

Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES) Report and Action Plan 2024

NHS Midlands and Lancashire Commissioning Support Unit

midlandsandlancashirecsu.nhs.uk



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Definitions	3
WDES Data Sources	3
WDES Reporting Metrics	4
WDES 2024 Key Findings*	5
WDES Action Plan	6
Conclusion	7
Appendix 1: ML WDES Data Set 2024 and Analysis	8



Introduction

This report sets out the performance and approach to NHS Midlands and Lancashire Commissioning Support Unit's (ML) Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES) for 2024.

The WDES is an equality reporting requirement introduced by NHS England. The aim of the WDES is for NHS organisations to review the experiences and outcomes of disabled and non-disabled staff. The WDES helps NHS organisations to review their workforce data across ten metrics and to produce an action plan to improve workplace experiences of disabled staff. The WDES also places an obligation on NHS organisations to improve disabled representation at Board and senior leader level.

The WDES applies to NHS organisations including service providers, commissioners and independent organisations through the NHS standard contract. WDES is not mandatory for Commissioning Support Units, however ML is committed to collecting and analysing WDES data as good practice and to gain valuable insight into staff experiences and outcomes.

It is important to note that while WDES data provides a valuable overview of workforce demographics and broad experiences, it does not tell us about the context behind the data. It is recommended that organisations use the WDES data to explore lived experiences of staff to gain more understanding of ML's diverse workforce.

Completing the WDES is an important part in better understanding experiences of staff living with disabilities, and support ML in creating cultures of belonging and trust that will improve staff retention, support diverse recruitment and provide sustainable careers.

Key NHS strategic documents such as the NHS People Plan, the NHS Long Term Plan, and the NHS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Improvement Plan refer to the WDES as a reporting tool that support NHS organisations to address prejudice and discrimination that exists through behaviour, policies, practices and cultures against certain groups and individuals across the NHS workforce.

Definitions

Definitions of disability differ across NHS systems. For example, the NHS Electronic Staff Record (ESR), NHS National Staff Survey and NHS Jobs define disability in different ways. These definitions also vary when compared to the legal definition of disability, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

In this report, workforce data that has been collected from ESR details staff members who have (or have not) stated that they live with a disability, long-term illness or health condition. ML acknowledges that staff may not disclose their disability status on ESR, and therefore workforce data should be viewed with caution as it may not capture a fully representative picture.

ML recognises that differences in how different systems define disability may cause confusion in reporting and may impact upon the level of clarity that an organisation can report upon via the WDES. Throughout this report, the data sources for each WDES metric are provided in Appendix 1.

WDES Data Sources

The information presented in this report is taken from the following sources:

- Electronic Staff Record (ESR) as of 31 March 2024
- NHS Jobs / TRAC recruitment data: 01 April 2023 – 31 March 2024
- Formal capability process information supplied by the ML People Services Team: 01 April 2023 – 31 March 2024
- NHS National Staff Survey results for ML: 2023

WDES Reporting Metrics

While completion of the WDES is not mandatory for CSUs, to fully support the implementation of the WDES, ML fully supports the principles and purpose of the WDES and commits to:

- Collect data of our workforce
- Carry out data analysis
- Produce a WDES report
- Publish our WDES report and action plan

There are ten WDES metrics that NHS organisations are required to report on annually*:

WDES Metric	Description
Metric 1	<p>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.</p> <p>The WDES technical guidance states that Metric 1 data should be presented as grouped by pay band into seven clusters:</p> <p>Cluster 1: AfC Bands - Under 1, 1, 2, 3 and 4</p> <p>Cluster 2: AfC Bands - 5, 6 and 7</p> <p>Cluster 3: AfC Bands - 8a and 8b</p> <p>Cluster 4: AfC Bands - 8c, 8d, 9 and VSM (see note below)</p> <p>Cluster 5: Medical and Dental staff, consultants</p> <p>Cluster 6: Medical and Dental staff, non-consultant career grade</p> <p>Cluster 7: Medical and Dental staff, trainee grades</p>
Metric 2	Relative likelihood of disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff being appointed from shortlisting across all posts.
Metric 3	Relative likelihood of disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff entering the formal capability process, as measured by entry into the formal capability procedure.
Metric 4	<p>Percentage of disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from:</p> <p>a) Patients/service users, their relatives or other members of the public</p> <p>b) Managers</p> <p>c) Other colleagues</p> <p>d) 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.</p>
Metric 5	Percentage of disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff believing that the organisation provides equal opportunities for career progression or promotion.

<p>Metric 6</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Metric 7</p>	<p>Percentage of disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff saying that they are satisfied with the extent to which their organisation values their work.</p>
<p>Metric 8**</p>	<p>Percentage of disabled staff saying that their employer has made reasonable adjustment(s) to enable them to carry out their work.</p>
<p>Metric 9</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The staff engagement score for disabled staff, compared to non-disabled staff. <p>Please note: this part of the metric is now solely a comparison between the engagement score for disabled staff and non-disabled staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you taken action to facilitate the voices of disabled staff in your organisation to be heard (Yes or No)? <p>Please note: if the response to part b) is yes, please provide at least one practical example of current action being taken in the relevant section of the organisation’s annual report.</p> <p>If no, please include what action is planned to address this gap in the annual report.</p>
<p>Metric 10</p>	<p>Percentage difference between the organisation’s Board voting membership and its organisation’s overall workforce, disaggregated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By voting and non-voting membership of the board. By Executive and non-exec membership of the board.

* Data should be broken down by disabled and non-disabled staff
 ** Metric 8 should be reported broken down by disabled staff only

WDES 2024 Key Findings*

<p>80.84% of employees declared their disability status on ESR</p>	<p>6.17% of ML employees declared a disability on ESR</p>	<p>Disabled candidates were slightly more likely to be appointed from shortlisting compared to non-disabled candidates</p>
<p>Disabled employees were more likely to experience harassment, bullying or abuse</p>	<p>19.67% of disabled staff have felt pressure from their managers to come to work despite not feeling well enough</p>	<p>Fewer disabled employees feel ML provides equal opportunities for career progression or promotion compared to non-disabled employees</p>

* A detailed breakdown and analysis of WDES 2024 data can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.



WDES Action Plan

ML's WDES action plan has been developed in collaboration with ML's Disability Network and ML Staff Side colleagues. Colleagues shared feedback and ideas for work that the organisation should carry out over the following year to consolidate and improve upon this year's WDES data findings, and the following recommended actions were co-produced:

WDES Action Number	Action	Deadline	Responsible Team/Lead
1	ML to continue to promote self-reporting disability status and other protected characteristic information via the NHS Electronic Staff Record system	Ongoing throughout 2024-25	OD Team
2	ML to work with the Disability Network, and Staff Side to evaluate current EDI-related training (including mandatory training) and guidance for managers and assess the wider impact that EDI training has in fostering inclusive culture across the organisation	31 March 2025	OD Team / The Inclusion Team
3	ML to work with the Disability Network on plain language, comprehensive guidance to support staff in relation to making reasonable adjustments when participating in the recruitment process	31 January 2025	OD Team / HR Teams
4	ML to carry out engagement with disabled staff regarding staff survey results relating to the increase in disabled staff reporting that they have felt pressure from their managers to come to work despite not feeling well enough to perform their duties. Engagement will support ML to understand concerns in more detail and develop meaningful actions where necessary	30 June 2025	OD Team / The Inclusion Team
5	Foster a culture where EDI is everybody's responsibility: incorporate EDI objectives into appraisal process, and, to link in with the aims of NHS England's EDI Improvement Plan, implement measurable EDI-related objectives for Board members and senior staff	31 March 2025	OD Team
6	Formulate a comprehensive communications and engagement calendar to support diverse staff at all levels of the organisation to feel seen and heard via publication of blogs, awareness articles, and other communications that celebrate diversity	31 December 2024	OD Team / Inclusion Team / Communications and Engagement Team

The WDES actions will be monitored through the year via ML's Equality Sub-Group, with oversight from ML's Disability Network and ML Staff Side, and progress will be captured in ML's 2025 WDES report.

Conclusion

Our WDES report provides an overview of NHS Midlands and Lancashire's WDES data for 2023-24. We are working to create an inclusive and positive environment for our workforce, and our WDES reporting data shows sections of our workforce population feel comfortable in reporting their disability status. However, we are aware that there is more work to do to support our colleagues in updating their disability status on the ESR system.

We also acknowledge that there is work to be done to better understand and address experiences of disabled staff, and there are actions that we can take to make our staff feel more included and able to thrive.

We are looking forward to working with colleagues in ML's Disability Network, and with colleagues across the organisation to improve the way we work and meet the needs and aspirations of our diverse workforce.



Appendix 1: ML WDES Data Set 2024 and Analysis

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

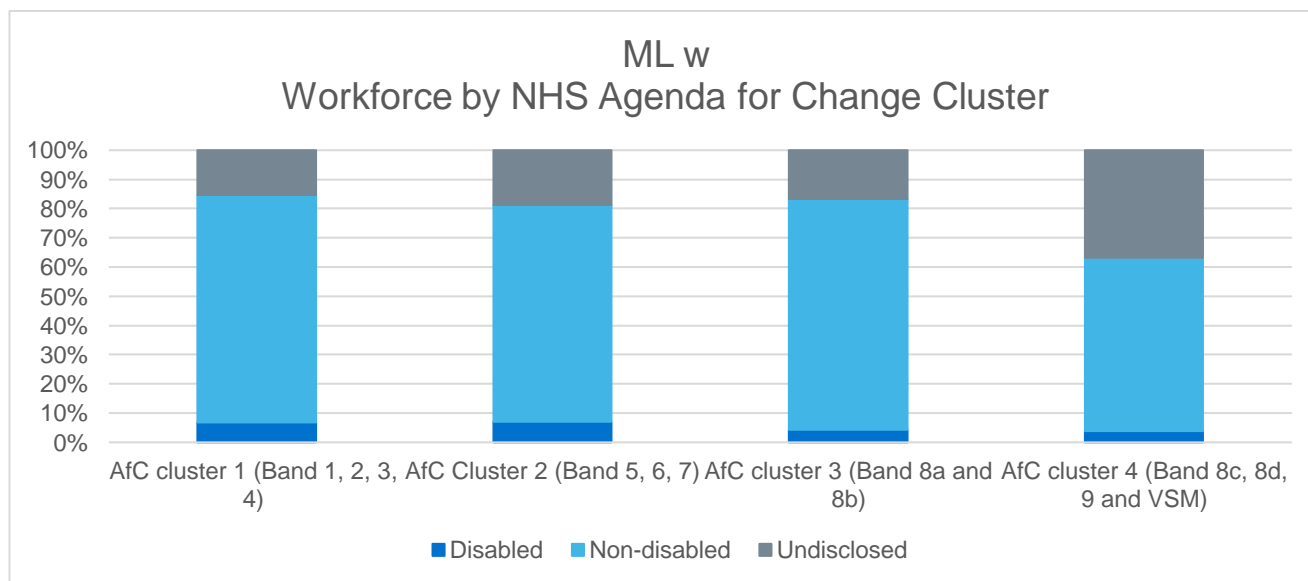
	2022	2023	2024
Number of staff employed within the organisation	2125	2231	1863
Proportion of staff self-reporting their disability status (%)	79.9%	82.5%	80.94%
Proportion of disabled staff (%)	3.6%	4.98%	6.17%

The total number of staff employed within ML has decreased in comparison with the previous WDES reporting year.

The proportion of staff that self-report their disability status on ESR has decreased by around 1.5%.

The proportion of disabled staff working at ML has increased by just over 1%.

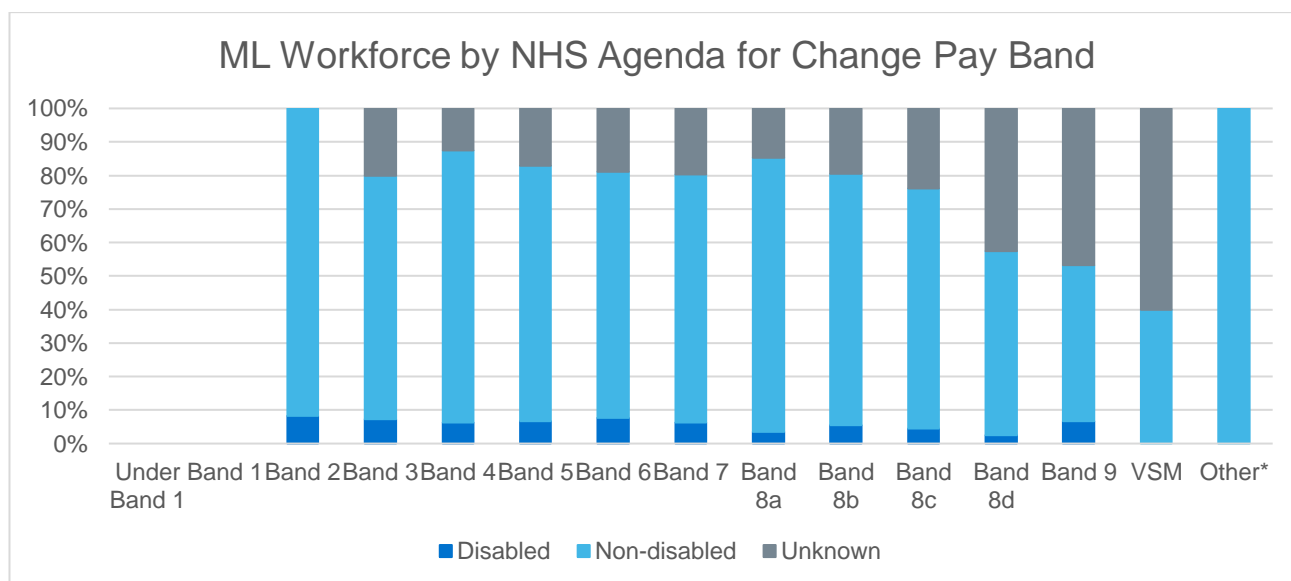
Bar chart showing breakdown of staff by Agenda for Change cluster:



The breakdown of ML staff by Agenda for Change cluster highlights that approximately 7% of staff employed in AfC cluster 1 and cluster 2 respectively live with a long-term health condition or disability. The proportion of disabled staff appears to decrease in the upper AfC pay bands and VSM, however caution should be applied when viewing the data, particularly for cluster 4, as around a third of staff have not disclosed their disability status.



Bar chart showing disability status of staff within each AfC pay band:



*Clinical advisors

A breakdown of the ML workforce by NHS Agenda for Change pay band shows that approximately 5-10% of employees have self-declared a disability across each pay band. However, it is challenging to fully understand the population of staff living with a disability across the organisation, as there are significant gaps in data, particularly in pay band 7 and in pay bands 8b-VSM.

Metric 2: Relative likelihood of non-disabled staff compared to disabled staff being appointed from shortlisting across all posts. This metric refers to both external and internal posts

	2022	2023	2024
Number of shortlisted applicants (headcount)	1279	1625	820
Disabled shortlisted applicants (headcount and %)	92 (7.19%)	131 (8.06%)	70 (8.5%)
Total number of staff appointed from shortlisting	304	479	198
Disabled staff appointed from shortlisting (headcount and % from total appointed)	19 (6.3%)	25 (5.2%)	19 (9.60%)
Relative likelihood of appointment from shortlisting for:			
a) Disabled staff	a) 20.7%	a) Data unavailable	a) 27.1%
b) Non-disabled staff	b) 18.6%	b) Data unavailable	b) 24.0%
c) Undisclosed	c) 30.9%	c) Data unavailable	c) 21.9%
Relative Likelihood of non-disabled candidates being appointed from shortlisting compared to disabled candidates	0.90	1.54	0.88

WDES reporting data shows that the relative likelihood of non-disabled candidates being appointed from shortlisting compared to disabled candidates is 0.88.

NHS England WDES guidance states that a figure below 1.00 indicates that disabled staff are more likely to be appointed to roles at ML from shortlisting compared to non-disabled candidates. This is reflected in that disabled candidates had a 27.1% likelihood of being appointed from shortlisting compared to 24.0% of non-disabled candidates.

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

Fewer than five staff entered the formal capability process in the reporting year. ML does not hold details regarding the disability status of staff entering the process and therefore is unable to report on this metric.

Nationally, WDES reporting indicates that disabled staff are more likely to enter formal disciplinary processes compared to non-disabled staff.

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

- Patients/service users, their relatives or other members of the public
- Managers
- Other colleagues
- 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

	Disabled	Non-disabled
Percentage of disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from patients/service users, their relatives or other members of the public	2022: 14.42% 2023: 11.58%	2022: 7.63% 2023: 4.66%
Percentage of disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from managers	2022: 12.54% 2023: 13.51%	2022: 5.41% 2023: 5.04%
Percentage of disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from other colleagues	2022: 16.14% 2023: 14.79%	2022: 6.51% 2023: 6.63%
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.	2022: 64.37% 2023: 47.76%	2022: 42.98% 2023: 37.78%

The percentage of disabled and not-disabled staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from patients/service users, their relatives or other members of the public has decreased by around 3% since 2023.

The percentage of non-disabled staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from managers has slightly decreased, however there has been a 1% increase in disabled staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from managers compared to the previous WDES reporting year. The percentage of

disabled staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from managers is twice as high as that of non-disabled staff.

The percentage of disabled staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from other colleagues is twice as high as the percentage of non-disabled staff, however it should be noted that the figure has decreased slightly compared to 2023 (16.14%).

Under half of disabled staff that experience harassment, bullying or abuse at work in this WDES reporting year said that they or a colleague reported it. This is a decrease of nearly 17% compared to 2023.

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

	Disabled	Non-disabled
Percentage of disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff believing that the organisation provides equal opportunities for career progression or promotion.	2022: 61.88% 2023: 53.08%	2022: 65.96% 2023: 62.30%

There has been a reduction in the percentage of disabled staff believing that ML provided equal opportunities for career progression or promotion. In this WDES reporting year, 53% of disabled staff believe there are equal opportunities for career progression, compared to 62% of non-disabled staff.

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

	Disabled	Non-disabled
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.	2022: 10.00% 2023: 19.67%	2022: 8.76% 2023: 11.80%

The WDES data shows that overall, there has been an increase in the percentages of both disabled and non-disabled staff saying that they have felt pressure from their managers to come to work, despite not feeling well enough to perform their duties. The percentage of disabled staff reporting this has significantly increased compared to non-disabled staff – at 19.67%, the figure has almost doubled compared to the previous WDES reporting year.

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

	Disabled	Non-disabled
Percentage of disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff saying that they are satisfied with the extent to which their organisation values their work.	2022: 53.77% 2023: 51.33%	2022: 65.93% 2023: 61.75%



There has been a similar decrease in the percentage of disabled and non-disabled staff saying that they are satisfied with the extent to which their organisation values their work in this WDES reporting year. It should be noted however that fewer disabled staff feel satisfied with the extent to which ML values their work compared to non-disabled staff.

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

	Disabled
Percentage of disabled staff saying that their employer has made reasonable adjustment(s) to enable them to carry out their work.	2022: 77.71% 2023: 78.93%

There has been a 1% increase in the percentage of staff saying that ML has made reasonable adjustment(s) to support them to carry out their work. Approximately three quarters of disabled staff feel that this was the case.

**Metric 9: a) The staff engagement score for disabled staff, compared to non-disabled staff
b) Have you taken action to facilitate the voices of disabled staff in your organisation to be heard (Yes or No)?**

	Disabled	Non-disabled
The staff engagement score for disabled staff, compared to non-disabled staff*	2022: 6.77 2023: 6.44	2022: 7.27 2023: 7.07

*Staff engagement score is 0-10, where the higher the score, the more engaged staff feel

The staff engagement score for disabled staff is generally lower compared to non-disabled staff. WDES metric 9 data for this reporting year shows that the staff engagement score for both disabled and non-disabled staff appears to have decreased slightly.

To facilitate the voices of disabled staff in the organisation to be heard, ML has a functional and active Disability Network in place.

Metric 10: Percentage difference between the organisation's Board voting membership and its organisation's overall workforce, disaggregated by voting and non-voting membership of the board, and by executive and non-exec membership of the board

	Disabled	Non-disabled	Undisclosed
Staff employed within the organisation	6.17%	74.77%	19.06%
Total Board members (%)	0%	45.45%	54.55%
Of which, Voting members (%)	-	44.44%	55.56%
Of which, Exec Board members (%)	-	50.0%	50.0%

The data highlights that while 6.17% of ML's staff self-report as being disabled, ESR workforce data shows that there is no disabled representation at Board level. It is important to note that over half of the

ML Board members have not disclosed their disability status, and therefore the available data may not capture a comprehensive understanding of disability representation.





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