

Research on the experience of staff with disabilities within the NHS workforce

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Background to the study

The study commissioned by NHS England focused on the experiences of staff with disabilities working within the NHS, drawing upon two national data sets:

- The 2014 NHS staff survey, completed by 255,000 staff, reporting their experiences of working in the NHS
- The Electronic Staff Record (ESR), comprising data on the entire NHS workforce, gathered for workforce planning, personnel and wage payment purposes.

Key research questions

What can interrogation of the 2 datasets tell us about:

- Representation of staff with disabilities' at all levels of the NHS and covering different types of disability?
- Disparity between staff declaration of disability in the different records
- The differences between Disabled staff and not Disabled staff with respect to; appraisal rates; access to training and development; turn-over, retention and stability rates; disciplinary and capability processes?
- The effectiveness of NHS management of Disabled staff om the recruitment process to the end of employment and what might help?



Methodology

Mixed methods, primarily quantitative analysis of survey data including;

- Percentage point differences for the categories of responses between Disabled staff and not Disabled staff
- Logistic regression analysis to control for demographic factors (age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality)
- Literature review to collate, assess and synthesise the available research evidence on the experience of Disabled employees both within the NHS workforce and within other UK employment sectors.
- Focus groups with Disabled Associates of Middlesex and Bedford University to discuss and interpret findings to reflect co-production in our overall approach.

•Reference : Ryan, P., Edwards, M., Hafford-Letchfield, T., Bell, L., Carr, S., Puniskis, M., Hannah, S., Jeewa, S. (2015) *Research on the experience of staff with disabilities within the NHS Workforce: A joint report between Middlesex University and the University of Bedfordshire in collaboration with INVOLVE and Bedford Service User Associates.*

•Full report available from the Middlesex Research Repository



Findings

There are significant disparities in reported levels of disabilities across the two data sets (17% in the survey and 3% in the Staff Record), none of which allow for more specific analysis reflecting issues about the definitions used, the conditions and timing for self-disclosure.

There were significant indicators that Disabled staff rate themselves as less well supported than staff not Disabled including appraisal; training and reasonable adjustments. Disabled staff rated themselves as having far less job satisfaction with less opportunities for recognition; be given more responsibilities; to use their skills and in relation to remuneration.

Recommendations

improve and promote best practices for Disabled staff in the NHS and to develop an explicit, values-based, proactive rights- and strengths-based approach to disability in the work place including:

- Consultation on common definition of disability
- Appointing designated senior staff with responsibility for disability and a disability champion
- Develop responsive systems to address the sensitivities involved in recording Disability status
- Develop and implement fair policies on absence; Disability support; reasonable adjustments and monitoring procedures
- Develop and deliver a robust training programme
- NHS Standards and metrics to integrate disability issues;
- mount a positive promotion anti-stigma campaign on disability both within the NHS and in the public arena