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NIHR Staff Engagement in the NHS
Review of Practitioner Studies of Engagement

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The Institute for Employment Studies

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Executive Summary

This paper has arisen from the '**Enhancing and Embedding Staff Engagement in the NHS: Putting Theory into Practice'** project commissioned by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). That project focused on producing a systematic evidence review[1] with practitioner outputs. The systematic evidence review, referred now on as 'the evidence synthesis', considered empirical and theoretical material from academic sources. It found that there was strongest weight of evidence supporting the following five factors as having the potential to foster high levels of engagement:

- individual psychological states

- experienced job-design related factors

- perceived leadership and management

- individual perceptions of organisational and team factors

- organisational interventions or activities

However, the evidence synthesis only focused on peer-reviewed, academic publications. Therefore there is still an appetite to examine what material is available within the practitioner community that generally is non-peer reviewed, yet may provide supplementary insight alongside the evidence synthesis.

Thus, the aim of this current paper is to identify and analyse the most relevant material available in the practitioner domain in order to answer the following research question:

What tools and resources would be most useful to NHS managers in order to improve engagement?

The search was limited to practitioner websites, and started with trialling a range of different terms and websites (known as scoping and sifting). The decisions about which sites to concentrate on and which search terms to use were made based on advice from the Project Advisory Group. Starting from 136 sources and six possible search terms, the scoping process reduced the search to 35 sources and two terms: staff engagement and employee engagement. This was to select only the sources and search terms which would result in the highest quality and quantity of relevant material. Any sources or terms which returned only editorial or opinion pieces that contained no primary research evidence, or returned material that was not specifically about engagement, were judged to be of low quality, and were therefore discounted entirely from further use within this review. Sources and terms that returned very few or no documents were also deemed unsuitable for further sifting.

The 35 selected sources produced a very high volume of material and so to reduce this to a manageable number of studies five selection criteria were developed:

Is the material relevant or useful to an NHS practitioner (in the context of staff engagement)?
Does the material contain evidence?
Does the material include a described methodology?

Is the research original to this source?
If the material forms part of a series, is this the most recent?

From assessing each item against these criteria, a total of 14 studies from six different sources were considered of sufficient quality for inclusion. Analysis of these studies has produced seven key areas that warrant focus by NHS practitioners and managers as they appear to be influential in how engagement can be fostered and sustained.

The seven key themes[1] were:

Senior Leadership

A distinction was made in the studies between the role of the immediate line manager and the role of senior leadership. Most of the studies showed an association between positive perception or trust in leaders and increased engagement, although one study found that higher levels of employee engagement were associated with lower ratings of senior manager effectiveness.

Role of the Line Manager

The role of the line manager was one of the key factors associated with employee engagement in most of the studies. In two studies, a detailed analysis of line manager behaviours was conducted. The types of behaviours that were shown to be correlated with greater levels of engagement were clear and respectful communication, recognising and involving team members, and being supportive and approachable.

Appraisal, performance management and training

Good quality appraisals, having performance development plans and being able to undertake training and development opportunities were shown to be linked with higher levels of engagement. One important caveat was that a poor appraisal may be linked to lower levels of engagement than having no appraisal at all.

Meaningfulness

Meaningfulness has a number of definitions. In this review, we have taken the following definition: '*the extent to which employees find meaning in their work…where people can see the impact of their work on other people or society in general*' [2(p23)]. Meaningfulness was shown to be a particularly important factor associated with high levels of engagement in one of the studies and antecedents of meaningfulness were also identified as relevant to engagement in some of the other studies.

Employee voice

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[1] As the evidence synthesis[1] differed in its scope, focus and quality criteria, it is not surprising that this review of practitioner studies has not found the exact same themes. Despite this, the key themes overlap significantly, albeit the weight and focus of each differs somewhat between the two (for those interested please see appendix 3).

Employee voice, a term referring to the opportunities employees have to input into decisions affecting their work and to be properly consulted and communicated with was identified as a particularly strong driver of engagement. The importance of involving employees in decision-making and having opportunities to feedback for fostering engagement was supported by a number of the studies.

Team working

Being part of a well-structured team that has shared and clear objectives was associated with increased levels of engagement. Other related factors such as perceived organisational support and co-worker quality were also found to be associated with high levels of engagement in many of the studies.

Work-life balance

There was evidence that those on flexible contracts, those satisfied with their work-life balance, those feeling that their work-life balance was supported by their employer demonstrated higher levels of engagement.

Overall, this review of practitioner studies arose from the appetite to explore the evidence from the practitioner domain, which was not the focus for the evidence synthesis. The rest of this paper will focus on the themes identified from the practitioner materials and not from the evidence synthesis[1] as the practitioner studies standalone from the peer-reviewed academic studies focused on within the evidence synthesis. This paper acts as a distinct supplement to the evidence synthesis; it aims, from examining selected practitioner material, to identify tools and resources that would be most useful to NHS managers in order to improve engagement.

Introduction

Background

As the substantial volume of material within both the academic and practitioner literature has demonstrated, engagement is a topic of considerable importance to organisations and individuals because it has the potential to benefit both employees (in terms of improving wellbeing and morale) and employers (in terms of increased performance and innovation). However, the available evidence in the practitioner domain is not clear-cut and has not been consolidated with the NHS context in mind, thus making it difficult for NHS practitioners to identify specific strategies and interventions that will foster engagement within their organisations. This is particularly problematic as the business context for the NHS is one of increased pressure on costs and greater competition between providers. In a time when costs must be contained, it is important to have evidence to justify expenditure on initiatives related to increasing staff engagement and to be able to use practical evidence to identify which areas to prioritise. It is hoped that this presentation of the evidence from a review of practitioner studies will achieve this aim.

Aim of this review

The aim of this review is to answer the following research question:

What tools and resources would be most useful to NHS managers in order to improve engagement?

The process of answering this research question was guided by the following suggested approach that was developed by the project team with support from the advisory group:

- To undertake a search of 'authoritative' / recognised sources (websites, research centres, professional organisations and networks, unions, charities, government agencies and quangos, conferences, consultancies, think tanks)
- To use the 'practitioner literature' where these provide examples that could be integrated into tools/guides

- To examine tools and resources available to other professional groups (e.g. other public sector employers' websites, Engage for Success, etc.)
- To consult with Advisory Group and wider group of experts.

We were looking for evidence that would assist line managers and organisations to choose interventions, policies and procedures which would lead to greater engagement amongst their employees. We were also assessing the range of definitions and measures of engagement that exist in the practitioner studies selected. To be included in the review, studies had to be considered relevant and useful to NHS practitioners, had to contain evidence, a described methodology and not be based on secondary or desk research (i.e. data is collected and analysed for that study).

Structure of the report

This report includes:

- A summary of the methodology adopted to conduct the review
- Summaries of the 14 studies selected for data extraction
- Discussion of the key themes that emerge from the data extraction

In addition the appendices provide a fuller methodology, further information on our approach and a bibliography of the studies included in this review.

Methodology

This review of practitioner studies on engagement followed a prescribed methodology (see appendix 1 for more detail) which began with an initial scoping study to explore the available sources and types of evidence available. A scoping study is useful before going onto a full search as it ensures that the right questions are being asked and helps to reduce available material to the most relevant.

Six search terms ('employee engagement', 'staff engagement', 'employee involvement', 'employee participation', 'social partnership forum', and 'employee voice') were applied to 136 sources that included CIPD, Harvard Business Review, Kenexa, and NHS Institute. These sources and terms were chosen based on the advice and knowledge of the Project Advisory Group as well as the research team members, all of whom were involved in engagement research or practice. This process revealed that a) the search terms could be reduced to two key terms (i.e. 'employee engagement' and 'staff engagement') as many of the search terms only returned a small number of materials, and b) the list of sources could be narrowed down to 35 that would give the most relevant and valuable material because a substantial proportion of the 136 sources returned no suitable material or only returned secondary research outputs.

Following from this, the two key search terms were applied to the 35 sources for the full search. To help identify the most suitable, high-quality and relevant material a set of criteria were applied based on our overarching research question (i.e. *What tools and resources would be most useful to NHS managers in order to improve engagement?*), and were developed by the research team in discussion with the advisory group. The criteria were based on the following five questions:
Is the material relevant or useful to an NHS practitioner?
Does the material contain evidence?
Does the material include a described methodology?
Is the research original to this source?
If the material forms part of a series, is this the most recent?

Findings

A total of 14 studies from six different sources (CIPD, IES, Kenexa, The King's Fund, GSR, Strategic HR Review) met the criteria for inclusion in this review and were focused on interventions, policies, practices or interventions implemented by line managers or organisations which were associated with enhanced engagement of their staff. The studies are presented alphabetically in order of lead author.

Summaries of the included studies

Alfes K, Truss C, Soane E C, Rees C, Gatenby M. *Creating an engaged workforce – Findings from the Kingston Employee Engagement Consortium Project*. London UK: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development; 2010[2]

The authors defined engagement as '*being positively present during the performance of work by willingly contributing intellectual effort, experiencing positive emotions and meaningful connections to others*'[2(p5)]. The study measured engagement using the Kingston Job Engagement Inventory, which has since been refined and validated as the 'ISA engagement scale'[3]. Three facets of engagement were assessed: intellectual (e.g. '*I focus hard on my work*'), social (e.g. '*I share the same work values as my colleagues*') and affective (e.g. '*I am enthusiastic in my work*'). In measuring engagement, the authors differentiated between the extent of engagement (the strength of the feeling of engagement) and the frequency of engagement (how often individuals experienced engagement).

A total of 5,291 employees across eight UK-based organisations representing public and private sectors completed a questionnaire that asked them about their perceptions of their work and organisation they worked for, their engagement with their job, and a range of behavioural outcomes such as their intention to stay with the organisation. A further 180 interviews were also carried out within the organisations to add more depth and understanding to the findings. The research team reviewed the data collected and analysed socio-demographic patterns, identified key drivers and outcomes of engagement, and produced some case studies and recommended strategies for engagement.

Findings of the study

The measure used resulted in an aggregate score for engagement ranging from 1 - low to 5 - high. Eight per cent of participants were found to be strongly engaged (scores of 4.5 or over), 70 per cent were moderately or somewhat engaged (scores between 3.5 and 4.5), 1 per cent were very weakly engaged and 21 per cent were neither engaged nor disengaged.

The authors emphasised that meaningfulness was the most strongly associated factor associated with high levels of engagement. Two thirds of respondents were found to experience reasonable levels of meaningfulness in their work. Other important drivers of engagement were being able to feed views and suggestions upwards (i.e. voice and involvement), having a good quality relationship with one's line manager, feeling that the job is a good fit with one's skills and needs, and feeling supported at work.

An interesting set of findings emerged with regards to the influence of senior managers. On one hand, engagement was higher for employees who perceived that senior managers communicated well with all levels of the organisation, and articulated a clear and inspiring vision. On the other hand, perceptions of senior manager effectiveness were negatively associated with engagement, meaning that lower ratings of senior manager effectiveness were associated with higher levels of employee engagement. The authors go on to state that if employees hold generally positive views of their senior managers, particularly with regards to communication, vision and visibility, then some negative perceptions may help encourage the individual to engage more with their jobs in order to drive change.

Although it was found that most employees held negative views of their organisations' HR policies and practices, these did not impact directly on engagement as these relationships were shown to be mediated by person-job fit and line management style. In other words, well-structured and implemented HR practices can foster engagement by helping employees to identify and connect with their job role, and to develop good quality relations with their line manager.

Limitations

There is no ability to show causal relationships between factors considered. Although the analyses considered the context of each organisation, this was limited by the cross-sectional nature and focus of the study.

Gourlay S, Alfes K, Bull E, Narendran S, Petrov G, Shantz A. *Locus of Engagement – Understanding What Employees Connect with at Work.* London UK: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development; 2011[4]

This study sought to establish the locus of engagement: 'that particular location in which engagement exists for a person while at work'[4 (p3)]. The study used the term

'location', in the same way as 'locus', to refer to the aspect of the work environment which may be associated with engagement. Possible loci of engagement included the job, colleagues or work teams, line managers, their profession, the organisation or the client/customer. The study found evidence that employees were engaged with multiple loci simultaneously, and such engagements were not static and varied according to the organisational context.

The study was based on survey data from three of the ten companies in the Kingston Employee Engagement Consortium representing manufacturing, waste disposal, and project management sectors. The survey data was supplemented by conducting a number of face-to-face interviews in the manufacturing and project management organisations. Engagement with the job was measured using the Kingston Job Engagement Inventory (see Alfes et al, 2009[2] above for details). Engagement with the line manager, with colleagues, and with the organisation were measured using validated scales published in reputable academic journals.

Findings of the study

The study found that there were different levels of engagement for each locus; engagement with the job had the highest levels, followed by engagement with colleagues and with the line manager (18 per cent were 'strongly' engaged with each of these foci respectively). The majority of respondents were moderately engaged with their organisation; 11 per cent were 'strongly' engaged with their organisation. The study concludes that '*for the majority of people the organisation appears to be a less important locus of engagement than the job*'[2(p25)]. Moreover, engagement with the job was the most strongly correlated with task performance and citizenship behaviours.

The highest levels of engagement, particularly for engagement with the job, were linked to having varied job tasks and responsibilities, having personal control and discretion over the way a job is performed, and experiencing a sense of meaning in one's job (i.e. the ability to see what one does as part of a larger picture).

Limitations

The size of the sample is not given nor is there any demographic data or specifics of the organisations. This may limit the applicability of the study to the NHS context. Moreover, it is only possible to establish correlation and not causation.

Gourlay S, Alfes K, Bull E, Baron A, Petrov G, Georgellis Y. *Emotional or Transactional Engagement – Does it Matter?*. London UK: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development; 2012[5]

This study presented two different types of engagement:

■ **Emotional engagement**: Defined as '*displaying an emotional attachment to one or more aspects of their work*'[5(p3)]

- **Transactional engagement**: Defined as being '*happy to exhibit the behaviour of engagement, do what is required or expected as long as promised rewards such as promotion or training are forthcoming, but not committed to the job or the organisation and willing to leave if a better offer appears elsewhere*'.[5(p3)]

The study identified the drivers and discusses the outcomes for the organisation to each of these types of engagement.

Questionnaires assessing an individual's emotional and transactional engagement and behavioural outcomes as well as perceptions of their job, work environment, management and organisation were completed by a range of employees in two UK-based companies (one manufacturing and one service organisation) from the Kingston Business School Engagement Consortium. This was supplemented with 40 interviews with employees in a range of organisations representing manufacturing, project management, and local government sectors.

Findings of the study

The study found that the following were positively associated with emotional engagement:

- **Person–job fit:** Perception that the job role is a good match or fit with personal needs and desires from a job as well as their skills and abilities.

- **Person–organisation fit:** The sense that one shares similar characteristics and values to the organisation.

- **Organisational identification:** The individual identifies strongly with, and feels attached, to the organisation.

- **Perceived organisational support:** The organisation is perceived to have a genuine interest and commitment to employees' wellbeing and morale; they act in supportive ways that help employees to perform well.

- **Quality of the line manager relationship:** Perception that the relationship with line management is mutually respectful and beneficial; the relationship is based on trust and reciprocity.

Work intensification (i.e. increasing pressures and demands) was found to be a positive driver of transactional engagement, but a negative driver of emotional engagement. This indicates that under increasingly demanding environments, employees may appear to display engagement behaviours, yet deep down actually feel less emotionally engaged with their jobs.

In terms of outcomes, emotional engagement was positively associated with task performance, citizenship behaviours and wellbeing, and negatively associated with deviant behaviours, turnover intentions and burnout. In contrast, transactional engagement was positively related to deviant behaviours and burnout, and negatively

related to wellbeing (and not significantly related to the other factors). Taken together, this suggests that transactional engagement may be detrimental to both the individual and the organisation whereas emotional engagement may be beneficial.

Limitations

The size of the sample is not given nor is there any demographic data or specifics of the organisation types. This may limit the applicability of the study to the NHS context. The nature of the study means that it is only possible to establish correlation and not causation. In addition, there is limited information about the measures of emotional and transactional engagement used although the article does state that it comes from published academic articles which allows the researchers to be more confident in the validity of the measures.

Government Social Research Service. *Embedding Employee Engagement, Engagement Best Practice: Case Studies, How HMRC's Chesterfield Office Improved Engagement*. London UK: Civil Service; 2013[6]

This study provides an account of the steps taken by two teams (VAT and PAYE teams) within the Debt Management and Banking Group of the HMRC in Chesterfield to raise engagement levels within their respective teams.

In 2010, these teams had experienced low levels of engagement as demonstrated by low engagement indicator scores in the 2010 Civil Service People Survey[7]. The Civil Service Engagement indicator measures engagement via five attitudinal statements:

- *'I am proud when I tell others I am part of this organisation'*
- *'I would recommend my organisation as a great place to work'*
- *'I feel a strong personal attachment to my organisation'*
- *'My organisation inspires me to do the best in my job'*
- *'My organisation motivates me to help it achieve its objectives'*

Subsequently, the team leader implemented a number of changes over 2011 and 2012 to increase engagement levels that included consultations with staff, monthly meetings, action plans and the creation of the 'Chesterfield Way' programme of behavioural change.

Findings of the study

The focus on engagement succeeded in increasing the Engagement Index score (0 – low engagement to 100 – high engagement) from 20 in 2010 to 38 in 2011 and to 72 in 2012. The index was calculated by averaging the weighted engagement scores of all respondents within the organisation. Weights were applied on each statement where a weight of 100 was given for strongly agree, 75 to agree, 50 to neither agree/disagree, 25

to disagree, and 0 to strongly disagree; thus scores closer to 0 indicated low levels of engagement and scores closer to 100 indicated high levels of engagement.

The increase from 20 to 72 points (out of 100) for the HMRC in Chesterfield was achieved through a number of key elements:

- **Influencing behaviours and opportunities for voice**. The decision was made not to have staff engagement representatives but to involve everyone by having monthly one-to-one meetings between manager and staff so that individualised discussions around what and how performance could be improved could take place, and to increase opportunities for employees to raise concerns and suggestions directly with their manager.

- **Communicating the bigger picture**. There had been concerns about the closure of the Chesterfield office as part of the HMRC's estate rationalisation. Making the link between individuals' work and organisational objectives helped them understand how they can remain a strategic site by maintaining their reputation for delivery and high performance.

- **Managing change**. Resilience training was organised for all to help them manage change more effectively.

- **Putting the People Survey in context**. Managers worked with staff to support their interpretation of the People Survey and the need for continuous improvement so that employees could see the localised actions and changes initiated as a result of the survey.

- **Taking time to build a community**. Team days were implemented to build a sense of community where teams decided what the work priorities were and which charity events to organise.

Limitations

It does not give clear sample size data and it is not possible to assess to what extent each practical intervention is associated with the improvement in engagement score.

Kenexa's WorkTrend Reports: Integration of Kenexa. *Engaging the Employee*. Kenexa, 2008[8]; Kenexa. *Engagement and Leadership in the Public Sector*. Kenexa, 2012[9] and Kenexa. T*he Many Contexts of Employee Engagement*. Kenexa, 2012[10]

These studies were based on the data gathered from Kenexa's WorkTrends survey that contains a number of questions on employee, manager and leadership behaviours, organisational practices and demographic variables. The studies were conducted at different time-points: 2008[8], 2011[9] and 2012[10].

The 2008 study[8] surveyed 10,000 employees in the USA and 1,000 each from each of the following countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom; and 500 in Russia. The 2011 survey[9] was completed by more than 6000 employees across a range of industry sectors in 10 European countries (Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands and the UK). In 2012, the survey[10] was taken by approximately 33,000 employees in 28 countries.

Employees were full-time and organisations had 100 members of staff or more (except in UAE, Saudi Arabia and Ireland where organisations had 25 staff members or more).

The studies defined employee engagement as '*the extent to which employees are motivated to contribute to organizational success, and are willing to apply discretionary effort to accomplishing tasks important to the achievement of organizational goals*'[10(p4)]. It was measured by the extent to which survey respondents agreed with the following four items:

- *'I am proud to tell people I work for my organisation'*
- *'Overall, I am extremely satisfied with my organisation as a place to work'*
- *'I would gladly refer a good friend or family member to my organisation for employment'*
- *'I rarely think about looking for a new job with another organisation'*

The Kenexa studies analysed a number of drivers of employee engagement that included job characteristics, social environment factors, perceptions of management and leadership, and organisational practices.

Findings of the study

The most consistent findings throughout the Kenexa WorkTrends studies[8,9,10] were that four factors were shown to be highly associated with employee engagement levels:

- **Perceptions of senior managers:** Individuals more engaged when they perceived senior managers as competent and effective at leading the organisation to success, as well as trustworthy and confident.

- **Quality of relationship with line manager:** Engagement was higher when one's relationship with line management was based on trust and respect, and when the individual perceived the manager to be good at not only traditional managerial work (i.e. assigning, scheduling and prioritising tasks and workloads), but also people management tasks such as dealing with the motivations and needs of the team.

- **Training and development:** Feeling satisfied with the opportunities for training and development within the organisation as well as perceiving that the organisation has a positive culture of developing its employees to become more knowledgeable and skilled helped to foster high levels of engagement.

- **Work-life balance:** Individuals are more engaged when they felt that the organisation supported their work-life balance and had practices in place to provide flexibility and opportunities that enabled employees to have better work-life balance.

Limitations

The measure of employee engagement is unique to Kenexa and it is not clear whether this has been validated. The study can only show correlations not causation. The sample consists of a proportionally large number of full-time staff, which may limit its applicability to the NHS context.

Lewis R, Donaldson-Feilder E, Tharani T. *Management Competencies for Enhancing Employee Engagement*. London UK: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development; 2011[11]

This study defined employee engagement as '*being focused in what you do (thinking), feeling good about yourself in your role and the organisation (feeling), and acting in a way that demonstrates commitment to the organisational values and objectives (acting)*'[11(p4)].

Its main objective was to identify management behaviours line managers needed to enhance employee engagement though the development of a management competency framework. This was achieved by surveying 48 employees of a global energy provider through applying critical incident technique within semi-structured one-to-one telephone interviews. The employees were split into one of two groups: individuals without line management responsibility and individuals with line management responsibility.

The questions were designed to identify effective and ineffective manager behaviours based on each of the three parts of the definition of engagement given above (i.e. thinking, feeling, and acting).

Findings of the study

The study identified 11 management competencies that were associated with helping employees feel engaged, grouped under three main themes:

- **Supporting employee growth:** includes the competencies of autonomy and empowerment, development, and feedback, praise and recognition.

- **Interpersonal style and integrity:** includes the competencies of individual interest, availability and personal manner, and ethics.

- **Monitoring direction:** includes the competencies of reviewing and guiding, clarifying expectations, managing time and resources, and following processes and procedures.

The three management competencies with both the highest percentage frequency of mention and the highest percentage of the sample referring to it were:

- **Reviewing and guiding** (part of monitoring direction): This included giving guidance on how to meet targets and how to overcome barriers, as well as making suggestions on how to improve quality of work and how to prioritise tasks.

- **Feedback, praise and recognition** (part of supporting employee growth)**:** This included sharing employees' achievements with the team and senior management, giving timely, constructive and specific feedback as well as balancing positive and negative feedback effectively, and thanking employees for their work.

- **Autonomy and empowerment** (part of supporting employee growth)**:** This included allowing employees to do the job the way they want, welcoming ideas and feedback from employees, acting as a coach when needed, and backing up employee decisions when necessary.

Limitations

The nature of the study means that it is only possible to establish correlation and not causation. Participants were drawn from a single (large) organisation and from one occupational group (i.e. call centre staff) so further research would be needed to test the applicability of the findings in other workplaces and occupations. Another limitation is that the study does not contain any quantitative measure of engagement and so the impact of the behaviours they describe on their engagement is difficult to verify.

Robinson D and Hayday S. *The Engaging Manager*. Brighton UK: Institute for Employment Studies; 2009[12]

This study sought to understand the influence of line managers on engagement levels and to understand the behaviours of managers who are able to foster particularly high levels of engagement within their teams. Seven organisations (ACCA, Centrica, Corus, HMRC, London Borough of Merton, Rolls Royce and Sainsbury's) were asked to identify 'engaging managers' based on the engagement scores of their teams in each organisation's most recent employee attitude survey. The engaging managers and their own managers (referred to as 'senior managers') were interviewed and focus groups were carried out with the engaged teams. Focus group members also completed a standard IES engagement questionnaire. 25 'engaging managers', 22 'senior managers' and 154 team members in 25 teams participated in the study. The definition of

engagement used was 'engagement is a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organisation and its values. An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organisation' [12(p2)].

Findings of the study

The study found that the 'engaging managers' differed in terms of their roles, their time in post, their team size, span of control, experience and career aspirations but were similar in their adoption of an informal coaching style, their strong performance focus and the fact that they all led high-performing teams. They had a common strength in communicating with their teams and getting to know people. The focus groups generated a list of 27 positive behaviours of engaging managers, the top five of these were: communicates, makes clear what is expected; listens, values and involves team; supportive, backs team/you up; target focused; and shows empathy. The study also explored behaviours that were disengaging and listed 29 behaviours as such. The top five of these were: lacks empathy, interest in people; fails to listen and communicate; self-centred; does not motivate or inspire; and blames others, does not take responsibility. The data gained from the engaging and senior manager interviews contributed to the creation of a classification of a range of engaging and disengaging types of managerial behaviour. The engaging manager types are:

- **the High Performer:** focuses on applying a methodological approach to managing performance and involves the team within this.

- **the Communicator:** focuses on listening to and involving the team in decision-making and communicates expectations and standards effectively.

- **the Visionary:** focuses on communicating the bigger picture and how the team contributes to this, and on inspiring them with a motivational vision.

- **the Empathiser:** focuses on understanding what motivates each individual in the team, and on the development needs of each.

- **the Developer:** focuses on coaching individuals and facilitates development through identifying how best to adapt jobs and opportunities to expand skills.

- **the Enthusiast:** focuses on fostering a passion and energy within the team, and on behaving according to the values and ethos of the organisation.

- **the Protector:** focuses on nurturing their team to share ideas and suggestions, and on sheltering them from organisational politics and pressures.

- **the Networker:** focuses on cultivating and utilising internal network to best position their team as a key influential unit within the organisation.

- **the Rock:** focuses on being a dependable and reliable source of support for their team, and is prepared to get stuck in when necessary.

- **the Brave:** focuses on tackling difficult situations and standing up for their team, and on behaving with integrity and courage.

- **the Juggler:** focuses on organising work with great effectiveness and efficiency; often able to delegate tasks and manage competing priorities well.
- **the Maverick:** focuses on developing new and innovate ways of doing things; often does not toe the company line in order to achieve positive change.

Disengaging manager types are:

- **the Micro Manager:** finds it difficult to delegate tasks and responsibilities; often interrupts and interferes with others work in order to maintain control.
- **the Muddler:** finds it difficult to be organised and consistent; often communicates ineffectively and gives unclear or contradictory information.
- **the Blamer:** finds it difficult to accept responsibility for problems or failures; often points the finger at others and does little to defend the team's reputation.
- **the Bully:** finds it difficult to remain calm and sensitive to others' feelings; often is aggressive and intolerant towards others.
- **the Egotist:** finds it difficult to attribute success to others; often thinks of themselves as superior, and rarely recognises the team's achievements.
- **the Pessimist:** finds it difficult to be passionate and positive; often sees problems in ideas and acts in ways that de-motivate the team.

Limitations

A question remains about the extent to which the engaging behaviours lead to high performance or whether high performance is generating engagement. The study can show that these are associated, but how they are causally linked.

Robinson et al - IES Employee Engagement Drivers Reports: Integration of Robinson D, Hayday S, Perryman S. *The Drivers of Employee Engagement*. Brighton UK: Institute for Employment Studies[13] and Robinson D, Hooker H, Hayday S. *Engagement: The Continuing Story*. Brighton UK: Institute for Employment Studies[14]

The 2004 study[13] was based on data from IES' 2003 attitude survey of over 10,000 employees in 14 organisations within the NHS; and the 2007 study[14] was based on data from IES' 2005 attitude survey of 1,786 employees in eight organisations representing private, public and third sectors.

Both studies used the following definition of engagement: *'engagement is a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organisation and its values. An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organisation'*[13 (p ix)].

The IES 12-item engagement indicator was used to measure engagement in both studies (the 2003 study[13] describes the development and testing process that IES followed to establish this measure of engagement). It covers the following content:

- Pride in the organisation (e.g. *'I speak highly of this organisation to my friends'*)

- Belief that the organisation provides good products/services and enables the employee to perform well (e.g. '*I would be happy to recommend this organisation's products/services to my friends and family'*)

- A willingness to behave altruistically and go beyond what is required (e.g. '*I try to help others in this organisation whenever I can'*)

- An understanding of the 'bigger picture' (e.g. '*I find that my values and the organisation's are very similar'*).

Findings of the study

Both studies analysed the connections between characteristics and experiences of work and engagement levels. The most consistent findings were that the following seven factors seemed to be particularly (positively) associated with employee engagement:

- **Feeling valued and involved:** This is about employees having an input into the decision-making processes of the organisation, and feeling that their opinions and feedback are wanted and valued by management. It is about feeling actively involved in the organisation's operations outside one's main job role.

- **Job satisfaction:** This refers to people evaluating their job in a generally positive light. They feel that their job satisfies their basic needs and desires, such as having enough interesting and varied work to keep them stimulated, and they generally enjoy their work.

- **Training and development** (including having a personal development plan): This refers to employees having opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and abilities needed to perform their jobs and to progress their careers. In addition, it includes tailoring of training and development programmes to meet the career goals and skills needs of the individual.

- **Communication:** This refers to the person feeling that the ways in which information and knowledge are shared across the organisation are effective and useful. Being kept informed about changes, having access to all the necessary information to do one's job, and receiving useful feedback about management decisions, are particularly important aspects of effective communication.

- **Equal opportunities and fair treatment** (including not experiencing harassment/violence): This is about the organisation demonstrating its commitment to fairness, equality, and diversity. People feel that the organisation is free from prejudice and discrimination; that they can be free to express themselves; and that different lifestyle and family needs are considered within work arrangements and practices.

- **Health and safety** (including not experiencing accidents/injuries): This comprises the perception that the organisation genuinely cares about employees' health and

wellbeing, and the feeling that employees' personal safety is not in any way threatened by the work environment.

- **Co-operation:** This is about how the various teams and/or departments within the organisation communicate and interact with each other. When departments and functions communicate well and regularly with one another, and have positive and mutually respectful relationships, then it is more likely that problems and issues within the organisation can be spotted and dealt with effectively.

Limitations

The data is cross-sectional and so the ability to show causation is limited.

Tomlinson G. Building a culture of high employee engagement. *Strategic HR Review* 2010; 9(3): 25-31[15]

This study aimed to examine the key drivers of employee engagement within Kia Motors by presenting a case study of a five-part engagement strategy put in place to address low levels of engagement. Engagement at Kia Motors consisted of three dimensions: the belief (mental), the feeling the brand generates (emotion) and the generation of discretionary effort (behaviour); also described as *'creating an 'emotional connection' with employees so that they are passionate and 'live' the brand'*[15(p26)]. It was measured using the Kia Motors employee survey, 'Your Voice', which included 12 key engagement drivers that ranged from perceptions of senior/line management, internal communications, and pride in the organisation. These 12 aspects were averaged to form the overall engagement index. The engagement strategy was introduced in 2007 and monitored over a two-year period to 2009. The five parts of the strategy were:

- **Leadership development**: All ll members of the management team were given training and support to improve their management skills in line with Kia Motors' five core behavioural competencies.

- **Employee recognition**: The establishment of a quarterly outstanding awards scheme presented by the CEO to an individual or team nominated by other employees and a Kia thank you scheme whereby a card and simple present were left on the desk of an individual by their line manager.

- **Internal communications**: Quarterly employee briefings, a new corporate intranet and an employee forum to improve internal communications.

- **Organisational development:** A number of changes were made; including the replacement of bonuses with an increase in base salary, and the re-writing of the employee handbook to align more with the organisation's cultural values.

- **Employee development:** A more formal process of training needs analysis was incorporated into the appraisal system that helped identify career aspirations.

Findings of the study

The average engagement index score increased from 39 points (0 = low to 100= high) in 2006 to 51 in 2007 to 65 in 2008 and to 71 in 2009.

Limitations

There is little detail of the content, scope or format of the engagement indicators. There is no demographic or job profile data so it is not possible to establish how transferrable the results would be to the NHS context. It is difficult to ascertain causality as the increases in survey scores could also be due to other factors.

Truss C, Soane E, Edwards C. *Working Life: Employee Attitudes and Engagement 2006*. London UK: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development; 2006[16]

This research study defined employee engagement as '*passion for work*' [16(p xi)] involving feeling positive about one's job, being prepared to go the extra mile, and wanting to perform one's job to the best of one's ability. It was measured as three dimensions: emotional, cognitive and physical, using a validated Likert scale published in an academic journal[17].

A sample of 2,001 working UK adults that reflected the age, gender and working status (part-time/full-time) distributions of the general population completed a questionnaire that assessed perceptions of one's working life and attitudes towards their work and organisation.

Findings of the study

Truss et al (2006)[16] covered a wide range of findings within their report; this current summary focuses specifically on those that directly meet our research aim (i.e. identifying tools/resources that can help foster engagement). The study found that the main drivers of employee engagement were having opportunities to feed one's views upwards, feeling well informed about what was happening in the organisation and thinking that one's manager is committed to the organisation. Moreover, those who were satisfied with their job were more likely to be engaged with their work and that this sense of job satisfaction derived primarily from having good quality relationships with colleagues.

The report also highlighted that perceived managerial fairness in dealing with problems impacted positively on individual performance but was not significantly related to engagement, and that employees who were satisfied with their work-life balance and those on flexible contracts were more engaged than those who were dissatisfied with their work-life balance or were not working flexibly. In addition, those that did not use all of their annual leave entitlement were more engaged than those that did use their full entitlement; however those who worked the longest hours were the most dissatisfied with their work-life balance and were most at risk of damaging their health

and wellbeing. They also did not appear to perform any better than those who have achieved a better balance.

Younger workers were found to be less engaged than older workers; suggesting that organisations may not be meeting the needs of younger workers. This, as the authors suggest, may have potentially serious implications for organisations as well as younger workers in terms of career progression and skill utilisation. In addition, women tended to be more engaged, more satisfied with their work-life balance and feel a greater sense of loyalty to the organisation and their customers/clients than men, and managers tended to be more engaged, feel a greater sense of involvement with as well as loyalty to the organisation, and find more meaning in their work than non-managers.

Overall, the authors stated that '*good, sound management practice and jobs that enable employees to fulfil their potential will lead to higher levels of employee engagement*' [16(p.45)]. From looking at the findings of this report, it appears that tools and resources that increase engagement are those which help employees a) be involved in higher-level decision-making, b) feel continually updated on changes and informed about the organisation, c) feel that managers are committed, fair and care about their staff, c) find meaning in their work through the tasks they perform, the skills they use and the potential route for progression/development, and d) have opportunities to work flexibly and to have a good work-life balance.

Limitations

The nature of the study means that it is only possible to establish correlation and not causation.

West M A, Dawson J. *Employee Engagement and NHS Performance*. London UK: The King's Fund; 2012[18]

This study analysed the NHS Staff Survey data to identify factors which are associated with employee engagement within the NHS context. The paper discussed a number of definitions of engagement and stated that the NHS Staff Survey definition includes three elements: psychological engagement, influence in decision making and advocacy. The data used were primarily taken from the 2009 and 2010 NHS Staff Survey. A total of 288,435 NHS staff were asked to participate in the survey in 2009; 54 per cent of those

completed it (156,951 responses). However, sample size data was not given for 2010. This paper focused on data in relation to two possible antecedents: appraisals and team working. These were identified as areas to investigate based on previous work by the research team.

Findings of the study

The responses relating to appraisals were analysed according to whether employees had received a good quality appraisal (defined as being useful, clear, and valuable), a poorer appraisal (defined as not very useful, clear or valuable) or no appraisal. 71 per cent had received an appraisal while 32 per cent had said that their appraisal was well-structured. A good quality appraisal was associated with the highest levels of engagement, whereas a poor quality appraisal was associated with lowest engagement scores; even lower than having no appraisal at all.

To assess team working, the study identified three possible team types: well-structured teams, pseudo-teams and not in a team. A well-structured team was one in which there were clear, shared objectives for the team and where the team would regularly discuss team effectiveness and how to improve it. A pseudo-team was one which did not meet all the criteria above. Although 93 per cent stated that they worked in a team, only 43 per cent thought they worked in a well-structured team. Working in a well-structured team was associated with the highest levels of engagement while those who worked in pseudo-teams had lower engagement levels than those who stated that they did not work in a team.

Other factors that were associated with higher levels of engagement included having an interesting job, receiving support, feeling that the job role made a difference, having low levels of work pressure, having clear job content and feedback, and having the opportunity to be involved in decision-making.

Limitations

The sample size was not given for 2010. The quality of the appraisal and of the team was measured using self-report items, which were not verified against perceptions of other team members or the manager.

Discussion

This review focuses on the concept of employee engagement, which has developed into a broad and diverse concept that many practitioners consider as having the potential to benefit both employees (in terms of improving wellbeing and morale) and employers (in terms of increased performance and innovation). Therefore, examining the evidence on what may help organisations achieve high levels of engagement will help NHS managers to not only improve the quality of working life of NHS staff, but also of patient care and health services. In line with this rationale, the aim of this review is to examine the evidence from good quality practitioner studies to ascertain which tools and resources would be most useful for NHS managers to utilise in order for them to increase engagement within their organisations.

This review includes evidence from 14 practitioner studies about the extent to which interventions, tools and approaches put in place by organisations and line managers are associated with increases in the engagement levels of their employees. The studies have been included because they met the selection criteria set out at the scoping stage: they were found on websites that had been identified as sources of relevant information, included the agreed search terms and met the selection criteria set in the form of five questions:

Is the material relevant or useful to an NHS practitioner?
Does the material contain evidence?
Does the material include a described methodology?
Is the research original to this source?
If the material forms part of a series, is this the most recent?

The 14 studies covered a range of elements associated with engagement and represented a number of countries, sectors and organisation sizes. Due to the nature of the study methods, none of them were able to establish causal links between the particular interventions, attitudes or behaviours being analysed and subsequent improvements in engagement. The findings were instead correlations or associations. Despite this caveat, it is striking and encouraging that this group of disparate studies does produce a relatively small number of key themes which help guide practitioners

towards tools and resources that may be particularly useful for fostering and embedding high levels of engagement within an organisation. The key themes identified were:

1. Senior leadership

2. Role of the line manager

3. Appraisals, performance management and training

4. Meaningfulness

5. Employee voice

6. Team-working

7. Support for work-life balance.

Before discussing each of these themes in turn, it is important to firstly discuss how engagement was defined and measured across the 14 studies. This is because the ways in which engagement is understood as a concept has been found to vary considerably[1], and so this variation needs to be considered when attempting to understand how it can be increased/embedded within an organisation.

Definition and measures of engagement

It is a limitation of this field of study that there is not one accepted definition and that this can cause confusion in discussions of the topic[1]. This lack of a single definition is mirrored in the lack of a single measure of engagement. Without these in place, it is possible discussions on engagement are at cross-purposes and that researchers are studying slightly different phenomena by their choice of measures. There is further elaboration of this question in 'Measuring engagement and interpreting survey results'[20], a paper led by Luke Fletcher of IES and available through the NHS Employers website.

The definitions used in the 14 practitioner studies were:

Alfes et al (2010)[2]: '*Being positively present during the performance of work by willingly contributing intellectual effort, experiencing positive emotions and meaningful connections to others. We see engagement as having three core facets: intellectual engagement, or thinking hard about the job and how to do it better; affective engagement, or feeling positively about doing a good job; social engagement, actively taking opportunities to discuss work-related improvements with others at work.*' [2(p5)]

Gourlay et al (2011)[4] uses the same definition as Alfes et al, 2010[2].

Gourlay et al (2012)[5]: Two types of engagement: '*emotionally engaged, displaying an emotional attachment to one or more aspects of their work, or transactionally engaged, happy to exhibit the behaviour of engagement, do what is required or expected as long as promised*

rewards such as promotion or training are forthcoming, but not committed to the job or the organisation and willing to leave if a better offer appears elsewhere.'[5p3]

GSR (2013)[6] do not include a definition of employee engagement.

Kenexa (2008, 2012, 2013)[8-10]: *'The extent to which employees are motivated to contribute to organizational success, and are willing to apply discretionary effort to accomplishing tasks important to the achievement of organizational goals.'*[10(p4)]

Lewis et al (2011)[11]: *'Being focused in what you do (thinking), feeling good about yourself in your role and the organisation (feeling), and acting in a way that demonstrates commitment to the organisational values and objectives (acting).'*[11(p4)]

Robinson et al (2004, 2007, 2009)[12-14]: *'Engagement is a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organisation and its values. An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organisation'*[12(p9)]

Tomlinson (2010)[15]: *'Employee engagement consists of three parts – the belief (mental), the feeling the brand generates (emotion) and, most importantly, the generation of discretionary effort (behavior)'.'*[15(p26)]

Truss et al (2006)[16]: Uses the May et al (2004) measure of engagement, which is based on Kahn's (1990) definition of engagement as the *'harnessing of organisational members selves to their work roles; in engagement people employ and express themselves physically, cognitive and emotionally during role performances'*[19(p694)].

West & Dawson (2012)[18]: Uses the NHS staff survey definition stating that *'engagement was measured using three different dimensions: psychological engagement (similar to motivation), advocacy, and involvement'.'*[18(p13)]

Despite the studies using different definitions, they do seem to share a similar understanding of engagement as a composite attitude that consists of emotional, cognitive and behavioural elements. They seem to focus on the relationship with the organisation, but some, e.g. Alfes et al (2010)[2], focus on the job role.

To conclude, there are a range of diverse definitions being used within practitioner studies. This makes it difficult to make firm and unified conclusions about the evidence due to the possibility of comparing apples and pears rather than apples and apples; particularly when some focus on the relationship with the organisation and others focus on the relationship with the job role. However, there seems to be an underlying assumption that engagement is a multifaceted and positive work-related attitude, which at least provides some common ground.

Theme 1: Senior Leadership

The studies show clear differences in the role of senior leaders and immediate line managers in fostering engagement in employees.

In this section, the role of senior leaders is analysed. Alfes et al (2010)[2], showed that positive perceptions of senior manager communication style and vision were associated with higher levels of engagement. This is supported by Truss et al (2006)[16], who also found that those who held positive perceptions of leaders were more engaged than those who held neutral or negative perceptions. Truss et al (2006)[16] also identified a group of employees called 'committed visionaries'. This group were those who perceive senior management to have a clear vision and themselves support that vision, and were highly engaged.

Kenexa (2012)[10] stated that, amongst employees who trust their leader, engagement was 81 per cent, whereas, amongst those who distrust their leader, engagement was 29 per cent. Kenexa (2008)[8] also found that having leaders who inspire confidence in the future was a key theme for the factors that are associated with increased levels of engagement.

There seemed to be mixed findings with regards to perceptions of senior management effectiveness. Kenexa (2012)[9] found that senior leader effectiveness was positively associated with engagement, and that such perceptions were more positive in the private sector than public sector. In contrast, Alfes et al (2010)[2] found that ratings of senior management effectiveness were negatively associated with engagement. They argued that if the general perception of leaders is positive, particularly with regards to communication and vision, then specific negative perceptions may actually engage an employee more because it motivates them to drive change and innovation within the organisation. Thus, organisations should ensure that senior managers are viewed positively with regards to communication, trustworthiness, and vision/direction.

Theme 2: Role of the Line Manager

The role of the immediate line manager is analysed in a very high number of the studies; indeed two studies exclusively analysed line manager behaviours which were associated with increased employee engagement.

One of these was Lewis et al (2011)[11], which found that the most important behaviours for managers were reviewing and guiding, giving feedback, praise and recognition, and encouraging autonomy and empowerment. The other was Robinson and Hayday (2009)[12], in which the top three manager behaviours linked with increased engagement were communicating and making clear what is expected, listening, valuing and involving the team and being supportive.

In other studies, the role of the line manager was one factor in a broader range of components analysed. Line management style was one of the six key drivers of engagement identified in Alfes et al (2010)[2], and Gourlay et al (2012)[5] showed that the quality of the line manager relationship was associated with engagement. Kenexa (2008, 2012)[8,10] showed that the effectiveness of the direct manager and the presence of managers who respect and recognise employees were associated with high levels of engagement. Truss et al (2006)[16] demonstrated that perceiving one's line manager as

committed to the organisation was associated with higher levels of engagement. The same study showed, however, that perceived managerial fairness was related to individual performance but not to engagement. GSR (2013)[6] linked a programme of leadership development for line managers with an increase in levels of engagement amongst all employees.

Theme 3: Appraisals, performance management and training

More specifically, having a manager who manages performance well was associated with higher levels of engagement[12]. In West and Dawson (2010)[18] a good quality appraisal was linked to higher engagement as was clear job feedback. It is important to ensure that managers have the skills to deliver effective appraisals as this study found that having an appraisal that was defined as poor quality was linked to lower levels of engagement than not having an appraisal. The importance of appraisals was also supported by Robinson et al (2007)[14] and Kenexa (2012)[10] who both found that having an appraisal contributed to higher levels of engagement.

GSR (2013)[6] showed that monthly supervisory meetings focused on performance management principles were associated with increases in engagement. This was reinforced by Lewis et al (2011)[11] who found that a key competency of an engaging manager was giving feedback. Robinson and Hayday (2009)[12] also found that being target-focused was a key attribute of engaging managers. As well as having discussions about performance, it seems that taking steps to build performance is associated with higher levels of engagement. Tomlinson (2010)[15]discussed the benefit to engagement of including a clear training needs analysis within an appraisal process. Robinson et al (2004, 2007)[13,14] as well as Kenexa (2012)[9] supported this by showing that receiving training and holding positive perceptions of such training and development opportunities were associated with higher levels of engagement.

Theme 4: Meaningfulness

The link between meaningfulness and engagement can be traced back to Kahn (1990)[19], who proposed that meaningfulness is one of three critical psychological conditions that need to be met for engagement to occur. Kahn (1990)[19] defined psychological meaningfulness as '*a feeling that one is receiving a return on investments of one's self in a currency of physical, cognitive, or emotional energy*'[19(p703)]. In other words, it refers to feeling that the work one does 'makes a difference' and is worthwhile and personally significant.

Within the practitioner studies, meaningfulness at work was described as '*the extent to which employees find meaning in their work…where people can see the impact of their work on other people or society in general*' [2(p23)] or where one can see how one's work contributes to the organisation's aims/success (i.e. 'seeing the bigger picture')[5, 6]. For Alfes et al (2010)[2] and Gourlay et al (2012)[5] meaningfulness was the most important driver of engagement. Within the NHS context, West & Dawson (2012)[18] found that feeling that the job role

makes a difference was a factor associated with higher levels of engagement. Other studies[16,18] also showed positive links between aspects of meaningfulness and engagement

Theme 5: Employee voice

Employee voice is a term which refers to the opportunities employees have to input into decisions affecting their work and to be properly consulted and communicated with over workplace issues. Alfes et al (2010)[2], Truss et al (2006)[16] and West & Dawson (2012)[18] found that having such opportunities to feed views upwards and to input into higher-level decision-making was linked to higher levels of engagement.

Both Lewis at al (2011)[11] and Robinson and Hayday (2009)[12] showed that a manager who welcomed ideas and feedback from employees, and provided opportunities for team members to input into decision-making was able to elicit higher levels of engagement within their team.

Theme 6: Team working

West & Dawson (2012)[18] linked being part of a well-structured team with increased levels of engagement, yet being part of a pseudo-team (i.e. in a poorly structured team) was connected with lower levels of engagement than not being in a team. GSR (2013)[6] found that having team days contributed to an overall strategy that helped increase engagement for two departments within the HMRC.

Kenexa (2012)[10] found that co-worker quality, made up of being cooperative, do their best, feel part of a team, was one of the four key drivers of engagement. This is further supported by Truss et al (2006)[16] who found that increased job satisfaction was associated with higher engagement and that a key component of increased job satisfaction was the quality of the relationships with colleagues. Related to this, Alfes et al (2010)[2] showed that a supportive work environment was associated with higher levels of engagement.

Theme 7: Support for work-life balance

Truss et al (2006)[16] found that those who were satisfied with their work-life balance or those on flexible contracts were more engaged than other employees. Kenexa (2012)[9] also showed that having support for work-life balance was one of the top three drivers of engagement, and that satisfaction with work-life balance was higher in the public (58 per cent) than in the private (51 per cent) sector.

Kenexa (2008)[8] found that organisations which demonstrated a genuine responsibility to their employees and communities, particularly through showing support for work-life balance, was associated with higher levels of employee engagement.

Other factors explored

The above seven themes were the key ones that emerged; however other elements were also discussed by some studies. These were:

- **Job variety**: Having a range of different tasks that utilised a mix of skills and abilities was found to be positively associated with engagement[11,13,14,18].

- **Job autonomy**: Being able to decide how to conduct one's work tasks and having personal discretion over the scheduling of one's workloads was associated with higher levels of engagement[11,13,14,18].

- **Equal opportunities**: Feeling that the organisation was committed to providing equality of opportunities and would act upon any incidence of bullying/harassment was associated with higher levels of engagement[13,14,16].

- **Health and safety**: Feeling that the organisation made provision for high standards of health and safety policies, procedures and practices was associated with higher levels of engagement[13,14].

Conclusion

This review of practitioner studies has enabled us to draw out seven key themes in relation to tools and resources which organisations and managers can put into place to foster and embed high levels of engagement. These can be used to form evidence-based recommendations for practice, and so this section discusses relevant recommendations that arise from each of the seven themes, as well as action planning (see 5.8).

Senior leadership

A number of the papers suggested ways in which senior leaders can be harnessed to embed high levels of engagement across the whole organisation. One the most important aspects was the need for senior leaders to develop a clear, inspiring and promising vision for the future that instils confidence and trust in their ability to lead the organisation[2,8-10,16]. Therefore tools and coaching processes that help senior managers to create such positive and engaging visions may be particularly useful.

A second aspect that emerged was that senior leaders should be perceived as '*open, transparent and approachable*'[2(p3)] by employees. Other studies[11,12] also highlighted the importance of trust in senior managers and senior managers leading by example. Therefore, this suggests that selecting senior managers who can demonstrate that they have acted in ethical and morally justified ways, and/or score highly on psychometric assessments designed to capture personality characteristics that are associated with such behaviours may be helpful.

A third aspect was that senior managers should show that they value employees, and are committed to employee involvement and wellbeing[8-10,13,14]. In order to develop such competences, many of the studies highlight the usefulness of personal development practices such as 360 degree feedback, competency frameworks and assessments, and practical toolkits[8-11,15]. Kenexa (2012)[9(p.7)] argued that senior managers should '*be assessed against behaviors…using objective assessments of leadership…(to) ensure that all development decisions are made with the very best evidence*'.

Finally, Tomlinson (2012)[15] highlighted how gaining buy-in from senior managers about the value and importance of employee engagement to the success of the organisation was crucial for getting the engagement strategy at Kia Motors off the ground. This suggests that HR practitioners and those with influence should take some time and effort to prepare a strong business case for engagement so that senior managers can clearly see the benefit of investing in engagement activities.

Line management

Many of the papers suggested ways in which line managers can be harnessed to embed high levels of engagement across the whole organisation. Line managers are implicated within the themes of performance management and training, meaningfulness, employee voice, team working and work-life balance. In order not to overlap with these other themes, this section will detail how line managers themselves can be selected, developed and managed to foster engagement within their teams.

With regards to selection, psychometric assessments such as situational judgement or integrity tests could be used as a proxy indication of a potential manager's likely style of behaving in respectful and trustworthy ways. A key foundation of engagement is having a good quality relationship with one's line manager that is based on mutual respect and trust[13,14,16]. Therefore, selecting managers who are inclined to act in interpersonally respectful and trustworthy ways would be beneficial to ensure that the basic foundations for engagement are set[11].

Many of the papers highlighted how line managers can be trained to enact people management behaviours that build engagement within their teams. In particular both Robinson et al (2009)[12] and Lewis et al (2011)[11] have developed competency frameworks for assessing and monitoring engaging management behaviours. These frameworks can be used, or adapted to fit particular contexts, as a basis for personal development initiatives targeted at line managers. As Robinson et al (2009)[12(p.71)] note '*engaging managers are made, not born. They learn through observing others and through self-reflection*'. Therefore training and development of line managers' people management behaviours seems like a fruitful avenue for building engagement.

Lastly, line management behaviour can be shaped by harder performance management processes[9-11]. By building an assessment of people management behaviours that encourage engagement[11,12] then managers can, on one hand, be held accountable for their behaviour and, on the other, be rewarded and recognised for demonstrating a commitment to fostering engagement within the organisation. Thus performance management processes can act as an extrinsic motivational tool to reinforce engaging management behaviours that, with time, become embedded within the culture of the organisation.

Performance management and training

Engagement can be enhanced when employees can see how they can add value to the organisation through their skills and performance. Therefore, performance management and training practices can help engage employees because they provide motivational targets, clarify performance expectations and standards, and encourage self-awareness and improvement[6,8-10,13-15,18]. Therefore these practices can be harnessed to foster engagement.

GSR (2013)[6] found that building engagement behavioural indicators within appraisals and one-to-one discussions with managers formed an important part of the engagement strategy for the HMRC. These indicators not only served as a monitoring tool, but also helped to identify development needs regularly and accurately. Moreover, utilising voice processes could help identify broad gaps in training and development, whereas appraisal processes can identify specific ones for individuals and workgroups[15].

Lastly, it was highlighted that although pay may not in itself be that important to engagement, recognising and rewarding performance may help increase engagement[13,15]. This could involve small gestures such as thank-you cards and gifts to more grand gestures such as employee awards, benefit packages and financial bonuses[6].

Meaningfulness

Some of the papers discussed ways in which meaningfulness can be fostered. Firstly, jobs and work tasks should be designed to be interesting, challenging and enjoyable[2,16]. Kenexa (2008)[8] found that feeling a sense of personal accomplishment, feeling that one's knowledge, skills and abilities were being utilised, and feeling that one's job held promise for one's future career goals were highly associated with feeling 'excited' about one's work. Gourlay et al (2012)[5] also highlighted how feeling some degree of fit and identification with one's job role as well as with the organisation will help an individual feel more engaged. Thus, how the job role and work tasks are perceived in relation to one's own identity as a person and as an organisational member may be crucial for meaningfulness.

Kenexa (2008)[8] additionally pointed out that such feelings of excitement and identification are difficult to sustain over time as '*employees become disenchanted…once employees know their job, fewer projects and tasks are outside of their box and fewer work problems pose an exciting challenge*' [8(p.24)]. Therefore, organisations need to ensure that jobs can be adapted and reconfigured over time to allow employees to continue to extract meaning from their work.

A number of the papers suggest that line managers may be particularly important for helping employees to gain meaning from their work. A common rationale is that meaningfulness can be fostered by '*articulating the links between individual jobs and the broader organisational aims and…sharing an understanding of deeper levels of the purpose of the organisation*' [2(p.3)]. Line managers are in a unique and pivotal position because they

'have an in-depth knowledge of their organisation and how their role (and their team) fits into the bigger picture' [13(p.73)]. Thus, they are a crucial intermediary between employees and the organisation, and so are able to facilitate such meaningful links between jobs and the wider purpose/objectives of the organisation. The GSR (2013)[6] case study of the HMRC showed that discussions on managing change facilitated by the team leader helped employees make the connection between their work and organisational objectives so they could fully understand the context and benefits of HMRC's change strategy.

However, it is not just line managers that can help facilitate such links between jobs and organisational strategy. Tomlinson (2012)[15] observed that improving internal communications were a core part of Kia Motor's engagement strategy. Improvements included introducing quarterly employee briefings and redesigning the corporate intranet. By increasing the opportunities for, and quality of, top-down communication, Kia Motors were able to provide all employees with access to the information they needed to see how their job roles fitted in with the overall organisational strategy.

Employee voice

Feeling valued and involved within organisational decision-making processes, and feeling that one can raise concerns and suggestions for improvement have been shown to be strongly associated with engagement[2,13]. Bringing together the evidence and discussions from the 14 practitioner studies reveals four main ways that employee voice can be fostered.

Firstly, senior managers can help strengthen employee voice by implementing channels and initiatives that provide employees with an opportunity to raise concerns and suggestions for improvement[16]. Some examples may include regular staff suggestion schemes[2] and focus groups or forums where employees can have discussions directly with senior managers[15]. It is important that senior managers have a genuine desire to listen and act upon feedback from employees[2] otherwise these could actually disengage employees if they feel that senior managers are simply paying them lip service. Communicating upon decisions and actions as a result of such feedback is also important[14].

Secondly, organisational practices to improve performance and effectiveness can be harnessed as a way to encourage proactive problem-solving that develops cross-functional working and co-operation across teams[2,6,14]. Employees will feel more involved with the wider organisation and feel that are contributing significantly to important decisions and actions that ultimately may improve the organisation's culture, environment and/or performance.

Thirdly, HRM practices that demonstrate to employees that the organisation values them and is committed to them provide the basis for voice. Employees feel valued and involved, and subsequently engaged, when they perceive that the organisation

provides good equal opportunities, training and development, pay and benefits, performance appraisals, and health and safety practices[14].

Lastly, line managers act as the day-to-day gatekeepers of voice as they shape the immediate working environment that surrounds the employee. Line managers who are communicative and approachable; gain input from the team in workgroup decisions, and enact an open-door policy help employees to feel that they are valued and involved within the organisation[2,12,16].

Team working

Team working was seen as a fairly useful way to engage employees within many of the studies[2,6,10,16,18]. There was not much discussion around how team working can be developed to best achieve engagement. Despite this, there is evidence to suggest that two ways may be useful.

Firstly, line managers can set clear shared targets for their team, and use these as motivational tools to enhance engagement for the whole workgroup[18]. Team members will feel part of a collective purpose that not only clarifies how the team contributes to the success of the organisation, but acts a way to facilitate decision-making and problem-solving within the team. Thus, teamworking can help promote meaningfulness and voice, which, as detailed in this paper, are particularly powerful processes that foster engagement.

Secondly, line managers can encourage team members to help and support each other in proactive and practical ways[2,9]. This not only builds resources and communication within the team, but also strengthens feelings of trust and respect. All of these aspects are important for engagement because employees need to feel that they are safe and secure environment where they can fully express themselves without fear of negative consequences[19].

Work-life balance

Work-life balance emerged as an important driver of engagement in some studies[8-10,13,16] mainly because it may constitute a crucial part of one's perception that the organisation genuinely cares about their employees[8]. To strengthen such perceptions organisations can focus on the following two actions.

Firstly, HRM policies and flexible work arrangements can be developed to increase the flexibility and choice offered to employees with regards to working hours, location of work and access to resources[13,16]. Employees who have more control over how they manage the interface between their work and non-work lives are likely to be more engaged because they feel supported and feel a greater sense of balance between the two.

Secondly, line managers can support each of their direct report's work-life balance by being empathetic and showing consideration towards their unique needs[11,12]. Line managers have day-to-day interactions with employees and so it is important that line managers enact interpersonal behaviours that demonstrate support for work-life balance and individual flexibility.

Action planning

It is well understood that practitioners, particularly in the NHS, whether they are line managers or HR specialists, have very limited budgets for engagement programmes. Given such constraints, it is hoped that this summary of the evidence available will allow informed choices to be made as to the most effective means of using available resources to achieve higher levels of engagement.

Before designing an engagement strategy, an audit of the above drivers and practices could be taken to identify particular areas to focus on. For example, it may be that the organisation provides a range of flexible work arrangements and has policies in place to support different groups of the workforce with regards to work-life balance; however it may be lacking in opportunities and avenues for employees to share their concerns/ideas and be involved in decision-making. Therefore, it would make sense, for that organisation, to focus on developing employee voice rather than work-life balance. However, ignoring work-life balance and the other drivers completely or failing to consider how actions may then impact on the other drivers is also dangerous. Within any strategy or plans an assessment of the risks and impacts to the other drivers, and how the organisation would consider these, is recommended.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Methodology

In this Appendix we set out the methods used to review the practitioner material sources that ran in conjunction with the main data collection and analysis process. The practitioner material was evaluated for its relevance to the evidence synthesis report, and for inclusion in the practitioner outputs arising from this project.

In order to acknowledge the importance of practitioner-led research, as well as address the risk of publication bias, the development of the search terms and strategy was shaped by the need to include 'practitioner material' on employee engagement from the health sector and beyond. At this stage the project team, in consultation with others experts and Advisory Group members, discussed possible sources of practitioner material in order to make the search strategy as inclusive as possible and to be

able to address the fourth research question: 'What tools and resources would be most useful to NHS managers in order to improve engagement?'

It was agreed it would be useful to have a list of 'mandated sources' of this literature deemed by the experts to be of the highest quality and relevance, including professional or membership organisations and networks (e.g. various Royal Colleges, NHS Federation, NHS Employers); research centres (e.g. Institute of Work Psychology, RSA); unions; third sector organisations (e.g. Nuffield Foundation, the King's Fund), as well as various conferences (Healthcare Conferences UK, British Academy of Management), independent consultancies and think-tanks, along with government-led or sponsored agencies (DH, Nursing and Midwifery Council, UKCES).

Scoping study

In order to identify evidence-based practitioner material on the topic of employee engagement likely to be of relevance to the evidence synthesis and/or the production of practitioner materials, an initial scoping exercise was completed to locate primary sources from which these items might be obtained. Using the expertise of team members in the field of engagement, combined with their familiarity with the NHS and reference aids such as listings of health-related organisations in Binley's Directory of Management, the project team produced a list of 121 practitioner material sources that they believed warranted a preliminary search. It was agreed that each listed source would be individually examined for relevant evidence-based content.

An initial list of six search terms was devised by those members of the project team leading the practitioner material extraction. These were: 'employee engagement', 'staff engagement', 'employee involvement', 'employee participation', 'social partnership forum' and 'employee voice'. The aim of this broad list of search terms was to assess whether the identified sources contained any evidence-based material. The rationale was that sources yielding no relevant material did not need to be investigated further; while those that did yield apparently relevant material would be taken forward to the next stage, when the longer list of search terms (those in use for the core evidence synthesis) would be used.

A log was kept of the search strategy adopted for each source, recording the type of search engine and any filtering functions that were used, as well as the search terms employed and the results of the scoping exercise. Specifically, the number of materials that each search term returned was recorded for every listed source. The format of these documents was then specified in each instance. Finally, the reviewer's comments on the overall quality of the source were listed next to the search results. For the purposes of this evidence synthesis, a source was deemed to be of high quality if, in the first instance,

several documents were returned that referenced one of the six search terms in either the title, abstract or main body of the text and, second, if any supporting evidence obtained from primary quantitative or qualitative research conducted by the author(s), organisation(s) and/or affiliate(s) involved in the production of these materials was presented.

On this basis, any sources that returned a substantial number of materials on the topic of employee engagement that could be classified as either editorial or opinion pieces containing no primary research evidence were judged to be of low quality, and were therefore discounted entirely from further use within this review. Sources that returned very few or no documents that referenced the selected search terms in the text fields specified were also deemed unsuitable for further sifting. It was envisaged that this scoping strategy would aid the next stage of the practitioner material extraction - the project team's systematic search for potentially relevant material - by producing a refined list of sources derived from the 121 originally listed that were known to provide access to primary research outputs on employee engagement and related topics.

A useful by-product of this scoping exercise was the identification of additional sources of practitioner material through secondary references to reports or resources provided by other organisations in the area of employee engagement. Table 1 details the search features that were used to scope each listed source; it shows that internal website search engines were utilised in vast majority of cases (75.7 per cent). Where this strategy was adopted, the search field was 'all text', except in one instance where an exact phrase search was used in order to reduce the total number of materials returned, and to ensure that the listed documents addressed the subject of the search terms. Filtered searches - for instance, by listed publications - were also employed in a number of instances.

Table 1: Search features adopted in scoping exercise of practitioner material

Search feature	No. of sources	per cent
Website search engine	103	75.7
Manually keyword search (Ctrl + F)	17	12.5
Library Catalogue	1	0.7
Subject headings	3	2.2
No search function adopted	12	8.8
Total	136	100.0

Where internal website search engines were not available, or in cases in which these search engines could not be filtered to return a manageable list of materials, a manual keyword search of listed content was employed. This strategy was frequently adopted when attempting to scope the work of research institutes/centres affiliated with Universities. The search engines available from these websites tended to search published content across the University, and could not be filtered by the research body in question. Manual keyword searches were generally conducted by listed publications, working papers, current research projects, and/or research themes; and were employed for 17 sources in total. These 17 sources included; the Institute of Work Psychology; EU Workplace Innovation Network; Society for Human Resource Management; Centre for Research on Management and Employment; Work and Employment Research Unit; Centre for Employment Studies Research; Routledge Research in Employment Relations; The Future of Work; Employment Research Institute; Institute of Medical and Social Care Research; Center for Healthcare Management; Centre for Health Information Management Research; Health Services Management Centre, University of Birmingham; Work and Employment Research Centre; Peoplemanagement.com; European Association for People Management; Contemporary Work and Employment Relations.

In a small number of instances (2.2 per cent), a manual search was not needed as the website in question provided clear links to relevant content. For example, the Tomorrow's Company website had a section dedicated to its 'Rethinking Voice' research series, which examines the value of employee voice to both employers and employees operating in companies within the UK through a number of case studies. Finally, no search function was adopted for 12 listed sources. In these instances, no search engine, listed content, or clearly labelled and relevant subject headings were provided. These websites were thereby deemed unusable and discounted entirely from this evidence review.

A further 15 potential sources of practitioner material were identified during the scoping exercise via in-source links and references to items of research and consultancy conducted by other organisations in the area of employee engagement, bringing the total number of listed grey sources to 136 (see Table 1).

Table 2: Number of returned results of practitioner material by search term

Search term	No. of returned results	per cent
'employee engagement'	27,604	15.2
'staff engagement'	52,840	29.2
'employee involvement'	34,640	19.1
'employee participation'	17,571	9.7

'social partnership forum'	34,869	19.3
'employee voice'	13,500	7.5
Total	181,024	100.0

A substantial proportion of listed practitioner material sources (39 per cent) returned no materials of relevance to the present evidence review, after trialling each of the six search terms individually. This occurred for 53 out of 136 sources. Each of the six search terms employed within the scoping exercise returned a large quantity of materials from selected sources (see Table 2). The term 'staff engagement' returned by far the largest number, at 52,840. This was 10 per cent more than the terms 'social partnership forum' and 'employee involvement', which returned the second and third highest numbers, respectively. 'Employee voice' produced the smallest number of hits at 13,500, 7.5 per cent of the total number.

The team members leading the practitioner material extraction encountered several difficulties in attempting to classify the type of documents that each source returned. Some sources already provided their own classifications for the returned documents, while others supplied none. For those sources that did provide classifications, these varied from broad-based definitions – such as documents listed as, 'Training and Business Solutions' by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) – to the very specific. Further, in some cases the returned results were so large in number that it was not possible to classify each document individually.

The final classifications recorded within the search log varied between sources. Where the selected search terms returned a large number of unclassified results, a general comment on the types of documents returned, and their frequency, was provided. This tended to cover all the search terms used, although any noticeable variations between terms were specified. However, in instances where the returned results were small enough to allow individual classification by the reviewer, and no prior, specific classifications were provided by the source in question, the document type, and the precise number that each search term returned, were listed. Despite these difficulties, a few document formats appeared frequently among the returned materials. These included resources that may be classified as case studies, research reports, guidance documents, expert practitioner interviews and feature pages/press releases commenting on the results of secondary research.

Of the original list of 121 potential sources of practitioner material, 29 were deemed to be of high quality on the basis of the criteria outlined above (see Table 3). There was no noticeable trend in terms of the type of source included, although many had an established track record of producing, or

providing access to, research outputs on the topic of employee engagement. These included sources such as the CIPD, the IPA, IES, Engage for Success and NHS Employers. Few of the Royal Colleges returned any relevant results. These sources were therefore excluded entirely from the rest of the evidence review because it was decided that focusing on the sources that were likely to yield the most number of relevant and potentially useful studies was the best use of the project's budget and resources.

Table 3: Initial list of approved practitioner material sources

Source
ACAS research papers
CBI
CIPD
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)
Engage for Success
Eurofound
Gallup Business/Management Journal
GSR (Government Social Research/Government Research Service)
Harvard Business Review
Hay Group
Hewitt Associates (Now Aon Hewitt)
IES
International Labour Organisation (ILO)
Involvement and Participation Association
NHS Employers
NHS Institute
NICE
Optimise Ltd.
People Management
Personnel Today
Policy Studies Institute (PSI)
Routledge Research in Employment Relations
Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)
The Boston Consulting Group
The Future of Work (ESRC)

The King's Fund

The Work Foundation

Towers Watson

UK Commission for Employment & Skills (UKCES)

A review of this list was carried out by the team and the project adviser. The review was designed so that no further sources of possible relevant material could be identified, and to verify that the list contained sources of sufficient quality. At this stage, sources were deemed to be of high quality if they contained supporting evidence obtained from primary quantitative or qualitative research. The review of the list by the team resulted in the inclusion a further 9 sources (see Table 4):

Table 4: Sources added to the list of by the research team

Additional sources
Kenexa
Ipsos Mori
BlessingWhite
Corporate Leadership Council
Roffey Park
Mercer
McKinsey
Health Service Journal (HSJ)
Nursing Times

A number of these sources were not initially mandated in the practitioner material search as they would have been captured in the sifting exercise of the academic literature. To address publication bias these were added to the practitioner material search. At the same time a number of other sources were removed from the list. These are listed in Table 5 with the reasons for their removal.

Table 5: Sources removed from initial list of practitioner material sources with reasons

Source name	Removal reason
Personnel Today	News items only – no original research
Routledge Research in Employment Relations	Books only – no capacity to review books in this search

Eurofound	No relevant materials
The Future of Work (ESRC)	No relevant materials

It was also decided that any individual materials which had been identified during the main academic search and that did not meet that quality threshold, yet which were considered to have relevance for the practitioner material search, would be referred to the practitioner material search team for review.

The structured search

Having established the list of sources of practitioner material, a more specific search for materials was carried out using internal website search engines where available. The search facilities on the practitioner material sources had very limited capacity for complex multi-term searching and the search terms returned a very high volume of material with a great deal of duplicated material. It was therefore decided to limit the search terms to:

- 'employee engagement'
- 'staff engagement'

The results of the structured search of grey material as reported in Table 6 include high levels of duplication of materials across and within websites along with a high volume of material that not relevant to the evidence review (e.g. press releases, role descriptions and conference details).

Table 6: Number of items of practitioner material returned for each source and search term

Sources	Terms			
	Employee Engagement	"Employee Engagement"	Staff Engagement	"Staff Engagement"
Acas	418	208	328	28
BlessingWhite	178	139	156	16
CBI	209	209	344	344
CIPD	864	469	314	17
Corporate Leadership Council*				
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)	50	50	50	50
Engage for Success	153	0	0	0
Gallup Business/Management Journal	40	30	13	1
Harvard Business Review	262	262	262	262
Hay Group	764	736	35	1
Hewitt Associates (Now Aon Hewitt)	403	297	179	10
Health Service Journal (HSJ)	5,321	47	16,777	200
IES	797	500	570	23

International Labour Organisation (ILO)	2,469	40	2,589	7
Involvement and Participation Association	186	96	191	191
Ipsos Mori	42	33	54	9
Kenexa	137	21	42	0
McKinsey	567	84	567	11
Mercer	110	41	11	1
NHS Employers	126	48	512	256
NHS Institute	24	2	2,890	76
NICE	113	1	564	2
Nursing Times	1,934	6	9,081	84
Optimise Ltd.	3			
People Management	2,201	699	1,720	0
Policy Studies Institute (PSI)	0	0	6	0
Roffey Park	15	0	4	0
Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)	4,150	997	1,690	7
The Boston Consulting Group	367	115	253	8
The King's Fund	10	10	201	7
The Work Foundation	92	60	50	10
Towers Watson	288	288	46	46
UK Commission for Employment & Skills (UKCES)	281	91	368	27
Government Social Research Service (GSR)	23	9	34	0
Grand Total	**22,597**	**5,588**	**39,901**	**1,687**

*this is blank due to difficulties accessing the information on the site. These were resolved for the full search.

Sifting the results

To identify suitable materials for data extraction from the practitioner material identified in the structured search, a series of 'sift' questions were applied to each of the materials. These were:

- Is the material relevant or useful to an NHS practitioner (in the context of staff engagement)?
- Does the material contain evidence?
- Does the material include a described methodology?
- Is the research original to this source?
- If the material forms part of a series, is this the most recent?

These questions were devised by the research team members engaged on the practitioner material review and were intended to identify materials that would be most appropriate to the project research questions and to the production of the practitioner outputs. Applying the quality criteria to the material revealed that a high number of sources (85.3 per cent) were not found to contain any suitable material (see Table 7).

Table 7: Practitioner material sources returning suitable material

	Number	per cent of total
Sources where no suitable material was found	29	85.3
Sources where material for data extraction was found	5	14.7

For consistency, these quality criteria were also applied to the materials that had been referred to the practitioner material search team when sifting the material from the main search. Of the 12 items referred, only one was considered of sufficient quality for data extraction. The application of quality criteria to the list of sources had the effect of reducing the number of sources that were considered suitable. It also enabled the team to focus on a small number of high-quality materials within each source after discounting items identified in the initial count of results that did not fit the quality criteria outlined above (see Table 8).

Table 8: Number of items for data extraction within suitable practitioner material sources

Source	Number of suitable items
CIPD	5
IES	3
Kenexa	3
The King's Fund	1
GSR (Government Social Research Service)	1
Referred from main literature search	1
Total number of items	**14**

Data extraction

The 14 materials identified in Table 8 were taken forward for data extraction. The date range of materials put through the data extraction process ranged from 2004 to 2013. They included two single-organisation case studies, while the other papers discuss data from more than one organisation. Studies were based in the UK, USA or mixed country settings, and four were based either uniquely or partially in a healthcare setting.

Overall, the tools, resources, approaches, and interventions explored in the 14 items shortlisted for data extraction included material focused on the following themes:

- Senior manager leadership

- Role of the line manager

- Appraisals, performance management and training

- Meaningfulness

- Employee voice

- Team working

- Support for work-life balance

These items were cross-checked against the outcomes of the main data sifting and extraction process from the academic literature to ensure their relevance and appropriateness to the development of practitioner materials. The practitioner materials developed as a result of this project are outlined in more detail on the NIHR website.

Appendix 2: Inclusion and data extraction checklists

Inclusion/exclusion checklist

For inclusion, each paper must elicit a positive response to the following criteria:

- Is it relevant or useful for NHS practitioners?

- Does it contain evidence?

- Does it have a described methodology?

- Is the material original to this source?

- If this is a series of publications, is this the most recent?

Data extraction form

Field	Field guidance or detail
Source	ie name of org
Author	Or organisation of origin
Document title	Or first line of text if no title
Year	
Location (Publication)	
Link to full text	
Full text saved?	Use dropdown

Reference added to EndNote?	*Use dropdown*
Assessment against quality criteria (use dropdowns)	*Relevance/usefulness to NHS practitioner*
Quality2	*Contains Evidence*
Quality3	*Has a described methodology*
Quality4	*Material original to this source?*
Quality5	*Most recent (if of a series)?*
Country of origin	*Insert details (country/ies in which research carried out)*
Study population	
Type of environment/setting	
Aim of research / Problem to be tackled?	*Driver or prompt for research being done*
Health context mentioned?	
Definition of engagement	
1st Type of T, R, A, I (Tools, Resources, Approaches, Interventions) discussed (one per field)	*Insert detail or N/A*
1st Study method(s)	*Insert detail or N/A*
1st Measures	*Insert detail or N/A*
1st Results	*Insert detail or N/A*
1st Evidence	*If avail, evidence for single T, R, A, I . Insert detail or N/A*
Overarching evidence	*If evidence not linked to single TRAI, include here*
2nd Type of T, R, A, I discussed (one per field)	*Insert detail or N/A*
2nd Study method(s)	*Insert detail or N/A*
2nd Measures	*Insert detail or N/A*
2nd Results	*Insert detail or N/A*
2nd Evidence	*Insert detail or N/A*
Above categories repeated for 3rd, 4th and 5th TRAI	
Any models/framework/guidance mentioned?	*Insert detail or N/A*
Limitations (author identified)	*Insert detail*
Limitations (reviewer identified)	*Insert detail*
Comments, quotes, relevant findings or conclusions	*Anything useful for final review, such as any particularly informative description or quotes*

Appendix 3: Areas of communality and difference between the evidence synthesis review and the review of practitioner studies

The evidence synthesis[1] found that a large proportion of academic studies examined the relationship between psychological state or job design factors and engagement whereas this review of practitioner materials found that only a small proportion of practitioner studies have investigated such relationships. This high proportion within the academic community relates to the dominant way in which engagement has been conceptualised. Schaufeli et al's (2002)[21] work engagement construct, measured via the UWES[22] and underpinned by the job demands-resources model (J D-R)[23] focuses on the psychological experiences regarding immediate work activities/environment, and is less concerned about the wider organisational and HR context. This reflects the trend within the academic community to view the employment relationship in a purely psychological way[27]. In contrast, this review of practitioner studies indicates that practitioners have focused more on wider managerial issues rather than on psychological factors.

Despite these differences, there are areas of communalities. In particular, both the evidence synthesis[1] and this review of practitioner studies have identified meaningfulness, the role of the line manager, and leadership behaviours as important antecedents of engagement. Meaningfulness refers to the employee feeling that they matter to the organisation and that the work they do makes a difference; line management is about the employee having a supportive, mutually respectful and high quality relationship with their line manager, and leadership refers to how a charismatic leader with an inspiring vision can help engage employees by connecting them with a higher purpose, and show that people within teams can engage each other.

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