

**Corporate Workforce Equality & Diversity
Annual Report 2024**

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People Management

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Introduction

Sunderland is a fantastic, forward-looking city undergoing significant transformation and economic regeneration. It has a global reputation as a welcoming and inclusive place in which to live, work, achieve, play, and belong.

In the same way that we recognise and value the diversity of people living in the city, we also understand the benefits that having a diverse workforce can bring, and we are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all employees. We understand that having a workforce with a wider range of skills, backgrounds, ages, and experiences means we will have an organisation that is more responsive to our communities. Therefore, having an inclusive and equitable approach is fundamental to achieving our City Plans vision to "create a connected, international city with **opportunities for all.**"

In addition, a diverse workforce can bring new ideas, new ways of working and will create opportunities to challenge the status quo. An engaged and motivated workforce brings energy and enthusiasm and facilitates the continued delivery of effective and responsive services to our customers.

Legal Framework

This report sets out some of the information we collect, analyse and publish to help comply with the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED). The Equality Act 2010 introduced the PSED which consists of a General Duty and Specific Duties. The General Duty requires public bodies, to pay due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (this includes tackling prejudice and promoting understanding).

The Specific Duties require public bodies to be transparent about how they are responding to the Equality Duty. This report demonstrates compliance with the requirement to publish information relating to employees who share protected characteristics (for public bodies with 150 or more employees). The report presents information in relation to the characteristics protected by equality law but also goes further as we recognise other characteristics can also be linked to disadvantage, for example poverty, caring responsibilities, veterans of the armed forces and more.

Workforce Overview

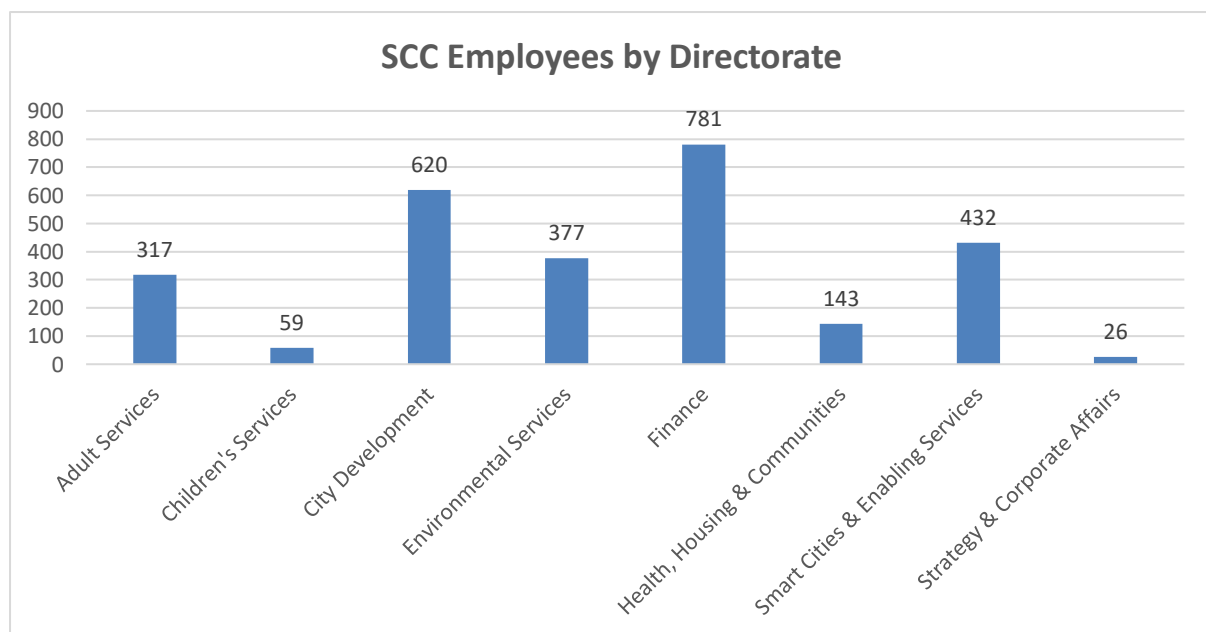
Our Workforce Equality and Diversity Report provides a snapshot of our workforce information and is based on data that we held about our staff as of 31st March 2024 (the data period is 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024).

Declaration Rates

In recent years the key focus for our workforce diversity reporting has been to improve declaration rates to enable more useful analysis. The introduction of Employee Self Service (ESS), which enables employees to view and update their own equality information, has helped us to reduce the gaps in our information. We have now reduced the number of people who have not completed their equality data from 16.2% to 4.5%. Of those that have completed 2% prefer not to disclose.

Some of the data involves small numbers and can make meaningful analysis difficult. Sharing such information within this report increases the risk of identification if the information is presented in full. Therefore, where there are groups of fewer than 10 people within an equality characteristic, the information has been redacted with an * to protect anonymity. Information is published in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation's and Data Protection Act 2018 and does not identify individuals. All employee equality information is stored securely and treated confidentially.

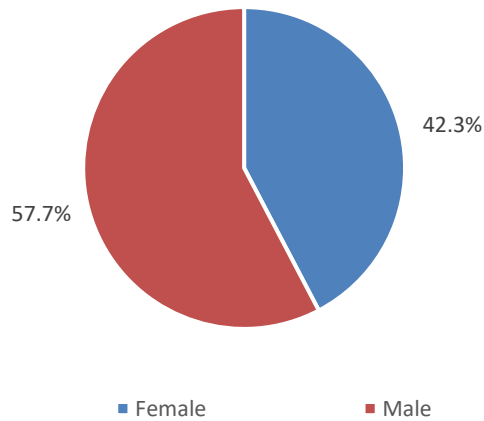
Contracts



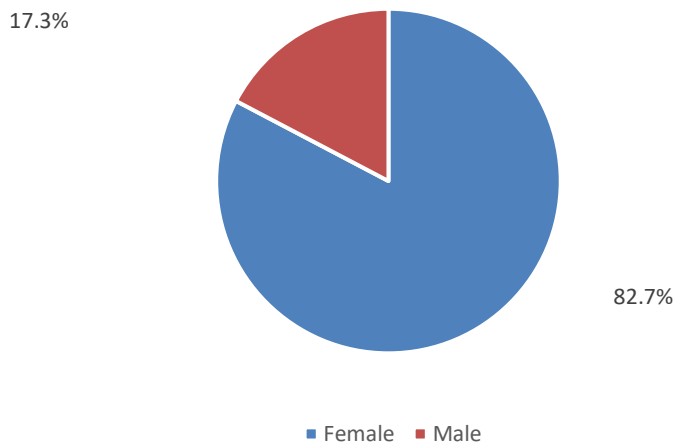
We directly employ 2755 people on a range of employment contracts. Some people have more than one job and therefore the job count is higher at 2913. This data, and the data in the following analysis excludes 1481 school-based employees.

966 employees (35.1%) work on a part-time basis, (i.e. less than a standard 37 hours working week), and 1789 work full-time. The numbers of people working part-time across the organisational structure shows a predominance of part-time working in lower paid roles, and this pattern is similar across the UK. Part time working is nationally recognised as a contributor to gender pay gaps, due to women taking on low paid, part time roles to balance family and caring responsibilities more often than men.

Gender Percentage Split (Full time positions)



Gender Percentage Split (Part time positions)



The council employs 192 people on a Permanent Variable Hours contract (PVH). This means that they have the same employment rights, terms, and conditions of employment as other employees but do not have a set number of contracted working hours. Although this enables the Council to have a flexible workforce available to meet temporary or changeable staffing requirements, we look to establish posts with contracted hours of work wherever possible.

Workforce diversity data analysis

These pages explain how we are meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty, introduced by the Equality Act 2010. This includes information on the arrangements we have in place to ensure the nine protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act 2010 are considered in all that we do. The protected characteristics are:

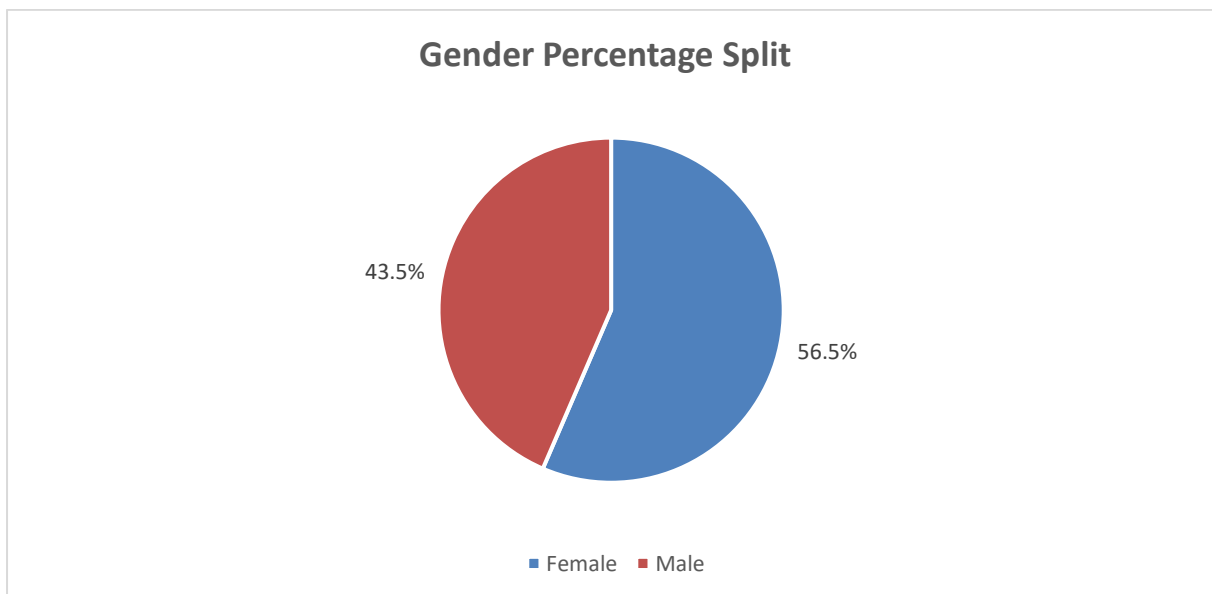
- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and/or civil partnership

- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex (gender)
- sexual orientation

We also understand the importance of considering the needs of other groups that experience disadvantage.

Gender

Overall, female employees make up 56.5% of Sunderland City Council staff and 43.5% are male. This compares to a population with 51% female and 49% male (2021 Census). Women predominantly fill part time positions (82.7% of part-time workers) which also influences the make-up of the workforce.



Age

- The average age of the population of Sunderland is 43 years of age (2021 Census).
- The age profile of the council workforce has reduced over the last 3 years and the average age of our employees in 2024 is now 47.8.
- The percentage of our employees aged 16-30 has also increased to 10.2%.
- The proportion of the workforce under 50 now accounts for the majority of council employees (50.4%).

The council continues to be active in its promotion of apprenticeships and directly employed 18 people during the period of this report.

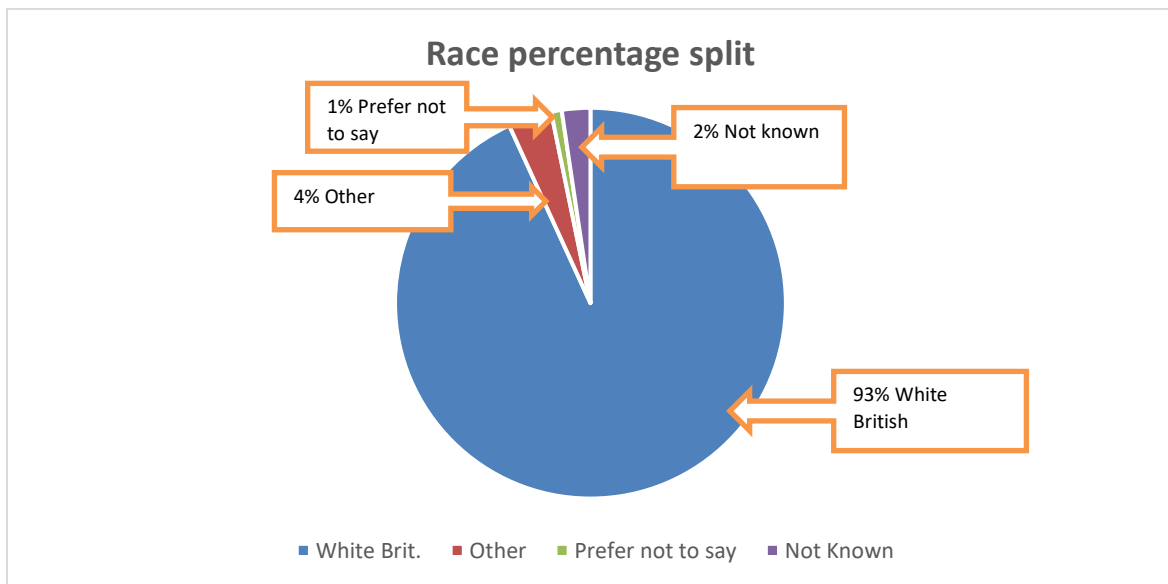
Age Range

Age Range	Grand Total	% in each age range
16 to 19	28	1.0%
20 to 24	86	3.1%
25 to 29	137	5.0%
30 to 34	190	6.9%
35 to 39	235	8.5%
40 to 44	342	12.4%
45 to 49	370	13.4%
50 to 54	414	15.0%
55 to 59	488	17.7%
60 to 64	333	12.1%
65 to 69	105	3.8%
70 to 74	21	0.8%
75 to 79	*	0.2%
80 to 85	*	0.0%
Grand Total	2755	100%

Race

The workforce within Sunderland City Council is predominantly White British (93.0%). This is not surprising, given that the majority of our employees are resident within Sunderland and there is a small BME population within the city.

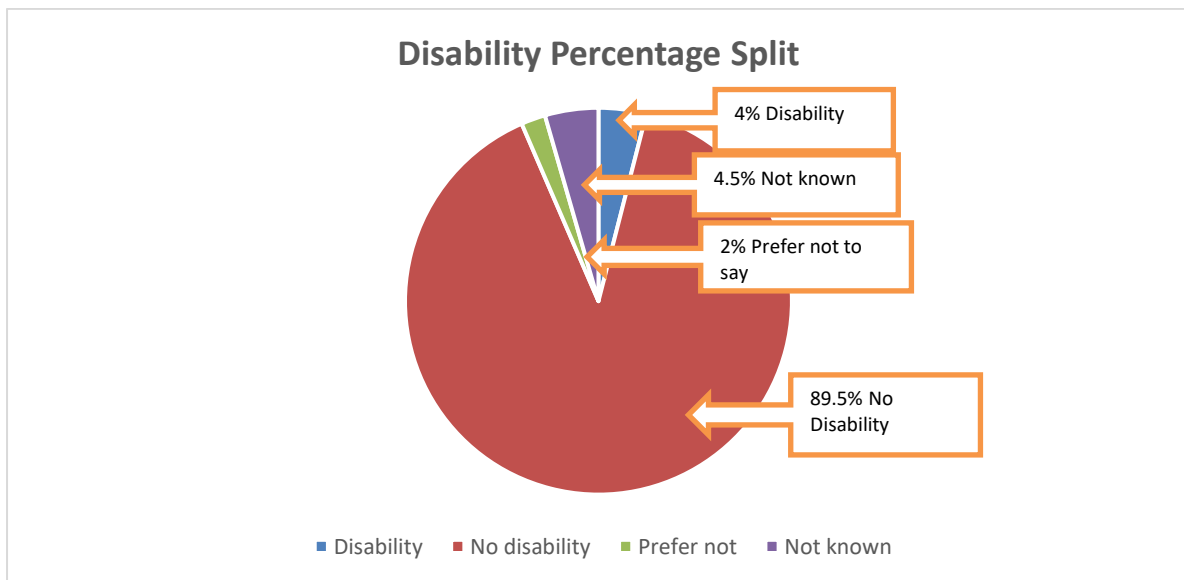
The 2021 Census shows 94.6% of the Sunderland population are White. Detailed analysis of wider data in relation to ethnicity is difficult due to the low numbers of non-white British people in the workforce.



Disability

The council has 110 employees (4%) who declare themselves as disabled, compared to 23.1% of residents in Sunderland declaring themselves as disabled (Information sourced from 2021 Census).

The figures suggest that there is some under-reporting of disability in the employee statistics. It is likely that there is also some under-representation of disability in the workplace.



Pregnancy & Maternity

A snapshot figure at the end of March 2024 shows 13 employees were on maternity leave.

36 employees were on maternity leave between April 2023 and March 2024.

97.2% of employees whose maternity leave finished in this 12-month period returned to work, which is a significantly high proportion and is a positive reflection of the council's employment policies to support working parents, e.g. flexible working options.

24.3% of our employee's state that they are a parent or carer for a child under the age of 18. The information provided helps us to understand our workforce profile, and to ensure that our policies and practices best support employees with childcare responsibilities. The number is likely to be higher as information is currently not known for this category for some of the workforce.

Gender Reassignment

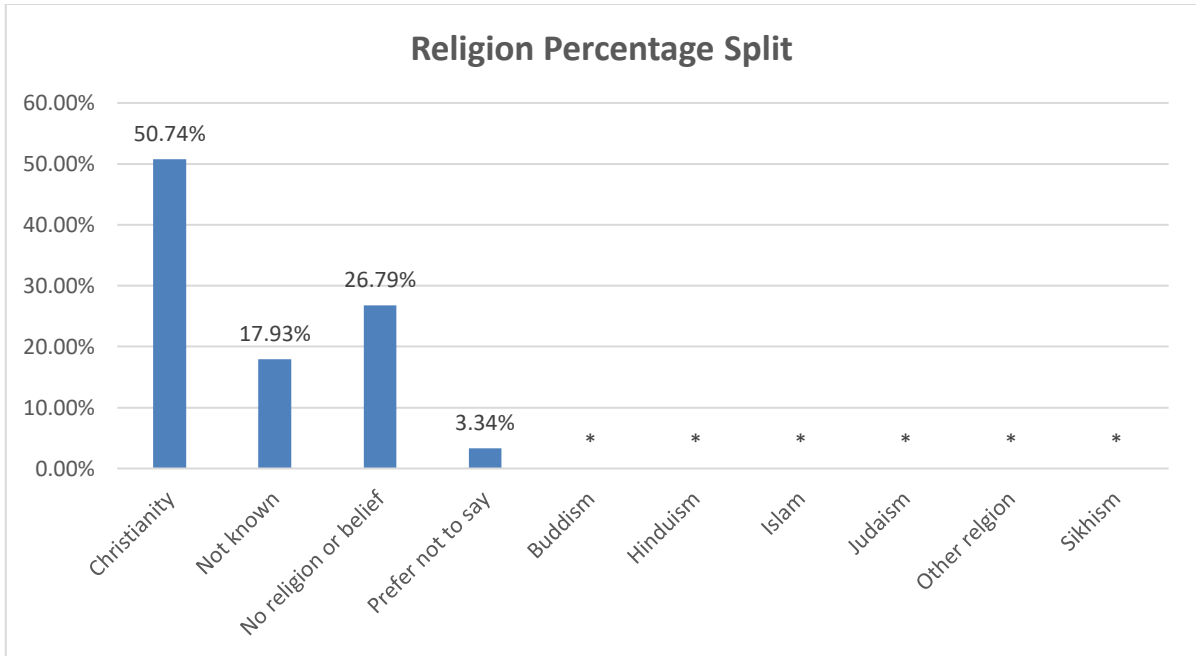
In 2015, a policy was developed in consultation with a transgender employee and the employee network and was introduced in order to support Trans, Non-binary and Transitioning Employees. It has since been reviewed based on guidance from Stonewall.

Information on employees who are or have transitioned is still not widely held. Of course, employees have the opportunity not to disclose information on an equality aspect if they so wish. This data has not been included in this report because this could lead to identification of individuals.

Religion or Belief

Our employees provided information, on a voluntary basis, regarding their religion or belief to provide a baseline of employee information to help gain a better understanding of equalities across the council and inform our policies and practices where they impact on religion or belief.

Employees can choose not to disclose information on an equality aspect if they so wish. The information shows the workforce is predominantly Christian and there is an increase in No religion or belief, this is in line with the residents of Sunderland where the majority of residents consider themselves Christian (53.2%) and a growing number of people assign themselves to No religion or belief at 39.5% (2021 Census).



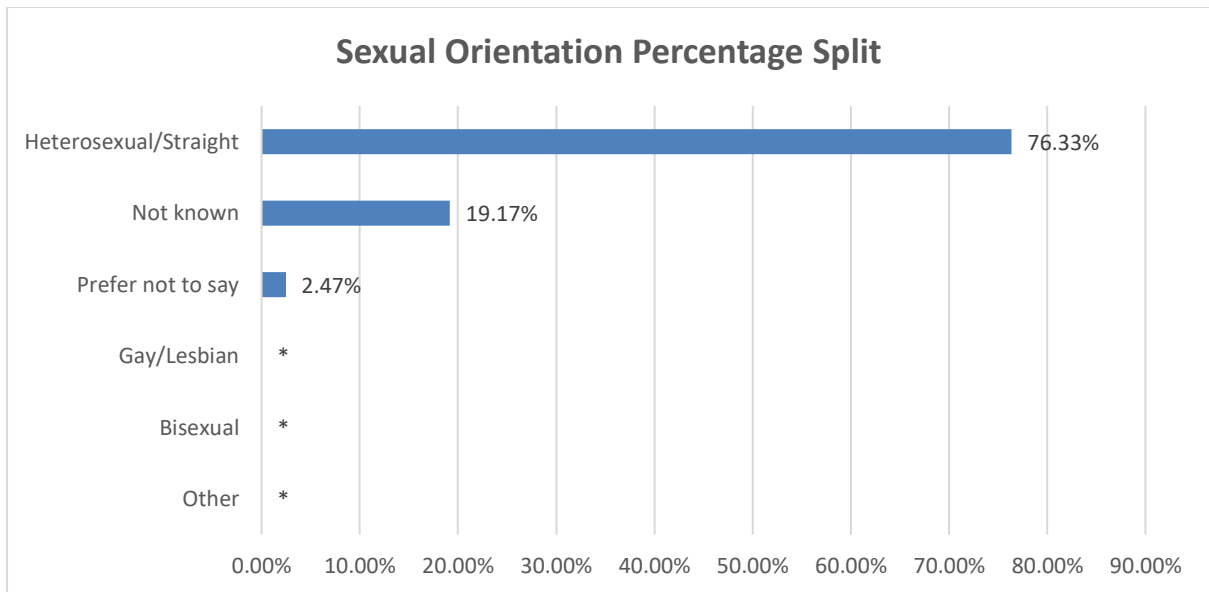
The Council's employment policies and procedures in place for supporting employees in respect of religion or belief include:

- Specific flexibility available in our Leave of Absence Policy for religious or cultural observance.
- The allocation of faith rooms.

Sexual Orientation

Our employment policies and benefits apply to everyone in the council and all relevant benefits will be paid to both same sex and opposite sex couples.

Flying the Rainbow flag annually to promote International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia and promoting Sunderland Pride also sends a message out of the council's commitment to sexual orientation equality in the workplace.



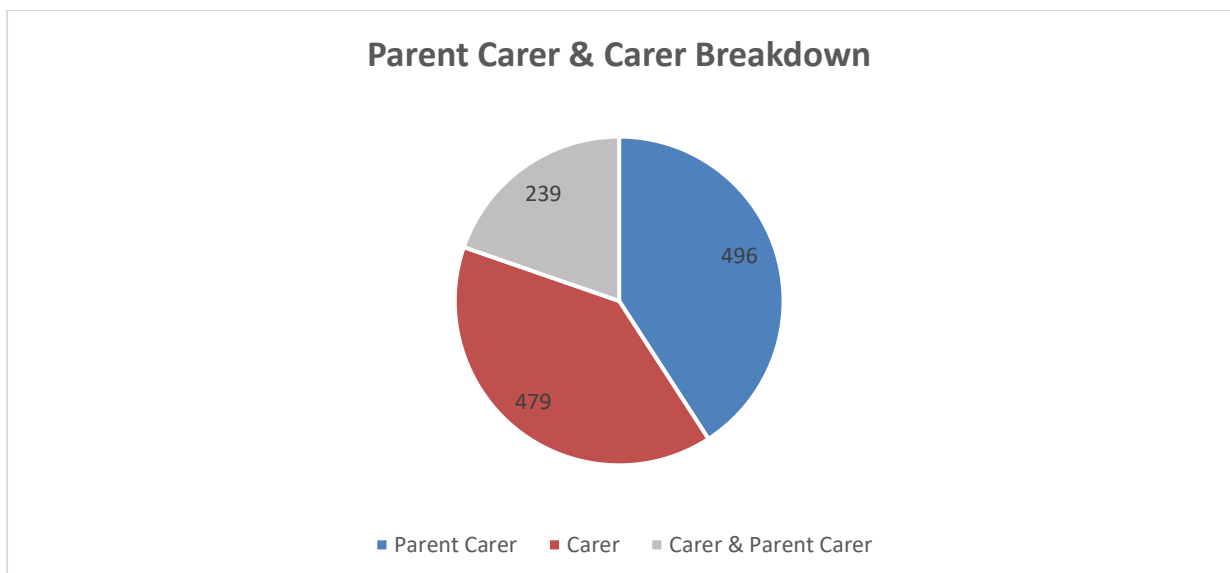
Marriage & Civil Partnership

78% of employees have disclosed their marital status.

Carers Information

We asked employees to advise whether they are a carer to understand our workforce profile and the demands on our employees in respect of caring responsibilities. Employees may record that they fit more than one category of caring.

The definition used is: “A carer is someone who, without payment, provides help and support to a friend, neighbour, relative or partner (opposite or same sex) who could not manage without this help because of frailty, illness or disability.”



Employee Journey

Recruitment and Progression

The Council is committed to recruiting a high-quality workforce with appropriate expertise, skills, and experience. Equality of opportunity is at the core of our recruitment and selection procedures, which provides ways to assess and appoint the most capable and effective employees while ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly. It is our policy to recruit the most appropriate person for each approved vacancy.

Wherever possible the Council remains committed to maximising the opportunities for redeployment and career development to utilise the skills and expertise of existing employees, including apprentices.

The Council is committed to ensuring that all recruitment is free from unfair and unlawful discrimination and encourages disabled people to apply for advertised vacancies.

Reasonable adjustments for disabled people are made at all stages of the recruitment process, if required. We guarantee to interview and consider all disabled applicants who meet the criteria of a job vacancy.

The application form contains an equal opportunity monitoring form. This information is used for monitoring purposes and compiling performance information but is removed before shortlisting.

E-learning and face to face training is provided for recruiting managers and panel members, with a focus on best practice, to support equality and diversity within the workforce.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Guidance

To support equality throughout the employment cycle, a separate Workplace Equality Policy outlines our approach to:

- Recruitment and selection
- Managing employees
- Pay and benefits
- Workforce monitoring
- Employee policies and procedures
- Reasonable adjustments
- Employee development
- Dismissal/redundancy
- Employee engagement

The council take any equality concerns seriously and address these through the appropriate channels. We would usually become aware of these through direct approaches from employees or trade union representatives, through our joint consultation arrangements and groups, or through practical implementation of our relevant policies.

In addition, the council works in collaboration with the Sunderland Partnership and with the eleven other local authorities in the Northeast to embed up to date best practices and share ideas for improvement.

Supporting Employee Equality Network (SEEN)

Our Supporting Employee Equality Network (SEEN) is an employee network and has been running since 2014. The network is open to all employees and provides a safe space to share views and ideas. It works with senior leadership to raise awareness of equality issues, influences council policy and allows staff to have a voice to continuously improve inclusion in the workplace.

Listening to Our Employees

Listening to our workforce is extremely important to us and there are opportunities throughout the year to check-in both formally and informally with our employees.

Opportunities to check-in include:

- Staff briefings (live Teams events with Chief Executive and Chief Officer Group)
- Toolbox talks
- Pulse surveys (travel, financial wellbeing)
- Managers briefings
- Monthly 1-1's
- Annual appraisal
- Staff awards
- Wellbeing mentors

This year will see the introduction of a People Forum which will provide a platform for employees to have their voices heard, to influence and shape the services we deliver to our customers and drive positive change.

Biennial staff survey

We actively seek out the views and opinions of our workforce via our biennial staff survey, and in 2023 employees were asked the following:

- My workplace is inclusive and celebrates diversity.
- The council truly values the diversity of its employees.
- I feel supported by colleagues to be the best I can be.
- I can talk honestly and openly about the things that are important to me.
- Team members are welcoming and accepting.
- The team I work in respect one another.
- Team members are respectful of each other's backgrounds.
- My direct line manager/supervisor is approachable and allows me to talk honestly and openly.

- My direct line manager/supervisor cares about the things that concern me.
- The senior leadership team recognise and demonstrate the value of diversity.

Employee health and wellbeing

The council continues to support the positive health and wellbeing of its workforce, one of the most important ways of doing that is by asking our workforce how they feel.

The following questions were included in our biennial staff survey (2023):

- I am aware of the councils wellbeing offer to employees.
- I know how and where to access the support for my wellbeing that is provided by the council.
- My health, wellbeing and safety is taken seriously.
- My direct line manager/supervisor checks in regularly to ensure I am ok.
- My direct line manager/supervisor takes a genuine interest in my health and wellbeing.

Health and wellbeing survey

The last employee health and wellbeing survey was conducted in 2022, 592 employees responded equating to a 22% response rate, the survey will be repeated in 2024. Feedback was collected across a number of themes in line with Public Health England's Health Needs Assessment and included:

- General health and wellbeing
- Mental health
- Physical exercise
- Financial concerns
- Alcohol
- Smoking
- Healthy eating
- Sleep health.

Better Health at Work

Sunderland City Council is a Better Health at Work Award accredited employer at the maintaining excellence level (the highest level of the Award). This regional award recognises employers who assist their employees in improving their health and wellbeing.

We are also an advocate for the award across the city and currently support fifty-two workplaces on their own journey to accreditation.

Mental Health

The council is committed to challenging mental health stigma and embedding wellbeing conversation in the everyday.

A comprehensive training offer is available to all council employees and includes:

- Mental health awareness.
- Mental health awareness for managers.
- Wellbeing and resilience

Occupational Health

The councils Occupational Health Service provides a comprehensive range of proactive services to support and maintain the health, safety and wellbeing of employees.

Some of the services offered include:

- Pre-employment health assessments – health screening to assess a prospective employee's fitness to undertake a role. Assessment can also include a discussion around any additional support or adjustments an individual may require to carry out a specific role.
- Health Screening - health assessments performed to ensure an employee/prospective employee is able to perform the duties of the role.
- Health Surveillance – performed at initial employment and then at stipulated intervals to observe for early signs of work-related ill health.
- Immunisations – Hepatitis B, Hepatitis A, and seasonal Influenza (Flu) vaccines to those deemed at increased risk as a result of the role they perform.
- Workstation assessments – this is in addition to the annual Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Assessments workers must perform as determined by policy. Workstation Assessments are conducted by a Physiotherapist who will assess workstation equipment, furniture, and the environmental working conditions and make recommendations.

Health & Wellbeing Programme

The council continues to support employee Health and Wellbeing via the Employee Wellness Programme. The programme provides a number of support services to promote and enable healthy living within the council and within the city.

Supporting Documentation

This report forms part of a wider suite of documentation which support equality and diversity in the workplace, including:

[Pay Policy Statement](#) – this sets out the methods by which salaries of all employees are determined and helps to ensure a fair approach by ensuring transparency of senior pay and the relationship with pay of other employees. Equal pay principles are incorporated into our practice and decision making. During 2016 the council

implemented a wide-ranging pay review via the Workforce Transformation Project, which reviewed and set the relative grade and pay level for every position in the council. That exercise was the subject of a very detailed equality impact assessment, which demonstrated how the review had reduced pay gaps.

[Gender Pay Gap Report](#) - to comply with The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017.

Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG)

The Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) is a tool designed to help local authorities meet their obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

The framework covers various aspects of equality including age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and other relevant issues affecting staff and communities.

The framework ensures council activities deliver accessible, inclusive, and responsive services to customers and residents, including those from underrepresented groups. It encourages councils to employ a workforce that is representative of the community it serves, promotes equality of opportunity for all staff and assist councils in meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Impact Assessment Reports

As a council, we undertake a comprehensive assessment of equality impacts relating to any changes in policy, services, or procedures to ensure the proposed changes do not discriminate against any protected group.

To ensure that our resources are invested equitably, we carry out Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs). An IIA considers relevant evidence to determine if proposals may be unfair or have unequal effects on different groups within the community or workforce.

Policies and Initiatives

We have a number of policies and initiatives in place to promote and embed equality, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace, they include:

- New starter induction
- New manager induction
- Equality, diversity, and inclusion training (via face to face workshop or eLearning)
- Equality, diversity, and inclusion policy
- Dignity at Work policy
- Supporting Employee Equality Network (SEEN)
- A dedicated inclusion and belonging space on our staff intranet
- A range of initiatives to support employees experiencing mental ill health including toolkits, face to face training and implementation of Stress Risk Assessments (SRA)

- Embedded reasonable adjustment guidance to ensure managers can better meet the needs of employees with disabilities and long-term health conditions
- Implementation of Mental Wellbeing Action Plans (MWAP)
- Mental health awareness for managers
- Wellbeing and resilience

Conclusion

The collection, monitoring and reporting of workforce equality information is in line with the council's duty to monitor the Council's workforce and publish the results. We will continue to develop an equality profile of staff, and publish this on an annual basis, in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty. We will also use the findings from this report to inform future action planning to help us meet our equality objectives as part of our commitment to an inclusive and diverse workforce.