



Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES) Data Report

**Covering the period of
1st April 2025 – 31st March 2026**

Introduction

This report sets out the 2025/26 annual workforce data in relation to disability which the trust is required by NHS England to publish. Working to address inequalities identified by workforce data demonstrates our compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. Monitoring workforce equalities data is also central to ensuring that we are delivering on our equality, diversity and inclusion priorities:

- 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.

Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES)

The WDES is a set of ten specific measures (metrics) which enables NHS organisations to compare the workplace and career experiences of disabled and non-disabled staff. We use the metrics data to develop and publish an action plan, building on high impact actions as set out in the EDI improvement plan. Year on year comparison enables us to demonstrate progress against the indicators of disability equality to create the cultures of belonging and trust that will improve retention, recruit from the widest possible talent pool and provide sustainable careers.

The data in this report relates to the period of 1st April 2025 – 31st March 2026 and comprises information taken from the Electronic Staff Record (MyESR), HR Business Partnering, Learning & Development, and the 2025 NHS Staff Survey.

In line with the nationally mandated timeframe, the data was submitted to NHS England in May 2026.

Metric 1: Percentage of staff in Agenda for Change (AfC) pay-bands or medical and dental subgroups and very senior managers (including Executive Board members) compared with the percentage of staff in the overall workforce.

The following two tables provide a breakdown of representation of disabled staff within NWS non-clinical and clinical workforces.

Non-clinical Staff

Year	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Cluster 1: Bands 1 - 4	10.7%	10.4%	13.3%	14.8%	13.9%
Cluster 2: Bands 5-7	6.2%	8%	10.5%	13.1%	13.5%
Cluster 3: Bands 8a-8b	4.7%	3.6%	4.8%	10.1%	11.6%
Cluster 4: Bands 8c-9 and VSM	5.0%	14%	10.2%	9.7%	12.7%

Clinical Staff

Year	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Cluster 1: Bands 1-4	4.5%	6.1%	7.4%	9.1%	9.5%
Cluster 2: Bands 5-7	5.0%	6.4%	7.5%	8.7%	9.3%
Cluster 3: Bands 8a-8b	6.9%	14.3%	16.7%	17.9%	18.2%
Cluster 4: Bands 8c-9 and VSM	11.1%	0%	0%	0%	8.3%

As of 31 March 2026, 833 staff (10.4% of the workforce) had declared a disability or long-term health condition, marking the first time that the proportion has exceeded 10%. This is an increase from 9.4% in 2024/25 and continues the increasing year-on-year trend. This improvement reflects ongoing work to encourage declaration, including internal communications, support from the Disability Network, and increased awareness of reasonable adjustments and neurodiversity support.

In 2025/26, the representation of disabled staff remained highest within non-clinical Clusters 1 and 2 and Clinical Cluster 3, which together accounted for over 45% of disabled staff across the organisation. Nearly one in five staff in clinical Bands 8a–8b identified as disabled or as having a long-term health condition. Encouragingly, for the first time since 2021/22, disabled staff were also represented within senior clinical roles at Bands 8c to Very Senior Manager level, indicating progress in representation at the highest levels of the organisation.

There are 363 staff (4.5% of the workforce) whose disability status is recorded as unknown, a reduction from 400 in 2024/25. Non-declaration remains most evident in Clinical Band 6 roles, with smaller pockets in some senior grades.

Work will continue to encourage staff to update their disability status and to target engagement in areas where declaration rates remain lowest.

Table: Disability status unknown

Staff group		Disability status unknown as of 31/3/25	Disability status unknown on 31/3/24	Disability status unknown as of 31/3/26
Clinical	Band 3	3.9% - 68 people	5.4% - 88 people	3.6% - 44 people
	Band 5	5.1% - 41 people	5.9% - 47 people	4.3% - 28 people
	Band 6	9% - 183 people	10.4% - 198 people	7.7% - 156 people
Non-clinical	Band 8d	7.1%	15.4%	6.7%
	VSM	22.2%	31.3%	9.1%

Metric 2: Relative likelihood of non-disabled staff compared to disabled staff being appointed from shortlisting across all posts.

The target outcome is a figure of 1.0 – meaning that disabled candidates are no less likely to be appointed from shortlisting than candidates who have not declared a disability. A figure of 1.0 reflects well on the fairness of current recruitment processes.

Year	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Likelihood	1.56	1.26	1.29	1.17	1.07

Between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, 792 disabled applicants were shortlisted for roles (up from 716 in 2024/25), with 138 appointed (up from 113). This compares with 3,889 shortlisted and 726 appointed non-disabled applicants over the same period.

The relative likelihood for 2025/26 is 1.07, improving from 1.17 in 2024/25 and moving closer to the target position of 1.0. This indicates that disabled applicants are almost as likely as non-disabled applicants to be appointed following shortlisting.

This continued improvement suggests that actions to strengthen inclusive recruitment practices are supporting more equitable outcomes for disabled applicants.

Work will continue to focus on reviewing recruitment processes, ensuring inclusive advert wording, strengthening panel capability, and facilitating reasonable adjustments to further improve equity across the recruitment pathway.

Metric 3: Relative likelihood of disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff entering the formal capability process on the grounds of performance, as measured by entry into the formal capability procedure

A figure of 1.0 or below is desired, as this would indicate disabled staff are no more or less likely to enter into the formal capability process than non-disabled staff. This metric is based on data from a two-year rolling average of the current year and the previous year and looks at capability on the grounds of performance only, rather than ill health.

Year	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Likelihood	0.00	1.47	1.63	4.46	2.59

The number of disabled staff entering the capability process increased during 2025/26. However, their relative likelihood of entering the process decreased significantly from 4.46 in 2024/25 to 2.59 in 2025/26. This reflects the fact that the majority of capability cases involving disabled staff related to ill health this year – and therefore are not counted for this metric. In 2025/26, 24.5 of the 36.5 cases capability cases related to ill health, compared with higher proportion of 14 of 28.5 cases in 2024/25.

Given the relatively small number of capability cases overall, the relative likelihood measure has fluctuated considerably between reporting years.

A deep dive into the data underpinning this metric was undertaken earlier this year, informing a series of recommendations that are now being progressed through collaborative working between HR BP, HR Corporate, Learning & Development, and operational teams.

These recommendations include earlier intervention by EDI and HR specialists in performance cases to help prevent escalation to Stage 3, and equipping managers to proactively identify and address barriers faced by disabled staff - with initial focus on ICC educators. Work is also underway to review training and assessment processes, exploring alternative delivery methods and additional support for disabled staff, alongside consideration of extended timelines or reasonable adjustments for mandatory assessments.

The data in the following Metrics (4 - 9) is based on responses in the NHS Staff Survey.

In 2025, we achieved our highest ever level of participation in the NHS Staff Survey, with over 4,100 responses, equating to a 53% response rate, compared with 3,500 in 2024.

33% of respondents reported having a disability or long-term condition, which is significantly higher than the 10% declaration rate recorded on ESR. This difference is consistent with the national picture, where staff surveys typically report higher levels of disability disclosure.

This gap highlights the importance of continuing to build trust and confidence in staff declarations. Feedback from staff engagement suggests that some colleagues remain concerned about how this information may be used. Work is ongoing with Communications and the Disability Network to address misconceptions, promote the benefits of declaration, and encourage staff to keep their records up to date. Improving declaration rates remains a priority to ensure staff can access appropriate support and reasonable adjustments.

Metric 4: Percentage of Disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from:

• 4.1: Patients/Service users, their relatives or other members of the public

Staff Survey Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Non-disabled	37.8%	34.1%	34.7%	34.9%	34.3%
Disabled	45.9%	47.2%	42.7%	41.8%	45.5%
Difference	8.1%	13.1%	8.0%	6.9%	11.2%

While the experiences of non-disabled staff have remained largely stable in recent years, responses from disabled colleagues showed a favourable downward trend from 2023 before deteriorating again in 2025. More than four in ten disabled staff (compared with 34.3% of non-disabled staff) reported experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from patients, service users, relatives or members of the public. This has widened the gap between the two groups, from 6.9% in 2024 to 11.2% in 2025.

The Trust will continue to monitor this indicator through Staff Survey results, alongside internal reporting data and the work of the Violence Prevention and Reduction Team. This includes ongoing efforts to encourage reporting, strengthen support for staff, and work with police partners to increase prosecutions.

• 4.2: Managers

Staff Survey Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Non-disabled	11.3%	10.1%	9.1%	9.0%	7.7%
Disabled	18.6%	16.8%	14.8%	15.0%	14.9%
Difference	7.3%	6.7%	5.7%	6%	7.2%

The proportion of disabled staff experiencing negative behaviours from managers has remained stable since 2023, while the proportion of non-disabled staff has decreased compared with the previous year. Figures from the 2025 staff survey show that disabled colleagues are approximately twice as likely to experience bullying and harassment from managers compared with non-disabled staff.

This indicator highlights the need for continued focus on inclusive management practice and compassionate leadership, ensuring all staff are supported to work in a safe and respectful environment.

- **4.3: Other colleagues**

Staff Survey Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Non-disabled	14.1%	14.0%	12.7%	13.3%	11.4%
Disabled	23.6%	21.8%	18.2%	20.2%	18.5%
Difference	9.5%	7.8%	5.5%	6.9%	7.1%

Disabled staff remain significantly more likely to experience negative behaviour from their peers, with almost one in five affected compared with just over one in ten non-disabled staff.

We continue to reinforce expectations of inclusive and respectful behaviour through leadership, culture, and learning and development initiatives, and will monitor whether this gap in colleague-to-colleague experiences narrows in future Staff Survey results.

- **4.4: Percentage of Disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff saying that the last time they experienced harassment, bullying or abuse at work, they or a colleague reported it.**

Staff Survey Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Non-disabled	43.8%	45.1%	46.2%	52.4%	50.2%
Disabled	46.3%	44.7%	47.8%	49.9%	49.5%
Difference	2.5%	-0.4%	1.6%	-2.5%	-0.7%

Around half of both disabled and non-disabled staff reported their most recent incident of harassment, bullying or abuse, broadly in line with the previous year's results, though non-disabled staff saw a slight decrease of 2%.

While reporting levels are broadly consistent across the two groups, this indicates that a significant proportion of incidents continue to go unreported. Further work is required to ensure all staff feel safe and supported to report concerns through the full range of available routes, including line management, Freedom to Speak Up and other formal mechanisms.

Metric 5: Percentage of Disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff believing that the Trust provides equal opportunities for career progression or promotion.

In line with the 2025 NHS Staff Survey Technical Guide, some caution is advised when interpreting trends in Metric 5, as the wording of this question changed in 2025, meaning previous years may not be directly comparable.

Staff Survey Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Non-disabled	49.7%	51.9%	52.2%	52.5%	52.9%
Disabled	39.4%	45.1%	48.7%	47.8%	45.5%
Difference	-10.3%	-6.8%	-3.5%	-4.7%	-7.4%

In 2025, fewer disabled staff compared to the previous year felt that the Trust acts fairly with regard to career progression or promotion - a decrease of 2.3% from 2024. This compares with 52.9% of non-disabled staff, an increase of 0.4%. The gap between the two groups has widened to 7.4%.

This indicates a continuing disparity in experience, with over half of disabled staff feeling that opportunities for progression are unfair. The downward trend since 2023, when this figure was 48.7%, highlights the need for continued focus on addressing barriers to progression.

To support fair recruitment practices, Recruitment and Selection training has been mandated for all new leaders, ensuring managers are equipped to undertake objective, inclusive and values-based decision-making.

The Trust also continues to invest in apprenticeships as a key route for workforce development and progression. For example, in 2025/26, over 175 new starters joined the EMT Apprenticeship programme, with 18% identifying as disabled, supporting broader efforts to improve access to career opportunities across the organisation.

Metric 6: Percentage of Disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff saying that they have felt pressure from their manager to come to work, despite not feeling well enough to perform their duties.

Staff Survey Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Non-disabled	28.6%	27.2%	24.8%	27.2%	23.8%
Disabled	40.6%	38.3%	35%	33.3%	29.0%
Difference	12.0%	11.1%	10.2%	6.1%	5.2%

The proportion of both disabled and non-disabled colleagues feeling pressured by their manager to attend work despite not feeling well enough has fallen to its lowest level since 2021, with the gap between the two groups narrowing to 5.2%, continuing the trend of gradual improvement.

Despite this progress, a significant proportion of staff continue to report feeling pressure to attend work when unwell, with nearly 3 in 10 disabled staff and almost a quarter of non-disabled staff affected. This indicates that, while improvements have been made, further work is required to support a culture where staff feel able to prioritise their health and wellbeing.

Metric 7: Percentage of Disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff saying that they are satisfied with the extent to which their organisation values their work.

Staff Survey Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Non-disabled	32.9%	33.6%	35.7%	36.2%	37.2%
Disabled	27.5%	23.9%	31.1%	30.4%	24.6%
Difference	5.4%	9.7%	4.6%	5.8%	12.6%

Around a quarter of disabled staff reported being satisfied with the extent to which the organisation values their work, a decrease of approximately 6% from 2024. This compares with 37.2% of non-disabled staff, an increase of 1%. The gap between the two groups has widened to 12.6% - significantly higher than the previous year's difference.

As part of the People Promise Exemplar programme, the Trust has reviewed and refreshed its compliments process to ensure that positive feedback is captured more consistently, shared more promptly, and reflects the contributions of all staff. Building on this work, a Trust-wide Recognition Framework will be launched in 2026/27 to provide a fair, consistent and inclusive approach to recognising exceptional contributions across all teams and service areas.

The Trust will also work in partnership with the Disability Staff Network to explore further opportunities to ensure disabled colleagues feel valued, recognised and respected within the organisation.

Metric 8: Percentage of Disabled staff saying that their employer has made reasonable adjustment(s) to enable them to carry out their work.

Staff Survey Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Disabled	57.8%	63.0%	65.2%	71.3%	69.0%

In 2025, over two-thirds of disabled said that they had received reasonable adjustments. While this metric saw a slight decline compared to the previous year, the figure remains higher than levels from 2021 – 23.

We will continue to build on existing work to strengthen reasonable adjustments, including policy development, manager guidance and neurodiversity support. Training on reasonable adjustments, delivered since October 2024, has been attended by 390 leaders, managers and staff over 50 sessions, with significant numbers rating the training as good or very good. Feedback highlights the value of the training in supporting both individual needs and wider team awareness.

Metric 9: Staff engagement score for calculated from nine specific questions in the NHS Staff Survey

Staff Survey Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Non-disabled	6.2	6.2	6.3	6.3	6.3
Disabled	5.6	5.6	5.9	5.9	5.6
Difference	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.7

The 2025 Staff Survey results show that the gap for this metric between disabled and non-disabled staff has widened to 0.7, compared with 0.4 in both 2024 and 2023.

While engagement scores for non-disabled staff have remained stable, scores for disabled staff have declined to levels last seen in 2021/22.

This position highlights the need for continued focus on improving engagement and overall staff experience for disabled colleagues, ensuring that all staff feel supported, valued, included and able to contribute fully within the organisation.

Metric 10: Representation of disabled people among Board members

Percentage difference between the organisation's board voting membership and overall workforce, disaggregated by:

- *voting and non-voting membership of the board*
- *executive and non-exec membership of the board.*

Disability declarations

NWAS Disabled staff 31/03/2026	10.4%	Disabled Board Members 31/03/2025	18.75%
Voting Board Members	16.67%	Non-Voting Board Members	25%
Executive Board Members	25%	Non-Executive Board Members	12.5%

The proportion of total board members declaring a disability has increased to 18.75% (8% in 2025).

The table below shows the percentage difference when comparing the total Board number to the overall workforce.

Year	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Disabled	7%	-2%	8.37%
Non-disabled	-29%	-24%	-16.34%
Disability unknown	22%	26%	7.98%

Trust-wide actions

The WDES data along with the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES), and Pay Gap data (set out in separate reports) 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 there remains a significant difference in the experiences of disabled and non-disabled staff. We will continue to explore the reasons for this and put in place actions to help improve the employee experience of our colleagues with disabilities.

Listed below are some of our areas of focus for 2026/27:

Indicator 1 – Workforce representation

We will continue to encourage staff to update their disability status and with the support of the Disability Network, deliver targeted engagement activities in areas where disability declaration rates remain lowest, to improve the accuracy and completeness of workforce data.

Metric 2 – Recruitment

- We will continue to deliver targeted careers support through the Widening Access Team, including community careers events, online engagement sessions, partnerships with local organisations and one-to-one coaching, with an increased focus on improving engagement with and representation of disabled people.
- We will develop and deliver training for recruiting managers on inclusive interview skills, with a particular focus on reducing bias and promoting diversity and inclusion throughout the recruitment process.

Metric 3 - entering the formal capability process on the grounds of performance

Review emerging themes within capability data, ensure reasonable adjustments are consistently considered, and provide targeted support to managers to reduce disproportionality and improve outcomes for disabled staff.

Metric 7 – Satisfaction with the extent to which organisation values work.

Work in partnership with the Disability Staff Network to explore further opportunities to ensure disabled colleagues feel valued, recognised and respected within the organisation.