



**Survey
Coordination
Centre**

2020 NHS STAFF SURVEY: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

NHS STAFF SURVEY COORDINATION CENTRE

This document contains answers to some of the most frequently asked questions from staff taking part in the NHS Staff Survey.

If you cannot find answers to your questions here, or need further information, please contact the Coordination Centre at nhsstaffsurvey@surveycoordination.com or on 01865 208 141.

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1 The 2020 NHS Staff Survey

Q: When will the 2020 Staff Survey be launched?

A: The link to the Survey Guidance and the Core Questionnaire was published on our [website](#) and sent to survey leads at all participating organisations on 31 July 2020. Organisations should begin preparations for the survey as soon as possible.

We recommend organisations distribute questionnaires to staff no later than the week commencing 21 September 2020, although some organisations may choose to begin the survey on a slightly different date. Mailing **must** have begun by 5 October 2020.

Q: Where can I see the 2020 Staff Survey questionnaire?

A: The core questionnaire and additional questions are available to view on the survey documents page of the [NHS Staff Surveys website](#).

Q: Why are we having to do another Staff Survey?

A: The purpose of the NHS Staff Survey is to collect staff views about working in their NHS organisation. Data are used to improve local working conditions for staff, and ultimately to improve patient care. The survey is administered annually so staff views can be monitored over time. It also allows us to compare the experiences of staff in similar organisations, and to compare the experiences of staff in a particular organisation with the national picture.

Whilst this year has been very different for the NHS, the 2020 survey asks many of the same questions, in the same way, as in previous years. It may seem strange to ask some of these questions now, but it will ensure that we can measure the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the experiences of our staff by comparing the survey results to previous years. There are also some new questions specific to the experience of staff working through the pandemic, so that we can understand that experience more fully.

At a national and local level, the survey will uncover the best practice that really made a difference to people, and help us get a clear picture of what could have been better. This will provide learning for future public health emergencies and inform further work to support #OurNHSPeople.

2 Staff included in the survey

Q: Who is the survey being sent to? / Who is taking part? / Why have I been selected?

A: All NHS trusts (foundation trusts, acute and specialist hospital trusts, ambulance service trusts, mental health, community and learning disability trusts) are required to participate in the NHS Staff Survey. Clinical Commissioning Groups, Commissioning Support Units, Social Enterprises and other NHS bodies may choose to undertake the NHS Staff Survey on a voluntary basis.

Participating organisations must, as a minimum, select a random sample of 1,250 employees to take part in the survey. We can get a representative picture of views within the organisation by taking a random sample which reduces the burden on staff within an organisation, as not all staff have to take part. Organisations may choose to survey an extended sample of staff or all of their staff (a census approach) and provided the fieldwork procedure in the guidance manual is followed, the Coordination Centre will accept all this data for national reporting purposes.

NHS England [wrote to all participating organisations](#) in 2016 to encourage them to consider adopting a census approach to their Staff Survey.

Q: Why am I ineligible to participate in the survey?

A: Only staff working at an organisation 1st September 2020 will be included in the survey, those joining afterwards are ineligible to participate. Eligibility for the survey is determined on 1st September 2020. A full list of the criteria for determining eligibility are outlined in the survey guidance (available on [this page](#)).

Bank staff are ineligible to participate in the survey. This is due to practical concerns. Frequently, bank staff will work in various different organisations across a twelve month period which makes assigning their responses to a single organisation difficult. Additionally, some bank staff work in more than one department or position, so this presents additional challenges in assigning their responses to a specific part of an organisation.

Q: How long is the fieldwork period?

All organisations are now 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 Coordination Centre as soon as possible.

Q: Should staff on long term sickness leave be included in the survey?

A: Staff who are on long term sickness leave on 1st September 2020 should be excluded from the staff list (long term sickness leave is defined as more than 90 days). Staff on the staff list who move on to long term sickness leave in the period between 1st September 2020 and the date on which the organisation distributes their first mailing will be removed from the survey.

Staff who move on to long term sickness leave during fieldwork will be sent the survey, but may not receive further reminders once they are identified as being on long term sickness leave, and will have the opportunity to respond.

Q: Should staff on parental leave be included in the survey?

A: Yes, staff on maternity or paternity leave should be included in the survey (if they are selected as part of the random sample, or if your organisation is running a census).

Q: What is the size of the basic sample?

The size of **the basic sample is 1,250 for all organisations**. Organisations with fewer than 1,250 eligible staff must conduct a census (include all eligible staff).

The minimum sample size has been designed to ensure that the survey findings will give a statistically representative picture of the views of all staff in the organisation.

Q: If my organisation is surveying a sample only and I have not been included, can I still fill the questionnaire in?

A: You can download a copy of the questionnaire from the website. However, your responses cannot be included in any national comparisons with responses from other NHS

organisations as your name was not selected in the random sample of staff from your organisation.

3 Completing the questionnaire

Q: When will the questionnaires be distributed to staff?

A: This date will vary between organisations. We recommend that questionnaires are distributed to staff in the week commencing 21st September 2020 and they must be distributed **no later than 5th October 2020** in order to adhere to the mandatory minimum fieldwork period. You should contact the survey lead in your organisation if you wish to confirm the exact date.

Q: Do I have to complete the survey?

A: Participation in the survey is not compulsory, but staff are strongly encouraged to use the opportunity to give their opinions and views about the organisation in which they work by completing the questionnaire.

It is important that as many staff members as possible complete the questionnaire. The higher the survey response rate, the more confident we can be that the survey findings are representative of the views of staff at the organisation as a whole.

Q: I have recently changed to a different job/department within the organisation. Do I answer the questions about the job/department I am working in or the job/department I used to work in?

A: Please answer the questions in relation to the job/department you are currently working in. However, if, for example, you have been redeployed at any time during the Covid-19 pandemic, please reflect on your entire experience of working through the pandemic when answering the free-text questions 21a and 21b.

Q: I have only just started to work for this organisation. How should I complete the questionnaire?

A: Please answer the questions as best you can in relation to your current job with this organisation. However, if your organisation is new as a result of a recent merger, and you were employed by one of the previously separate organisations, please answer the questions in relation to your time spent working at this new organisation and its predecessors. Similarly, if your organisation is new as a result of a recent name change, and you were employed at the organisation before its name change, please answer the questions in relation to your time spent working at this organisation, before and after its name change.

Q: I am a blind person, how can I complete the questionnaire in confidence?

A: The questionnaire can be completed over the phone. The covering letter/email that is sent with the questionnaire should contain a helpline number (for the contractor or the Coordination Centre) which you can ring to have the questionnaire dictated to you, and have your answers transcribed. If in doubt, please ring the Coordination Centre on 01865 208 141.

Q: Can the questionnaire be completed in the workplace in work time?

A: Research has shown that giving staff the opportunity to complete their questionnaires in the workplace during work time can boost response rates. It is the responsibility of the organisation's management to inform employees whether or not this is acceptable. Any organisation running an online or mixed-mode survey **must** allow staff time during work hours to complete the survey.

4 Contractors

Q: We have heard about contractors; what is their involvement?

A: To ensure all staff responses to the survey 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 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

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

5 Confidentiality

Q: What happens with the information collected?

A: The surveys are collated by the survey contractors and the response data are sent to the Staff Survey Coordination Centre. The Coordination Centre are 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.

Q: Where will the data be stored?

A: The data are stored in accordance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 and following 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 data are only accessible to a small number of data 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 2021 when the Coordination Centre conducts data checks. Once this process is complete, the contractors securely dispose of the paper copies of the questionnaires.

Q: If I fill in the questionnaire, will my response be kept confidential?

A: Yes. You will post/submit your completed questionnaire directly to the independent survey contractor appointed by your organisation. Your organisation does not have access to the questionnaires or to any linked personal data (e.g. names and addresses). The report that is sent back to the organisation presents the survey findings in summary form, and does not reveal the identity of the staff sampled. To help preserve anonymity, the Coordination Centre will not provide feedback on any group from which there are 10 or fewer responses.

Q: Why does the questionnaire need an identification number and barcode?

A: You have been given a unique identification (ID) number so that your name and work contact details are not on the questionnaire. After the first survey is distributed, survey contractors use the ID numbers to ensure that reminder letters/emails are only sent to staff who have not returned a questionnaire.

As staff return their completed questionnaires directly to an external survey contractor, there is no way that anyone in your organisation will be able to link data with a particular ID number or individual. Your organisation will only receive reports of the summary survey findings. If a questionnaire is returned with the ID number obscured or removed, data cannot be included in the survey findings because, without the ID number, it is not possible to assign data to the correct NHS organisation.

Q: I am in dispute with my organisation, and would like to complete the questionnaire but am concerned I may be identified

A: All data submitted through the survey are confidential. Since NHS organisations use an external survey contractor to administer the survey, and all surveys are returned directly to that external contractor, no one in your organisation will be able to link your responses to you.

Results will only be reported to organisations in summary form and in such a way that it will be impossible to identify an individual's responses.

The written comments which you provide within your survey response will be passed to your organisation, and NHS England and NHS Improvement, as outlined in the disclaimer on the questionnaire. Please consider this before including any identifying information in your written comments. Comments will always be anonymised before they are made publically available.

6 Results and feedback

Q: When will we receive a benchmark report on the survey findings?

A: In Spring 2021 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, even if only the Basic Sample was analysed in those cases. Hence, we ask that organisations do not release Staff Survey findings externally e.g. to local media, until the results are published on the Staff Survey website in spring 2021.