Disability Network Chairs Development Programme

Supported by WDES

Introduction

In over 1.3 million NHS workers, only about four per cent declare their disability status on the Electronic Staff Record (ESR), but a twenty-one per cent data gap is filled by the 'unknown' and 'not disclosed' categories (NHS Digital, 2021).

You play a crucial role in cultural development of an organisation by creating an inclusive and diverse working environment that encourages visibility, respect and equity for staff with disabilities.

The networks also provide a safe space for staff to find connections with each other, share experiences, and promote ways to raise and discuss concerns. However, organisational pressures, scarcity of resources, and a lack of dedicated time for network activities often become the barriers to the networks' growth, and/or barriers to meaningful engagement from staff

 In February 2021 we launched The Disability Network Chairs Development Programme (DNCDP) which was funded by NHS England and NHS Improvement's Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES).

Objectives

Research shows that staff who have disabilities are held back for a range of reasons including lack of support for personal development, inconsistent appraisals with a scarcity of opportunities to explore their career aspirations and identify progression opportunities. This programme seeks to address this gap and provide a safe space for staff with disabilities to assess their needs and develop confidence without fear.

Chairs of the Disability networks provide a steer for the network, help co-create a psychologically safe environment for staff members, and question decision- and policy-makers within the systems. Therefore, developing you plays an important role at directly and indirectly supporting the workforce. This is achieved through highlighting to others your visibility and value, thus improving retention and attracting fresh staff into the NHS which supports our long- term plans to increase the workforce.

Individual Development

Workforce Development

Organisational Development

This programme aims to give network chairs and leads the opportunity to develop skills to support their providers and ICS/STP to improve Disability equality, focus on WDES actions and aspirations, and reduce disability-related health inequalities.

Key Findings from the report:

- Following successful completion of the workshops, the biggest increase in confidence was the ability to lead the staff Disability Networks.

- Confidence in developing the careers of others also saw a clear improvement. This had initially been the lowest area of confidence.

- Sessions received positive feedback and appreciation
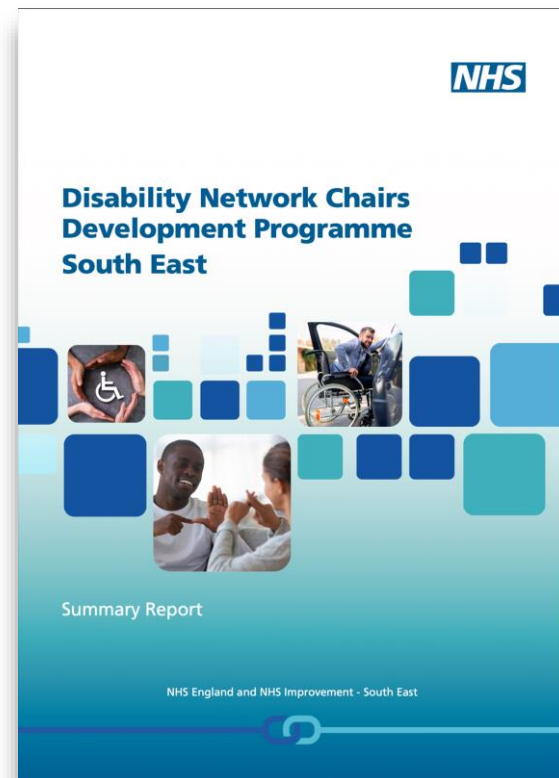
Key Findings from the report (cont'd):

● A further analysis relating to workplace experiences uncovered some concerning themes around:

- Recognition of particular health needs of staff with disabilities
- Reasonable adjustments
- Staff Networks (not particularly allowed or encouraged to be part of the decision-making processes in the workplace).
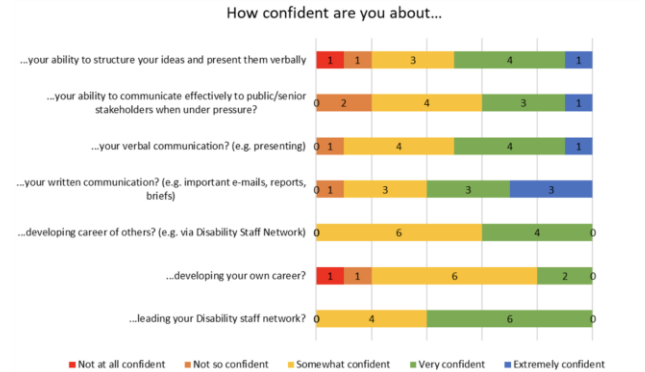
58% of participants also have experienced some form of abuse, discrimination or harassment from their colleagues or managers because of their disability. None of the participants reported abuse, discrimination or harassment from patients.

Changes in your confidence levels
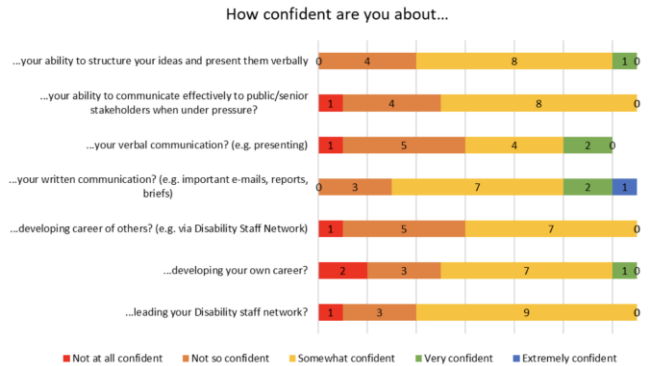
The highest confidence level was in written communication, and the biggest increase in confidence appeared to be around leading your Disability Staff Networks.

Confidence in developing the careers of others saw a clear improvement following the first workshop, though it had been the lowest area of confidence initially.