

NHS Workforce Disability Equality Standard

2021 Factsheet

What is the Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES)?

- The Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES) is an evidence-based standard that aims to help improve the experiences of Disabled staff in the NHS.
- The ten WDES metrics enable NHS organisations to compare the workplace and career experiences of Disabled and non-disabled staff.
- The WDES is mandated by the NHS Standard Contract.
- As in 2020, NHS and Foundation trusts are required to publish a WDES annual report, which should contain:
 - A report that sets out the organisation's data for each metric.
 - A WDES action plan, which should set out how they will address the differences highlighted by the metrics data in the forthcoming 12 months.
 - A narrative on what progress has been made in delivering the objectives detailed in their 2020 WDES action plan.
- Trusts must publish 2021 WDES annual reports on their website by 31 October 2021.

What is the purpose of the WDES in 2021?

- The purpose of the WDES is to improve the workplace and career experiences of Disabled staff working in and seeking employment in the NHS and build on progress achieved in the first two years (2019 and 2020).
- The WDES Annual Report 2020 provided [key findings](#) highlighting inequalities between the experiences of Disabled and non-disabled staff across all 10 metrics. This demonstrates the case for trusts to continue in 2021 to take urgent action to create an inclusive and diverse leadership; reduce bullying and harassment; improve recruitment of a diverse workforce; and improve the retention of Disabled staff.
- The WDES mandates all trusts to build on progress made in 2020 and outline the steps the organisation will take to improve the experiences of Disabled staff in their 2021 WDES action plan.

Which NHS organisations does the WDES apply to in 2021?

- The WDES is mandated to all NHS Trusts and Foundation Trusts in 2021.
- It is a voluntary standard for national healthcare organisations. As system leaders and in the spirit of transparency and continuous improvement, they will be expected to report and publish data against the WDES metrics.
- It does not apply to CCGs and the independent sector in year 3, however they are welcome to produce their own data analysis and WDES action plans.
- We will be engaging with regions and integrated care systems (ICSs) to explore how the WDES can be applied in 2022.

What positive outcomes will the WDES bring in 2021?

- The WDES will help foster a better understanding of the issues faced by Disabled staff and the inequalities they experience compared to non-disabled colleagues.
- Trusts will be able to look at key areas highlighted by their metrics data and will enable them to compare performance on a national, regional, trust type and size basis.
- The WDES will aid trusts to consider Disabled staff representation at all levels throughout the organisation and identify any barriers that stand in the way of career progression.

- Trusts will be encouraged to work with Disabled staff and networks to review progress with their WDES action plans and identify what further work is needed to enable a more inclusive environment for Disabled colleagues.
- In the spirit of ‘Nothing about us without us’, the WDES will support the amplification of the voices of Disabled staff and their lived experiences.
- The WDES will also help to increase understanding of Disabled patients’ needs, which is even more important during COVID-19.

Have there been any changes to the WDES Metrics in 2021?

- There have been no changes to the metrics in 2021.

How will the WDES reporting work in 2021?

- The data collection period opens on 1 July 2021 and closes on 31 August 2021.
- NHS trusts will submit metrics and narrative data via a new secure online WDES data collection framework.
- Those within trusts with responsibility for submitting WDES data will require a new account to access the framework.
- By 31 October 2021, trusts must publish their board ratified 2021 WDES annual report on their website.
- The raw data will enable high level comparative data analysis across all trusts and will be compared with findings from the 2020 WDES national data collection.

Will the WDES data collection take account of the impact of COVID-19 on NHS Disabled staff?

- Yes, we will be asking trusts some COVID-19 related questions through the data collection framework.

2021 Timetable

July 2021	NHS Trusts and Foundation Trusts review their datasets, declaration rates and published WDES 2020 annual report.
1 July 2021	WDES data collection period opens with WDES metrics data and narrative data to be submitted via the new data collection framework.
31 August 2021	WDES data collection period closes.
31 October 2021	Trusts publish their WDES 2021 annual report which contains the metrics report, and WDES action plan on their website.

Further information

To access more detailed guidance and resources visit:

www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/wdes

www.nhsemployers.org/WDES

Email: england.wdes@nhs.net