

NHS staff survey results 2019

Introduction

Today NHS England/Improvement published the annual [NHS staff survey results](#). The publication came alongside a [letter to all staff](#) from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock, pledging to reduce acts of aggression and discrimination towards NHS staff. This briefing provides a summary of the national level findings and NHS Providers view.

Key findings

- 63.3% of staff would recommend their organisation as a place to work – a 2% increase from 2018
- 38% of staff are satisfied with their pay – a 2% increase and the highest level in past five years
- 81.1% of staff said they were satisfied with the quality of care they give to patients/service users – a small increase from 2018
- 59.5% of staff look forward to going to work, and 74.5% are often or always enthusiastic about their jobs – both small increases from 2018.
- However there has been no significant decrease in the proportion of staff reporting bullying and harassment from colleagues (19.1%), or their immediate manager (12.3%)
- Far too many staff (14.9%) still experience violence and discrimination from patients and service users – with a small increase on last year's findings.
- BME staff are 16% less likely to say that they are offered equal opportunities than their white colleagues
- Only 22.9% of staff never or rarely suffer from unrealistic time pressures at work.

Pay, management and recognition

The 2019 survey shows a small but statistically significant increase in the proportion of staff who are satisfied with their pay (38%, up 2% from 2018, and the highest in five years).

- While this group remains a minority, there are a number of positive trends in the management and recognition indicators: 71% (1.2% increase from 2018) of respondents are satisfied with the support they receive from their immediate manager and 62.9% (1.5% increase from 2018) say they receive clear feedback on their work. Both indicators are at their highest level in the last five years.

- This year a higher proportion of staff feel their work is valued, both by their immediate managers (73.3%, 1.1% increase from 2018) and within their organisations more broadly (48%, 1.9% increase from 2018). Consistent improvements have been made against these indicators in recent years. Although a minority of staff feel their work is valued within their organisation, the figure has increased by a significant 6.2% since 2015, with a more modest rise in the indicator concerning immediate managers (2.8% increase since 2015).
- Rises in satisfaction with pay over the past few years are likely to be attributable to increases to compensation since 2017 when the government ended its pay restraint policy enabling real terms pay increases for most grades of staff. The current agenda for change pay deal, for example, has gradually but significantly increased salary for most NHS staff throughout the three-year term of the deal. While pay, terms and conditions, are an important consideration for individual members of staff, we know that NHS colleagues are motivated by a much broader range of factors. The survey results today also provide evidence to suggest that trusts' efforts to improve the quality of management, and to recognise the contribution and dedication of their staff, are bearing fruit.

Other important findings include:

- 72.3% of staff receive the respect they deserve from colleagues (stable from the initial finding in 2018)
- 88% of staff in the NHS had a performance appraisal in 2019 (0.4% decrease since 2018; 2.8% increase since 2015)
- 35.4% said their appraisal allowed them to agree clear objectives (1% increase since 2018; 2.7% rise since 2015)
- 32.9% said their appraisal left them feeling valued by their organisation (1.6% increase since 2018; 5% rise since 2015).

Staff safety and quality of care

Quality of care

The survey results are moving in a positive direction and reflect the commitment of NHS staff to delivering high quality care:

- 81.1% of staff said they were satisfied with the quality of care they give to patients/service users (an increase from 80.7% 2018 but lower than in 2015 and 2016)
- Slightly more members of staff felt their role makes a difference to patients (89.6%, a 0.3% increase from 2018)
- There has also been an increase in the number of staff saying that they felt able to deliver the care they aspire to (68.5% compared to 67.2% in 2018 and 66.8% in 2017).

Safety at work – violence, bullying and harassment

The results in this area remain broadly similar to recent years with slight improvements in some indicators:

- Nearly three-quarters of staff (72.3%) said they receive the respect they deserve from their colleagues, but bullying and harassment remains a key concern. The same proportion of people (28.5%) of staff said they have experienced harassment or bullying from patients, members of the public and their family members (28.1% in 2016).

- There has been a fall in the number of people who said they (12.3%) experienced bullying and harassment from their manager (12.3%). This is the best result in five years. However, the number of staff saying they have experienced bullying and harassment from their colleagues remains nearly the same (19%, compared to 19.1% in 2018).
- Less than half of staff said that they or a colleague reported the last time they experienced bullying, harassment or abuse at work (48.6%). Overall this trend has improved since 2015 when it fell to a low of 44.7%.

Other findings include:

- 14.9% have experienced physical violence in the past 12 months from patients, members of the public and family members (a slightly increase from 14.6% in 2018).
- A small percentage of staff said they have experienced violence from managers and colleagues (0.6% and 1.5% respectively).
- The level of staff reporting physical violence when it occurs has increased to 72% from 70.6% in 2018.

Equal opportunities

Overall, the majority of staff surveyed (83.9%) said that they felt their organisation acted fairly towards them (in terms of career progression, promotion, ethnic background, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or age). This is a slight increase from the previous year (0.5 percentage points).

- In 2019, more BME staff said that their organisation provided equal opportunities for career promotion/progression (71.1% - 1.2 percentage points increase). However, this figure is still significantly lower (by 15.8 percentage points) than the proportion of white staff who said their organisation provided equal opportunities for career promotion/progression (86.9%).
- More disabled staff this year felt that their organisation provides equal opportunities for career progression/promotion (78.4% - 0.7 percentage points increase). However, more non-disabled staff (85.3%) than disabled staff (78.4%) felt that that their organisation provides equal opportunities for career progression/promotion
- Fewer staff reported being discriminated against by their managers or colleagues (7.7% - 0.4% percentage decrease). However, worryingly, the percentage of staff who have experienced discrimination from patients, service users, their families or other members of the public has increased slightly from 5.8% in 2015 to 7.2% in 2019.

Safety culture

The proportion of staff who saw an error, near miss or potentially harmful incident remains high at 95%.

- Slightly more staff felt secure in raising concerns about unsafe clinical practice this year (71.7% - one percentage point increase). However despite an increase in staff feeling confident that their organisation would address their concern when reporting incidents (from 57.6% in 2017 to 59.8% in 2019), considerably more staff need to feel confident that their concerns are dealt with when reported.
- There was a slight improvement in the percentage of staff who felt that their organisation treated staff fairly when they were involved in an error, near miss or incident (this indicator rose from 58.3% last year to 59.7%). There was also a slight improvement in the percentage of staff who felt that

their organisation gives them feedback about changes made in response to errors, near misses and incidents (this indicator rose from 60% last year to 61.1% in 2019).

Staff health and wellbeing

There has been little improvement in findings around staff health and wellbeing, including measures concerning work-related stress and burnout.

- There was a small increase (0.5%) from 2018 in the large proportion of staff who reported feeling unwell due to work-related stress in the past year (40.3%). The five-year trend presents greater concern, with an increase from 36.8% in 2015. Additionally, 56.6% had gone to work while not feeling well enough to perform their duties (no improvement since 2015).
- Workload is a major factor affecting stress and burnout and it is clear too many staff are stretched beyond a reasonable limit. Only 22.9% of respondents said they “never” or “rarely” experienced unrealistic time pressures in their jobs (a 0.7% increase following 2018’s initial finding on this measure) while 32.3% said there are enough staff in their organisation to allow them to do their job (0.6% increase from 2018 and a 2% rise since 2015).
- More positively, 54% of staff say they are satisfied with opportunities available for them to take on flexible working patterns (0.8% increase since 2018, and a 3.7% rise since 2015), and 69.7% say their managers take a positive interest in their health and wellbeing (1.3% increase from 2018, and a 3.9% rise over five years). There has been an encouraging movement in the proportion of staff working unpaid hours, with 55.9% reporting this in 2019 (down 2% since 2018, and a 4.9% decrease since 2015), though this figure is still very high.

Other findings include:

- 19.2% of staff are working part-time (stable from 2018, and a 1.3% decrease over 5 years)
- 34.8% of staff worked additional paid hours (1.1% increase from 2018, and a 2.5% rise since 2015)
- 53.4% say relationships with colleagues and sometimes, often or always strained at work (1.5% decrease since first measure in 2018), with the vast majority of this group indicating this is “sometimes” the case.

Staff engagement and motivation

Staff engagement scores have improved for the most part in 2019:

- The proportion of respondents who look forward to going to work is at 59.5% (0.7% increase from 2018; 1.1% higher than in 2015), while close to three-quarters of staff (74.8% - an 0.4% increase since 2018) are often or always enthusiastic about their jobs. This is relatively stable finding since 2015.
- There has been an encouraging decrease in the proportion of staff who often think about leaving their organisation (1.5% down from 2018’s initial finding), while the proportion of staff considering leaving the NHS altogether has also decreased from last year by 1%. Importantly, there has been an increase in the proportion of staff who would recommend their organisation as a place to work, with 63.3% reporting this in 2019 (2% increase from 2018, and a 4.7% rise since 2015).

- Other positive trends are evident in terms of senior manager engagement with staff, although these increases come from a low base-level. 42% said communication between senior managers and staff is effective in their organisations (1.4% increase from 2018, and a 3.9% rise since 2015), while 34.5% say senior managers act on feedback from staff (1.8% increase from 2018, and a 4.4% rise since 2015).
- Worryingly a declining proportion report receiving non-mandatory training (0.8% decrease since 2018, and a 2.9% fall over the past five years). This is likely to reflect the considerable funding restraints for providers around continuing professional development.

Other findings include:

- 72.9% of staff feel they have frequent opportunities to show initiative in their work (stable from 2018, and a 0.4% decrease since 2015)
- 35.8% say senior managers involve staff in important decisions (a 1.6% increase from 2018, and a 3.9% rise since 2015)
- 39.2% of staff say their appraisals involved discussing the values of their organisation (2.2% increase since 2018, and a significant 8.4% rise over the past five years).

NHS Providers View

Responding to the NHS staff survey results today, NHS Provider deputy chief executive, Saffron Cordery, said:

Despite the significant pressures facing the NHS in terms of rising demand for care, and workforce vacancies, it is encouraging to see that staff reported improvements in the past year. More people feel satisfied with their pay, flexible working opportunities, and the support they receive from managers.

It is particularly positive to see that more staff feel that the care of patients and service users is a top priority for their organisations, and would recommend their trust as a place to work. We're also pleased to see fewer staff are working additional unpaid hours, though this is an area where continued and significant improvements are still needed.

However, it is unacceptable that more staff are experiencing discrimination and violence from patients and members of the public, particularly at mental health and ambulance trusts, with no notable decline in instances of discrimination or bullying from managers and colleagues. It is very concerning to see that ethnic background is the most common factor linked to discrimination at work. We welcome the secretary of states announcement that more will be done to tackle this and to hold those responsible to account.

It is also worrying to see that more staff are feeling unwell due to stress, despite the fact that fewer people are thinking of leaving the NHS. The proportion of staff facing unrealistic time pressures in their jobs remains far too high and it is clear that funding restrictions around continuing professional development are limiting training opportunities with the lowest uptake in five years.

Trusts are clearly making progress in ensuring their organisations are great places to work and they are

not complacent. These figures show that there is much more to do locally to develop an inclusive, working culture within the NHS. Government and the national bodies must also play their part in creating the conditions in which trusts and their staff can thrive. Organisational culture is clearly improving, but more support is needed to improve recruitment and retention with 100,000 workforce vacancies across the NHS.

We look forward to working with trusts and the national bodies to support the implementation of the NHS people plan to ensure that staff feel valued, safe, supported and are given the right tools for career progression and to deliver high-quality care to patients. The people plan is a clear opportunity to reset the culture across the whole NHS.