



Introduction

Northumbria is a Disability Confident Leader at Level 3 of the Government's [Disability Confident Scheme](#). As a Level 3 organisation, we have committed to fulfilling the requirements of the Voluntary Reporting Framework. The framework supports employers to voluntarily report on disability, mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.



This report covers the period from 01 August 2023 to 31 July 2024, to align with our academic calendar and EDI Annual Reporting period.

Part A – The activities in our organisation in relation to the recruitment and retention of disabled people

Recruitment

Northumbria's [recruitment portal](#) contains a range of information around our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and a [page](#) dedicated to Disability Confident.

We include positive statements in our job adverts and role descriptions to show we welcome applications from disabled people and a range of flexible working arrangements are supported. Reasonable adjustments are proactively offered to candidates at all stages of the recruitment process and hiring managers are provided with training, guidance and advice from the HR team. We also use [AccessAble](#) across the campus which provides accessibility advice for people attending interviews.

Policies

The University has a range of policies and guidelines in relation to the recruitment, support and management of staff.

- *Staff Code of Conduct* – contains information around Health and Wellbeing at work
- *Disability Disclosures and Reasonable Adjustments* – this guidance sets out how to disclose a disability and the support we provide for colleagues with reasonable adjustments in the workplace.
- *Special Leave* – contains provision for disability-related appointments and treatment.
- *Sickness Absence Management* – contains provision for Disability related absence management and support, and Disability Leave. The policy also has provision for Dual Track arrangements in relation to the absence management of an underlying chronic medical condition. This reduces the frequency of staff with chronic conditions hitting a Trigger Point in a situation where an improvement in their medical condition is not likely or possible.

Support for colleagues with specific disabilities

Support offered to colleagues with disabilities is tailored depending upon individual circumstances and needs and we have several different types of support. This includes DSE (display screen equipment) assessments, support from HR Managers and Advisors, access to Occupational Health services and an Employee Assistance Programme, as well as assessments by external providers and a single point of contact for the procurement of equipment and training identified through these routes and Access to Work assessments.

Workplace Adjustments

Adjustments in the Workplace Passports were introduced at Northumbria in early 2023, and since then the establishment of a centralised budget and single point of contact has simplified the procurement of goods and services identified as reasonable adjustments for colleagues. Requirements are identified through various routes including DSE (Display Screen Equipment) assessments, discussion with HR and Line Managers, Occupational Health recommendations and Access to Work reports.

The role of Staff Networks

The Disabled Staff Network is formally recognised within the organisation and co-chairs of the Network hold formal roles on the Disability Equality Steering Group. The Network was founded in 2021, and its purpose is to provide members with the opportunity to share experiences and information; offer peer support; raise awareness of disability issues and barriers and advocate for a culture of equity and inclusion for disabled people. The Network recently introduced a Neurodiversity special interest group for neurodivergent Network members.

Progression and Pay

Northumbria operates a fair and transparent graded pay structure which ensures equal pay for work of equal value. Our pay policy combines all pay-related information in a transparent way and reviews of additional supplements and bonus payments are regularly carried out. In 2023 we introduced voluntary reporting of the Disability Pay Gap. The data used is based upon those employees who have voluntarily recorded in the online HR system that they have a disability. This analysis allows us to identify vertical and horizontal segregation within the workforce and take targeted action to reduce the Disability pay gap.

Employee Engagement scores

In our 2023 Staff Survey, around 50% of colleagues responded and of those 12.5% identified as disabled. The Engagement Index Score for colleagues identifying as Disabled was 16.9% lower than that of all respondents. In the coming year we will take steps to understand the reasons behind this difference, so we can identify actions which may reduce this gap in our next survey.

Part B – The percentage of individuals within our organisation who consider themselves to be disabled or have a long term physical or mental health condition

NU People and Finance (NUPF) is Northumbria's online HR system. Colleagues can update their own personal data in NUPF. In NUPF the question around disability is set out as follows:

Statement: A person has a disability if they a) have a physical or mental impairment and b) the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

Question: Do you have a Disability? *Options:* No; Prefer not to Say; Yes.

Using a datapoint of 31 March 2024, in NUPF the percentage of colleagues who have declared a disability is 3.8%, and for 13.6% of colleagues this data is not known. It is evident from our November 2023 Staff Survey responses that not everyone who considers themselves to have a disability has recorded this information in NUPF.

Over the past year, we have encouraged colleagues to update their personal data, using a range of communication methods to increase colleague awareness and confidence to update their personal information. This will improve our understanding of the workforce and their needs. While the proportion of colleagues declaring a disability has increased by just 0.9% in the past year, this represents an overall increase of 28%, which is a positive shift.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Our Wellbeing Agenda is aligned to the [Five Ways to Wellbeing](#), a set of evidence-based public mental health messages aimed at improving the mental health and wellbeing of all individuals. They were developed by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) as the result of a commission by Foresight, the UK government's futures think tank, as part of the Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing.

Support for Mental Health

Northumbria provides a range of mental health support to colleagues.

- Our Occupational Health Service provider can make recommendations to support colleagues at work, or to support a return to work following absence due to mental health.
- The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) offers free 24/7 confidential support, practical advice (including qualified legal and financial advice) and counselling, for a range of issues including family issues, gambling, domestic abuse, debt, childcare, financial, insurance claims, legal, work, drugs and alcohol, relationships, consumer issues, stress and housing. Our latest data shows that 355 calls were made to EAP during this reporting period. Over 87% of these were counselling calls, with anxiety being the most common reason, accounting for 22.8% of overall counselling engagement, followed by Low Mood 20.2% and Work-related Demands at 6.1%.
- We have several Mental Health First Aiders who are available as a point of contact for colleagues who are experiencing mental ill health and for colleagues who are concerned about the possible mental ill health of others. Support ranges from having a conversation, to signposting to avenues of support and escalating concerns where appropriate.
- All areas across the university have a dedicated Health Safety and Wellbeing Champion. They play a key role in championing the University's Health and Safety Procedures and Wellbeing offer.

- Our Stress Prevention and Management Policy sets out how we take a proactive approach to managing stress at work. It reflects the University's commitment to ensuring that stress levels are kept to a level which does not adversely affect individuals' health.

Training and Awareness

Throughout the year we hold learning events in relation to Wellbeing. In October 2023 to mark World Menopause Day, we held a Menopause Awareness interactive workshop, Chair Yoga and Guided Visualisation sessions, as well as providing a series of menopause at Work videos. We also held a Winter Wellness Week in January 2024, recognising the [Samaritans' Brew Monday](#) campaign, encouraging colleagues to get together on campus over a free hot drink.