

Neurodiversity at work in hospitality



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Executive summary

Hospitality can offer varied and rewarding employment to neurodivergent people, provided that recruitment and working practices allow them to demonstrate and develop their abilities. Inclusion depends on everyday decisions: how a manager explains a task, how a team handles a change of plan, whether a worker can ask for support and whether development opportunities remain open after recruitment. This report brings these decisions into focus for UK hospitality and tourism employers, policymakers, educators and support organisations. It connects selected research with practical examples and the experiences of trainees at The CRUMBS Project in Bournemouth.

The central recommendation is to build support around the individual and the work they want to do. Neurodivergent people have different skills, ambitions and support needs. Some identify as disabled, while others do not; some also have learning disabilities, physical disabilities or mental health conditions. A useful approach combines accessible working arrangements for everyone with individual adjustments where needed. Opportunities should extend across hospitality roles, including customer service, and should be assessed through the person's capabilities rather than assumptions attached to a label.

Employers can begin by reviewing job requirements, making selection clearer, providing structured induction and giving supervisors time to support learning. During employment, clear priorities and agreed communication methods can help people navigate demanding service environments. Adjustments should remain available when managers, shifts or responsibilities change. Access to training and progression matters alongside entry into work. These actions require management commitment and resources, particularly in smaller businesses where specialist HR knowledge and coaching capacity may be limited.

The CRUMBS Project demonstrates how hospitality training can connect professional skills with confidence, independent living and local employment opportunities. Its contribution includes practical learning, digital skills and relationships with community organisations and employers. Selected trainee accounts illustrate the significance of securing paid work, developing confidence and gaining greater control over everyday life. They also show why a person's own goals should guide the meaning of progress. Training achievements, voluntary participation and paid employment each have value, but they need to be described separately.

The report recommends closer cooperation between employers, training providers and public agencies so that support continues through the transition into work. For employers, the immediate priorities are clear responsibility for adjustments, practical supervisor development and regular employee feedback. For government and local partners, priorities include accessible advice and dependable routes to specialist and employment support. Future research could explore how these arrangements work in ordinary hospitality settings, including their costs, the experiences of workers and managers, and the quality of employment achieved. The aim is to turn promising practice into usable knowledge that helps more people enter, remain and progress in work.

Cover image source: Authors' AI-assisted illustration, generated using generative artificial intelligence.

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1 Introduction and Scope

Hospitality work brings people with different abilities and experiences together in kitchens, restaurants, hotels and other service settings. The opportunity for inclusion lies in how these workplaces recognise ability and organise work. An applicant may be well suited to a role yet struggle with an unfamiliar interview format; an experienced employee may need a different way of receiving instructions when responsibilities change. Responding effectively requires employers to understand both the person and the demands of the job.

This report examines neurodiversity at work within UK hospitality and tourism, drawing on selected international examples. Its primary concern is employment: access to suitable jobs, everyday work experience and opportunities to develop. Disability inclusion provides a wider context, particularly because the CRUMBS Project case includes people with different and sometimes overlapping needs. The discussion addresses existing employees as well as those entering work through supported training.

The report brings together academic research, professional and government guidance, organisational documents and published trainee accounts. It is a focused narrative synthesis intended to inform employers, practitioners, training providers, support organisations and policymakers, while also providing a useful resource for neurodivergent people considering or working in hospitality. The report draws on research to explain barriers to inclusion, examples of organisational practice to show how these barriers can be addressed, and personal stories to illustrate how training, support and employment affect people's lives. Figure 1 explains how these sources inform the discussion. Our recommendations apply this evidence to hospitality operations and should be reviewed with the people affected.

Figure 1: How the report brings evidence and experience together

Evidence informing workplace decisions

Research, practical guidance and lived experience answer different questions

Research	Explains barriers and tests approaches	Check the population and workplace setting
Guidance	Supports decisions about workplace practice	Apply it to the individual and the role
Organisational accounts	Shows how programmes operate	Keep activities separate from employment outcomes
Trainee and employee stories	Explains what support means to a person	Preserve the person's voice and circumstances

Use the sources together to inform action and review what happens in practice.

Source: Authors' conceptualisation.

2 Understanding Neurodiversity and Disability

Neurodiversity describes variation in how people think, learn and process information. Neurodivergent is an umbrella term commonly used for people whose neurological functioning differs from prevailing expectations. It is not a diagnosis. Disability is a related but distinct concept: a person may experience substantial barriers at work, identify as disabled, or have more than one condition. Neurodivergence, learning disability and mental ill health should therefore not be used interchangeably (Acas, n.d.; Doyle, 2020).

The practical starting point is the person's experience. Two people with the same diagnosis may require different support, and someone who communicates confidently may still find aspects of the working environment exhausting. Visible behaviour provides an incomplete picture of need. Managers should discuss tasks and barriers respectfully, without trying to diagnose staff or assuming that a particular condition determines suitability for a role.

Table 1: Common forms of neurodivergence and examples for workplace discussion

Variation	Brief explanation	Possible workplace discussion
Autism	Differences that can involve communication, sensory processing and responses to change.	Clarity of instructions, sensory demands and preparation for changes.
ADHD	Differences involving attention regulation, activity levels and/or impulsivity.	Prioritising tasks, interruptions and ways of organising work.
Dyslexia	Differences affecting aspects of reading, spelling and written information processing.	Accessible instructions, reading time and alternatives to dense text.
Dyscalculia	Persistent difficulties involving numbers and numerical information.	Support for quantities, calculations and numerical records.
Dyspraxia or DCD	Developmental differences involving coordination and movement.	Equipment, workspace organisation and opportunities to practise tasks.
Tourette syndrome	A condition involving involuntary movements and sounds known as tics.	Understanding tics and agreeing support without treating them as misconduct.

Source: Adapted from Acas (n.d.) and Doyle (2020).

In Great Britain, the Equality Act framework protects disabled workers, including through reasonable adjustments. Acas explains that a formal diagnosis is not required for someone to be considered disabled under the Act. Employers should offer support according to the barriers experienced rather than make diagnosis the starting condition for a conversation (Acas, 2025). The legal arrangements differ in Northern Ireland. Across workplaces, respecting the individual's preferred language and confidentiality helps create the conditions for a useful discussion.



Image Source: Adobe Stock ®, Image ID: 750928891 by Krystian

3 Working conditions and employee experience

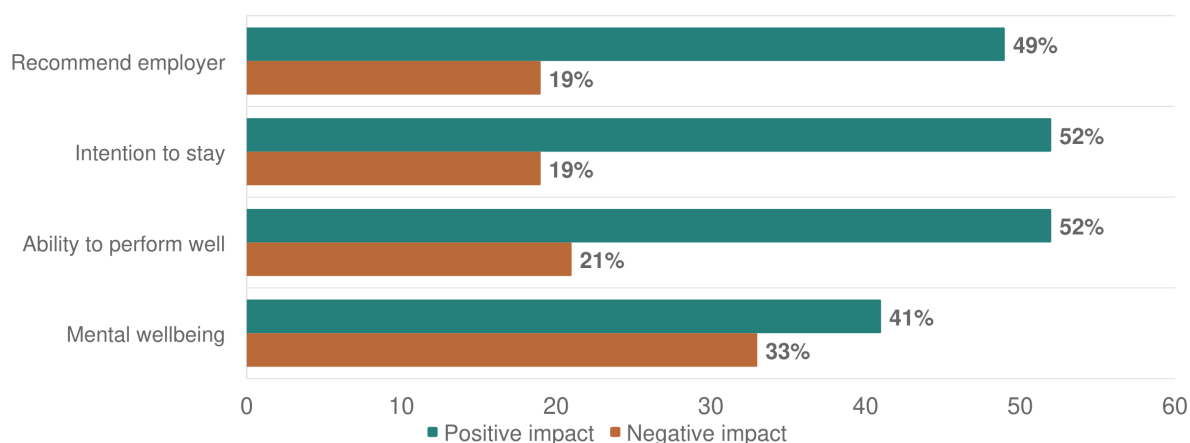
Neurodiversity becomes a workplace issue through the interaction between individual needs and job demands. In hospitality, a service period may involve competing instructions, sudden changes, background noise and close coordination with colleagues. The key question for management here is whether the organisation of work enables a person to use their skills. For example, difficulty following several spoken requests at once may call for clearer task allocation, rather than an assumption that the employee lacks commitment.

Research supports examining the working environment. Weber et al. (2024) identify physical adjustments as a relevant area of support, while highlighting limitations in evidence drawn largely from office settings. Hospitality managers must translate this carefully: a quieter briefing location may be feasible even when the kitchen itself cannot be quiet. Adjustments should be agreed around actual tasks and essential safety communication. Figure 2 shows why working experience matters beyond simply securing a job.

Figure 2: Reported positive and negative impacts of workplace experience

Workplace experience and employee outcomes

Reported impact of experience at work in relation to neurodivergence



UK cross-sector survey, n = 790 neurodivergent employees. Other responses omitted.

Adapted from Thompson and Miller (2024), Table 13, p. 21.

The CIPD findings link employees' accounts of their neurodivergence at work with wellbeing, performance and intention to stay. They are UK cross-sector self-reports, not hospitality estimates or evidence that a particular adjustment causes improvement (Thompson and Miller, 2024). Their practical value is to direct attention to the quality of daily experience. A successful recruitment initiative needs to be followed by supportive supervision and a credible route for discussing difficulties. Retention alone is insufficient: employers also need to understand whether people feel respected, can perform their roles and have opportunities they value.

CIPD's (2024) seven principles for creating a neuroinclusive organisation position neuroinclusion as an ongoing organisational responsibility, combining supportive management with individual choice and employee participation. Applied to hospitality, they offer a framework for reviewing how recruitment, shift arrangements, supervision and development accommodate different needs. Figure 3 summarises these principles by highlighting the importance of embedding inclusion in everyday practice and involving neurodivergent employees without making them responsible for driving organisational change.

Figure 3: Principles for fostering a neuroinclusive workplace

Seven principles for a neuroinclusive organisation



Source: Adapted from CIPD (2024)

4 Creating Supportive Hospitality Workplaces

The following recommendations translate the report's evidence into decisions that managers can make with employees. The examples are practical applications for hospitality, rather than fixed prescriptions for particular diagnoses.

4.1 Recruitment and induction

Recruitment should begin with a clear account of the job. Employers need to distinguish essential requirements, such as safe food handling or accurate guest records, from habits that have become part of selection without a clear relationship to performance. A broad request for an “outgoing personality”, for example, may conceal several different skills that can be assessed more directly. In practice, barriers can arise before an applicant reaches that stage. Online-only forms, automated screening, lengthy essential criteria and reliance on written CVs may exclude capable candidates whose skills are better demonstrated through practical work. The CRUMBS Project's experience highlights the importance of building relationships with employers to identify and negotiate changes to established recruitment procedures. Options include accessible application routes, advance interview information, supported introductions and appropriately structured work-based assessments (Jones, 2026). These approaches should assess the requirements of the role fairly, without treating unpaid placements as a substitute for paid employment. Candidates should know what the selection process involves, who they will meet and how to request an adjustment. Where a practical assessment is appropriate, its purpose and criteria should be explicit, with support agreed in advance.

Induction provides an opportunity to establish a shared understanding of how learning will take place. A supervisor can demonstrate a task, provide a short written or visual sequence and invite the employee to practise and explain it back. In housekeeping, this might involve learning the room sequence before managing a full allocation; in food service, it could mean practising the ordering system before a busy shift. The employee should know whom to ask when instructions conflict and how progress will be reviewed. A named contact is useful only if that person has the time and authority to respond. Learning pace should be agreed and reviewed, with expectations made clear rather than left to informal comparison with colleagues.

4.2 Everyday supervision and working conditions

Support needs to work during ordinary shifts, including busy periods. Managers can agree how priorities are communicated, how changes are explained and when clarification is possible. For instance, a pre-service briefing can identify the employee's initial tasks and the person responsible for reallocating work. Feedback is more useful when it describes a specific action and the improvement required. Public criticism, sarcasm or vague instructions can make it harder for any worker to identify what they should do differently. Supervisors should check whether an apparent performance difficulty reflects unclear expectations, an unmet support need or a task that requires further practice.

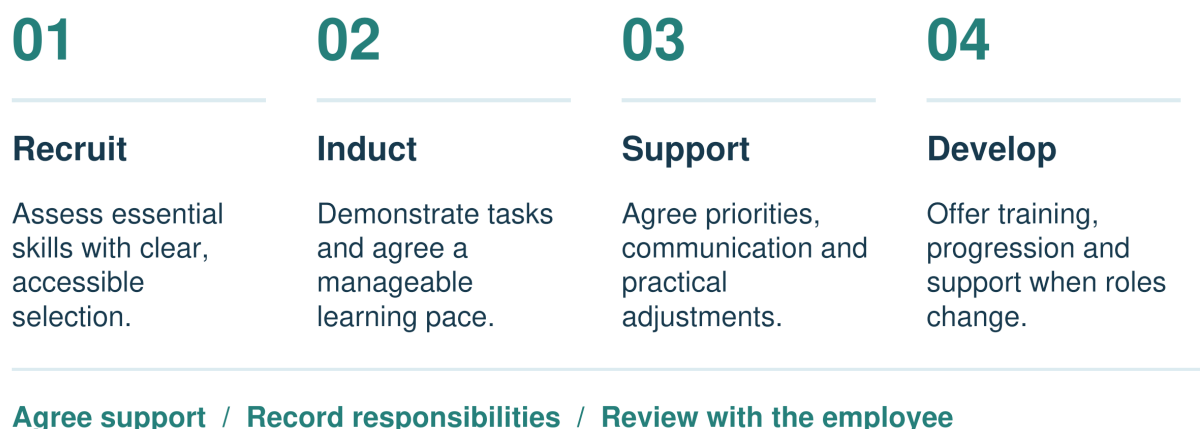
Workplace adjustments may concern the environment, the organisation of tasks or the timing of work. Options to discuss include reducing avoidable interruptions, providing accessible checklists, planning breaks and offering a suitable place to recover from sensory demands.

Any change must be assessed for the role: equipment that blocks sound, for example, may be unsuitable where staff need to hear warnings. The employee's account should inform that assessment. Fair implementation also requires managers to explain working arrangements to colleagues appropriately, without disclosing private information, and to ensure that the wider team has adequate staffing and supervision.

4.3 Development and continuity of support

Inclusion should keep opportunities open after an employee has settled into a role. Managers should discuss training interests and career ambitions rather than assume that a person wants to remain indefinitely in the first job they can perform well. Support may need to change when a neurodivergent employee takes on guest contact, learns a new system or supervises others. With the employee's agreement, a short record of effective adjustments can help maintain continuity when a line manager changes. Reviews should ask what is working, what remains difficult and whether the employee's goals have changed.

Figure 4: Practical support across the employment relationship



Authors' practical framework. Adapt each action to the person, role and workplace.

4.4 Making support workable for smaller businesses

Smaller hotels, restaurants and cafés may lack specialist HR knowledge, spare supervisory time or the resources to employ a job coach. A workable starting point is to assign responsibility to a named manager, agree a small number of priority changes and establish a contact with a local training or employment support organisation. Employers should include the time needed for demonstrations, feedback and liaison in the work plan. Specialist partners can advise on individual needs and help prepare the team, while the employer remains responsible for day-to-day management and fair employment.

[Access to Work](#) can provide eligible individuals with practical support, which may include job coaching, specialist equipment or help with travel. It does not fund the reasonable adjustments an employer is legally required to make (DWP, n.d.). Employers and partners should clarify who will arrange and pay for each element of support and avoid making ordinary management improvements dependent on a funding decision. An agreed contact and review date make this shared responsibility easier to manage.



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5 Learning from industry practice

Hospitality organisations use different arrangements to connect employment opportunities with specialist expertise. The examples below show mainstream hotel partnerships, supported internships and social enterprise provision. They serve different populations and operate within different funding systems, so their value lies in illustrating approaches that employers can investigate and adapt. The sources describe organisational practice rather than provide a basis for ranking effectiveness.

Table 2: Selected UK and international employment initiatives

Organisation and setting	Documented approach	Source
Project SEARCH at Sheraton Skyline United Kingdom	A supported internship combining three workplace rotations with on-site teaching and job coaching. The programme prepares participants for paid employment, with further support for job seeking, settling into work and career progression. Paid employment is an intended outcome rather than a guaranteed placement.	London Borough of Hounslow (n.d.) Available from: https://www.hounslow.gov.uk/supported-internships/dfn-project-search-supported-internship-programme
Fairmont and Giant Steps Canada	Fairmont Tremblant and Fairmont The Queen Elizabeth partnered with Giant Steps to support autistic people into hotel teams. Accor's 2024 account reports job-coach support and 12 recruits at that point.	Accor (2024) Available from: https://group.accor.com/en/news-stories/recruitment-fostering-disability-inclusion
Hotel Etico Australia	Combines hospitality experience with supported independent living. The published programme describes an initial work-experience period, assessment and potential paid roles with partner hotels, followed by support towards industry employment.	Hotel Etico Australia (n.d.) Available from: https://hoteletico.com.au/our-program/independence-program/
Café Joyeux France	Combines café employment for people with intellectual and cognitive disabilities with adapted training. Its training organisation describes learning through workplace practice and preparation for a recognised catering qualification.	Café Joyeux (n.d.) Available from: https://www.cafejoyeux.com/en/content/38-how-to-support-training-and-employment

Across these examples, employers share responsibility with organisations that provide training or specialist support. For a UK employer considering a partnership, the key questions are practical: who prepares the individual and the team, how support operates during shifts, and what happens when the placement or initial training ends? A placement should have an agreed learning purpose and a clear discussion of possible next steps. Paid roles, training placements and voluntary work should remain transparent to everyone involved. The CRUMBS Project case provides a local example of how these relationships can develop.

6 The CRUMBS Project

6.1 Purpose and training approach

The CRUMBS Project is a Bournemouth-based disability training charity that uses hospitality, catering and life skills education to support greater independence and access to employment. Its participants include adults with disabilities, neurodivergences, mental health conditions, stabilised addictions and acquired brain injuries. This wider remit matters: the charity's work offers valuable insight into inclusive hospitality pathways, while its overall figures refer to its whole trainee population (The CRUMBS Project, 2025).

The training offer connects vocational learning with skills used outside work. Foundation learning introduces core expectations and safety, while Food Production and Service, Housekeeping, Administration and Digital Skills provide different areas of development. The charity describes its programmes as tailored to the individual's interests, needs and learning style, with professional recognition through the Institute of Hospitality. Practical learning takes place in settings including a training kitchen, bakery, computer room and dining areas. Trainees can practise producing food, serving customers and completing tasks with support before applying these skills in other settings (The CRUMBS Project, n.d.-a).

The programme policies explain the foundations of this approach through personal action planning, key-worker support, trainee reviews and supervised placements. They also recognise that people may move towards employment, voluntary activity or further education according to their goals. Furthermore, the annual report and current training information provide the more recent account of provision (The CRUMBS Project, 2019; 2025). The common principle is that learning should have a purpose understood by the trainee and be supported through an organised relationship with staff.

6.2 Community and employer relationships

CRUMBS operates within a local network that gives training a practical social and economic purpose. Its 2024 annual report describes work-experience links with Marsham Court Hotel, Rick Stein Sandbanks and Bournemouth & Poole College. It also records meals provided to assisted living residents at Hibberd Court, showcase events and contributions from volunteers and supporters. These activities bring trainees into contact with customers, professional teams and the wider community. The trainee stories identify the PATHS employability programme as a route through which work experience and employment preparation can connect with paid opportunities.

The annual report also identifies independent travel as a barrier to wider participation. This connects the charity's life-skills work directly with employment: being able to perform a job is only one part of being able to take it up. Digital skills, confidence in communication and the ability to manage everyday routines can help a person make use of an opportunity. Employers therefore benefit from understanding what support already works for a trainee and agreeing how it will continue in the new workplace. Such relationships also help address barriers within employers' recruitment systems. CRUMBS can introduce trainees directly to prospective employers, explain how candidates demonstrate their abilities and discuss alternatives to standard applications or interviews. This advocacy depends on sustained employer engagement, rather than expecting trainees alone to navigate procedures that may not be accessible to them (Jones, 2026). The value of the partnership lies in this connection between preparation, opportunity and continuing support.

6.3 Training and Participation

The annual report records a range of achievements across learning, work participation and community service. Figure 5 brings together selected measures so that readers can see the scale and variety of the charity's activity. The 18 programme awards comprise 11 Foundation completions and seven completions in Food Production and Service and Housekeeping. Training-unit passes and online courses represent additional learning activity, rather than separate counts of people.

Figure 5. CRUMBS training achievements and community contribution



The reported 6,162 employment hours include both paid and voluntary activity. The published split of 22% paid and 78% voluntary describes hours, not the proportion of trainees obtaining paid jobs. Keeping this distinction visible allows the report to recognise contribution while retaining a clear focus on access to paid employment for those who want it. Similarly, programme awards demonstrate achievement but do not by themselves establish what happened after training.

Taken together, these measures show a charity providing repeated opportunities to learn, contribute and engage with other people. They become more meaningful when read alongside the trainee accounts, which explain what a new skill or employment opportunity can change in everyday life. The following section brings that personal perspective into the report.

7 Trainee Experiences

These accounts are adapted from the trainee stories supplied by The CRUMBS Project (n.d.-b). Quotations retain the trainees' words. The accounts illustrate different experiences of learning and employment; the practice reflections are the report authors' interpretation.

7.1 Luke: The transition into restaurant work

Luke is described by CRUMBS as neurodivergent and determined to progress and develop as a person. Through the PATHS employability programme, he completed a placement with Rick Stein Restaurants. This gave him an opportunity to build confidence and demonstrate his ability to adapt to a professional hospitality environment. The account reports that his professionalism and work ethic led to his first paid role in front of house at Rick Stein Sandbanks.



“Crumbs has done a lot to help me to achieve my ambitions. The support, praise, and recognition has really given me a boost. Crumbs has felt like a second home to me. It has changed my life.”

Luke's account places encouragement and recognition alongside work experience. For employers, the lesson is to create opportunities for candidates to demonstrate what they can do and to provide feedback that helps them develop. His move into front-of-house work also challenges the assumption that neurodivergent employees should be directed away from customer contact. Suitability should emerge through the individual's interests, performance and support needs.

Image Source: Courtesy of The CRUMBS Project.

7.2 Matthew: The value of learning and recognition

Matthew is described as neurodivergent and interested in cooking and baking. He joined CRUMBS to develop these skills and prepare for employment, completing a Certificate in Food Production and Service. Through PATHS, he also developed customer service and employment skills. His achievements included recognition as CRUMBS' Trainee of the Year and the Destination Management Board's Tony Williams Young Innovator Award in 2022. CRUMBS reports that he is now in paid employment.

“I really grew as a person at Crumbs and enjoyed learning something new every day. I now feel I'm worth something and I've learnt to look after myself.”

Matthew's words draw attention to how learning can affect self-worth as well as employability. Recognition of progress matters when it is connected to real achievement and opportunities to use developing skills. His story also supports a broader understanding of preparation for work, in which professional learning and the ability to look after oneself develop together.

Image Source: Courtesy of The CRUMBS Project.



7.3 Krystal: A pathway into housekeeping

Krystal has learning disabilities and joined CRUMBS with an interest in housekeeping and a clear ambition to obtain paid work. She completed a Certificate in Housekeeping endorsed by the Institute of Hospitality and became the first trainee to complete all nine units of a digital skills programme designed for adults with learning disabilities. She also received the charity's Trainee of the Year award in 2024. Through PATHS, voluntary experience with Care South became a route to her first paid housekeeping job that year.



“Crums is a friendly place and I’ve been happy to be here. I’m very pleased to get paid employment which will help me to afford hobbies and be social with others. I’ll be more independent, confident, and happy having an active work-life balance.”

Krystal’s account explains the value of paid work in her own terms: income can support social participation, interests and independence. Her experience connects vocational achievement with an employer opportunity, while showing how hospitality skills can be used in a care setting. A practical implication is to make the purpose and possible next steps of work experience clear, so that learning can lead towards the person’s stated employment goal.

Image Source: Courtesy of The CRUMBS Project.

7.4 Sarah: The connection between work and independence

Sarah has a learning disability and joined CRUMBS after finding herself living alone in the family home. Her initial goal was to learn how to care for herself and become more independent. Structured training helped her shop within a budget, prepare meals and maintain her home safely. Digital skills enabled her to keep in touch with family and friends. The supplied account reports that she now has paid employment and also volunteers at CRUMBS, sharing her learning with other trainees.

“I’ve learnt so many new skills and am now able to look after myself. I enjoy sharing what I’ve learnt with others. Crums is a supportive place and the staff are really friendly.”

Sarah’s experience shows why employment support may need to begin with the circumstances of everyday life. It also presents her as someone who contributes knowledge and support to others. Together, these four accounts illustrate different starting points and ambitions. They support a flexible approach in which paid work remains an important opportunity, while confidence, independence and a person’s own choices also inform how progress is understood.

Image Source: Courtesy of The CRUMBS Project.



8. The Employer's Perspective: Marsham Court Hotel

Marsham Court Hotel in Bournemouth demonstrates how an independent, family-run hospitality business can turn a commitment to accessibility into employment opportunities. For owners Rosie Radwell and James Dixon-Box, the journey has personal roots: their mother's experience of becoming a wheelchair user helped shape the family's determination to make the hotel more inclusive. That commitment now extends beyond accessible guest facilities to the people delivering its services. A 2026 report states that 21% of staff have declared disability, while the hotel holds Disability Confident Leader status. Together, these provide a strong starting point for understanding its approach to inclusion. [1, 2]

"Our family's experience shaped our commitment to accessibility. We want that commitment to be felt by everyone who works here, through the support they receive and the opportunities they have to develop." Rosie Radwell



The hotel's approach connects inclusion with workforce development: widening access to hospitality careers can help employers draw on talent that conventional recruitment may overlook. Applicants are invited to request reasonable adjustments during recruitment and interviews, with information available in alternative formats. Once employed, staff can access one-to-one mentoring through a dedicated Recruitment and Development Manager and receive tailored training. Disability awareness is also part of every employee's induction, supported by external trainers and specialist provision such as deaf awareness and basic British Sign Language. These practices combine individual support with wider team understanding, creating conditions in which disabled and neurodivergent colleagues can discuss their needs

and develop their capabilities. [2, 3]

Community partnerships help translate this culture into practical opportunities. Marsham Court works with organisations such as The CRUMBS Project and Minstead Trust, whose trainees gain experience alongside the hotel's Head Chef and Management Team. This offers a bridge between specialist hospitality training and a commercial working environment. The hotel also participated in Dorset Careers Hub's Removing Barriers [project](#), delivered with SendMe2Work to improve employment opportunities for young people with special educational needs and disabilities. A further example comes from Empowering Employment: its 2024–25 impact report describes Greg securing a long-term, structured apprenticeship at Marsham Court after difficult experiences with previous employers. Greg reported developing efficiency and initiative, illustrating how appropriate employment arrangements can support learning and progression. He has now completed his apprenticeship gaining a Distinction and has gained permanent employment with the hotel. [4–6]

"Recruiting someone is only the beginning. We need to understand what helps them succeed, work with our partners and colleagues to provide that support and give them room to build their skills and confidence." James Dixon-Box

What makes Marsham Court a benchmark employer is the connection between leadership commitment, accessible recruitment, continuing support and opportunities to practice and progress. Its recognition includes the Institute of Hospitality's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Employer of the Year Award 2024 and 2025 for SMEs; James also serves as the UK Government's Disability and Access Ambassador for Hospitality. For other hospitality businesses, the lesson is practical: build relationships with specialist organisations, equip colleagues to support inclusion and give individuals the conditions to demonstrate their abilities. Marsham Court shows how these commitments can become part of everyday hospitality management. [7, 8]

Sources: 1. Scholes 2026; 2. Hotel careers and support; 3. Hotel disability training; 4. CRUMBS Annual Report 2024, p.3; 5. Dorset Careers Hub 2024; 6. Empowering Employment 2024–25, p.7; 7. Institute of Hospitality 2024 award; 8. GOV UK ambassador profile



9 Conclusions and Priorities for Action

9.1 Responsibilities across the partnership

The report's central conclusion is that inclusive hospitality employment depends on the relationship between the individual, the workplace and the support available (Figure 6). Recruitment creates an opportunity; daily management makes it workable and worthwhile. The CRUMBS Project and the international examples show how learning can connect with work. The trainee stories illustrate the value of income, social participation, confidence and independence, while recognising that people follow different pathways.

Figure 6. Shared responsibilities for inclusive employment in hospitality.



Source: authors' conceptualisation

For employers, the priority is to make inclusion part of day-to-day operations and management. This means checking whether application portals, screening criteria and interview procedures unnecessarily exclude capable applicants, and reviewing recruitment requirements, allowing time for induction and ensuring that line managers can agree and maintain appropriate support. An adjustment should have a clear purpose, a person responsible for putting it into practice and a review point agreed with the employee. Employers should also examine the wider working conditions that shape experience, including workload and the way colleagues communicate. A welcoming recruitment message means little if employees do not feel safe asking for support or raising concerns during a shift. Development conversations should remain open so that support does not become a reason to restrict responsibility or advancement.

Training providers and community support organisations can prepare people for workplace tasks and help employers provide effective support. Before the person starts, partners should agree responsibilities, a contact person and which learning and support arrangements should continue. They should also agree how to respond when the role, supervisor or support needs change. These arrangements should extend beyond the initial placement while respecting the employee's independence and control over personal information.

Government and local public agencies have a role in making these partnerships accessible and dependable. The Expert Academic Panel on Neurodiversity recommends support based on need and greater use of accessible workplace design, alongside stronger evidence about effective practice (DWP, 2026). For hospitality, this report recommends translating that direction into practical advice for small employers, routes to specialist support and coordination with training providers. Employment initiatives should recognise the importance of transport and the time needed for workplace learning. Public support can help sustain this infrastructure, while employers continue to meet their responsibilities for fair treatment and reasonable adjustments.

Progress should be assessed through employment quality and the individual's own account as well as participation totals. Useful questions include whether someone has obtained the paid work they wanted, whether agreed support is available, and whether they can develop or move to a preferred role. Voluntary activity can be a valued choice or a stage in learning, but it should remain distinct from paid employment in both planning and reporting. This clarity gives employers, trainees and supporters a shared basis for judging what has been achieved and what still needs attention.



Image Source: Adobe Stock ®, Image ID: 2208423554 by Iryna

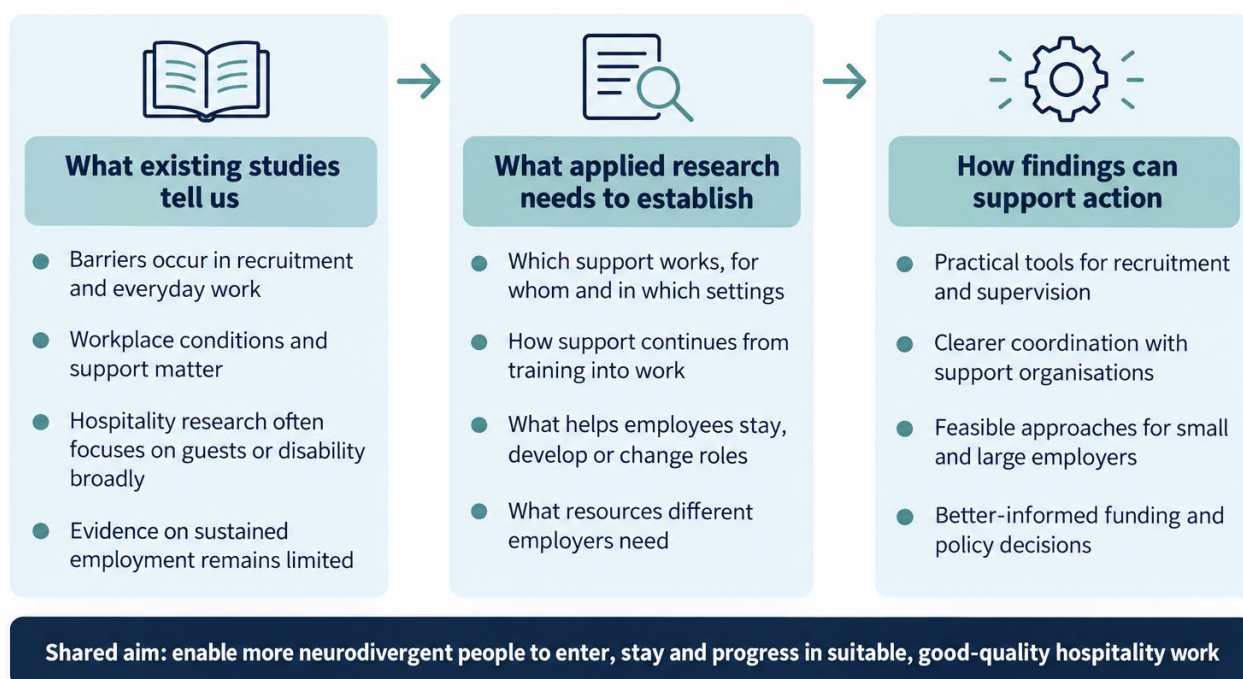
9.2 Priorities and future directions for applied research

Existing research identifies barriers to inclusive employment but provides less guidance on how support can be maintained within the everyday realities of hospitality work. Manoharan et al. (2024) highlight gaps in research on disability employment in hospitality, while Jamin et al. (2024) show that much of the wider literature focuses on customers rather than employees. Emerging research brings neurodivergent employment and management practices more directly into view (Deb et al., 2026), but further evidence is needed to understand which approaches help people enter suitable work, remain in employment and progress. Findings concerning disability more broadly provide a useful foundation, although they cannot automatically be applied to the different experiences and support needs of neurodivergent employees.

Future research should examine whether recruitment allows applicants to demonstrate their abilities, how employees agree support with managers, and whether it continues when shifts, responsibilities or supervisors change. It should also examine coordination between employers, training providers and community organisations during the transition into work. Comparing hospitality settings and business sizes would help establish which arrangements are sustainable, the staff time and resources they require, and where they can be adopted.

Neurodivergent employees should help shape the questions, methods and interpretation of future research. Their involvement is essential to understanding whether an arrangement that appears successful to an employer also meets the employee's needs and aspirations. Following experiences over time would reveal what happens beyond recruitment and initial placement, including why people stay, seek different responsibilities or leave the industry.

Figure 7: Priorities and future directions for applied research



Source: authors' conceptualisation

Research should assess employment quality and sustainability alongside recruitment numbers, including suitable hours and contracts, wellbeing, reliable support and development opportunities. Employees' own assessments should remain central, including whether they can raise concerns and whether the work meets their goals. Comparing these outcomes with implementation costs and organisational demands would help practitioners and decision makers judge which approaches are effective and workable.

Further research should produce practical guidance for employers, practitioners, support organisations and public agencies, including accessible recruitment materials, supervisor guidance and arrangements for coordinating support. These resources should be tested with their intended users and refined through feedback. The aim is to help more neurodivergent people enter hospitality, remain in suitable work and pursue their ambitions.



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