“You’re the best!”: how NHS staff wish to give and receive positive feedback at work

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Background

- Positive feedback improves engagement and performance at work (1,2) as well as personal wellbeing (3)
- NHS staff rely on this to improve their professional practice
- The NHS aims to facilitate positive feedback in different ways, including:
  - Friends and Family Tests
  - Appreciative Inquiry
  - Greatix reporting
  - Multi-Source Feedback
  - Staff Awards
- There is little published evidence on NHS staff preferences in giving and receiving positive feedback at work
- Our aim was to understand recent experiences of staff at our Trust and their preferences regarding giving and receiving positive feedback

Methods

Our survey was anonymous and advertised to all staff and students at our Trust via mailing lists and posters

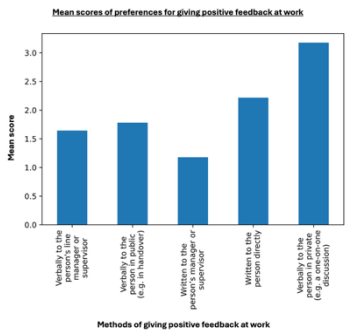
The survey included:
- Demographic data
- Recent experience of positive feedback
- Preferences in giving and receiving positive feedback
- Free-text responses on Greatix reporting

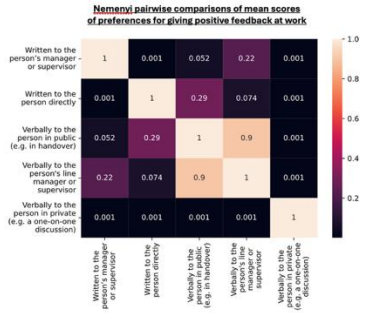
Our analysis involved:
- Quantitative analysis using Friedman and Nemenyi tests (FT and NT respectively)
- Analysis of the data as a whole
- Analysis of the data by demographic categories
- Review of free-text responses

Results

Giving feedback:

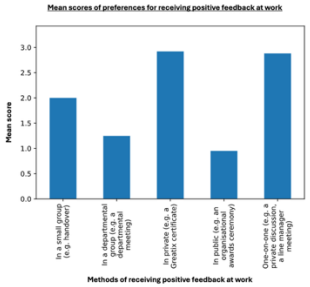
- ✓ 91.1% of staff had given positive feedback in last 3 months (usually verbally in private)
- ✓ Participants were most likely to prioritise giving feedback verbally in private (FT $p<0.05$)

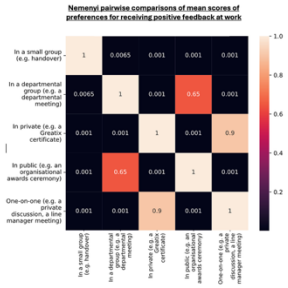




Receiving feedback:

- ✓ 80.1% of staff had received positive feedback in last 3 months (usually verbally in private)
- ✓ Participants were most likely to prioritise receiving feedback in private (FT $p<0.05$) either verbally or in writing (NT $p=0.9$)
- ✓ Participants were least likely to prioritise receiving feedback in public (FT $p<0.05$), whether in departmental groups or wider public settings (NT $p=0.65$)





Analysis by job role:

- ✓ Clinical staff were most likely to prioritise receiving feedback from patients or relatives (FT $p<0.05$)
- ✓ Administration staff were more likely to prioritise feedback from line managers or senior staff (FT $p<0.05$)
- ✓ All job roles were least likely to prioritise feedback from the organisation (FT $p<0.05$)

Greatix responses:

89% were positive about the use of Greatix

9 respondents felt Greatix provides useful evidence for appraisals

13 respondents felt Greatix reporting is underutilised

Conclusions

Our research showed NHS staff demonstrate varied individual preferences on positive feedback. Overall participant preferences for giving and receiving feedback in private matched their recent experience at work. However, different preferences between clinical and administration staff may relate to work environment.

We suggest that Trusts should continue to offer a wide range of recognition tools. Greatix reports should be encouraged as they can be useful for appraisals and wider positive feedback. Supporting discussion of positive feedback methods during appraisal meetings and among the multidisciplinary team would help managers and colleagues to take individual preferences into account, maximising positive effects on performance and wellbeing,

References

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Conflicts of interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.