

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Annual Report 2024-25

NHS

North West
Ambulance Service
NHS Trust



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A NOTE ON THE PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), established under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, requires public bodies, including NHS organisations, to consider how their policies, services, and decision-making processes impact people who are disadvantaged or face inequality. It encourages active engagement with diverse communities to ensure services are accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all individuals.

The general duty obliges us to have due regard to three key aims:

- **eliminate unlawful discrimination**
- **advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't**
- **foster or encourage good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't**

In addition to the general duty, the PSED sets out specific duties that require public bodies to publish equality information annually and to set and publish equality objectives at least every four years.

This annual report serves as evidence of our compliance with the PSED for the reporting period 2024–2025. It outlines the actions we have taken to meet our legal obligations and illustrates how equality, diversity, and inclusion are embedded in our work. Furthermore, it reflects progress against our current three-year EDI objectives — referred to as our Priorities.

FOREWORD BY LISA WARD KAM, DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE

Thank you for taking the time to read our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Annual Report for 2024–25. Building an inclusive culture is a collective responsibility, and I am sincerely grateful to all colleagues, partners, and stakeholders who continue to champion this essential work across North West Ambulance Service (NWAS).

Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion remains central to who we are and how we serve. Over the past year, we have made significant progress embedding inclusive practices throughout our organisation – not only to fulfil our Public Sector Equality Duty, but to create a workplace where every colleague feels respected, heard and valued.

This year brought a particularly proud milestone for us with the appointment of Salman Desai KAM as our new Chief Executive Officer – the first leader from an ethnic minority background to head an ambulance service in the UK. His appointment brings renewed perspective, experience and energy to our collective mission of delivering inclusive, compassionate care while advancing equality across every area of the Trust.

I am also proud that our progress has been recognised externally. We maintained our status as a Disability Confident Leader (Level 3) and were again named a Gold Standard organisation by the Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion (enei), ranking third globally in the TiDE (Talent Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation) accreditation. We also retained our Veteran Aware status, underlining our ongoing support for the Armed Forces community.

However, 2024–25 also brought significant challenges. The riots and civil disorder that unfolded across the UK during the summer left many in our workforce and the communities we serve feeling anxious and unsafe. These events starkly reminded us of the ongoing presence of hate, prejudice, and inequality in our society. In response, we reaffirmed our values through the launch of two cornerstone declarations: a new EDI Statement to replace our former policy, and our first-ever Anti-Racism Statement. These declarations clearly signal our ambition to be a truly inclusive and anti-racist organisation.

Our five Staff Networks – Armed Forces, Disability, LGBT+, Race Equality and Women’s – continue to play a vital role in shaping our inclusion agenda. Each supported by an Executive Sponsor and dedicated budget, they have led impactful initiatives throughout the year – from Armed Forces Week celebrations and awareness campaigns on reasonable adjustments, to powerful storytelling during LGBT+ History Month. Their work remains instrumental in creating a more open, respectful and supportive workplace.

As I reflect on this past year, I do so with pride and optimism – while recognising that our journey is far from complete. We will not be complacent, and will continue to address inequalities in the workforce and for our patients, to help everyone be at their best.



NORTH WEST AMBULANCE SERVICE NHS TRUST

North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust (NWAS) covers a vast area of around 5,400 square miles, serving over seven million people in Cumbria, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Cheshire, and Glossop. With a team of approximately 7700 employees in diverse roles, supported by 1000 volunteers, NWAS provides 999, NHS 111, and patient transport services.

Our vision is to deliver the **right care, at the right time, in the right place, every time**. Our Strategy 2022-2025, and our supporting strategies set out how we will deliver our vision and our EDI priorities through the delivery of our three aims:

- **Provide high-quality, inclusive care**
- **Be a brilliant place to work for all**
- **Work together to shape a better future**

Approach in 2025/26

Our Strategy 2022-2025 has been extended for a further year to cover 2025/26.

During the next year we will redevelop the Trust strategy and supporting strategies. The new strategies will be co-produced through engagement with staff and patient groups. The project will also set up an equality reference group to take an active role in strategy development and to undertake the equality impact assessment. This will ensure that our EDI priorities and considerations are woven through the new and refreshed strategies.

Our values



**WORKING
TOGETHER.**



**BEING AT
OUR BEST.**



**MAKING A
DIFFERENCE.**



OUR WORKFORCE

This section of the report presents an overview of our workforce demographics, based on data extracted from the NHS Electronic Staff Record system as of 31 March 2025.

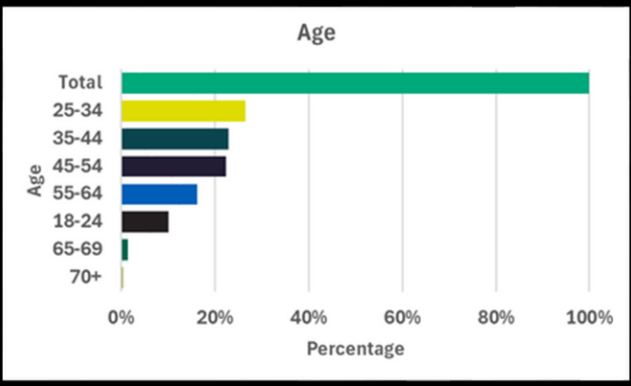


Headcount

Our total workforce headcount increased to 7775, from 7415 in March 2024.

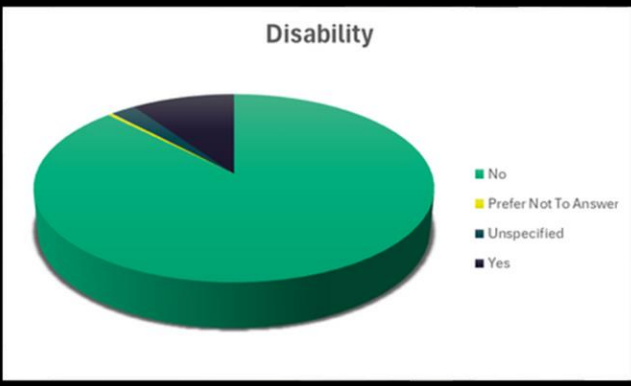
Age

The majority of staff are aged between 25 and 54, accounting for 72% of the workforce. Younger staff aged 18–24 made up 10%, while those aged 55–64 comprised 16%. Representation from individuals aged 65 and over remains low, at just 1.5%.



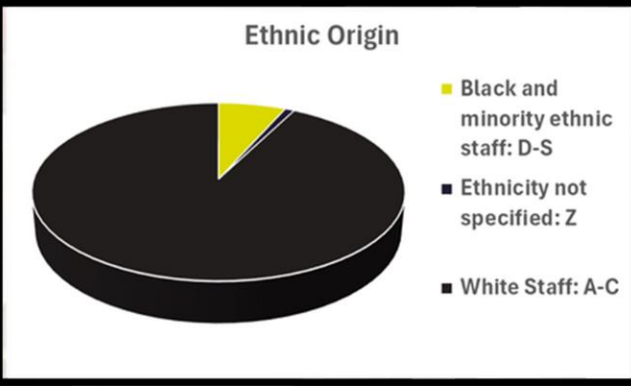
Disability

85% of staff declared they do not have a disability, while 9% identify as having a disability, increasing from 7.8% in 2024. The proportion of staff who have not declared their disability status has halved to 3%.



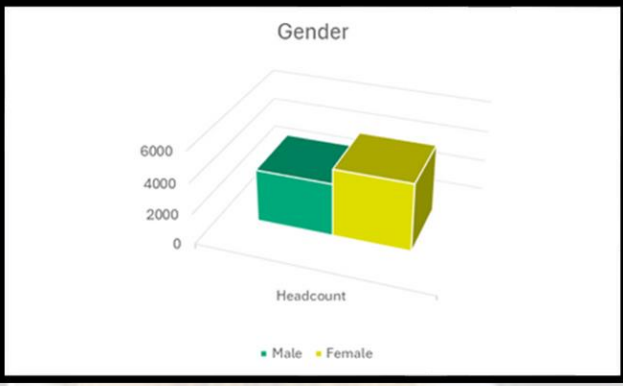
Ethnicity

92% of staff identify as White, 7% as Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) which is an increase of 1% from 2024. Declaration for ethnicity is 99%, which means that only 1% have not specified their ethnic origin.



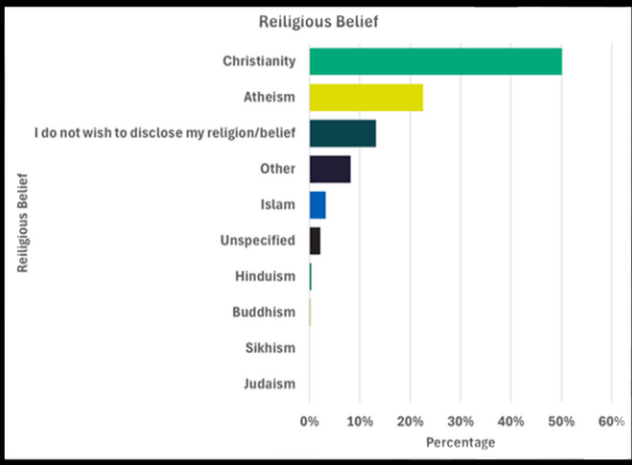
Gender

The proportion of women in the NWS workforce has increased to 56%, up from 55% in 2024. Representation of female staff in all operational areas has also increased this year.



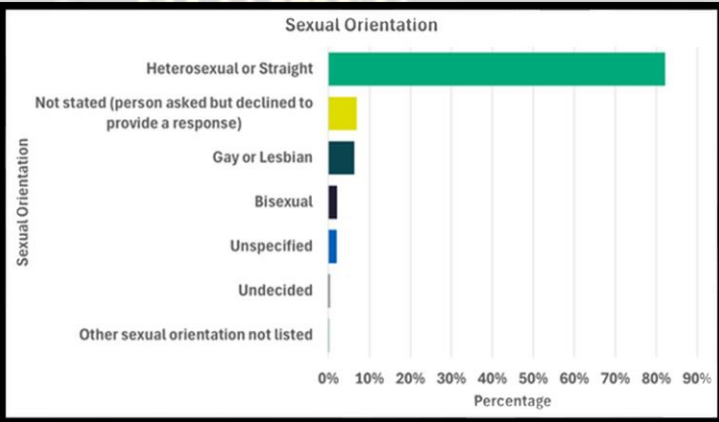
Religion and belief

Just over half of staff identify as Christian, while 23% state they have no religious belief with around 13% choosing not to disclose their religion. Smaller proportions identify as Muslim (3%), Hindu (0.3%), Buddhist (0.2%), Sikh (0.1%), or Jewish (0.1%).



Sexual orientation

The proportion of staff identifying as gay or lesbian has remained consistent with the 2024 figure at 6%. Staff identifying as bisexual represent 2%, also in line with the previous year. Approximately 7% of staff have not disclosed their sexual orientation, reflecting a decrease from 10% in 2024.



We regularly review and monitor our staff profile as we continue to make efforts to develop a workforce representative of the communities we serve.

HOW WE MADE AN IMPACT IN 2024/25

Throughout the year, we have remained committed to embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion at the core of our work at NWAS.

This section outlines key areas where we have made progress and achieved positive outcomes, with notable examples highlighted here.

Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)

A year after the EIA process was refreshed with the introduction of Stage 1 and Stage 2 pro-formas, the updated approach has significantly strengthened the Trust's ability to consider equality issues in its decision-making. Whether shaping policies, procedures, strategies, projects, or programmes, the revised EIA framework ensures that equality considerations are meaningfully integrated at every stage.

Over the past year, more than 60 EIAs have been undertaken across a wide range of initiatives, with the assessments playing a critical role in supporting inclusive and equitable outcomes in areas such as:

- Armed Forces, Reserve & Cadet Forces Policy
- Bank Worker Procedure
- Career Break Procedure
- Digital Governance
- Dress Code Policy
- Maternity & Neonatal Care Policy
- Maternity Procedure
- New Parent Support Leave Procedure
- Secondary Employment and Volunteering Policy
- Strategic Mental Health Plan

Commitment to EDI and developing an anti-racist organisation

We introduced a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement as well as an Anti-racism Statement. The EDI Statement was developed to replace the EDI Policy, as the latter reached its term limit in summer 2024. The Anti-racism Statement was produced to set out in clear terms the trust's commitment to becoming an 'anti-racist organisation'.



Free sanitary products launch

The Women's Network, working in partnership with the Staff Experience Team, NWAS Charity, Facilities Management, and Infection Prevention Control team successfully scaled up the availability of free sanitary products trust-wide, to fight against 'period poverty'. The initiative was initially piloted at 40 sites, with funding secured for coverage across the whole trust, with products being available at over 120 sites now.



Training for managers on reasonable adjustments

This year, over 80 managers from across the Trust took part in dedicated online training sessions designed to enhance understanding around effectively supporting staff requiring reasonable adjustments, due to disability or health condition. This bite-sized training was introduced following the launch of the new Procedure for Requesting and Managing Reasonable Adjustments in early 2024.

The training has been exceptionally well received — with all participants rating it as good or excellent — and is already making a meaningful impact. This progress is reflected in the 2024 NHS Staff Survey, where 71% of NWAS respondents who identified as disabled or having a long-term condition reported that the Trust had made reasonable adjustments for them, up from 65% the previous year. This marks our highest-ever response to this question and highlights the positive effect of both the policy and the accompanying training.

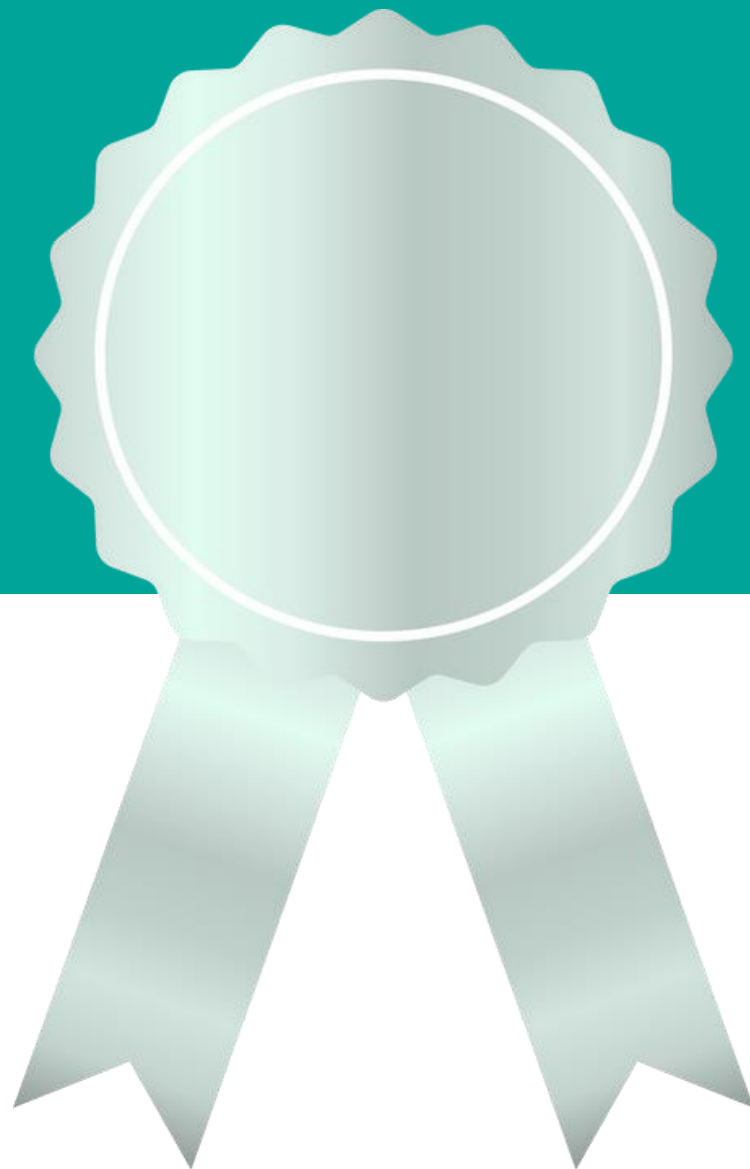
ParaMedic Residential



In August 2024, we co-delivered an interactive and engaging ParaMedic Residential Programme in partnership with the College of Paramedics and Edge Hill University. Over 40 young people from diverse backgrounds from across the country participated in the three-day residential, gaining firsthand insight into careers within the ambulance service. The programme included practical exercises supported by Paramedic Practice students at Edge Hill, visits to NWAS contact centres, and an immersive session with our Special Operations team.

Originally developed by the College of Paramedics, this marked the second year of the initiative and the first time NWAS hosted the residential. Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing a strong interest in pursuing a career in the ambulance service. Building on this success, we plan to deliver the programme in-house in the future, expanding its reach by hosting local versions across key areas within our region.

HOW WE MADE AN IMPACT IN 2024/25



Armed Forces 'Lest we forget' wrapped ambulances

To commemorate the service and sacrifice of Armed Forces personnel, we launched three permanently wrapped ambulances with the phrase 'Lest we forget' and Remembrance Day imagery. These special ambulances are based in Preston, Rochdale, and Fazakerley, and respond to patient calls on daily basis.

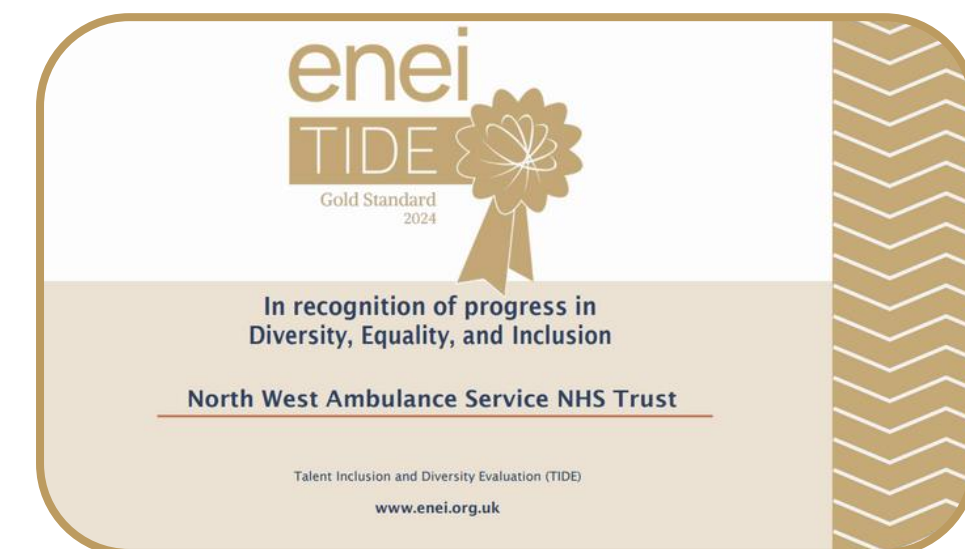


Talent Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation (TiDE) Gold Award

For the third year in a row, we are proud to have been awarded the Gold Standard in the Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion's (enei) Talent Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation (TiDE) accreditation. Out of 185 global submissions spanning 26 sectors, we were one of just 25 organisations to receive this prestigious recognition – and with an outstanding overall score of 94%, we ranked third highest amongst all entrants.

Re-accreditation of Disability Confident Leader Level 3 status

We were pleased to be re-accredited as a Disability Confident Leader (Level 3) by the Department for Work and Pensions for another three years, having initially achieved this status in 2022. This demonstrates our commitment to an inclusive work environment for disabled colleagues.



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION PRIORITIES

How we delivered on our EDI Priorities in 2024/25

In 2024/25, we refreshed our EDI Priorities which were agreed by the Board in July, and are now in place until March 2027. Our priorities reflect our commitments to creating a more equitable working environment for colleagues and delivering patient services more inclusively.

Priority 1: We will embed fair and inclusive recruitment and progression processes to improve the diversity of the workforce at all levels.

Priority 2: We will educate and empower our workforce and leaders to promote a positive psychologically safe culture, to support a reduction in the experience of bullying, harassment, discrimination and an improvement in retention.

Priority 3: We will reduce health inequalities for our patients.

Progress against each of the EDI Priorities continues to be monitored through the Diversity & Inclusion Group led by the Deputy Chief Executive, with oversight by the Trust Management Committee and Board.



PRIORITY 1: WE WILL EMBED FAIR AND INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT AND PROGRESSION PROCESSES TO IMPROVE THE DIVERSITY OF THE WORKFORCE AT ALL LEVELS

Priority 1 is centred on taking the necessary steps to ensure that our recruitment and progression processes are inclusive, consistently applied, and free from bias by all individuals involved in recruitment across the Trust. This section of the report provides an overview of the activities undertaken this year aligned to this Priority.

1.1 EDI monitoring of 2024/25 recruitment data

This year, the Trust received more than 17500 applications for roles advertised across the organisation, with around 5500 being shortlisted for assessment/interview, and just over 620 candidates were appointed.

Gender: Female applicants represented the majority at each stage of the recruitment process, making up 52% of applicants, 58% of those shortlisted, and 59% of new starters. Male representation decreased across the stages, from 47% of applicants to 41% shortlisted, and 40% of new starters. The proportion of candidates who did not disclose their gender remained consistent at 1% throughout all stages.

Ethnicity: White applicants represented 52% of all applicants, increasing to 70% at the shortlisting stage and 84% of those appointed. In comparison, BME applicants made up 46% of applicants but were underrepresented in later stages, accounting for 27% of shortlisted candidates and just 10% of new starters. The proportion of individuals who chose not to disclose their ethnicity remained low, rising slightly from 2% at application to 6% at the point of appointment.

Disability: A majority of applicants (87%) declared no disability, with representation declining slightly to 83% at the shortlisting stage and 81% among new starters. 10% of applicants identified as disabled, increasing to 13% at shortlisting and 11% at appointment. The proportion of individuals who did not disclose their disability status rose incrementally, from 2% at the application stage to 4% at shortlisting and 8% at appointment.

1.2 Recruitment processes

Recruitment in NWS is facilitated by the HR Hub, working closely with managers to ensure that EDI is woven into the recruitment and selection processes for all posts within the Trust.

Building on the findings from the 2023 Recruitment Audit conducted by the Employer's Network for Equality and Inclusion (enei), this year we continued to make meaningful progress in refining our recruitment practices. Some of these improvements include reviewing and updating our Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure, and evaluating our approaches for large-scale campaigns to ensure that applicant-facing information is both inclusive and accessible.

The Job Description template for Trust roles was revised to support the use of concise, accessible language, with an emphasis on listing only the essential criteria for each role. In addition, the Recruitment and Selection training course for managers was redeveloped to embed inclusive principles at every stage of the hiring process. Work also continued to improve the diversity of shortlisting and interview panels to support balanced and objective decision-making. For leadership roles, recruitment methods were enhanced to assess candidates' understanding and capability in relation to EDI.

Looking ahead: In 2025/26, we are planning to continue to further develop and evolve our recruitment approaches. For example, we will be looking to implement specific recruitment targets for some of our operational service lines, helping to address underrepresentation of certain groups while also strengthening accountability around inclusive recruitment. Bite-sized training sessions for managers will also be launched, designed to improve interview skills, with a particular emphasis on assessing understanding around equality and inclusion.

The Inclusive Recruitment Working Group will be re-launched with membership from both operational and corporate teams, providing a collaborative forum to drive continued enhancements in recruitment and selection practices. Insights and themes emerging from exit interviews and new starter surveys will be analysed and used to inform ongoing improvements, helping to support a more inclusive experience for both current employees and prospective candidates.

1.3 Delivery of careers support initiatives

The Positive Action and Widening Access Teams, when working both collaboratively and independently, play a key role in promoting awareness of career opportunities at NWS across communities throughout the North West.

The Positive Action Team focuses primarily on addressing underrepresentation within the workforce, with current efforts concentrated on improving the representation of individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds. In contrast, the Widening Access Team support a broader range of disadvantaged groups and individuals, including long-term unemployed, social and economic deprivation, etc, where lack of employment can adversely affect health and wellbeing. The team deliver pre-employment programmes, support for young people and also support existing NWS staff to progress their careers.

The two teams often work in partnership to ensure the Trust is represented at key careers events and regularly collaborate to facilitate online engagement with members of the public interested in joining NWS. For example, the teams continued to jointly host virtual support sessions during recruitment campaigns — to assist applicants, and provide insights into specific roles, and offer guidance on producing effective applications. These sessions covered job overviews, day-to-day responsibilities, and practical application tips, while giving attendees the opportunity to ask questions in real time.

By working together, the teams delivered around 30 virtual information sessions via Microsoft Teams and the NWS Live Chat platform, engaging nearly 750 people across the year. These events were widely promoted through community organisations, public sector partners, and the Trust's own social media channels, helping to ensure an inclusive and far-reaching approach.

Priority 1

1.4 Positive Action in 2024/25

This year, the Positive Action programme was refocused to prioritise specific geographic areas identified in the 2021 Census as having higher concentrations of ethnic minority communities. Rather than maintaining a broad approach across the entire North West. Efforts were concentrated in targeted locations including Lancashire (particularly Preston, Blackburn, and Burnley), Greater Manchester, and Merseyside. This shift enabled a more effective allocation of limited resources, allowing for deeper, more meaningful engagement in areas where the potential for impact was greatest.

With the Trust’s commitment to supporting inclusive recruitment, the Positive Action Team was expanded this year with the introduction of Positive Action Engagement Officer positions. We successfully recruited an Officer in August 2024, with the role focusing on Lancashire and parts of Greater Manchester and building strong relationships with local organisations working with ethnic minority communities, promoting our careers through events and pop-ups, and offering initial advice and guidance on career opportunities. Recruitment for the second position to cover Merseyside will take place in 2025/26.

Support for prospective applicants: Over the course of the year, we provided information, advice, and guidance to over 200 individuals who contacted the Positive Action Team to learn more about careers within the ambulance service. Our support covered a range of topics, including role eligibility, the application process, and available career pathways across NWAS.

Through our events and engagement activities, approximately 200 individuals joined our mailing list to stay informed about job opportunities within the Trust. We shared regular updates on vacancies, signposted new job adverts, and offered guidance on how to access one-to-one support. The majority of interest focused on roles such as Ambulance Care Assistant, ICC Call Handler, and Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) apprenticeships.

A key feature of the Positive Action work has continued to be tailored one-to-one coaching which prospective applicants can access to develop their applications. If shortlisted, applicants are then offered support and guidance at the assessment and interview stages.

In 2024/25, 41 applicants from ethnic minority backgrounds received in-depth support for their applications (across all roles). At the time of reporting, 19 applicants had been appointed, while around 15 chose not to apply or were not successful, and a further six have readied their applications to submit in the 2025 EMT Apprenticeship recruitment campaign.

Community engagement: For our Positive Action (PA) work, we engaged with more than 30 new organisations in our target areas this year, taking our total number of PA organisational partners to around 350. Additionally, by collaborating with local organisations and groups, we delivered a presence at more than 80 careers focused events, reaching over 9000 people across a range of settings and formats.

We supported around 30 in-person events, including participation in career fairs and community-led events hosted by local organisations and faith-based groups. These opportunities were valuable in connecting directly with individuals from diverse backgrounds, and to promote the wide range of roles available within the organisation.

We held 15 bespoke careers sessions, both online and in-person in our focus areas, offering tailored insights into career pathways at NWAS. These sessions, which engaged over 300 people, were supported by Trust Ambassadors (Operational staff members) representing all patient-facing teams. Notable events included those hosted at Bangor Street Community Centre in Blackburn, the Kashmir Youth Project in Rochdale, Women with Wings in Salford, Blackburne House in Liverpool, and Refugee Women’s Connect in Toxteth, Liverpool.

To further enhance community outreach, the team piloted three "pop-up" stands at community hubs in Bolton and Preston. These informal, accessible engagement points were designed to bring NWAS careers information directly into the heart of local communities.

Tracking ethnic minority applicants: This year, we continued our tracking initiative which monitors the stages of the recruitment process where ethnic minority applicants are most likely to exit. Unsuccessful applicants are then contacted by the Positive Action Team with an offer to provide support should they want to reapply for the same or different role. Of the 41 applicants referenced above, around 50% came from the tracking pool.

For the EMT Apprenticeship recruitment campaign in July 2024, 28 eligible individuals identified through tracking were offered support. 11 individuals took up the offer, 4 of whom subsequently applied and were successfully shortlisted for interview, resulting in 3 role offers. For the ICC Call Handler positions in April and September 2024, just over 200 prospective applicants were offered support, with 7 applying, all progressing to interview, and 5 receiving offers. In the case of the Patient Transport Service Ambulance Care Assistant role in January 2025, 17 previously unsuccessful applicants were offered support, leading to 3 applications, 3 interviews, and 2 offers.

2025/26 plans: In the coming year we plan to significantly expand our engagement and outreach activity across all priority areas, deepening our connections with both communities, and key stakeholders. As part of this, we will deliver eight bespoke careers events, complemented by our participation in wider community events, careers fairs, and workshops.

To strengthen our community presence, we aim to host over 24 pop-up stands at local community hubs throughout the year, creating accessible opportunities for individuals to learn about careers within NWAS. We will also launch a Positive Action Careers Roadshow, taking our messaging directly into communities to raise awareness and provide practical guidance on recruitment. In addition, we will continue to offer bespoke online support sessions, tailored to specific roles and focused on helping candidates apply more effectively.

We will also continue to strengthen our Applicant Tracking Programme by embedding it across all recruitment campaigns where we anticipate a high volume of applications. Particularly for the ICC Call Handler role — where a significant number of applicants have historically been unsuccessful — we plan to introduce "Effective Applications" support sessions to improve applicant outcomes and reduce attrition in the early stages of the recruitment process.

“Just a message to say thank you for being part of my journey to a rewarding career. I very much look forward to starting my course. It's been a tough application, and I don't think I could have done it without your help and support.”

Leya, EMT Apprenticeship applicant

Priority 1

1.5 Widening Access in 2024/25

This year, the Widening Access Team continued to deliver a comprehensive programme of community outreach activities aimed at promoting careers within NWAS. In addition to managing the rollout of pre-employment programmes, the team facilitated engagement with young people and supported internal staff in their career progression within the organisation.

Externally, the Team worked extensively with regional partners to promote careers in the ambulance service and broaden access to NHS opportunities. This included collaboration with local DWP offices and housing associations, supporting job fairs, and offering tailored support to individuals referred through these

Strategic partnerships were also developed with key regional bodies such as the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Lancashire and South Cumbria Careers Team, and the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub, where NWAS is a registered Pledge Partner. These collaborations enabled wider promotion of vacancies and events, supported regional career initiatives, and aligned activity with shared goals around inclusive workforce development.

The team continued to liaise with other NHS organisations, sharing best practices and participating in joint events to support the workforce, and also engaged with organisations such as the King's Trust, Back on Track, and emergency services in Greater Manchester. This engagement focused on projects aimed at supporting disadvantaged adults and inspiring young people to explore future careers in health and social care.

Supporting applicants: More than 30 internal staff were supported by the Widening Access Team around career progression within the Trust. This included accessing information, advice and guidance around development opportunities, as well as application support, interview techniques and confidence boosting. We also supported nearly 90 external individuals with their recruitment journey for a position in the Trust.

Since May 2024, the Widening Access and Learning & Development Teams have jointly hosted workshops for internal staff wanting to apply for a new role in the Trust. These sessions, which were attended by nearly 500 staff members this year focused on understanding the application process, developing interview skills, and provided opportunities for participants to seek further guidance and support through interactive Q&A.

Careers engagement and outreach: The Widening Access Team attended over 100 career events, supported by NWAS Ambassadors, reaching around 40,000 individuals across the North West. We have continued to prioritise events where there is potentially a diverse group of attendees, or attendance from a group that is underrepresented in our workforce currently.

Pre-employment programmes: Pre-employment programmes provide the opportunity to make a real positive difference in someone's life and can act as a stepping stone, out of unemployment, by introducing them to entry level roles in NWAS, providing bespoke training/exposure to the real work environment with a work experience and support to work towards an application for the targeted role in the trust. The Widening Access Team work collaboratively with recruiting managers and the recruitment team to scope potential recruitment campaigns which could support pre-employment programmes.

This year, the focus of pre-employment programmes was on the Integrated Contact Centre Call Handler role, with around 50 people enrolling on to courses. Across the cohorts in 2024/25, 60% of participants were female and 35% of were from an ethnic minority background. Just over 10% identified as having a disability and the age profile was broadly distributed, with the largest group falling within the 21–30 (30%) age range. 22 participants successfully secured a role in the trust, with a further 11 people applying but unsuccessful at assessment or interview stages.

Feedback from participants

"I can't thank you enough for giving me this experience!! You have helped me so much and have now got me a job. "

"Thank you so much for the opportunity. I loved every minute of it and you have got me the job!!!"

Apprenticeships: The Widening Access Team have continued to play an important role in the provision of internal and external apprenticeships in the Trust. Internally, we deliver the Emergency Medical Technician Apprenticeship in-house in NWAS, which saw nearly 200 new starters join in 2024/25. Almost 70% of EMT apprentices joining this year were female and more than 50% were aged between 21 – 30.

The team also oversees the external apprenticeship provision which staff may access for their own development. Around 100 staff members completed their apprenticeship this year, with 60% of them being female and 5% identifying from an ethnic minority background.

Engagement with young people: At NWAS we provide structured placements for Healthcare Cadets across the North West, facilitated by the Widening Access Team. The Cadets, aged 16-20 remain on placement with the Trust from January- May, and the scheme provides a valuable experience of the ambulance service environment to help young people make informed career choices. Participants often progress on to studying or working in the health and care sector. In January 2025, we welcomed our latest cohort of cadets comprising of just under 50 young people from a range of colleges and areas. 90% of participants in this cohort are female with 15% from an ethnic minority background, and around 10% have identified as disabled.

This year, the team represented the Trust at the Liverpool City Region Creating Careers Live event—a week-long initiative aimed at inspiring future careers in health and care. Around 250 Year 10 students from across Liverpool participated, engaging with a wide range of health and care providers. The event provided a valuable platform to promote NHS careers and raise awareness of opportunities within the ambulance service among young people.

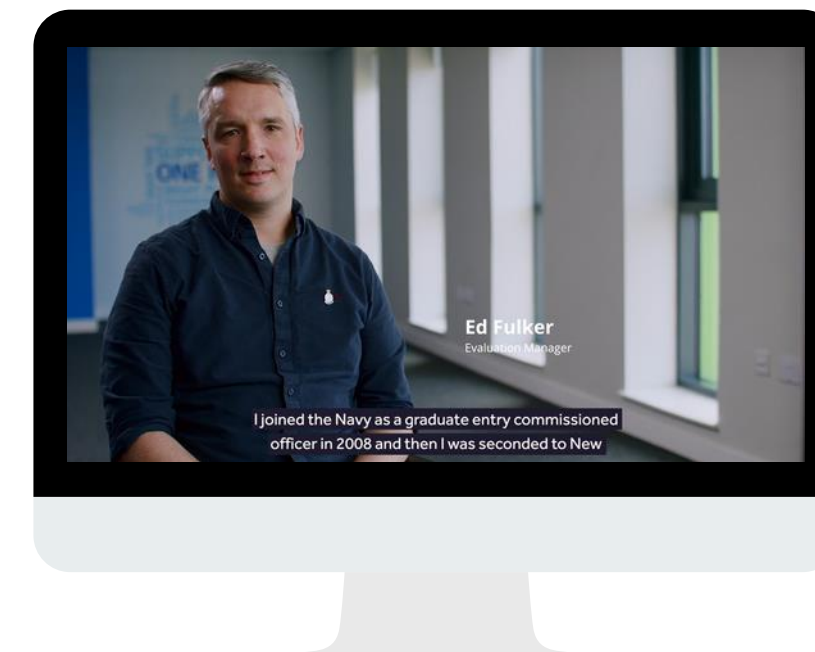


Priority 1

1.6 Supporting Armed Forces Veterans into employment

We are a forces-friendly employer, and work with key organisations across the region to support the Armed Forces Community. We are committed to demonstrating and advocating support for the defence and the armed forces communities, as signatory of the Armed Forces Covenant and recipient of the Employer Recognition Scheme Gold award.

In February 2025, we were proud to have achieved reaccreditation of the Veteran Aware status, being recognised as exemplars of the best care for, and support to, the Armed Forces Community. At NWAS we have continued to support our staff who are members of the Armed Forces community, including veterans, service spouses and partners, and members of the Reserve and Cadet Forces.



This year, we continued to actively welcome veterans and service leavers into the Trust, recognising their military experience and qualifications within our recruitment and selection processes. Through our partnership with NHS Employers Step into Health programme, we supported 39 individuals with tailored information, advice, and guidance on careers at NWAS.

In 2024-25, the Trust was represented at two Armed Forces careers events engaging over 500 service leavers and veterans. Additionally, we worked with the national Ambulance Armed Forces Network and Step Into Health to deliver a webinar on careers in the ambulance service. To further support with the promotion of Trust roles, a new short film was produced this year featuring current NWAS staff who had joined from the Armed Forces - *Armed Forces Insight: Careers with North West Ambulance Service*. The film sees members of the Armed Forces Network sharing their experiences of transitioning from the military to NWAS.

Around 30 prospective applicants with an Armed Forces background were provided with information, advice and guidance on NWAS careers. 6 individuals accessed in-depth one-to-one support for their application, resulting in three service leavers receiving offers of employment from the Trust. Some who accessed support this year are planning to submit their applications in the 2025 EMT apprenticeship recruitment campaign.

Collaborative Working: We continue to have representation on regional NHS Armed Forces Networks, the national Ambulance Armed Forces Network, Covenant Partnership Hubs, and the Employer Recognition Scheme North West Gold Award Association. Where possible, we share good practice, promote collaborative working and learn from one another from across the ambulance sector, wider NHS and private sector.

Future work: In the coming year, we will launch the Armed Forces Insight film across our social media channels to highlight career opportunities and the value of military experience within NWAS. We will also begin preparations for our Veteran Aware reaccreditation to reaffirm our commitment to supporting the Armed Forces community. Additionally, we plan to host an NWAS Armed Forces Insight Day and take part in a range of careers and community events to further engage with veterans, service leavers, and their families.



PRIORITY 2: WE WILL EDUCATE AND EMPOWER OUR WORKFORCE AND LEADERS TO PROMOTE A POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICALLY SAFE CULTURE, TO SUPPORT A REDUCTION IN THE EXPERIENCE OF BULLYING, HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION AND AN IMPROVEMENT IN RETENTION

This priority focuses on the responsibility that everyone in NWAS has, particularly managers and leaders, to help nurture an inclusive and supportive working environment for all.

2.1 Improving cultural competency

EDI staff training: Throughout 2024/25, our EDI training has been aligned to our EDI Priorities, and has focussed on embedding inclusive practices and fostering cultural change. This year we launched the Leadership for Diversity and Inclusion (LfD&I) training programme, which evolved from the Beyond Bias module and the Reverse Mentoring initiative.

The Beyond Bias training was concluded in May 2024, which close to 750 managers participated since October 2022. Nearly 60 leaders have attended the new LfD&I module with feedback highlighting improved awareness of underrepresented groups and confidence in addressing EDI challenges. Staff have reported valuing the interactive discussions, lived experiences, and practical tools to challenge bias.

Staff inductions: This year, we delivered induction sessions to over 400 PES leaders at various levels as they transitioned into their new roles. EDI was embedded throughout the programme, with dedicated sessions on behaviours and values, civility and respect — featuring relevant scenarios and case studies — and on support for neurodiverse colleagues. The induction also highlighted our approach to staff wellbeing, including guidance on supervision, supportive conversations, and the wide range of resources available to help leaders foster inclusive and effective working environments.

Additionally, we launched our new Welcome Presentation as part of the refreshed NWAS induction, reaching more than 700 staff members. Delivered by a senior leader, the presentation offers an overview of the Trust and serves as a key opportunity to reinforce EDI priorities and expectations from the outset of the employee journey.

Reverse Mentoring Cohort 2: In September 2024, we launched Cohort 2 of the Reverse Mentoring Programme. We started with 18 matched pairs with mentees coming from a variety of operational and corporate roles, and mentors being either part of or affiliated with one of the five staff networks within the Trust.

This year, we refined our approach for the reverse mentoring programme based on insights from Cohort 1. Some of the key changes we made included expanding the number of mentoring pairs and extending the programme duration from six to nine months to allow more time for relationship-building. We encouraged early shadowing between mentors and mentees to promote mutual learning, following positive feedback about informal shadowing in the first cohort. Additionally, we explicitly acknowledged this year that there is expected to be a reciprocal element to each mentoring relationship. While we wanted to retain the programme as reverse mentoring to support the power balance that we wanted, it was essential that the mentors also benefit from the reciprocal support they receive i.e. for their career development.

Feedback received from Cohort 2 was overwhelmingly positive, with mentors feeling empowered and heard, and noting that their input is already influencing change. Mentees report gaining valuable insights into different perspectives and identifying practical actions they can take. Both mentors and mentees valued the mutual support and human connection the programme fosters.

Commemorating Ramadan 2025: To mark the holy month of Ramadan, observed by many Muslims globally and within NWAS, we hosted our second annual Iftar event—'Iftar' being the meal to break the fast. Held on Wednesday 19 March in Bolton, the event was open to all NWAS staff, regardless of role or location within the Trust.

Around 180 attendees joined the evening, including senior leaders, staff, volunteers, family members, and external stakeholders. The programme included reflections from the Chief Executive and Director of People, as well as an interfaith panel discussion featuring an Imam and Reverend Karen Jobson, NWAS Chaplain for Staff Wellbeing. The fast was broken at sunset following the call to prayer, after which guests shared a meal and engaged in further dialogue and connection.

To support understanding and inclusivity during Ramadan, we also updated the HR Ramadan Guidance and refreshed the Clinical Ramadan Factsheet to assist staff, particularly those in patient-facing roles, with considerations relating to the fasting period.



Priority 2

2.2 Speaking up

Freedom to Speak Up Guardians: We are committed to a robust and accessible Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) function to support our staff and volunteers. In recognition of this we expanded the team with the introduction of two additional

FTSU Guardians, as recommended by the National Guardian’s Office report: This year, the

FTSU team has enhanced the process for raising concerns by allowing staff to do so openly, anonymously, or confidentially through various channels. Improvements have been made to the online form, which is accessible on Trust-issued mobile devices, and is intended to help those who want to speak up about anything which concerns them.

Just over 120 FTSU concerns were logged this year. The number of concerns about bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment, increased by 40% from 25 to 35 in 2024/25 – showing improved staff confidence in utilising the FTSU function. Predominant themes in these concerns were general incivility, bullying leading to feelings of belittlement, and experiences of sexualised behaviour/language.

Some concerns have been signposted by the FTSU guardians to the Dignity at Work or grievance processes. In cases involving bullying or harassment where reporters disengage from the process, relevant information is shared with the appropriate management team before closure.

2.5 Leadership and Culture Events

A series of Leadership and Culture events were delivered between October 2024 – March 2025, successfully bringing together leaders from across the Trust to engage in conversations about the culture review of the ambulance sector which was published in February 2024.

Asking ourselves ‘what needs to change?’ enabled us to create objectives that centred around inclusivity. Leaders actively participated in the events and were encouraged to model inclusive leadership and an understanding of the importance of civility and respect. Participants didn’t just talk about inclusivity; they were invited to share their stories, challenges, and successes and the post event toolkit embedded ongoing reflection and action. The events covered a range of topic areas such as generational differences, sexual safety, and the important of being allyship and being an active bystander.

All participants rated the events as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’, and post-event feedback tells us that people are actively calling out poor behaviours and ‘calling in’ people to educate them, with a strong belief in ‘what you permit, you promote’, and a collective stance to improve culture at NWS.

2.3 Improving sexual safety

We have continued to deliver thematic learning sessions on sexual safety and hate crime this year, with the Sexual Safety Steering Group reviewing incident data, identifying trends, and implementing targeted interventions and educational initiatives to improve sexual safety in the Trust.

Key initiatives undertaken this year include Sexual Safety Roadshows to raise awareness of reporting processes and available support, and collaboration with staff networks to emphasise the importance of incident reporting. Body Worn Video Cameras continue to serve as valuable tools for capturing evidence. In partnership with external agencies, we have also held awareness evening town centres to promote staff safety and public understanding of these issues.

Looking ahead, any incident relating to unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature which is reported will have a Violence Prevention Reduction Specialist Practitioner assigned to support and implement any relevant interventions.

2.4 2024 summer riots

During the civil disorder that took place across the UK in July and August 2024, many communities and individuals were placed in vulnerable and potentially unsafe situations. As an employer, we prioritised the safety and wellbeing of our staff—particularly those in patient-facing roles—by taking proactive measures to support and protect them during this period.

Managers were encouraged to check in directly with team members who may have been affected, specially those commuting to or from work in impacted areas. Guidance was issued to support wellbeing conversations and ensure individual needs were recognised and addressed.

At a national level, we engaged with other ambulance trusts and the wider NHS to consider appropriate responses in cases where safety concerns may have influenced the ability to deliver care, both in person and via contact centres. The events highlighted ongoing societal challenges related to racism and prejudice, reinforcing the importance of our continued commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion.



PRIORITY 3: WE WILL REDUCE HEALTH INEQUALITIES FOR OUR PATIENTS

Health inequalities result in poorer outcomes for disadvantaged populations. This priority focuses on ensuring that not only are we delivering our services inclusively, but that we are working to address the root causes of inequality.

3.1 Health and Equality (Public Health)

The Sustainability Strategy 2023-2026 sets out our commitment to work as an effective system partner to improve population health across the North West. In 2023, the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives (AACE) issued a national statement on reducing health inequalities in the ambulance sector and shared an assessment tool to evaluate our maturity in four key domains:

- Building public health capacity and capability,
- Data insight, evidence and evaluation,
- Strategic leadership and accountability, and
- System partnerships

Our baseline assessment was completed in March 2024 and indicated our maturity as an organisation is ‘Developing - building good practice’. We have analysed our maturity assessment gaps, integrated previous Sustainability Strategy goals, and aligned with recent national health inequality policies and guidance to develop our improvement goals, which are:

- To improve the collection, analysis, and utilisation of our data to support population health improvement and reduction of health inequalities
- To develop core clinical education and training which is culturally aware

Delivery of NWAS’ first population health dashboard: To align with our data improvement objective, the Public Health and Business Intelligence teams created a population health dashboard to enhance data collection and analysis. A series of reports on 999 calls and incidents will provide detailed breakdowns by patient characteristics (age, sex, and ethnicity) and population health data. This information, visible to all in the Trust, aims to enhance our understanding of access and outcomes disparities among patient groups, as well as identify demand from vulnerable populations.



NWAS Public Health Team

Development and rollout of Health Inequalities and Making Every Contact Count training: As part of the NHS’ Long Term Workforce Plan, priorities include reforming the workforce to enhance skills for prevention and early intervention. To boost capacity and clinical education, the Public Health, Strategy and L&OD teams created modules on Health Inequalities and Making Every Contact Count. These modules will form part of the mandatory training cycle in 2025-26. This work was supported by a small grant from NHS England North West Workforce Training & Education department.

Leveraging ambulance data to improve hypertension management and prevent cardiovascular disease: In England, hypertension is the top risk factor for cardiovascular disease (CVD), leading to heart attacks, strokes, and other complications. Living in deprived areas increases the likelihood of a stroke. Despite hypertension affecting over a third of adults, more than 40% are unaware of their condition. Identifying hypertension early is crucial for lifestyle changes or treatment. We collaborate with GPs to establish a data sharing pathway to help identify undiagnosed or unmanaged hypertension.

This year we completed a new pilot with a group of six GPs in Cheshire and Merseyside, highlighting the potential for ambulance services to contribute meaningfully to preventative care. It also helped foster collaboration between NWAS, GPs, and other healthcare partners.

Future work: in 2025/26, our work will focus on advancing our approach to addressing health inequalities through several key initiatives. We will disseminate the new population health dashboard across the organisation and integrate health inequalities data into Board reports to inform strategic decision-making. Additionally, we will develop Phase 2 of the population health dashboard to enhance its functionality and reach. As part of our ongoing commitment to education, we will also design follow-up training on health inequalities and the Making Every Contact Count (MECC) framework to further equip staff with the knowledge and tools needed to support equitable care.

Priority 3

3.2 Communications & Patient Engagement

Each year, the Trust's Patient Engagement Team implements a programme aligned with the Patient, Public and Community engagement Implementation Plan. This plan aids the Trust's strategic EDI priorities by engaging patients and gathering feedback across all service areas, including Paramedic Emergency Services (PES), Patient Transport Service (PTS), NHS 111, and Urgent Care Desk.

Family and Friends Test (FFT): Patients who access PTS and PES services are offered the chance to provide feedback via the FFT. With our PES surveys this year, 5% of respondents were from ethnic minority communities. Of this group, 82% rated their overall experience of the service as 'very good/good' and 80% indicated that they were 'cared for appropriately, with dignity, compassion, and respect'.

Community engagement: We successfully delivered four county-based community awareness events with a target audience of young people, those with learning disabilities, and members of ethnic minority groups including Chinese and Jewish communities. More than 320 people from diverse communities participated in the events, with young people accounting for around three-quarters of overall attendance at the events.

During 2024/25, we undertook 31 patient focus groups working with organisations such as Kashmir Youth Project and the Chinese Wellbeing group. We also participated in 29 community engagement events across the North West, such as Chester PRIDE and Bolton Health Mela.

Patient and Public Panel: Our Patient and Public Panel membership increased to 344 members at the end of March 2025. More than a quarter of members identify as BME or disabled, and nearly a third are young people. The valuable lived experiences within the diverse Panel inform service development to benefit the Trust.

Areas of focus for 2025/26: Looking ahead to the coming year, our focus will be on enhancing accessibility and inclusion across key service areas. Priorities include improving demographic reporting to better understand and respond to the needs of diverse communities, and launching a 'Help save a life' card featuring a QR code that links to life-saving information in multiple languages.

We also plan to produce an 'Insight App' film for operational staff, offering guidance on inclusive communication, including appropriate language use and British Sign Language interpreters at the patient's side. Additionally, a health literacy project will support the development of more effective and inclusive communications within our Patient Transport Service (PTS).



Staff Networks



**ARMED FORCES
NETWORK.**



**DISABILITY
NETWORK.**



**LGBT
NETWORK.**



**RACE EQUALITY
NETWORK.**



**WOMEN'S
NETWORK.**

The Trust proudly supports five staff networks that play an important role in fostering inclusion and celebrating the diversity of our workforce. These networks offer members a platform to share experiences and contribute to shaping organisational culture and priorities.

Each network benefits from dedicated funding and the guidance of an Executive Sponsor to enhance their reach and influence.

In May 2024, a Staff Networks Development Day was held, bringing together network members and committees alongside the full Executive Team. The event served as a platform to highlight progress, promote intersectional collaboration, and strengthen the impact of the networks.

One key outcome was the agreement between networks that they would set up 'Network of Networks' sessions, designed to promote shared learning and ongoing collaborative development.



Armed Forces Network

The Armed Forces Network (AFN) sustained its third-year success as a member-driven network, organising quarterly events and championing the Armed Forces Community across the Trust's areas. The first event of the year was at Bolton Whites in April 2024 – a birthday celebration with charities supporting veterans in the North West.

In honour of Armed Forces Week, the network held an event at Estuary Point on Armed Forces Reserve Day, 26 June 2024. The event featured a British Army Medical Regiment led by a serving NWS Paramedic who is also a Sergeant Major. They showcased their medical equipment, shared insights into the challenges of being a combat medical technician, and informed NWS colleagues about career opportunities as an Army Reservist.

In September 2024, the AFN committee held a joint meeting at Bancroft House in Burnley with Healthier Heroes CIC, supporting veterans. The focus was on raising mental health awareness among veterans and observed the charity's direct impact on local veterans in crisis.

The cornerstone of the AFN calendar is Remembrance Day on 11 November, commemorated in over 30 locations by NWS colleagues. Donations are collected for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal in the weeks leading up to the event at various dates and sites.

In the short term, the main focus for the AFN for 2025/26 is the VE Day 80th anniversary celebration on 8 May 2025, which will comprise of several activities at varying locations to commemorate the occasion. In the medium to longer term, the committee and wider network will continue to support the established key dates throughout the year along with increasing and promoting the AFN presence within the Trust.



Disability Network

The NWS Disability Network continues to thrive by working strategically to influence the Trust's EDI agenda and culture. The network celebrated its third anniversary in December 2024 with an in-person event at Estuary Point during Disability History Month.

In 2024, the network set clear objectives based on member feedback, aligned with Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES) metrics and the Trust's EDI agenda. This involved boosting awareness of the Access to Work scheme through webinars with assistance from the Trust's ED&I Advisor and HR Attendance Improvement team to support disabled staff to remain in work. The network is striving to increase ESR declaration rates for a clearer understanding of disabled staff needs. Efforts focused on raising staff awareness through initiatives like the 'Count Me In Census' campaign, and also reminders shared through videos and messages to prompt staff to update their ESR disability details.

During Disability History Month 2024, the network collaborated with the Communications team to film various colleagues, such as an Director, HR managers, Sector managers, and an Emergency Medical Advisor. This highlighted the significance of reasonable adjustments to enhance workforce diversity at all levels. The initiative was unveiled at the network's third anniversary celebration event themed 'Disability Livelihood and Employment'. The event included a 'reasonable adjustments display' where network members showcased specialised equipment used in their roles.

The network values teams within the Trust which actively engage in projects enhanced by network members to improve inclusive care. New committee members have increased the network's purpose and visibility in all service areas.

The network aims to support the Trust in creating a safe, inclusive culture for disabled staff. Collaboration with teams will improve accessibility for all, including patients. This involves enhancing the user interface through work with the Digital Team.



LGBT+ NETWORK

The LGBT+ Network continues its ongoing growth this year with around eight new members joining each month. New staff who become members are often introduced to the network during their induction training. The network maintains a hybrid meeting model, enabling members to attend in person or via Microsoft Teams. In-person meetings rotate across the Trust, ensuring broader participation.

In February 2025, during LGBT+ History Month, network members shared testimonials about inspiring figures in LGBT+ healthcare, for example, Dr. Michael Farquhar who created the NHS rainbow badge for LGBT+ service users. The Network also organised a visit to Manchester's People's History Museum, where attendees explored the newly opened LGBT+ archives in celebration of LGBT+ History Month.

Pride events are a key part of our activities, with members attending local events in Blackpool, Liverpool, and Manchester. This year, the network will look to expand its presence at more Pride events. The Pride events attended are made more special with the introduction of the Trust's three Pride-wrapped ambulances, which are also used for frontline duties, and reinforce the organisation's commitment and visibility to equality and inclusion.



RACE EQUALITY NETWORK

The Race Equality Network (REN) has actively continued to help improve recruitment practices by advocating for diverse interview panels, better questions, and emphasising EDI goals during recruitment efforts. Members have learned from conferences like the Asian Professionals National Alliance and shared best practices on international recruitment and onboarding for better retention rates. These insights have been communicated within our organisation. The network also supported a cadet program at Edge Hill University where members shared their experiences with ethnically diverse students interested in healthcare careers.

Chair of the REN, Wes Proverbs sits on the oversight group for the second cohort of staff in the reverse mentoring programme, providing guidance to ensure a meaningful experience. The programme aids senior colleagues in enhancing cultural competency and fostering curiosity. The impact was evident at the NWAS Iftar on 19th March 2025.

The network continues to be represented in the Diversity and Inclusion Group meetings, advocating for staff and influencing senior managers to understand lived experience.

To commemorate Black History Month in October 2024, the network organised an event at Hilton Liverpool shedding light on challenges faced by menopausal women. The event explored health disparities for women from BME backgrounds, advocating for improved care. Additionally, we collaborated with public health partners to create an informative poster on sickle cell anaemia, aiming to raise awareness of the illness, its impact, and the need for better pain management. We plan to continue raising awareness about sickle cell in a bid to enhance patient care and staff education.



WOMEN'S NETWORK

The Women's Network has continued to grow considerably in membership and scope within the last year, with 242 members across the NWAS workforce as of March 2025.

The network's main focus remains on improving maternity experiences by researching within the organisation, collaborating with HR to improve internal policies, and working with the national ambulance sector workstream to improve maternity processes and policies.

The network is active in various collaborations, including supporting the Sexual Safety Steering Group and the 'Network of Networks'. In 2024, we partnered with the Race Equality Network on Menopause, highlighting its diverse impacts on women of different ethnicities.

In 2024/25, the Women's Network committee saw significant changes as many members departed, including our Executive Sponsor, Maxine Power. Dan Ainsworth, the Director of Operations, now serves as the new Executive Sponsor. The Committee underwent a major restructure and membership expanded from 4 to 12 members by optimising the allocated release time for committee members.

Our biggest event was International Women's Day (IWD) 2025. The event was held in-person on the 14th March 2024 in Penrith on the theme of 'Accelerate Action'. This was very well attended and well received by all who could make it.

Looking ahead: In 2025, the network will propose recommendations to improve maternity experiences for staff based on data gathered. Feedback for the sanitary product initiative is being collected for a 2025 paper with project recommendations. The new committee will start outlining annual plans and strategies for 2025/26 from April.

The network will host a roundtable in 2025 focusing on addressing violence against women and improving staff safety at work and in 2026, will host the IWD event while aiming to partner and collaborate with other networks.



CHAPLAINCY

The Chaplain for Staff Wellbeing, Reverend Karen Jobson had a busy year with over 3,700 staff contacts, often improving morale through giving out treats. The Chaplain has established a strong presence in contact centres, emergency departments, and on stations across the North West. Karen continued to offer confidential support to all NWAS staff regardless of faith and/or belief, and this year conducted 152 one-on-one sessions assisting with bereavement, family, mental health, work stress, and other concerns including, support requested at major incidents.

The major incident in Southport during the summer posed unique challenges for NWAS staff. The Chaplain provided pastoral support during debriefs and meetings, conducted observation shifts from Southport station, and offered informal support. Following the incident, Karen was also present at hospital emergency departments and contact centres to ensure support was available, even on the day the perpetrator was sentenced.

Karen has supported staff wellbeing with mindfulness sessions at the People Directorate Team Brief, represented the Trust at the TASC Memorial Service and joined a reflective discussion during the Trust's Iftar event. Additionally, she led a remembrance service at Estuary Point on Remembrance Day, and organised two carol services in December.

Karen consistently provides bereavement support and palliative care to staff with terminal conditions, and in February, conducted a staff member's funeral and supported his colleagues and others grieving. In addition to pastoral support which Karen provides trust-wide, including at training exercises, she has also been working with the Command and Resilience Education Team to improve pastoral care within the Death in Service Policy and related action cards.

During the coming year, we are looking forward to onboarding a team of volunteer chaplains who will increase the reach and impact of the chaplain for staff wellbeing service. Karen's dedication and extensive efforts continue to make a significant impact on the wellbeing of NWAS staff, fostering an environment of support, inclusivity, and care.



RELIGION, BELIEF & CULTURE FORUM

Enhancing the cultural competency of staff remains a key priority for the Trust Chaplain. However, engaging staff in the Religion, Belief and Culture Forum has proven challenging due to ongoing operational pressures.

Following a successful in-person session in summer 2024 focused on the customs and health-related practices of Jehovah's Witnesses, further sessions of the Forum have not yet been scheduled. Looking ahead to 2025, the Chaplain will work in collaboration with the Learning and Development Team to explore training opportunities to build staff understanding and improve cultural competency.

NWAS CHARITY AND EDI



The Charitable Funds Committee meets quarterly, with reports that all include an equality section. This section highlights NWAS Charity's efforts to prevent the unintentional exclusion of colleagues with protected characteristics from the charity's work, fundraising, or in benefiting from the support provided by NWAS Charity.

The Charity team has regularly collaborated with EDI colleagues and Staff Networks this year to find new funding opportunities that may support the wellbeing and needs of staff with protected characteristics.

NWAS Charity exists to support the work of the Trust both externally and internally.

Externally, the Charity supports the communities that NWAS serves, aiming to improve health outcomes, and addressing some of the health inequalities that exist in the region. Internally, they provide support over and above what the Trust may be able to facilitate for the health and wellbeing of our staff and volunteers.

In terms of EDI, this year NWAS Charity supported the staff networks and gave grants for their initiatives. For example, the Charity was able to provide funds for additional spaces at Women's and Racial Equality Network events, which were oversubscribed. The Charity also funded the scaling up of the sanitary products initiative, supported the Menopause Champion volunteers, and co-funded the NWAS Iftar 2025.

The external work of the Charity has focused on providing public-access defibrillators and funding Community Resuscitation Engagement Officers. These officers target areas with high out-of-hospital cardiac arrest rates, often found in communities with a high proportion of ethnic minorities or high deprivation. NWAS Charity's "Saving Lives" remit aims to address health inequalities related to cardiac arrests in these communities.

The NWAS Charity's work aligns with the Trust's strategy, focusing on addressing health inequalities. This involves collaboration with the Trust's Community Resuscitation Team, which targets areas with high out-of-hospital cardiac arrest rates to improve survival outcomes.



POLICY DEVELOPMENT

All new and existing policies, procedures and guidance are developed in partnership through our Policy Group which includes trade union representatives, managers and Staff Network members to ensure that they are representative of our diverse workforce.

To support us in developing effective policies and procedures (new or revised), equality impact assessments are mandatory for each policy or procedure, and are a prerequisite for any policy or procedure being signed off by the Executive Leadership Committee. The Trust remains committed to supporting the development of best practice and learning from others in this regard. We have various policies or procedures in place to ensure we are delivering on our EDI commitment, and we continue to review and update these in line with legislation and best practices.

Since April 2024, the following key EDI related policies, procedures and guidance have been approved with an EIA completed:

- Supporting Trans, Non-Binary, Gender Fluid and Cisgender Staff Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure
- Occupational Health Procedure
- Adoption Leave Procedure
- Maternity Leave Procedure
- Menopause Policy



WORKFORCE EQUALITIES MONITORING REPORTING

We continued to meet all our statutory and regulatory reporting requirements in relation to EDI - including submitting our Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES), Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES), Gender Pay Gap and Equality Delivery System data.

***Note:** the headlines relating to the WDES, WRES and Gender Pay Gap shared in this report are based on data which was extracted on 31 March 2024 and submitted in subsequent months. Data for period of 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025 will be published later in the year.*



NHS Equality Delivery System

The EDS is an NHS England framework that helps NHS organisations improve the services they provide for their local communities, and create better working environments, free of discrimination, for those who work in the NHS, while meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

There are three main areas that EDS focuses on, with evidence for each area assessed by a panel of stakeholders:

- Domain 1 - Commissioned or provided services
- Domain 2 - Workforce health and well-being
- Domain 3 - Inclusive leadership

The assessment was undertaken between December 2024 – January 2025, with the findings submitted to NHS England ahead of the 28 February deadline.

This year, our organisational rating was 18, placing the trust at ‘developing’ – sustaining last year’s position. Further efforts around the recording and utilisation of EDI monitoring to drive improvements could help increase the organisational rating in future assessments.

Workforce Disability Equality Standard

We continued to see an increase in the numbers of staff declaring that they have a disability or long-term condition. At the end of March 2024, 7.8% of all staff had declared they had a disability – an increase from 6.5% in 2023 and 5.0% in 2022.

Figures around the relative likelihood of disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff entering the formal capability process further deteriorated from the previous year’s score, meaning that disabled staff were over one-and-a-half times more likely to enter the capability process compared to non-disabled staff. However, the total number of affected staff remained in single figures.

Whilst the actual experience of negative behaviours decreased for disabled staff, there was a notable increase in the proportion of disabled staff reporting negative experiences when they occur. On the whole, NHS Staff Survey results since 2018 consistently show that a greater percentage of disabled staff report their experiences of bullying, harassment or abuse compared to non-disabled staff.

Around 1 in 3 disabled staff reported feeling satisfied with how the organisation values their work, and this is the highest positive response since reporting on this metric started in 2018. Additionally, the difference between disabled and non-disabled staff has significantly narrowed on this question in comparison to the previous year.

Workforce Race Equality Standard

The WRES figures showed a consistent increase in the number of BME staff in the organisation since 2019. There were 100 more BME staff in the organisation on 31 March 2024, compared to the same date in March 2023.

Overall, the experiences of BME staff as seen through the WRES indicators showed improvements. This was particularly apparent through the data extracted from the NHS Staff Survey which saw considerably more responses from BME staff in 2023 compared to 2022.

Figures in Indicator 5 -7 showed fewer BME staff experiencing bullying, harassment or abuse from the public or colleagues, and more BME staff feeling that organisation acts fairly in terms of career progression. It was also encouraging to see that improvements in figures are helping narrow the gap in experience between BME and White staff.

However, recruitment data showed that White staff are more than one-and-a-half times more likely to be appointed compared to BME applicants – which is a worsening of the previous year’s position. This is despite significantly more BME applicants being shortlisted, and an increase in the number of BME staff being appointed.

Indicator 3 (relative likelihood of BME staff entering the formal disciplinary process compared to White staff) identified an area of significant concern. The data in this Indicator showed that BME staff are over two-and-a-half times more likely to enter the formal disciplinary process compared to their White colleagues.

An exploration of the disciplinary data found that out of less than 100 formal disciplinary cases in 2023/24, around 15 related to BME staff and are largely concerned with lower-level incidents. While these numbers were low when compared to the overall BME and White staff total, the BME cases equated to 16% - when the proportion of BME staff in the organisation is only 6%. Further work will continue in our Contact Centres in 2025 as we seek to address these disparities.

Gender Pay Gap

Female representation in the NWAS workforce has consistently increased over a number of years. As of 31 March 2024, 53.13% of staff were female (52.14% in 2023, 51.60% in 2022). Additionally, the majority of the workforce (55.43%) in the Operations directorate were female, and women accounted for half of all staff across the corporate directorates.

The percentage of women in the lower and lower middle quartiles fell for the first time, while increasing in the upper middle and upper quartiles. The most sizable increase was in the upper quartile, where female representation stood at 44.06% - an increase of 5% on the previous year.

The hourly mean/average pay gap continued to narrow and was at 7.27%. While still a significant gap, this was, however, the lowest average figure since we started reporting. This reflected the increasing representation in the higher pay quartiles and the impact of work around progression.

On the other hand, the median hourly gap increased to 11.17%. In contrast to the average gap, this figure represented the largest gap since reporting started. This is largely because of the higher proportion of female than male staff in the entry pay bands.

The WRES, WDES and GPG data reflects the ongoing work to support all our staff groups and address inequalities in the workplace. While there have been some improvements across a number of key areas, we recognise that notable disparities remains in the experiences of BME, disabled and female staff in the organisation.



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