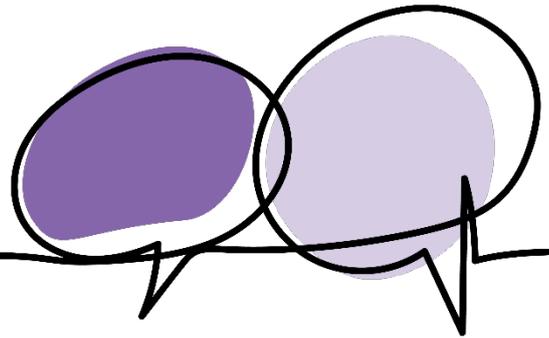


National Staff Survey FAQ



People Promise



We are **compassionate**
and **inclusive**



We are **recognised**
and **rewarded**



We each have
a voice that
counts



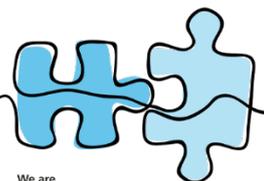
We are **safe** and
healthy



We are **always**
learning



We work
flexibly



We are
a team

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General questions about the NHS Staff Survey

This section provides some general information about the NHS Staff Survey.

1. **What is the NHS Staff Survey?**

The NHS Staff Survey describes how our NHS people experience their working lives. Its strength is in providing a national picture alongside local detail, enabling staff voice, providing the data organisations need to improve employee engagement and experience, and tracking progress towards achieving the People Promise. It is one of the largest workforce surveys in the world and has been running every year since 2003. Approximately 600,000 of our NHS people take part in the NHS Staff Survey.

2. **Who owns the Survey?**

[NHS England and NHS Improvement](#) own the Staff Survey. The NHS Staff Survey Coordination Centre at [Picker Institute Europe](#) and the independent Staff Survey Advisory Group support them with the implementation. The anonymised data is publicly available and an *official statistic.

*[UK Statistics Authority](#) defined official statistic as 'produced by an organisation named by the Statistics and Regulation Service Action 2007 and described by that organisation as an official statistic or part of a set of official statistic'.

3. **What is the purpose of the NHS Staff Survey?**

The NHS Staff Survey collects our NHS people's views about working in their organisation. The results are used to improve local working conditions, and ultimately to improve patient care. The Survey is administered annually so views can be monitored over time. It also allows us to compare the experiences of our NHS people in similar organisations, and to compare the experiences of those in a particular organisation with the national picture.

4. **Who can take part in the survey?**

All NHS trusts are required to participate in the NHS Staff Survey. Clinical commissioning groups, commissioning support units, social enterprises and other NHS organisations are welcome to take part on a voluntary basis.

Only staff working at an organisation on the 1st September will be included in that year's Survey; those joining after this date cannot participate until the following year. A full list of the criteria for determining eligibility is outlined in the survey guidance available on the [Survey documents](#) page.

How do I manage the Survey?

The responses in this section aim to help you to manage the Survey for your organisation and clarify who is entitled to complete it.

1. **When does the Survey launch each year?**

The fieldwork for the NHS Staff Survey is carried out during the autumn with results published in the early Spring (February/March) of the following year. This ensures the results remain comparable and avoids the summer and winter periods when the NHS is historically at its busiest.

The questionnaire is distributed in the Autumn. The precise date will vary between organisations. You should contact the Staff Survey lead in your organisation if you wish to confirm the exact date.

For more information on the key stages involved in delivering the survey, please take a look at the [Staff Survey timeline](#) on the FutureNHS.

2. **When does the Staff Survey close?**

It closes towards the end of November.

For more information on the key stages involved in delivering the survey, please take a look at the [Staff Survey timeline](#) on the FutureNHS.

3. **How can my organisation select a contractor to support with the NHS Staff Survey?**

To ensure all staff responses remain confidential, all participating organisations must employ an independent survey contractor to administer the Survey. NHS staff complete and return their questionnaires directly to the independent contractor, which means that no one at your organisation will be able to see how an individual member of staff responds. Survey contractors will treat your completed questionnaires in strict confidence, according to the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

In many organisations, the independent survey contractors also conduct the sampling, questionnaire distribution and presentation of findings.

The NHS Staff Survey Approved Contractors Framework expired in June 2019 and has not since been replaced. The following contractors ran the Survey in 2021 on behalf of participating organisations.

Quality Health: lucinda.phillips@quality-health.co.uk or 01246 856263

Picker: clientservice@pickereurope.ac.uk or 01865 208140

Qualtrics: complete the '[get in touch with sales](#)' form or call - 0203 808 3310.

4. **Where can I find the questionnaire and other Survey documents?**

The questionnaire and other survey documents are available to view on the [Survey documents](#) page of the Staff Survey Coordination Centre website.

5. **How many staff take part from each organisation?**

Organisations are strongly recommended to survey all of their eligible staff (a census approach) in order to give all our NHS people a voice.

6. **Can the NHS Staff Survey be completed online?**

Yes. In order to improve access to the Survey, from 2021 all eligible employees have been offered the option to complete it online. For those receiving a paper questionnaire, a link to the online survey with a personalised login and QR code is provided so that staff can immediately access and complete it online if they would like to.

7. **Which staff groups are eligible to complete the Survey?**

Staff Group	Yes	No
Substantive staff	X	
Fixed term contract staff	X	
On secondment for 12+ months	X	
Bank workers		X
Leave		
Parental leave	X	
Maternity leave	X	
Paternity leave	X	
Sickness leave (for staff who absent for less than 12 months)	X	

8. **Should bank staff be included in the NHS Staff Survey?**

Bank staff are currently ineligible to participate. However, options are being considered for a tailored survey option for bank staff in 2022 that is fully aligned to the NHS Staff Survey.

9. **If an individual has recently changed to a different job within the organisation, should the answers be in relation to their current or old role?**

They should answer the questions in relation to the job they are currently working in.

10. **If an individual has recently joined the organisation, should they complete the questionnaire?**

If they are new to the organisation, they should answer the questions as best they can in relation to their current job with this organisation.

However, if their organisation is new as a result of a recent merger, and they were employed by one of the previously separate organisations, they should answer the questions in relation to their time spent working at this new organisation and its predecessors.

11. **How long is the fieldwork period?**

All organisations are required to have a mandatory minimum fieldwork period of eight weeks. However, it is strongly recommended that a longer fieldwork period is used, to increase response rates, representativeness, and comparability. Any organisations that believe they may struggle to meet the mandatory minimum fieldwork period should contact the Staff Survey Coordination Centre as soon as possible.

12. **What is the legal basis for the Survey?**

The legal basis for processing personal data for Staff Survey purposes is “*for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller*” (Article 6(1)(e)). Organisations undertaking the NHS Staff Survey as part of the NHS Standard Contract are therefore ‘exercising official authority’ in doing so.

13. **What is a ‘good’ response rate?**

The intention is to encourage and enable all eligible NHS people to take part; however, evidence shows that there is not a definitive threshold level that determines a ‘good’ response rate.

Therefore, higher response rates cannot automatically be assumed to imply more representative data – or a more engaged workforce. They should not be viewed as a survey outcome in and of themselves and NHS organisations should be cautious about focusing too heavily on response rates – particularly if this is at the expense of a focus on outcomes that are more important to staff, such as their self-reported engagement, morale, and working experiences.

Have a look at the [NSS response rates – briefing note](#) for more information.

Communication about the survey to your staff and stakeholders

The FAQs in this section aim to help you in your communications:

1. **What is the value in taking part in the NHS Staff Survey?**

The NHS Staff Survey is a vital way of finding out about your experience of working in the NHS and what could make it better for you. It only takes 15 minutes to complete.

The Survey data is an official national statistic which means it meets the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality, and value.

The survey is aligned to the People Promise which sets out, in the words of our NHS people, what is important in our working lives – like being able to

look after our health and wellbeing, to work flexibly, and to feel we all belong, whatever our background or our job. The questions in the Staff Survey will be used to see what progress has been made on the People Promise and where more change is needed.

You only take part once, but the results are used many times. The Survey is used by your organisation and at a system, regional and national level. It is also used by national bodies such as the Care Quality Commission, National Guardians Office, Department of Health and Social Care, Workforce Race Equality Standard Team, Workforce Disability Equality Standards Team, and the NHS Pay Review Body.

The Staff Survey Coordination Centre has more [guidance and assets](#) to help you encourage your staff to take part in the Survey.

2. **Why take part in the NHS Staff Survey when other listening tools are also available (e.g. National Quarterly Pulse Survey (NQPS), People Pulse, other organisational surveys)?**

The NHS Staff Survey provides a detailed picture of employee experience across the country annually and supports long-term actions. It is an official statistic, with a robust and evidence-based set of questions. Each survey has its own unique purpose, and they work together to provide an accurate picture.

For more information on employee listening tools please have a look at our [‘Employee listening channels’](#) page on FutureNHS.

3. **Is there any information to support local communication?**

To support local communications, we’ve put together a toolkit of some template materials using visuals which illustrate the People Promise. This toolkit is designed to support participating organisations to promote the survey to their staff through their internal communications channels. This is available on the [Staff Survey Coordination Centre website](#).

There are lots more support materials available via the [Survey document](#) page on the Staff Survey Coordination website or our staff engagement [FutureNHS page](#).

4. **Can the Staff Survey questionnaire be completed in the workplace in work time?**

Research has shown that giving a member of staff the opportunity to complete their questionnaire in the workplace during work time can boost response rates. It is the responsibility of the organisation to inform their staff whether or not this is acceptable. Any organisation running an online or mixed-mode survey should allow staff time during work hours to complete the survey.

5. **Can the Staff Survey be completed in a language other than English?**

We strongly recommend organisations to support all staff, including those who may struggle with written English or for whom English is not their first

language, to complete the Survey. This gives every member of staff equal opportunity to have their voice heard. For example, organisations may have champions or volunteers available to help staff understand and answer the questions, and line managers are encouraged to ensure that those who may need more time to answer the Survey are given the time they need within their allocated working hours.

6. **Do staff have to complete the Survey?**

Participation is not compulsory, but our NHS people are strongly encouraged to use the opportunity to give their opinions and views about the organisation in which they work by completing the questionnaire. This gives every member of staff equal opportunity to have their voice heard

It is important that as many people as possible complete the questionnaire to maximise staff voice.

7. **Is the NHS Staff Survey anonymous and kept confidential?**

The Staff Survey is run independently and is done to the highest standards of quality and accuracy. What anyone says is kept confidential and anonymous.

Some may query the fact that the questionnaire they receive includes a personalised log in or ID number.

Independent survey contractors use these to ensure that reminder emails or letter are only sent to staff who have not already completed the Survey and to tell them information such as the NHS trust/organisation/directorate that the person works at. This means that NHS organisations can receive directorate level reporting which is essential for planning and implementing improvements. The report that is sent back to the organisation presents the Survey findings in summary form and does not reveal the identity of anyone who took part. To ensure anonymity, results are not provided for any group with 10 or fewer responses.

8. **Why does the questionnaire need a personalised login/identification number/barcode?**

The contractors use the personalised login/ID numbers to ensure that reminder emails or letters are only sent to staff who have not already completed the Survey.

The personalised login/ID numbers are to ensure each respondent can only respond once to give as accurate a picture of employee experience as possible.

As staff return/submit their completed questionnaires directly to their organisation's external contractor; there is no way that anyone in an NHS trust/organisation will be able to link data with a particular ID number or individual.

Organisations will only receive reports of the summary Survey findings. If a paper questionnaire is returned with the ID number obscured or removed, data cannot be included in the Survey findings as, without the ID number, it is not possible to assign data to the correct NHS trust/organisation.

9. **Is there an app or QR code which can be used to complete the NHS Staff Survey?**

The NHS Staff Survey is mobile friendly; however, it isn't available as an app/QR code as each questionnaire is linked to a personalised login / ID number.

10. **How is the NHS Staff Survey different to other employee listening tools like People Pulse and National Quarterly Pulse Survey (NQPS)?**

There are a number of differences; the key ones are:

- The NHS Staff Survey provides a detailed picture of employee experience across the country annually and supports long-term actions. It is an official statistic, with a robust and evidence-based set of questions.
- The National Quarterly Pulse Survey complements the NHS Staff Survey data on a quarterly basis. It provides regular and consistent insight into employee engagement, using the nine employee engagement questions which are also part of the annual national NHS Staff Survey.
- The monthly People Pulse is a more frequent survey which provides a snapshot information with almost immediate results to support actions for improvement, recognise trends and adjust existing plans.

All three surveys provide a view of employee experience at local, regional and national level. For more information on employee listening tools please take a look at our ['Employee listening channels'](#) page on FutureNHS.

11. **How are the Survey questions chosen and developed?**

The Staff Survey questions have been developed to ensure sound understanding of working experience via robust and validated questions and indexes. There is a gold standard approach to developing the questions that includes identifying high quality questions used on other surveys wherever possible, extensive engagement with experts and stakeholders, and testing with staff from many different backgrounds and roles.

For more information, take a look at this video from [Professor Jeremy Dawson](#) on FutureNHS.

12. **What are the key changes with this year's NHS Staff Survey?**

The refresh of the survey for 2021 is the most significant change for at least a decade.

The People Plan 2021/21 committed that the NHS Staff Survey will be redesigned to align with the [People Promise](#). This was also an opportunity to update, modernise and maintain the relevance of the NHS Staff Survey.

The scope of the refresh, based on widespread and significant engagement with stakeholders and key data users, covered the following key areas:

- aligning with the People Promise
- increasing participation and inclusivity
- maintaining comparability of survey results for key indicators where possible.

The National Staff Survey team have developed a [summary of key changes and improvements](#) document which highlights the improvements and changes with the reporting for the 2021 NHS Staff Survey.

13. [Why the Survey aligns to the People Promise?](#)

[The People Promise](#) sets out, in the words of our NHS people, the things that would most improve our working experience – like health and wellbeing support, the opportunity to work flexibly, and to feel we all belong, whatever our background or our job. The People Promise is made up of seven elements:



The people who work in the NHS are best placed to say when progress has been made towards achieving our People Promise. From this year, everyone's answers in the NHS Staff Survey will be used to better understand what it's like at the moment and where more change is needed.

How do I use the survey results?

This section provides information on results to support your understanding of the process and results:

1. [Are there any updates on when the publication date and embargo dates might be or when will we receive this information?](#)

The final publication date is identified at least four weeks before publication. At that point we have to be really confident that the data will be ready at this date and that there are no errors. This is quite challenging with the size of the Survey and number of reporting outputs.

2. [Why are the results not available sooner?](#)

The NHS Staff Survey team have developed a [reporting and quality](#)

[assurance infographic](#) which provides useful information on why, as an official statistic, it takes time to publish the NHS Staff Survey results

The NHS Staff Survey results are used throughout the year to understand and measure the working experiences of our NHS people. They should also be considered alongside insights from other listening tools and exercises to support a culture of continuous improvement. Actions can be taken, and decisions made before results are published.

The [National Quarterly Pulse Survey](#) and [national monthly Pulse Survey](#) provide faster results where these are needed, and other forms of feedback can also be collected to evaluate interventions.

3. **What happens with the information collected?**

The questionnaires are collected and checked by each organisation's independent contractors and then sent to the Staff Survey Coordination Centre. The Coordination Centre is then able to provide organisations with data to compare their performance with other organisations of a similar type and also produce national statistics for NHS England and NHS Improvement.

4. **Where will the data be stored?**

The data are stored in accordance with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 and follow the principles of the NHS Confidentiality Code of Practice. Completed questionnaires are returned directly to an independent survey contractor. The data from each questionnaire are then entered into an Excel spreadsheet by the contractor and held in password-protected files. These are only accessible to a small number of analysts responsible for inputting the data.

After the Survey is completed, these data files are sent to the Coordination Centre where they are collated and stored in secure files only accessible to the researchers conducting data analysis. The information does not include details of the names of staff who completed the survey.

Survey contractors will store paper copies of the completed questionnaires until February when the Coordination Centre conducts data checks. Once this process is complete, the contractors securely dispose of the paper copies of the questionnaires.

5. **Where can I find the Staff Survey data for my organisation?**

The benchmark reports for each participating organisation can be found in the [local results](#) section on the Staff Survey Coordination Centre website.

6. **When will participating organisations receive a benchmark report of the Survey findings?**

Participating organisations usually receive their local benchmark report in February. The Coordination Centre will provide each organisation with reports

of core survey responses appropriately benchmarked against national data. Some organisations may wish to commission an earlier organisation-level report from their survey contractors in order to work with results internally, for example in developing action plans.

Please note that the benchmark reports produced by the Coordination Centre are benchmarked against other organisations of a similar type – accordingly, in order to make fair comparisons between organisations in the benchmark reports, the data from each organisation will be weighted so that the occupational group profile of that organisation reflects that of a typical organisation of its type. This means that it is possible that results given in the benchmark reports produced by the Coordination Centre could differ slightly from those given in any reports produced by survey contractors.

7. **Why is a directorate report listed as ‘not available’ on the website?**

The directorate reports we produce are subject to an organisation’s contractor submitting its directorate information to the Coordination Centre. If you are unable to find such a report for your organisation but think that this information should be there, it is worth speaking with your contractor as they would be in a better position to explain this to you.

8. **Why are some of the directorates missing from the report?**

There are two main reasons why some directorates may be missing from the report. First, where a group has fewer than 11 responses, results are suppressed in order to protect staff confidentiality and it is therefore not possible to show this data. The second reason why certain directorates may be missing is because this information has not been provided to us by the contractor. Directorate groups are agreed earlier on between the organisation and their contractor and then the contractor sends us this data to add to our reporting. You would need to get in touch with your contractor regarding the categories that were agreed.

9. **Why are the figures for my organisation different in the benchmark report compared to the directorate report?**

The data in the full and summary reports are weighted based on the current year staff profile. The main reason that this is done is to allow for fair comparisons to the benchmark scores. The data in the directorate reports, on the other hand, does not weight the data as there is not any benchmark comparison; this would explain for the discrepancy across those reports. More information on weighting can be found in the [technical document](#) available in the survey documents section of the Coordination Centre website.

10. **How are the Promise/theme scores calculated?**

You can find detail on how the theme scores are calculated in the [technical document](#) – see section 3. The scores are calculated using case level data so it is not possible for you to do the calculation and get the same values because the data that are published are aggregated.

11. **Why are some of the theme scores listed as a significantly different change even though the score is exactly the same as the previous year?**

Rounding is one factor that can impact why figures that look the same to 1 decimal place (dp) may be significant while those that look different to 1dp are sometimes not significant. Each score is rounded to 1dp which means that figures can appear more similar or more different than they actually are.

For example, a change in change from 8.3 to 8.1 does not necessarily represent a change of 0.2. Due to rounding the difference may actually be: 8.349 to 8.051 (a difference of 0.298) or 8.251 to 8.149 (a difference of 0.102)

The statistical test applied uses the actual, rather than the rounded results. The test also takes into account the sample size (larger sample sizes are more likely to result in changes being statistically significant) and the actual values (a 0.1 movement on a very high or low score is more significant than a similar movement on a mid-range score).

The results of the significance testing are provided as a guide to help data users see where there may have been 'real' changes in the scores year on year, and where changes are too small to be statistically significant. But we always advise that these tests are used for guidance only and that actions are based on the comparison with benchmark scores, the longer-term trends, and the context in which the survey took place.

12. **Is it possible to locate the results for the overall top and bottom scoring organisations?**

We do not produce an output of this nature as we advise against grouping all organisations in the same way to find the overall top and bottom. Instead, we categorise the results into benchmark groups in order for organisations to see how they compare to similar organisations, and we would always advise comparing results in this way.

You can download the dataset which feeds into the benchmark reports from the [local results](#) section of this website. The data is in Excel format and shows the results for each organisation grouped into the different benchmark groups, so you can see who is performing best and worst on the different questions and themes.

13. **Is it possible to locate the detailed spreadsheets which show unweighted data?**

The detailed spreadsheets which show unweighted data for each organisation are available on request. Please contact the Staff Survey Co-ordination Centre team for more details.

14. **Why do the averages differ between the national dashboard and the benchmark reports?**

There are several measures of averages that can be used such as mean, median and mode.

On the national dashboards, the average used is the (arithmetic) mean of all respondents within a particular organisation type (with weighting). The mean of all the responses of all people within acute trusts is taken to create the score for the acute trusts. This score is comparable between organisation types – ie the acute trust score is directly comparable to the score for community trusts on the national dashboards.

In the benchmark reports, we calculate the arithmetic mean of all respondents within a particular organisation – the organisation's score (with weighting). The median in the benchmark reports is then the median of those organisational arithmetic means. The median is the appropriate measure here, as it allows organisations within an organisation type to compare themselves to each other, and accounts for outliers (extremely low or high scores) as exactly 50 per cent of the values are above and below the median, whereas a mean score can be skewed by those outliers.

If you want to compare acute trusts with other types of organisation, the national dashboards are preferred (mean); whereas if you are wanting to compare an organisation to other organisations of the same type the benchmark values (medians) are preferred.

15. Is it possible to use the staff engagement results from the NHS Staff Survey to compare against NQPS results?

Results from NHS Staff Survey and NQPS will not be directly comparable, due to factors including methodological differences, the response rate and possible seasonal affects. The purpose of the NHS Staff Survey is to provide official statistical data of staff experience across all provider organisations, allowing organisations to track progress over time and compare their results against national and local benchmarks to a granular level of detail. The NQPS provides a view of staff engagement in provider organisations on a quarterly basis. Methodological differences between NHS Staff Survey and NQPS include the sampling strategy (the NHS Staff Survey has a robust sampling strategy aligned to ESR data), and the use of weighting to increase the quality and comparability of the data (NHS Staff Survey results are weighted while NQPS results are not).

16. Is it possible to get the raw data without any identifiable data so participating organisations can have a head start with internal analysis and the action planning sessions?

Organisations can ask their contractors about this. We are aware of some getting access to their raw question level results data as soon as two weeks after the close of the fieldwork period. Also, contractors often provide bespoke reporting outputs before the national data is published by the NHS Staff Survey Coordination Centre.

17. What does 'embargo' mean?

Embargo means an official ban; therefore, when there is an 'embargo' on the survey, this means the survey cannot be shared or discussed outside the organisation.

18. **Will there be any workshops or webinars on 'using the data' or key changes?**

The NHS Staff Survey team regularly hold and speak at events. For more information on previous events please have a look at the ['Community sharing and good practice'](#) on FutureNHS page and for any information on future events, check out the 'upcoming events' calendar on [FutureNHS page](#).