WDES 2022 – Report and Action Plan

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# Introduction

The NHS Workforce Disability Equality Standard is a key tool for analysing Disability in the workforce and providing a snapshot of the situation and opinions at a point in time. Its specific purpose is to evaluate whether employees with a Disability, Long Term Health Condition (LTC) or Neurodiversity have equal access to career opportunities and receive fair treatment in the workplace. VHG recognises the importance of supporting our colleagues who have a Disability, LTC or Neurodiversity as well as the importance of recognising that these colleagues face certain barriers and inequalities in the workplace. The WDES holds us accountable to any barriers or inequalities that are present and ensures we can focus on tackling these and therefore improve the experience of our Disabled staff. Taking an honest look at our current position through the data, and being transparent about this with our employees, will allow us to implement meaningful change where it is needed.

VHG is committed to continual improvement and development in all areas of its work on equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). The EDI Team has undergone significant changes over the last 9 months, and following a restructure of the team, the People Services Team (PST) has now been developed which incorporates the operational functions of EDI, Health, Wellbeing & Inclusion and Freedom to Speak Up (F2SU). VHG has taken positive steps to ensure we are holding ourselves accountable and responsible for supporting colleagues with their health and wellbeing and concerns that they might want to raise. The company is working hard to foster an open and supportive culture, where colleagues can feel supported to have a voice. By being transparent on areas for improvement, we hope to better the experience of our colleagues in an accountable and proactive manner. Completing the WDES report and action plan is one of the ways in which we can do this and ensures that we are listening to our Disabled staff and acting to make improvements where needed.

# Method

The WDES requires NHS trusts and CCGs including independent providers to self-assess against ten indicators (see appendix 1) of workplace experience and opportunity.

There are ten WDES metrics; Three metrics focus on workforce data; Five are based on questions from the Staff Survey; One metric focuses on Disability representation on boards; One metric focuses on the voices of Disabled staff.

Vita Health Group collects this data via the annual employee survey, staff onboarding database and recruitment applicant tracking system.

# Findings

We are fully focussed on the areas where the data does not represent appropriate workforce diversity and are committed to using this information to address highlighted issues and identify opportunities for improvement.

Our November 2022 staff survey found that employees with a Disability scored lower than employees with no Disability on recognition (3.8 compared to 3.9), work life balance (3.7 compared to 3.9), perceived fairness (3.6 compared to 3.8) and overall wellbeing (3.4 compared to 3.5). Employees were also less likely to express that they felt the organisation acts on employee feedback (3.4 compared to 3.6) and employees were less likely to feel that the organisation values their work (3.5 compared to 3.7).

Compared to last year’s survey data, there has been a slight decline in role clarity (4.2 2021 compared to 4.1 2022) and there has also been a decline in access to resources and enough colleagues to help colleagues in their roles (4.1 2021 compared to 3.3 2022).

These findings suggest that employees with a Disability are disadvantaged when it comes to work life balance and positive wellbeing. This also indicates that they also feel less heard within the organisation as well as valued.

Nonetheless, a positive finding was in relation to the number of reasonable adjustments which have been provided for employees with a Disability. According to the staff survey results from 2022, 136 out of the 144 (94.4%) employees who had requested a reasonable adjustment had their support or reasonable adjustment provided. Overall, this equates to 44.4% of employees with a Disability. Additionally, in comparison to last year’s survey, there has been an improvement in access to adequate resources (2021 3.4 & 4.1 2022). Despite this, metric 8 tells us that 64.9% of our Disabled staff feel that their employer has made reasonable adjustments. This means that although the survey tells us that 94.4% of reasonable adjustments were provided, less staff feel that reasonable adjustments have been provided. This is also a slight decline from last year, where 76.2% of Disabled staff felt that reasonable adjustments had been made. It is important that the views of staff with Disabilities are considered in relation to this finding.

# Limitations

## Disability Reporting

Improvements have been made to establish more consistent disability data collection into the new starter/recruitment process. Following the implementation of the Disability Confident guaranteed interview scheme and the new Equipment Request process for reasonable adjustments. Our reasonable adjustment process has been updated, and a new policy and clear process flow chart developed. All our reasonable adjustments are logged via the reasonable adjustment tracker and training/guidance around reasonable adjustments is being provided to our managers.

We are now reporting on and tracking:

* Numbers of Reasonable Adjustment requests made / and time to completion.
* Number of Disabled candidates applying for vacancies within the organisation.
* Number of Disabled candidates hired into post.
* Reasonable Adjustment Request form being completed to track Disability related issues.
* Freedom to Speak up cases being logged.

We are aware of varying factors which impact the willingness of colleagues with Disabilities to share openly their conditions in the staff survey which causes limitations to the data. Vita Health Group recognises the importance of supporting individuals to feel comfortable to disclose their Disability within the workplace should they wish to. New starters are informed about the Diverse-Ability Network as well as the other networks and individuals are made aware that the networks are a space where they can access further support. We have also launched and produced our Hidden Disability Sunflower policy as well as our Disability Language and Conversation Toolkit to help encourage support and open conversations around Disability in the workplace. As an organisation we want individuals to feel that they can bring their whole selves to work and not feel fearful about disclosing whether they have a Disability. Nonetheless, we equally respect and value that some individuals may not wish to disclose this information.

# Conclusion

Vita Health Group’s goal is to ensure that there is an equitable experience for all our colleagues, irrespective of Disability. All colleagues should have equal experiences and equal opportunities and we recognise as an organisation that there is more that we need to do to achieve this.

Vita Health Group’s leadership is committed to making improvements and positive changes for our colleagues with a Disability, LTC and/or Neurodiversity, which will also bring wider benefits to the organisation. This includes a commitment to establish and retain a more diverse workforce; improve representation at all levels and work towards improving the experience of colleagues with Disabilities. It will also ensure that we are working towards making our services more representative of the populations that we serve, which in turn will help to improve the experiences of our service users and customers.

Vita Health Group is moving forward in a collaborative manner, seeking to understand and address the inequalities experienced by our colleagues with Disabilities. We recognise that lived experience and co-production must inform all our activities.

This requires our senior leaders, the Diverse-Ability Staff Network, colleagues with a Disability, LTC, Neurodiversity, People Services Team, and allies to work together on progressing our action plan, communicating effectively with all staff across the organisation to maintain transparency and accountability.

# Actions taken to date.

To date, Vita Health Group has taken important steps in respect to Disability issues, including:

* + Establishing a central People Services Team with capacity to consult and provide subject matter expertise on EDI related matters as well as Health, Inclusion & Wellbeing and Freedom to Speak Up (F2SU). There is also a specific function for providing support and expertise around reasonable adjustments.
  + Establishing and maintaining staff networks, to support staff with various protected characteristics including Disability, Race Equality, Women, LGBTQIA+, Faith and Carers. We have also updated our staff network operational model where we have a Leadership Group for all network leads and very senior managers to ensure that they regularly meet to support the operation and function of our staff networks. Importantly, we have also promoted and advertised the network chair roles to ensure that colleagues in the wider company can be involved in the leadership and operation of the staff networks should they wish to. This has so far been successful, and we are pleased to share that the Diverse-Ability Network’s chairs are now members of staff from the wider company which will further enhance our co-production work with the network, helping to ensure the network is staff led.
  + Internal People Services Team training Including Disability Awareness rolled out to all managers and wider team.
  + Promoting and re-enforcing of VITA’s Zero Tolerance policy across the business.
  + Monitoring review of Recruitment processes and changes incorporating anonymised recruitment and more diverse advertising opportunities. We have also actively promoted the Disability Confident Guaranteed interview scheme which is already showing promising results evidenced by an increase in applications month on month since March 2022.
  + New and improved reasonable adjustment process to significantly improve the experience of Disabled colleagues requesting Reasonable adjustments including the development of a reasonable adjustment policy and updated reasonable adjustment request form. Our reasonable adjustment process has also been streamlined to ensure further clarity and efficiency.
  + Review of Freedom to Speak up (F2SU) Policy and process and further oversight of F2SU under the People Services Team with our Lead Guardian role.
  + Expansion of Disability Liaison Officer into Practitioner in Disability, Health Inequalities & Equity.
  + Engagement and Communication Plan.
  + Development of the Assistant Practitioner in Disability, Health, and Wellbeing role within the People Services Team to assist with the Access to Work applications.

We want to ensure that we utilise this data effectively and build on the progress taken to date, evaluating the information, and using this intelligence to inform the actions taken.

The following action plan and timetable will guide next steps for some practical outcomes.

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| Action | Who Responsible | When |
| Full review and analysis of WDES matrices and identification of potential actions. | People Services Team and allocated EDI Practitioner | July 2023 |
| Companywide engagement & engagement with Diverse-Ability Network. | Diverse-Ability Staff Network Lead, EDI Practitioner and Head of Service (People Services Team) | July 2023 |
| Presentation to Executive Management / Senior Management Team of WDES results and next step. | PST Head of Service, EMT, & Operations Board | August 2023 |
| Publish agreed next steps/ actions on our website. | Allocated EDI Practitioner & Head of Service (People Services Team) and marketing to assist with this. | October 2023 |
| 3-month review on actions, and collection and review process to begin for 2023 data collection. | People Services Team | January 2023 |

# Action Plan

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| WDES Metrics | What is the issue we need to address? | What has been done/ what are we doing already? | What's already in the pipeline? | What else should we be doing/considering? |
| Percentage of staff with a Disability in AfC pay-bands or subgroups /very senior managers (including Executive Board members) compared with the percentage of staff in the overall workforce. | Under representation in all bands. Particularly in bands 8c, 8d,9, SM - 97% non – Disabled & 3% Disabled.  Bands 1,2,3,4 -84.6% non – disabled, 10.3% Disabled and 5.1% not disclosed. There is a positive trend of an increase in more Disabled staff then last year (10.3% 2022 vs 9.9% 2021), however more people did not disclose whether they had a Disability this year (5.1% 2022 vs 3.4% 2021) which is a negative finding.  Bands 5,6,7 – 83.4% non-disabled, 10% Disabled & 6.6% not disclosed. Compared to last years findings, there has been a slight decrease in Disabled staff (10% 2022 vs 10.2% 2021) and there has been a slight increase in the non disclosure category (6.6% 2022 vs 4.2% 2021).  Band 8a, 8b – 84% non disabled, 14.5% Disabled & 1 % not disclosed. | Review of Recruitment practices across the business -Disability Confident Guaranteed interview scheme.  Internally advertising roles for a minimum time period before going external.  Listed support available on intranet PST page including how staff can approach us for further support and advice with any concerns they may have. | THRIVE mentoring programme available to staff and advertised/shared in Diverse-Ability Network.  Consideration of an anonymous staff survey to encourage sharing of conditions to get a more accurate data reading. This would enable staff who have not felt confident to share their Disability to be more able to do so. In turn this would give VHG a clearer picture of the number of staff with additional needs within the organisation. The Staff Survey in 2022 was anonymous. | Continue to advertise THRIVE programme company wide. Consider how feedback from individuals with Disabilities is gathered for the THRIVE programme. |
| Relative likelihood of non-disabled staff compared to Disabled staff being appointed from shortlisting across all posts. | We are able to see through our applicant tracking systems that applicants for the Disability Confident scheme have continued to increase For example, in March 2022 we had 60 applicants through the scheme and in October 2022-133, November 2022-116 and December-127. These have continued to increase also into 2023 (in the month of June 2023 there were 216 applicants through the scheme).  The relative likelihood of non-disabled staff compared to Disabled staff being appointed from shortlisting across all posts is 1.1. As the score is just above one, this indicates that non-disabled applicants are slightly more likely to be appointed from shortlisting compared to Disabled applicants. However, this difference is minimal.  Additionally, it is positive that our DCS information shows us that more Disabled candidates are being shortlisted over time.  As stated earlier, we must acknowledge that there is still under representation in all bands. Particularly in bands 8c, 8d,9, SM - 97% non – Disabled & 3% Disabled. | Have implemented Guaranteed interview scheme as part of Disability Confident Accreditation.  Recruitment delivering training on the new shortlisting process.  Unconscious/implict bias e-learning reviewed to ensure inclusive of Disability specific elements. | Managers awareness and responsibilities of identifying line reports and employees with Disabilities and ensure they are encouraged to apply for promotion and other progressive opportunities.  We have promoted the Disability Confident scheme and the fact that we are a Disability confident employer. | Continue to raise awareness among hiring managers about the importance of reasonable adjustments at interviews. Promote PST guidance toolkits & resources relating to this.  To also promote our Ethnicity Matters, Gender Matters Scheme’s, Armed Forces Covenant (support for veterans) and accompanying guidance alongside the Disability Confident Scheme and audit uptake of at least three of these schemes. This will ensure an intersectional approach is applied when considering Disability and other protected characteristics as outlined in The Equality Act (2010). These scheme’s ensure that we are recognising and addressing racial, disability and gender inequalities that can occur when applying for job roles. |
| Relative likelihood of Disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff entering the formal capability process, as measured by entry into the formal capability procedure. | The relative likelihood of Disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff entering the formal capability process is 0.0 in 2022. As this score is below one, this score indicates that Disabled staff are less likely to enter the formal capability processes compared to non-disabled staff. This is a positive finding. | Partnership work with HR and improvements to data that is shared with People Services Team. | Improvements have been made to the collection of data and sharing of data from HR with the People Services Team. | The figures here are low however it will be good to continue to promote good practice around Reasonable Adjustment via reasonable adjustment training and guidance resources for managers as when reasonable adjustments are in place (when needed) they can help to prevent performance management concerns. This is taking place and further work will be developed around this in 2024. |
| 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 / Colleagues and if they reported it. | The data shows that those staff members with a Disability are experiencing more incidents of harassment and bullying than non-disabled staff members.  Which breaks down as follows:  From Patients/Service users, their relatives, or other members of the public: 25.8% 2022 vs 32.5% in 2021 Disabled staff and 14.9% 2022 vs 13.7% non-disabled in 2021.  There has also been a decrease for Disabled staff’s experiences of this metric this year compared to their experiences last year.  27.1% of individuals did not disclose this.  From Managers – 8.8% 2022 vs 5.2% in 2021 Disabled staff, 3.6% 2022 vs 2.6% in 2021 non – disabled. This finding is concerning, as experiences of harassment, bullying or abuse at work from managers has increased for Disabled staff since last year.  From other colleagues: 3.9% 2022 vs 3.9% in 2021 Disabled staff, 3.8% 2022 vs 3.7% in 2021 non – disabled. This has remained the same since last year’s figures. | Freedom to Speak up Guardians appointed within company.  Diverse- Ability Staff Network drop in sessions are a support space.  New Appraisal process focusing on wellbeing.  Disability Awareness Training for Managers.  Zero tolerance process, this has been updated and promoted.  Developed Wellness Action Plan (PWAP) document to run alongside PWD process.  Produced Hidden Disability Policy & promoted policy along with access to Hidden Disability badges, ribbons and name tags. | Continuing to encourage the Freedom to Speak up Culture of Speak up, Listen up, Follow up.  Disability Awareness Training to wider teams.  Training relating to  microaggressions being rolled out.  Review of grievance process. | Continue to raise awareness of Freedom to Speak up Guardians via yammer, People Services Team newsletter and all company emails as well as attendance at Diverse-Ability Network.  Deliver Aspire Manager training which includes information on harassment and discrimination as well as our duties under The Equality Act (2010). Consider delivering this across the wider company.  To continue to educate workforce on harrassment, discrimination and victimisation.  To continue to promote our Zero Tolerance policy and update our company solidarity statement, re-socialising this. |
| Percentage of Disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff believing that the company provides equal opportunities for career progression or promotion. | The survey showed that both employee’s with and without a Disability believed that the company provides equal opportunities / career progression.  70.9% 2022 vs 78.8% in 2021 Disabled staff. 75.1% in 2022 non-disabled vs 76.8% in 2021.  Although a high % of both Disabled staff and non-disabled staff believe our organisation provides equal opportunities, the figures have decreased since 2021. Additionally, this years data shows us that less Disabled staff believe we provide equal opportunities than non-disabled staff. | Thrive Mentoring programme.  Video updates from different parts of the business on individuals job roles.  Email updates from recruitment on job opportunities within the company. | Thrive mentoring programme continues to be rolled out company wide.  Raising awareness around the Disability Confident Scheme among recruiting managers and the importance of this. | Continue to promote THRIVE programme and ensure Disabled staff are aware of the THRIVE programme. To monitor Disabled staff’s uptake on the THRIVE programme. |
| 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. | The data shows employees with a Disability are more likely to feel pressure from their manager to come to work despite feeling unwell. This was also the case last year.  7.5% of Disabled staff in 2022 vs 9.5% in 2021 & 3.1% non-disabled staff in 2022 vs 2.8% in 2021. Although it is positive that less Disabled staff feel this than last year, the numbers are still higher than non-disabled staff. 14.3% have not disclosed this information. | Disability Awareness Training for managers and Staff.  Developed Reasonable Adjustment / Disability Policy to provide clear guidelines for managers. This clearly outlines procedures and processed to follow when staff are in need of a reasonable adjustment.  Disability Awareness training for managers has been updated  and includes a section on presenteeism. | Development of Neurodiversity training to raise awareness.  Continuing to raise awareness among managers and staff of the processes to follow when requesting a reasonable adjustment.  Continuing to raise awareness around the importance of partnership working regarding reasonable adjustments to ensure best outcomes for Disabled staff (e.g. PST & HR working closely together to ensure best outcomes).  Further developments to the previous DLO role into more specialist role of Practitioner in Disability, Health Inequalities & Equity with clearer duties regarding the reasonable adjustment process. | Continue to deliver specialist Manager training programmes such as ‘Aspire’ which includes information on the reasonable adjustment process.  Continue to deliver reasonable adjustment training for managers as well as training and continue to raise awareness around the reasonable adjustment policy & process. To ensure guidance and resources are also available on this.  Raise further awareness around presenteeism and develop guidance document for this. |
| Percentage of Disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff saying that they are satisfied with the extent to which their organisation values their work. | 67.3% of Disabled staff feel satisfied that the organisation values their work in comparision to 66.3% of non-disabled staff.  54.3% did not disclose what they felt about this. | Star of the month nominations.  1:1s, PWD meetings to recognise achievments. | Encouraging managers to use PWDs and 1:1s to acknowledge achievments.  Staff being encouraged to apply for career progression roles.  Include in guidelines of Disability Policy guidance for managers.  Focus on more Staff wellbeing initiatives (this has been done with the development of the Health & Wellbeing Team under the People Services Team). Further wellbeing guidance, advice and support has been given as well as staff Mindfulness sessions every Thursday lunch time accessible to all staff. | Start to evaluate how we can improve the experiences of Disabled employees within the organisation.  Increase declaration reates for Disability via improved process, policy and promotion. |
| Percentage of Disabled staff saying that their employer has made adequate adjustments for them to carry out their work. | 64.9% of staff feel that the organisation has made adequate adjustments for them to carry out their work. This is an improvement since last year where only 29% of Disabled Staff received any support or had a Reasonable adjustment put in place. | Reasonable adjustment process has been reviewed and new flow chart for clear process introduced.  Disability Awareness training being delivered to managers and their wider teams (ongoing).  HR contact People Services Team with all new starter information for those who have a LTC, Disability or Neurodiversity.  Further developments to the previous DLO role into more specialist role of Practitioner in Disability, Health Inequalities & Equity with clearer duties regarding the reasonable adjustment process.  Assistant Practitioner in Disability, Health & Wellbeing role has also been introduced to support with all Access to Work Claims. | Improvments to HR data collection that provides greater clarity.  People Services Team continue to raise awareness around the Reasonable Adjustment policy which has been added to the PST intranet pages under PST policies.  Guidance resources have been made available for managers regarding reasonable adjustments as well as drop in sessions and training for hiring managers. | Continue to promote the importance of reasonable adjustments among hiring managers. Promote PST specific guidance resources and continue to deliver reasonable adjustment training for managers.  Deliver Aspire training for managers in Corporate Services which has a section on reasonable adjustments. |
| The staff engagement score for Disabled staff, compared to non-disabled staff.  Has the organisation taken action to facilitate the voices of Disabled staff to be heard (Yes) or (No)? | A lower percentage of staff with Disabilities engaged with the survey compared to their non – Disabled counterparts. However, this difference was marginal.  The staff engagement score is 4.0% Disabled vs 4.1% non – disabled in 2022.  In answer to the second part, yes the organisation has taken action to facilitate the voices of Disabled Staff to be heard. | Diverse-Ability Network is a supportive forum for individuals to meet with others & share ideas.  People Services Team & Practitioner in Disability, Health Inequalities & Equity supporting staff with the reasonable adjustment process.  People Services Team liaising with HR, IT, L&D, and facilities facilitating staff to have their views put across i.e., Hearing loops, captions on teams.  Produced and socialised the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Policy. Staff are also able to purchase Hidden Disability badges and ribbons should they wish to (process for requesting this is in the Hidden Disability process). | Diverse-Ability network sessions continue to run and are led by members of staff outside of central services. The network sessions are an opportunity for Disabled staff (as well as non-disabled staff) to come together and support one another as well as share learning and good practice.  The People Services Team can also offer further support to Disabled staff for example, with reasonable adjustments and support from the PST Freedom to Speak Up Guardians if staff have any concerns they wish to speak about or raise.  The annual staff survey considers the views of all staff and looks at the experiences of Disabled staff. | Highlight companywide the actions we are currently taking due to most recent survey and goals going forward (including the actions in this WDES report).  Continue to promote Freedom to Speak Up Guardians and process to ensure staff are clear on support available to raise concerns. |
| Percentage difference between the organisation’s Board voting membership and its organisation’s overall workforce, disaggregated: | The survey indicates that 100% of Vita's board are non – Disabled (This is identical to last years findings). This compares to the entire workforce as follows: 84% in 2022 non-disabled vs 88.2% in 2021 non-disabled and 10.2% in 2022 vs 9.1% in 2021 Disabled. 5.8% non disclosed in 2022 vs 2.6% in 2021. |  |  | Ensure we continue to promote that we are a Disability Confident Employer as well as the Disability Guaranteed Interview Scheme.  Continue to promote THRIVE programme. Ensure THRIVE programme updates are shared widely so that all staff are aware of the programme including staff with Disabilities. To monitor Disabled staff’s uptake on the THRIVE programme. |

# APPENDICIES

1. WDES Indicators – reproduced from NHS Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES), 2021Text

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