

# Staff experience in the NHS: A national study

## An Experience Based Design approach

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**Background:** The experience of healthcare staff has been shown to impact patient experience, quality of care, patient safety, and organizational performance (1). The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) has outlined that by improving how staff feel at work (by minimising their ‘daily impediments of joy’), staff morale and patient outcomes will significantly improve (1). Experience Based Design (EBD) is a service improvement technique that captures the experience of service users so that recommendations for sustainable improvement can be co-designed, making improvements more meaningful and centered on the service user’s needs. However, at present, there is little evidence in literature of EBD tools specifically designed to capture the day-to-day experiences of healthcare staff. The purpose of this study is to design and validate an EBD approach for healthcare staff to enable co-design with staff groups to identify improvements in the day-to-day experiences of healthcare staff at work.

I love working for the NHS, patients getting best experience and outcome puts the smile on my face.

I have been nursing for 38 years for the NHS. I have never felt this low, weary, fatigued and just worn down. The constant changes are simply overwhelming.

The [break] room is disgusting, dirty and there are never any cutlery or plates. The fridge is always full of rotting milk. None of us have time to clean it. It does not make me feel valued.

I start the day by sending a positive "Good Morning" message to all my staff.

The pandemic showed how well we can all work together and how quickly we can respond AS A TEAM.

[Admin] makes me feel like I'm not capable, not achieving, always behind. It tests my resilience more regularly than I would like.

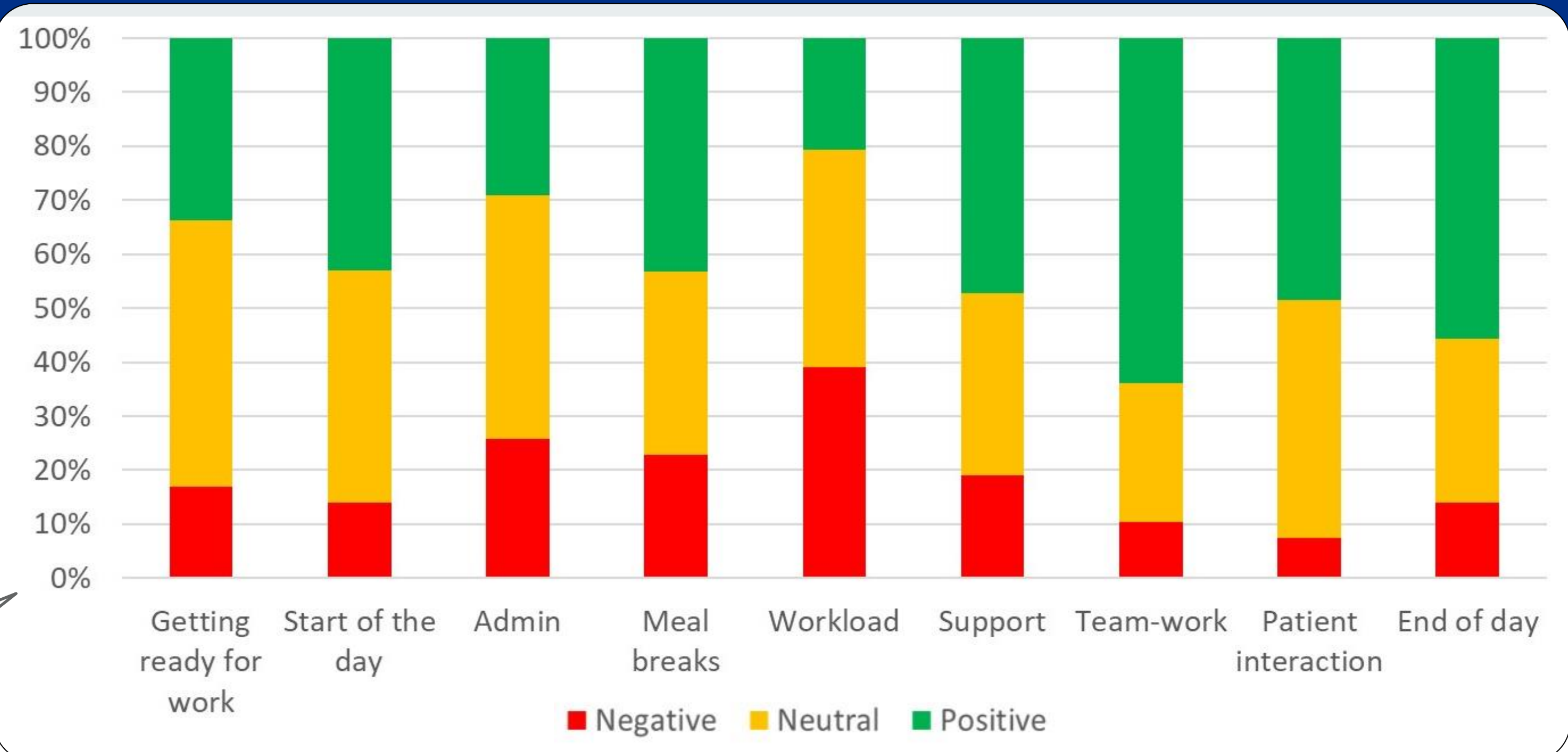


Figure 1: Emotional map showing the percentage of positive, neutral, and negative emoji's selected to describe the respondents' experience at each touchpoint.

### Methods:

NHS Elect worked with a representative cross section of healthcare staff to establish key aspects of a typical working day that might trigger an emotional response (touchpoints, seen in Figure 1). Using these touchpoints, an EBD data collection questionnaire was created using Microsoft Forms. A link and QR code to this form was shared across NHS Elect’s member organisations (95 NHS organisations). Staff were asked to chose an emoji indicating how they felt about each touchpoint (positive, neutral, or negative), select an emotion to describe their feelings at that touchpoint, and share any comments.

### Summary of outcomes of study:

- Staff feel positive about teamwork. Having a sense of comradery has a positive psychological impact on healthcare staff.
- Clinical staff feel overwhelmed by administrative demands.
- Non-clinical staff do not feel well supported by management.
- Not having enough time or appropriate space for meal breaks is a common and prevalent issue. It is accepted and endorsed by leadership that staff work through their meal breaks.
- Many feel overworked and underappreciated. Staff expressed that their workload is not achievable, and they attribute this to inadequate staffing levels.
- Many feel that their IT systems are inconvenient, inaccessible and difficult to use.
- Generally, employees who can work from home enjoy it.

### Results:

377 NHS healthcare staff responded to the questionnaire. Results were expressed in an emotional map, seen in Figure 1. The emotions most commonly used to describe staff’s experience across the nine touchpoints were “happy”, “frustrated”, “ok”, “positive”, “pressured”, and “stressed”. Workload was the most negatively associated touchpoint, while teamwork evoked the most positive emotion.

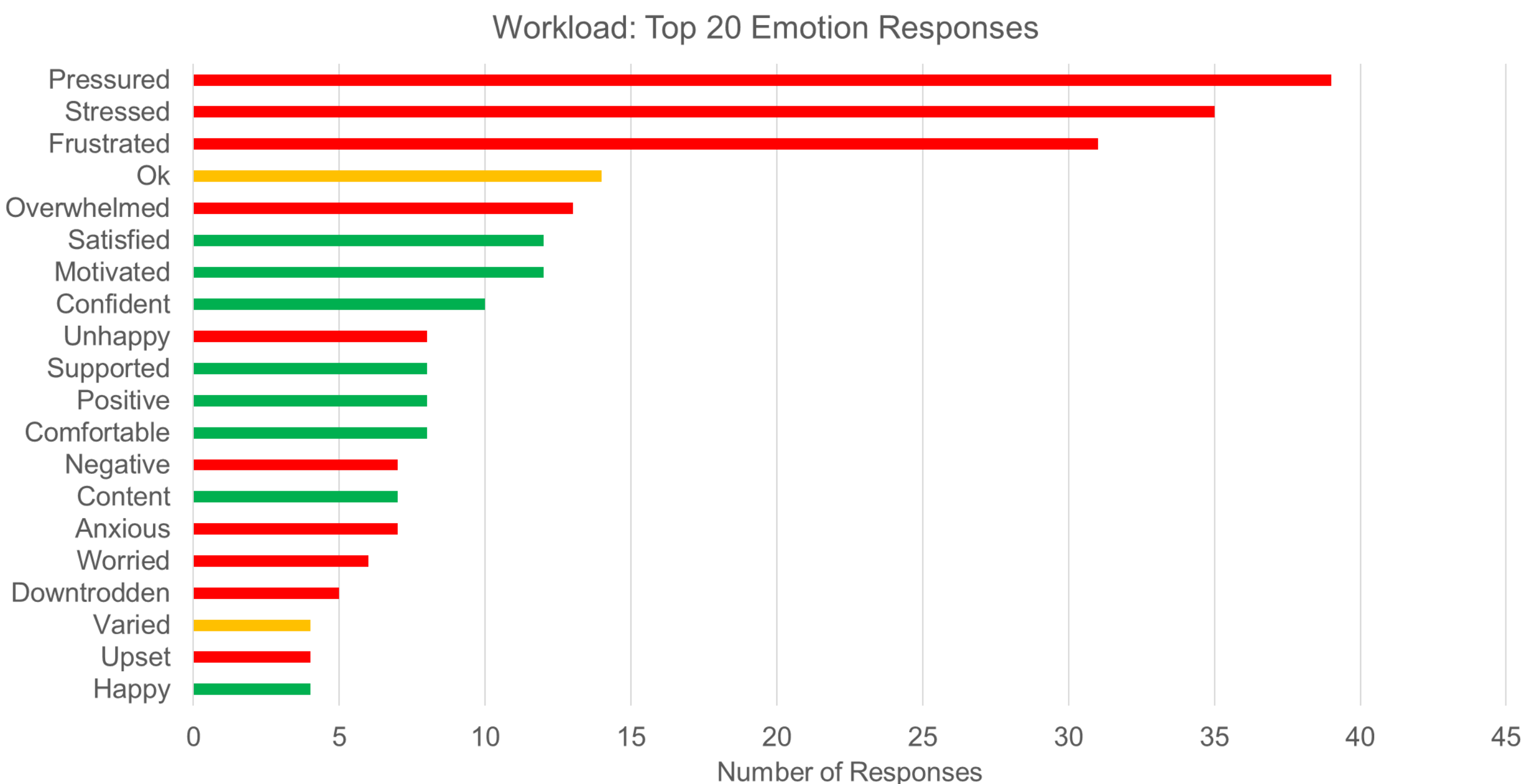


Figure 2: Emotion words selected by staff to describe their experience around “workload”.



Read the study in full



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