

Trust Board Meeting Report Summary

Date of meeting: September 2026	
Title of Document: Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES)– 2025/26 Annual Report	
To be presented by: Kate Read, Chief People Officer	Author: Clare Harper, HR Business Manager – Staff Experience & Culture
1. Status: For <u>Approval</u>	
2. Purpose: WDES annual report for Board approval and publication on the Trust's website.	
Relates to:	
Strategic Objective	Support and develop our staff
Operational performance	The WDES enables monitoring of data trends of the number of staff disclosing a disability as well as highlighting any inequities in terms of recruitment and formal capability processes. This enables our service leads to review its service provision and improve operational performance and service delivery.
Quality	Staff who feel 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, increasing 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 NHS Digital Strategic Data Collection Service (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, an action plan must be implemented to address any inequities within our 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 (virtually) 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	https://www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/workforce-equality-data-standards/equality-standard/

Accreditation/ Inspection	The data is assessed by the National WDES team post submission 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 the accessibility of its service provision by working closely with our patient and staff governors and staff networks.
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 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:

Following submission of the Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES) 2025/26 data in May, the Trust is required to produce an annual report summarising the data analysis, highlighting progress over the past year and identifying priorities to address inequalities

The 2025/26 Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES) Annual Report is attached for assurance and demonstrates the Trust position in terms of disability equality.

Please note that this summary report should be read in conjunction with our EDI Strategy, Key Performance Indicators and our EDI action plan. These are monitored through our EDI governance meetings and the People and Organisational Development Committee.

Summary of Data Analysis

The Trust has made continued progress in improving disability inclusion, with the proportion of staff declaring a disability or long-term condition increasing to 7.6% (up from 7.24% in 2024/25 and 2.93% in 2021/22). This reflects improved data collection and growing confidence in disability disclosure. 73.2% of disabled staff report receiving reasonable adjustments.

However, the data set identifies several remaining inequalities. Disabled candidates were slightly less likely to be appointed following shortlisting than non-disabled candidates (relative likelihood 1.36:1), and disabled staff were more likely to enter the formal capability process (relative likelihood 2.11:1). Whilst the latter has been due to an increased focus on mid-to-long-term sickness absence support, the data highlights the need for continued monitoring and review.

The NHS Staff Survey showed disabled staff continue to report poorer workplace experiences than non-disabled colleagues. They were more likely to experience bullying, harassment and abuse, feel pressure to attend work when unwell, and were less likely to believe they have equal opportunities for career progression or feel valued by the organisation. While reporting of bullying incidents has increased, suggesting greater confidence in raising concerns, it is recognised that this is in the context of staff engagement and satisfaction which have slightly declined.

Representation of colleagues with a disability at Board level reduced.

Progress over the past year

A number of support mechanisms and key initiatives have been implemented over the past year. These have focused on engagement with staff by promoting the support from our disability staff network (ESNAble), the establishment of a Neurodiversity working group and a reasonable

adjustment working group, as well as the launch of a Carers Network. These have provided safe spaces where staff can discuss concerns or suggestions to improve current processes, address workplace concerns and working collaboratively to reach a solution.

Quarterly network members meetings have been well attended and provided updates on disability inclusion initiatives such as the revised reasonable adjustment passport and supporting guide which have been significantly strengthened to support individuals in the workplace; support and guidance on adjustments for staff undertaking EpicEPR training; and a range of guest speakers delivered informative sessions on neurodiversity, Long COVID, cancer in the workplace, stammering support, Access to Work application process, staff wellbeing, and support and benefits available for family carers.

In addition, data collection from career conversations has been monitored through the lens of EDI to ensure that all protected characteristics are not being disadvantaged, particularly in relation to development or promotion opportunities. The Employee Relations team have been monitoring the formal capability process to ensure that individuals have been well supported throughout. The Recruitment team has continued to work with recruiting managers and candidates to ensure that requested reasonable adjustments are implemented for the interview processes.

Future Priorities

To address the disparities shown in the 2025/26 data, the following set of priorities will be taken forward over the next year:

- Strengthened utilisation of ambassadors throughout the recruitment, selection and employee relations cases. Monthly tracking will be undertaken.
- Improved access to, and timely implementation of, reasonable adjustments and flexible working opportunities
- Working with colleagues in ESNAble, we will enhance disability awareness and inclusive leadership across all management levels;

These priorities will be monitored through the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion governance meetings to ensure sustained progress towards achieving equitable outcomes and an inclusive workplace for all staff.

Next Steps

The report was reviewed by the People and Organisational Development Committee, who recommended the report to Board for approval. The Board is therefore asked to receive the report and thereafter it will be published on the Trust's website by the national deadline of 31 October 2026.

4. Recommendations / Actions

The Board is asked to approve the WDES 2025/26 Annual Report