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Tîm Awtistiaeth Cenedlaethol
National Autism Team

AutismWales.org

National Autism Team Virtual Employment Event Survey:

Results Report

National Autism Team, July 2021

Contents:

Background and Context:

The National Autism Team are holding a virtual employment event for autistic people on 3rd December 2021. To ensure that the event is of benefit to autistic people, the National Autism Team ran a survey for autistic people and their parent/carers from 21st June to 23rd July. The survey was co-produced with Autistic UK who provided sensitivity checks and invaluable input into how to make the survey most effective and accessible for autistic people. The survey was also co-produced with Learning Disability Wales and EasyRead Wales, who translated the survey into EasyRead, to ensure that the needs of autistic people with co-occurring learning disabilities were met and that their voices were heard.

The survey asks respondents to share which topics would be most useful to them and how they best learn, to ensure that the event is shaped by the needs and views of autistic people. The responses will be used to define the parameters of the event and to determine what topics the event's sessions should focus on and how those sessions should be delivered.

Executive Summary:

- In **total** there were **46 responses** across the virtual employment event survey (45) and the virtual EasyRead employment event survey (1).

- The report captures the results across both versions of the survey.

- The survey consisted of 8 questions. Questions 7 and 8 related to establishing whether or not respondents were interested in staying up to date with the event so are not covered in depth by this report.

- Most respondents are in full-time employment, part-time employment or seeking employment.

- Respondents have a diverse range of work experiences and range from entering year 11 to retirement.

- The overall top 5 topics respondents feel would be most beneficial to learn more about are:
    o Communicating your needs to your employers (37).
    o Dealing with stressful situations in the workplace (32).
    o Information on self-care: managing your own health and wellbeing (24)
    o Disclosure and reasonable adjustments (23).
    o Finding a suitable job that's right for me (23).

- Most respondents learn most effectively from written materials and resources (30) and practical workshops (30).

- Most respondents need extra support/accommodations made with relation to:
    o Help to focus during the event.
    o Written information/slides before the event.
    o A clear timetable outlining the timings of the event.
    o Clear rules surrounding communication (including making attendees aware that non-verbal communication and/or no communication is okay).
    o Clear guidance about how to use the online platform.

- When asked which 'interactive' activity they felt most comfortable participating in, the majority of participants chose 'taking part in quizzes and polls' (39).

- 32 respondents provided their email address to stay up to date with the event and 5 provided a postal address (all 5 also provided email addresses).
- 14 participants expressed interest in being part of a separate advisory group to co-produce the event with the National Autism Team and the event planning group.

Question 1: What is your current work situation?

Description:

What is your current work situation?
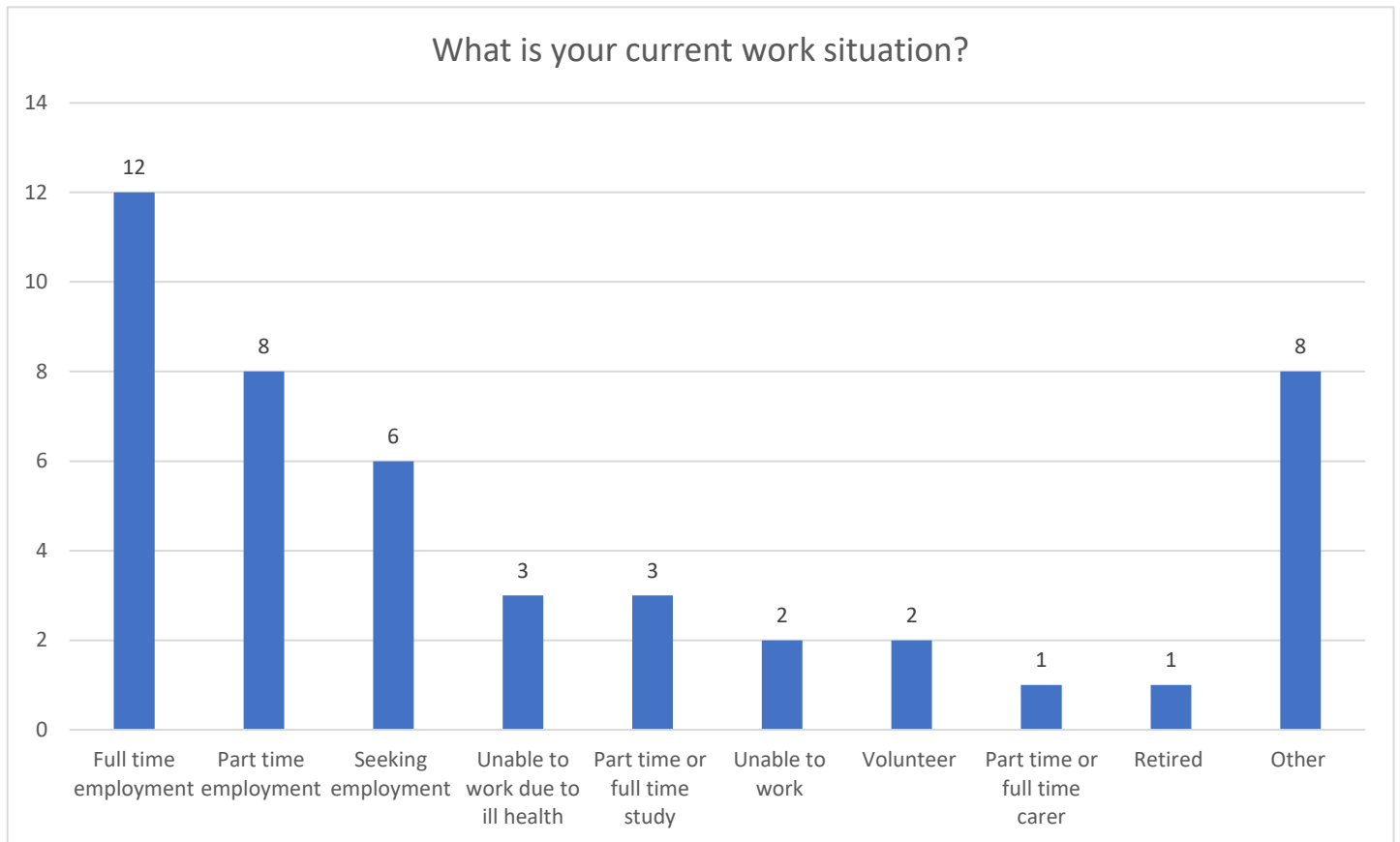
Most respondents (about 44%) are in full time or part time employment. All work situations offered as options in the survey were selected by at least 1 participant. This demonstrates the diverse range of work experiences among autistic people.

8 respondents did not feel that the options captured their work situation and offered 'other' responses:

1. "Want to get back into employment but not sure if I'm ready to."
2. "Looking for part time work 2 days a week alongside college."
3. Answering for my autistic son. He has acted for the BBC but due to Covid very little happening and needs advice to find work ALONGSIDE future possible acting roles."

4. "Full time carer and part time employment."
5. "Stay at home dad."
6. "Going into year 11 in September."
7. "Full time student with part time jobs."
8. "Long term unemployed, frustrated by this, but fear of the work environment"

These responses suggest that there are three further respondents who are in part or full time education and seeking part time work; one respondent who is seeking part time work alongside another career; one further respondent working part time who is also a carer; one who is a stay at home parent and two who are looking to get back into work but are unsure if they are ready to.

Analysis:

The employment event needs to take into consideration the different needs of autistic people in terms of fitting the event and any co-production meetings around other commitments (such as work commitments, care commitments, study commitments etc.)

It also needs to take into account that the respondents are at different stages in terms of their work experience, and this needs to be reflected in the workshops provided or the way that the workshops are run. Workshop facilitators need to be remain mindful of this.

Question 2: Which of these topics do you feel would be beneficial for you to learn more information about? (Choose your top 5 topics)

Description:

Which of these topics do you feel would be beneficial for you to learn more information about? (Choose your top 5 topics)
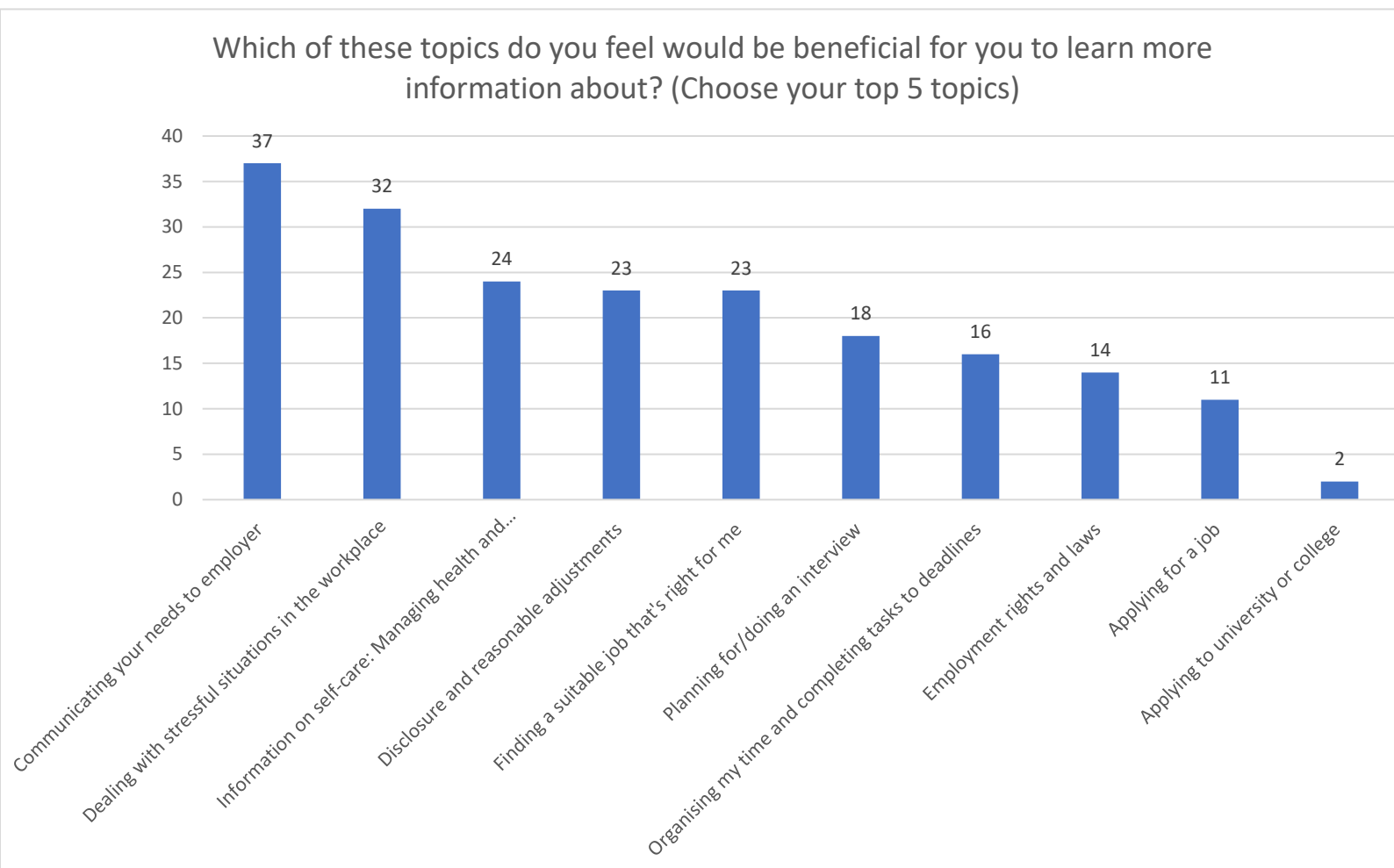
Participants were asked to choose their top five topics that they would like to learn more information about. The overall top five topics selected by respondents were:

1. 'communicating your needs to an employer' (37)
2. 'dealing with stressful situations in the workplace' (32)
3. 'information on self care: managing your own health and wellbeing' (24)

4. 'disclosure and reasonable adjustments' (23)
5. 'finding a suitable job that's right for me' (23)

Roughly 80% of respondents (37 out of 46) felt that communicating their needs to an employer was a topic that it would be beneficial to learn more information about. This was closely followed by dealing with stressful situations in the workplace, with roughly 70% of respondents (32 out of 36) feeling that this would be a beneficial topic to learn more information about.

Skills-based topics such as planning for/doing an interview and applying for a job featured lower on the list of topics that would be beneficial. However, with the exception of applying to university or college, all options received more than 10 responses.

6 respondents felt that the options provided by the survey did not reflect all the topics they felt would be beneficial, so provided 'other' response:

1. Support to manage in a work environment
2. Not backing out of social interactions job related
3. Losing benefits then failing to maintain employment
4. Workplace bullying (colleagues and management)
5. How to find employers who will respect my skills, pay fairly and allow working from home.
6. Allergy awareness in the workplace

These responses suggest that dealing with the experience of work, maintaining employment and communicating your needs to an employer (allergy awareness and childcare) are important issues for the survey respondents.
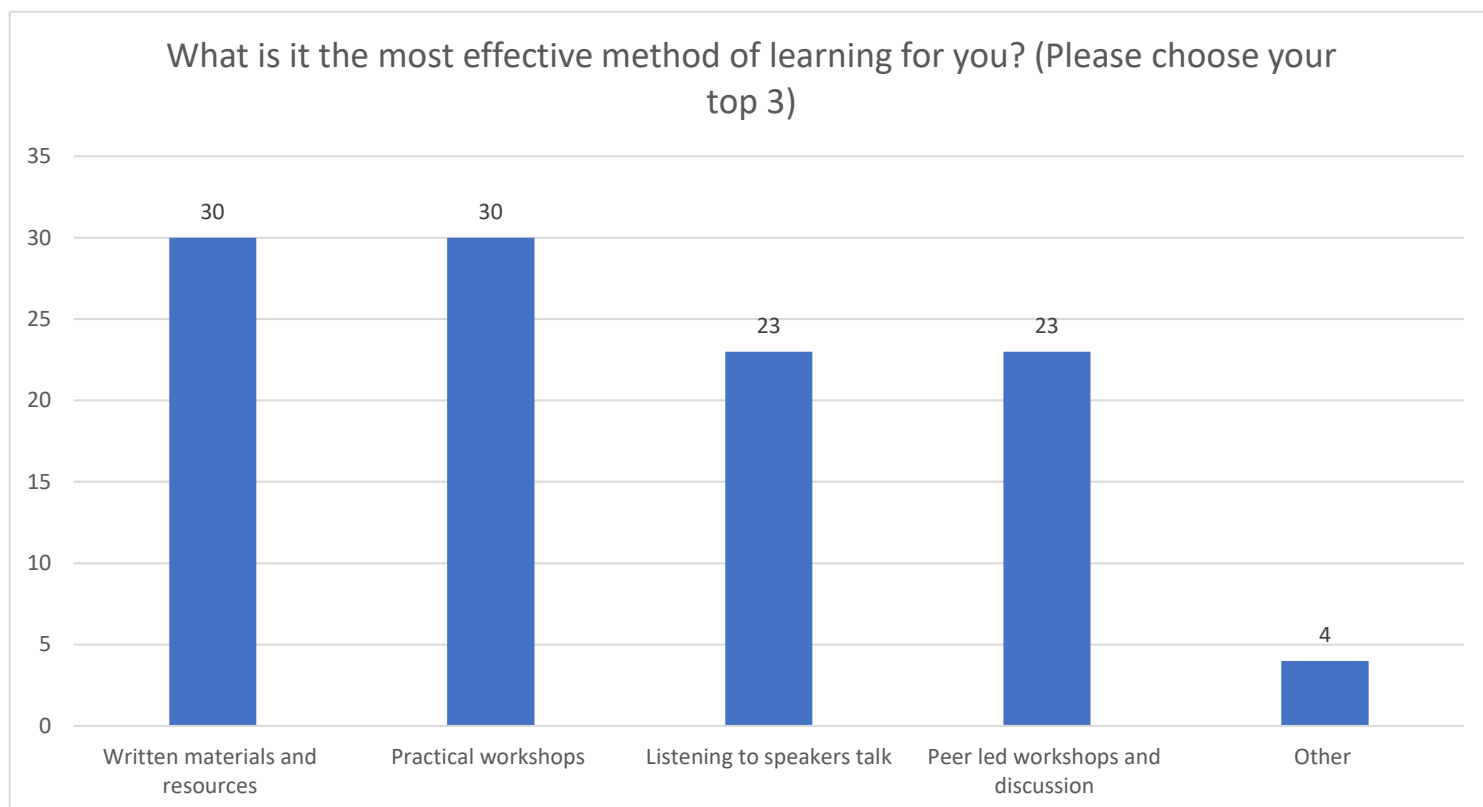
Analysis:

A person's work experience or personal situation will determine what support they feel would be beneficial, and the results of this question reflect the varied experiences of the respondents. However, extra information and support surrounding the experience of being in the workplace (including communicating your needs to an employer, managing your own wellbeing and dealing with stressful situations) is

considered to be beneficial by the majority of participants. Finding a suitable job that is right for the individual is also an important theme. It is important that support surrounding these topics is provided by the employment event.

As there is still a significant number of respondents who feel the other topics would be beneficial to learn about, it is important that the employment event also tries to incorporate workshops based around these themes and skills and/or provides other resources surrounding these themes/skills to accommodate people's varied needs (whether this be in the form of a resource pack or workshops).

Question 3: What is it the most effective method of learning for you? (Please choose your top 3)

Description:

What is it the most effective method of learning for you? (Please choose your top 3)

Method	Value
Written materials and resources	30
Practical workshops	30
Listening to speakers talk	23
Peer led workshops and discussion	23
Other	4

Participants were asked to choose their top three most effective methods of learning. Joint top responses were 'written materials and resources' and 'practical workshops' (which were each chosen by 65% of the respondents). These were closely followed by 'listening to speakers talk' and 'peer led workshops and discussion' (which were each chosen by 50% of respondents).

4 respondents felt that their most effective method of learning was not captured by the options provided and gave 'other' responses:

1. "Watching and learning"
2. "By doing it myself with guidance"

3. "Video/recorded tutorials"
4. "Self-led online courses to be followed at my own pace and without real-time interaction"

Interestingly, these all seem to reflect a visual approach to learning. They also raise the issue of considering that people may want to do practical activities outside of the employment event where they have the time to go through the activity at their own pace.

Analysis:

The responses to this question show that people learn in a variety of different ways and it would be good to be able to incorporate different methods of learning into the workshops so that they are accessible for all.

The responses also raise the importance of recording the sessions and providing attendees with the option of doing practical activities with guidance beyond the session. This is a further question that would need to be extended to autistic people through the advisory group or other co-productive means.

Question 4: Are there any reasonable adjustments that the team can put in place for you to attend our online event? Contact us if you have any concerns about attending online. (E.g., palantypist/ signer, ACC, sending any written information in particular formats, for example a particular font or coloured background) Please write below:

Description:

There were 11 responses to this question out of 46 total respondents. The responses focused around core themes:

1. Help with focusing during the event:
- "Support to focus"
- "Ensure no background noise"
- "I would need support to focus on the online event."
- "Clear, large font is preferable please"

2. Written information/slides before the event:
- "Written resources provided to help keep track of talks. I struggle with hearing in busy environments especially if I can't see the person's lips to support."
- "Written information/slides beforehand. I will most likely not manage to contact you but ability to attend online will depend entirely on how I'm coping on the day"

3. A clear timetable outlining the timings of the event:

- "Clear timetable before event - detailing what happens when and detailing when and how long breaks will be for - and then sticking to them."
- "To have an information pack of the event prior to it so that I know what to expect during its duration as well as timings of the event and names of who'd be undertaking the event so that once it starts, I know exactly who are the speakers/organisers of the event."

4. Clear rules surrounding communication (including making attendees aware that non-verbal communication and/or no communication is okay):

- "For those who find these events difficult perhaps making it clear that passive participation is fine would be good i.e no need to speak, video can be off. A system similar to green/yellow/red badges would be good for online."
- "Allowing for non-verbal communication through typing/writing etc."
- "Clear rules about how to ensure I can communicate when needed without being drowned out by more strident participants."

5. Clear guidance about how to use the online platform:

- "Am not sure how online events work but I could ask my family who can use zoom and teams."

Analysis:

These responses demonstrate that it is important to put adjustments in place that help attendees to focus on the event, to understand the content of the event, to feel prepared for the event and to feel comfortable taking part in or attending the event. Any workshop

facilitators must be aware of these needs and adjust their delivery accordingly.

The Team must clearly communicate with attendees about the timings of the event, content of the workshops and rules surrounding communication prior to the event. The responses indicate that it would be helpful to create written resources focusing on these issues, as well as a clear participant guide to Zoom, that can be circulated before the event. These resources must be circulated with enough time for people to digest the information and ask follow-up questions.

Question 5: We would love to make this event as interactive as possible. Which interactive activities would you feel comfortable with? (Choose all that apply)

Description:
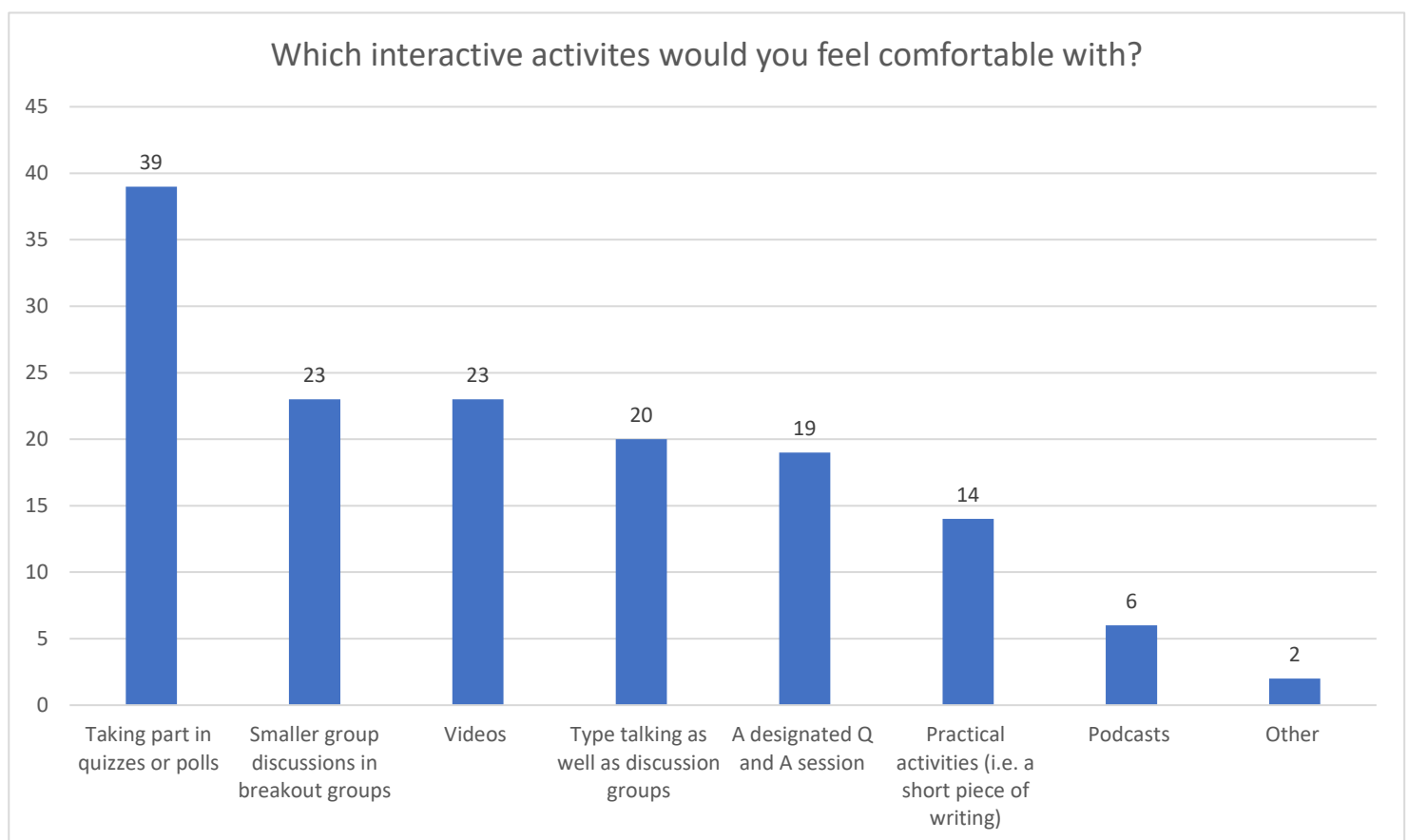
The majority of participants felt most comfortable taking part in quizzes or polls (roughly 85%). There was not a great deal of difference between 'smaller group discussions in breakout groups', 'videos', 'type talking as well as discussion groups' and the 'designated Q and A session'. A smaller number of respondents felt comfortable taking part in practical activities or listening to podcasts.

2 respondents did not feel that the interactive activities they would feel comfortable with were captured in the options and provided 'other' responses.

The first response focused around setting up a social media or community group for attendees of the event to connect with one another: "It would be good in the future to have a Facebook Group supporting Autistic people through employment as this is something Autistic people look for."

The second response raised the issue that not all participants will feel comfortable with certain levels of 'interactivity' or that the word 'interactive' may have different meanings to different people: "I'm not really sure about "Interactive"?!

Analysis:

The responses to this question demonstrate that the majority of the respondents would feel comfortable taking part in quizzes or polls. Whilst a lot of participants would feel comfortable taking part in smaller group discussions, it's also important to remain mindful that others may not feel as comfortable with verbal participation or 'interactive' activities that require verbal participation.

Going forward, it's important to make sure that each workshop provides the *option* to passively participate, to participate in non-verbal ways or to observe rather than participate. It is important that the workshops respect each person's boundaries and allow people to participate as much or as little as they would like to and that the workshop leaders facilitate discussions in a variety of ways.