To what extent are autistic library staff in the UK supported in their workplace?

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Abstract

Low employment statistics of adults with autism spectrum disorder in the UK, the low number of academic studies about supporting autistic library staff in Library and Information Studies academic literature and the indication within the relevant literature that autistic library staff may face barriers to receiving support because of the lack of understanding and negative stigma associated with autism, has prompted this investigation into whether libraries in the UK are providing effective support for autistic library staff. A mixed methods approach was employed to gather quantitative and qualitive data to represent the thoughts and opinions of autistic library staff about the support offered in their workplace. Two surveys were sent out to various library staff listservs, networks and social media groups and a few survey respondents were invited to take part in follow-up interviews which were provided in different formats. Results from both surveys and the interviews indicated that there were issues with disclosure, masking/hiding autistic traits, discrimination due to lack of understanding about autism by some line managers and staff, barriers to requesting reasonable adjustments at work and during job interviews, lack of provision of support services in UK libraries and the lack of provision of autism awareness training. Results have also positively indicated that some autistic library staff have certain traits and skills which enable them to carry out their library

work. Although some of the participants have indicated that they have some level of support and face less discrimination in their workplaces, there is still more that can be done in UK libraries to support autistic library staff. Further recommendations are made about different types of support and providing special training for library managers and non-autistic staff to improve understanding about adjustments that autistic library staff may need. Further studies would be useful to understand about prevalence of autism in different sectors and understand the needs of staff working in different library sectors.

Declaration

I have read and understood the College and Departmental statements and guidelines concerning plagiarism. I declare that:

- This submission is entirely my own original work.

- Wherever published, unpublished, printed, electronic or other information sources have been used as a contribution or component of this work, these are explicitly, clearly, and individually acknowledged by appropriate use of quotation marks, citations, references, and statements in the text. It is 14,971 words in length.

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List of abbreviations

- ADA = Americans with Disabilities Act (1996)

- ASCEL = Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians

- ASD = autism spectrum disorder

- BL = British Library

- CILIP = Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals

- DN = Disability Network

- LISA = Library and Information Science Abstracts

- NAS = National Autistic Society

- OAR = Organization of Autism Research

- ONS = Office for National Statistics

- PBS = Positive Behavioural Therapy

- UK = United Kingdom

- UDL = Universal Design for Learning

- US = United States

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1.0 Introduction

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), which is also referred to as autism, is defined as a "lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world" (National Autistic Society, 2022c). It is a spectrum condition that affects autistic people in different ways which means that some people require more support in the daily life than others. Some autistic people may have difficulties with social communication, social interaction, repetitive and restrictive behaviours, high or low sensitivity to light, sound, touch or taste, or extreme anxiety (National Autistic Society, 2022c). There has been a substantial increase in the number of adults diagnosed with autism in recent years. It was estimated in 2020 that there were around 700,000 people in the UK, including one in 100 children, who have been diagnosed with autism (British Medical Association, 2020). A further population study indicated that the rate of recorded incidences of autism diagnoses had increased by 787% between 1998 and 2001 (Russell, et al., 2021, p.676). There was also a greater increase in the number of adults and females diagnosed with autism, which may have resulted from campaigns to raise awareness within these groups (Russell, et al, 2021, p. 680). Since the introduction of the Autism Act in 2009, it had been estimated that 99.5% of

the people were more aware of autism (All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism, 2019, p.8). However, despite the substantial increase in public awareness of autism and increased rates of diagnosis in adults, the number of employed autistic adults in the UK remains low. In 2021 the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in the UK published data which shows that only 22% of adults with autism are employed (Putz, Sparkes & Foubert, 2021). This figure has been described by the National Autistic Society (NAS) as of great concern. The NAS stated that the government should "hold itself to account on improving employers' autism understanding and support for autistic job seekers and employees" (National Autistic Society, 2021). These figures suggest that there may be significant barriers to employment for autistic individuals.

Bearing in mind the concerns of the NAS about the level of employment of autistic people in the UK, the author is interested, as an autistic individual who is currently employed in library work, to investigate how autistic adults are supported in UK libraries and whether the support they received influences their employment.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Search strategy

Several literature searches were performed to discover what research exists in this area. Searches were carried out using online discovery resources and databases accessible via a UCL library subscription. Searches were also carried out through Google and Bing to locate relevant articles and additional information about government legislation and library policies for supporting autistic library staff. The resources which were initially explored included:

• UCLExplore

• Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA) via ProQuest Central

- Library and Information Science Database via ProQuest

- EBSCO HOST Library and Information Science Source

- Emerald Insight

- Scopus

- The Internet: Google, Google Scholar and Bing

Two initial advanced searches were carried out in LISA. The first search used the search terms ab(librar*) AND employ* AND autis* AND PEER(yes) AND pd(>20120501). This search was limited to peer reviewed articles published in the last 10 years, and truncation was used to expand the search. It was initially decided to search for articles published within the last 10 years to extract the latest research in this area. The second search used the terms: librar* AND/OR employee* AND/OR (librarian* OR library assistant* OR information specialist* OR volunteer*) AND/OR autism. The second search used the same limits except the search was expanded to include articles from the Library and Information Science Database. The first search yielded 73 results and the second, 53 results. For both searches only 8 articles were identified which focused on autistic library staff.

A third search was carried out through the EBSCO HOST Library and Information Science Source, using the terms: librar* AND auti* AND employ* which yielded 22 results. This was narrowed down to 4 Journal Articles after search was limited to Abstracts, Full-text, and Peer Reviewed Articles. The least number of results was found in Emerald Insight and Scopus which only had two articles which were of relevance.

To attempt to increase the number of results new search terms were used including neurodiversity, neurodiverse, neurodiver*, disabled, disabilities, disab*, work*, workers*, Asperger's syndrome, Asperger's, high functioning, support* and the search was expanded to include journals which UCL is not subscribed to. This yielded a few more results included some articles about employing, managing, and supporting autistic adults in retail and office work.

The bibliographies of the relevant articles identified in the previous searches were also used to locate other relevant articles. One article was identified as being from an open access peer-reviewed online journal: *In the library with the lead pipe* which was located after a Google search. This journal contained a few relevant articles including one where an autistic librarian is being interviewed about their work experience in libraries (Eng, 2017). Articles about library staff with disabilities were also selected for the literature review because they contained similar themes and issues discussed in articles about autistic library staff. After these searches were carried out the articles were sorted and grouped on Endnote according to their themes and their relevancy to the research topic.

2.2.0 Key themes

The literature searches retrieved few academic articles about supporting and employing autistic library staff, especially within the UK and confirmed that there are no recorded figures of the total number of autistic adults employed in UK libraries.

Most of the relevant literature about autistic and disabled library staff has been written in countries outside of the UK such as the United States (US) and Canada. This may reflect the rise of the autism rights or autistic self-advocacy movement in the US which was started by autistic adults in the 1990s who campaigned for self-advocacy, tolerance for their neurodiversity and "to create a world where autistic and other dis-abled people are free to be themselves in a respectful and inclusive society" (Kapp, 2020, p.12). Only one relevant article has been written by a UK librarian who had been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome (Attar, 2021).

The search results showed a greater focus in the literature on provision of services and access for autistic library users as confirmed by several US and Canadian autistic and disabled library researchers (Anderson, 2021a; Anderson, 2021b; Brown and Sheidlower, 2019; Everhart, and

Anderson, 2020; Hill, 2014; Lawrence, 2013; Oud, 2019b; Pionke, 2019). 47 articles that focussed on autistic users were found in LISA with the main themes of:

- accessibility issues and solutions for autistic school-age or university students

- troubleshooting technology for autistic students

- information needs of parents of autistic people

- information needs and information seeking behaviours of autistic university students

- support programmes for autistic academic students and for autistic adults in public libraries.

Several articles were retrieved about accessibility for autistic users in the UK in the public library sector although these are limited to individual case studies and tend to focus more on providing services for autistic children (Attar, 2021; Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians, 2016; Mears, 2017). This may partially reflect the impact of the collaborative *Autism Friendly Libraries* film created by the Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians (ASCEL) and Dimensions in 2016 which sparked a nationwide commitment for public libraries to be more autism friendly (Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians, 2016; Dimensions, 2022). Not all these articles are relevant, but some are of interest because they share themes around lack of awareness of autism and disabilities and negative attitudes towards autism.

Only 11 journal articles, one book chapter, two online webinars, and one blog post were retrieved which referred to autistic library staff. A further 20 journal articles and two printed books were retrieved which focused on to library staff with disabilities. From these 35 sources several common themes were identified:

2.2.1 Autism and neurodiversity

The searches retrieved articles which discussed theories about disability which relate to autism. The theory of neurodiversity claims that there are natural biological neurological differences and

variations in the way people think and that these "naturally-occurring differences lead to species richness" (Lawrence, 2013, p.100). Theorists and activists who view autism as a neurodiverse condition, seek to improve social support mechanisms, facilitate better understanding of other people about autism and help other people recognise they are not suffering from or need to be "cured" of their neurodiversity (Fenton & Krahn, 2007, p.4). This contrasts with the dominant medical model of disability which views disabilities and neurodiverse conditions as afflictions which need to be treated and cured so that individuals can fit into society (Linton, 2005). The neurodiversity view is also influenced by the social model of disability, which describes disability as a social construct, caused by physical and attitudinal barriers in society rather than by an individual's impairment. This model also criticises ableism which is a form of discrimination against people with disabilities who are regarded by society as inferior because they are unable to conform to the able-bodied norm (Oud, 2019b, p.173). However, the social model has been criticised as an inflexible model and difficult to apply to autistic people because they may still encounter barriers even when society makes changes to accept them (Dwyer, 2022, p.75). Although the neurodiverse model provides a useful theory as a basis for discussion of the experiences of autistic library staff, only three articles were found that address this concept and assert that there needs to be more awareness of it within libraries and LIS literature (Eng, 2017; Lawrence, 2013; Tumlin, 2019).

Some articles asserted that many members of the autistic community prefer the use of identity-first language such as "autistic person/individual" rather than person-first language ("person with autism") because they acknowledge autism as part of themselves rather than as being separate from their identity. This has been confirmed in a recent study by the Organization of Autism Research (OAR) where 81.4% out of 1000 respondents preferred identity-first language and 76.4% stated that they were more likely to use resources that used identity-first language (Organization of Autism Research, 2020). An earlier study which surveyed 3470 people in the UK showed that there was a preference for identify first language among a large percentage of autistic adults, but fewer adults and many professionals preferred using person first language (Kenny, Hattersley and Molins,

2016). This may show that certain groups have different preferences for language used for addressing individuals in the autism community which may be influenced by the person's background and the context in which the language is used.

2.2.2 Lack of knowledge about autism by employers, 'masking' by employees and disclosure.

It is asserted that one issue affecting employment of autistic adults is the lack of knowledge and understanding of autism by employers and co-workers. This is a wider societal issue seen in media portrayals about autistic people. It varies considerably from the portrayal of autistic individuals who have learning difficulties and require support for example, Sia's film *Music* presents a nonverbal autistic character as infantilised and suffering from her autism, to contemporary US sitcoms which show autism as limited to "high functioning, socially deficient, emotionally detached, and heterosexual males" (Blastow, 2021; Ressa, 2021, p.22). A lack of understanding may result in employers having a negative bias against autistic people and autistic individuals may choose to not disclose their diagnosis and prefer to "mask" their autistic traits because of the fear of facing discrimination. In a recent study by Anderson (2021b, p.47) of autistic Canadian librarians some of the interview participants described how they tried to avoid disclosing their diagnosis and "mask" their autistic traits during job interviews because they feared that they might be filtered out of the application process by managers who lack knowledge about autism. Anderson (2021b, p.47) observed that some respondents state that they are reluctant to ask for reasonable adjustments and choose to ask for them as a last resort. One respondent also stated that they did not want to be labelled with a disability, which shows how some individuals may prefer to be recognised for their personal achievements rather than being associated with their autism (Anderson, 2021b, p.44). Additionally, most of the participants described creating their own reasonable adjustments without needing to disclose their autism, which included having written instructions, adjusting/dimming lights, controlling the temperature, using noise cancelling headphones or ear plugs, working with

the lights off to prevent sensory overstimulation (Anderson, 2021b, pp. 45-46). It is also concerning to observe in another study that 25 out 54 respondents, who may have invisible disabilities, indicated that they 'pass' as able-bodied in the library workplace (Brown and Sheidlower, 2019, p.477). However, "passing" or "masking" autistic traits has been shown to cause mental and physical fatigue for autistic staff especially during interviews (Anderson, 2021b, p.47). Another study of librarians with disabilities in Canada showed that most respondents had not disclosed their disabilities at their workplaces and were reluctant to request reasonable adjustments because the "fear of negative judgements or impacts on their jobs" (Oud, 2019b, p.189). That some autistic and disabled library staff are fearful of disclosing their diagnosis and reluctant to ask for adjustments may signify that libraries may be failing to provide support for these types of staff.

Lack of knowledge about the abilities of autistic people and other disabled people also extends to library users. A survey about the views of library staff towards disabled people indicates that library managers do not empathise with users with mental health issues (Pionke, 2020, p.134). Some respondents suggested users with invisible disabilities may be making it up "just to get out of certain fines or excuse poor behavior" (Pionke, 2020, p.136). Another study showed that some autistic university students have had negative experiences with librarians with one student describing how they were told to leave on multiple occasions after speaking too loudly (Anderson, 2018a). This shows that lack understanding of the social communication issues that some autistic individuals may result in them being excluded from the library. Such biases and misunderstandings may also dissuade library staff from revealing their diagnosis.

However, despite these negative attitudes towards autism, it was observed by Anderson (2021b, pp.43-44) that some autistic librarians did disclose their autism to their employers either through their involvement in autism awareness training in their workplace, to explain to their line managers and colleagues about how their autism affects their behaviour to avoid negative consequences such as poor performance reviews or when the institution or potential employers have a history of serving

disabled users and accommodating library staff. Although some chose to use their own adjustments, they did eventually disclose their autism to their line manager or HR when they faced an issue which they could not control (Anderson, 2021b, p.47). This indicates that some autistic library staff disclose their autism because of the context of the situation as some autistic library staff may see it as beneficial to disclose as it helps them avoid negative consequences and it also enables them to acquire reasonable adjustments to resolve problems which may occur because of lack of understanding about autism by non-autistic staff members/line managers or barriers caused by uncontrollable work environments.

2.2.3 Lack of autism and disability awareness training and lack of clarity on making reasonable adjustments

A lack of provision of disability and autism awareness training in some libraries may also signify employers' lack of knowledge and understanding of these conditions. Some managers are unaware that there are disabled people using the library and do not see the need to send their staff for training (Pionke, 2020, p.134). Employers also lack awareness of how to manage autistic employees. An earlier survey found that 31% of employers see autistic employees as difficult to manage and require more advice on how to support them which also indicates lack of knowledge and understanding (National Autistic Society, 2016, p.15).

One researcher asserts that libraries can and should provide autism awareness because it has been proven to work in improving relationships and understanding of autism between school children (Lawrence, 2013, p.105). Many studies show that libraries do provide autism training to improve staff awareness of autistic library users. This can be seen in many examples in US academic libraries including the Seton Hall University Libraries' LibGuide on autism, and the provision of information literacy workshops for students on the Adelphi University Library's *Building Bridges* autism support scheme (Cho, 2018; Remy and Seaman, 2014; Shea and Derry, 2019).

There are also free online autism awareness training courses offered by Project PALS in the US (Project PALS and Florida State University, 2022). Another website Project ENABLE offers free worldwide autism awareness courses for library staff (Syracuse University, inforpeople califa, Burton Blatt Institute and Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2022). It is difficult to see how effective these strategies are at improving inclusivity since further studies have not been carried out to assess their impact or whether they can be adapted to promote autism awareness and understanding between library staff.

Further database and internet searches were carried out to identify any autism awareness strategies used in UK libraries. Only one early example was found which assesses an online VLE disability awareness training module for library staff at the University of Dundee. Staff feedback was favourable with 93 percent of participants saying they would recommend this module to their colleagues; however, the study was limited to 14 participants (Forrest, 2007, p.713).

Lack of training and awareness may also make it difficult for autistic individuals to acquire reasonable adjustments. The library manager's lack of knowledge about autism and 'invisible' disabilities may lead to the process taking too long and result in damage to the employee's mental health and well-being (Pionke, 2019, p.433). Lack of initial provision for people with other disabilities has meant that some libraries have been reactive towards accessibility issues by using retrofitting techniques such as providing access ramps for people in wheelchairs to enter older library buildings, yet this can also exclude people if the accessible entrance is hidden from view (Moeller, 2019, pp.458-459). Researchers have observed that some library managers may have an unconscious bias for supporting library staff with physical/visible disabilities because they may find it easier to see and understand how to accommodate for people with these types of conditions rather than for people with 'invisible' disabilities or conditions such as autism (Moeller, 2019, p.459; Pionke 2019, pp.428-429).

Other US research is critical of the lack of clarity in legislation which makes it difficult to define and implement reasonable adjustments. The American Disability Act (ADA) may be unsuitable for autistic people because it requires individuals to predict and anticipate changes to justify their request for accommodations. Autistic individuals may struggle with this since autism affects everyone differently and support needs can fluctuate daily. The ADA also demands that employees should request "reasonable accommodations" which do not hinder the employer. This puts the employers' and institution's needs over the needs of the individual (Moeller, 2019, p.464).

There was little evidence retrieved which assesses the impact of relevant UK legislation. It appears that the UK Equality Act (2010) attempts to address some of the limitations of the ADA, emphasising that organisations should not wait or respond to difficulties as they emerge and instead anticipate what may be required. Nevertheless, there is little information about supporting autistic people which may make it difficult for library managers to assess the needs of these employees. The Autism Act (2009) aimed to provide a national strategy to improve services available to autistic adults. This act was reviewed and updated in 2021 when it was reported that two in three autistic people were unable to get the support they needed (All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism, 2019). The multiple UK laws and lack of clarity may make it difficult for library managers to understand how to support autistic people. However, the new national autism strategy addresses this by advising employers to get advice through the Disability Confident Employer Scheme and Access to Work scheme (Great Britain. Department of Health and Social Care and Department for Education, 2021). The Disability Confident Scheme highlights the benefits of employing disabled people, offers advice about how to implement reasonable adjustments and advises employers on how to communicate with disabled employees (Great Britain, Department for Work and Pensions and CIPD, 2020a). The Access to Work scheme provides grants to support employees with obtaining special aids and equipment, adapting current equipment, travelling to work, communication support during interviews and accessing support workers (Great Britain, Department for Work and Pensions, 2020b). It is

good to see that steps have been taken to support employees with disabilities in the UK, but it is not clear whether library managers are aware of these schemes and what they offer.

2.2.4 Librarianship as a profession, reinforcement of ableist attitudes and positive abilities of autistic library staff

Researchers have described systemic values held by library staff about librarianship which reinforce ableist attitudes. Resilience and professionalism reinforce ablest views because it is implied that autistic staff or people with other disabilities are not good enough if they do not embody these traits (Moeller, 2019, p.461). Some librarians display 'vocational awe' and view libraries as "inherently good and sacred, and therefore beyond critique" (Ettarh, 2018). These views may hinder criticism and prevent changes to make libraries more inclusive for autistic people. Another source indicates that academic libraries focus more on making efficient and cheaper services to meet public and state goals which creates an environment in which autistic staff must conform to social norms to stay employed (Giles-Smith and Popowich, 2020, p.112). Another interview study of disabled librarians also emphasises the problem with academic libraries focusing on increasing efficiency and productivity as nearly all interviewees indicated that they had negative work experiences because of their inability to conform to performance-based targets (Oud, 2019b, p.179). The economic pressures on libraries may therefore result in autistic staff being forced to work in ways which do not accommodate any cognitive, sensory, or learning issues they might have, and librarian's professional values may affect library provision of support for autistic employees.

Although autistic library staff face these pressures and may struggle to meet library targets, it has been observed that autistic people have an affinity for library work, and that some characteristics such as being detail oriented can be a great asset in librarianship (Attar, 2021; Eng, 2017). Autistic adults also may consider getting a LIS degree or pursuing a career in librarianship because of their positive childhood experiences of using public libraries (Anderson, 2016, p.21).

2.2.5 Support strategies for autistic library staff

Very few studies were retrieved which focus on managing and supporting autistic library staff and these were mainly by US and Canadian researchers. For example, two earlier articles describe individual case studies about managing young autistic adults in academic libraries (Miner and Morris, 2009; Strub and Stewart, 2010). Both articles are written from the point of view of library managers who do not have living experience of autism and include biased assumptions about the abilities of autistic people. Strub and Stewart (2010, pp.265-267) observe that autistic employees are exceptional at doing repetitive tasks such as shelving but are not suitable for management work. These ableist views diminish the abilities of autistic individuals and assumes that they are unsuitable for complex library work.

One possible support invention for managing autistic library staff is Positive Behavioural Support (PBS) which seeks to identify the individual's support needs, especially if they are distressed and at risk of harming themselves and others and is applied to people with learning disabilities which may be present in some autistic people (National Autistic Society, 2022b). Only one US article by Lund (2018) was retrieved which examines how to use PBS as a framework for managing autistic library staff. He describes how employers need to seek advice from the individual, their families, therapists, and other support services to help to "diminish the problem behavior and replace it with a healthier behavior" (Lund, 2018, p.437). He also states that PBS should be applied so that the employee understands their role within the library and that it should not greatly disrupt library services (Lund, 2018, p.445). The association of autism with problematic behaviour emphasises ablest views that autistic individuals need to conform to societal norms and standards of communication to remain in employment. The statement relating to disruption of library services suggests that the needs of the organisation must be met over the needs of the employee. PBS has been criticised by disability researchers as being potentially harmful to autistic people who require less support because of how it imposes social conformity on individuals who already feel "social

pressure to mask autism characteristics" (Camarata, 2021, p.1607). Although PBS may seem useful for providing person-centred support for autistic individuals with learning difficulties its focus on social conformity may cause more harm by marginalising autistic library staff who already feel they are unable to express themselves. However, it is difficult to fully assess the usefulness of PBS because there is only one article which applies PBS in a library setting.

Some articles and sources highlight methods which may be effective at supporting autistic library staff. For example, Giles-Smith and Popwich (2020) propose several strategies and methods to support autistic library employees -**see below**. Lack of further research makes it difficult to assess the effectiveness of the suggested methods.

- Writing job adverts which are free of jargon and emphasise essential skills for the role rather than social skills such as social communication and teamwork.

- Alternative interview arrangements.

- Sending a copy of interview questions in advance.

- Modelling and simulating social and workplace scenarios.

- One-to-one consultations with the employee to assess what kind of support they need.

- Creating an accommodation plan and assessing its impact on the colleagues work and its impact on the rest of the employees and services.

- Supporting diversity training in the workplace.

- Explaining clearly what the individual's role and work goals are so that they contribute to the library's services.

- Simulating work and social interactions.

- Teaching autistic employees social and emotion skills so that they can maintain working relationships.

Some recent studies have used surveys and interviews to highlight the views and issues faced by autistic and disabled library staff (Anderson, 2021a; Anderson, 2021b; Oud, 2018; Oud, 2019b, Brown and Sheidlower, 2021). Anderson (2021b, p.46) confirms the effectiveness of some strategies mentioned by Giles-Smith and Popwich (2020, p.120) such as providing a copy of the interview questions in advance.

A few of the sources identified provide first-person accounts by autistic librarians and librarians with disabilities which can be useful for understanding some of the difficulties librarians with these conditions have and may help to promote awareness and empathy for these employees (Attar, 2021, Eng, 2017; Lawrence, 2013; Pionke, 2019; Spectrum, 2017; Tumlin, 2019). However, accounts by autistic librarians may be limited by showing only one perspective of autistic library staff as autism manifests differently in each person.

2.2.6 Disability support networks and online training resources

There is hardly any literature about supporting autistic library staff in the UK. One article explains how autistic traits may align with certain types of library work and that support needs vary depending on the person's role within the library (Attar, 2021, p.38).

However, the internet searches revealed that there are several initiatives aimed at supported employees with disabilities. The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) launched the CILIP Disability Network (DN) in 2021 to provide a platform for CILIP members and library staff with disabilities to discuss issues and promote training opportunities (CILIP, 2022). The DN had recently collaborated with an autistic librarian from Falkirk Libraries to host a panel about autism inclusion in libraries at the annual CILIP Scotland Conference, 2022 (Milligan, 2022). Researchers recommend that libraries should work together with autistic colleagues and organisations to provide training because it might help to raise awareness more effectively than if

the information was shared by a medical expert (Everhart and Anderson, 2020, p.3; Lawrence, 2013, p.104; Shea and Derry, 2019, p.329). The British Library (BL) also has an internal disability support network which seeks to improve the workplace for disabled employees and to provide advice and support for line managers (VERDICA, 2022). Staff from the BL also shared stories of disabled people found within the library's collections for Disability Awareness Month (Cox, 2021). The National Autistic Society offers online training modules on its website and support for employers to recruit and retain autistic employees via the *Autism at Work* programme (National Autistic Society, 2022c). This and the recent amendment of the autism strategy shows that UK libraries, the Government and charities are trying to provide support for autistic employees, but it is not clear whether these initiatives have had any impact.

Searching in LISA, using the terms "autism awareness training AND libraries" retrieved only two articles which referred to supporting library employees with autism. These were the article by Forrest (2007) that assessed an online academic course at the University of Dundee and an article which described and referenced autism awareness strategies employed in academic libraries in the US (Shea and Derry, 2019). This indicates that further research needs to be conducted to explore these areas.

2.2.7 Literature review summary

In summary the research retrieved shows that there is little evidence about how autistic library staff are supported in their workplace. The research indicates that autistic library staff face many difficulties in their workplace because of the lack of understanding and knowledge of autism by employers, which may force them to "mask" and hide their diagnosis. Employers seem to lack knowledge and awareness of autism. They may lack clear guidance on implementing reasonable adjustments and may not be aware of current UK Government legislation and schemes available for employers to support autistic and disabled staff. There was only one study found which

interviewed autistic library staff (Anderson, 2021a; Anderson, 2021b). Three studies engage with concepts of neurodiversity and the social model of disability to discuss workplace and recruitment challenges that autistic library staff face. Only one study assesses the effectiveness of support methods (Anderson, 2021a; Anderson, 2021b). Most of the literature has been written in countries outside the UK which makes it difficult to identify workplace supports offered for autistic library staff in UK libraries. Case studies about supporting autistic library staff are few, dated and express ablest views which misrepresent the abilities of autistic individuals. Some of the articles offer subjective accounts by autistic and disabled library staff which are limited by the person's experiences. The few group studies which have surveyed and interviewed disabled library staff as well as the one article about autistic library staff in Canada helped to confirm the effectiveness of some support methods identified within the literature and influenced the chosen methodology.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Survey and interviews

A lack of UK research and limited research generally around support for library staff with autism prompted the decision to create an online survey to gather relevant data **(Appendix A)**. Two helpful surveys of librarians with multiple disabilities had been retrieved that were carried out in the USA and Canada which helped to show issues that both autistic and disabled library staff face (Oud, 2018; Brown and Sheidlower, 2019). Also, since it is unknown how many autistic library employees are currently working in UK libraries an online survey was seen as an effective means to gather information from a hidden minority and to allow autistic people to comment and voice their concerns and experiences. A survey was chosen as a suitable method for data gathering to "study relationships between specific variables […] or to describe certain characteristics of the population" (Pickard, 2013, p.111). In accordance with standard methodologies a combination of descriptive and explanatory survey techniques was used to define connections between specific groups of library staff and to summarise different types of data (Pickard, 2013, pp.112-113).

The questions were taken from Oud's (2018) survey and changed so that they referred to autism. They include a question about the type of autism diagnosis, the respondents age, gender identity, minority group, job role, contractual hours, whether they identify as having a disability, whether they have multiple disabilities, disclosing disabilities to managers and colleagues, requesting reasonable adjustments, support offered in the workplace and discrimination towards people with disabilities. Oud (2018, p.6) also included a 5-point Likert scale which measures the rate of occurrences of microaggressions or discriminatory behaviour in the workplace. This was adapted into a 4-point scale to make it easier to quantify the information and to get definitive responses from the participants. Further questions, adapted from themes in Anderson's (2021b) study, include requesting adjustments during interviews, using self-administered adjustments without disclosure, and the provision of autism awareness training in their workplace. Additional demographic questions were included about the type of library sector working in and ethnicity.

Multiple choice and open-ended questions were used to collect a mixture of quantitative and qualitive data. Respondents were invited to explain their experiences and their answers (YES or NO). This was intended to enable autistic library staff to clarify their answers to avoid misinterpretation. One study retrieved indicates how the misinterpretation of the lived experiences of autistic people has made it difficult to assess them in larger group studies (Everhart and Anderson, 2020, p.2). Another study stated that it is considered good practice to involve autistic people in every step of the research process because it allows them to make sure that their experiences and perspectives are not misinterpreted by experts with little living knowledge of autism (Anderson, 2021b, p.41). Respondents were then asked at the end of the survey whether they would like to participate in a follow-up online interview to provide further insight about their work experiences. This follows previous studies surveying disabled library staff (Oud, 2018; Oud, 2019b; Brown and Sheidlower, 2019). As surveys tend to gather more quantitative than qualitive data, interviews were used to gain a more in-depth understanding about the specific opinions and experiences of individual autistic library staff. Interviews are a popular method for further extracting

qualitative data in LIS literature as they allow researchers to gather individual opinions and complex answers about a subject (Pickard, 2013, p.196). Although Anderson (2021b) interviewed autistic library staff, she did not provide a sample of the interview questions. Therefore, original interview questions were created to expand upon themes found within the survey responses and literature review (**Appendix B**). A broad structured interview approach was adopted by asking interviewees standardized, open-ended questions to enable them to respond in their own way and choose information they wanted to share (Pickard, 2013, p.196). This approach is used to show differing or similar opinions about the topics identified in the survey and past research.

3.2 Ethical considerations

The survey was created in UCL's survey and questionnaire designing and storage software Opinio, which enabled responses to be anonymised so that no names or IP addresses were collected. Respondents who wished to take part in interviews were advised to send an email expressing their interest and contact details to the author's student email address. These will be stored in a secure place and later deleted. The survey needed to be fully anonymous since respondents were being asked to reveal their diagnosis which is considered as a special and protected characteristic under UK Data Protection law and the Equality Act, 2010. Findings from the survey and interviews will not be used to reveal the person's identity or diagnosis to their workplace or medical professionals.

3.3 Theoretical framework

The study employed and engaged with theoretical concepts found in disability studies such as the social model of disability and neurodiversity when assessing the key findings from the survey. Although it was stated previously that the social model of disability is not very applicable for autistic individuals it was helpful to use this to indicate barriers which may impact their work. Although some

person-first terminology was used occasionally in this study, identity-first language was used more often to make it more accessible and reflect current trends and preferences of adults within the autism community.

3.4 Survey distribution

After gaining permission and ethical approval by UCL's Ethics and Data Protection departments, the survey was sent via email to various staff networks including the CILIP Disability, LGBTQ+ and BAME Networks, the Disability and Usability & Accessibility Staff Networks at the British Library, and several Facebook groups: Autistics in the library and their allies, School Librarians, UCL Postgraduates 2022/23 and UCL LIS 2017/18. It was also sent via a contact within the health library sector to the UK medical / health care library community / information workers LIS@MEDICAL JISMAIL listserv. The survey was intended for circulation to other listservs including LIS-PUB-LIBS, LIS-LINK and LIS-ACCESSIBILITY for a period of two weeks from 13 – 29 July. However, after reviewing some of the earlier responses and hearing concerns by the project supervisor about the emotional impact of some of the questions, an amended copy of the survey was created, and circulated to the three listservs and to the project supervisor's contacts. The amended copy (Survey 2) was also sent to the LIS-SCHOOL LIBRARY-RESEACH Listserv to get more responses from school librarians who were not in higher education institutions. The first pilot copy of the survey (Survey 1) remained open. Responses to both versions are included in the analysis. Survey 1 had a total of 50 questions. In Survey 2 questions 18,19, 21,22,23,29,30, 43,44 were removed following the advice from the project supervisor that these questions may be upsetting for some respondents so there were 38 questions.

Survey distribution reflected practices in relevant research. Brown and Sheidlower (2019, p.475) sent a survey to various US library listservs. Researchers also suggested sending surveys via social media to neurodiversity and autistic advocacy groups and recommended snowballing techniques

such as encouraging contacts to share the survey to potential respondents (Everhart and Anderson, 2020, p.4). Survey 1 was shared via the *Autistics in Libraries & Their Allies* Facebook group and respondents were encouraged to share the survey to others who might be interested.

The surveys include quantitative and qualitive data and questions are analysed accordingly. 26 questions yield quantitative data such as the number of respondents, the number of respondents in each library sector, and the number of instances when a respondent encountered discriminatory behaviour. Qualitative data is derived from 21 questions. These have been analysed so that similar responses are grouped within tables in **Section 4.2**, such as the respondent's opinions about their disability status, how their autism affects them, whether they have received reasonable adjustments in their work or during an interview, and other questions where respondents explain why they chose YES/NO as their answers.

As stated in **Section 3.1**, the interviews included some additional qualitative questions aimed at expanding on the respondents answers - such as whether their autistic traits align with traits which are valued in their workplace, whether the support they have received is satisfactory, whether libraries tend to focus on providing support services for autistic library users rather than autistic library staff, whether participants had recommendations for improving recruitment, support and retainment of autistic library staff and whether they had any feedback about the survey. Interview responses were added to the survey findings and comparisons were made with findings in the survey data. To protect the identities of the interviewees the interview data was summarised and presented in tables, and instances of similar or different opinions were counted and recorded.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Response rates

Detailed survey reports for both surveys were generated in Opinio which included all saved responses. The total number of responses for Survey 1 was 76 with 18 completed responses and

58 saved responses. Survey 2 had a total of 98 responses with 24 completed responses and 71 saved responses. So, there were 174 responses in total but of these only 40 were fully completed by autistic people. This seems to be a reasonable responses rate, but it is not clear how many autistic people are employed in library work. Response rates from previous studies in the relevant literature varied as well. Oud (2018, p.7) had 268 survey respondents and only 38 or 14% identified as someone with a disability. Anderson (2021b, p.41) had 10 interview participants. 22 responses in Survey 1 and 12 responses in Survey 2 were partially answered by library staff who did not have an autism diagnosis and were not waiting to be assessed, with most of their responses being incomplete after either Question 10 or Question 11. An additional 10 forms in Survey 1 and 22 forms in Survey 2 were blank and did not contain any responses. Another 12 forms in Survey 1 and 9 forms in Survey 2 were partially filled in and not completed by people who either indicated that they had an autism diagnosis or by people who had not yet received a diagnosis. The partial or blank forms may indicate that some of the respondents did not wish to engage further with the study. It is not possible to explain why they did this or why this had happened, and there is no evidence in other studies which can be used to explain this. Some respondents may have wanted to assist with the study but did not realise that it was intended for autistic library staff and so ended their participation. Some of the partial responses by autistic library staff do go further than Question 10 with one notable example ending on Question 25 though this was left unfinished.

Two of the completed responses in Survey 1 were filled in by a library manager from the national library sector and a subject librarian from both the health and academic library sector who indicated that they were not autistic. Though they did not meet the required criteria for analysis they did provide interesting comments about autism awareness training offered in their workplace. Answers given in the forms which were partially filled in by autistic library staff were not included in the analysis. The completed survey responses were further divided into groups to demonstrate the different types of answers given by each respondent.

4.2 Responses to Survey Questions

Responses from the interviews and surveys are recorded in tables in the following sections and answers are grouped together where possible to allow meaningful analysis.

4.2.1 Background questions: Q1-7 (Survey 1 and 2)

The first 7 questions collected quantitative data about the respondent's background. Results show that participants were drawn from a wide variety of autistic library staff from different backgrounds (Table 1).

Table 1, Background questions, answers to Q1-7

Table 1: Answers from Questions 1-7													
Q1: Job Role	No	Q2: Library Sector	No	Q3 WTE	No	Q4: Age	No	Q5: Gend-er	No	Q6: Minor-ity	No	Q7: Ethni-city.	No
Library Assistant	12	Public	7	Full Time	33	20-29	10	Fema-le	27	Yes ^	13	White Eng-lish £	32
Assistant Librarian	5	Acad-emic	14	Part Time	7	30-39	14	Male	8	No	27	White and Asian	2
Subject Librarian	3	Health	9			40-49	10	Non-Binary	4			Other	5
Refer-ence Librarian	1	Nation-al	5			50-59	5	A-gender	1				
Library Manager	2	Speci-al	2			60-69	1						
Other*	16	School	1										
		Other $	2										
Total	40		40		40		40		40		40		40

* Q1: Other: Information Specialist; Deputy Library Manager; Clinical Librarian: Copyright Officer; Assistant Data Services Specialist; Data Services Specialist; Administrative Assistant; Librarians (2); Systems Librarian; Data Librarian; Library Supervisor; Other (?); Electronic Resources Librarians (2)

$ Q2: Other: Local studies library staff; College Library Staff

£ Q7 Other: White and Native American (1). White Eastern European (4). White Other (1)

^ Q6 **Other responses summary:** Neurodivergent and LGBTQ+; white but Eastern European; female presenting but agender, pan/demisexual, plus size, and on autism spectrum; 4 disabilities: – autism, dyslexia, Irlen Syndrome, visually impaired; LGBTQ+; LGBT-bisexual; autism -see as a disability; white British, English speaking and well educated; asexual and autistic and with mental health disabilities; autistic; autistic and follow an alternative religion; Multiple disabled, working class, queer, Jewish heritage; several disabilities (autism, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, visual disability); immigrant (originally from Eastern Europe), part of the LGBTQ+ community and with long-term chronic condition; Lesbian; Ethical Vegan; Other than neurodiverse?

16 out of 40 respondents specified additional roles. This emphasises the many different roles occupied by autistic library staff. It contrasts with earlier studies which either showed autistic individuals as librarians or library assistants (Anderson, 2021a; Anderson; 2021b; Lund, 2018; Strub and Stewart, 2013). The largest group (12 out of 40) are library assistants.

33 out of 40 respondents are in full time employment. It was identified in an earlier study by the NAS that 16% of autistic people were in full-time work, so the survey responses may indicate that some individuals can work for long periods in library work (National Autistic Society, 2016, p.2).

Most of the respondents (32) have indicated that they are White English or of White Ethnicity and that 27 indicated that they are female. This confirms the traditional view of the library workforce as female dominate and mainly white. An earlier study which surveyed staff in information organisations indicated that 78.1% of the workforce were female and 21.9% were male. 96.7% of respondents identified as white (CILIP and Archives and Records Association, 2015).

Q6 and Q7 were included to identify whether autistic people see themselves as a minority within library work and to allow individuals to indicate whether they are a part of any other minoritized group within society.

Although this survey was sent to the CILIP BAME Network only one respondent identified as White and Asian. 4 respondents have commented that they are White European and that the survey did not allow them to advance without selecting one of the categories. This was because of a design issue with Survey 1 where respondents could not advance until they selected an answer. This restriction was removed from Survey 2. 27 respondents indicated that they were not part of a minority group whilst 13 respondents did declare this for different reasons: there were part of an ethnic minority (Eastern European, Native American, and Jewish), part of the LGBTQ+ community or that their autism makes them a disabled minority.

7 respondents also took part in the follow-up interviews including 4 library assistants, and 3 qualified librarians **(Section 4.3)**.

4.2.2. Autism diagnosis: Q 8, 9,10 (Survey 1 and 2)

These questions were included to determine whether participants had an autism diagnosis, what type of autism diagnosis they have or whether they were waiting to be assessed.

Table 2, Autism diagnosis, answers to Q8-10

Received autism diagnosis	No.	Type of autism	No.	Waiting for Diagnosis	No.
Yes	29	Asperger's Syndrome	15	Yes £	10
No	11	Autistic Disorder	11	No	8
		Other *	6		
• Other *: ASD; Autism Spectrum Disorder (2); N/A ; Autism Spectrum Condition; Autism; • Other £: I have been on a waiting list for 6 months; Autism and ADHD					

29 respondents indicated that they have received an autism diagnosis. 15 respondents indicated that had Asperger's Syndrome and 10 declared that they have Autistic Disorder. 11 respondents have not received a diagnosis, with 10 people indicating that they are currently waiting to receive an official diagnosis (Table 2).

4.2.3. How does your autism affect your work: Q11,12,13 (Survey 1 and 2)

Table 3-A, how does your autism affect your work; answers to Q11

Q11 Does your autism affect your work?	No.		No.
Yes	28	No	11

Table 3-B, how does your autism affect your work; answers to Q12-13

Q12 Negative effects	No.	Q13 Positive effects	No.
Problems with social communication/ Interaction with colleagues, group work	21	Better attention to detail	2
Sensitivity to sounds, lighting, smell, and temperature	7	Ability to mask for acceptance and to adapt to library work	4
Need for clarification/difficulty in understanding vague language/ need for clear and detailed instructions	6	Ability to focus on work/hyperfocus	3
Stress – meltdowns, commuting, unexpected changes	6	Better awareness of user needs/better customer service	3
Problems with social communication/ interaction with users	5	Creativity/problem solving	3
Problems with multitasking	2	Skilled with technology and software	2
Poor planning/executive function	2	Ability to spot patterns	1
Stress – masking autism, for acceptance by colleagues, users	2	Being assertive	1
More time processing information to complete work/tasks	1	Mild symptoms	1
Lack of concentration	1		
Regulating behaviour	1		
Total	54		20

28 participants have indicated that their autism negatively affects their ability to do their library work, whilst 11 respondents feel that it does not affect their work (Table 3-A). 54 negative issues were identified with only 20 positive issues (Table 3-B). Responses indicate lots of common issues which autistic library staff face with the most frequent being problems with social communication with colleagues (Table 3-B).

4.2.4. Disability: Q14,15 (Survey 1 and 2)

Table 4-A, Disability, answers to Q14

Q14 Autism as a disability?	No.
Yes	25
No	5
Yes and no	10

Table 4-B, Disability, answers to Q15

Q15: Other disabilities and conditions	No.
Anxiety	20
Depression	17
Mobility Issues	6
ADHD	5
Dyspraxia	4
Dyslexia	3
Hearing impairments	3
Sensory issues due to autism	3
Irritable bowel syndrome	2
Mental health issues	2
Visual impairment	2
PTSD	2
Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS)	2
No other conditions	2
*Mentioned only once: bipolar disorder; eating disorder; Irlen Syndrome (over-active brain); Agoraphobia; OCD; Dyscalculia; Speech impediment; Chronic pain; Irregular heartbeat; congenital heart defects; Scoliosis	

25 respondents indicated that they do see their autism as a disability. However, 10 respondents were unsure about this as autism has both negative and positive effects on their work and personal life. 5 respondents indicated that that their autism is not a disability, but that society, library policies and colleague's attitudes create barriers which make them disabled (Table 4-A). Most respondents reported having additional disabilities/conditions. The highest conditions were anxiety (20) and depression (17) (Table 4-B).

4.2.5 Autism awareness/disclosing autism: Q16,17 (Survey 1 and 2); Reasons for disclosing autism: Q18,19 (Survey 1 only); Masking autism: Q18 (Survey 2) and Q20-23 (Survey 1).

Table 5-A, autism awareness/disclosing autism, answers to Q16-17

Q16: Line manager's awareness of autism	No.	Q17: Colleague's awareness of autism	No.
Yes	32	Yes	23
No	2	No	11
Not yet received diagnosis (Survey 2)	6	Not yet received a diagnosis (Survey 2)	6

Table 5-B, autism awareness/disclosing autism, answers to Q18-19 (Survey 1 only)

Reasons for telling	No.	Reasons for not telling	No.
Need for clear and detailed information	1	Not have full diagnosis	2
Line manager is understanding/aware of autism	3	Stigma associated with disability/autism	2
Treated as equal	1	Negative attitudes from line manager and colleagues/exclusion/bullying	4
Need for adjustments	2	Lack of understanding by colleagues and line manager	1
Disclosed whilst presenting staff accessibility training	1	Not necessary	1
Autism explains their behaviour	1	Need support from someone who understands autism	1
		Need to understand how autism affects them	1

Most participants indicated that their line manager and colleagues are aware of their autism. 11 respondents indicated that they have not told their colleagues (Table 5-A). Q18-19 were answered by only 15 people (13 answered Q18 and 4 answered Q19) and were not included in Survey 2. This may support the exclusion of this question from Survey 2. It includes some useful information however about the viewpoints of some of the participants including the stigma of being associated with a disability and facing negative attitudes from colleagues and managers (Table 5-B).

Table 6-A, Masking autism, answers to Q20/18 (Survey 1/Survey 2)

Q20/18 Masking autism	No.
Yes	23
No	17
Total	40

Table 6-B, Masking autism, answers to Q21-22

Q21 Reasons for masking	No.	Q22 Reasons for not masking	No.
Need to be professional/act appropriately/not stim	6	Hard to mask autistic traits	2
Colleagues question person's abilities to do their work	1	Awareness about autism from colleagues and line manager	1
Need for acceptance/ fit in	2		
Need to interact with people as part of their job	1		
Embarrassing – meltdowns	2		
Lack of understanding of autism	2		
Causing more work/difficulties for manager/colleagues	1		

Table 6-C-1, masking autism, answers to Q23a

Q23a Experiencing negative effects from masking	No.
Yes	7
No	3
Yes/No	2

Table 6-C-2, masking autism, answers to Q23b

Q23b What are the negative effects of masking?	No.
Exhausting – affects work and personal life	5
Anxiety	3
Feeling like an imposter; taking longer to resolve queries; lack of confidence; antisocial towards users.	4

More respondents mask their autism than do not (Table 6-A). Some reasons were given to explain why some of the respondents mask their autism (Table 6-B). Q21 and Q22 were answered by 14 people (10 people answered Q21 and 5 people answered Q22). Q23 was answered by 13 people. This may support the decision to exclude these questions from Survey 2 although they also provide useful insight into the viewpoints of some of the respondents with most saying that they need to act professionally and hide inappropriate behaviour such as self-stimulatory behaviour, or stimming, which may involve repeated physical movements (rocking back and forth), sounds, words, and moving objects. Masking these traits may have negative effects on an autistic person's mental wellbeing as 5 people indicated that it causes them to be exhausted, and a few indicated that it causes them anxiety. 4 people additionally said that it affects the way they carry out their library tasks with some taking longer to resolve queries and acting antisocially towards users (Table 6-C2).

4.2.6 Reasonable adjustments/support: Q20-Q23 (Survey 2)/ Q24-Q29 (Survey 1); Self-administered adjustments: Q30 (Survey 1)

Table 7-A, Support/reasonable adjustments, answers to Q20/24 (Survey 1/Survey2)

Q20/24 Types of support offered to staff by employer	No.
Clear detailed written instructions	2
Working from home	7
Written document of agreed reasonable adjustments	4
Having a mentor/coach/buddy	3
Advanced notice of changes	3
Offering alternative means of communication/written communication	3
Working in separate office	2
Time away from issue desk	2
Awareness and understanding of autism	2
Risk assessments	2
Support offered for other conditions	2
Limiting social interaction/online meetings	2
Change focus on doing a single task	2
Mentioned once by different participants: Not engaging in group work; Counselling; Informal support from manager/proof reading emails; One to one catch-up sessions with manager; Using headphones whilst working; Support for sensory issues/adjusting light/temperature; Sensible timetabling for lunch and off-desk duties; tasks set sequentially/one-by-one	

Table 7-B, Table support/reasonable adjustments, answers to Q21/25 (Survey 1/Survey 2)

Q21/25 Requested reasonable adjustments	No.
Yes	23
No	17

Table 7-C, support/reasonable adjustments, answers to Q22/27 (Survey 1/Survey 2)

Q22/ 27 Reasons for not asking for reasonable adjustments/lack of support offered	No.
No or little support offered by employer	11
Not yet told colleagues/employer – waiting for diagnosis	3
Job requires them to be onsite	1
Lack of soundproofing/quiet spaces	1
Lack of official diagnosis	3
Lack of understanding about autism	1
No need for support	5

Table 7-D, support/reasonable adjustments, answers to Q28/23 (Survey 1 and 2) and Q29 (Survey 1)

Q28/23 Negative consequences for requested reasonable adjustments	No.
Yes	4
No	25
Q29 (Survey 1) Reasons for negative consequences	
Failed probationary period in previous job/ workplace unable to provide adjustments	1

Table 7-E, own adjustments, answers to Q30(a) (Survey 1)

Q30 Self-administered reasonable adjustments	No.
Yes	6
No	4
Yes and no	3

Table 7-F, own adjustments, answers to Q30(b)-Q30(c) (Survey 1)

Q30(b) Types of self-administered reasonable adjustments	No.	Q30(c) Reasons for not making self-administered adjustments	No.
Had to work longer hours - commuting	1	Not needed in current workplace	3
Working from home	1	No – gave up	1
Wearing headphones for concentration/no social interaction/noise cancelling	2	No reason given	1
Stress – squeezing/fidget toys	2	Temporary work – no time off	1
Matching communication methods of non-autistic people – small talk	1	Workplace is quiet	1
Task list	1	No strong smells	1
Take short breaks if needed	1		
Told colleagues to provide written communication/email	1		

Many different types of support were offered to autistic library staff with the most prevalent being working from home (Table 7-A). However,11 participants had been offered little or no support from their employers (Table 7-C).

23 participants have requested reasonable adjustments, whilst 17 have not. However, only 17 of the 23 participants who had requested reasonable adjustments indicated that they had received all their requested reasonable adjustments whilst 2 people are still waiting for all their adjustments to be made (Table 7-B).

25 respondents have had no negative consequences for requesting adjustments, whilst 4 did. Only one respondent described why they suffered negative consequences for making reasonable adjustments as shown in Q29. This question was not included in Survey 2 (Table 7-D).

Q30 in Survey 1 asked respondents whether they had to make their own adjustments without disclosing their diagnosis. This was not included in Survey 2. 6 participants made their own workplace adjustments without disclosing their autism and used various 'workarounds' (Table 7-F). 4 people have not made their own adjustments. Reasons given indicate that these respondents did not feel that adjustments were necessary in their workplace.

4.2.7 Adjustments for interviews: Q31-Q33 (Survey 1) – Q24-Q26 (Survey 2)

Table 8-A, interview adjustments, answers to Q31/24 (Survey 1/Survey 2)

Q31/24 Requested adjustments for interview	No.
Yes	8
No	31

Table 8-B, interview adjustments, answers to Q32/25 (Survey 1/Survey 2)

Q32/25 Reasons for not requesting adjustments for interviews	No.	Q33/26 Reasons for requesting adjustments for interviews	No.
Not been diagnosed at time of the interview	3	Disclose – not be judged because of autism	1
Not had job interview – still in current role	4	Stressful	1
Not had job interview since diagnosis	2	Requesting interview questions in advance – more time to think of answers to questions	3
Not need adjustments	7	Requested subtitles for online interview	1
Need to prove oneself-Personal achievement	2	Warning of group work – anxiety	1
Understands requirements for library work	1	Sensory issues – request quiet room	1
Negative assumptions about autism	1	Print out interview questions	1
Not draw attention to oneself	1	Not use questions with multiple parts to them	1
Not aware of the types of adjustments available	5	Understanding about autism – problems with eye contact	2
Needed adjustments not related to autism	1	Need extra time to explain answers	1
Online interviews – less stressful	1		
Not be seen as difficult/worried about not getting the job	2		
Interviews are predictable	2		
Can cope/manage autism	1		
Managers not offering help/fear of favouritism	1		

31 out of 40 participants indicated that they have not requested adjustments for job interviews (Table 8-A). Whilst some respondents have not needed adjustments, 5 participants have stated that

they were not aware of the adjustments available for interviews (Table 8-B). 3 out of 8 participants requested interview questions in advance which has been shown to be effective in Anderson's study (2021b).

4.2.8 Additional support offered at workplace: Q34-Q37 (Survey 1) – Q27-Q29 (Survey 2)

Table 9-A, additional support in workplace, answers to Q34/27 (Survey 1/Survey 2)

Q34/27 Types of support available at workplace	No.
Not aware of support available	6
Support schemes	1
Disability staff support Networks	15
Mentor/Mentorship scheme	6
Occupational support	1
Employee support/assistance	2
Mental health first aiders	1
Counselling (external service)	4
Support offered to users	1
Support buddy	2
Attending NHS workshops	1
Listening to delegates/own experiences	1
Not used them	2
Not available	1

Table 9-B, additional support in workplace, answers to Q35/28 (Survey 1/Survey 2)

Q35/28 Benefitted from support	No.
Yes	14
No	22

Table 9-C, additional support in workplace, answers to Q36 (Survey 1)

Q36 (Survey 1) Benefits from support	No.
Insight into disability support available	1
Mentors – help with anxiety	1
Having a community	1
Have good service	1

Table 9-D, additional support in workplace, answers to Q37/29(a) (Survey 1/Survey 2)

Q37/29(a) Would you like to be offered support?	No.
Yes	14
No	15

Table 9-E, additional support in workplace, answers to Q37/29(b) (Survey 1/Survey 2)

Q37/29 (b) Type of support recommended	No.
Not sure what support is available	1
Opportunity to progress	1
Autism/Disability mentor for support/ advice on reasonable adjustments	4
Support from line manager/training/ awareness of Equality Act 2010 rules	3
More support offered that is suitable for autistic/neurodivergent staff	1
Have neurodiversity network	2
Support group	1
See how the workplace is supporting autistic people	1
Hearing other people's experiences/case studies on autistic staff	2
Focus on hybrid and home working/training on adaptable working for staff and HR	2
Guided reading	1
Details of ongoing support – number to call/e-directory of key groups and UK services	1
Find like-minded people	1
Not let anyone know they need additional support	1

Most respondents (22 out of 36) have not benefitted from support offered at their workplace (Table 9-B). Most stated that their workplaces provide support through disability support staff networks and 6 stated that they receive support from a mentor (Table 9-A). Q36 in Survey 1 was only answered by 4 people, so it is not clear how many participants benefitted from the support methods offered (Table 9-E). Q37 was answered by 29 people and almost evenly divided into those wanting and not wanting to be offered additional support (Table 9-D). 13 participants offered suggestions for different types of support. Only 1 said that they do not want people to know about their autism (Table 9-E).

4.2.9 Discrimination: Q38-Q42 (Survey 1) – Q30 -Q31 (Survey 2); 4-point scale of occurring discriminatory behaviour (microaggressions) in workplace: Q41 (Survey 1 and 2)

Table 10-A, discrimination, answers to Q38/30 (Survey 1/Survey 2)

Q38/30 Do you face discrimination or harassment in your workplace?	No.
Yes	13
No	27

Table 10-B, discrimination, answers to Q31-Q32 (Survey 1)

Q31 (Survey 1) Type of discrimination	No.	Q32 (Survey 1): No discrimination	No.
Offensive comments by colleagues/ said behaviour are unprofessional/ childish and attention seeking	4	Small team, good line manager	2
Told neurodiversity does not exist/autism being ignored	2	Colleagues do not know about autism/masking	4
Line manager does not understand autism/said person is being rude	1	Good line manager	1
		Quiet workplace	1
		Autistic colleagues	1
		Don't know	1

Table 10-C, discrimination, answers to Q41 (Survey 1/Survey 2)

Rates of discrimin-ation	Help with-out perm-ission	In-cap-able of wor k	Mini-mises autism impact	Person-al quest-ions about autism	Gener alises autistic people	Negative comm-ents and jokes about autism	Avoid-ance because of autism	Un-com-fort-able with autism	Tot-al
Never	15	17	15	21	14	22	25	18	147
Rarely	10	11	3	6	3	2	6	6	65
Sometimes	10	5	10	9	11	9	3	9	66
Often	3	3	9	2	10	3	3	5	38
Total									164

Although 27 respondents did not encounter discrimination in the workplace, 13 said that they do which indicates that this problem may be underestimated by autistic library staff (Table 10-A). People who do encounter discrimination may receive offensive and dismissive comments from colleagues/managers who may not understand autism. Some autistic library staff answered that they may not encounter discrimination because their workplace is quiet, they have knowledge about autistic colleagues, and they may have good line managers who support them. However, 4 people indicated that their ability to mask their autism is a reason why they do not face discrimination in their workplace (Table 10-B). 14 people answered Q41 in Survey 1 and 22 answered in Survey 2 (Table 10-C). Of these around 27 stated that they never experience these types of discrimination.

However, for those who did experience discrimination, there were 164 instances of discriminatory behaviour recorded in the workplace (Table 10-C). 5 participants who answered this question have indicated that they encounter discriminatory behaviour more frequently.

4.2.10 Further difficulties because of autism: Q42/32 (Survey 1 and 2); Q43-Q44 (Survey 1)

Table 11-A, further difficulties, answers to Q42/32 (Survey 1/Survey 2)

Q42/32 Further difficulties at work because of autism	No.
Yes	19
No	20

Table 11-B, further difficulties, answers to Q43-44 (Survey 1)

Q43 What are the difficulties?	No.	Q44 Why are there no difficulties?	No.
Not able to advance in career	1	Remote working/less stressful	1
Internal pressure to keep coping	1	More awareness of autism in health sector	1
Difficulty getting a job	1	Masking	1
Spending more time at work	1	Small team	1

Responses for Q42/32 were evenly split between those who had no additional problems and those who did (Table 11-A). However, most of the respondents had discussed their difficulties in the previous questions which explains the low number of responses to Q43 and Q44 (Table 11-B). In addition, 6 people stated that they could not think of anything else. These results may justify the removal of this question from Survey 2.

4.2.11 Autism awareness training: Q45-47 (Survey 1)/Q33-35 (Survey 2)

Table 12-A, autism awareness training, answers to Q45/33 (Survey 1/Survey 2)

Q45/33 Is autism awareness training offered in your workplace?	No.
Yes	15
No	21
Don't know (Survey 2)	4

Table 12-B, autism awareness training, answers to Q46/34(a) (Survey 1/Survey 2)

Q46/34(a) Has autism training improved how colleagues treat you?	No.
Yes	4
No	15

Table 12-C, autism awareness training, answers to Q46/34(b)

Q46/34 (cont.) What improvements have there been made?	No.	Why has it not improved?	No.
Organised own training/improved understanding	1	Not offered in workplace	7
		Not compulsory	1
		Virtual learning	3
		Not used training	1
		Not sure	2
		No change in staff attitudes/dismissing autism	3
		Focus on one person's experience rather than giving actual help	1
		Training offered externally	1
		Training focus more on helping users	1
		Out of date information	2

Table 12-D, autism awareness training, answers to Q47/35(a) (Survey 1/Survey 2)

Q47/35(a) Would you like to be offered autism training?	No.
Yes	26
No	8

Table 12-E, autism awareness training, answers to Q47/35(b-c)

Q47/35 (b) Why do you want to be offered autism training?	No.	Q47/35 (c) Why do you not want to be offered autism training?	No.
Feel included/lack of focus on disability	1	Cause misunderstanding due to variance of autism	2
Make managers and colleagues more aware of the impacts of their actions	1	Need training on disability law in UK	1
Useful for everyone / increased awareness and understanding	8	Training outsourced	1
Include voices of autistic people/rather than external trainers	4	Update info for women	1
Manager and staff need further guidance	1	Not aware of it being offered	1
		Not want to be centre of attention	2
		No formal training	1

Most participants (21) have indicated that their workplace does not offer autism awareness training and 15 have stated that it has not improved their workplace or their colleagues' understanding of autism (Table 12-A; Table 12-B). However, a large majority of respondents (26)

would like training to be offered with the most prevalent reason stated as improvement in understanding and awareness of autism in the workplace (Table 12-D; Table 12-E).

4.2.12 Further comments made by participants about autistic library staff: Q48 (Survey 1) - Q36 (Survey 2)

Table 13, further comments about autistic library staff, answers to Q48/36 (Survey 1/Survey 2)

Comments	No.
Excel at library work because of autism/ suited for library work	7
Difficulties of staff management for autistic people/ easier working in librarian role	1
Workplace needs to be accommodating/ result in ill health	5
No career progression	1
Use of appropriate autism terminology	2
Lack of accommodation for disabled people in work/ more support for supporting autistic and disabled people in libraries	2
Need to accept autism rather than be aware of it	1
Leaving work due to lack of accommodation	2
Make improvements to service	1
Less focus on one-size fits all approach	1
More training with social interaction and enquiries	1
Medical libraries more accommodation rather than public libraries	1
Not based in library role	1
No further comments	2

23 people provided further comments (Table 13). 7 respondents confirmed their suitability for library work and there were further recommendations for training. 1 respondent expressed that they were leaving their current role, and another expressed that they did not want to work in libraries again. This was because of the lack of understanding and the lack of accommodations given in their workplaces. 2 people offered criticism about the survey by commenting on the use of inappropriate language such as 'ASD' in the survey title and Participant information sheet, and the phrase 'on the autism spectrum'. Although research had been done to find appropriate terminology to refer to autistic people there has not been any up-to-date studies about the use of identity-first or person-first terminology in the UK autism community. The phrase "on the autism spectrum" which appears in Survey 1 was taken from an earlier study and had been quoted as appropriate on an NHS webpage (Kenny, Hattersley and Molins, 2016; National Health Service, 2022b). As a result of this criticism the term was replaced with autistic library staff when Survey 2 was created.

4.3 Interview Responses

Out of the 18 survey respondents who reported that they would like to take part in follow-up interviews, only 10 people volunteered via email. Invitation emails, with attached consent forms, were sent to the interviewees, expressing that the interviews will be carried out on Zoom and each person was offered a time slot in the evening (between 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm) from Tuesday 2nd August - Friday 5th August. However, only a total of seven interviewees responded. Four interviewees took part in the Zoom interviews, one was unable to access the Zoom meeting and instead provided answers via a phone call, two completed written responses and one withdrew from the interview because of concerns about confidentiality. Responses to the seven interview questions **(Appendix B)** are provided in the tables below. Enabling the interviewees to choose a preferred method of response in different formats supports practices employed by Anderson (2021b, p.42) who also offered interviewees multiple options to respond. Anderson (2021b, p.42) employed recommendations within the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to provide multiple options for engagement through a variety of formats to enable access for people with varying cognitive and physical abilities (CAST, 2022b). UDL is influenced by the principles for Universal Design which were created to make products and buildings more accessible for everyone (Center for Universal Design, 1997).

Although it is a small data sample, four different library sectors are represented as shown in **Table 14**, with nearly half of the respondents being from the academic library sector and there being a nearly even split between qualified and non-qualified staff.

Table 14, Job Role and Library sector, Interview Q1

What is your current job and what library sector do you work in?			
Role	No.	Sector	No.
Assistant	4	Academic	3
Qualified/Manager	3	Local Studies	1
		Local Studies/Public	1
		Health/Academic	1
		Health	1

Table 15, Autistic employee traits, Interview Q2

What employee traits are most valued at your library and does your autism align with these traits?	
Traits valued at workplace (number of instances)	**Issues for people with autism (number of instances)**
- Need for accuracy - Need to be organised (3) - Has strong memory - Presenting difficult information - Being flexible, fair, and accommodating for autistic users/ understanding how education affects autistic users (2) - Attention to detail (2) - Technical skills - Focusing on specific tasks - Strong sense of right and wrong - Finding the right information	Social interaction (6) Specific problems with social interaction: - Affect professionalism, diplomacy, partnership working, collaboration. - Teamwork, sharing jobs, - Need to be away from desk. - Need to mask problems with social communication. Workplace focuses on recruiting person without autistic traits - being outgoing and friendly. Multitasking/ managing multiple projects (2)

Several interviewees repeated their views expressed in Table 3-B that the autistic traits that align best with their library work are their abilities to organise information, being accurate, and having great attention to detail. However, additionally, two stated that they can be flexible and accommodating for autistic library users because of their own experiences with autism. Most repeated that they have trouble dealing with social communication, and multitasking with one saying also that their workplace seems to be excluding autistic people by emphasising sociable traits as ideal for prospective employees (Table 15).

Table 16, making own adjustments, Interview Q3

Have you made your own adjustments without disclosing your autism and why did you feel that you have needed to do this?			
Made Adjustments	**Not made adjustments**	**Disclosed autism**	**Not disclosed autism**
3 Comments Turning off video during online sessions, Coming in later (commuting). Before, diagnosis- used to go away from the issue desk to calm down, felt overwhelmed. Uses headphones to manage sensory issues Does project work to be by themselves and manage social interaction. Autism does not affect their work greatly able to mask well, appear as confident and suited to library work because of the high presence of introverts in libraries. Has disclosed diagnosis to managers to explain the need to be allowed extra time to complete work. Has been able to make changes and own accommodations without being challenged.	3 Comments Requested adjustments for clear written instructions rather than verbal feedback, being away from the front desk, and explained having problems with loud sounds. Feel they must mask	5 Comments Mask only with new people/ outreach, more comfortable at workplace.	1 Comments Felt that nothing would change because of it

Half of the interviewees had not made their own adjustments but five have disclosed their autism to their line managers. One person has not disclosed their diagnosis and three people said that they mask their autism. One person also describes a workaround such as using headphones. Although most respondents seem to be comfortable with disclosing their diagnosis, and have received accommodations, it is notable that several interviewees feel they need to hide their autism in their workplaces and one person made their own changes 'without being challenged'. There were some additional self-administered adjustments mentioned including turning off video during online sessions, coming in later, going away from the issue desk to calm down, doing project work by themselves and managing social interaction (Table 16).

Table 17, support in workplace, Interview Q4

Do you feel the support you receive in your workplace is able to meet your needs, or do you think that more could be done to support you?			
Yes	**Details**	**No**	**Details**
5	• Line manager limits interaction during online and in person meetings/presentations • Colleagues supportive and helped create a support programme for autistic library users • Adjustments to work from home granted (2)- • Able to control environment • Considering having a mentor who is autistic to talk to. • Manager offers regular catch-up meetings in person rather than on online and understands autism • Works flexible hours, has no staff to manage, little teamwork	2	Not sure what is available and not offered it because of preconceived ideas about autism. Need mentor or someone outside management to talk to and get advice. Support from team has been mixed and depended on the context of the situation and whether the manager can sort the issue without being confronted.

Most respondents have received some form of reasonable adjustment in their workplaces. Examples include working from home, limited interactions, in person meetings. However, only 5 interviewees felt that they have received good support. Two interviewees felt that they need more support. Two interviewees mentioned the idea of having mentors for support (Table 17).

Table 18, supports for autistic library staff and users, Interview Q5

Do you feel that the support services offered by UK libraries focus more on providing support for autistic library users rather than library staff and should there be more services offered for supporting autistic library staff?	
Yes -focus on users	**Comments on training/support for library staff**
7	• Not a lot of understanding about autism among staff. There are a few online training modules about diversity and various conditions but little about support library staff. • No effort to recognise that library staff maybe autistic. Support is only offered in the worst-case scenario - need for planning/anticipation of possible accommodations. • More training needed for managers and staff about how to support autistic library staff. Face dismissive and derogatory comments and must constantly explain their autism. • Autistic library staff feel isolated. • Has suggested that managers should take special training.

	• Management has attitude that you had to do the work even if your autism affects your work - refused to give adjustments - failed probation • Staff have had autism training for users but may not recall training due to being over-worked.

All interviewees agree that autism support services in their workplaces focus more on supporting autistic library users rather than autistic library staff. One interviewee describes how support for autistic library staff seems to only be offered in the worst-case scenario and that there is little consideration given about the potential problems autistic people have. There needs to be more forward planning to anticipate accommodations for autistic library staff. Another interviewee describe how little support is offered in public libraries where library managers refused to give the person adjustments and insisted that the interviewee had to do the work as part of their role even if their autism makes it difficult for them to carry out the tasks. This resulted in the interviewee failing their probation period. One interviewee describes how their workplace is understaffed due to lack of funding which has made the library unable to provide support for autistic library staff. Four interviewee recommended that library managers undergo special training (Table 18).

Table 19, improving recruitment, support and retainment of autistic library staff, Interview Q6

Question 6	What do you think could be done to improve recruitment, support, and retainment of autistic people in UK libraries?
Topics	**Comments**
Support for interviews and recruitment (5)	• Needs to be more understanding about how autistic people struggle with interviews and interacting with users at the front desk. • Need to provide interview questions in advance, suggest alternative ways to carry out interviews which are suited to the person, ability to write questions down or to ask for further clarification without pressure. • Emphasise positive traits of autism in job adverts to attract autistic candidates, provide autism friendly interview structure, avoid ambiguous questions or having people ask questions at once, not prejudice autistic people, provide a mentor which understands disability needs. • Provide questions in advance, provide remote interviews less pressure to conform to social norms (eye contact), provide a list of the support offered at the organisation, • Stress during interview about its location, avoid asking questions with multiple parts (may have difficulty remembering to answer all parts), need to offer support list as soon as you get offered the job
Environment	Changing lighting in the library.
Opportunities	Providing more volunteering/work experience opportunities for autistic people

Flexibility	Allow flexibility in how autistic people work and playing to individual strengths.
Training (3)	• Managers should have training about how to manage autistic staff. • Staff need to be taught about autism to break stereotypes and stigmas about autism • Management should be trained and structured to provide personal excellence - need more funding to increase management to be more responsive and provide more training for staff, close libraries once a month for essential all-staff training - utilize autistic staff members for their skills.

Five interviewees repeated that support should be offered during interviews as they also stated in the answers to Q32/25 and Q33/26 (4.2.7: Table 8-B). Additional advice was offered about advertising positive autistic traits, provide more volunteering/work experience opportunities for autistic people. Several interviewees also repeated that improvements could be made through training for managers and staff. One interviewee suggested that there needs to be more funding to increase the number of managers so that support for autistic library staff can be provided and it was also recommended that libraries should be closed once a more to provide training for all staff (Table 19).

Table 20, further comments about support, Interview Q7

Is there anything else you would like to add about your work experiences and the support provided at your workplace?	
Greater understanding about autism needed	Comments
3	• Has taken years to get diagnosis-had years of therapy before being advised to get diagnosis. • Decisions made in workplace resulted in health problems • You're lucky to get a good manager who understands and accommodates for autism • Need to have document with agreed adjustments/details about your autism and how it affects you to be given to new line manager without having to have a long chat about how your autism affects you. • Managers need to be trained if they are managing autistic staff
Other	• Work experiences improved ability to do library work and to manage stressful, unexpected events in personal life. See autistic colleagues struggling because they lack ability to communicate their needs. • Part of an Equality and Diversity group - interested in autism and trying to help autistic people as part of the group

Several interviewees agreed that there needs to be greater understanding about autism in the workplace. Advice for training managers and criticism about how management decisions can result in causing ill health for autistic employees were repeated as in Q46/36. One interviewee shared the experience that obtaining an autism diagnosis could take years and that autistic individuals may also undergo years of counselling and therapy before being advised to get a diagnosis (Table 20).

Table 21, feedback about survey, Interview Q8

Do you have any comments or feedback about the survey?	
	Comments
3	• The survey was great - it made them think, and able to write down their thoughts and feelings in detail - good when you are given the chance to clarify/explain why you choose that answer. It was not too long or too short. • It was very thorough, and it asked very good questions. • There were a few questions which had multiple parts to them - maybe make smaller or fewer questions.
4	No further comments.

Two interviewees offered positive feedback with one saying that it was good to allow them to explain their answers in detail. One offered criticism about the questions having multiple parts which was also mentioned in the survey results (Table 21).

5.0 Summary of Findings

The surveys and interviews were completed by autistic library staff who had received a diagnosis or were waiting to receive one, from different backgrounds and occupying a variety of different roles. Most were white, female and in full-time employment. Some indicated that they were part of other minority groups such as LGBTQ+, White European, Jewish, or White Asian or White Native American (Table 1, Table 2). It is significant that staff who have not received a diagnosis cannot receive reasonable adjustments or support.

Key themes which were identified in the surveys and interviews are similar to some of the key themes found in the literature review which included:

- Autism and neurodiversity

- Lack of knowledge about autism by employers, 'masking' by employees and disclosure.

- Lack of autism and disability awareness training and lack of clarity on making reasonable adjustments

- Librarianship as a profession, reinforcement of ableist attitudes and positive abilities of autistic library staff

- Support strategies for autistic library staff

- Disability support networks and online training resources

5.1.0 Survey findings

Key themes in the surveys are identified as follows:

5.1.1 Autism and library work.

Most participants reported that their autism affects their ability to do their library work. More negative issues were identified than positive, with most respondents indicating that they have trouble with social interaction with colleagues and users, multitasking, and sensitivity to noise, sound, smell, and temperature. However, 9 respondents said that they do not have any issues and 4 staff stated that they can mask their autism well and are able to adapt to library work. Others have also indicated that their autism helps them with their library work, claiming that they have great attention to detail, ability to organise their work, solve problems, the ability to hyperfocus, being skilled with technology, and seeing patterns. Similar advantages that autism conveys were also a theme in the literature review (**2.2.4**) and were reported in Anderson's study and by others (Anderson, 2021a; Anderson, 2021b; Attar, 2021;

Eng, 2017). The responses show that some staff with autism can manage their work effectively and that they have certain traits which enable them to perform some typical tasks in library work well. The value of such skills and abilities could be highlighted by employers so that autistic individuals are attracted to library roles. This reflects suggestions found in the research (**2.2.5**), that job adverts for library roles could emphasise skills which may align with positive autistic traits, rather than emphasising social communication and teamwork skills (Giles-Smith and Popwich, 2020, p.118). Most respondents indicated however that they see their autism as a disability, though 10 respondents were unsure because their autism has both negative and positive effects on their library work. It is notable that a few respondents who have autism indicated that they see themselves as a disabled minority or that they are a minority because of their neurodivergence in Q6 (Table 1). A few indicated that their disability is caused by barriers created by library working practices and staff attitudes (Table 4-A). This was also identified in the literature review where the reinforcement of ableist attitudes within librarianship was highlighted (**2.2.4**). It suggests that library practices are creating barriers for autistic library staff as suggested by a few respondents and it may be worth examining current library policies in different sectors to assess this in more detail.

5.1.2 Associated health conditions.

Most respondents advised that they suffer from anxiety and depression which has been commonly linked with autism and employers and colleagues should be aware of this. The prevalence of these conditions in people with autism is notable as shown in a recent survey of 1,500 autistic people and 1,000 family members where 94% (6 in 10) of autistic respondents reported experiencing anxiety, with almost half falling into the GAD-7 severe category, and 83% of autistic respondents also reported experiencing depression, with half saying that it had a high impact on their lives (National Autistic Society and Mind, 2020, p.7).

5.1.3 Disclosing autism to managers and colleagues.

Most participants had disclosed their autism or indicated awareness of this amongst line managers and colleagues. However, 11 respondents indicated that they had not told their colleagues, and 6 of these had not told either their colleagues or managers. This may indicate that there is a considerable hidden number of autistic staff members in UK libraries who have not come forward about this diagnosis. One third of respondents offered further information about the reasons for disclosure/non-disclosure which may provide useful information about additional needs and attitudes to consider. Responses also support findings in the literature review in **Section 2.2.2** as Anderson (2021b, p.44) observed that some autistic librarians did disclose their autism because their line managers seemed to support people with disabilities and that some respondents needed to disclose to acquire reasonable adjustments. Although, it is difficult to compare findings in this current study with Anderson's (2021b, p.41) since only 10 autistic librarians were interviewed. It is, however, concerning that some of the survey respondents indicated that they were being excluded and bullied by their colleagues or line managers which indicates a lack of understanding about autism in some UK library workplaces. Reluctance to disclose autism is also linked to masking as explained further below.

5.1.4 Masking autism.

More respondents mask their autism than do not (23-17). Reasons for masking were provided by few respondents but these provide valuable insight about needs and attitudes. Reasons for masking included avoiding stigma associated with autism and to hide unprofessional behaviours including self-stimulating behaviour. However, some feel that they do not need to mask and find it hard to mask their autistic traits and that some line managers and colleagues are supportive. Autistic library staff mask to hide self-stimulating behaviour or stims. The need to hide stims is indicated in another study in which 31 autistic adults were interviewed about their stimming (Kapp, et al, 2019). Despite the needed self-regulating and

calming benefits of stimming in overwhelming workplace environments many of the interview participants felt a need to suppress their stims or to stim in private because of negative attitudes/reactions by people who lack understanding about these behaviours and regard it as unprofessional and childish (Kapp, et al., 2019, p.1787). Masking is shown to have some negative consequences such as causing exhaustion and burnout which may impact the staff member's ability to do their work. Although not much data was gathered about this subject because of the removal of Q21-23 in Survey 2, the many reasons why respondents choose to mask in their workplace suggests that this may be a serious issue in UK libraries and that steps should be taken to improve awareness of autism and why some individuals may need to stim to cope with the stressful workplace situations. This highlight's themes found in the literature review **Section 2.2.4** where the need to mask autistic traits exemplifies ablest systemic values within libraries which emphasise how library staff aspire to be professional and resilient and in doing so has caused some autistic library staff to hide themselves to meet this ideal (Moeller, 2019, pp.461-462). It also supports observations in of the literature review **(2.2.2)** where some autistic librarians described how they avoided disclosing their autism and chose to 'mask' during interviews to avoid being excluded from the application process (Anderson, 2021b, p.47). Another study which surveyed librarians with other disabilities in Canada revealed respondents feared suffering negative consequences because of requesting reasonable adjustments (Oud, 2019b, p.182). The survey respondents also described negative consequences of masking, most significantly, how it causes autistic or people with other disabilities to become exhausted which was also highlighted in **Section 2.2.2** of the literature review (Anderson, 2021b, p.47; Pionke, 2019, pp.430-431).

5.1.5 Requesting reasonable adjustments/support offered by employer. (Tables 7A-E)

Over half of the respondents had requested reasonable adjustments, although not all had received all adjustments requested. Many different types of reasonable adjustments were requested including working from home, providing detailed written instructions, headphones,

having a mentor for support and having time away from the issue desk to manage stress from social interactions with users. Most of those who requested the adjustments did not say there were any negative consequences because of their requests. The findings expand further the theme of requesting reasonable adjustments in **Section 2.2.3** in the literature review, where it was indicated that some autistic librarians did seek reasonable adjustments in workplaces which seemed to accommodate disabled users and staff and although some autistic staff were reluctant to ask for reasonable adjustments and only asked for them as a last resort for a situation they cannot control, or to avoid being labelled with a disability (Anderson, 2021b, p.47). Responses in the survey further add to this theme as some respondents have not received an autism diagnosis and were unable to ask for reasonable adjustments.

 Some indicated that there were barriers which prevented them from seeking adjustments including being required to work onsite, and lack of soundproofing and quiet spaces in the library building which contrasts with Anderson's study (2021b, p.47) where reasonable adjustments seemed be able to overcome workplace and environmental barriers. Perhaps there is a need to assess the physical library workplace and library policies to see whether it is possible to implement reasonable adjustments for autistic library staff.

5.1.6 **Making own adjustments**.

   Around one third of respondents in Survey 1 have used their own workarounds rather than requesting adjustments or did not feel that they needed to make them. Responses include possible non-intrusive, cost-effective support methods used by autistic library staff which line managers should be aware of in addition to potential barriers to providing adjustments as indicated in Tables 7-C and 7-F. Four people said that they did not need make their own adjustments because they feel supported by their line manager and colleagues. Other reasons given are that they can mask their autism well, or that there is no need to do this because their workplace accommodates their needs by being quiet, and free of strong smells.

However, limited data was gathered because of the omission of Q30 in Survey 2, so this should be investigated in a further survey. The implication that autistic staff must mask to be supported in their workplace highlights that there is an underlying problem with accepting autistic traits in library work. Some of the workaround/adjustments such as working longer hours to avoid problems with commuting may cause further issues and health problems. The respondent's methods for self-implemented adjustments supports findings in literature review **Section 2.2.2** where Anderson (2021b, p.47) observed that autistic librarians used similar methods to control their work environment. However, the findings from the current study contrast with those in Anderson's study (2021b) as most of the respondents have disclosed their autism whilst some of the interview participants in Anderson's study implemented their own adjustments to avoid disclosure.

5.1.7 Requesting reasonable adjustments during interviews.

Three quarters of respondents had not requested adjustments for job interviews and while some said they did not require adjustments either because they have not had interviews recently or before they were diagnosed, some were not aware of that adjustments were available. Additionally, some felt that they needed to prove themselves and not be seen as difficult because of their autism. The stigma of disclosing during interviews and the fear that they would be seen as undesirable emphasises the themes found in literature review (**2.2.2**) particularly how autistic people feel that they may excluded because of library managers lack understanding about autism (Anderson, 2021b, p.47). Responses include some recommendations for adjusting interviews for autistic people, including providing interview questions in advance, allowing applicants to refer to a printed copy of the interview questions, and holding remote/online interviews which some respondents said are less stressful. These recommendations may show a desire for adjustments to be made available for interviews and that line managers make autistic candidates aware of the potential adjustments available in the workplace. One respondent described how training was not offered for interviews in

their workplace by management because of the fear of being accused of favouritism which may show one of the reasons why adjustments for interviews may not be readily offered. However, as only one person mentioned this it is not clear whether library managers have this attitude or not. The findings confirm recommendations for supporting autistic library staff in the literature review (**2.2.5**) and emphasise the concerns of individuals who did not want to be stigmatised because of their autism (Anderson, 2021a; Anderson; 2021b; Giles-Smith and Popwich, 2020).

5.1.8 Lack of additional support offered in libraries.

Most respondents (60%) had not received support in their workplace, with most receiving support via external disability networks or mentors. This supports and expands upon findings in the literature review (**2.2.6**) as there was little information found during the literature search about mentorship schemes for disabled library staff. It is not clear why some respondents may have benefitted from this support as Q36 was omitted from Survey 2 and only four people answered in Survey 1. However, only half wanted additional support and some suggestions were provided about the other types of support. Only one said they do not want people to know about their autism. It is not clear whether all the support offered to autistic library staff was provided externally or internally. However, it is worth noting that a few respondents recommended having an autism/disability mentor to provide support and advice about reasonable adjustments and that a few more recommended that line managers should undergo training so that they can offer support and be more aware of guidance provided by the Equality Act (2010). Others recommended hybrid and home working, training on adaptable working for staff and HR, and about hearing about autistic library staff's work experiences to get advice on how to manage their work and managing autistic library staff. The findings confirm observations in the literature review (**2.2.3**) that there is a lack of understanding about 'hidden/invisible' conditions such as autism which can hinder the provision of reasonable adjustments (Moeller, 2019, p.459; Pionke, 2019, p.430). The

request for library managers to receive further training about the Equality Act (2010) reflects how some researchers in **Section 2.2.3** have criticised disability legislation in the USA for not being clear about supporting disabled people (Moeller, 2019, pp.463-464).

5.1.9 Discrimination.

There were some conflicting responses to questions about experiences of discrimination in the library workplace. Although around 68% said that they did not experience discrimination, for those who did, 164 instances of discriminatory behaviour were recorded. It may be inferred that the problem may be underestimated by some autistic library staff and that accumulatively it is a significant occurrence. It is not clear why this may be the case, and this should be explored further. Respondents who do encounter discrimination indicated that they may receive offensive and dismissive comments from colleagues/managers who may not understand autism. Some respondents thought that their ability to mask their autism meant that they did not experience discrimination. This is indicative of the issue that some autistic people may feel uncomfortable being themselves in their workplace and that they may not want to be identified as autistic to avoid negative reactions from non-autistic staff. Another respondent indicated that they had encountered ablest attitudes in their workplace aimed at autistic library users which supports concerns in **Section 2.2.2** of the literature review (Pionke, 2020, pp.135-136). Around half of respondents said that they had experienced further difficulties because of their autism but very few have spoken here, and it seems likely that they had already explained their difficulties in the previous questions. Additional comments by respondents indicate further concerns about discrimination in the workplace as one respondent expressed that they were leaving their workplace, and another expressed that they did not want to work in libraries again. Additional concerns were raised including the lack of career progression, lack of accommodation for disabled people working in libraries which one respondent said had caused them health problems (Table 13). The findings support themes in **Section 2.2.2** in the literature review and emphasise that there is

an issue of discrimination of autistic library staff in library workplaces which some respondents agree needs to be addressed and resolved.

5.1.10 Lack of autism awareness training.

Training in autism awareness is not offered in around half the workplaces of respondents and of those around 80% said that it had not improved colleagues understanding of autism and that they kept on being dismissive towards autism and autistic people. Most respondents would like it to be offered as some feel that it may help to improve their colleagues understanding and awareness of autism. One respondent criticised online training offered by the charity Autism Speaks as out-dated and problematic due to use of the puzzle piece image which may offend some autistic people who may see it as infantilising. Another person warns that libraries should avoid contacting Autism Speaks for training because of concerns that they express ablest attitudes about autism being an impairment. However, since only two people express this opinion, it is not clear whether any of the other participants have had training from this charity or whether the training may have contained biased opinions or inaccurate information about autistic people. Another option discussed for providing training is to allow autistic library staff to present the training. Two people were concerned about this as they did not want to draw attention to themselves, and they felt that autism training tends to focus on the experiences of the person presenting the training rather than offering useful advice. As autism is different in everybody it could be difficult to provide training to meet the needs of every autistic person. However, one respondent who described hosting their own training felt that they were able to improve their colleague's understanding of autism when they received positive feedback after the training session. It might be worth exploring this topic further in another study to assess the effectiveness of different types of autism awareness training. Concerns about the way the training is held and who is providing the training should be taken under consideration by library managers so they can decide how best to provide this training and who would be the best people//organisation to provide it.

This expands upon themes within in **Section 2.2.3** of the literature review about the lack of provision of autism awareness training, and it also contradicts researcher's opinions about how autism/neurodiversity training may improve understanding of autism and disabilities in the workplace, since some respondents have indicated that this was not the case (Lawrence, 2013; Pionke, 2020). One respondent who presented their own training session described how they received positive feedback from non-autistic library staff who felt they understood the condition more after the training. This may support recommendations in **Section 2.2.6** of the literature review that libraries should work directly with autistic people and organisations to help raise awareness (Everhart and Anderson, 2020, p.3; Lawrence, 2013, p.104; Shea and Derry, 2019, p.329). However, as only one autistic respondent presented this training it is not possible to assess whether this is effective way to provide this training. Since there is a lack of recent literature about providing and assessing autism awareness training in the UK and that one past research study by Forrest (2007) about providing online disability awareness training was limited by the participation of a small minority of library staff, the findings from the survey help to expand on themes identified in **Section 2.2.5** of the literature review and also show that there is a need to consider the ways in which this training is presented and provided to non-autistic library staff. The findings also indicate that provision of training is perhaps limited by budgetary constraints as few respondents mentioned having external training such as that provided by organisations, including NAS and Autism Speaks. However, one respondent said that they had undergone internal training through the NHS which indicates that some health libraries are able to provide autism awareness training through their organisation.

5.2.0 Interview findings

The interview questions were intended to extend answers in the survey. The interviewees represented different sectors and levels of library staff (Table 14) and some useful further points were made.

5.2.1 Employee and autistic traits in libraries.

Most of the interviewees agreed that their autistic traits aligned with their library work, and some felt that their autism helped them to be flexible and accommodating for autistic library users. One commented that their workplace may be excluding autistic people by its emphasis on social traits as an ideal for prospective employees. It is significant that some library managers are unaware of how wording in job adverts and emphasising social skills may deter autistic candidates (Table 15). This supports recommendation in **Section 2.2.4** of the literature review about the need for writing job adverts which emphasise essential skills to recruit autistic people (Giles-Smith and Popwich, 2020, p.118).

5.2.2 Making own adjustments.

There were some additional self-administered adjustments mentioned including turning off video during online sessions, coming in later, going away from the issue desk to calm down, doing project work by themselves and managing social interactions. Most participants have not made their own adjustments without disclosing their autism to their line managers and colleagues except for one who stated that they have not because they do not think anything will change by doing this. It may be of some significance that one interviewee was reluctant to disclose their autism as it may imply that their workplace is not supportive of people with disabilities (Table 16).

5.2.3 Support in the workplace.

Over half of the interviewees stated that they need more support or have faced resistance to being given adjustments by managers. Several stated that line managers need more training about different/hybrid ways of working which is also indicated in Table 9-E. Additional instances of support were mentioned such as limit of interaction during meetings and regular meetings in person rather than online (Table 17). This expands more on the support methods

discussion in **Section 2.2.5** of the literature review as although, there was no mention of the use of PBS to support autistic library staff in the surveys and interviews, some methods such as providing regular one-to-one support was discussed in **Section 2.2.5** of the literature review.

5.2.4 Supporting autistic library staff and users.

There were several useful responses by interviewees to Q5 as shown in Table 18. Interviewees agreed that all support services in libraries focused more on autistic users rather than autistic library staff and gave examples of some unfortunate consequences resulting from lack of support including failure of probation and loss of job. It was reiterated that line managers and staff needed more training. One person thought that lack of funding and staff in libraries may be a reason why support is not offered. The findings expand upon observations found in **Section 2.2.0** of the literature review that there is a larger focus on providing support services and autism awareness training towards autistic users in UK libraries which has been criticised in the relevant literature (Anderson, 2021a; Anderson, 2021b; Brown and Sheidlower, 2019; Everhart, and Anderson, 2020; Hill, 2014; Lawrence, 2013; Oud, 2019b; Pionke, 2019a). It was interesting to note that one interviewee was surprised and unaware of this although this may have been because of their lack of understanding about their condition as they have been recently diagnosed. It is also concerning that the interviewee who lost their job described that autism awareness training was provided for supporting autistic users which emphasises that there is a lack of acknowledgement about the needs of autistic library staff. One interviewee emphasised that the lack of managers, library staff and funding is a major barrier to providing support and autism awareness training in some UK libraries. Some library sectors have suffered large cuts to funding, especially the public library sector where according, to a recent library survey, the total spending on public libraries in Great Britain decreased by nearly £20m (25% reduction) from 2019-2020 and the total number of paid staff fell by less than 100 (1%) within

the last 3 years (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, 2022). Other library sectors such as school libraries, academic libraries and health libraries have also suffered cuts to funding which may hinder the provision of support/autism awareness training in UK libraries. This supports findings in the literature review **Section 2.2.4** where lack of funding in academic libraries in Canada has put pressure on library services to be more efficient and cheaper to meet public and state goals which affects provision of support for autistic and disabled library staff (Giles-Smith and Popwich, 2020, p.112; Oud, 2019b, p.179).

5.2.5 Improving support, recruitment, and retainment of autistic library staff.

Suggestions for improving these areas included repeated statements about the need for interview adjustments, with some additional suggestions (Table 8-B; Table 19). There was one new suggestion regarding emphasising traits that autistic people display as positive in job adverts about having attention to detail, good organisation skills, being focused and technical skilled. Other recommendations included closing libraries once a month to allow for suitable training for library staff, providing more volunteering opportunities and work experience for autistic people, and for management to be more flexible and play to individuals' strengths.

5.2.6 Additional comments (Table 20).

Further comments were offered about the time it may take for a diagnosis to be made, documenting agreed adjustments for future managers, and autistic people who are less able to express their needs and required further support (Table 20). The long wait for an autism diagnosis and the fact that some respondents are currently waiting to receive one may reflect how the number of patients with an open referral for suspected autism had increased from over 90,000 to nearly 120,000 between April 2021-March 2022 and that people waiting for a first appointment within 13 weeks also increased from 5,640 to 7,536 (National Health Service, 2022a).

6.0 Conclusions and recommendations

The surveys and interviews provided an opportunity for library staff with autism to express their views about the support they receive in the workplace. The response rate seemed to be fairly good, but it would be helpful to know how many people with autism are employed in libraries. Perhaps CILIP could undertake a survey to establish this.

However, data about autistic library staff may also be difficult to extract possibly because the stigma associated with the condition may prevent participation or openness about experiences and difficulties so there may be a large hidden population of autistic library staff. This could be the reason for the large number of unfinished survey responses, and it is also supported by the responses which confirmed that autistic library staff may mask their autism or adjust themselves to fit in.

Several gaps were identified in representation from respondents to the survey: including staff in school library and special library sectors and managerial staff. There was also a lack of representation of people in the BAME community which may have provided an interesting comparison to understand how people with white ethnicity face different challenges. Further studies may be helpful to obtain more staff representation across all library sectors and levels including management, to enable comparisons to be made about support available in different sectors and to identify examples of good practice. It would be interesting to hear perspectives from autistic library managers to see whether they encounter similar issues identified within this study or to hear some of their perspectives on managing autistic library staff.

There were also conflicts in the findings for some of the questions. For example, most respondents indicated that they did not face discrimination in their workplaces although 164 instances of

microaggressions were reported. Conflicts in the data can also be seen in responses for questions regarding additional support and provision of autism awareness training (**5.1.8; 5.1.10**). There could be various reasons for these conflicts. It may be useful to carry out further studies to investigate specific issues further. It could also possibly signify the differences between autistic people, how their needs vary, and how they may require less or more support. The requirement for support may also be influenced by other factors including their roles, sector, and their additional health needs. This may also explain the dissatisfaction with the autism awareness training as most respondents said that it was not acceptable at explaining these differences.

Additionally, nearly half of the participants indicated that they mask their autism which illuminates the underlying issue that autistic people choose to hide their autism in their workplaces because of the fear of being stigmatized and discriminated against for not conforming to societal norms. As masking has been shown to have exhausting consequences on an autistic person's mental and physical health, it may be concluded that libraries should provide more support by improving staff awareness and acceptance of autism so that autistic individuals do not feel the need to project an ideal normative persona. Libraries should also aim to normalise discussion about autism and similar conditions so that non-autistic staff are not judgemental about autistic behaviours or traits.

Even though Survey 2 omitted questions around masking, self-administered adjustments, and discrimination there was probably enough data gathered to confirm the presence and significance of these issues for people with autism. Perhaps in any future study the questions could be included but presented in an alternative form or made optional to avoid any negative emotional consequences.

There was agreement that whilst some library staff do receive support in their workplace, many participants felt that they required more help which indicates that libraries do need to provide more support for autistic library staff and that support needs to be differentiated to take into consideration

individual needs. Also, the level of support needed may be linked with their role and sector. Library assistants may be expected to interact more with customers whilst qualified librarians may be able to limit social interactions. Some participants had not yet received a diagnosis or had received a diagnosis later in life, so they were unable to obtain reasonable adjustments or were unaware of the options available. Lack of awareness of the support options available was also reported by respondents with a diagnosis. This indicates that both those with and without a diagnosis need further information about support available to them.

There was a higher level of instances of discrimination reported by library assistants in academic, public, national and health libraries who also indicated that they required further support. Some respondents and interviewees have also criticised discriminatory staff attitudes in these sectors so further research could be helpful for a clearer comparison.

One barrier was identified as lack of funding to provide staff disability/autism awareness training in UK libraries. Since loss of funding for libraries has been a major concern especially in the public and school library sector it may be worth highlighting this serious consequence for autistic library staff and investigating further to see how this might be addressed.

Most participants agreed that library managers need to undergo special training and that autism awareness training needs to be made compulsory for all staff. Although some libraries offer autism awareness training, most participants said it was inadequate and did not help to improve understanding of autism. Some workplaces offer training aimed at supporting library users rather than staff. It could be useful to update the content presented in current training to mention the needs of autistic library staff which may encourage acceptance and understanding towards autistic library staff. It is also recommended that current training methods in libraries or from external organisations might be assessed to see how they could be improved, and library managers might consider whether it is better for a professional or an autistic person to provide the training. They may also

consider how the training is best delivered and whether it contains out-dated or biased information about autism. Library managers might investigate implementing UDL principals into the training so that they can make the training more accessible for all library staff (CAST, 2022a). Following UDL principals may help to address issues caused by overwhelming workplace environments which cause sensory issues with some autistic library employees.

The need for autistic library staff to receive reasonable adjustments was clearly shown and difficulties around this might be reduced if library managers and non-autistic library staff improve their understanding of autism through appropriate training. Support may also be improved if records are kept of the agreed reasonable adjustments for future managers and new employees.

Library managers and employers could help to improve discussion about disabilities and mental health issues in the library workplace so that staff who have or who have yet to receive an autism diagnosis could be more open about their needs and be confident enough to seek further support or to request reasonable adjustments. As not all autistic people have the same issues it may be worth encouraging library managers to investigate providing individual support for their autistic employees or to discuss what their individual needs are.

It may be useful to carry out a further survey aimed at non-autistic library staff and library managers after considering comments from respondents who indicated that they mask their autism and avoid disclosing their diagnosis because of the fear of being mistreated and stigmatised by their colleagues and managers. This may help to show differing perspectives of non-autistic library staff towards autistic people and may encourage openness and highlight the need for training to improve understanding and acceptance of autism in libraries.

If the recommendations above are implemented the library as a workplace may be improved for people with autism and this could benefit library employers, making libraries more attractive to

prospective employees with autism, thereby improving their rate of employment and enabling people with autism to flourish in the many roles that they occupy in a variety of different library sectors.

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Appendix A: Survey Questions from both Survey 1 and Survey 2
Key:
 *(Question included in survey 1 and 2)
$(Question in Survey 1 only)
£(Question in Survey 2 only)

*Q1: What is your current role/position in your workplace? Please select one option from the choices below.

- o Volunteer
- o Library Assistant
- o Assistant Librarian
- o Reference Librarian
- o Subject Librarian
- o Library Manager
- o Other

If you have chosen "other", please specify:

[   ]

*Q2: What type of library do you work in? Please choose from the following options.

- o Public
- o Academic
- o School
- o Health
- o Special
- o Nation
- o Other

If you have chosen "other", please specify:

[   ]

*Q3: What hours do you work?

- o Full Time
- o Part Time
- o Zero Hours Contract
- o Voluntary
- o Other

 If you have chosen "other", please specify:

[   ]

*Q4: What age range do your fall into? Please choose one of the following options.

- o   18-20
- o   20-29
- o   30-39
- o   40-49
- o   50-59
- o   60-70
- o   70 +

*Q5: What gender do you identify with? Please choose one of the following options.

- o   Male
- o   Female
- o   Trans-gender
- o   Non-binary
- o   £ Prefer not to answer
- o   Other

If you have chosen "other", please specify:

*Q6: Are you part of a minoritised group?

- o   Yes
- o   No

Please specify

* Q7: What is your ethnic group?

(Choose one option that best describes your ethnic group or background)

- o White English
- o White Welsh
- o White Scottish
- o White Northern Irish
- o White British Irish
- o Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- o White and Black Caribbean
- o White and Black African
- o White and Asian
- o Aisan
- o Aisan British
- o Indian
- o Pakistani
- o Bangladeshi
- o Chinese
- o Black
- o Black British
- o African
- o Caribbean
- o Arab

Other

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*Q8: Have you received an autism diagnosis?

- o Yes
- o No

*Q9: If yes, then what type of diagnosis do you have? Please choose from the follow options.

- o Asperger's Syndrome
- o Autistic Disorder
- o Childhood Disintegrative Disorder
- o Rett's Disorder
- o Pervasive Developmental Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)
- o Other

If you have chosen "other", please specify:

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*Q10: If no then are you currently waiting to be diagnosed?

- o Yes
- o No

*Q11: Does your diagnosis affect your ability to do your work?

- o Yes
- o No

Q12: If yes, please explain how?

*Q13: If no, please describe why you think it does not?

*Q14: Do you consider yourself as having a disability? Please explain why or why not?

*Q15: Do you have any other conditions (learning or cognitive disabilities, mental health issues, physical disabilities) as well as autism? Please explain what these are and how they affect you below.

*Q16: Is your line manager aware of your diagnosis?

- o Yes
- o No
- o Not yet received a diagnosis (£)

*Q17: Are your colleagues aware that you have a diagnosis?

- o Yes
- o No
- o Not yet received a diagnosis (£)

$Q18: If yes, please explain how many of your colleagues know and whether this has affected the way they and your line manager treats you? (Only in Survey 1)

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$Q19: If no, then please explain why you have not told them? (Only in Survey 1)

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*Q20: Do you feel that you have to hide/"mask" your autism from your colleagues and line manager?

- o Yes
- o No

$Q21: If yes, please explain why?

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$Q22: If no, why?

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$Q23: Does the way you hide your autism have any negative effects on your mental health and your ability to do your work? Please explain how.

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*Q24: What kind of support do you receive from your employer to accommodate for your autism? Please explain.

*Q25: Have you requested reasonable adjustments to accommodate for your diagnosis in your current job?

- o Yes
- o No

*Q26: If yes, then please describe the adjustments given and why they were needed?

*Q27: If no, then please explain your reasons for not requesting reasonable adjustments?

*Q28: Did your requests for reasonable adjustments have any negative consequences?

- o Yes
- o No

$Q29: If yes, then please describe what these were?

$Q30: Have you had to make your own adjustments in your workplace? Please explain what they were and why you had to use them?

*Q31: Have you had to request reasonable adjustments for a job interview?

- o Yes
- o No

*Q32: If yes, please explain why?

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*Q33: If no, please explain why?

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*Q34: Are there any other support mechanisms in your workplace that you could use to accommodate your needs?

(For example, mentorship schemes, library support networks, Positive Behavioural Support (PBS) etc.)

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*Q35: Have you benefited from using these additional support mechanisms/interventions?

- o Yes
- o No

$Q36: If yes, please explain how?

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*Q37: If no, would you like to be offered additional support?

Please explain what type of support you would like to be offered in the comment box if you had answered yes.

- o Yes
- o No

Comment

[ ]

*Q38: Have you experienced discrimination or harassment in your workplace because of your diagnosis?

- o Yes
- o No

$Q39: If yes, then please describe what kind of discrimination do you face at work? (Only in Survey 1)

[ ]

$Q40: If no, please explain why this might not be the case? (Only in Survey 1)

[ ]

*Q41: How often have you experienced the following at work?
Please select one of the 4 options per row which best applies.

	Somebody helps me even if I did not need help	Someone assumes I'm incapable or unskilled because of my diagnosis	Someone minimises the impact of my diagnosis and how it affects me	Somebody asks personal questions about my diagnosis	Someone assumes that all $people on the autism spectrum/£autistic people are the same and have the same issues	Someone makes negative comments or jokes about autism and about disabilities	Someone avoids me because of my diagnosis	Someone is uncomfortable with me or does not know how to act because of my diagnosis
Never	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Rarely	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sometimes	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Often	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

*Q42: Have you experienced any other difficulties at work because of your autism?

- o Yes
- o No

*Q43: If yes, then please discuss them here

*Q44: If no, then why not?

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*Q45: Does your organisation offer autism awareness training?

- o Yes
- o No
- o I don't know £

*Q46: If yes, has it improved how they treat you and their own understanding of autism? If no please explain further in the comment box below.

- o Yes
- o No

Comment

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*Q47: If you answered no in Question 45, would you like autism training to be offered? Please explain the reason for your answer in the comment section below.

- o Yes
- o No

Comment

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*Q48: Are there any further comments you would like to give about your experiences working in libraries as $a person on the autism spectrum/£as an autistic person?

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*Q49: Would you be able to volunteer for a follow-up interview to provide more insight into the work experiences of $library staff on the autism spectrum/£autistic library staff?

- o Yes
- o No

*Q50: If yes, please email your name and contact details to the researcher's email address: […] (This information will not be recorded in the research data, and your responses to the interview will be anonymised).
Thank you very much for taking the time to complete the survey

<u>Appendix B: Interview Questions</u>

1. What is your current job and what library sector do you work in?

2. What employee traits are most valued at your library and does your autism align with these traits?

3. Have you made your own adjustments without disclosing your autism and why did you feel that you have needed to do this?

4. Do you feel the support you receive in your workplace is able to meet your needs, or do you think that more could be done to support you?

5. Do you feel that the support services offered by UK libraries focus more on providing support for autistic library users rather than library staff and should there be more services offered for supporting autistic library staff?

6. What do you think could be done to improve recruitment, support and retainment of autistic people in UK libraries?

7. Is there anything else you would like to add about your work experiences and the support provided at your workplace?

8. Are there any comments or feedback you have about the survey?