



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

# Voluntary Reporting on Disability, Mental Health and Wellbeing

A framework to support employers to report  
voluntarily on disability, mental health and  
wellbeing in the workplace



# Contents

Introduction	3
Framework for voluntary employer reporting on disability, mental health and wellbeing	4
What are the benefits of voluntarily reporting information on disability, mental health and wellbeing?	6
Why is the voluntary reporting framework a useful tool for employers?	8
How can an employer collect data for voluntary reporting and where can this information be reported?	10
What further support is available?	11



# Introduction

## What is the voluntary reporting framework?

The framework has been developed by the Government in partnership with large employers and expert partners (including leading charities) to support organisations to record and voluntarily report information on disability, mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.

## Who is the voluntary reporting framework for?

The framework is aimed at large employers with over 250 employees but can also be used to support smaller employers who are keen to drive greater transparency in their organisation or industry.

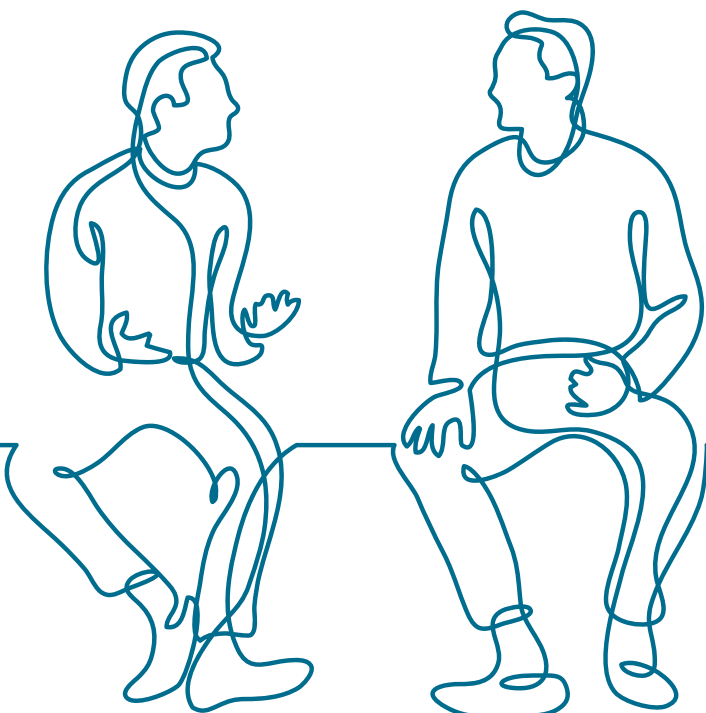
## Why has the voluntary reporting framework been published?

The Government believes that transparency and reporting are effective levers in driving the culture change required to build a more inclusive society.

The independent [Thriving at Work Review](#) conducted by Paul Farmer and Lord Dennis Stevenson, published in October 2017, recommended that employers should report more information about their actions on workplace mental health on a voluntary basis.

In November 2017, the Government's [Improving Lives](#) command paper committed to working with partners, including employers, to develop a framework for voluntary reporting on disability and mental health.

The framework itself is a two-page guide to support employers to take a first step on the journey towards greater transparency. It can be found overleaf.



# Framework for voluntary employer reporting on disability, mental health and wellbeing

## Disability - Reporting recommendation

For reporting on disability, the aim is that employers who choose to engage with this framework will report on **Part A** and, where possible, also on **Part B**, as set out below. Should employers not be able to do so now we hope that this framework, and the associated guidance, will support them towards being able to do so in the future.

### It is suggested that you:

- A.** Provide a narrative to explain the activities in your organisation in relation to the recruitment and retention of disabled people (**guidance below**); and
- B.** Report the percentage of individuals within your organisation who consider themselves to be disabled or have a long term physical or mental health condition (**recommended question below**).

## Guidance on collection and reporting

**For Part A:** The framework is not prescriptive on the content voluntarily provided in this section, as long as it provides context, is accurate and is complete. Below is a non-exhaustive list of information that may be included.

Employers choosing to voluntarily report should aim to include information about:

- The context to the results of Part B;
- Organisational policies in relation to the recruitment and retention of disabled people;

- Support offered to employees with specific disabilities;
- The role of networks and support groups;
- Progression and pay of disabled people;
- Workplace adjustments; and
- Employee engagement scores.

**For Part B:** It is suggested that employers report the percentage of individuals who consider themselves as being disabled.

Employers should:

- Consider whether the data is reliable enough to publish, including looking at non-disclosure rates;
- State the question used (if not the wording below); and
- Explain the collection methodology.

Collection of information could be completed through employees updating self-service HR records or anonymous staff surveys. It is recommended that you publish both sources, if held. Please explain where data was collected.

It is important to be transparent with employees about data usage, handling and storage.

### Recommended question

Do you consider yourself to have a disability or long term health condition (mental health and/or physical health)?

## Mental Health and Wellbeing - Reporting recommendation

### It is suggested that you:

- A. Provide a narrative to explain the activities in your organisation in relation to supporting the health and wellbeing of your employees (**guidance below**); and
- B. Report the output of staff surveys that provide measures of employee wellbeing (**recommended questions below**).

### Guidance on collection and reporting

**For Part A:** The framework is not prescriptive on the content voluntarily provided in the section, as long as it provides context, is accurate and is complete. Below is a non-exhaustive list of information that may be included.

Employers choosing to voluntarily report should aim to include information about:

- Employee take up of mental health support offered by the organisation;
- The training offered to employees related to mental health;
- The percentage of individuals within the organisation that are comfortable disclosing mental health; and
- Whether a public commitment has been made to adhere to both the core and enhanced standards as set out in the Thriving at Work (Stevenson / Farmer) review of mental health, and how you are achieving these.

**For Part B:** The recommended questions below will provide a starting point to measure the wellbeing of your employees. The first four are from the Annual Population Survey conducted by the Office for National Statistics.

### Recommended questions

- Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
- Overall, to what extent do you feel that things you do in your life are worthwhile?
- How happy did you feel yesterday?
- How anxious did you feel yesterday?

#### And:

- These questions (including ranking of a response to a statement) are based on principles of wellbeing e.g., health, security, environment, relationships and purpose as recommended by the What Works Centre for Wellbeing, including:
  - All in all, how satisfied are you with your job?
  - I would recommend my organisation as a great place to work;
  - How would you rate your overall physical health now?
  - How would you rate your overall mental health now?
  - I feel safe from threats and physical hazards in my work environment;
  - My line manager helps and supports me;
  - My colleagues help and support me;
  - I am satisfied with my physical working environment; and
  - My work gives me the feeling of a job well done.

# What are the benefits of voluntarily reporting information on disability, mental health and wellbeing in the workplace?

Recording and voluntarily reporting information on disability, mental health and wellbeing may support an employer to:

- Improve employee engagement and retention, with consequent gains for performance and productivity; engaged employees are less likely to report workplace stress and take fewer days sickness absence;
- Better understand the experiences of disabled people and people with mental health conditions in their workforce;
- Better monitor internal progress in building a more inclusive environment for employees;
- Access a wider pool of talent and skills through promoting inclusive and disability-friendly recruitment, retention and progression policies;
- Set an industry example in driving a cultural shift towards increased transparency;
- Better serve and connect with disabled customers and communities, capitalising on spending power; and
- Engage in open and supportive conversations about disabilities and health conditions to help enable employees to remain in work and achieve their potential.

## CASE STUDY

### Employee disclosure, Channel 4

Channel 4's internal 'Tell Us' campaign encouraged staff to share their diversity data, particularly around disability. They knew that improving disability employment wasn't just about attracting, recruiting, and retaining disabled talent, but also creating a culture that enables staff to disclose a disability.

Channel 4 explained to staff why sharing their disability status was important to help them determine how they were doing and how to improve and reassure them about confidentiality and how their data would be used. Channel 4 raised awareness of the range of conditions included under the definition of a disability, and because some find 'disclosure' off-putting, the campaign's language instead talked about 'sharing'.

Their centrepiece was a series of 'This Is Me' videos where disabled staff and their managers shared their stories, many for the first time. The senior leadership team launched these videos alongside the wider strategy, giving important context. The videos were incredibly powerful and helped to create a culture of openness.

Within two weeks, 90% of employees had uploaded their diversity data and the percentage sharing a disability increased from 3% to 11.5%. Suddenly, disability data told a more complete story and Channel 4 were in a better position to ensure their staff had the support to excel. This made them happier and more productive not only because they benefitted from more active support, but also because the burden of keeping their disability secret at work was removed.

## Our mental health and wellbeing narrative, Thames Water

Over the last five years, Thames Water has been on an incredible health and wellbeing journey and is proud to be a Disability Confident employer.

The introduction of a wave of proactive initiatives year-on-year has led to a more than 80% reduction in workplace illness and several thousand employees being supported by Thames Water for non-work related mental health issues.

Employee Health and Wellbeing has been at the front of business decision making.

Here are just a few of the steps Thames Water has taken:

- Mental Health First Aiders introduced across the business;
- Expansion of the internal clinical occupational health team to support the business in case management, health screening, health surveillance and wellbeing;
- An occupational health team which now processes on average 100 referrals per month, 98% of which are for non-work related issues (up to 80% of the cases referred every month are for those still in work); and
- Water Wellbeing Week - a dedicated health and wellbeing week every year to act as a catalyst for engagement, openness & transparency.

Transparency increases trust and Thames Water believes in being transparent about its health, safety and wellbeing status. Thames Water believes it can serve customers, support colleagues and work better together if it has a diverse, understanding and inclusive workforce with employees who feel pride in working for an organisation that encourages, supports and respects individual differences.

# Why is the voluntary reporting framework a useful tool for employers?

Collecting relevant data – for instance around levels of disability employment - can pose a significant challenge for employers.

For this reason, the voluntary reporting framework focuses not just on the publication of numbers, but also more broadly on the shaping and sharing of an organisational narrative which captures how an employer is seeking to support their employees to create an open and supportive culture around managing health at work.

The framework includes recommended questions, a series of prompts to shape an employer narrative and guidance on collection and reporting. The framework is a flexible tool to encourage employers to take an important step on their journey towards greater transparency around physical and mental health in the workplace.

## CASE STUDY

### Voluntary Reporting in the Civil Service

The Civil Service is committed to being a leading employer on mental health, which is why we accepted in full the recommendations of the Stevenson / Farmer Thriving at Work review. Mental health affects all of us and providing effective mental health support is a critical part of meeting our ambition to be the UK's most inclusive employer by 2020, as set out in the Civil Service Diversity & Inclusion Strategy, published in November 2017.

The Civil Service is at its best when it reflects the diversity of the country as a whole and is able to understand what the public needs. When people from diverse backgrounds with different life experiences are involved in creating the public services we all rely on, we get better services that work for everyone.

Visible leadership at the most senior level is driving progress against our key strategic priorities on health and wellbeing and disability, led by Jonathan Jones and Sir Philip Rutnam, our respective Civil Service Champions. Committed leadership at this level sends a clear message that looking after mental health, wellbeing and disability is a key priority for the Civil Service, whilst ensuring a holistic approach to mental (and physical) health.

As the third largest public sector employer, it is also important to us that we demonstrate with accountability and transparency how we are meeting our commitments to the Thriving at Work review and the Improving Lives command paper, published in November 2017.





We do this through publicly sharing our progress on GOV.UK in terms of:

- Providing regular blog updates on how the Civil Service has benchmarked against the Thriving at Work standards and action taken to date – which includes all Permanent Secretaries now having a performance objective specifically related to meeting the standards;
- The annual Civil Service People Survey, which includes specific questions on well-being and mental health and also allows comparative results for disabled and non-disabled staff;
- The Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion dashboard which contains a range of data about representation and inclusion and covers all protected characteristics including disability; and
- Civil Service Employment statistics which provide regional analysis, diversity and earnings data for the Civil Service population.

To help our Champions understand the full narrative, we have developed health, wellbeing and disability dashboards which extract data from sources such as the People Survey to measure wellbeing and feelings about mental health as assets and deficits. This groundbreaking approach means that we maintain our strengths and address where we are less strong. The approach also supports the key principles from the Voluntary Reporting Framework and drives concerted actions across the Civil Service to transform our approach to mental health and disability. This benefits both the employer, who can use it to drive targeted action, and the employee who benefits directly from these actions.

Examples of the actions flowing from this narrative include:

- Creating a growing 2,200 strong Mental Health First Aider network to support staff experiencing mental health issues.
- Promoting mental health campaigns and implementing initiatives to foster awareness and to de-stigmatise conversations about mental health.
- Developing Wellbeing Confident Leadership training for leaders building their understanding of the impact they have on the wellbeing of their staff at a personal and strategic level.
- Making it easier to openly share mental health and disability concerns and access appropriate adjustments to enable our staff to remain in work and realise their full potential.

By regularly reporting and publishing data externally the Civil Service is able to demonstrate transparency, accountability and ongoing commitment to our progress on mental health, wellbeing and disability.

# How can an employer collect data for voluntary reporting and where can this information be reported?

This decision is entirely for the reporting employer who will determine what works best for their own organisation.

The Voluntary Reporting Working Group of leading employers and other expert partners – who developed the framework – recommended two potential sources: (i) employees updating self-service HR records and (ii) anonymous staff surveys.

When collecting and publishing this data it's important to: (i) state the question(s) used; (ii) explain the collection methodology; and (iii) be transparent with employees about data usage, handling and storage.

The decision of where to report information is entirely for the employer who will know what works best for their organisation. For employers who choose to report information publicly, the Voluntary Reporting Working Group recommended annual reports as the most suitable place.



# What further support is available?

Government is working with employers and expert partners to publish further guidance to support as many organisations as possible to engage with voluntary reporting. Other useful sources of information include:



The Government's [Disability Confident](#) scheme focuses on

the crucial role played by employers in ensuring disabled people are attracted, recruited, retained and supported in their careers.



This [guide for line managers](#), published with the CIPD, provides practical advice on increasing employee disclosure.





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