

Neurodivergent Library and Information Staff Network



Annual Report July 2025

Chairs: Joanne Fitzpatrick and Andy Walsh

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1. About NLISN

The Neurodivergent Library and Information Staff Network (NLISN) is a peer support network for neurodivergent (ND) individuals working in the library and information science (LIS) sector in the UK and Ireland.

What do we do?

- NLISN welcomes individuals who are both diagnosed, waiting for diagnosis, or are suspected or self-diagnosed neurodivergent.
- NLISN also welcomes individuals who are current, past, aspiring, student or adjacent library, information and knowledge workers.
- NLISN includes staff from academic, health, public, school, college, law, government, business libraries and information services, and strives to make our deliverables suitable for all sectors.
- NLISN is based in the UK and is aimed primarily at colleagues in the UK and Ireland.

What do we NOT do?

- NLISN does not have expertise in creating library services suitable for neurodivergent service users.
- NLISN does not have expertise in building collections with neurodiversity as a theme.
- NLISN does not have any holdings or collections available to lend, beyond our outputs as seen on the website.
- NLISN's activities are not normally aimed at allies or interested third parties.

Our Timeline

The Pilot Phase

NLISN was part of the pilot year of the Academic Libraries North EDI Innovation Fund in 2022-2023, then called 'Neurodiverse Library Leaders', as a joint project between Joanne Fitzpatrick (Lancaster University) and Andy Walsh (then at Huddersfield University). During that year, we administered a survey asking if there were other ND LIS staff working in academic libraries in the north, and if so, what were they struggling with in particular.

What we found was that there were a high number of respondents to that, which included those outside of the north and outside of academic libraries asking to be included. We made the decision to include them from the start, and saw ourselves as promoting ALN by positioning northern academic libraries as the innovators.

The respondents identified 3 areas of work where they were struggling the most, and we devised a further 3 surveys to explore this more. These became our outputs for the project available here:

- No 1 Workplace Environment Report DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8202058>

- No. 2 Workload Management Report DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8186023>
- No. 3 Recruitment and Interviews Report DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8269342>

As this year drew to a close, ALN funded an event where we invited the community built so far to plan out how the network could develop beyond the project. The group devised the name NLISN, and expressed they would like to focus on peer support rather than advocacy, and avoid being affiliated with any other organisation and remain at grass roots level.

2. This Year's Plan

Entering 2024, under the name NLISN, we formed a committee who would help us develop this work. We again were very lucky to have a high number of respondents to this too, and we set about deciding together what work we would complete and the roles we would take.

We developed our 3 core offers and structured the committee around them, which has included:

1. An online presence, including website, JISCmail list and social media
2. Events, both online and in person
3. Buddying

In July we captured this, and our other decisions, in an internal document that became a light touch strategic plan which we called a 'strategic statement'. In addition to the offers above, it captured our scope (as seen in 'About NLISN' above), our communications tone (i.e. friendly and informal, open to being corrected), language decisions (e.g. neurodiverse to mean a group), how we handle the data we need to collect and how we might connect with other networks.

We purposefully scaled this small, to ensure we could deliver within the capacity we had, were not overburdening our volunteer committee (who are all neurodivergent), and that we had accurately assessed what the wider network wanted us to do to deliver peer support to them. We are looking to slowly build a network that will last long term, and to do this incrementally and sustainably (in terms of workload).

Because this is when our plans came together, we will revisit this plan every July to update it.

3. What we achieved July 2024-July 2025

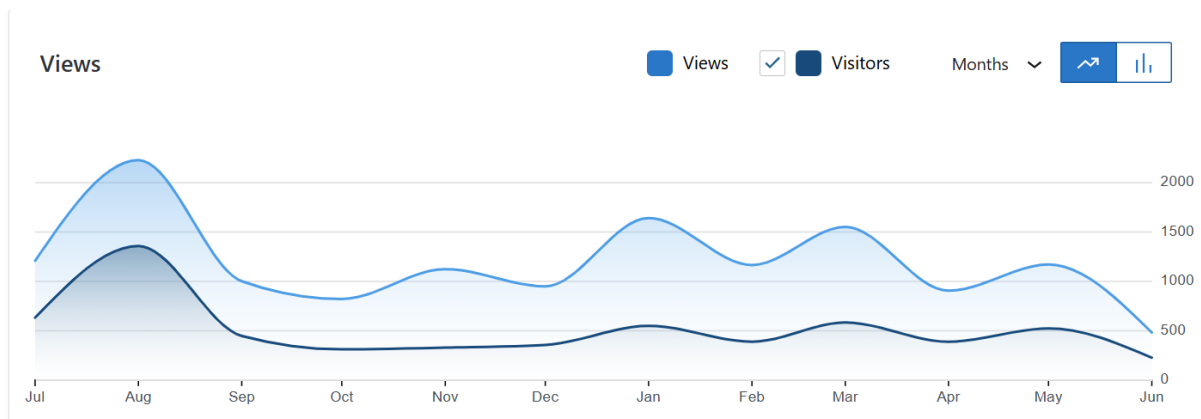
a. Our online presence

We have 4 committee members who work together to organise a range of online services. These are:

1. Our Website [NLISN.org](https://nlisn.org)

We provide a website that states our aims, profiles our committee members, hosts our outputs (such as reports, presentations and photos from events), and gives details of our events and buddying (see below for more information). In addition to this, our website also hosts our resources list.

Over the last 12 months (1st July to 30th June) we had 14,254 views of our website, spread over 6,103 visits, with last August our busiest month. Top 3 pages (not including the home page) were Events; Outputs; and Buddying Scheme.

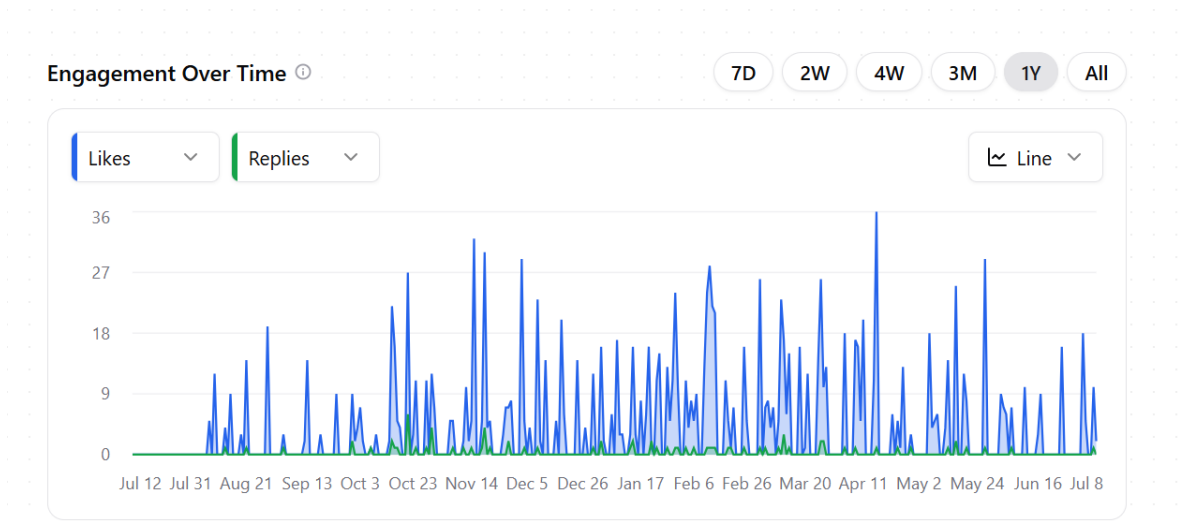


2. Our Resources List <https://nlisn.org/resources-2/>

Our committee curates an extensive list of relevant resources, including books, podcasts, organisations, websites and sources of support. They keep it constantly updated and add things as they are discovered.

3. Our Social Media

We have a presence on BlueSky (@nlisn.bsky.social) and LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/nlisnorg>) that our committee maintains with regular posts to engage the Library community. Our LinkedIn followers amount to just under 100 whilst the BlueSky account has amassed nearly 1.5k in the 16th months since it was begun. We follow just over 800 accounts both in the UK and stateside. Our most popular post gained 30 likes back in April, and on average each post gains 6 likes.



4. Our Mailing List

We have JISCMail list (NLISN@JISCMail.AC.UK) that we aim to keep just for discussion between neurodivergent people, not including allies. We do this through stating the aims of the list and not making it searchable within JISCMail - we do not check individual members on joining, but monitor usage and would remove anyone if necessary. We currently (1st July, 2025) have 260 people on the JISCMail mailing list, primarily from the UK and Ireland.

You can join here: <https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/NLISN>

5. Our Newsletter

Every season, we summarise our activity and share key updates in a newsletter, which we email to our JISCMail list and post on our website as a blog post. You can find past editions of the newsletter here: <https://nlisn.org/blog-posts/>

b. Our Events

We have 2 committee members who lead on our events offer, and this year we have offered a wide range of online and in person events.

1. In Person Events

Leading the Library's Neurotypicals: Neurodivergent viewpoints

Tuesday 29th October 2024, Birmingham City University

We hosted an in person event where neurodivergent library and information staff shared their experiences of leadership. We approached this in a lighter way, seeking to flip the usual advice given on how to best manage neurodivergent individuals, and instead approach it as though neurotypicals were the minority and offered each other advice on how to lead them well.

Attendance (in person): 31

2. Online Events

Being information literate as an autistic person in the library workplace

Monday 20th January 2025

We hosted a webinar where Amelia Haire shared her masters research, which was recently nominated for a LILAC information literacy award. She shared how information literacy is different for autistic people, as they take in more information and social methods of transferring information are different. Amelia's research has also been published in the [Journal of Information Literacy](#).

Attendance: 129

Recruitment Experiences of Neurodivergent Library and Information Staff

Wednesday 26th March 2025

We hosted a webinar where multiple speakers shared their experiences navigating the jobs market within our sector as a neurodivergent individual. Speakers were from a range of roles and discussed experiences and reflections of application forms, shortlisting processes, interviews and receiving feedback.

Attendance: 111 different people in total across the day

ANDPA & NLISN Community Catch Up "Unique Minds, Many Strengths"

Tuesday 8th April 2025

Together with our Australian counterparts [ANDPA.org](#), we hosted a joint coffee catch up, at a time that suited all of our disparate time zones (just about!). Emilia Bell of ANDPA kindly lead the session, and devised it's theme, where a range of prompt questions were asked to stimulate discussion. Attendance was small, but about even between both ANDPA and NLISN which was great to see.

Academic Libraries and Neurodiversity

Friday 25th April 2025

Emma Finney from Sheffield Hallam University shared her work around supporting users of academic libraries who are neurodivergent. She did this using a [Relaxed Tutorial approach](#) (developed by the Open University). The model has been developed to make learning online a more accessible opportunity for neurodivergent people and those with anxiety. In a relaxed tutorial, attendees will not be recorded, not be expected to use the microphone, not be asked to switch on your webcam and not be put on the spot, or called upon by name. The slides are available here: [Academic Libraries and Neurodiversity Slides](#)

Attendance: 69

3. Event Feedback

The stats and feedback below are a summary from all 4 of the above in person and online events.

How do you rate the event overall?

Average of all 4 events:

Excellent = 73.6%

Very Good = 24.2%

Good = 2.2% (only the Birmingham event received any ratings less than Very Good)

Fair = 0%

Poor = 0%

Would you recommend the event to others?

Average of the three online events:

Yes: 95%

Maybe: 5%

No: 0%

Did you find this event useful for your role/professional development?

Average of the three online events:

Yes: 90.2%

Maybe: 9.8%

No: 0%

What did you find most useful/what was the best part? (Summarised/linked where similar)

- Shared/lived experiences with both speakers and other participants - including relating to these/increasing self-knowledge
- Connecting with other ND people
- Full days being well balanced with variety and breadth, yet still clearly connected and relevant to the overall theme
- Full days being structured well in terms of pacing and breaks, as well as the ways of engaging with the presentations and the variety of presentation options for presenters
- Appreciated research based information and guidance
- Appreciated information and guidance that was practical and could make links to how they could use it and apply it themselves

What actions do you plan to take, or have already taken, as a result of attending this session?

- Sharing learning with other colleagues
- Sharing event resources with others and directing to the network more broadly
- Reflections for own experiences and practice, including from a lived experience perspective rather than just an implementing things in the workplace perspective
- Clearly taking away practical content, no matter what the event, to apply in own workplace or lived practice
- Using content as justifications for accessible approaches in order to encourage the improvement of others' practice

4. Coffee Catch Ups

Every month, the events team organise an hour's online meeting where NLISN members can get together and chat. They are hosted by a different NLISN committee member each month, and they happen at different times and days of the week. A core of regular attendees have been attending and it's proved a good method of making connections with colleagues who are facing similar issues.

Jan-March - no data

April - 19

May - 14

June - no meeting, technical fault

c. Our Buddying

We have 2 committee members who lead on our buddying offer, and this year we piloted a scheme to pair neurodivergent library and information staff with each other for informal, one on one support. The pilot is due to finish soon, after which it will be evaluated.

30 people were paired up and involved in the first year's pilot of the buddying scheme.

d. Our Outputs

In addition to our core work above, we produced several one off outputs and pieces of work. The most exciting of these is that we were named as the organisational winner of the Inaugural **2024 Lynne Mackie Accessibility Award by CILIP's Disability Network**. Lynne was a young librarian who had a stammer and was very active in the stammering support community.

Our other outputs, including those from our previous year before we were titled 'NLISN', are listed below:

Caroline Ball, Joanne Fitzpatrick, Andy Walsh (2025), [UKSG Annual Conference and Exhibition 2025 Plenary Panel: Empowering Neurodivergent Staff, Learners and Researchers: The Library as a Partner in Success](#)

Caroline Ball (2024), [Neurodiversity in Libraries: Creating a supportive space for all. Information Professional, CILIP](#)

Maria King (2023), [What librarians are doing to tackle accessibility](#), Times Higher Education.

Joanne Fitzpatrick (2023), [Hiring Librarians Blog Post](#)

Joanne Fitzpatrick, Andy Walsh (2023), [NeuroSpicy Library Workers : A project and reflections upon being neurodiverse in the library workplace. Workshop at Academic Libraries North Conference](#)

4. Our Finances

Item	Amount
Balance on 1st July 2024	£0.00
Money in	£1015.89
Money out	£420.70
Balance on 30th June 2025	£595.19

5. Next year's plan

Next year we aim to build on all of the work completed above, to develop the network even more, driven by members of the wider network and what they would like us to put in place.

1. Annual Plans and Annual General Meetings

We will make it clear, both to network members and wider allies, what we are doing for neurodivergent library and information staff through annual reporting. This document is the first of our Annual Plans, which we will produce every year in July, and every September we will present this at an open Annual General Meeting. Each August, we will produce a new plan for the NLISN committee's work for the year ahead, which will also be presented at the meeting. The rest of these points encompass our starting point for this process which will continue next month.

2. Membership Options

The network have made it clear that they would like us to offer formal membership to NLISN. Currently there is no specific joining requirements - to join NLISN you simply engage with our activities in whichever way you'd like. The top question we are always asked is how do we join, and so we will be offering a range of membership options next year. These will range from free for NLISN network members, to paid options, including for allies and sponsors, and we will make clear what the benefits of joining are, e.g. being auto-enrolled to the mailing list or being first to hear about new events.

3. Buddying Evaluation

We will undertake a project to evaluate how the pilot of our buddying scheme went, with a view to relaunching a new and improved version in the future.

4. Statistics Research

Inspired by our Australian friends at [ANDPA.org](https://www.andpa.org/) and [CAUL](https://www.caul.edu.au/), we would like to produce a survey that aims to provide statistics on neurodivergent representation in the library and information profession in the UK and Ireland.

5. Case Studies

In addition to this quantitative research, we would like to also produce qualitative research and case studies, sourced from the statistics research, events, our buddying evaluation and our mailing list. We would like to showcase specific examples of the impact NLISN has had on individuals so far.

6. More Events

We will continue to offer a programme of in person and online events, building on the success we've had already, and consider new formats, such as larger conference style events.

7. Forum Development

We will develop our discussion forum, which has currently faded out of use, likely creating and promoting a Discord server. This is valuable to our network members who would like to discuss ongoing issues anonymously, and those who dislike numerous emails from the JISCMail list.

8. Maintain Online Work

We will maintain our strong online presence, developing it where appropriate, in particular considering alternative formats for the growing resources list.

6. Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to read the contents of NLISN's first Annual Report. We dedicate this and all of our work to our neurokin, who are well represented and thrive in this sector.

As a committee and a network we are incredibly pleased to see NLISN's success, especially the award in memory of a fellow neurodivergent library professional. We are also pleased to see NLISN build, from the initial idea, to the funded project that helped create it, to our first year in operation. NLISN has had strong engagement from the start, and we are happy to provide the peer support that is wanted, needed and clearly valued within the library and information sector. We hope we can build on this success to make NLISN even stronger, more relevant and more helpful to individuals within the network.

We want to take the time to thank all the committee members, both the current committee named below, and the past members, for all their hard work and contributions of their talents to making NLISN such a success. We also want to thank all the wider network members for your attendance, contributions and engagement, and hope that the network has helped you in some small way. We also acknowledge the support of our allies, through donations, awards, praise and the sharing of our work, which has been invaluable.

Thank you and let's see what we can achieve in another year.



NLISN Committee

Joanne Fitzpatrick, Andy Walsh, Amelia Haire, Laura Green, Maria King, Sue O'Sullivan,
Caroline Ball, Katrina Georgiades, Stacy Murtagh, Kelly Whittard, Marc Cohen, Victoria
Williams