

Theatres Together

Culture Baseline and Trend Update

From Discovery (2023/24) to Direction of Travel (2025-2026)



Background



Culture & Leadership Programme Survey Completed

- Summer 2023/24
- A mix of quantitative and qualitative questions
- Results raised significant concerns

Results

- Strong commitment to patient care
- Compassion within teams, although **not consistently across the system**
- **Leadership inconsistency and behavioural risk (bullying, poor behaviours)**
- **Psychological safety concerns and fear of speaking up**



Theatres Review Commissioned

- April 2025
- Qualitative interviews capturing 113 staff voices
- Thematic analysis

Conclusions supported survey findings

- 66 recommendations made across following themes

Values and behaviours

Leadership and management capability

Structure, Roles and Responsibilities

Team Dynamics

Communication and engagement

Fairness and Equity

Turnover

Patient and Staff experience

Theatre Efficiency

- **Theatres Together** project formed to deliver
- Support from shaping change, people and culture teams



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Measuring Cultural Progress



The NHS Wales Staff Survey was completed in **2024** (96 responses), **2025** (141 responses) and **Theatres Together Feedback Survey 2026** (188 responses)

These three surveys have been used to compare culture across staff groups working in theatres

20 out of the 24 questions asked in the recent Theatres Together Feedback Survey align identically to those from the previous NHS Wales Staff Survey

Theatres Together Feedback Survey - 2026

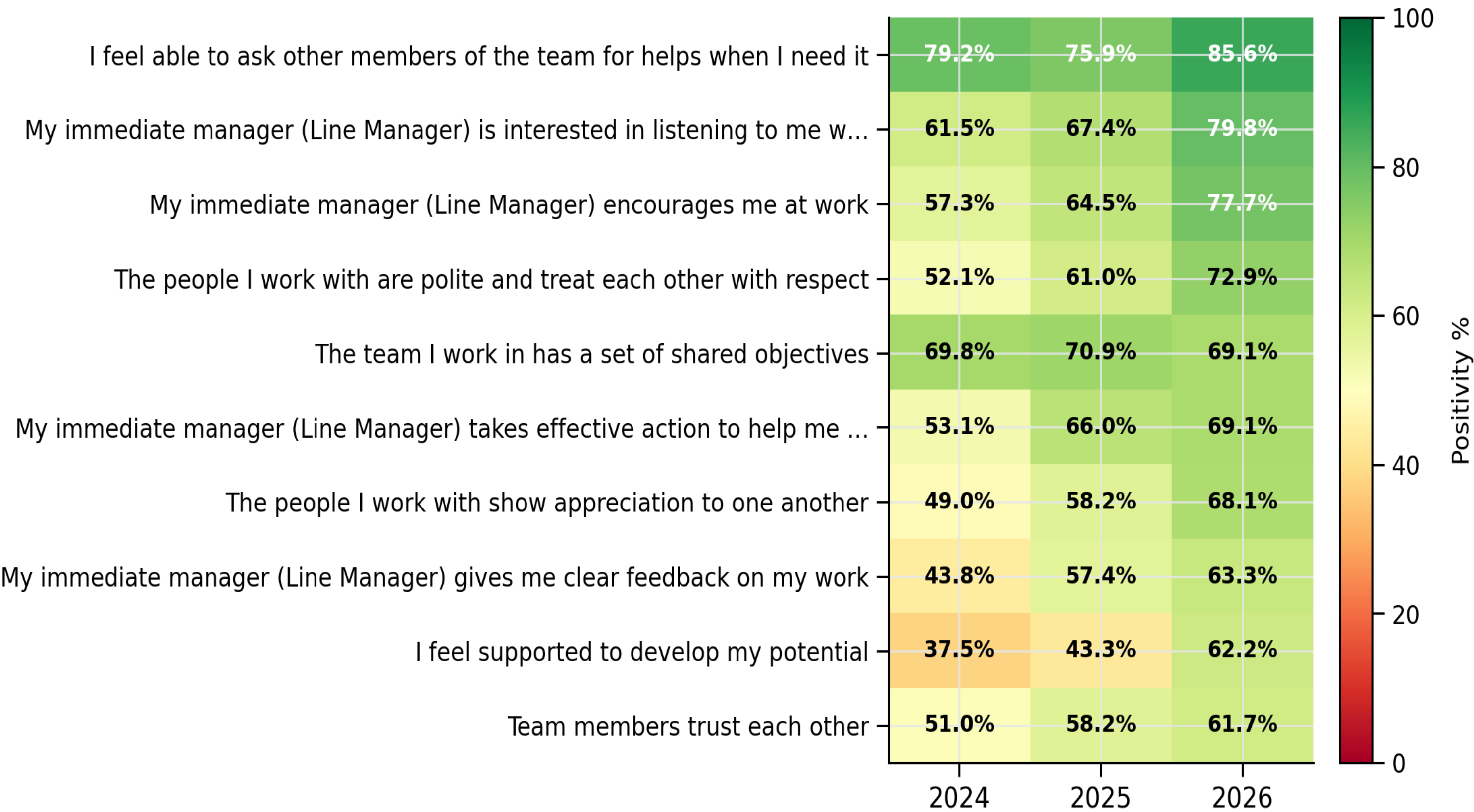


1. My immediate manager (Line Manager) encourages me at work
2. My immediate manager (Line Manager) is interested in listening to me when I describe the challenges I face
3. My immediate manager (Line Manager) gives me clear feedback on my work
4. My immediate manager (Line Manager) takes effective action to help me with any problems I face
5. I feel supported to develop my potential
6. The people I work with are polite and treat each other with respect
7. The people I work with show appreciation to one another
8. Relationships at work are strained
9. Team members trust each other
10. I feel able to ask other members of the team for helps when I need it
11. When things get difficult I can rely on my colleagues
12. The team I work in has a set of shared objectives
13. Team members are able to communicate closely with each other to achieve the teams objectives
14. The team I work in often meets to discuss the teams effectiveness
15. I am involved in deciding on changes introduced that affect my work/ area/ team/ department
16. If I spoke up about something that concerns me, I am confident the organisation would address my concerns
17. I have adequate supplies, materials and equipment to do my work
18. I have sufficient time to do my job well
19. The organisation values my work
20. Staff successes are celebrated
21. I am proud to tell people I work for my organisation
22. I would recommend my organisation as a good place to work
23. I am able to access the right learning and development opportunities when I need to
24. I have positive role models where I work

Please note
questions 8, 11, 18,
24 are new to the
2026 survey, there is
no historical
comparative data

For aligned questions across all 3 surveys responses have been compared

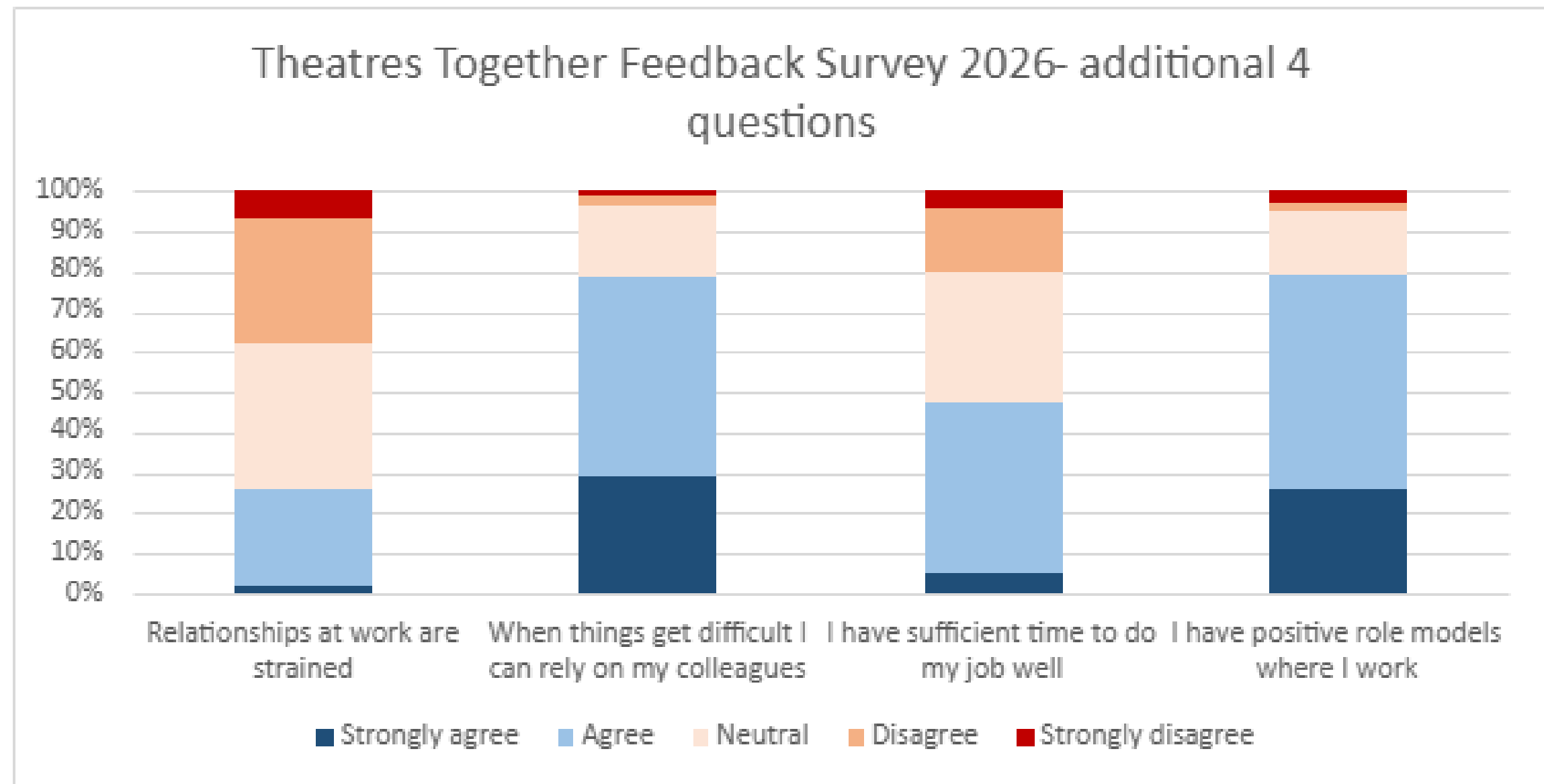
Positivity by question (Agree + Strongly agree) — excluding 4 questions (Part A)



Positivity by question (Agree + Strongly agree) — excluding 4 questions (Part B)



4 additional questions were asked as part of the Theatres Together survey

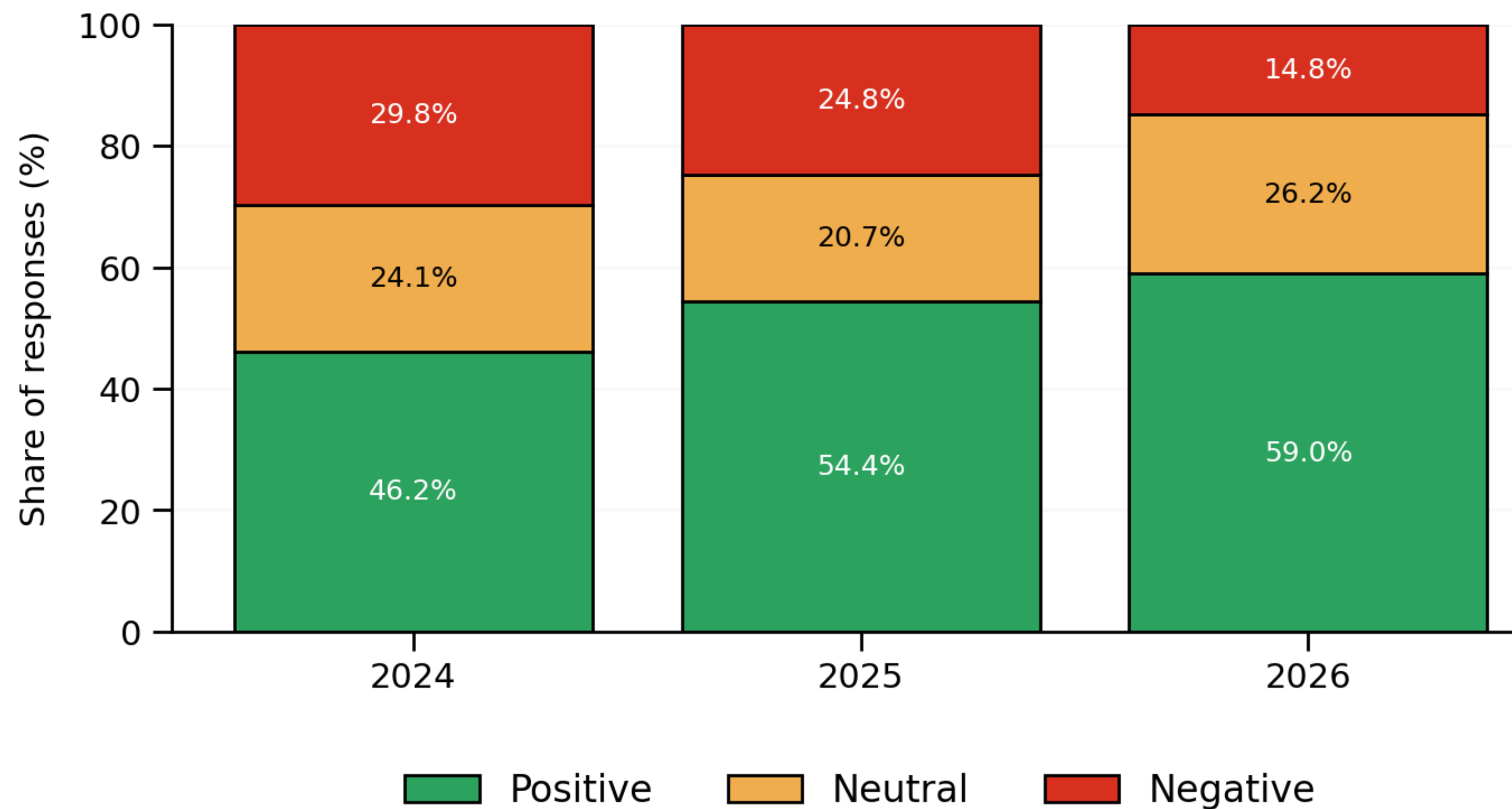


Please note the inverse scale response to Q1

Theatres Together Feedback Survey - 2026



Weighted overall sentiment (all questions combined)



Quantitative comparison - summary



- Comparison across NHS Wales Staff Survey 2024, 2025 and Theatres Together Feedback Survey 2026
- Overall improvement across several leadership and team indicators, especially since 2024
- Some indicators have declined since 2025, but are higher than 2024

Qualitative Information



The Theatres Together Survey 2026 captured free text comments which have been summarised:

What's going well

- Strong pride in work and commitment to patients
- Supportive, close-knit local teams (esp. Recovery, UHL, Paediatrics)
- Positive impact where leaders are visible, compassionate and consistent

Key Pressures

- Feeling of chronic staff shortages – unstable teams, high workload, burnout
- Resources and infrastructure; poor facilities, outdated equipment, low stock, very poor WiFi/ IT
- Education & development: limited opportunities, lack of protected time, inequity across roles/ sites

What staff are asking for;

- Safe staffing realistic expectations
- Decent facilities and reliable IT/ WiFi
- Protected time for learning, team development and reflection
- Better communication, transparency and involvement
- Visible support for theatre managers and local leaders



Additional Qualitative Feedback



The Theatres Together away day was attended by over 200 staff members working across theatres.

The opportunity was taken to capture a high Level summary of "What's gone well?" And "What's still a challenge?"

Each group was asked to share their top 3 things in both categories.

What's gone well?



Theme 1: Staffing, teamwork and culture

- Good teamwork and camaraderie
- Helpful, supportive colleagues
- Integration of new staff
- Supportive clinical leaders / managers
- Feeling valued (e.g., HCSWs recognised as Band 3s)

Interpretation: There is a strong, positive culture forming across theatre teams. Staff feel supported, heard and connected. Leadership visibility and support are key contributors.

Theme 2: Improvements to process and communication

- Team briefings working well
- Improved communication across MDTs
- Better cross-team collaboration (e.g., recovery teams, UHL/UHW)
- Clearer information sharing
- Speaking-up behaviours improving

Interpretation: Changes that increase structure and predictability (briefings, communication channels) are viewed positively and contribute to morale and confidence.



Theme 3: Equipment, facilities and systems

- Scrub availability improving (mainly UHW)
- New equipment
- AQUA/theatre list access on phones
- Better security
- Cleaner / high-standard theatre environments

Interpretation: Where investments have happened, they are noticed and appreciated—especially scrubs, security and digital list access.

Theme 4: Recruitment and workforce development

- New staff joining
- Band 2→3 progression
- Successful recruitment in some areas

Interpretation: Recruitment and career progression are seen as steps forward, but often still sit alongside major remaining challenges.

What's still a challenge?



Theme 1: Staffing levels, skill mix and overwork

- Staff shortages / turnover
- Inexperienced/new staff requiring support
- Working without breaks / long hours
- Skill mix imbalance
- High student presence affecting workflow

Interpretation: Workforce pressures remain the biggest systemic constraint, directly affecting morale, safety and flow.

Theme 2: Infrastructure, estates and facilities

- Outdated / broken equipment
- Holes in trays; missing instruments
- Leaky roofs, poor toilets, heating issues
- Insufficient storage
- Non-standard anaesthetic rooms
- Poor IT performance (slow access, system outages)

Interpretation: Estate and equipment concerns are chronic and undermine operational efficiency.



Theme 3: Flow, start times and patient readiness

- Delayed starts
- Poor preparation of patients
- Wards not coordinating well with theatres
- Theatre overruns causing tension with MTU/wards
- Arrival times of first patient

Interpretation: Flow inefficiencies remain a major friction point, with dependencies on wards, portering, pre-op and staffing.

Theme 4: Communication gaps and leadership limitations

- Surgical involvement in consent checking process or taking ownership
- Booking errors
- Inconsistent communication across sites/teams
- Establishing sustainable communication plans is difficult
- Feeling not fully supported by management

Interpretation: Although communication is sometimes noted as improving, it remains inconsistent—particularly in escalations, theatre list management and cross-team processes.

Theme 5: Financial constraints and resource limits

- Study leave limited / declined
- Slow or minimal study budget
- Financial constraints slowing change
- Mismanagement of funds (perceived)

Interpretation: Financial tensions are visible at the frontline, especially where they limit progression, training and timely access to good quality equipment.

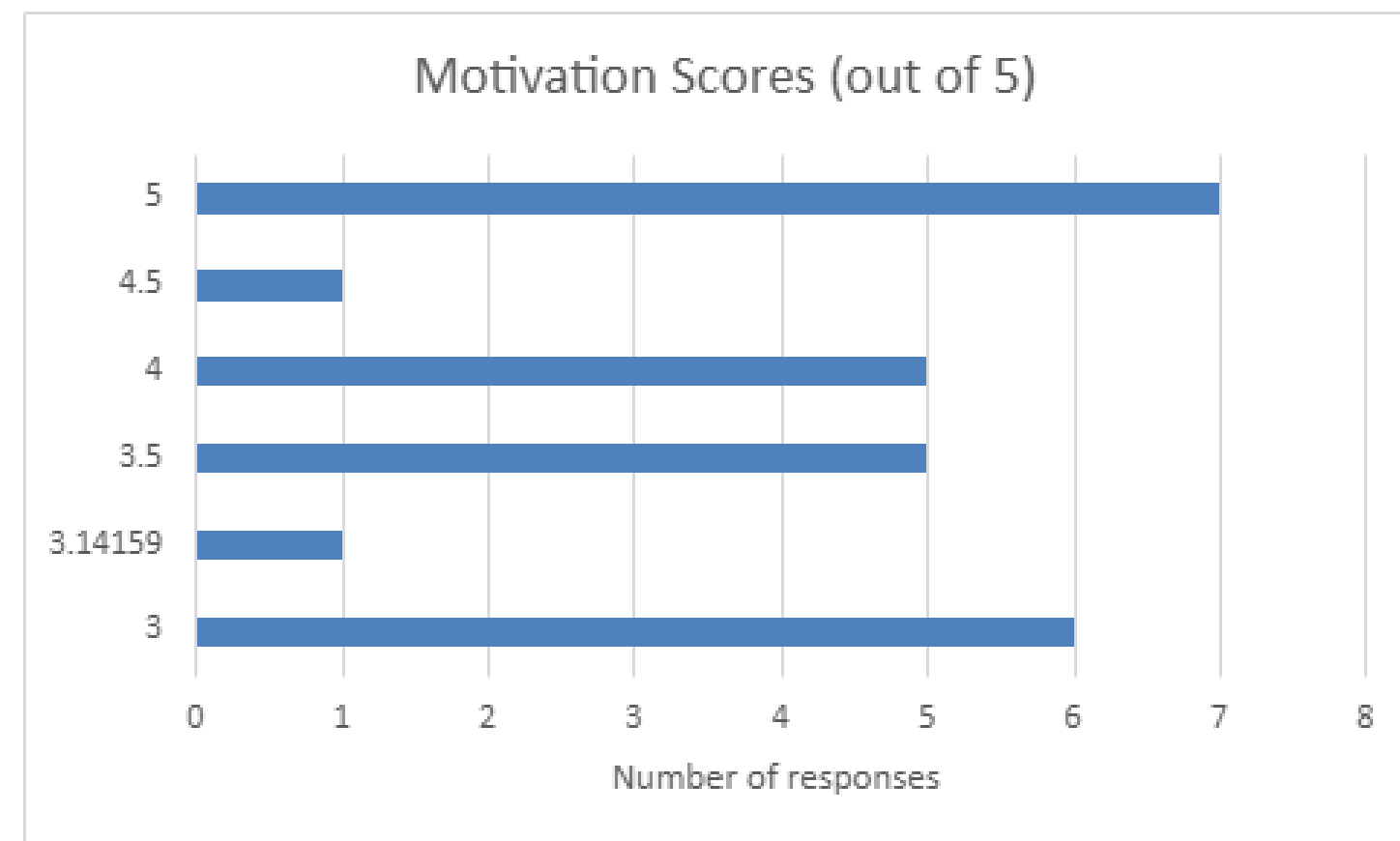


Motivated for change?



The Theatres Together away day also captured an indicator of how motivated groups of staff were for change.

- 25 responses
- 0=no motivation and 5 fully motivated
 - Range from 3 to 5
 - Mean = 3.93
 - Median = 4
 - Mode = 5
 - Most interesting answer = π



Other Initiatives

There have been various other initiatives to support development of a positive staff culture



Art competition



Newsletters

Summary



Significant steps forward have been taken to support a positive growth culture across theatres in Cardiff and Vale UHB.

- This has been born out in a generally positive measured trend across survey responses.
- Staff are feeling increasingly safe and able to ask for help and supported to raise concerns
- There has been a demonstrable move away from the previously reported cultural concerns (eg bullying, racism)

There remains a number of areas to work on including:

- Ensuring teams feel change is co-produced
- Increasing a sense of personal contribution and value including celebrating successes

Next Steps



- Theatres Together team continues to deliver against the recommendations through 2026/2027
- Commit to updating colleagues around progress made
- Define, focus & improve theatre efficiency
- Address the other things that staff have highlighted that matter to them
- Repeat Theatres Together survey