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An exploratory study of inclusive practices within the Scottish police force

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It is not uncommon for an autistic person to come into contact with the criminal justice system (CJS), either as a victim (eg Lindblad & Lainpelto, 2011) or a suspect (Woodbury-Smith & Dein, 2014). Therefore it is necessary that the Police have relevant training, knowledge and awareness of autism and the associated behaviours to allow for inclusive practices and work under an appropriate neurodivergent framework.

An online survey developed by Crane et al. (2016) was used to investigate the experience and views of 119 police officers from Police Scotland of autism. 44% found that meeting the communication needs of autistic individuals very difficult when conducting an interview, with little knowledge of aspects such as sensory difficulties. Overall, only 35 % of officers were satisfied with how they had worked with autistic individuals. Officers cited lack of skills, training, which is often only given to those who are high ranking, and awareness as barriers to inclusive practice, along with inappropriate facilities and time constraints.

The study highlighted a need for appropriate training to be given to all police officers regardless of rank in order for the development of police strategies for effective engagement and inclusion of autistic individuals with the CJS.