

Vision | Openness | Integrity | Compassion | Excellence



Bolton
NHS Foundation Trust

Workforce Disability Equality Standard 2025 Findings and Action Plan

Improving care,
transforming lives...for a **better** Bolton



Introduction

Steering a culture of inclusion remains a critical priority for our organisation. An inclusive workplace ensures that all staff feel welcome, valued, and able to thrive, which in turn enables us to provide the best possible care for the people of Bolton.

The importance of inclusion is embedded in the NHS People Plan, our Trust Strategy 2019–2024, and our EDI Plan 2025–2027, which sets out our vision and priorities for improving equality, diversity and inclusion.

Nationally, disabled staff and those with long-term health conditions continue to report less favorable experiences across the NHS workforce. Since 2019, the Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES) has provided a framework for organisations to measure, compare, and improve the experiences of disabled and non-disabled staff. The WDES specifically examines areas such as workforce representation, recruitment, career progression, experience of bullying and harassment, provision of reasonable adjustments, and how valued and engaged disabled staff feel at work.

By improving these aspects of staff experience, we also

enhance the quality of care and patient outcomes, as an inclusive workforce is better able to meet the needs of the diverse communities we serve.

This year's WDES results show encouraging progress in areas such as workforce representation, staff engagement, and confidence in career progression. However, challenges remain, particularly in relation to harassment from patients, the public and staff, as well as the continuing absence of disabled representation at Board level. While many of our indicators are performing at or above the national average, we recognise that meeting national benchmarks is not enough. We are committed to working proactively on all indicators, as our ambition is to lead the way and pioneer best practice in disability inclusion across the NHS.

The following report sets out the Trust's WDES data for 2024/25, alongside long-term trends and national comparisons. It should be read in conjunction with our EDI Plan 2025-27 (found at [Our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion - Bolton NHS FT](#)), which details the actions we are taking to address inequalities and drive meaningful change.

Key findings – Comparisons

Key to Symbols and Indicators

✓ = Improved ✗ = Below target → = No change ↑ = Increase ↓ = Decrease

| Metric | 2025 Disabled | 2025 Non-Disabled | Compared to previous year (2024) | National Average |
|--|---------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Workforce representation of Disabled staff (AfC) | 5.2% | – | ↑ ✓ (+0.3%) | ✗ National 5.7% → 0.5% below |
| 2. Relative likelihood of non-disabled staff being appointed from shortlisting | 1.04 (ref) | – | → (no change) | ✗ National 0.98 → 0.06 worse |
| 3. Relative likelihood of Disabled staff entering performance management | 0% | – | → (no change) | ✓ National 2.04 → 2.04 better |
| 4a. Harassment, bullying or abuse from patients/public | 30.0% | 22.2% | ↑ ✗ (+2.6%) | → National 30% → same |
| 4b. Harassment, bullying or abuse from managers | 11.2% | 5.1% | ↓ ✓ (-2.9%) | ✓ National 14.6% → 3.4% better |
| 4c. Harassment, bullying or abuse from colleagues | 21.8% | 12.1% | ↑ ✗ (+0.8%) | ✓ National 23.8% → 2% better |
| 4d. Last time experienced harassment - reported | 56.1% | 55.5% | ↑ ✓ (+4.7%) | ✓ National 52.5% → 3.6% better |
| 5. Equal opportunities for career progression | 51.1% | 58.4% | ↑ ✓ (+3.2%) | ✗ National 52.2% → 1.1% worse |
| 6. Felt pressure to come to work when unwell | 23.6% | 14.8% | ↓ ✓ (-0.3%) | ✓ National 26.6% → 3% better |
| 7. Organisation values work | 39.3% | 46.5% | ↑ ✓ (+2.5%) | ✓ National 36.9% → 2.4% better |
| 8. Employer made adequate adjustments (Disabled only) | 73.2% | – | ↑ ✓ (+0.3%) | ✗ National 74.5% → 1.3% worse |
| 9. Staff engagement score | 6.57 | 7.01 | ↑ ✓ (+0.02) | → National 6.5 → Same |
| 10. Representation of Disabled Board members | 0% | 100% | → (no change) | ✗ 5.2% below workforce benchmark (ESR) |

WDES results at a glance

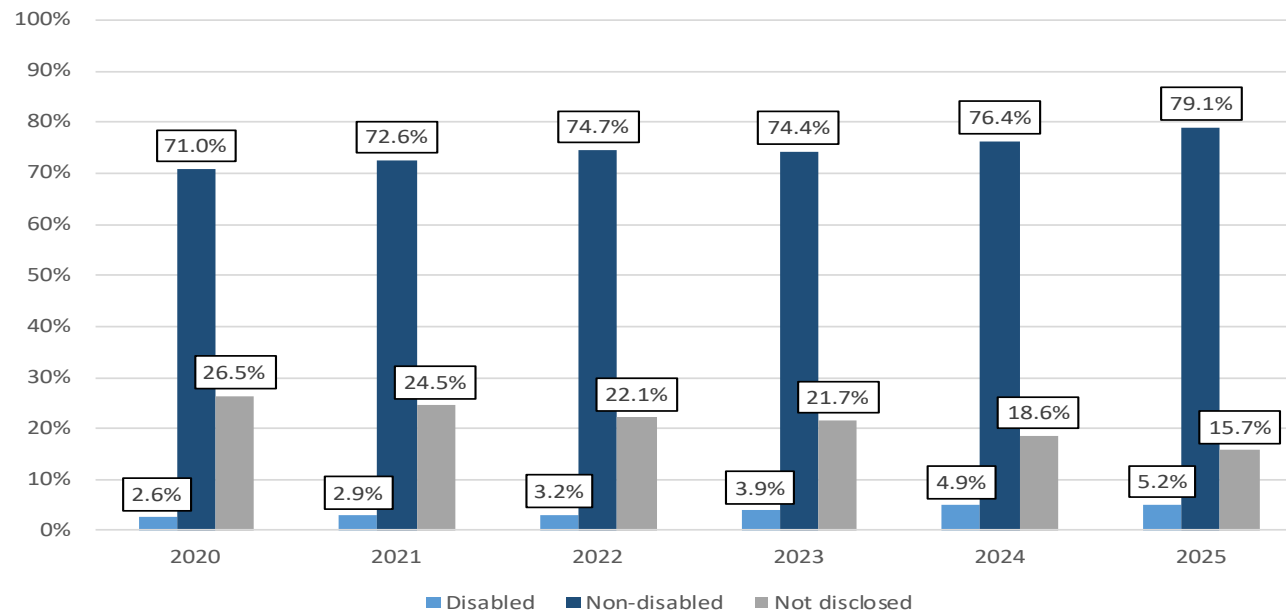
* Arrows indicate an improving or deteriorating position from the previous year. RAG rating shows comparisons: Metrics 1 & 4(i-iv) compare to the national averages; Metrics 2 & 3 compare the disabled/non-disabled likelihoods.

| WDES metric | | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | Difference bet 2024 & 2025 * | |
|-------------|--|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------------------------|----------|
| 1 | Workforce representation of Disabled staff (AfC) | Overall | 2.6% | 2.9% | 3.3% | 3.9% | 4.9% | 5.2% | 0.3% ↑ |
| | | 8c and above | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0% ↔ |
| 2 | Relative likelihood of non-disabled staff applicants being appointed from shortlisting across all posts compared to Disabled staff | 1.57 | 1.57 | 1.04 | 1.05 | 1.04 | 1.04 | 0 ↔ | |
| 3 | Relative likelihood of Disabled staff entering the performance management capability process compared to non-disabled staff | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 ↔ | |
| 4(i) | Percentage of staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse in the last 12 months by patients/service users, their relative or other member of the public | Disabled | 26.1% | 30.8% | 33.7% | 29.2% | 27.4% | 30.0% | 2.57% ↓ |
| | | Non-disabled | 21.9% | 24.2% | 24.2% | 24.5% | 21.4% | 22.2% | 0.79% ↓ |
| 4(ii) | Percentage of staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from managers | Disabled | 19.1% | 15.7% | 12.5% | 13.4% | 14.1% | 11.2% | -2.91% ↑ |
| | | Non-disabled | 9.9% | 9.4% | 9.7% | 9.0% | 6.8% | 5.1% | -1.74% ↑ |
| 4(iii) | Percentage of staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from other colleagues | Disabled | 29.9% | 23.3% | 20.4% | 22.6% | 21.0% | 21.8% | 0.84% ↓ |
| | | Non-disabled | 14.6% | 14.3% | 15.2% | 14.4% | 13.8% | 12.1% | -1.74% ↑ |
| 4(iv) | Percentage of staff saying the last time they experienced harassment, bullying or abuse at work, they or a colleague reported it | Disabled | 42.1% | 54.0% | 49.0% | 51.1% | 51.4% | 56.1% | 4.66% ↑ |
| | | Non-disabled | 41.3% | 49.8% | 46.0% | 47.4% | 50.4% | 55.5% | 5.11% ↑ |

WDES Indicator 1

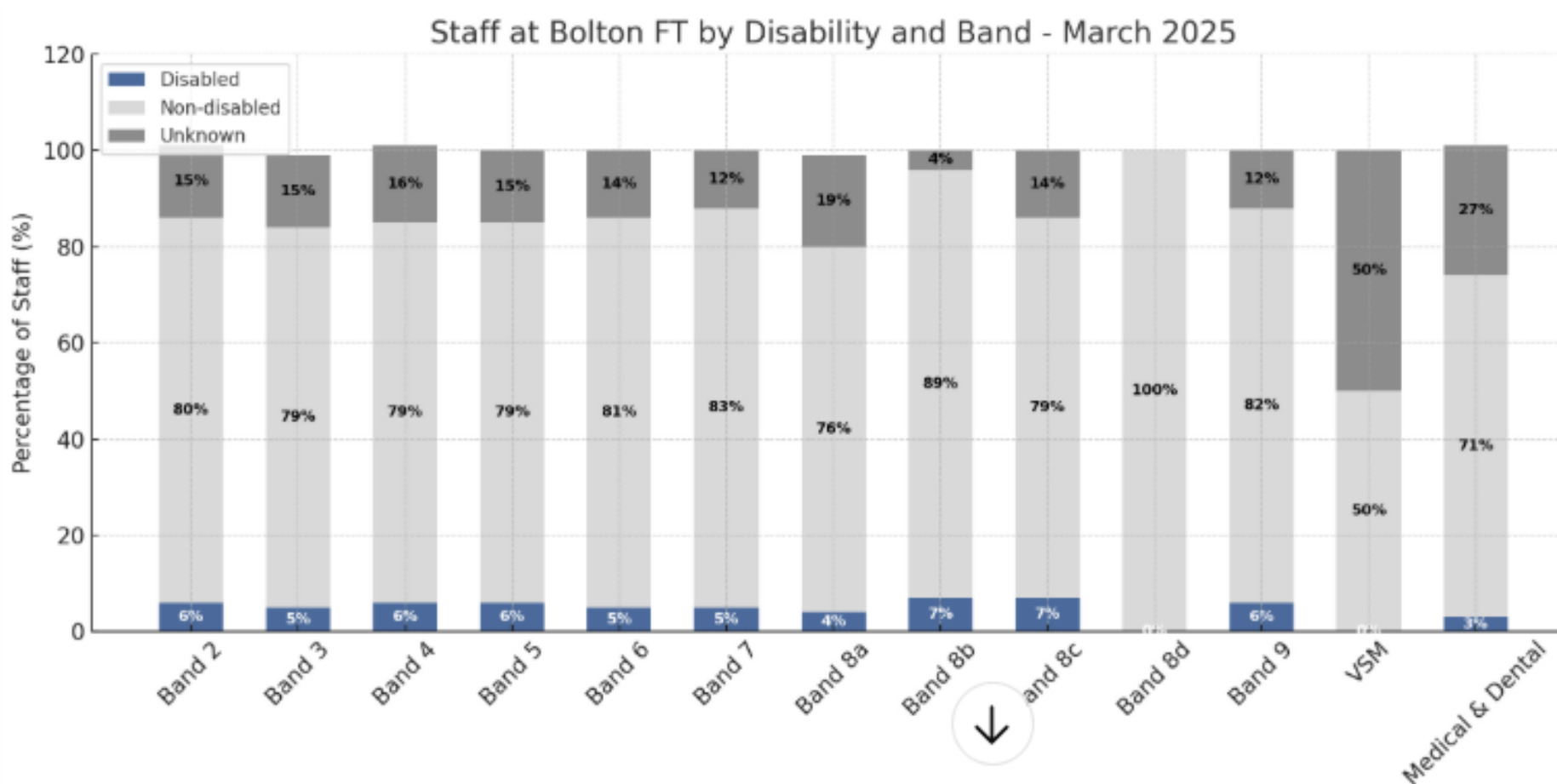
Bolton NHS Foundation Trust staff by disability status

| Year | Headcount | | | Percentages | | |
|------|-----------|--------------|---------|-------------|--------------|---------|
| | Disabled | Non-disabled | Unknown | Disabled | Non-disabled | Unknown |
| 2020 | 144 | 3982 | 1485 | 2.6% | 71.0% | 26.5% |
| 2021 | 167 | 4226 | 1428 | 2.9% | 72.6% | 24.5% |
| 2022 | 187 | 4414 | 1309 | 3.2% | 74.7% | 22.1% |
| 2023 | 240 | 4542 | 1323 | 3.9% | 74.4% | 21.7% |
| 2024 | 306 | 4729 | 1153 | 4.9% | 76.4% | 18.6% |
| 2025 | 329 | 5031 | 1001 | 5.2% | 79.1% | 15.7% |



- As of March 2025, 5.2% of our workforce had declared a disability, up from 4.9% in 2024 and double the level reported in 2020. This shows steady progress, although we remain just below the national average of 5.7%.
- The NHS Staff Survey suggests the true figure is much higher, with 24.4% of staff reporting a disability or long-term condition.
- The proportion of staff with an 'unknown' disability status has also reduced from 26.5% in 2020 to 15.7% in 2025, showing growing confidence in sharing information.

WDES indicator 1

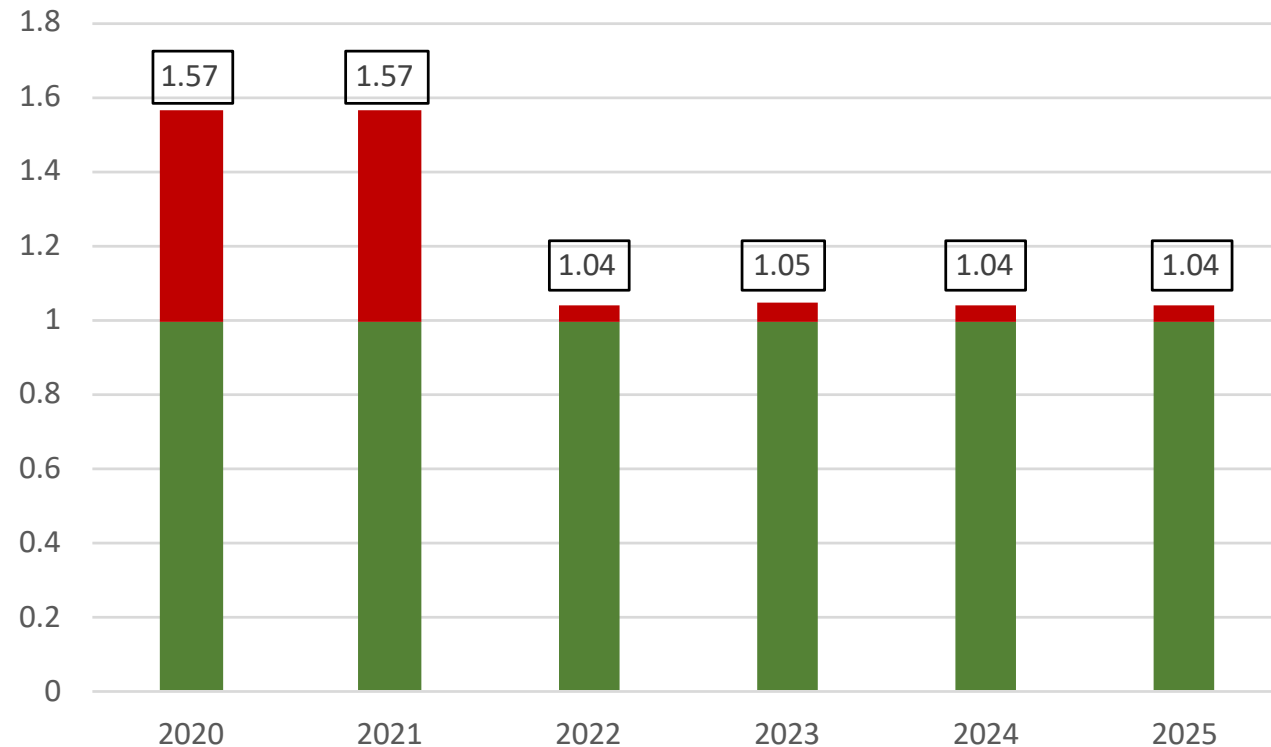


- **Highest declarations are at Bands 8b/8c (7%).**
Clinical staff: 3–6%, peaking at Band 5, but only 4% at senior levels (8a+).
- Non-clinical staff: Around 8% overall, highest at Band 2 (10%), falling to 5% at senior levels.
- Senior staff (8a+): About 5%, slightly higher for non-clinical than clinical staff.
- Medical & Dental: Lowest at 3%, with 1 in 4 undeclared, limiting analysis.

WDES indicator 2

Relative likelihood of Disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff being appointed from shortlisting across all posts

(figure above 1 indicates a higher likelihood of non-disabled staff being appointed from shortlisting than disabled staff.)



- Applicants without a disability are slightly more likely to be appointed from shortlisting, with no change from the previous year.
- The Trust's score is 0.06 worse than the national average (0.98), indicating less equitable recruitment outcomes than seen nationally.
- Over the past 5 years there has been a considerable improvement in the Trust score by 0.53 points. This shows progress in making recruitment fairer and inclusive.

WDES Indicator 3

Relative likelihood of Disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff entering the formal capability process

**A figure above '1' indicates that Disabled staff members are more likely than non-disabled staff to enter the formal capability process.*

| Year | Relative likelihood |
|------|---------------------|
| 2020 | 0.00 |
| 2021 | 0.00 |
| 2022 | 0.00 |
| 2023 | 0.00 |
| 2024 | 0.00 |
| 2025 | 0.00 |

- The numbers of staff entering the capability process for both disabled and non-disabled staff have been proportionally so low that the relative likelihood is 0.
- Nationally, however the relative likelihood is 2.04, indicating disabled staff are more than twice as likely to enter the capability process as their non-disabled staff
- However, around 16% of staff have not declared their status, which may affect the accuracy of this figure.

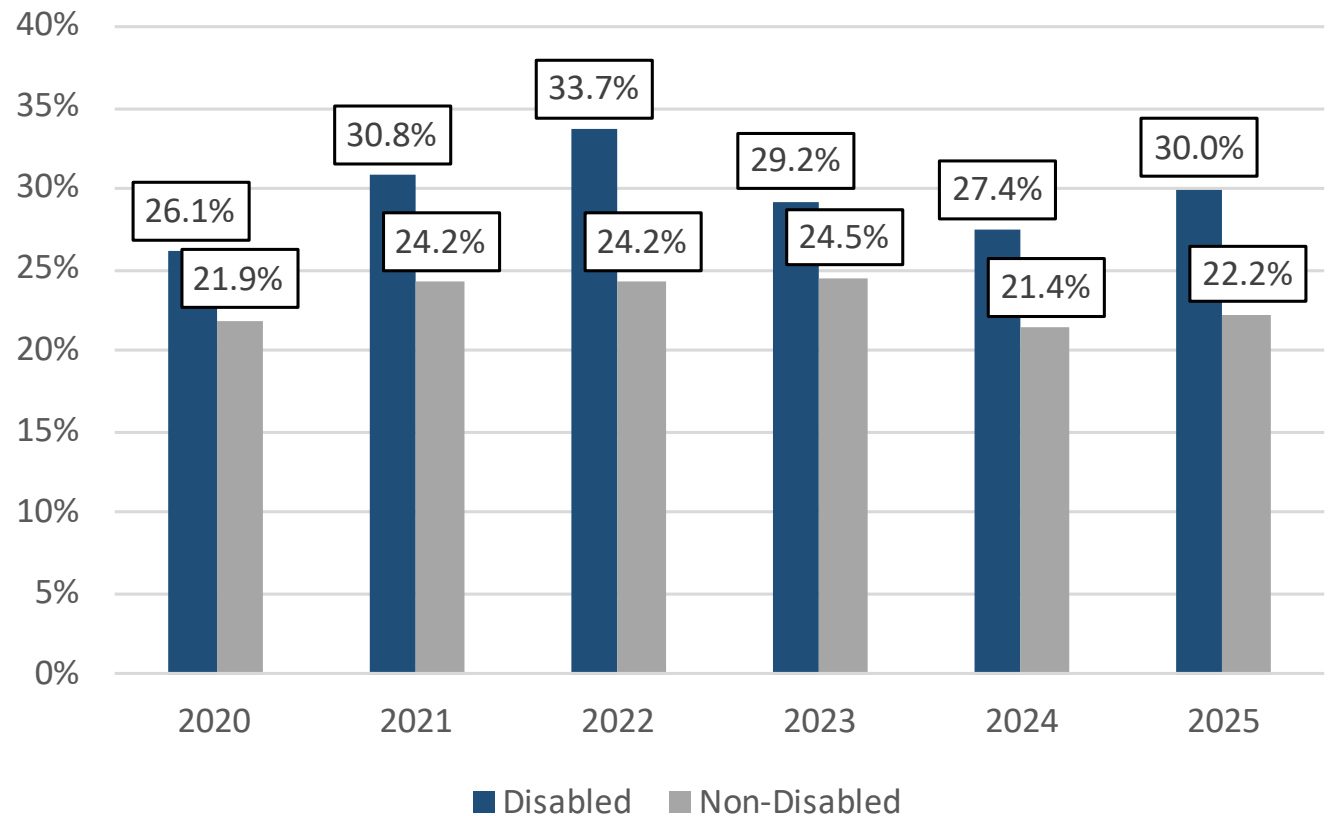
WDES indicator 4(i)

Percentage of staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from:

(i) Patients/service users, their relative or other member of the public

| Year | Disabled | Non-Disabled |
|------|----------|--------------|
| 2020 | 26.1% | 21.9% |
| 2021 | 30.8% | 24.2% |
| 2022 | 33.7% | 24.2% |
| 2023 | 29.2% | 24.5% |
| 2024 | 27.4% | 21.4% |
| 2025 | 30.0% | 22.2% |

- There has been a 2.57% increase in reports of bullying and harassment from patients and the public over the past year now at 30%. This matches the national average at 30.3%.
- However staff with a disability continue to experience higher rates of bullying, harassment and abuse from patients/ service users by 7.8% compared to non-disabled staff



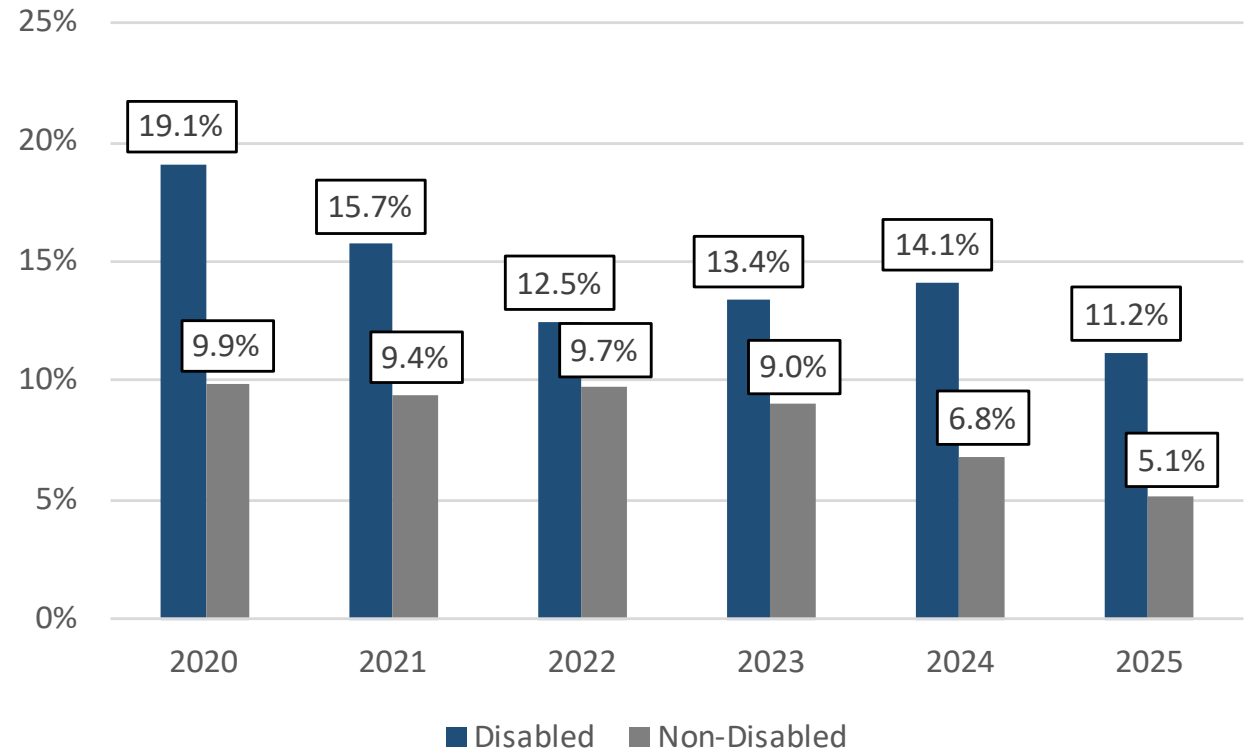
WDES indicator 4(ii)

Percentage of staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from

(ii) Managers

| Year | Disabled | Non-Disabled |
|------|----------|--------------|
| 2020 | 19.1% | 9.9% |
| 2021 | 15.7% | 9.4% |
| 2022 | 12.5% | 9.7% |
| 2023 | 13.4% | 9.0% |
| 2024 | 14.1% | 6.8% |
| 2025 | 11.2% | 5.1% |

- Staff with a disability experience higher rates of bullying and abuse from managers (11.2% disabled compared to 5.1% of non-disabled). Rates have decreased by 2.9% since the previous year and by 8% over the past 6 years
- The Trusts score remains 3.4% better than the national average at 14.6%



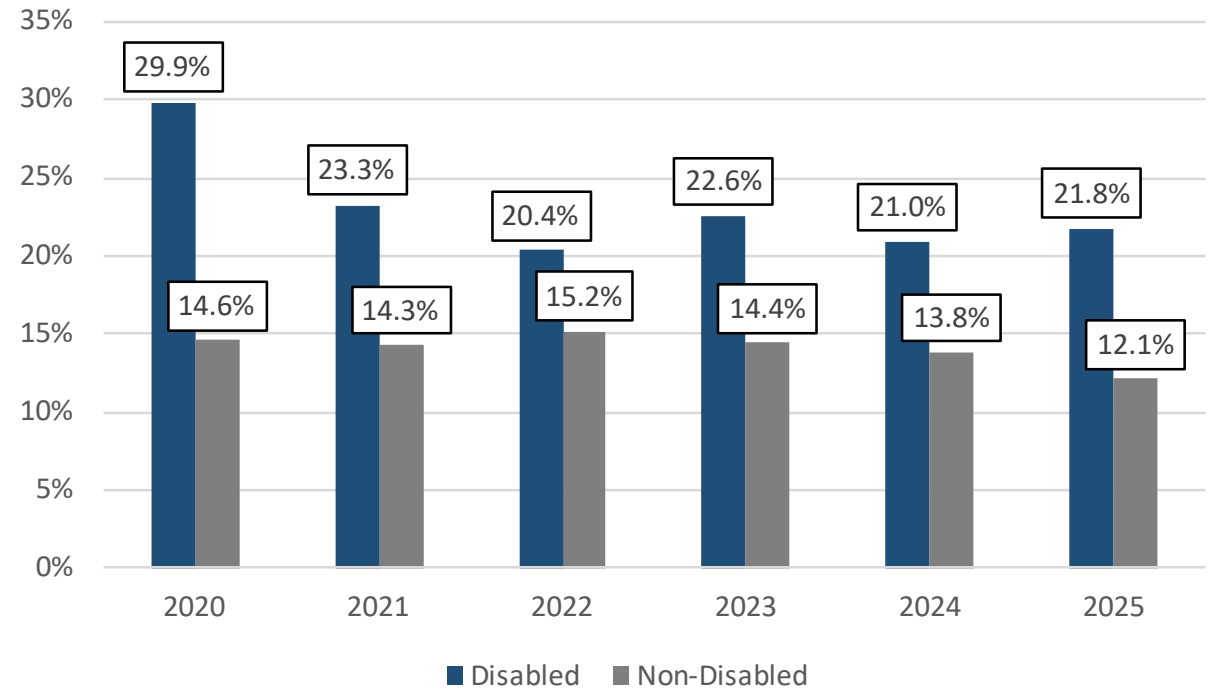
WDES indicator 4(iii)

Percentage of staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from

(iii) Colleagues

| Year | Disabled | Non-Disabled |
|------|----------|--------------|
| 2020 | 29.9% | 14.6% |
| 2021 | 23.3% | 14.3% |
| 2022 | 20.4% | 15.2% |
| 2023 | 22.6% | 14.4% |
| 2024 | 21.0% | 13.8% |
| 2025 | 21.8% | 12.1% |

- Staff with a disability continue to report higher rates of bullying, harassment and abuse from staff (21.8% compared to 12.1% for non-disabled staff).
- There has been a small increase of 0.8% over the past year, although rates have reduced by 8.1% over the past five years.
- The Trust's score is 2% better than the national average (23.8%).

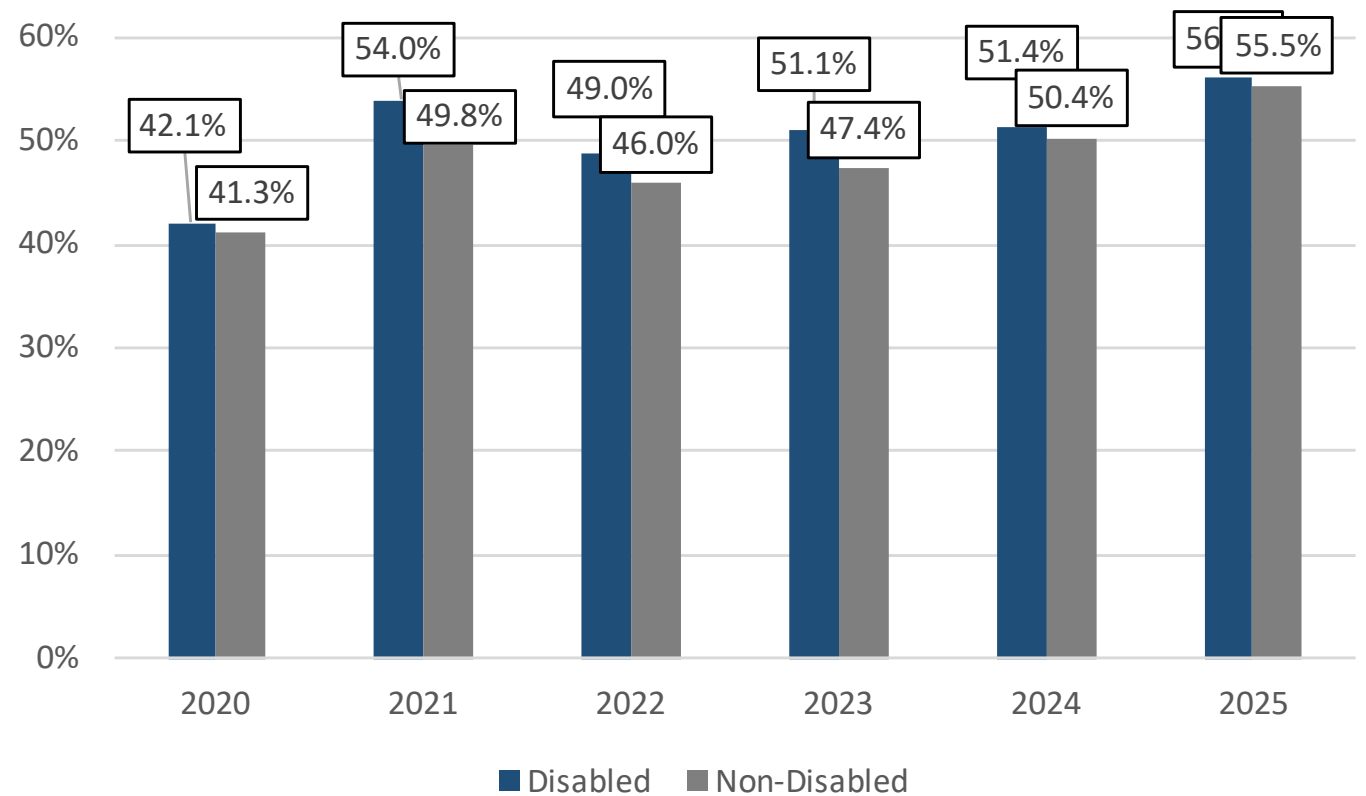


WDES indicator 4(iv)

Percentage of staff saying the last time they experienced harassment, bullying or abuse at work, they or a colleague reported it

| Year | Disabled | Non-Disabled |
|------|----------|--------------|
| 2020 | 42.1% | 41.3% |
| 2021 | 54.0% | 49.8% |
| 2022 | 49.0% | 46.0% |
| 2023 | 51.1% | 47.4% |
| 2024 | 51.4% | 50.4% |
| 2025 | 56.1% | 55.5% |

- The proportion of disabled staff stating that they felt confident to report bullying, harassment or abuse rose to 56.1% in 2025, an increase of nearly 5% compared with the previous year.
- This result is stronger than the national average of 52.5%, showing progress in building staff confidence to speak up.

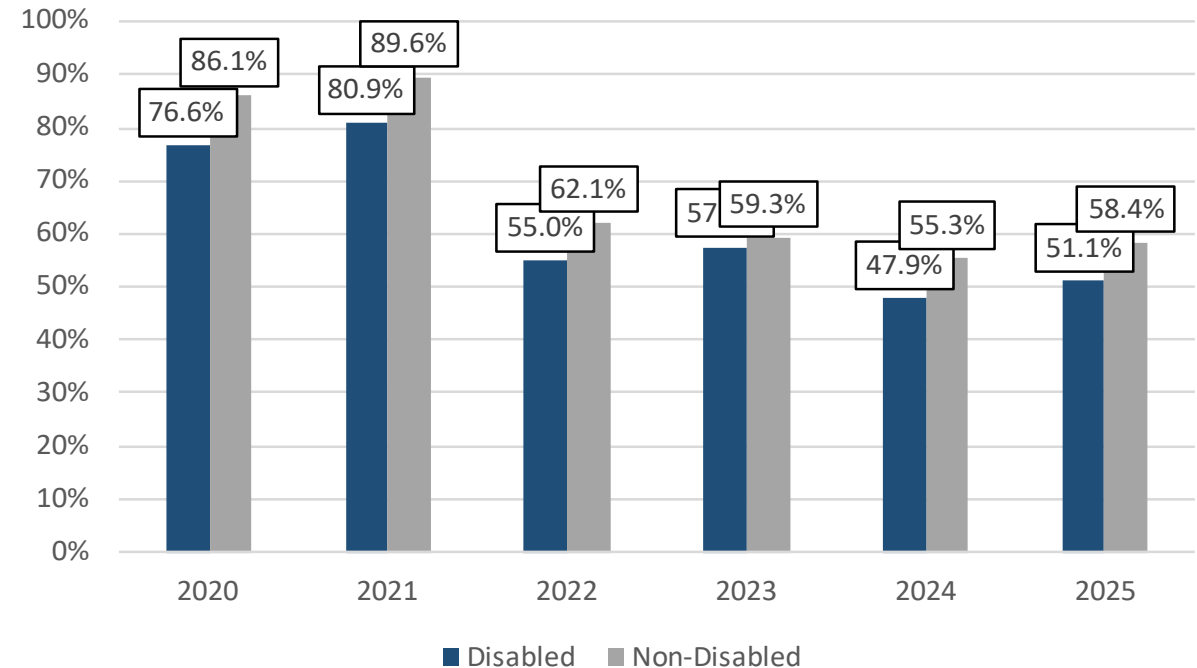


WDES indicator 5

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

| Year | Disabled | Non-Disabled |
|------|----------|--------------|
| 2020 | 76.6% | 86.1% |
| 2021 | 80.9% | 89.6% |
| 2022 | 55.0% | 62.1% |
| 2023 | 57.6% | 59.3% |
| 2024 | 47.9% | 55.3% |
| 2025 | 51.1% | 58.4% |

- In 2025, 51.1% of disabled staff felt they had equal opportunities for progression, compared to 58.4% of non-disabled staff.
- This is an improvement of 3.2% from last year but remains slightly below the national average (52.2%).

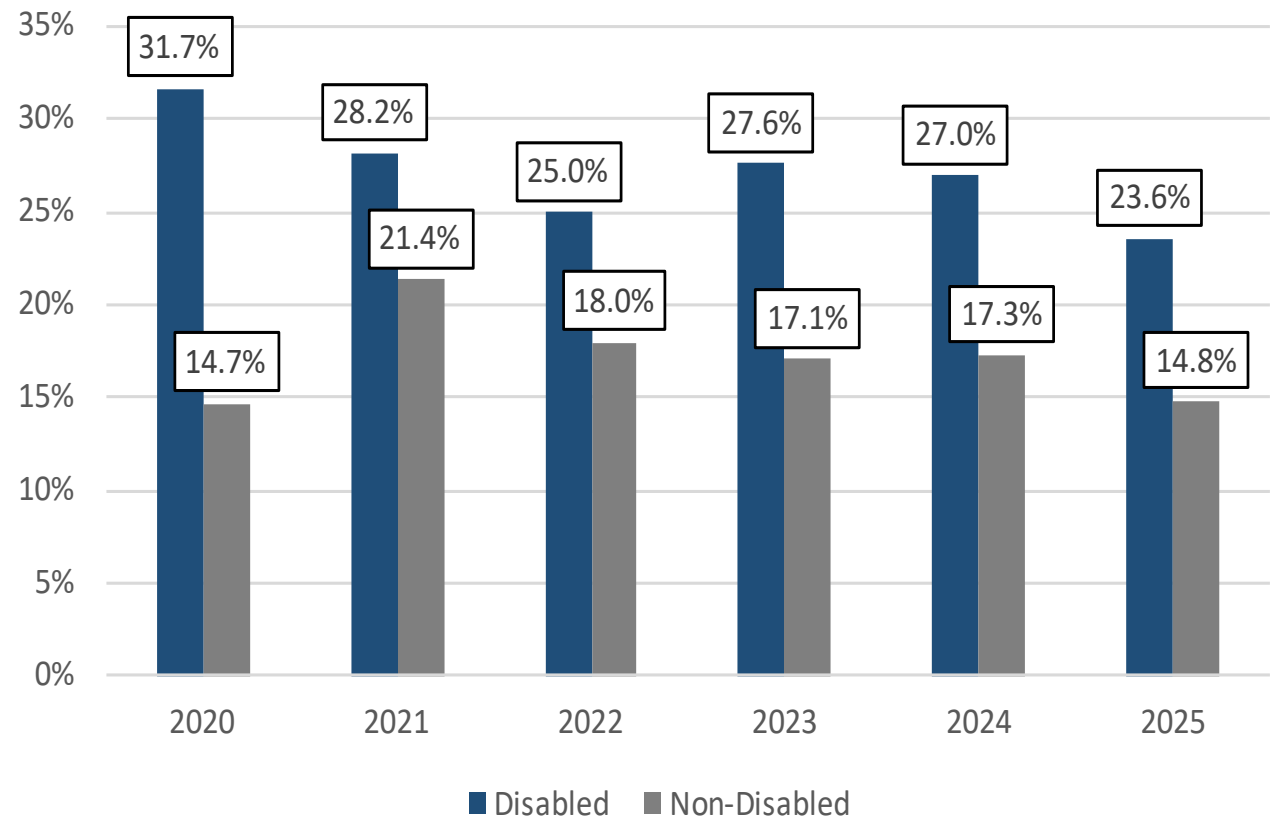


WDES indicator 6

Percentage staff saying they felt pressure to come to work despite not feeling well enough to perform their duties

| Year | Disabled | Non-Disabled |
|------|----------|--------------|
| 2020 | 31.7% | 14.7% |
| 2021 | 28.2% | 21.4% |
| 2022 | 25.0% | 18.0% |
| 2023 | 27.6% | 17.1% |
| 2024 | 27.0% | 17.3% |
| 2025 | 23.6% | 14.8% |

- Less staff with a disability reported feeling pressure to come to work when unwell in 2025, down by 3.4% from the previous year.
- Over the past six years, there has been a positive improvement of 8.1%. The Trust's score is also 3% better than the national average of 26.6%.

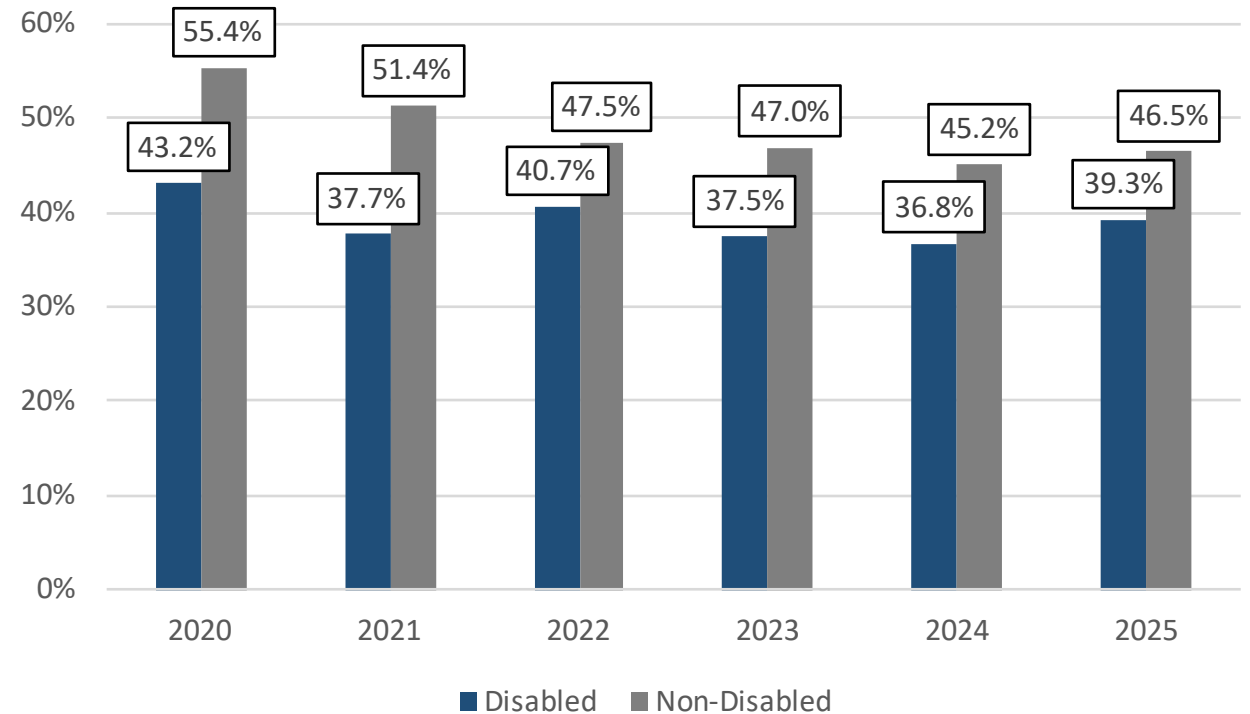


WDES indicator 7

Percentage of staff saying that they are satisfied with the extent to which their organisation values their work

| Year | Disabled | Non-Disabled |
|------|----------|--------------|
| 2020 | 43.2% | 55.4% |
| 2021 | 37.7% | 51.4% |
| 2022 | 40.7% | 47.5% |
| 2023 | 37.5% | 47.0% |
| 2024 | 36.8% | 45.2% |
| 2025 | 39.3% | 46.5% |

- Staff with a disability are 7.2% less likely than those without a disability to report satisfaction levels with feeling valued (39.3%). Over the past year an improvement of 2.5% is noted
- The Trusts score is a positive 2.4% higher than the national average (36.9%)

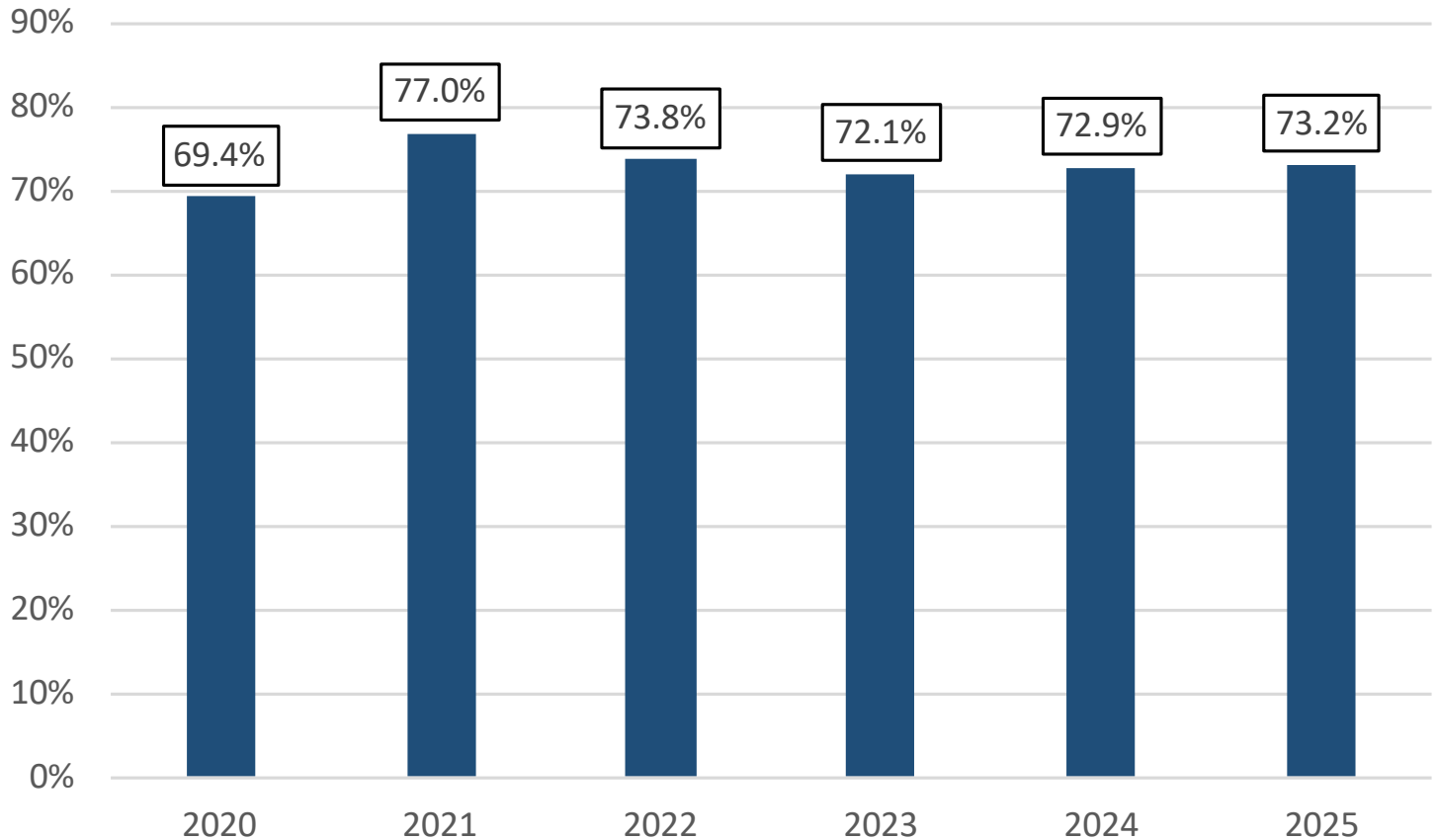


WDES indicator 8

Percentage of disabled staff saying their employer has made adequate adjustment(s) to enabled them to carry out their work

| Year | Disabled |
|------|----------|
| 2020 | 69.4% |
| 2021 | 77.0% |
| 2022 | 73.8% |
| 2023 | 72.1% |
| 2024 | 72.9% |
| 2025 | 73.2% |

- Nearly one in four (26.8%) disabled staff report that they are not getting the equipment and support needed to carry out their role effectively.
- The Trust's score improved slightly this year by 0.3%, but remains 1.3% below the national average of 74.5%.

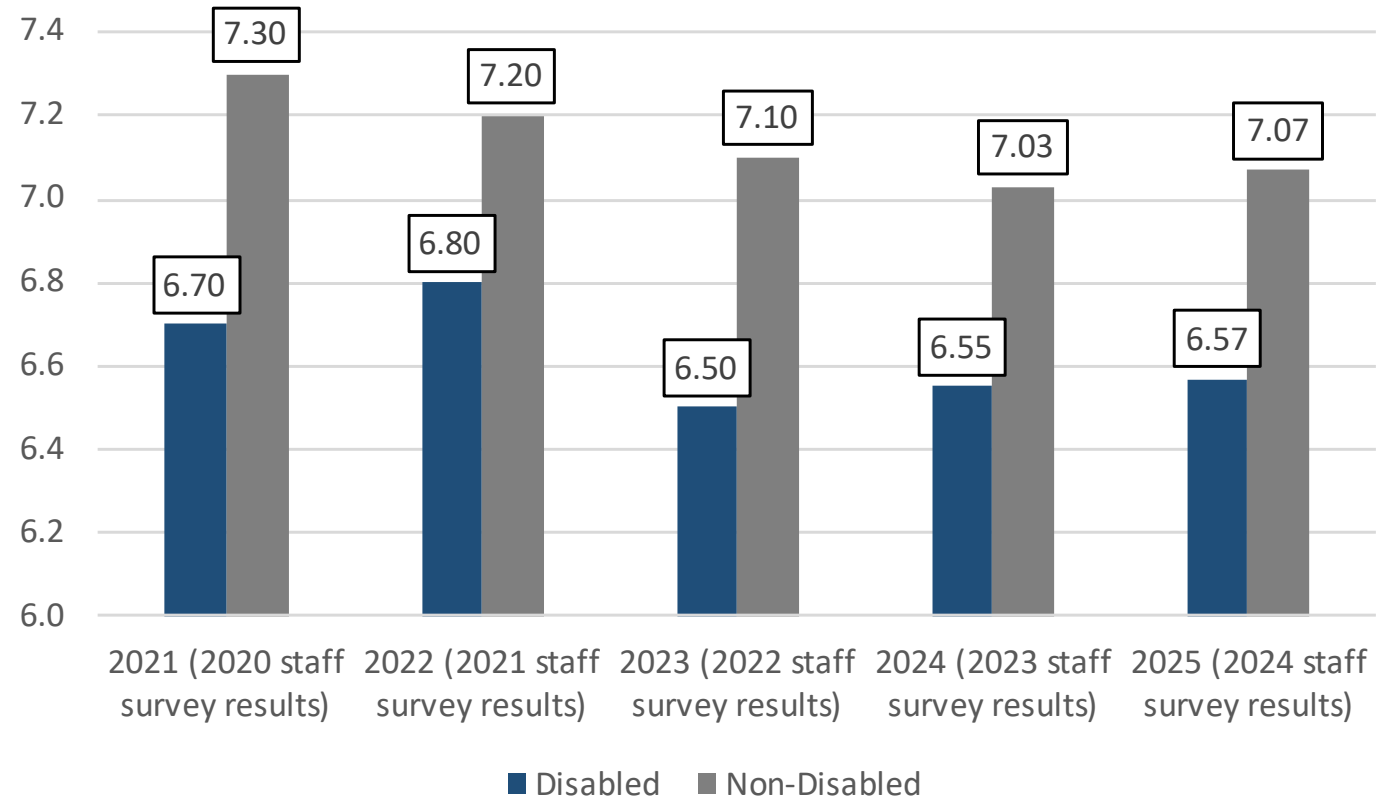


WDES indicator 9

Staff Engagement Score

| Year | Disabled | Non-Disabled |
|----------------------------------|----------|--------------|
| 2021 (2020 staff survey results) | 6.70 | 7.30 |
| 2022 (2021 staff survey results) | 6.80 | 7.20 |
| 2023 (2022 staff survey results) | 6.50 | 7.10 |
| 2024 (2023 staff survey results) | 6.55 | 7.03 |
| 2025 (2024 staff survey results) | 6.57 | 7.07 |

- Staff engagement for disabled colleagues has improved slightly over the past year, rising from 6.55 in 2024 to 6.57 in 2025.
- This matches the national average of 6.5 and shows stable levels of engagement across the Trust.



WDES Indicator 10

Percentage difference between an organisation's board voting membership and its overall workforce

- For the duration that the WDES data has been reported since 2019 there has been no disabled representation on the Board.
- The Trust will therefore continue to prioritise actions to encourage disclosure at senior levels, strengthen the talent pipeline for future board positions, and ensure lived experience of disability informs decision-making through advisory and sub-committee structures. Work is also ongoing to encourage openness around declaration and to strengthen opportunities for disabled colleagues to progress into senior roles.

WDES Actions taken 2024 –25

- **Health & Accessibility Staff Network** – Strong executive sponsorship; strengthened reasonable adjustments, phased returns, PEEPs, and awareness through Disability Access Day. Chair provides an alert, advise, assure report to the EDI Assurance Group every two months; alerts acted upon swiftly.
- **Neurodiversity Peer Support Group** – 30+ regular members; safe space, sensory aids, training and toolkit launched; shortlisted for HPMa Browne Jacobson Award.
- **Reasonable Adjustments Passport** – Embedded in HR and OH processes; Task and Finish Group set up
- **Improving Declaration Rates** – Streamlined ESR fields, communications campaigns.
- **Freedom to Speak Up** – 90+ diverse champions; simplified access to psychological and wellbeing support; embedded open culture for reporting bullying and harassment.
- **‘Our Leaders’ Programme** – We All Belong module on WDES, reasonable adjustments, inclusive leadership, civility, and active bystander training. Includes
- **Continuous Learning:** Oliver McGowan LD & Autism e-learning to meet statutory training requirements, EDI Blended Learning Bundles covering a range of disability awareness topics.
- **Strengthened EIA Framework** – Two-stage process, updated QEIA/business case templates, and embedded EDI reviews to ensure early risk mitigation.
- **Health & Wellbeing Support** – Mental Health First Aiders, counselling, TRiM assessors, physiotherapy, and occupational health for holistic staff support.
- **Disability Confident Level 2** – Retained accreditation
- **Inclusive Recruitment** – Adjustments at all stages; positive action statements welcoming disabled candidates.
- **Learning & Career Development** – Promoted national and internal opportunities to support development of disabled and staff with long-term conditions.
- **Awareness & Engagement** – Marked Disability History Month, Deaf Awareness Week, Neurodiversity and Accessibility Days to promote inclusion year-round.

Actions planned to support improvements to WDES

The EDI Plan 2025–2027 sets out how we will address key equality, diversity, and inclusion priorities that impact both patient and staff experience within our Trust. These priorities are informed by historical and recent WDES data, so you can be assured that the actions in the EDI Plan are designed to improve WDES indicators.

Rather than creating a separate WDES Action Plan, we have integrated WDES requirements into the EDI Plan to ensure full alignment. On this and the following two pages, you will see how actions from the EDI Plan map directly to WDES indicators.

To read the full EDI Plan 2025–2027, please visit: [Our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion - Bolton NHS FT](#)

| WDES Indicator | | Alignment with wording from the EDI Plan |
|----------------|---|---|
| 1 | Workforce representation of Disabled staff | <p>Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase disability declaration data quality so that our recruitment data is more accurate. |
| 2 | Recruitment – appointment from shortlisting | <p>Inclusive Recruitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive recruitment training and guidance – including neurodivergent friendly recruitment and accommodating reasonable adjustments Structured feedback and support for disabled candidates who were unsuccessful. Equality Advocates on hiring panels. Accountability processes for decision making. |
| 3 | Relative likelihood of Disabled staff entering the capability process | <p>Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase disability declaration data quality so that patterns can be identified and examined. <p>Inclusive Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Triangulating HR data to identify patterns. HR and OD learning needs analysis in order to best support our diverse workforce. Our Leaders to create inclusive leaders who support their staff and are aware of unconscious bias. |
| 4i | Bullying, harassment and abuse from patients/public | <p>Inclusive Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive leadership training via the Our Leaders programme – tackles active bystander theory. HR and OD learning needs analysis in order to best support our diverse workforce. Inclusive communications to promote zero-tolerance stance of the Trust. |

Actions planned to support improvements to WDES

| WDES Indicator | | Alignment with wording from the EDI Plan |
|----------------|---|---|
| 4ii | Bullying, harassment and abuse from managers | Inclusive Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triangulating culture data to identify ‘hotspots’; • Inclusive leadership training via the Our Leaders programme – tackles unconscious bias and active bystander theory. |
| 4iii | Bullying, harassment and abuse from colleagues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR and OD learning needs analysis in order to best support our diverse workforce. • Inclusive communications to encourage disability awareness, anti-bullying etc. |
| 4iv | Confidence in reporting bullying, harassment or abuse | Inclusive Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive leadership training via the Our Leaders programme – tackles unconscious bias and active bystander theory. • Inclusive communications to encourage cultural competence, anti-bullying etc. |
| 5 | Equal opportunities for career progression or promotion | Inclusive Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive leadership training via the Our Leaders programme – tackles unconscious bias and the link to talent development. |
| 6 | Staff feeling pressure to work when unwell | Inclusive Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive leadership training via the Our Leaders programme – tackles compassionate, disability aware leadership. • HR and OD learning needs analysis in order to best support our diverse workforce. |

Actions planned to support improvements to WDES

| WDES Indicator | Alignment with wording from the EDI Plan |
|--|--|
| 7 Satisfaction with feeling valued by the organisation | Inclusive Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive leadership training via the Our Leaders programme – as part of We All Belong. HR and OD learning needs analysis in order to best support our diverse workforce. Inclusive communications to encourage disability awareness, anti-bullying etc and awareness days related to disability. |
| 8 Employer made adequate adjustments | Reasonable Adjustments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clear process, well communicated. Catalogue of most requested equipment/software that is IG and IT approved. An escalation process. |
| 9 Staff engagement score | Inclusive Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive leadership training via the Our Leaders programme – as part of We All Belong. Inclusive communications to encourage disability awareness, anti-bullying etc and awareness days related to disability. |
| 10 Board-level disability representation | Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase disability declaration data. Inclusive Recruitment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive recruitment training and guidance – including neurodivergent friendly recruitment and accommodating reasonable adjustments Structured feedback and support for disabled candidates who were unsuccessful. Equality Advocates on hiring panels. Accountability processes for decision making. |