**Sarah Botterill:**  Okay, so I can see the numbers are still going up, but I'm just going to make a start with a few introductions. So welcome to today's webinar. I'm really delighted to be joined by colleagues from AbilityNet and by GeniusWithin.

We'll be meeting them in more detail and finding all about the services that they provide in a while.

But we're joined by Jacqui Wallis, who is commercial director for GeniusWithin and Charlie Eckton, who's a consultant psychologist. So welcome to them. Welcome to our audience.

I’ll just run through a small amount of housekeeping, and then we'll get going with the webinar, and then at the end, I'm hoping that there will be some time for some Q and A.

So in terms of housekeeping, there are some captions popping up at the bottom. They’re coming from within PowerPoint. You will see some odd interpretations of what the speakers are saying, but generally speaking is pretty good at capturing what's going on.

We've turned off chat today; that just makes it easier for us so we can keep the chat for any technical issues we have, but please do use the Q and A window to ask any questions that you've got. We'll be coming back to those later.

Once the webinar's finished, everybody will receive, keep an eye on your inbox, the slides, a transcript, and a recording will be made available and they'll be posted online and you'll be notified by email. So, , all the information that shared during the webinar will be made available afterwards. , and we'll also be asking you for feedback to ask any follow-up questions.

Just in terms of what we're going to cover, we're going to introduce AbilityNet and how we can help. Then we're going to hear from my colleague Rina about her personal experiences in the workplace. And then as I said, we'll be hearing a bit more about GeniusWithin, and the services that they can provide, and a bit of discussion around this question that they've posed as part of the webinar, which is, is the new normal here to say. We're going to look at how everyone's been adapting to working from home, working in different ways.

And I guess part of that question is what do we want to keep? And, and what things, some of the challenges around that. We're going to run through that, and we're talking about, as I say, the services that they can provide, and then we'll just come back to a new service that AbilityNet has launched during this time that can be helpful to people.

And then we'll come to our Q and A. So that's what you can expect.

So, I'll just briefly give you an overview of AbilityNet.

So, our vision and our mission is to create a digital world accessible to all.

We work with people with disabilities and older people supporting them at home at work and in education, we have a network of over 300 volunteers who’ve had a police check, and we're offering remote support at this time. They are really skilled in terms of IT support, but they're also really patient. And our approach is to empower you to do the things you want to do, so they won't just do it for you. There'll be like a learning process alongside that as well.

We've recently changed our free helpline number. The new one is there. So, you can give us a call during office hours, and then there's a variety of ways that we offer support online. An example of that is My Computer My Way, and it will give you information on how to make adjustments to your technology for your particular needs.

You know, for example, if you wanted to make the text bigger on screen, on a tablet or a computer, then you'll be able to find that information in there. We have a product called my Study My Way for students and there's series of free fact sheets that you can download.

And we can also help you with a disabled student assessment and all the links are there.

So just briefly to give an overview of the difference that we make to our clients.

I'm not going to go through all of these, but one thing that's particularly relevant at this time is that we know that using technology can really bridge some of the physical distancing gaps that we've got at any time, and that intervention from one of our volunteers, 69% of people say that they feel less isolated, and interestingly 78% also find it easier to manage daily life.

And I think that's quite important at this time when people are trying to access public and private services online.

And I know that's probably something that Genius Within will come back to as well.

So we're running a series of these webinars. Next weeks, we'll also be looking at neurodiversity at the same time on Tuesday.

That would be looking at it more from kind of a social perspective and how various individuals and organizations are embracing creativity as a way of making new connections.

So do please join us next week if that's of interest as well. So before we get going, I just want to hear a little bit about who we’ve got here. So I'm just going to launch our first poll, which hopefully will pop up on your screen.

So just want to find out about the people who've joined us today.

So if you are someone who has neurodiverse needs, which of these apply, and you can take multiple choices here. So we've got autism spectrum condition, ADHD. Acquired neurodiversity, DCD, dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, mental health, Tourette syndrome.

It may be that you're here because you're an employer and you're looking to support people who may have some of these needs, option for none of the above or other.

If you want to pop some extra information in the Q and a box, that would be fantastic.

It'd just be great to know a bit more about who we've got joining us today.

So I'm just going to give it another few seconds to make sure that everyone's had time to read those through and answer, and then we'll be able to see what sort of results we get from them.

Okay. I'm just going to end the poll now. Let's see what we've got here and I can see the largest number is none of the above, which instantly makes me curious. If anyone wants to pop additional information in the Q and a box, please do.

After that, I can see that we've got 22% of people who are employers joining us today; 15% of people with DCD or dyspraxia, and we've got 14% of people who are saying that they've got mental health issues.

So, sorry. I forgot to share the results during that.

**Sarah Botterill** Now I'm going to hear from my colleague Rina. Welcome to the webinar.

I know this is something that's of real personal interest to you. Could you maybe just talk just a little bit about your role at AbilityNet and why you wanted to work for us?

**Rina Wharton:** So as an accessibility and usability consultant, a large part of my role is to test websites and mobile apps to see how accessible they are, issues of that and to report on what I find, , I wanted to work for AbilityNet because we do great work in the community, through the team of volunteers and also in terms of web accessibility.

It was something that I got very interested in as I was teaching myself how to make websites, and then the other part was that I saw AbilityNet because you also involved in kind of helping disabled people and web accessibility, I thought that. It would probably be a really good organization for people with disabilities.

And I thought it'd be really accommodating and flexible and they really have without the accommodations and flexibility, the I've been given, I, I simply wouldn't be able to work full time.

**Sarah Botterill:** Okay. So, you have Asperger’s.

How has AbilityNet adapted to make things easier for you? What's that flexibility look like?

**Rina Wharton:** So they've allowed me to work from home full time as part of my role, , which means that means that I can work full time, full stop. , I have tried to do office-based jobs before. And I just got overwhelmed with the, kind of the unexpected changes of people being there or not being there, the noise and light levels in the workspace, because they can really affect my ability to concentrate with regards to like sensory overload and things.

But also, they've just been really flexible. My line manager contacts me sort of every week or two weeks just to check how I'm getting on.

See if I've got any questions, just really supportive. You know, I, I didn't have to ask them for an access to work assessment. They actually suggested it in the first place, and just kind of really supportive and not, not kind of holding back on what they could offer.

**Sarah Botterill:** Okay, that's brilliant to hear. And I think you've touched on a couple of key things that I know GeniusWithin are going to come back to, and that is that notion of flexibility and working from home. Lots of people have had to work from home, but it's great to hear that that was something that you were able to make a choice about.

And I think it comes back to that. The thing that sits underneath that question what do we want to keep from this time, as we go forward, Throughout the pandemic and beyond as well. So thanks very much Rina for sharing your personal experiences. And I know we'll come back to talking about remote assessments later as well. So I'm gonna move on now.

Is the new normal here to stay. This is the question that GeniusWithin I know are keen to [00:13:00] discuss with us. So I'm going to pass over and say hi to Jacqui.

Jacqui, welcome. Tell us all about who you guys are and what you do.

**Jacqui Wallis:** Thank you very much. And thanks Sarah. And AbilityNet for having us today. So in case anybody isn't aware of GeniusWithin just a couple of things about us, we were set up to in 2011, we are a CIC [Community Interest Company]. We support all adults across schools, neuro diverse conditions, and we support them both in work, for those who are not in work and in criminal justice system.

Our service is delivered by a team of psychologists and ILM coaches. All of our workplace recommendations are based on high level academic research, and rigor. In fact, we spend a lot of time collecting impact data, to make sure that, everything that we do comes from a very data-centric position, with the evidence to back up one of our recommendations.

So today we're primarily, I'm going to focus on the work that we do for clients. And we work with a whole range of organizations from very large corporates, right through to SMEs and public bodies, as I said, we support through, , all neuro diverse conditions, through awareness training, assessments, , and also, one, , and our purpose really is to help everybody to be able to work at their best most of the time.

So with the impact of COVID-19 helping people who are working with neurodiverse conditions, we really wanted to speak about the world that we're in right now and how we can support long term, as we, as we find ourselves in remote working. And my colleague Charlie Eckton who is a consultant psychologist is going to talk to you about our , and our work with your diverse communities.

**Sarah Botterill:** That's fantastic. Thank you. And as you said, you'll just need to prompt me for next slide cause I'm driving today. But, I know Charlie now is going to talk us through, I guess there's a lot of talk about pre and post COVID. And what we're talking about today is bridging that gap, but you've got some insights which have come from, as Jacqui says lots of research that you've done. Just give us a background of the type of things that you're interested in and what you're talking about. So, I’ll pass over to Charlie now.

Welcome to you as well.

**Charlie Eckton:** Thank you. Thanks Sarah. So, I love this slide. I was hoping that we might start here because for me, this is really the essence of GeniusWithin this slide. What it does is it shows all of the strengths behind different neurodiverse conditions, and just. I don't know, we’ll have lots of people on this call will know all about neurodiversity and I'm thinking maybe one or two people might not.

So, it just a couple of things to bring us all on the same page there. Neurominority neurodivergent neurodiverse, they all mean the same thing, and you're right. Diversity. We can look at in two ways. So firstly, there's the kind of a neurodiverse overview of us as homosapians and there is diversity within cognition and that's been selected for over thousands of years.

It's advantageous to us as a species to have kind of difference. Uh, and then it's an individual level. So it might, my typical day job is going in and assessing people for their neurodiversity. So strengths and weaknesses across somebody's cognitive profile. So what we find is, people have strengths and weaknesses anyway, but people who are neurodiverse have greater strengths and weaknesses across their cognitive profile.

So I might make recommendations to help people with the help of AbilityNet and put some things in place to help with weaker areas. But as a company, what we really focused on is the strengths. My background is education. So, I can say hand on heart that in education, what we do really well is point out what's going wrong. We talk about the difficulties, the weaknesses, the things that aren't doing, what we want them to, and what we actually have to do is prove how bad somebody is before we can get them help. And what I love about business is we're saying, okay, So you're struggling with these things in these areas.

So here's some adjustments for that, but look at these amazing strengths that you have.

And in business, if we don't pay attention to the strengths of different neurodiverse conditions, then we're losing a whole load of talent.

**Sarah Botterill:** I'm aware that we may have some people with visual impairment. So I was wondering if you could perhaps….so what we've got on screen here, guys is a picture of neurodiversity. Pulling out as Charlie says, some of the strengths and weaknesses around particular neurodiverse types. I was wondering if you could maybe just read out one or two for us, for people who might not be able to see this slide on screen.

**Charlie Eckton:** [00:18:58] Yes, of course. So, typical, a typical strains associated with dyslexia, for example, uh, visual thinking. And that means that they're much more creative. They're able to see things [in] three D allows them to problem solve better than people who aren't dyslexic. People with ADHD are able to hyper focus. They're also able to turn their attention between things very quickly. What I would say is no two people with any one of these conditions are actually the same. So, anybody on this call might think, well, that's not me. And that's true, but it's just the generalization. Also people with autism have had the ability to look at fine detail and concentrate in the meeting.

**Sarah Botterill:** That's fantastic. Thanks for doing that. So yeah, moving on to some insights now.

**Charlie Eckton:** Just some quick-fire statistics that I think are really interesting. So, 83% of disabilities are actually acquired and that's at the average age of 53.

And I think what's really important to, to know about disabilities is intersectional.

So, what I mean by that is it actually cuts through all of the areas of diversity and inclusion.

It affects a huge number of people, lots of people on this call, lots of people in your organization and also across the class.

And if you just move on to the next slide, we've got some more straps here that actually 90% of disabilities are not immediately visible. And typically, one in seven have mental health needs. And the estimates of the cost of the economy is 26 billion pounds.

And if you just go on one more slide as well.

**Sarah Botterill:** I'm not visible. It's interesting. I think because so many of these things will only have come to live with people working from home.

Those conversations may not have happened until now.

**Charlie Eckton:** I think that's absolutely the case. I think that the situation has really, for some people pulled out some of the things they weren't managing before or masking, and, actually for other people, it's, it's actually helped them as we're going to see it in, in a while.

So. 28% of the long-term unemployed are dyslexic. And if you've never heard that statistic before, I think you'll find that quite shocking. Along with 10 to 15% of autistic people. Having a job. So 85 to 90% of autistic people don't have a job.

Now we're not going to look into the mental health behind whether you work or not.

But I can tell you as a psychologist, absolutely tragic that that figure is the case.

I know, I know these statistics, so it's less shocking for me, but I think. What still continues to shock me is even though we know these, these, these statistics, I think most people on this call will be aware of the equality act.

I think most people on this call will think, okay, but there are things being done and what's actually really quite shocking for me is that. Since the equality act has been put in place, there's been no change in the 30 points or 30% difference between employment for people who are disabled and the general population.

And that for me, shocks me every time I think about it. Yeah. It's the new normal here to stay. So, I just, I just painted a picture of what we actually really called exclusion. It's not really inclusion. And as I say, it's not changed. And so, all of a sudden. March, 2020, everything went weird. Didn't it? So, so that's where we were.

And the question is, where are we now? What what's changed, if anything? I think we'll all agree. Agree. Things have changed. What I would say is as a research practitioner, It's a bit early to say with the data what's changed and how, but what we do know is that we've covered….of anecdotal evidence.

As a company we've been looking at lots of social media self-report data. I know that Jacqui has had a lot to do with that, and she's collected a lot of views.

And I think the most important thing is to say that it's different for everybody.

And that is going to be key to the adjustments that we make.

So I know that you've got some questions from, you know.

**Sarah Botterill:** So I guess it's just to dig a little bit deeper. And what you're talking about is you say… those experiences are very personal anyway, and everyone will be experiencing this unusual time in a different way.

But if you could kind of, do you have any of that anecdotal evidence, perhaps pull it together for us and tell us how you feel it has been impacting people with neurodiverse needs in particular.

**Charlie Eckton:** [00:23:47] Sure. So, one of the things that people might have seen was that quite soon into the lockdown, the head of Twitter said, right, that's it from now on, you can all work from home.

This is working really, really well, and clearly they thought that was a great announcement to make. And I know that for some people that will have filled them with anxiety, with the idea that they wouldn't go back to the office. And so. Okay to take the Liberty of sharing some anecdotal evidence of my own, actually…..

So within Genius[Within], we, then we've got a good representation of people with various neurodiverse conditions.

And I just want to contrast the experience of a good colleague of mine who has autism. So typically genius within we have monthly meetings. And we will all go down to headquarters and we'll sit around a table and we will go through all the business and it takes several hours, and she finds that quite overwhelming. She finds the journey there overwhelming. And, what she's found since we've been locked down is she's not using all her energy up, uh, getting there and she set her zoom so that she can only see the person talking. And this is a feature of seeing I'm sure you're all aware of, but that means you can do that.

And if people talk over one, another zoom, we'll focus in on probably the person who's allowed us, I'm assuming, but at one time you can only ever see one person and she finds that. Great. And my experience, I do have ADHD, but my experience of having ADHD. Is the, I want to take all of the information all the time on zoom. So I don't want to see what one person is saying. I want to see what everybody is thinking about what one person is saying;
I want to see everybody's reaction to what's being talked about.

And then taking in what's being said and everybody's reaction to it, which means that I find it absolutely shattering, and, and, and no two people are alike. So, what you've got that is already within one working team and a group of people that work well together, really different needs. So, my colleague really wants to do lots of zoom talks going forward. I can't wait to see everybody in person. And what we're going to find is this balance, the balance of, of making it right for everybody and hopefully more flexibility, which is what, the key thing is me.

**Sarah Botterill:** And I think you've touched on some of the other questions I've had there in terms of videoconferencing. Everyone deals with that cognitive load in a different way, and available choice and flexibility, which is really important for employers to embrace.

I wonder if you'd just like to say a little bit about that notion of making reasonable adjustments in terms of in the office. I think it's something that people recognize they have to do, perhaps just to talk about the, you know, as you said, there's a real need for making those reasonable adjustments and what types of things might help people with those needs now they're working from home.

**Charlie Eckton:** Absolutely. And I think this is where AbilityNet and Genius. They're a really nice fit, actually, because we both know the things that work.

One of the things that we spent a lot of time researching is neurodiverse specialists coaching. And if you just become to my, my next slide, what's, what's really great about coaching is regardless of what people's needs are or conditions are we found that they all want the same thing from coaching. And this is fantastically useful. So as you can see, that allowed me to learn how to all of the statistics, but as of March 92% of people wanted help with memory and concentration. 67% of people wanted help with wellbeing. I'm going to speculate that that might be higher. Now I'm going to speculate that I might be wrong.

But what we find is when people have specialist coaching, 95% of them stay in their job. If they're having problems, 25% of people get promoted. 75% of people report self-improvement and 47% of supervisors notice the same improvement. And it's interesting, isn't it? Typically we find that people have low self-esteem when they first talked to us. And so that's why we have such a huge increase after coaching. And if you go onto the next slide, and this is very much where you guys come in, things like assistive technology.

I'm sitting to now we do screens, which makes it so helpful. Cause I don't need to keep flicking between screens on one laptop, environmental flexibility. So, all of these things we've researched and we know that they work.

And what we need to do now is considered two environments at the same time.

So if at work you need your screens and you guys need them at home. We thought for a few weeks, people might manage sitting on their old piano stools. And actually, what we do know is you need an ergonomic chair. If you're not going to have a massive chiropractors bill that's, if you can get some chiropractors. So always it's about having this open mind, this flexibility, chatting with people and seeing what they need.

The only thing that I would say is the real difference is made when we don't do these, these things we actively. So, you know, you guys know, we know that if the same things are coming up, the same needs are coming up.

If we can put those things in place before things go wrong, then that's going to have such a massively positive impact on people's wellbeing and mental health. That's

**Sarah Botterill:** Great. Thank you. And I think what you're also highlighting is the importance from an employee's perspective of working at it really resonates with the new story I saw about the health service and how they've had to work so hard to combat attrition and nurses and how that's really come down. I think what you were saying there is that by working at it, you can improve staff retention. You can keep people, who've got great skills in the workplace, which I guess brings us onto this really? What can we learn from this experience? I think in a time of crisis, it brings everything to the fore.

What do you think we're learning, and how are these changes sustainable?

**Charlie Eckton:** So, it's interesting, isn't it? And we've got this, this phrase, the new normal, and I, I, I kind of think of it as the next normal, and then we're going to get another normal after that. I'm just looking at your slide there, work home boundaries.

For me, my work home boundaries are being challenged at the moment by my cats and my dog wanting my attention. And, and I know that for lots of people on this call, it's not just about how am I managing to work. In my home environment. It's how am I managing my family whilst I'm working in my home environment?

There was an article in the Observer a few weekends ago, basically saying that were returning to 1950s gender divide with all the women, picking up, educating the children and doing all the housework. And it's an interesting thing. I think that at the moment, whilst people have children at home for those people who do have children, that's not going to be the next normal.

So once people get out of the house a little bit more, and those who can work from home, settle in that's when they'll get to see actually, is this sustainable? Can I cope with this? What does it mean for me? And I envisage a saying a little bit of bouncing in between different types of normal. I don't think we'll go back to what we have before.

I think that there's a lot of talk about the risk assessments of going back into the office. And Jacqui and I were just talking about this this morning, but those risk assessments are focused primarily on the physical side of things, but there's not a lot of talk about the psychological risk assessment of being left at home while some of your colleagues were in the office, for example. So, as I said, it's all very well. You'll see I saying that you can all work from home, but how does that work? If you're in the sales department, if you have ADHD and you need a dopamine hit and, the moment of working alongside colleagues and feeling that excitement by being in the same room as them, then how you get that.

**Sarah Botterill:** And I think one of the things that you've talked about with those personal examples earlier is that way of maintaining social connection, and we've kind of all gone to this zoom environment, which I know I personally do also find quite tiring.

So again, it's about a balancing act, isn't it you're treading that line between maintaining social connection and not overwhelming people

**Charlie Eckton:** It's also about challenging some of the social norms. So, we all know that meetings should last for an hour. Don't we? You know, I, I feel that if you've got a really intense situation in which people are constantly looking at zoom, then let's change the norm. The new norm, let, let you know, let's say, well, actually, maybe half an hour is enough for everybody regardless. And if we can't get through that meeting and a half an hour, then we need to change the agenda just because we've done certain things in a certain way doesn't mean that we should keep doing them that way.

That's fine. For a long time as well.

I've been chatting with managers when I've gone into workplace to make adjustments for people. And I said, well, actually this person could really deal with working from home two days a week. And they said, well, that's impossible. How can we possibly manage that? How will I know that they're actually working? How are we actually getting to, to prove what they've done? And you know, I've been fighting this. And then all of a sudden, when the world went weird, everybody did it. And it showed it's not a problem. You know, we were told you can't possibly chat with your GP online. No, we can't do that. And then all of a sudden 40 hours later, or chatting with our GPS online and the technology has shown us, things can move very quickly. We want them to, we just have to make it happen, then we have to want it. And I know that you guys do, and we do so.

**Sarah Botterill:** That's great.

**Jacqui Wallis:** On our impact data, we kept talking about data every month on who we're working with and the two out of the four elements. Charlie mentioned before wellbeing and time management are the two points that are moving most on the scale. The biggest improvement in people being able to manage that time since March than we've ever seen. But we also saw stress levels increase higher than we've seen since December. So, December always peaks for stress. People find Christmas stressful, but , normally it sort of stays on the same trajectory and it's increased most other areas that we measure 14 areas altogether. Pretty stable, but it's really interesting that those two elements of measuring how we are responding to working in this new way have moved.

So, it's such a large number of percentage points away from their normal trajectory, on both of those elements. So, it's great that we don't struggle with that time management potentially. But it's also not so good that it's impacting on our mental health through stress.

**Sarah Botterill:** Thanks, Jacqui, and it's great to see you monitoring it so closely as well.

I think there's a lot we're going to learn from this, which brings me nicely to the title of the next slide, which is learning from the pandemic. So I think just five quick tips here around some of those initial insights. Charlie, are you gonna run us through these?

**Charlie Eckton:** Yes, of course. So, what we've got here in number one is the transition to more remote support.

And, the good thing is that companies likability in that genius within are already ready to support people. So, we we've shifted most of our coaching remotes and that's worked really well. For those people who don't like seeing weeds and telephone coaching is it's worth mentioning again, though, that that technology is only a level that if you have access to it.

And so certainly I know today we're talking about our own employed clients, but some of our employed clients don't have the access to computers. So. It's important that we do think about that going forward and what we can do about it to make sure that everybody can access things. So, we've got providing choice and accepting that one size doesn't fit all.

I think I've made that point that no two people are the same. And the important thing is around flexibility having, it's flexibility around isn't it it's flexibility. In the managerial position, but it's also knowing that some of your colleagues might be experiencing things in a different way to you.

And it's actually about asking the question, you know, what can I do to support you better? What do you need? And for some people, the support is actually helping them understand what adjustments might be available, but they didn't know before homes.

**Sarah Botterill** And I noticed you've got on there, notice the changes, and also monitor those changes. As I say, you know, you guys are doing a really great job of actually collecting the data and some of those trends, which we'll take forward from here.

I've got a slide here about how to create sustainable inclusion. So I was wondering if you could talk us through that.

**Charlie Eckton:** So, this is a really important slide for us as a company. When I first started talking, I was talking about exclusion and I was making the point that despite the equality act, we've actually not come that far. Having said that there's a lot of good work needs on an individual level, and that's the reaction reset. That's, that's what we call compliance inclusion.

Somebody needs some voice recognition software, and they need some coaching. And so, we give it to them and that is compliant with equality. Just very briefly deliberative inclusion is when we seek to put certain people with certain conditions in certain jobs. So natively that is for example, people with autism being recruited by GCHQ or some of the tech firms and what I would say about that is there's been little movement since, since we've seen that those particular recruitment types. So now where are the dyslexics? So why are we not recreating the ADHD in the army and on the front line for example.

So there's work to be done there, but as a company, what we're interested in is helping organizations do systemic inclusion.

We data collect, as you said, and once you start data collecting over a whole organization, then you can see actually. What's the, what's the need for the environment in this office. Why people in this team not getting promoted internally and what's wrong with our recruitment strategies, if we're not getting people through with these particular skills.

So as an organization, that's, that's what we're doing in the new normal with, this idea that some of the teams are going to be in some of the time and some of the, some of the month. So for us, this is about universal design as well. You talked about that, you mentioned that at the start and me looking at recruitment information opportunities for people who are neurodiverse to make sure we're grabbing that tone

**Sarah Botterill:** ….and that in the context of our discussion today, that word sustainable and systemic, they're really important.

**Charlie Eckton:** Well, absolutely. I mean, it's, it's a social and moral imperative I would say, so it's about making sure that we will utilize that talent.

So we've got our second poll now, which I will launch for everybody. So, this is just to find out from the people who are joining us today, whether your employer is embracing these reasonable adjustments. So simple question, has your employer made reasonable adjustments to make it easier for you to work effectively? Say simply yes or no. I can see the number is changing. , I'll just give it another, maybe 30 seconds or so for everyone to who wants to, to just have their, have their say here, and then I'll try and remember to share the results this time. Just give it another 10 seconds or so.

**Sarah Botterill:** So this is really heartening, actually. I'm sure Jacqui and Charlie and my colleagues from AbilityNet will agree, so it says that 77% of cases of people who've joined us, an employer has made reasonable adjustments to make it easier. I'm still a little way to go with 24% of people saying no. So sure that doesn't quite add up.

**Charlie Eckton:** I'm not a mathematician, but….

**Sarah Botterill:** no more than me. I don't know why that anomaly is. I'll have to look into that… but it's great to see that it's in favor of those reasonable adjustments having been made. So, we'll just move on from here. So, we've talked about this systemic approach, tell us a bit more about the benefits that can come from embracing that?

**Charlie Eckton:** So, this for us is the business case behind the work that we do. So not only are we making sure that at an individual level people aren't struggling for any length of time, and obviously the, the, the mental health aspect of that. But when we work systematically on inclusion, we, we actually reduced the cost of it by 30%. So, it's really expensive to get somebody like need to go in and do lots of assessments and I don't need to do it.

So, as I said earlier in the energy creation, we look for the problems and then you prove that somebody has these problems, but in actual fact, and this is a really important key message for anybody listening. The equality act does not require you to have a diagnosis of anything in order to get support, so with that in mind, We can save organizations, a lot of money by going in before the problems happen and putting the adjustments in place.

**Sarah Botterill:** And I think that echoes some of AbilityNet’s thinking in the sense that we would talk about inclusive design as being good for everybody. You know, it's not just doing this stuff because you've got to actually, it creates a better environment and lots of benefit for everyone.

**Charlie Eckton:** Absolutely. And I think we've just got a few more stats for people to look at, and I'm just going to hand back over to Jacqui to talk about some of the stuff that we're doing at the moment….

**Jacqui Wallis:** I mean, the stats speak for themselves really. There's a huge business imperative for companies and organizations to take on board systemic inclusion. You know, that there is a great loss when we don't all work at our best for ourselves and the businesses that we work for. So if we just finally move on to our last slide, what we just wanted to share how we've adapted. And obviously since March, and, and as Charlie said, everything went a bit strange in the world. We've had a call for different types of work and an approach. And obviously along with everybody else, looking at how we can deliver services in a remote context. So, there's new models of coaching that are being delivered, which are called Genius based on individual coaching sessions that can be delivered via this technology.

And they're blended with some online modules as well, to support people through whatever their objective. So I'm also working with companies and actually many companies that we've talked to, , all using this pause to be examined courtesy because. I'm really treaty. You can't work on a systemic inclusion approach without some central policy being addressed and how you recreate and how you manage your team. So that often starts with awareness training. So teams and groups, understanding neurodiversity and the strengths and the benefits that it brings to business.

So we've been running those groups remotely as well, and actually. Using things like Zoom, where you can break out into different groups and do some individual work and come back, , has actually worked incredibly well. So, we've gone into this earning how we can deliver this work in a, in a remote context, in an ongoing way as well. And also, sometimes we can almost have to have to start the conversation if I need reasonable adjustments, how do I even begin? And actually we have a free adjustment screener on a website, which I've just noted the address for there and that 65 questions that you can, you can answer that might help you just start that conversation internally as to what might be useful.

To help you work at your best within your business, or if you're a business, uh, to consider what you might want to think about providing that will help your teams continue to work at their best. , as we stay in this new normal is, or next normal….

**Sarah Botterill:** That's great. Thanks for that, Jacqui.

And I think, you know, again, you've touched on those themes around flexibility, you know, using Zoom to the fullness of its ability. Now it doesn't mean you have to be in a big room with everyone. You can do these breakout sessions and all say that kind of one to one support and adapting to individual's needs. And it's great to see you guys doing that in the move towards this next normal thanks, ever so much.

So I'm just going to launch our third and final poll.

Okay. So this is just to find out, and it comes back to some of what I'm telling you were saying earlier now, have things improved for you. So, how's your work life balance improved during lockdown? I know that's quite a generalization, but just be great to hear whether, , the answer to that is yes, no, or no change in the context of this discussion that we've been having today.

For 58% of people, it looks like work life balance has improved. Despite juggling animals and children in the house…30% of people are saying no, and 12% of people are saying No change. So I guess that reinforces some of what we've been talking about today. Great. Thank you. So now I just want to welcome my colleague Teresa, , who is going to talk about something that we've been adapting to, to help support people who may have moved to working from home. So Theresa welcome, perhaps you'd just like to give us an overview of how AbilityNet can support people working from home and introduce us to the working from home review.

**Teresa Loftus:** So, my name's Teresa Loftus. I deliver workplace assessments and disabled student assessments. And we've started to do those remotely. So that's using [Microsoft] Teams and so that's a face to face assessment that we can provide.

And a new service that we have developed is called Working From Home Review. So that's a 30-minute session with a unexperienced workplace assessor and it will help to identify some solutions to the barriers that you might be experiencing while you're working in this new working environment of home. So, we're not used to sort of always being in this environment, it's changed and there's some different things that you need might need to consider. So, that review will help you look at some of those issues that you were experiencing, and that could be to do with your workstation set up. It could be looking at your seat in your chair.

It might be to do with how you're using your computer, whether there's any adjustments that could be implemented, and, uh, those could be free solutions or they could be low cost or something that might be a little bit more longer term. So, there's a whole host of things that we can look at and discuss with you, it's quite a good session actually, that. So, I should feel quite relaxed. And if you don't like having a face to face session, you can turn your camera off. We can still chat to you whilst you’re having those, those discussions with us.

**Sarah Botterill:** That's great. And then as Jacqui said about their service, it kind of works as a, as a conversation starter as well doesn't it? It's what are some of the recommendations that may come out of that?

Can you give us a couple of examples based on the experience of working on those services?

**Teresa:** So when we're thinking about the economic side of things, it could be looking at how your place in your equipment to make it most sort of ergonomic comfortable for you so that it doesn't exacerbate any of your conditions.

It's going to be a short-term solution.

We hope for some of us, sometimes it might not be, and you might have to have another review at a later point if it's going to be longer term. But so that could be things like lap trays and things that will help you set a little bit better or lumber support, or even down to specialist seats. And then if we have a look at the software, it could be that we are discussing the free solutions that are built into Microsoft office. Things like dictate or speak or using the check in facilities or my computer, my way helps us from a bit of Siena helps us adapt the screens and the computer environment, and, uh, you could link him with that as well. There's a whole host of things out there, but you might not be aware of it. And as an assessor, we can help point those areas for you.

**Sarah Botterill:** That's great. And I'm really pleased. You've mentioned my computer my way. When I joined the organization, I was really impressed with it because it just goes down to such a granular level, but you can enter it at a high level and start off by looking at problems with vision, but you can go right down to specific tasks on there, and it's very easy to find specific practical tips. Isn't it for people if they need that kind of help?

**Teresa:** It's really helpful. And we do recommend it quite a lot. And, uh, it's, it's something that you can find that will work with the operating system or even, uh, the mobile phones or tablets that you're using as well. So, it's not just always focusing on maybe a laptop.

**Sarah Botterill:** And I think it's important to say that I know I've put here. What types of adjustments might employees need to make? I think sometimes there's that preconception isn't there that once you start talking about reasonable assessments, it's suddenly going to cost an employer, a lot of money, or it's going to be like a real headache for them.

But, as both organizations have said, it's about starting that dialogue and actually the devices that people have already, if you can just go under the hood of it, actually. Just by allowing that flexibility or a little bit of education. It's quite simple to have those interventions. I don't know if you'd agree with that.

**Teresa Loftus:** I totally agree with it. And I would say that when somebody comes to talk to you about the barriers that they're experiencing, but you're always talking about the problems that they have. And by the time you finished having those discussions, they, the weight has been lifted from their shoulders. And you usually have somebody that's going away with a smile on their face because you've identified things that are easy to implement, and that will make them productive and make them achieve, help them achieve what they want to do within the workplace.

So that means they're going to be productive and that's a win-win for both people.

**Sarah Botterill:** Yeah. And just to reiterate that, I think from a, hopefully what people have seen from today's webinar from both organizations is that it's quite a solutions-focussed approach. It's not about identifying problems with individuals or it's about looking at how people can work together to make those improvements. So, thank you very much, Theresa. , there are a couple of slides here, which I'm not going to read out, but, for anyone who gets the email afterwards, if you want more details on what AbilityNet has spoken about during the webinar, we've got lots of links here and. Previously in the slide deck versus links there.

Jacqui and Charlie have shared as well to their services and everybody will receive an email with links to that afterwards. There are some specific blogs and fact sheets from ourselves, which all free to access as well. So, please do take the time to have a look at these at your own pace. There are also some links here for GeniusWithin to their social media, as well as the information that they've shared earlier, and that phrase, again, coming up that Charlie mentioned earlier, *inclusion is a moral, social and economic imperative*, *and that we all lose out when that potential is squandered.*

I think that's a really nice way to finish our formal section of this, and then we've just got to do a quick time check, about five minutes for some Q and a, so I'll just pop in, there's a lot of messages in here, which is great to see this level of engagement.

So there's a question here, which says, do you have a view on how neurodiverse individuals from BAME ND backgrounds are differentially impacted compared to the majority community to offer and support adjustments. So are there additional barriers faced in society for BAME ND work. And I don't know whether Charlie and Jacqui have got any views on that topic or at this time

**Charlie Eckton:** ….it is very topical and it's, it's a, it's a really good question. And, the fact of the matter is that I don't have specific data. Behind that. So I don't want to speculate, but I think that you know, one of the most important things is that you have a good representation of coaches to support people from all backgrounds. And certainly, that's something that we have worked on quite hard at genius within to make sure that we're representative.

**Sarah Botterill:** Mm. Great. Thank you, and there's a question here from Patrick. If you could develop a culture of universal design, are there any good pointers towards resources online to help me as an employer? So, I don't know if Genius has anything to say about that.

**Charlie Eckton:** So, you know, universal design and it was universal music that just released some things…. Nancy Doyle actually contributed to universal music piece I'm working with you're a diverse employees and there's a whole book that they've written, which is actually beautiful. It looks lovely. It's really accessible….the point is that many of the adjustments, and I think that's been mentioned by both groups say many of the adjustments, all those that benefit everybody. So they are put in place to support those who are in your, a diverse, but they are to the benefit. Of the whole organization and that she thinks like flexibility that we've talked about and flexibility and remote working. We've just been through the largest social experiment of however my working can work and actually we've had to do that, and it's proved the point, for many employee employers, that's. We can work remotely unsuccessfully and whether or not we choose to do that long-term when things do come onto the next normal or the normal after that, then we can take that on board. But I think in case, you know, universal design comes from when we take on board, those changes that can benefit. Most people most of the time, and they are things that don't cost a lot of money actually often.

**Sarah Botterill:** And I'd just like to echo everything you said, but also to say that I'm from the perspective of universal design. So AbilityNet has a team of accessibility consultants for helping companies ensure that their websites and meeting that inclusive design as well, and I think that's a need that, like everything else we've spoken about today, that's really been amplified by the time that we live in, you know. Are supermarket websites accessible for people who've become far more dependent on them. Can you access public services at this time? Have these services been designed with accessibility in mind?

You know, and that's something that I guess in some ways is taken for granted, but, , Once you, again, start looking into it. There's lots of things that can be exclusive there. And actually by being inclusive, if you're just opening up your services to a much larger population. So that's an interesting two different takes on that question.

So hopefully that's helpful to you there, Patrick.

Oh, there's a nice question. Just to maybe finish on…my cat has joined me too. Are there any studies on how working at home with your pets support animals and how they can be good for the wellbeing of neurodiverse workers?

Charlie, you got any data on that or Jacqui? Any thoughts?

**Charlie Eckton:** [Again? I can speculate, but no, I don't have data on that. My anecdotal evidence is that my dog has got serious separation anxiety, but I don't want to start diagnosing animals. So.

**Sarah Botterill:** Okay, great. Well, I can speak from personal experience as well and say that timeout with my dog has been really helpful at this time. So I'm just going to do a very quick time check. I think we're more or less there, cause we did schedule this to that classic hour that Charlie talked about earlier, you can find just to finish, you can find details of future webinars from ourselves. Following the link, which again, will be sent out afterwards.

And next week, as I said, we will be looking at a different perspective on neurodiversity and how people are staying connected on a social level in creative ways. So should be looking at things like art and writing around that. So do please have a look at that as well, and I will just take my final minute because these sessions and very abruptly, just to say a huge, thank you to everyone who's joined us today, either as an attendee and also, , the partners and my colleagues who've joined us today. , thank you ever so much. It always feels like there's not enough time. There's much more that we could have said, but thank you for sharing your experiences. Thank you, Charlie and Jacqui, and thank you to Teresa for also sharing how we've been adapting during this time. We'll hopefully see you, , on a, on another webinar. , and if this has been useful and you are able to donate and support AbilityNet to continue with the webinars and the work that we're doing, there's a link here as well.

So, thank you very much. Bye everybody. Take care.