

How to support neurodiverse learners.

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Agenda

- Introductions
- Project overview
- Workshop activities
 - Discussion



Introductions



Abstract

- This workshop practicalises the findings of a study that explores the learning experiences of neurodiverse (ND) learners at university. The notion of neurodiversity is increasingly better understood; however, it is also a term that covers a wide range of experiences. Neurodiversity is an umbrella term for learning needs, mental health needs, health needs and many more.
- By understanding their experiences, we hope to share effective practice and suggested strategies to inform teaching and learning to enhance the students' experience while studying at university.
- Working with one of our final year students, we designed a research project that aimed to find the views and recommendations of a range of learners at university from first years through to students completing their doctorates.
- Our aims were to understand the preferences, strategies and methods that neurodiverse learners find as helpful to develop their learning journey, which we will share during this session.

Aims

To explore the experiences of neurodiverse learners

To understand the preferences, strategies and methods that neurodiverse learners suggest as helpful for their learning journey.

To produce a set of recommendations for staff to support neurodiverse learners on their programmes.



'Neurodiversity may be different in relation to social preference, ways of learning, ways of communicating and perceiving the environment.'

Method

01

Method: Online JISC Survey

02

Sample: The sample populations used in this study are defined as 'purposeful sampling' as defined in Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), the sample was drawn from the student body at UON- all phases, all subjects.

03

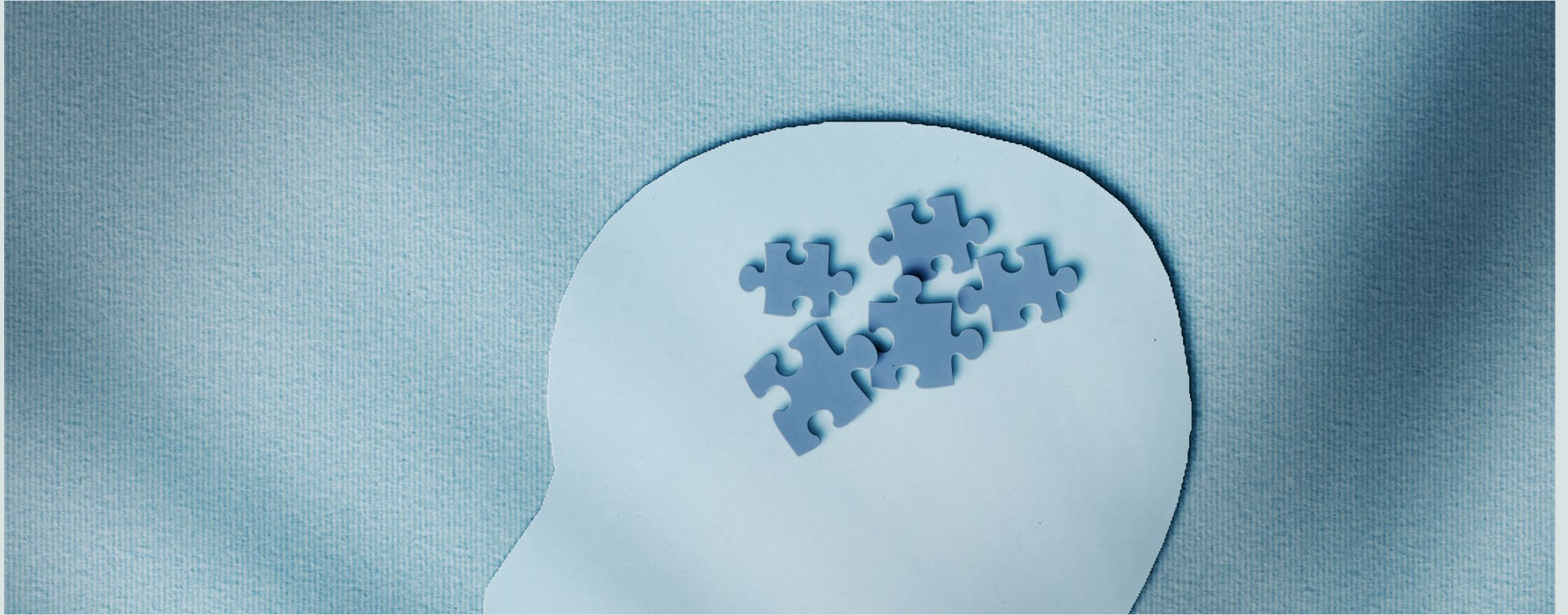
Inclusion Criteria: Current students studying between Levels 3 and 8 at the University of Northampton that consider themselves to fall into the range of categories for neurodiversity.

The final sample included 25 students from Levels 4-8. 20 identified as female, 4 males and 1 none binary. Their age range was between 19 and 70.

04

They described their neurodiversity as having a range of conditions including Dyslexia, ADHD, Autism and having a 'super skill' or 'a brain that works

What do our students tell us?



Aim 1: Explore the experiences of neurodiverse learners

We asked our participants about their experiences at UON.

This is what they told us...

'I find breakout groups and discussions with strangers very difficult.'

'Would be nice to have some more support as a level 8 learner.'

'Asking us what we want, how best we learn would be appreciated.'

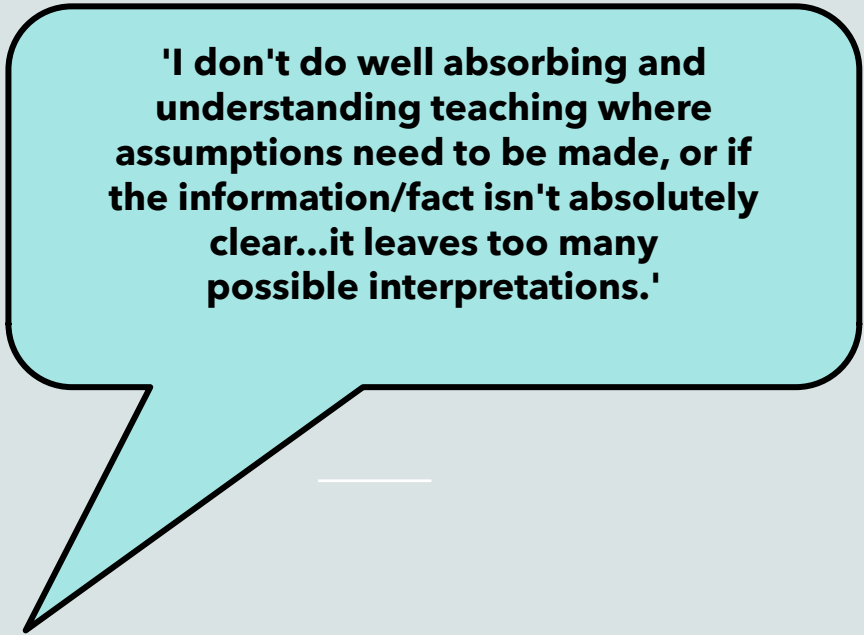
'There is still a lot of stigma about this that we are "lazy.'"

'Not making assumptions about what I know.'

'I think lecturers are very supportive and there is support available to help with your work and studies.'

'I have no friends. I find campus a very lonely place. I find the spaces very overwhelming and loud with nowhere else I know of that I can go and sit.'

'Table/chair placements mean I've either got my back/side to fellow students or the lecturers, although I understand round tables make it easier for group work/collaboration.'



'I don't do well absorbing and understanding teaching where assumptions need to be made, or if the information/fact isn't absolutely clear...it leaves too many possible interpretations.'



Over to you....

Card sort activity

Aim 2: To understand the preferences, strategies and methods that neurodiverse learners suggest as helpful for their learning journey.

Physical things that help me to learn.

- Visual cues and diagrams
- Quiet with frequent breaks
- Practical activities
- Demonstrations and being guided
- Face to face interactions

Physical things that stop me from learning.

- Noise and loud open spaces
- Big groups
- Overstimulation (multiple tasks or messy slides)
- Fatigue
- My phone

Emotional things that help me to learn.

- Reassurance and support (from peers and lecturers)
- Being able to ask questions
- Interesting content
- Staff having time for me

Emotional things that stop me from learning.

- Big groups
- None direct instructions with abstract interpretations
- Expectations of socialisation
- Feeling stressed and anxious.

'Asking us what we want and how best we learn would be appreciated.'

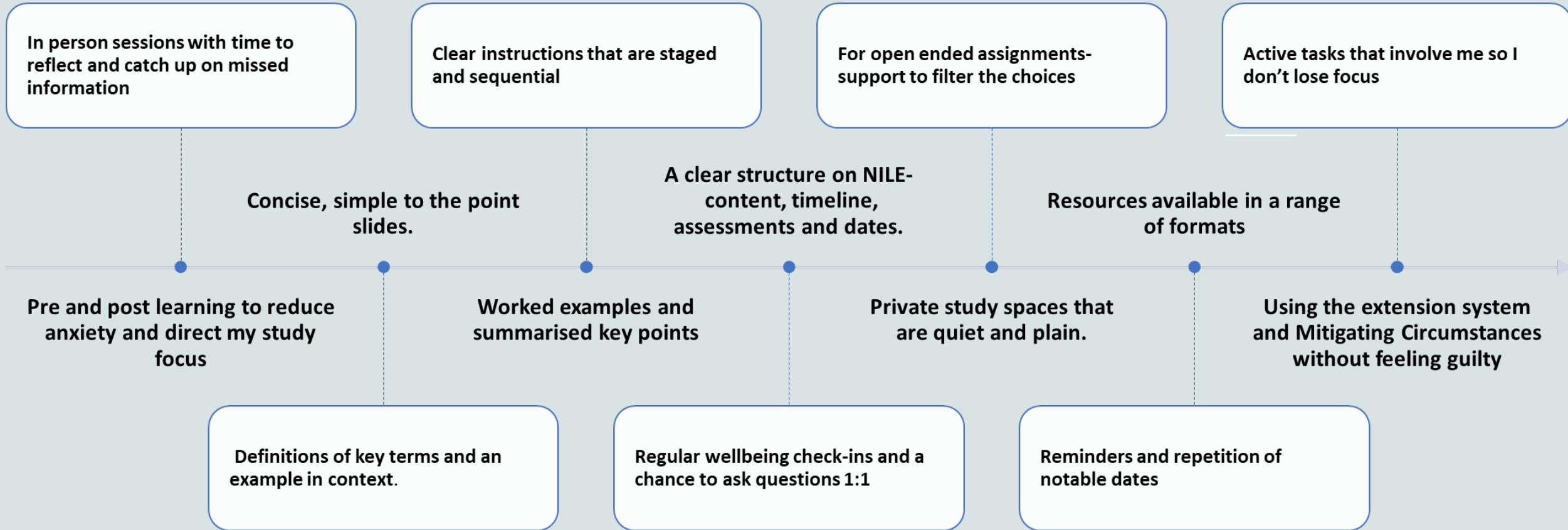


How else could you
analyse this
information?

- What other categories/sub-sets could we use?
- Over to you...

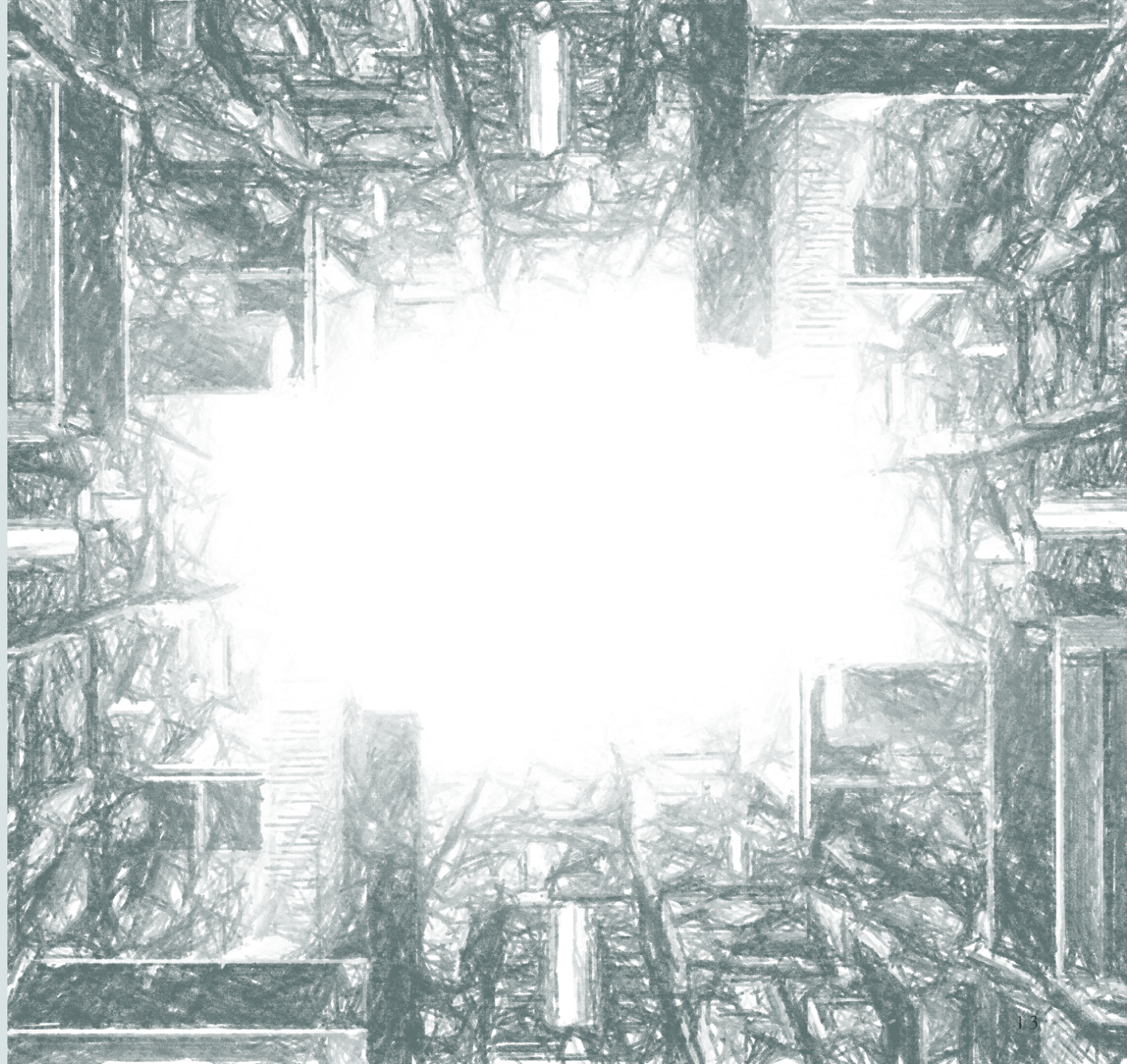


Aim 3: To produce a set of recommendations for staff



What could you do in your own practice?

- Keep doing...
- Start doing....
- Learn more about...



Thank you

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