

# Evaluating the evidence on employee engagement and its potential benefits to NHS staff: a narrative synthesis of the literature

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## Plain English summary

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## Plain English summary

While there is some disagreement over exactly what 'employee engagement' means, it is generally accepted that people are engaged with their work when they feel positive, enthusiastic and 'into' their job. We set out to review all the evidence published on engagement, aiming to find out (1) if people perform better at their work and/or experience higher levels of well-being when they are engaged and (2) what are the main factors in the workplace that drive up engagement levels. We examined all the evidence that has been published in peer-reviewed journals since 1990 and found 172 articles containing evidence that met our quality standards. We also examined a range of practitioner materials produced in more informal ways.

Overall, the evidence suggested that when people are engaged they tend to perform better and help colleagues more, and to be more satisfied with their work and life in general. We identified six factors linked to this: certain psychological states (such as resilience, self-efficacy and personal resources); providing people with the resources and tools they need to do their jobs; positive leadership; feeling supported by the organisation; working in a team with other engaged people; and taking part in training or development which boosts individuals' coping strategies.

However, we found the evidence on engagement was mixed and very little of it focused on the health-care sector; thus, we still do not know very much about how engagement works. Further research is needed to verify the findings of this review and to give work contexts greater consideration.

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