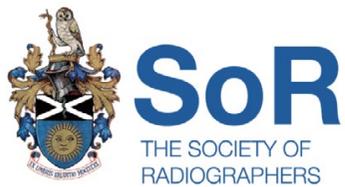


# SoR National Student Placement Survey 2024

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In May 2024, the Society of Radiographers (SoR) ran a survey involving pre-registration radiography students. This was the first time that this group had been surveyed since the [Student and recently qualified radiographers survey 2017](#). The aim of the 2024 survey was to explore the experiences and challenges faced by students while on clinical placement. In particular, questions focused on student finances, wellbeing and support, identifying both regional and national trends, and highlighting wider issues felt by the student body while navigating the educational pathway.

The survey ran for six weeks, closing on 12 June 2024. It was open to both members and non-members of the SoR. Respondents provided their place of study but no further identifiers, in order to protect anonymity and allow a safe channel to report their experiences. At closure of the survey there were 1,034 total responses. Of these, 272 were partial responses; however, as each question has been analysed individually, each response

remains of value. Of the 34 UK universities currently delivering pre-registration courses approved by the College of Radiographers (CoR), representation was achieved from 33 of these. 24 responses were also submitted by those studying at a site where CoR programme approval was pending or not provided.

**Findings of note were:**

- 1. 1 in 4 students were travelling over 60 miles** to their placement sites, with 8% travelling over 100 miles.
- 2. 40% of students have been required to stay away** from their term-time address during a placement block, with 73% of these paying for hotels/private rentals.
- 3. More than half of students paid over £100/week** for placement accommodation, 12% paying over £300/week and 4% paying over £500/week.
- 4. 1 in 4 students had no access to kitchen facilities**, further increasing associated placement costs.

- 5. More than 1 in 4 students were not eligible for reimbursement** of any placement costs.
- 6. 8% of students were not provided with a personal dose monitor** for use in protected areas.
- Half of students said staff were welcoming/accepting, but **1 in 5 students reported poor/hostile attitudes** from staff toward students on placement.
- 8. Access to wellbeing support was a highlighted issue**, with only 40% of students reporting positive emotional wellbeing during clinical placement.
- 9. Two thirds of students had either witnessed, or experienced first-hand, unacceptable behaviours toward students in the placement setting.**
- 15% of students had disclosed a learning difference to their university; just under half of those felt their needs/adjustments had been shared well with relevant staff on placement, and **1 in 3 students felt they had not had an appropriate level of input into their own reasonable adjustments.**

The SoR has published a position statement in conjunction with the Association of University Radiation Protection Officers (AURPO) on the Radiation dose monitoring of trainees in protected areas

**[Position statement: Radiation dose monitoring of trainees.](#)** 

All learner (student and apprentice) members are encouraged to join the SoR learner network. Learners who are experiencing difficulty on clinical placement, and who require individual support, are also encouraged to contact their Regional Officer, or the Students and New Professionals Officer, Nichola Browne, at **[NicholaB@sor.org](mailto:NicholaB@sor.org)**. 

The SoR launched a national survey into student placement experiences in May 2024. This was the first survey of its kind since the **[Survey into student bullying on clinical placement](#)**  (2016) and the **[Student and recently qualified radiographers survey 2017](#)**. 

It followed repeated reports from student radiographers of unacceptable behaviours in the workplace and consistent discussions, through the learner network, around the increasing financial and logistical challenges of attending clinical placement sites.

The aim of the survey was to gather data from across the UK to create a fuller picture of the clinical placement experience at both a national and regional level. The data will be used to identify support requirements and to develop and allocate tailored resources as required.

## ← Background

The SoR National Student Placement Survey ran between 30 April and 12 June 2024, via an Alchemer® online questionnaire distributed to pre-registration student radiographers. The survey was open to both members and non-members of the SoR, with distribution and promotion of the survey delivered via email, social media, SoR publications, events and networking. The survey was not open to learners on the apprentice pathway, as it was felt at this time that their unique experiences and challenges may be difficult to capture within the questioning of the survey.

Respondents were asked quantitative questions around their experiences of:

- Placement planning
- Placement location
- Placement accommodation
- Costs associated with attending placement
- Overall placement experience
- Wellbeing
- Neurodiversity support

Free text responses were also collected in each section, and were used to identify and summarise themes common to the wider student placement experience.

## ← Methodology

1,034 participants responded to the survey, with an average of 20 responses recorded per day. As not all questions were widely applicable to all participants, 272 participants provided partial responses only, making the overall completion rate for the survey 73.7%. However, as question responses were analysed on an individual basis, all responses have been counted in the result section.

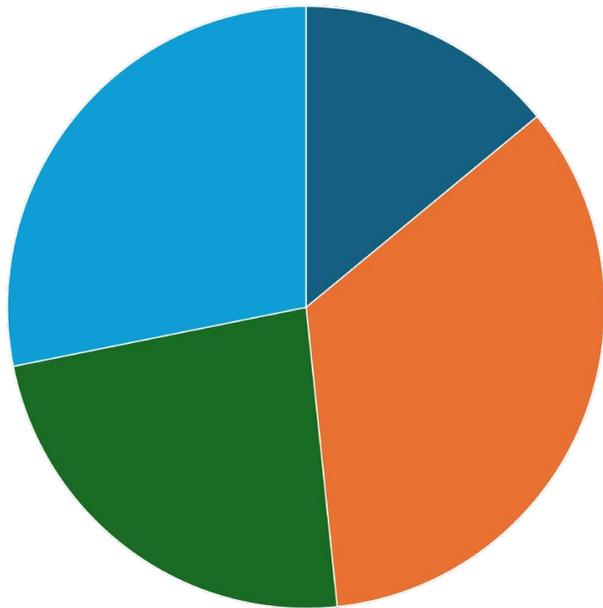
Participation spanned 33 higher education institutions delivering pre-registration radiography programmes across all four nations of the UK, offering a representative outcome.

In addition to quantitative data, students provided 54,898 words of written feedback as part of their free text responses.

## ← Survey response

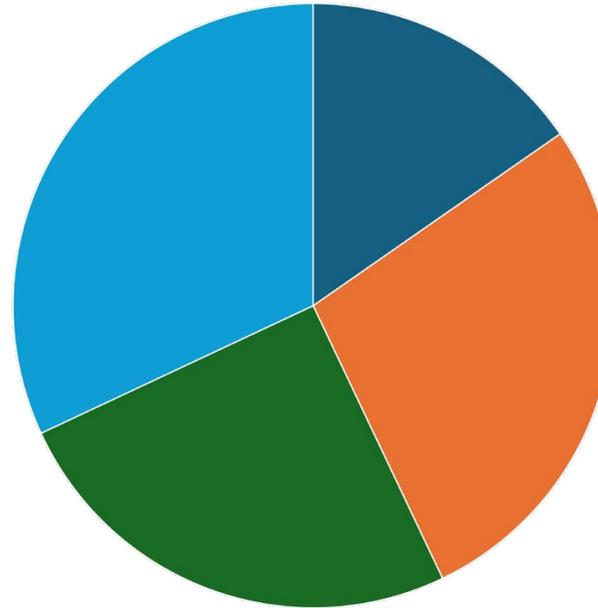
## Placement planning

Q1: On average, how much **notice** are you given of **placement location** by your university?



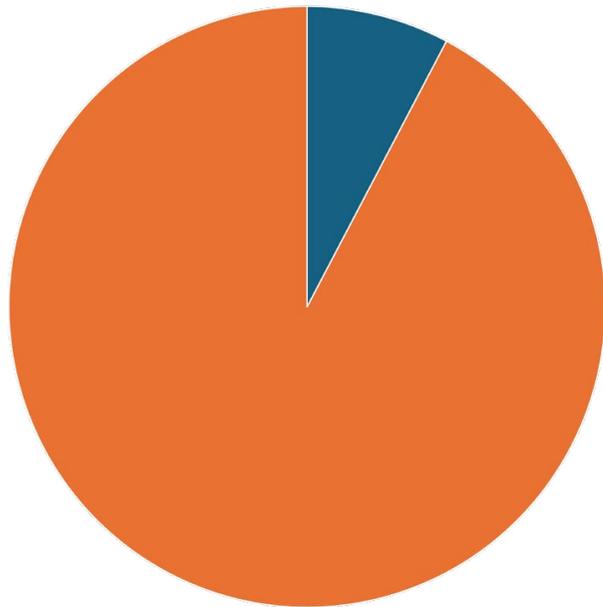
● <1 month  
● 1-3 months  
● 3-6 months  
● >6 months

Q2: On average, how much **notice** are given of your **working rota** by your placement site?



● <1 month  
● 1-3 months  
● 3-6 months  
● >6 months

Q3: Are you provided with a **personal dose monitoring device** (TLD) by your university or trust, for use in protected areas on placement?



Sample sizes: Q1: n=931, Q2–3: n=930.

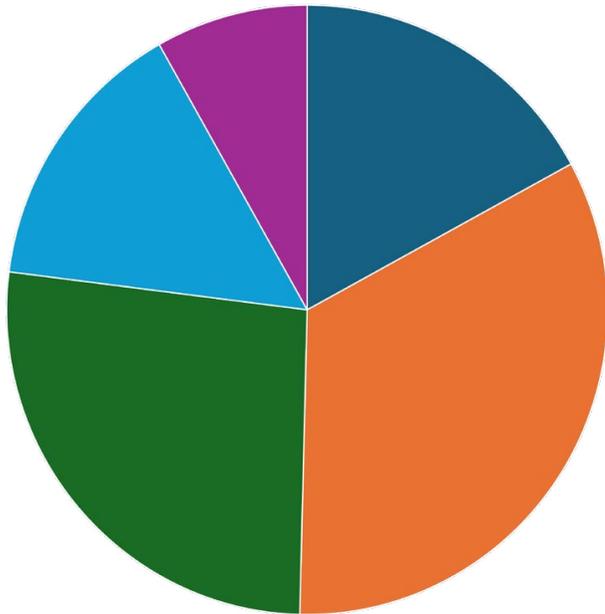
Of 931 respondents, 131 were given less than one month's notice of placement location, with the majority of respondents receiving 1–3 months' notice. Once allocated to a placement site, 297 of 930 respondents were given over 6 weeks' notice of their placement rota. However, 15% of respondents were given less than 1 week's notice of placement rota.

In free text responses, learners raised concerns around the clarity and timeliness of rota announcements, as well as issues with consistency and coordination of placements across different sites. Complaints were also voiced on changes to placements being communicated at late notice, causing stress and logistical challenges.

Learners were also asked about the provision of personal dose monitoring devices by their higher education institution (HEI) or placement site, with 72 of 930 respondents reporting no provision of such devices for use in protected areas.

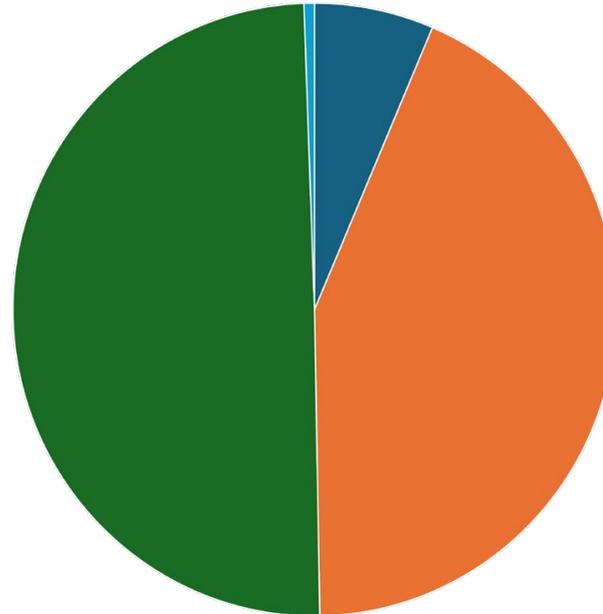
## Placement location

Q4: What is the **furthest distance** you have been expected to **travel** to a placement site?



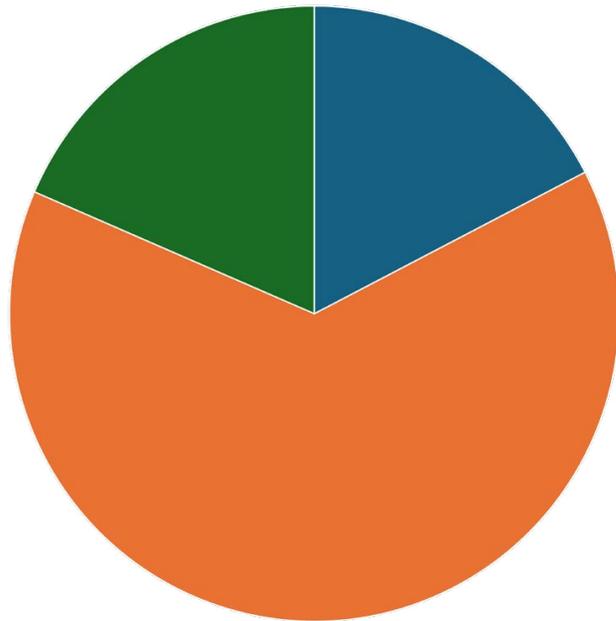
 <10 miles  
 10-30 miles  
 30-60 miles  
 60-100 miles  
 >100 miles

Q5: How do you travel to placement?



 On foot  
 Own vehicle  
 Public Transport  
 Taxi

Q6: How possible are **adjustments to location**, if this proves too challenging for a student to travel to?



- Flexible
- Possible in exceptional circumstances only
- Impossible

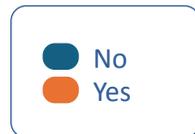
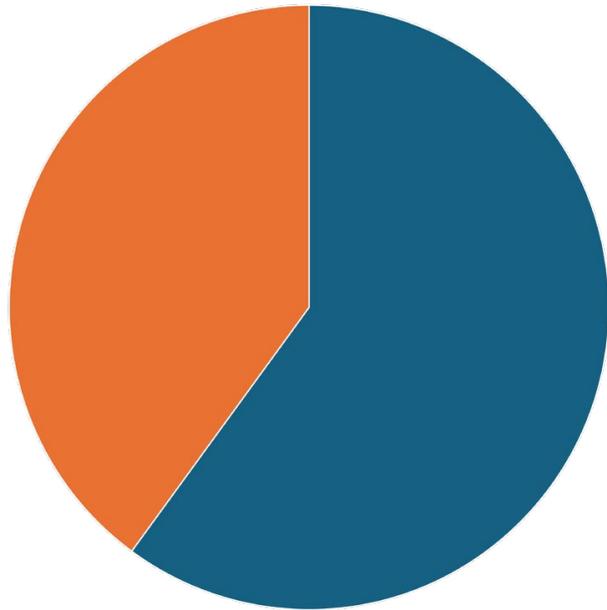
Sample size: Q4–6: n=891.

Just under half of respondents reported using public transport to travel to placement sites. When questioned on the furthest distance travelled to placement, 60% of respondents had travelled 10–60 miles to their placement site; however, 73 of 891 learners reported travelling in excess of 100 miles to their clinical placement. Just under one fifth of respondents reported that any adjustments to a challenging placement location would be impossible within their radiography programme.

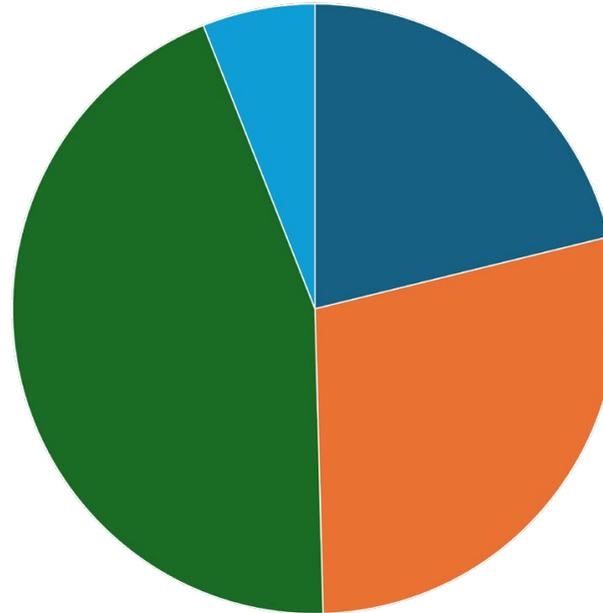
In the free text, financial strain was highlighted due to increased travel costs and the need for temporary housing during placement periods. Additionally, concerns were raised around the impact of long travel times on students' performance and wellbeing.

## Placement accommodation

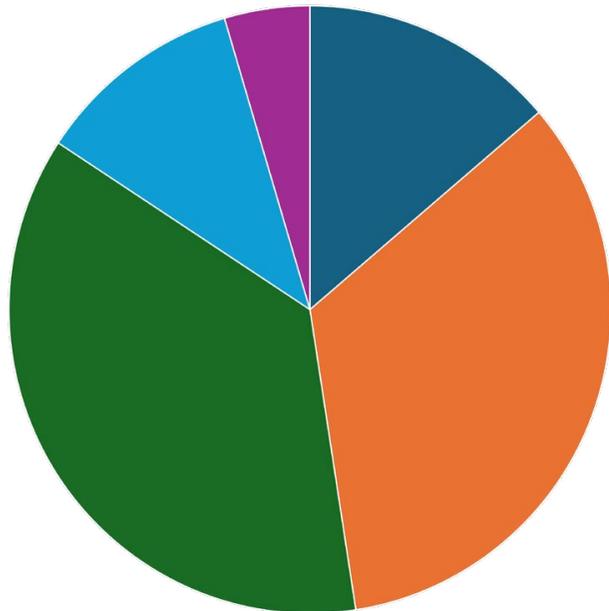
Q7: Have you ever had to **stay away from your term-time address** during a placement block?



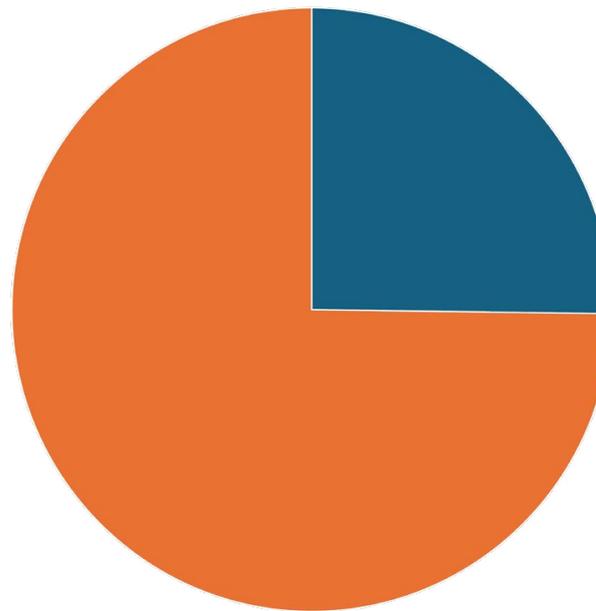
Q8: How would you describe your **placement accommodation?**



Q9: How would you describe the **standard of your placement accommodation?**



Q10: Did you have **access to kitchen/self-catering facilities** at your accommodation?



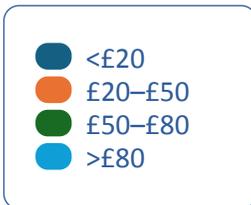
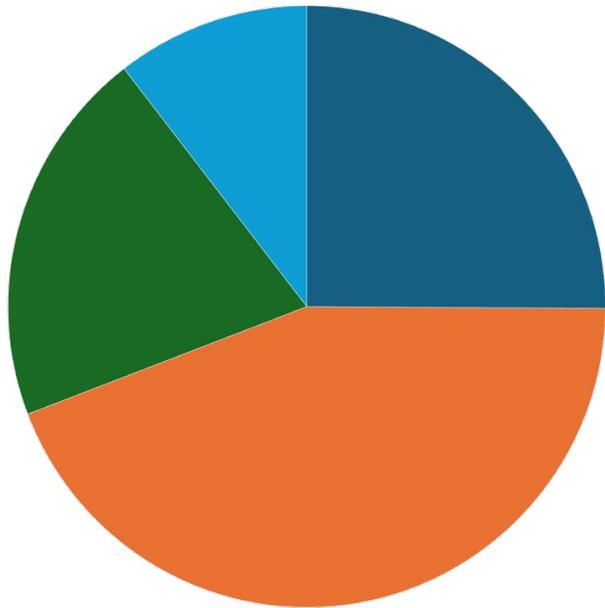
Sample sizes: Q7: n=874; Q8–Q10 are conditional, with sample size n=349 based on response to Q7="Yes".

40% of respondents stated that they had to stay away from their term-time address during a placement block. Of these, 73% reported paying for private rental or hotel accommodation, while only 27% were able to secure accommodation in hospital or university halls. 84% of respondents were satisfied with the standard of their placement accommodation; however, a quarter of respondents reported no access to kitchen facilities in their accommodation, further increasing associated food costs.

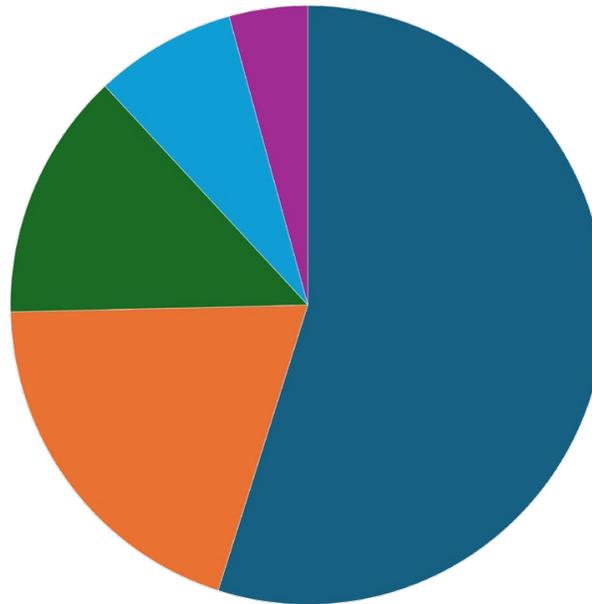
In the free text, learners cited the difficulties experienced in arranging accommodation for distant placement locations, particularly when coupled with short notice allocation of sites.

## Costs associated with attending placement

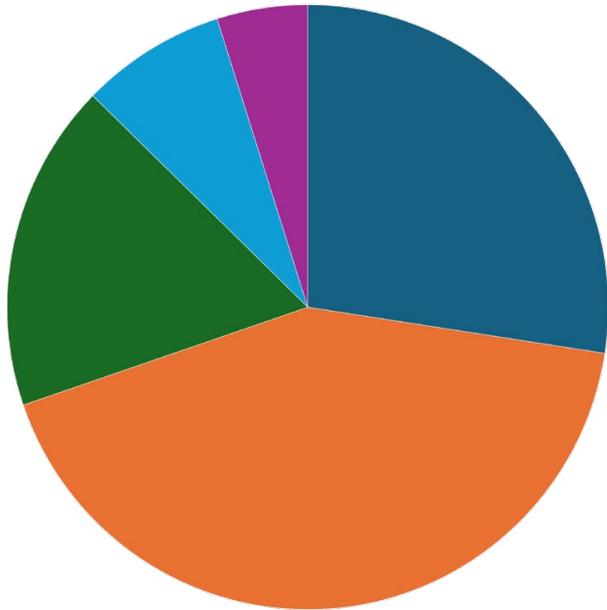
Q11: What is your average weekly **cost for transport** to placement?



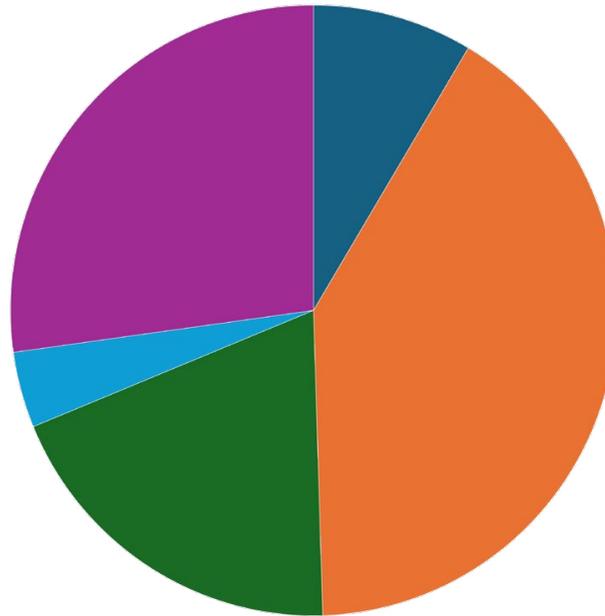
Q12: What is your weekly **cost for placement accommodation**?



Q13: What are your average weekly associated placement costs?

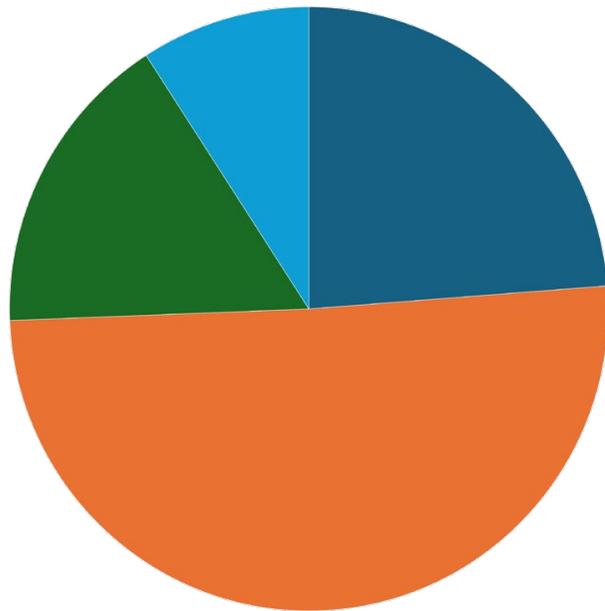


Q14: Are you eligible for reimbursement of all or any placement costs?



Sample sizes: Q11: n=821, Q12–15: n=820.

Q15: On average, **how long does it take to be reimbursed** by the relevant authority?



- <1 month
- 1-3 month
- 3-6 month
- >6 month

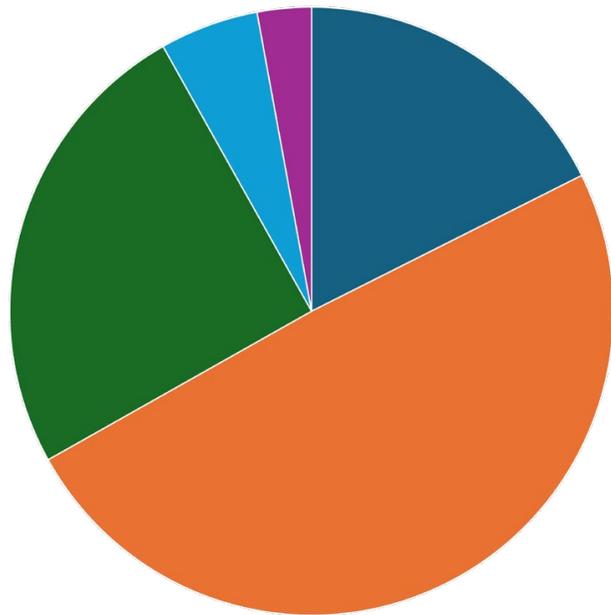
Of 821 responses, 362 reported spending £20–50 weekly on transport to a placement site. 10% of respondents reported spending in excess of £80 on these weekly costs. Over half of respondents spent below £100 per week on placement accommodation; however, 12% reported spending over £300 per week on placement accommodation. When asked about additional associated placement costs, such as meals, uniform or materials, 42% of respondents reported a weekly spend of £20–50, while 13% reported spending in excess of £80 per week on associated costs.

In relation to placement costs, only 9% of respondents believed they were eligible for reimbursement of all costs, with two thirds of students reporting eligibility for partial reimbursement. However, 27% of respondents reported ineligibility for reimbursement of any costs associated with attending clinical placement.

Of those applying for reimbursement, over half of respondents reported a turnaround time of 1–3 months between application and funds received. 9% of respondents reported waiting in excess of 6 months for reimbursement.

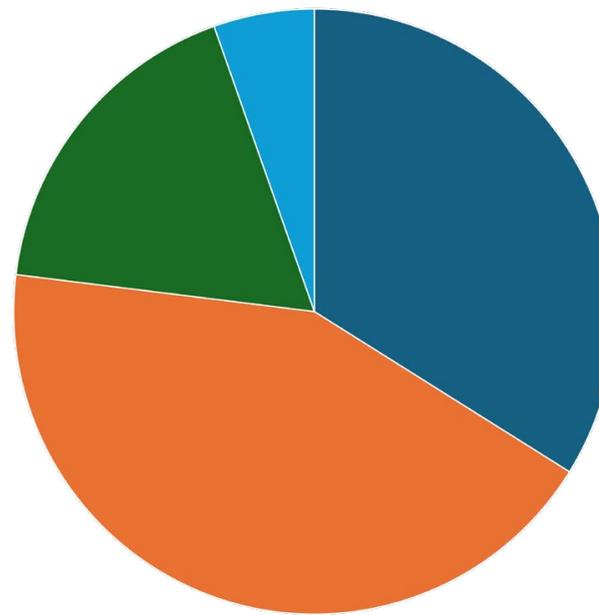
## Overall placement experience

Q16: How has your **overall experience** on clinical placement been?



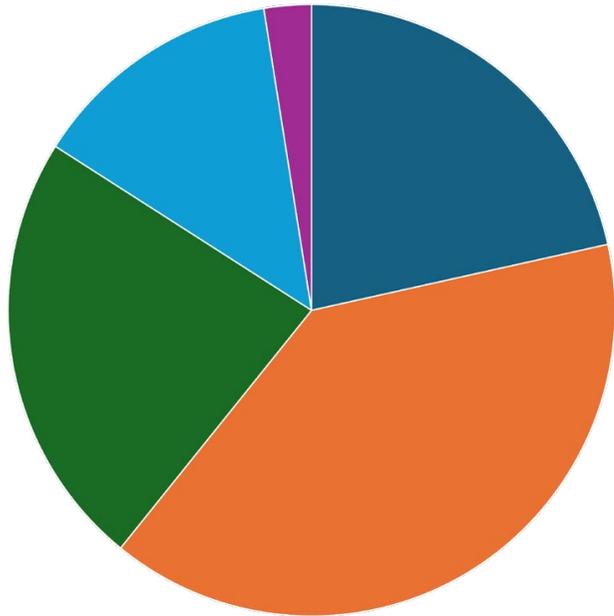
- Excellent
- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative
- Poor

Q17: When on clinical placement, **how valued do you feel as a team member** by other staff?

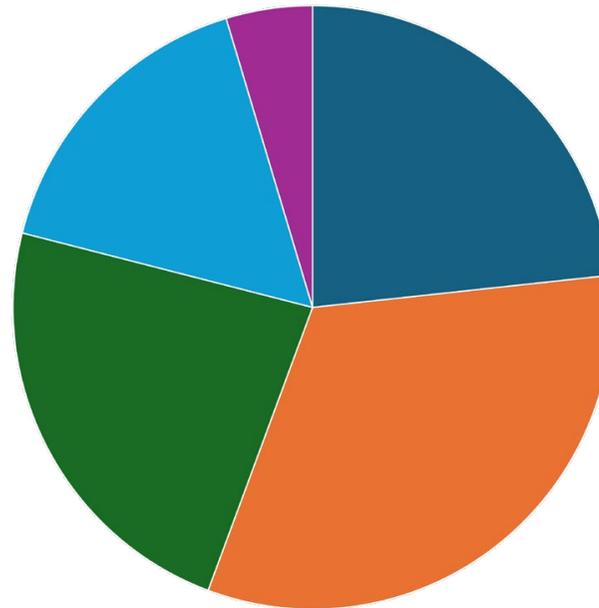


- I feel valued as equal member of team
- I feel less valued than a staff member of team
- I feel like a burden to the team
- I feel isolated

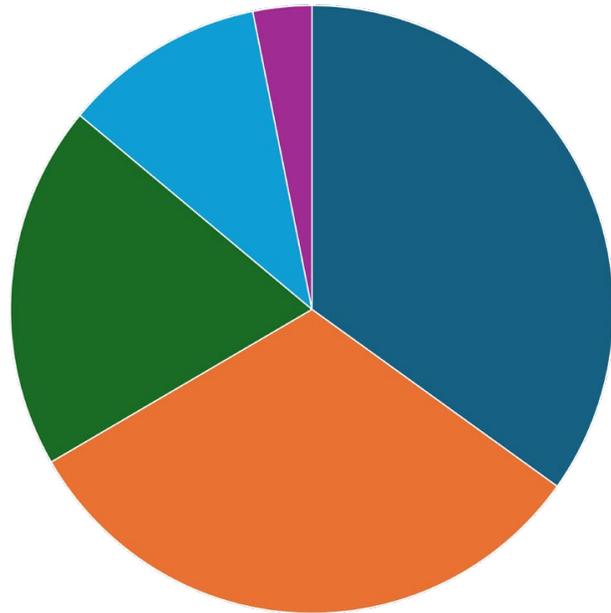
Q18: How would you describe your **access to learning opportunities** in the clinical setting?



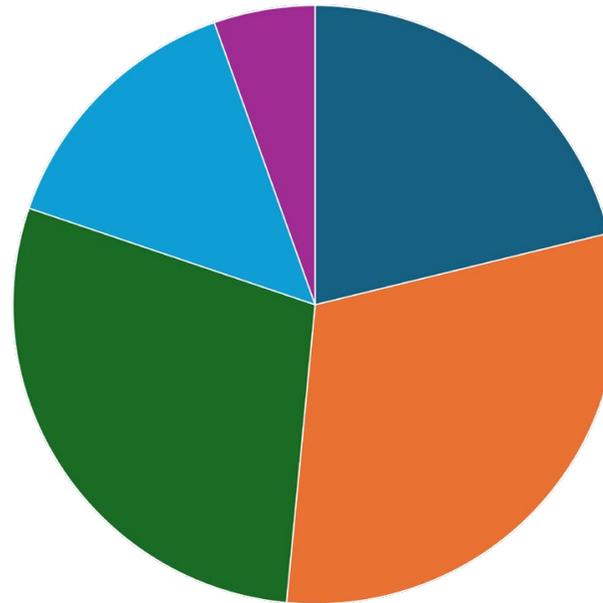
Q19: How would you describe your experience of **staff attitudes towards students** on clinical placement?



Q20: How would you describe the **support from practice educators/clinical tutors** on placement?



Q21: How would you describe the **support from university link staff** during your placement block?



Of 794 respondents, two thirds of these reported an overall positive placement experience; however, only 37% of respondents felt valued as part of their team on clinical placement, with 5% reporting feelings of isolation in the workplace. Just under half of respondents reported staff attitudes towards students on placement as less than accepting, with 5% identifying hostility from staff.

85% of respondents indicated satisfaction with access to learning opportunities on placement, with 86% of respondents reporting satisfaction with support from their practice educators during the placement block. High levels of satisfaction were also felt in relation to support from university staff while on clinical placement, but 20% of respondents reported poor or unsatisfactory support.

Free text responses indicated a requirement for improved support and guidance during placement periods, citing instances of poor or delayed communication from university staff to students during this time. Respondents suggested more proactive and transparent communication to reduce uncertainty through the clinical placement period.

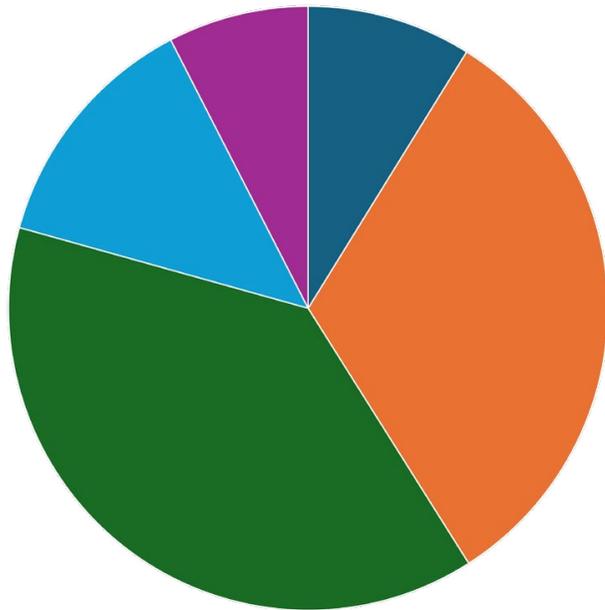
Respondents also called for better access to resources, such as study materials and support services, and reported a desire for mentorship or advisory programs to help navigate the challenges of placements.

Learners felt there was an opportunity for improved provision of comprehensive orientation or preparatory sessions as part of their pre-registration course before the commencement of placement blocks.

Overall, mixed feedback was received on the educational value of placements, with some students finding them highly beneficial and others feeling underprepared.

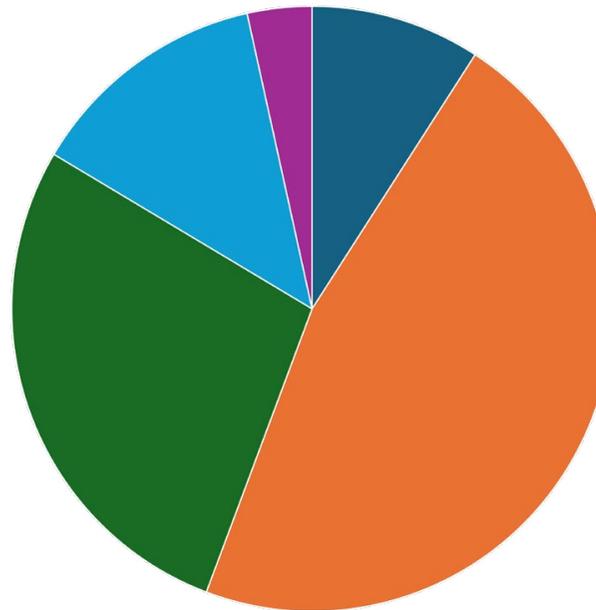
## Wellbeing

Q22: How would you describe your overall **emotional wellbeing** on clinical placement?



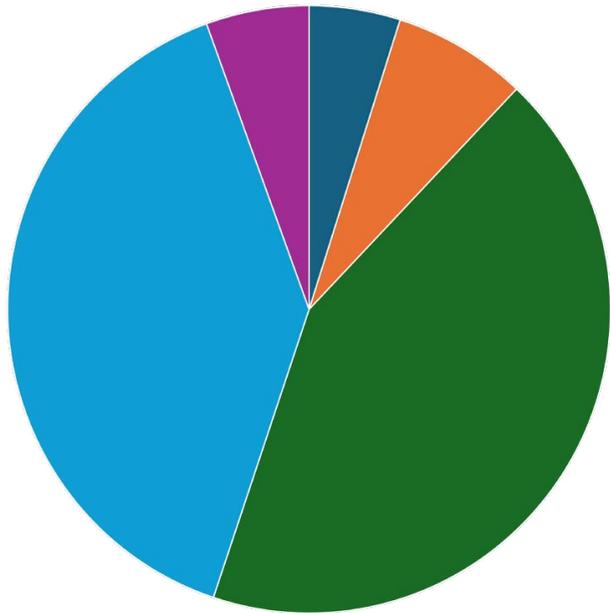
● Excellent  
● Good  
● Fluctuating  
● Lower than usual  
● Poor

Q23: How would you describe your **confidence levels** on clinical placement?

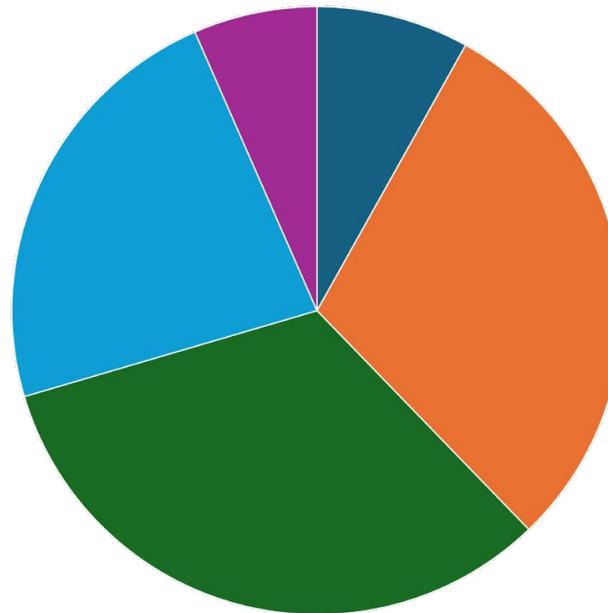


● Very confident  
● Quietly confident  
● Apprehensive  
● Low confidence  
● No confidence

Q24: How would you describe your **academic workload** while on a placement block (coursework/non-placement assignment)?

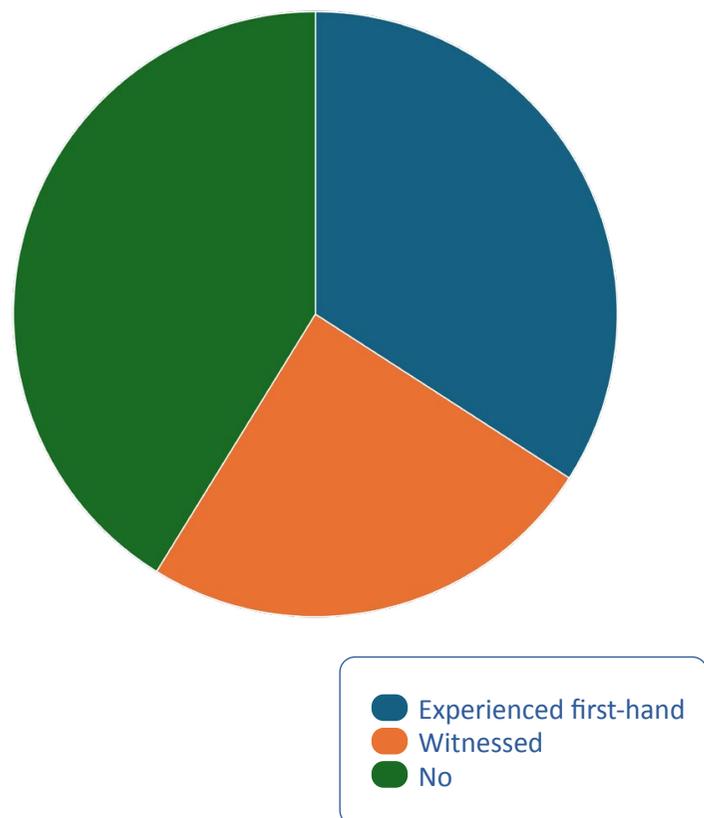


Q25: How would you describe your **access to wellbeing support** while on clinical placement?



Sample sizes: Q22: n=778, Q23: n=777, Q24–25: n=778, Q26: n=777.

Q26: Have you ever experienced or witnessed unacceptable behaviors towards students in the workplace?



41% of respondents reported feeling that their emotional wellbeing was overall good to excellent while on clinical placement; however, 21% reported low to poor levels. 56% of respondents reported positive levels of confidence in the clinical placement setting; however, 16% of learners felt that they had low to no confidence on placement.

Responses were divided on the distribution of academic workload while on a placement block. 45% of respondents reported a heavy or unmanageable academic workload, while 50% felt their workload was light or manageable. Only 38 of 778 students reported having no academic workload during the placement period.

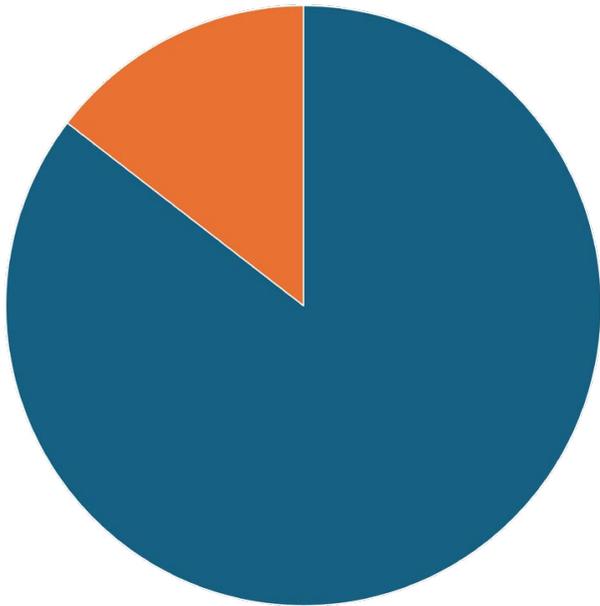
When asked about their experience of unacceptable behaviours from staff towards learners while on clinical placement, 59% of respondents reported having either witnessed or experienced these behaviours first-hand.

30% of respondents reported unsatisfactory access to wellbeing support on placement.

In the free text, respondents reported high levels of stress due to demanding workloads and placement responsibilities. Concerns were raised around balancing academic requirements with placement duties, with suggestions for implementing stress management workshops and improving mental health support.

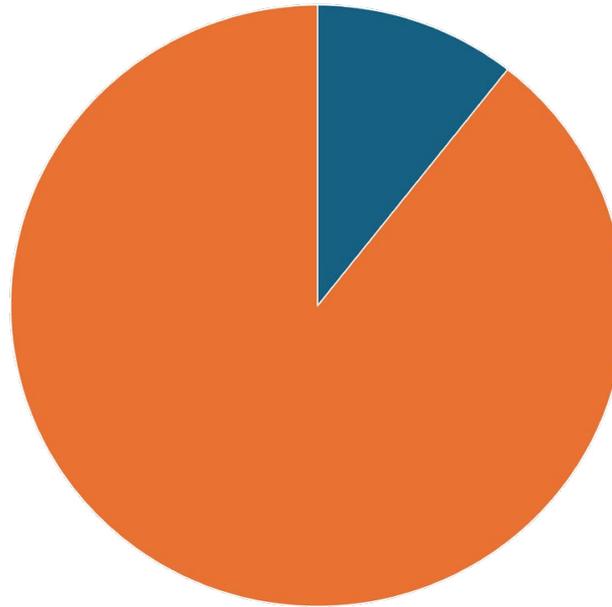
## Neurodiversity support

Q27: Do you have a **specific learning difference** which has been disclosed to your university?



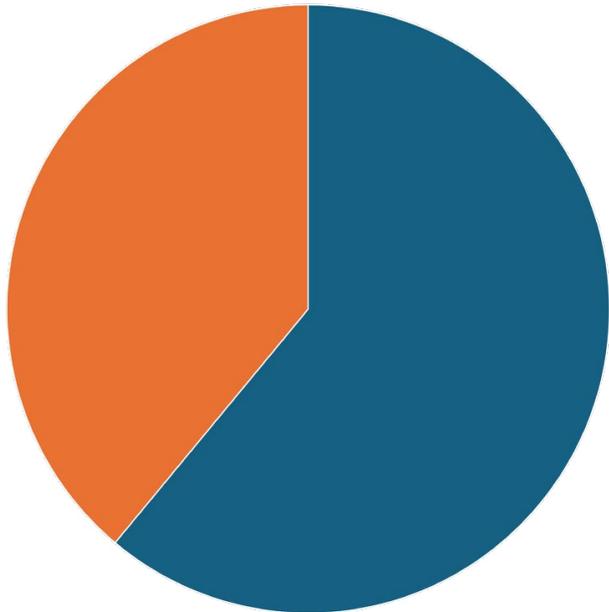
● No  
● Yes

Q28: Do you have **academic adjustments** in place?

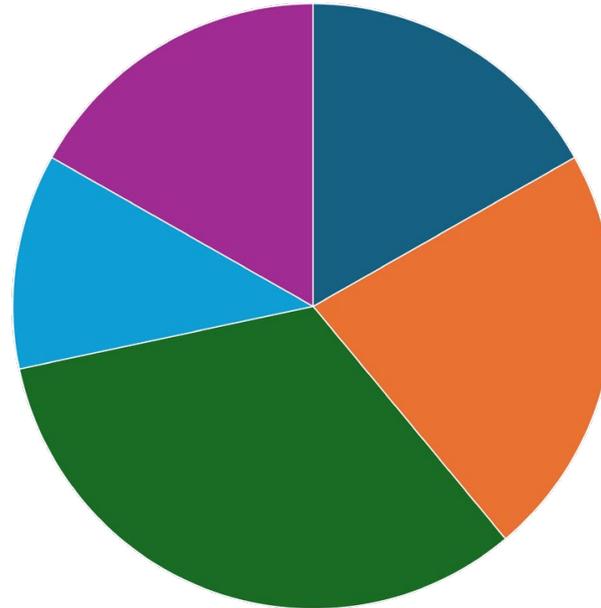


● No  
● Yes

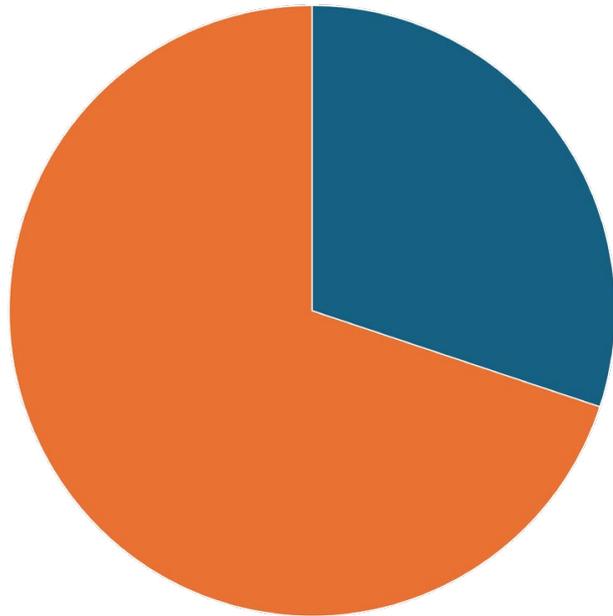
Q29: Do you have **workplace adjustments** in place?



Q30: How well do you feel your support **needs/reasonable adjustments have been shared** with relevant staff on clinical placement?



Q31: Do you feel you have had an **appropriate level of input** into your academic and workplace adjustments?



Sample sizes: Q27: n=775, Q28–Q31 are conditional, with sample size n=113 based on response to Q27="Yes".

When asked if they had disclosed a learning difference to their university, 113 of 775 responded "yes". Of these respondents, 89% had academic adjustments in place. However, only 39% had reasonable adjustments in the placement setting. 39% felt happy with how well their support needs were shared with placement staff, but 17% reported that these had not been shared at all. 30% of respondents did not feel that they had an appropriate level of input into their own academic and workplace adjustments.

Free text responses addressed inclusion concerns, with recommendations by respondents for more structured learning objectives and clearer expectations. A desire was also expressed for more practical, hands-on experiences that align with theoretical knowledge.

Learners requested a more effective feedback mechanism to address issues promptly, with suggestions for regular check-ins and feedback sessions with both the workplace and HEI link tutors to ensure continuous improvement.

Finally, respondents highlighted the importance of having a platform for anonymous feedback to encourage honest input.

It is evident from the survey findings that placement experiences across the UK are varied and wide in range. Significant issues have been reported around financial challenges, placement planning and support, with concerning data collected on exposure of radiography learners to unacceptable attitudes and behaviours while in the placement setting.

Ongoing communication is required by the SoR to promote support and representation for learners on placement, while increased collaboration with radiography educators may be necessary to explore safe reporting channels for student feedback.

Continued work to improve funding opportunities and reimbursement timescales for learners with government and local authorities remains vital in order to reduce placement associated stress.

It is recommended that best practices are shared and promoted between institutions, with support from the SoR, and that this survey is repeated every two years, to monitor improvement. Further work is also required to explore experiences of those on apprentice pathways, to identify support needs for this specific membership group.

