

**Trust Board of Directors**  
**Report Summary**

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| <b>Date of meeting:</b> 7 November 2024  |   |
| <b>Title of Document:</b> Workforce Disability Equality Standard – 2023/24 Annual Report |   |
| <b>To be presented by:</b><br><br>Kate Read, Director of People & OD                     | <b>Author:</b><br><br>Clare Harper, HR Business Manager – Staff Experience & Culture  |
| <b>1. Status:</b> For <u>Approval/Discussion/Assurance/Noting/Information</u>            |   |
| <b>2. Purpose:</b><br>Review and provide Board approval                                  |   |
| Relates to:  |   |
| Strategic Objective  | Support and develop our staff   |
| Operational performance  | If staff feel supported in terms of their experience in the workplace, this will support operational performance and service delivery.  |
| Quality  | Staff who are supported, valued and included will thrive in the workplace will in turn support our commitment to improve the quality of care for our patients (Quality Strategy) and deliver the Trust's ambition to offer the best care and experience and to increase equity in health outcomes   |
| Legal, Regulatory, Audit   | WDES reporting is a requirement for NHS commissioners and NHS healthcare providers through the NHS standard contract with annual WDES data submissions through the <a href="#">NHS Digital Strategic Data Collection Service</a> (SDCS). Where the data shows areas that fall short of national recommendations, interventions need to be implemented to address any anomalies.                             |
| Equality and diversity   | Through the WDES statutory reporting process, the Trust has an obligation to review the data to identify areas of focus where there may be evidence of processes which may discriminate or disadvantage individuals with a disability or long term condition. Where focus areas are identified, interventions must be implemented to improve the equity of processes and in turn, improve staff experience. |
| Finance  | None included in this report.   |
| Governance   | The WDES data is provided direct from the ESR, TRAC and ZEBRA systems used at this Trust. Oversight of this data set will be reviewed by the POD Committee before Board approval. Any areas of improvement identified will be monitored for progress by the EDI Operational Group, overseen by the EDI Strategic Reference Group and POD Committee.   |
| NHS policy/public consultation   | <a href="https://www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/workforce-equality-data-standards/equality-standard/">https://www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/workforce-equality-data-standards/equality-standard/</a>   |
| Accreditation/   | The data is assessed by the National WDES team post submission  |

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| Inspection                           | each year and any disparities are checked with the Trust.  |
| Anchor institutions                  | The Trust is committed to being an inclusive employer and service provider and regularly reviews its accessibility for all cohorts of people for both employment opportunities and service provision.  |
| ICS/ICB/Alliance                     | We ensure there is transparency in terms of availability of our WDES data which is published on our website by 31 October each year. We work collaboratively with the wider health and care system (Suffolk & North East Essex Integrated Care System, etc.) to share best practices relating to staff experience improvement initiatives. |
| Board Assurance Framework (BAF) Risk | This report provides additional assurance in relation to risk BAF5 - Workforce – recruitment and retention, in terms of the rigorous review of the data and progress when addressing any downward trends which may signify inequality in processes within the organisation.  |
| Other                                | N/A  |

**3. SUMMARY:**

There is a requirement for all NHS Trust's to submit Workforce data as part of the Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES). The Trust submitted its 2023/24 data within the reporting timeframe of 1-30 May 2024. Subsequently, a WDES Annual Report and Action Plan is required to be approved and published on the Trust's website by 31 October 2024.

ESNEFT WDES 2023/24 Data

As reported in May this year, the Trust's WDES data for 2023/24 comprised of a snapshot of the workforce from ESR as of 31 March 2024, the employee relation cases from Apr'23 to Mar'24 (Zebra system), and the number of shortlisted applicants v appointed between Apr'23 and Mar'24 (TRAC system). The data is shown in Appendix 1 of the attached annual report and upon analysis it shows that:

- A good improvement again this year in non-disclosure rate (8.85% compared to 12.33% the previous year) which is due to the targeted work undertaken by the workforce team as well as reminding staff in corporate induction and EDI Bitesize training sessions of the importance and purpose of disclosure to ensure they are adequately supported in the workplace.
- The number of staff disclosing a disability has risen to 6.37% from 5.21% the previous year. The largest rise is seen in the clinical workforce Bands 5-7 disclosure, which is encouraging given this is a cohort we're focussing on in terms of communication reach. There is more work to do around educating staff on what constitutes a disability or long term health condition to remove the stigma around declaring a disability, enabling open dialogue with line managers/colleagues to enable more accurate disclosure recording and to ensure that individuals are receiving support in terms of workplace reasonable adjustment requirements and going forward.
- The likelihood of non-disabled staff compared to disabled staff being appointed from shortlisting across all posts changed from 0.88 to 0.98. A figure below 1:00 indicates that disabled staff are more likely than non-disabled staff to be appointed from shortlisting. We are also seeing a rise in disclosure of a disability at application stage, which again is a positive sign around the work we've been doing to advertise our inclusive culture and intersectionality at the Trust. We will continue to review our advert narrative in terms of inclusive language.

- The likelihood of disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff entering the formal capability process is 3.63, which has reduced considerably when compared to the previous year (6.08). This is due to the continued support to divisions from the Employee Relations team regarding long term sickness absence. The team will be providing a deep dive into the outcomes of the capability cases to provide assurance that the individuals have been adequately supported in terms of their wellbeing, that reasonable adjustment requirements were implemented which would allow the individual to return to work sooner or where necessary, looking at redeployment options where it is deemed that their condition means that they cannot safely return to work in their existing role. Although a figure above 1:00 indicates that disabled staff are more likely than non-disabled staff to enter the formal capability process, we can be assured that we are taking a proactive approach to supporting this cohort of staff.

Overall the ESNEFT WDES 2023/24 data set shows an improvement on the previous year in terms of disclosure and a reduction in the number of formal capability processes mainly due to additional support provided to divisions from the Employee Relations team to review short to mid-term sickness absence cases and signposting individuals to additional wellbeing support provision at an earlier stage.

### Progress Over the Past Year

There has been a significant amount of work rolled out over the past year to support and educate our staff, acknowledging our diverse workforce and to consider equality, equity and inclusion in our behaviours and processes which in turn support positive and improved staff and patient experience.

We have significantly strengthened our speaking up process with posters around all hospital sites and inclusion in the corporate induction and EDI Bitesize training session highlighting the various routes to raise a concern; Our suite of EDI training programmes has been strengthened to include disability awareness and Recruitment and Selection Training with approximately 250 staff attending the first cohort of sessions and the next few sessions being almost full in terms of capacity; we have 1100 members who actively support our staff networks and much of their work is to promote intersectionality by signposting to additional resource and support available; the Equality Impact Assessment process is helping departments carefully consider any mitigations where revisions to or drafting of new policies or processes may have a negative impact on or disadvantage certain cohorts due to their protected characteristics. The process is showing a shift in mindsets and an increased enthusiasm towards equality, diversity and inclusion and in the positive impact that simple but more considerate changes to ones behaviour can have on individuals by creating and improving intersectionality amongst our teams and service users.

### Next Steps

The annual report identifies key areas of focus and a detailed action plan which will be delivered via EDI Work plan and EDI priorities. The plan details specific areas which support the continued work we are doing across our WDES metrics and has been reviewed regularly for assurance against progress at the EDI Operational and EDI Strategic Reference Groups:

- Continue to promote the Recruitment and Selection training (which includes unconscious bias, writing and interviewing for inclusion) for all staff involved in recruitment management process and interview panel posts, and increase the numbers and expanding the remit of Cultural Ambassadors to support on all 9 protected characteristics in our formal processes and recruitment processes to ensure they are fair and equitable.

- Complete the review of policies that will benefit our disabled staff e.g. the Employment of People with Disabilities Policy, the Reasonable Adjustments Passport (RAP) document, Managers Guide to Supporting Staff with a Disability, and drafting a Cultural Ambassadors Policy to ensure there is enhanced knowledge and equity of access to support available.
- Continue the programme of works with the ESNAble Staff Network leads to promote support available to staff and managers of staff with disabilities to optimise the understanding of the Reasonable Adjustments Passport as well as Department of Work's Access to Work Scheme working closely with our Health and Safety, Procurement and Occupational Health colleagues to simplify the process.
- Explore a more sustainable disability awareness training programme to be run in-house;
- Continue to promote the revised FTSU Policy and supporting Raising Concerns Guide, the Equal Opportunities & Diversity Policy, Bullying & Harassment Policy and toolkits, which identify the various routes to raise a concern, the process that will be undertaken, how staff will be supported and how the organisation will learn.
- Progress with the work required to attain Level 3 Disability Confident Employer to leader level.
- Reflect on the outcomes from Cohort 3 of the Reverse Mentoring Programme and utilise senior divisional leads to promote Cohort 4 (all protected characteristics), to engage with staff in terms of the benefits of participating in the programme which will provide lived experience of life with a disability or long term health condition in the workplace and associated learnings.
- Explore Network listening events to engage with staff to promote a better understanding and learnings associated with living with a disability or long term health condition and encourage greater staff engagement, participation and remove the stigma of disclosure.
- Continue the EDI Data Group monthly meetings to closely monitor the 9 protected characteristics and provide quarterly reporting and track monthly interventions at the EDI Operational Group.

#### Benchmarking Data

The WDES Annual Report is required to be approved and published by 31 October 2024 and the Committee had requested that the approval of the report is delayed so that a benchmark data section could be added. Unfortunately we have been informed that the national report will not be available until the end of October which would not allow sufficient time to be included. A separate comparator report will therefore be submitted to a future POD Committee instead.

#### **4. Recommendations / Actions**

The Board is asked to ratify the approval of the WDES 2023/24 Annual Report published on the Trust's website on 31 October 2024.