



Survey on the NHS People Plan

August 2020



About the survey

- The [NHS People Plan](#) was launched on 30 July with the ambition of fostering a culture of inclusion and belonging in the NHS. Compassion, inclusion and voice were listed among the pillars of the [NHS People Promise](#) – the centerpiece commitment to improve the experience of working in the NHS - and actions were included to develop inclusive leadership and to tackle the inequalities faced by some staff groups.
- In response to the People Plan, the Health and Care LGBTQ+ Leaders' Network conducted a short survey to gather reflections from across its membership. Network members were asked the following two questions:
 - To what extent do you feel the NHS People Plan recognises the needs of the LGBTQ+ NHS workforce? (Choice: very unsatisfied, unsatisfied, neutral, satisfied, very satisfied)
 - Please add any reflections you may have about the NHS People Plan in terms of supporting the LGBTQ+ NHS workforce. (Free text)
- Respondents were also asked to provide their job title but no other personal details.
- These slides summarise the major themes and findings from the survey.



What we found

- The concept of inclusive leadership was generally welcomed and recognised as being at the heart of the People Plan. The renewed focus on diversity and inclusion, and recognising its value, was also welcomed by a large number of respondents. But there was overwhelming disappointment with the LGBTQ+ aspects of the plan.
- When asked if it recognised the needs of the LGBTQ+ workforce, 71 per cent of 117 respondents stated that they were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied.
- We also asked whether the plan supported the NHS LGBTQ+ workforce. Comments fell into three main themes:
 1. There is only one reference to LGBTQ+ people throughout the plan.
 2. The only reference to LGBTQ+ people occurs within an example relating to disability.
 3. The plan excludes trans and non-binary people.
- On the next slide, we look at these themes in more detail, with direct quotes from our members.



1. There is only one reference to LGBTQ+ people throughout the plan

- Many respondents expressed distress about the lack of visibility of LGBTQ+ staff, with one NHS project manager reflecting:

“I feel this publication erases and invalidates my identity as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.”
- Respondents referred to the importance of focusing on the needs of Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups in the face of COVID-19 but felt that there should have been more reference to issues of intersectionality.



2. The only mention of LGBTQ+ people occurs within an example relating to disability*

- A large number of respondents were unhappy with the implication in the plan that being LGBTQ+ is a disability. As one respondent put it:

“It is difficult for me to put into words how upsetting and offensive I found the implication that being LGBT+ was somehow an example of being disabled or a long-term condition.”

- Several respondents expressed concern that the only reference to LGBTQ+ staff was in relation to sexual orientation monitoring.
- Many said they found the juxtaposition particularly problematic due to the traumatic history of LGBTQ+ identities having been classified as an illness. A commissioner reflected:

“Without wishing to be flippant, was this written in 2020 or 1920?”

*The original version of the People Plan included mention of LGBTQ+ staff in a paragraph on the Workforce Disability Equality Standard. This has now been removed, with an updated version published on 6 August. The sole reference to LGBTQ+ staff in the updated document is on page 24.

3. The exclusion of trans and non-binary people



- The plan uses the LGBTQ+ abbreviation to describe part of the NHS Staff Survey that asks about sexual orientation, though it does not address gender identity. Many respondents felt this conflation endorsed the erasure of trans and non-binary people.
- The lack of explicit support was particularly distressing because:
 - “Transgender people have been a particular target of increased volatile abuse, stigma and misunderstanding recently, whilst also facing known barriers and health inequalities when accessing NHS services, either directly relating to their gender or services such as screening.”



What we're calling for

- Despite many people working hard to ensure the LGBTQ+ experience is understood by the NHS, respondents felt the NHS People Plan demonstrated that more listening is needed.
- One respondent said: "It seems like no one in the NHS who is LGBT+ was consulted or listened to in preparing it." Another said: "Many of us still feel unseen within the NHS. This People Plan doesn't seem to have the vision to include people like us."
- Respondents recommended explicit recognition of the needs of LGBTQ+ staff within the NHS as part of the People Plan's focus on inclusivity. As one respondent said:

"I believe in what the plan is trying to achieve in terms of equality, diversity and inclusion does go some way to providing a voice to the LGBTQ+ workforce. However, it is a little concerning that no specific action is given and does leave opportunity to poor interpretation from NHS organisations in relation to the action required."



What we're calling for...continued

- In particular, respondents asked for:
 - Removal of the paragraph on page 24 linking the Workforce Disability Equality Standard to LGBTQ+ people. We are pleased to see that this has now been done.
 - Explicit recognition of the presence and issues affecting of LGBTQ+ staff within the NHS and clear plans to address these issues.
 - More engagement with staff networks to ensure that LGBTQ+ issues are understood and specific actions identified to address them.
 - We are calling on NHS England and NHS Improvement to listen and act to remedy the concerns raised by our members, because as one respondent said: **“We are also the NHS.”**
- We will be sharing the findings with senior leaders at NHS England and NHS Improvement who led the development of the NHS People Plan and who will be overseeing its implementation.

About us



- The Health and Care LGBTQ+ Leaders Network, delivered by the NHS Confederation, is a platform for the LGBTQ+ community to listen, share and engage with peers and wider stakeholders to:
 - increase the numbers and visibility of LGBTQ+ people on boards and in senior leadership to influence change across the system
 - improve the experience of LGBTQ+ staff so they can work in an inclusive and supportive environment where they can thrive
 - improve the experience of LGBTQ+ patients and ensure that they receive the best care.
- Launched in June 2020, the network works collaboratively to engage and activate our community, our allies, the wider NHS leadership and other organisations such as trade bodies, trades unions and voluntary organisations.

Find out more at nhsconfed.org/LGBTQnetwork