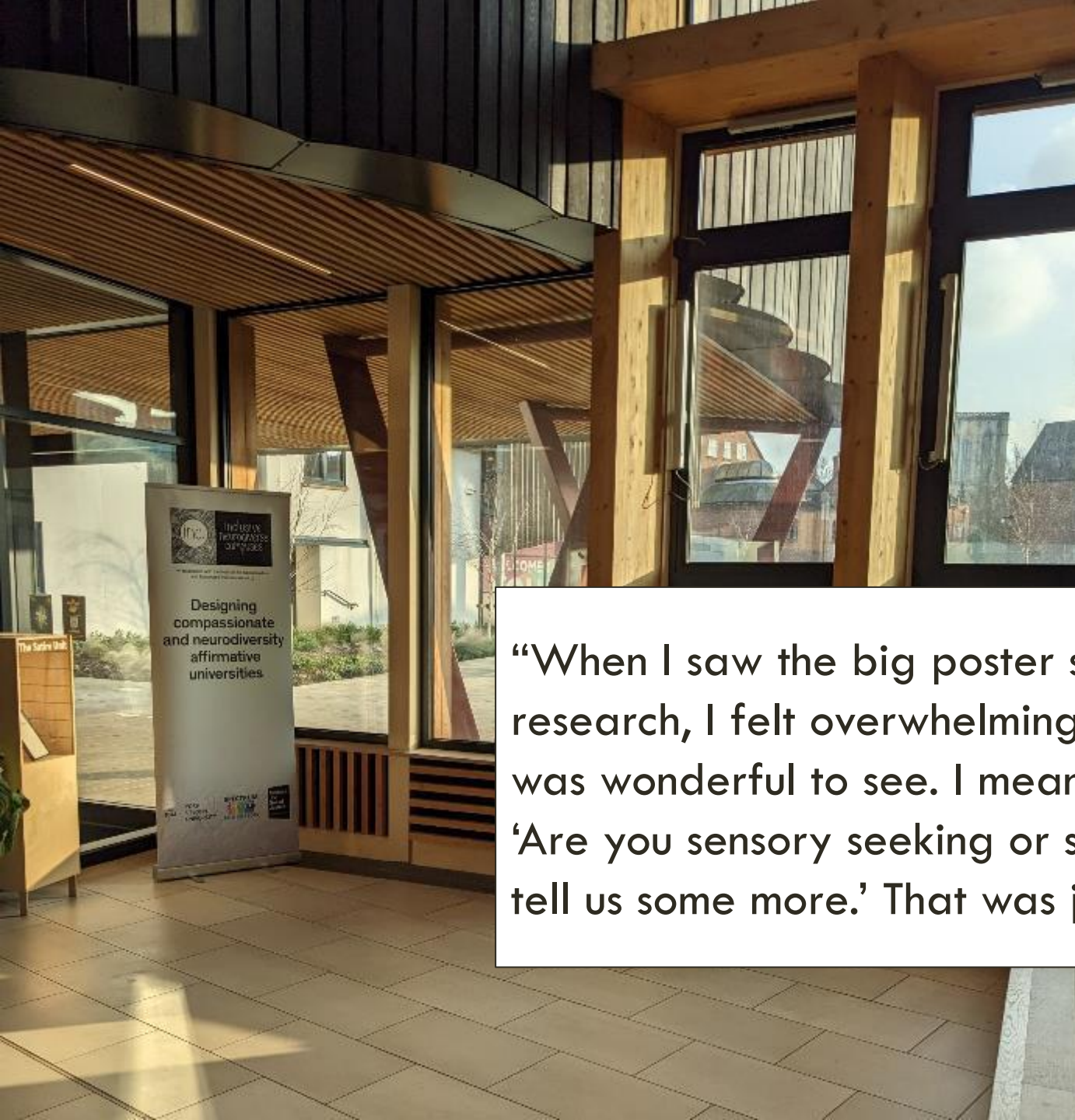
We are asking for your opinions on how the university caters to you.







“I had an appointment at St John and noticed the posters in the ladies... Thank you for considering this sensory issue and bringing it to public awareness... Far too many public places consistently choose to ignore people such as me.” (*Visitor, Business CEO, June 2024*)

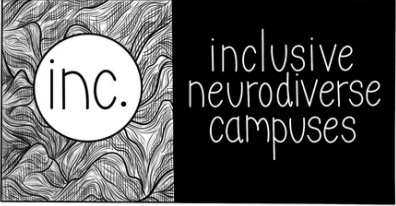


“When I saw the big poster saying that you would be doing this research, I felt overwhelmingly happy, uhm, and heard, and that was wonderful to see. I mean, all the posters everywhere saying ‘Are you sensory seeking or sensory avoidant? Follow this link and tell us some more.’ That was just phenomenal to see.”

Option to work
from home.
(live lectures / seminars /
workshops)
- LET IT COUNT TOWARDS
ATTENDANCE!!

INC: Project Information and Postbox locations

+



We are asking for your opinions on how the university caters to you

ed in our
roups:
[n/e/B80Zt3YS](#)

Information

is Padlet board! We want to understand
ally community and hear your ideas for
rgent students and staff.

to the prompts on the Padlet.
you (e.g. names). Posts will be
offensive material is published.

ing your consent for the content
data, and to be used in project

Information please

Belonging

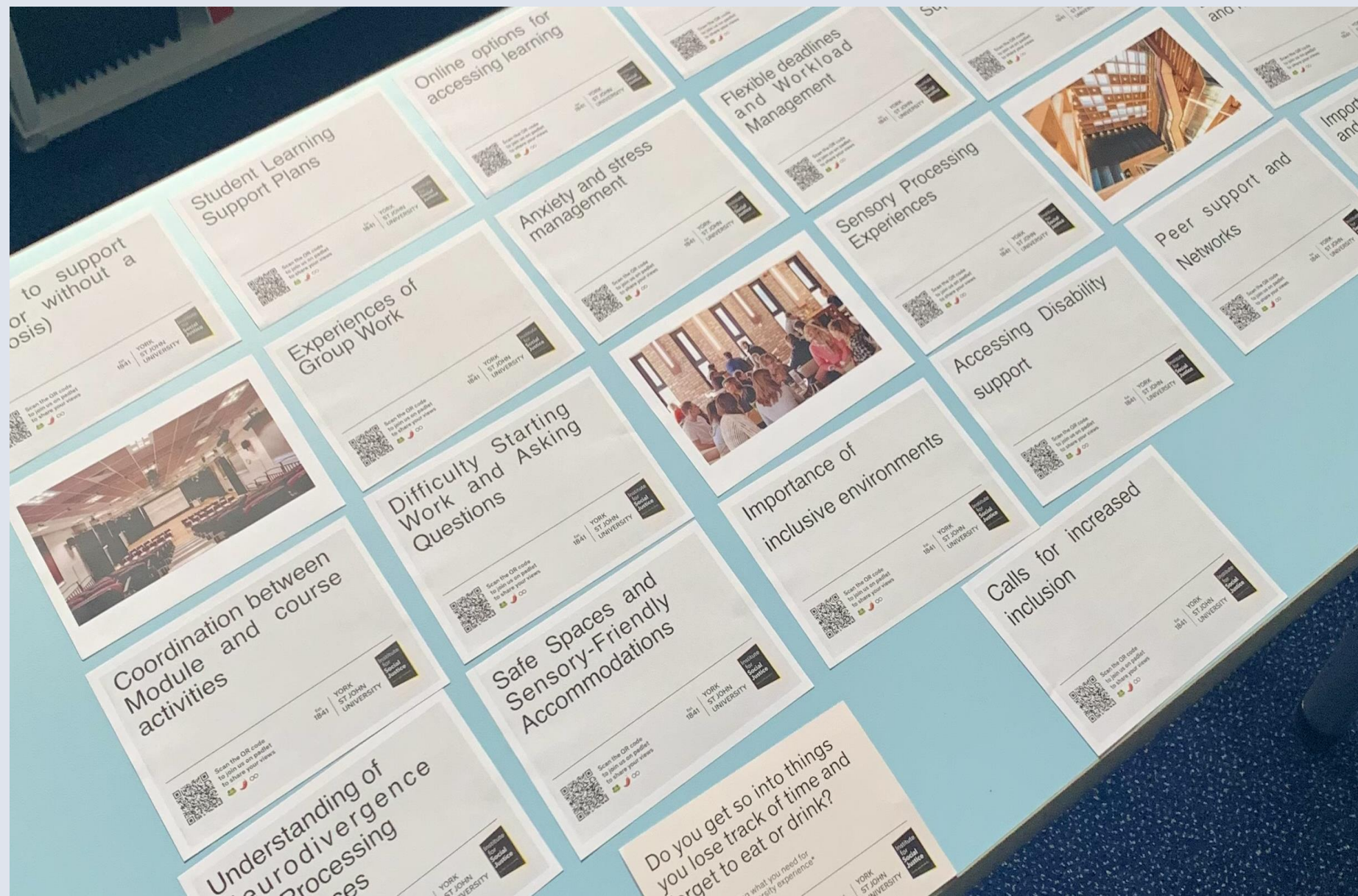
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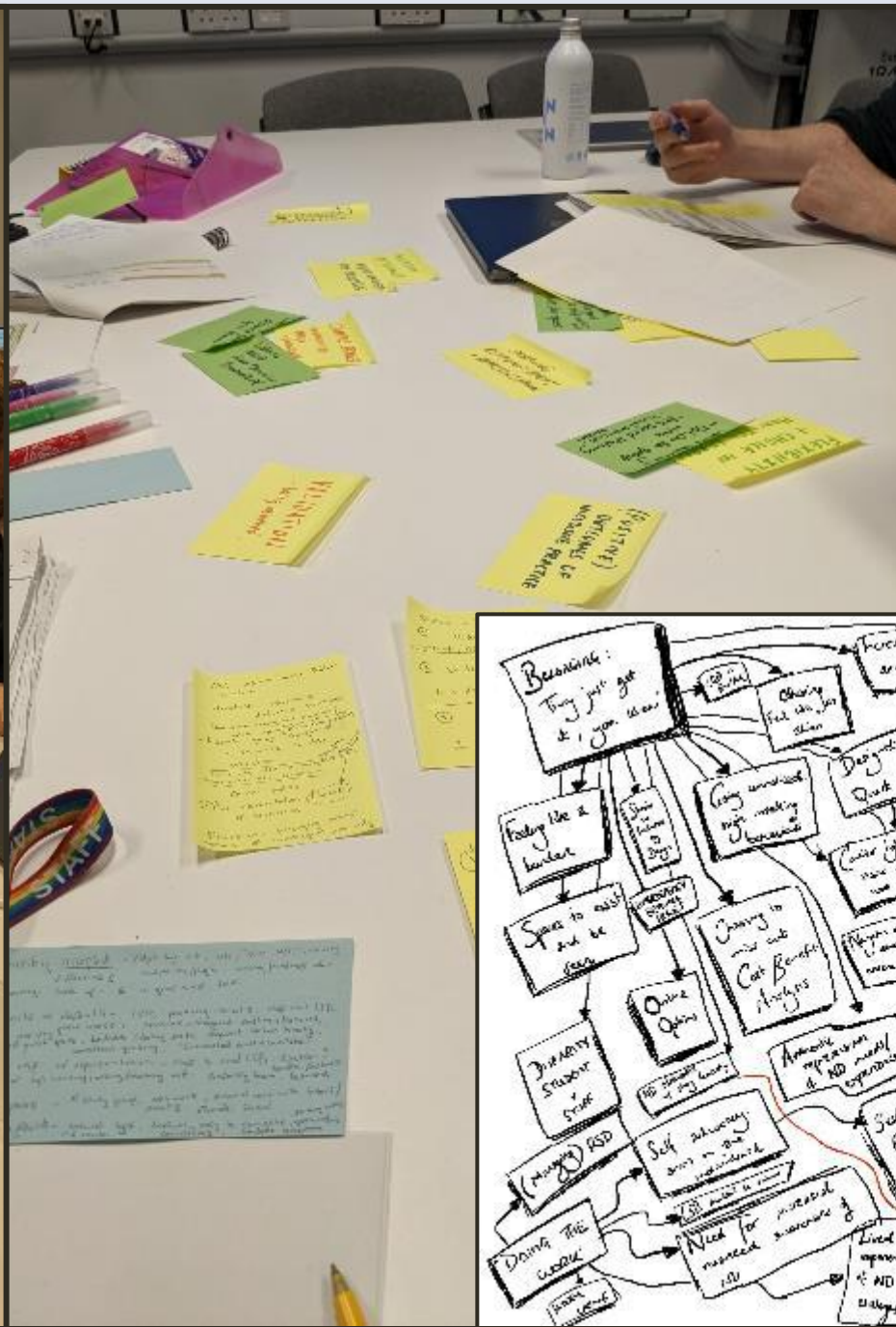
What would you need to feel
you truly belong on campus?

When do you
feel most supported
and understood?

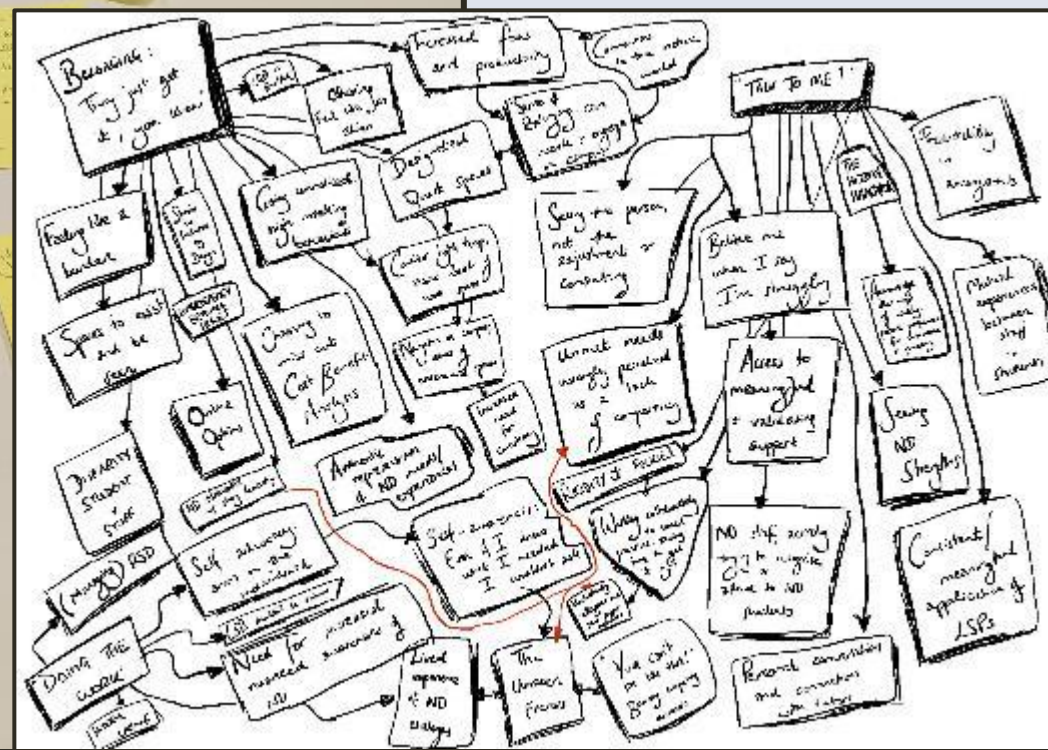
Knowing that my LSP is
actually read and
implemented by my tutors
would really help me feel like
I belong on campus,
sometimes it's awkward to
correct a lecturer because
they're going against

WHAT
WOULD
YOU
LIKE
TO
TELL
US?





ANALYSIS



RESULTS

(Positive) Outcomes
of Inclusive
Practice

Flexibility and
Choice in
Learning Preferences

Shared Responsibility
of
Representation

Campus Environment
by Default

Interdependency Between
Spaces and Experiences

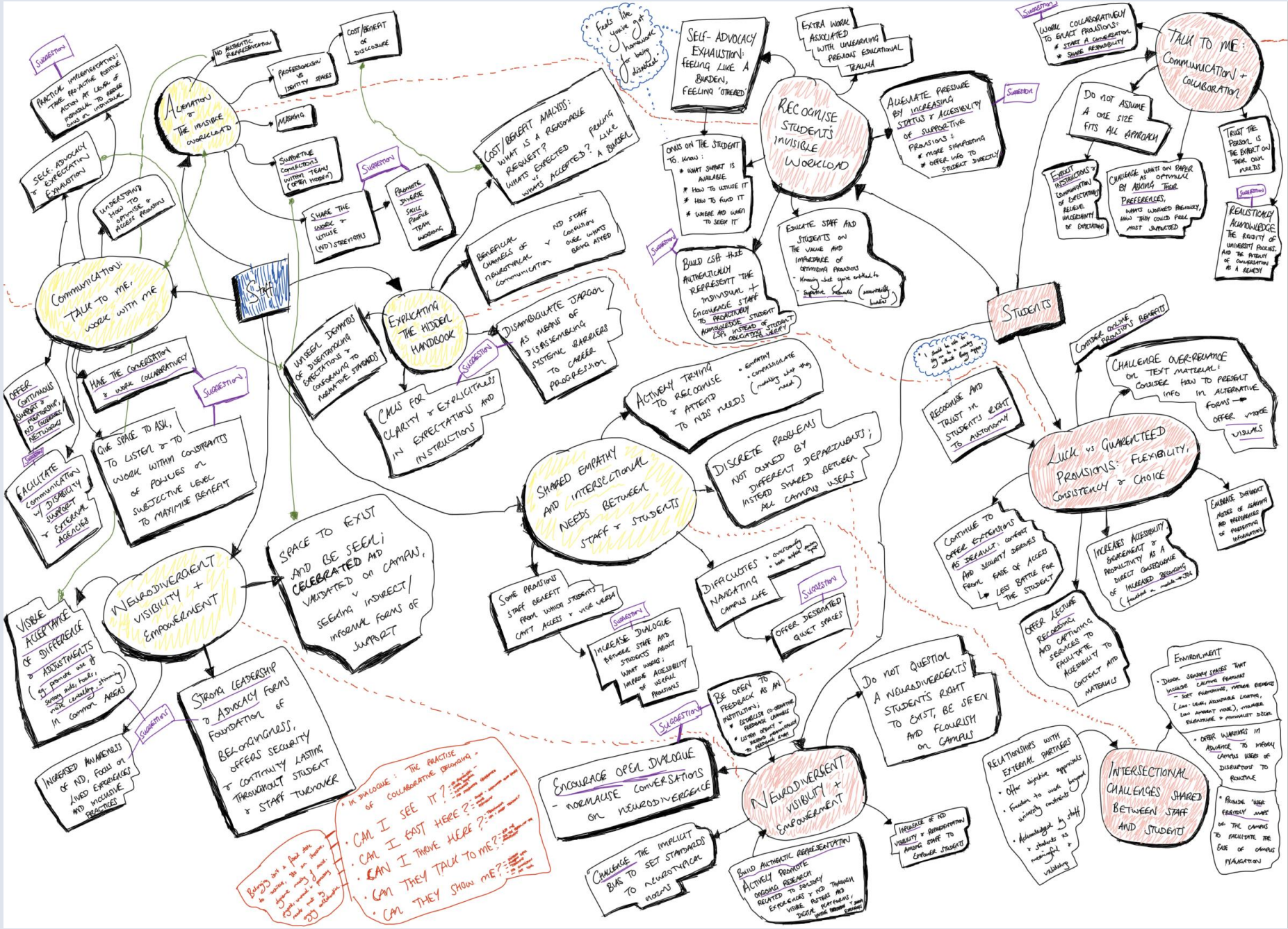
Identity
Spaces

Validation; Being Believed

Inclusion
By
Default

Visible Acceptance of Difference

INC



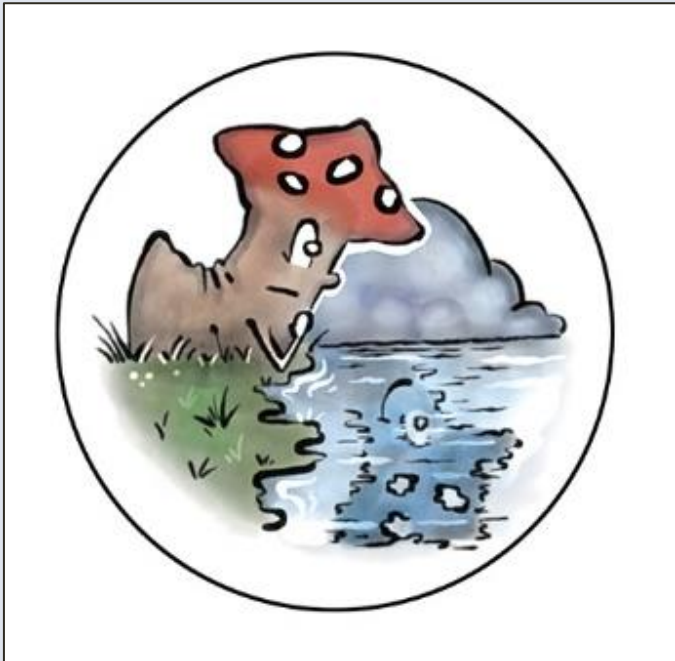
RESULTS

A suitable environment by default

“You can have that time away from being in an artificial, built-up, indoor environment... Perhaps having a more of a focus on an indoor-outdoor space or nature focus, I mean, the Creative Centre is brilliant, has loads of plants in it, smells like wood. It smells brilliant.”



Visible acceptance of difference



“I wish there was a place on campus that was ‘Stim safe’ where I didn’t have to worry about what others thought of my stimming when I’m studying.”

Provision guaranteed, not based on luck



“I think I've been incredibly lucky to have been mentored and championed by other disabled academics. And I think, I think not all, obviously there's a huge range of impairments, not everyone gets it, but having mentorship from autistic senior colleagues has been life changing for me.”

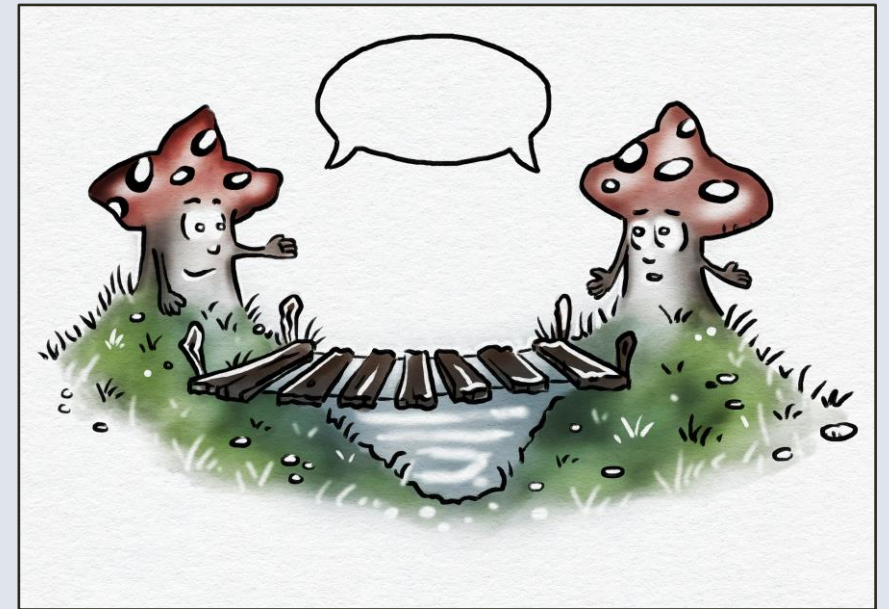
Share responsibility

“I am also really high masking and that can make it feel hard to ask for help because I think lecturers forget that I still have those needs”



Flexibility and choice in practices

“Yeah, our conversation with, like, words coming out of my mouth is so much easier for me. But, how do you assess that? So it has to be done on like, written work and stuff like that.”



Talk to me, listen, believe me



“Believe me when I say I am struggling; don't question me.”

All experiences are interdependent

“I don't have a diagnosis because I'm a woman and because [this city] doesn't allow you to get a diagnosis anymore unless you pay for it, and I can't really afford to pay for it.”

A model of **inclusive** belonging:

The collaborative and active practices of inclusive belonging

Can I see it?

Can I receive it?

Can we talk?

Can I exist here?

Can I thrive here?

PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS

EXTRACTED RECOMMENDATIONS WITHOUT

1. Deliver information using a slow, manageable pace for processing and questions.
2. Deliver negatively charged information with sensitivity.
3. Signpost the support available more clearly and consistently.
4. Proactively reach out to students to let them know support is available.
5. Offer flexibility and choice (e.g., allow students to meet if the meeting will be more productive if held in a different location).
6. Offer a welcoming space which embraces and normalises neurodivergence.
7. Acknowledge Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria within formal processes.
8. Provide support (emotional or administrative) for students who may feel overwhelmed (e.g., provide visual examples of how deadlines are set).
9. Be clear and explicit in instructions.
10. Promote team working that reflects diverse skill sets and strengths of individual staff members.
11. Create a non-judgemental space for individuals to express their fears of judgement/rejection.
12. Consider disparities between students and staff in terms of experience and knowledge.
13. Offer more than a depersonalised email service.
14. Clarify who is responsible for administering support.
15. Champion people who seek to access support.
16. Utilise technological support where applicable (e.g., mind mapping, recordings etc.).
17. Offer checks to verify whether someone is receptive to ensure they are not wrongfully missed.
18. Offer nuanced educational awareness courses that integrate personal, lived experience with professional knowledge.
19. Encourage receptiveness to learning about neurodivergence from senior roles (e.g., line managers).
20. Provide ongoing and iterative support, rather than one-off sessions.
21. Facilitate mentorship schemes (e.g., from autistic students to staff).
22. Offer online equivalents for engagement events.
23. Offer reliable room booking services to increase accessibility.

24. Distribute workload of mitigating interactional demands of neurodivergent students across staff members (rather than assume individual communication preferences rather than assume ubiquitously suitable).
25. See communication as a collaboration.
26. Be empathetic towards other person's processing styles and needs.
27. Recognise the benefits of distributing workload more flexibly across staff.
28. Celebrate neurodivergence and the individual's strengths and experiences.

47. Ensure any member of staff offering support is formally trained and paid fairly.
48. Offer help with schedule management and planning, accountability and personalised structure of workload.
49. View neurodiversity as continual; not something which exists in adolescence then disappears.
50. Challenge negative, biased stereotyped presentations of neurodivergent members of staff.
51. Do not punish staff members for being neurodivergent (e.g., via excessive performance targets).

66. Promote well-being: provide relaxing, mindful activities, puzzles and other calming activities across campus.
67. Enhance the clarity, transparency, and accessibility of information about available support by removing any unnecessary barriers that might prevent them from accessing it.
68. Encourage open communication and adaptability regarding workloads and meeting schedules (e.g., training on empathy and teamworking, regular check-ins).

- campus (e.g., posters, workshops, and online resources to educate the university community).
81. Implement mentorship programs that pair neurodivergent students with staff or peers who have similar experiences. Universities should facilitate more regular in-person meetups for neurodivergent students, in addition to existing online groups.
82. Increase visibility and awareness via implementing clear, visible communication opportunities about the availability of support groups through posters, flyers, and announcements on the university's website.
83. Signpost available support; make it easy to access and understand.

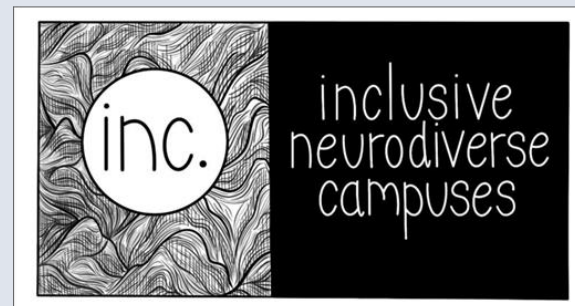
- * WORKLOAD STRUCTURING AND DELIVERY
- * FEEDBACK, COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION
- * PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPERIENCE ON CAMPUS
- * SUPPORT, ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY
- * ADVOCACY EFFORTS AND EDUCATION

42. Talk to neurodivergent people and ask what their needs are.
43. Disambiguate jargon as a means of disassembling system progression.
44. Educate people on campus about neurodivergent needs in a way that is accessible and understandable.
45. Offer lecture recording facilities.
46. Champion flexibility in assessment structure and delivery.

63. Support line managers in supporting their team members.
64. Increase use of varied textures on campus, use lower level lighting and establish quiet spaces that can be booked to secure access to uninterrupted time alone if needed.
65. Raise awareness (e.g., via campaigns) that promote acceptance, encourage and normalise the use of sensory aids and tools such as noise-cancelling headphones, ear defenders, fidget toys, and sensory stimulating toys, among both staff and students on campus. Provide access to these tools in common areas.

- feedback on the university's inclusivity practices, and ensure that this feedback is used to inform policy and practice.
79. Demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity by implementing feedback into policy and practice. This can be done by ensuring the university community feels heard and valued.
80. Align inclusivity practices and policies with up to date research-informed initiatives and policies, create and disseminate the correct terminology and understandings.

WHAT NEXT?



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING. ANY QUESTIONS?

