



Meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty 2021-2022

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1. Introduction

Equality and inclusion are at the heart of Durham County Council's vision and core values. We recognise that inequality continues to affect different people and communities in different ways. We are committed to creating and sustaining a modern and supportive working environment for our employees and tackling the inequalities, prejudice and discrimination affecting the diverse communities which we serve.

This publication outlines Durham County Council's approach to delivering equality and inclusion in our services and as a large public sector employer. It outlines the legal framework for equality and provides an overview of the progress we are making against our equality objectives, how we ensure equality and inclusion in service provision and an analysis of our workforce equality data.

2. Legal framework

The Equality Act 2010 brought together a number of existing laws making it a more streamlined piece of legislation. It sets out the personal characteristics that are protected by the law and behaviour that is unlawful. The nine protected characteristics under the Act are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

As a local authority we are subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as set out in the Act to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality 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.

We are also covered by the specific duties contained in the Act which mean that we must:

- Publish information to demonstrate how we are complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty, and
- Prepare and publish equality objectives (at least every four years).

This document is published in support of our specific duties and provides equality information in relation to the way we provide services, employ people and make decisions. Collecting, using and publishing our equality information helps us to identify and understand key equality issues for our organisation and demonstrate to the public how we are performing and what we are achieving in terms of equality and inclusion. Setting equality objectives which are specific and measurable helps us to better perform the public sector equality duty and focus attention on priority equality issues identified during public consultation that affect our communities and/or staff.

3. County Durham population data at a glance

Here are some key facts on County Durham taken from Durham Insight which is a website providing information, data and research about the county.¹ Data is based on 2020 sub-national ONS population estimates and projections and/or 2011 Census. First results from 2021 Census will be released in sages from May 2022.

- 533,000 people live in the county – the highest population of any council area in the North East region
- 1 in 5 are aged 0-17 years, that's over 100,000
- 1 in 5 are aged 65 years and over, a 36.5% increase since 2001
- 3 in 5 are aged between 18 and 64, a 4% increase since 2001
- Between now and 2043 the number of people aged over 65 is likely to increase by 34.3% and people over 85 increase by 86.4%
- 2% of the population are minority ethnic (Census 2011)
- Just over 23% of the County's population day-to-day activities are restricted which provides an indication of levels of disability. Restriction in day-to-day activity is around 18% for the working age population which is high compared to other parts of England (Census 2011)
- Although accurate numbers are not reflected in census data there is a large Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community resident in the county
- There are over 240,000 households in the county with 2 in 5 in rural areas
- The county covers an area of 862 square miles

¹ <https://www.durhaminsight.info/keys-facts/>

- There are 11 major centres with a population of over 6,000 people: Barnard Castle, Bishop Auckland, Chester-le-Street, Consett, Crook, Durham City, Newton Aycliffe, Peterlee, Seaham, Spennymoor and Stanley
- 71.3% of working age (16-64 years) population are in employment
- 1 in 3 people are employed in public administration, health and education
- There are a high proportion of children and young people with special educational needs, currently over 13,000 school aged children and young and people across the county.

4. Our Equality Objectives 2020-2024

Our equality objectives for 2020-2024 were identified as part of extensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and general public for a shared vision for the county. One key area of feedback highlighted the issues and barriers our disabled residents faced in securing employment and this has provided a key area of focus for our current equality objectives. Aligning with this consultation feedback, means that our objectives support the 2035 vision that 'County Durham is a place where there are more and better jobs, people live long and independent lives and our communities are well connected and supportive of each other'.

Our equality objectives are included as part of our Equality Policy 2020² and are embedded in the current council plan and planning framework which also includes a fourth ambition to be an excellent council.

Our equality objectives for 2020-2024 are:

- **We will improve employment opportunities for disabled people**
 - As a Disability Confident Leader, we will improve recruitment and retention rates of disabled people within the council and work with businesses locally to improve disability employment rates countywide and through our approach to procurement.
- **We will build inclusive communities**
 - To connect our communities and improve levels of tolerance and integration for our diverse communities we will support better partnership working on equality. This work will support a series of events that foster good relations between groups.
- **We will build an inclusive and welcoming employee culture**
 - Through our transformation programme we will become a more inclusive organisation by improving our staff engagement through the development of staff networks and improving how we collect, monitor, analyse and utilise staff diversity data.

² <https://www.durham.gov.uk/media/1001/Equality-Policy-2020/pdf/EqualityPolicy2020.pdf?m=637484033808470000>

5. Progress against our equality objectives

This section provides an overview of the progress we have made against our new equality objectives during 2021/22 including our planned areas of focus and action going forward. More detailed data analysis on specific topics is included in sections six (service delivery), and seven (workforce equality data) of this report.

We will improve employment opportunities for disabled people

We achieved Disability Confident³ Leader status in December 2019. As a leader organisation we focus not only internally in improving the recruitment and retention of council employees with disabilities, but also externally in how we work with local businesses and through our approach to procurement.

Our key achievements 2021-22 include:

- Our employability services⁴ engage with local employers to improve the level of inclusion and support provided to the working age population across the county and encourage more local employers to become Disability Confident signposting to DWP who provide the necessary support for organisations.
- Launch of the new Durham Enable service in which a team of job coaches provide intensive support for disabled people across the County, referred to the service, to secure employment. (Further data on this and other employability programmes⁵ who work closely with local employers, is provided in the service delivery section below)
- Utilisation of in-house employability services and programmes such as Durham Works⁶ and Durham Enable to help the council actively attract and recruit people with disabilities into council job vacancies.
- Improved information on the Jobs North East webpage, where all of our job vacancies are advertised, to encourage applicants with disabilities to apply.
- Growth of our disability and allies' staff network which provides additional support for disabled staff and acts as a reference group for policy development and service improvement.
- Programme of disability awareness training sessions open to all staff, in particular to raise awareness of the types of support required by staff with particular conditions to ensure they are included in the workplace and can carry out their roles to the full. These include dyslexia awareness, autism awareness, mental health, making reasonable adjustments and how employees apply for Access to Work funding.
- The council's new procurement strategy includes an action to utilise award criteria in support of disability confident employers which encourages employers with a good track record in disability employment to bid for contracts.

³ <https://disabilityconfident.campaign.gov.uk/>

⁴ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/employability>

⁵ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/employability>

⁶ <https://durhamworks.info/>

- Improvements made to the way we record staff disability data will allow us to carry out better data analysis going forward.

Going forward we will work with partner organisations across the region who advertise vacancies on Jobs North east to develop a more joined up approach to recruitment and selection to ensure we recruit diverse workforces. We will better analyse our recruitment and selection data to develop further proactive approaches to attracting and welcoming a diverse workforce.

We will build inclusive communities

Our programme of events underpins positive community relations, whether equality focussed or wider events that optimise opportunities to advance equality. The pandemic has impacted on the way we deliver events, also several events unfortunately have had to be cancelled for 2021.

Events for 2021-22 included:

- **International Women's Day**, 8 March, was marked with a social media campaign to promote the council as a great employer for women, in particular, in roles such as engineering and senior management. This was aimed to break gender stereotypes and inspire more women to apply for council vacancies, in particular, 'non-traditional' roles.
- **Durham Pride UK⁷** took place on 29 August 2021. The council recognises the importance of Pride as an inclusive and celebratory event for our lgbt+ community and provides ongoing support terms of event planning, promotion and financial contribution, also support through political leadership. The council's lgbt+ employee network supports Pride and links will be furthered strengthened going forward. The 2021 event was extremely successful in the circumstances given that it was not possible to hold a parade through the city. It was fully ticketed for the first time to allow it to be covid safe with 2500 tickets sold. This proved very successful and will be taken forward, keeping ticket prices low and offering concessions to remain inclusive, as there was no resistance from attendees and it made the event management much smoother with very positive feedback being received that it was clear those who attended wanted to be there and were there for the right reasons. The feedback from all services involved has been extremely positive and next years' Pride is planned to be a much larger event with a parade while incorporating the new safety and hygiene measures adopted in 2021.
- **Remembering Srebrenica**, 11 July, was marked in recognition of the Bosnian genocide 1995, the worst atrocity to take place on European soil since World War II. The Srebrenica Remembrance flag was flown at County Hall and a press release was issued from the Cabinet member for social inclusion. Events such as this also raise awareness of importance of community cohesion and tolerance.
- **International Men's Day**, 19 November, involved the promotion of a range of support available to men. This was underpinned by awareness raising of

⁷ <http://durhamprideuk.org/index.php/sample-page/>

issues such as male health conditions including cancer, mental health and problems with substance abuse, also awareness of the disproportionate rates of suicide for men and the support available.

- **Lumiere**⁸ took place 18-21 November. This free event, running since 2009, extended beyond Durham city for 2021, with installations across the County to make it more inclusive and provide residents and visitors the opportunity to visit different locations. This is likely to have benefitted disabled people, families and different age groups. Lumiere worked with local community groups and further education colleges to ensure art installations portrayed a more local and inclusive approach. This included local disability groups and local people from a broad age range and background. Accessibility information was provided as part of the event programme and reasonable adjustments and support where provided, where possible, to ensure the inclusion of people with disabilities. The countywide Disability Partnership were given access to a pre-event tour on the evening prior to launch to allow a brief tour of selected installations and also to open dialogue on how we can make the event as inclusive as possible going forward.
- **Holocaust Memorial Day** (HMD) was commemorated on 27th January 2022 with the theme 'One Day'⁹. Our guest speaker for the community virtual event was Uri Winterstein BEM, who talked about his experience as a child during the Holocaust with questions and poetry from local schools. A further live event was hosted by Durham County Record Office; 'Never Again, Never': The 113th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment and the liberation of Belsen, April - May 1945. A recording of the community event remains available on the council website alongside other resources and past recordings to remember Holocaust Memorial Day¹⁰. Our approach provided the opportunity for wider awareness raising of issues such as hate crime affecting protected groups.

Going forward we will ensure that all our festivals and events fully optimise opportunities to advance equality and be as inclusive and accessible as possible. Equality and inclusion are embedded in our work to progress, Durham2025 UK city of culture bid, as a wonderful opportunity to drive equality and cohesion for all groups and communities.

We will build an inclusive and welcoming employee culture

During 2021-22 a number of key initiatives have been implemented to help us build an inclusive and welcoming employee culture.

Key achievements 2021-22 include:

- Several employee networks are now successfully embedded. Our networks include; disability and allies, lgbt+ and allies, Black and minority ethnic, menopause and carer networks. These networks continue to influence transformational change and drive an inclusive workplace culture. This

⁸ <https://www.lumiere-festival.com/>

⁹ <https://www.hmd.org.uk/>

¹⁰ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/hmd>

includes support for new employees, setting the direction for staff training and providing feedback on policy and initiatives. Networks provide a valuable engagement mechanism to ensure the council continually drives inclusion which is directly informed by staff. Further information on our networks is provided in the workforce equality data section of this publication.

- The HR system MyView has been updated to allow employees to more easily self-record their personal equality characteristics. A full communication exercise supported this upgrade to explain the importance of staff data and how it is used. Sound data analysis allows us to have an evidence based approach to monitoring the diversity of our workforce, address policy gaps and seize opportunities to improve inclusion.
- The impact of Covid has accelerated new ways of working and normalised 'hybrid working' for many of our employees. This step change will help us to ensure that all staff have opportunities for progression and are able to achieve work life balance.
- We have carried out gender pay gap (GPG) reporting for the past five years and details are published on the council's GPG web page¹¹. For 2021 our calculations show that women's mean hourly rate is 1.85% lower than men and women's median hourly rate is 3.87% lower than men. This represents a slight narrowing of the gap as compared to the previous years' data. Further information on the gender pay gap is contained in the workforce equality data section of this publication.

We will better analyse our staff equality data once we have improved levels of employees providing this as part of the HR system upgrade. Our ongoing work with staff networks, awareness raising events, feeding the 'voice of staff' into policy development and improved data collection and analysis will help us to drive an inclusive and welcoming employee culture going forward.

6. How we have met the public sector equality duty in service delivery

The following equality information provides a snapshot of how we have met the public sector equality duty in service delivery 2021/22 during the challenging circumstances presented by the global Covid 19 pandemic. The council's quarterly performance management reports provide more in-depth data analysis and can be found on the council's Cabinet Reports web page¹².

6.1 Covid Response

The pandemic has exposed and magnified entrenched inequality within our communities, in particular the disproportionate health and economic impact in terms of age, disability, race and sex. Durham County Council has a public health role and continues to be at the forefront of responding to the pandemic. Restrictions to

¹¹ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/genderpaygap>

¹² <https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=154&Year=0>

contain the spread of Covid19 have widely affected council services with non-essential services suspended, buildings closed and services moving online or delivered remotely.

During 2021 the council continued to provide support for our most vulnerable especially those that were shielding or at greater risk of serious illness because of Covid 19 which included higher proportions of older people and people with disabilities. Also, those experiencing greater financial impact as the pandemic disproportionately impacted low-income households, in particular, families with children, women and disabled people. Over the course of the pandemic 10,000 residents have been supported. Emergency food parcels or a personal shopping service has been provided to over 3,000 vulnerable residents. The County Durham Together Community Hub set up as part of our emergency response has become a mainstay, and continues to proactively support residents and businesses, including 70,000 people identified as vulnerable.

The most recent report detailing our Poverty Action Plan was considered by Cabinet on 15 December 2021¹³. Key actions in combating the effects of the pandemic on our most vulnerable communities are centred around four workstreams:

- Community Resilience
- Employment and personal sense of worth
- Welfare and money matters
- Children and families

Actions include setting up 10 food hubs through 'That bread and butter thing'. Over 250 families engage with five of the operational hubs which provides access to advice and low cost food. Work is underway with community groups to open a further five hubs. During 2021 we made 1,500 discretionary housing payments, committing over £1m to help residents with rental costs. £143,000 was allocated for countywide school holiday activities with healthy food, supporting approximately 3,000 children.

We know that more residents are creating online accounts to access council services because of the massive shift towards digital access promoted by the pandemic. However we continue to provide alternate routes to ensure inclusion for all, especially those digitally excluded, which are more likely to come from older age groups, and provide reasonable adjustments where requested.

Our Covid 19 surveillance dash boards¹⁴ developed at the start of the pandemic in 2020, continue to be available and ensure that key decision makers have access to the most up to date data in order to make informed decisions in dynamically changing circumstances. Information is disaggregated by age bands where possible and continues to be made available to decision makers and the general public via the Durham Insight website.

¹³ https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s149088/Poverty%20Issues_.pdf

¹⁴ <https://www.durhaminsight.info/covid-19/>

6.2 Equality impact assessments

The council uses an evidence-based process of equality impact assessment (EIA) to ensure we analyse impact, across all protected characteristics, of policies and decisions, including our Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings proposals. Assessments allow us to remove or minimise any negative impact, formulate mitigating actions and capture evidence of where we are advancing equality. They are a key part of our decision-making processes and are published with reports as relevant, including Cabinet reports.

Recent equality impact assessment examples for 2021-22 include:

- **Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy:** This impact assessment examined our strategy in meeting the 'Safe Accommodation Duty' introduced under The Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Our approach will have a positive impact on victims of domestic abuse including children and young people. The strategy recognises that some groups are more likely to be victims of abuse and this includes those with protected characteristics (such as women) and actively targets interventions to ensure that inequalities are addressed. It recognises the distinct issues that some minority ethnic groups experiencing domestic abuse may face. Voice of the victim is central and we will actively encourage engagement and co-production opportunities, specifically with vulnerable groups. Rurality considerations will ensure equitable access to support and services. Although it is recognised that more equality data is needed, the available data used in the assessment included:
 - 1.6 million women in England and Wales reported experiencing **domestic abuse** in 2019, 2 women are killed each week by a partner/former partner
 - Pregnant women face an increased risk of domestic abuse, with domestic abuse estimated to occur in 5 – 21% of pre-birth cases and in 13 – 21% of post birth cases
 - County Durham data for those presenting at refuges:
 - Disability: around 18% have a disability, although we have no disability data for 58% of those presenting at refuges
 - Sexual orientation: around 96% heterosexual, although we have no sexual orientation data for 40% of those presenting at refuges
 - Ethnicity: around 90% are of white heritage, although we have no ethnicity data for 40% of those presenting at refuges
- **Library Needs Assessment:** The 'Libraries for you'¹⁵ consultation is live until 1 April 2022 and is seeking public views on customer need and how library services should be delivered in the future. To ensure impartiality, the council have engaged Counter Culture to carry out the consultation. The impact assessment records the consultation approach to ensure it is as accessible and inclusive as possible by offering a variety of methods to provide feedback,

¹⁵ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/25827/Durham-Libraries-For-You-get-involved->

by survey, telephone and attending virtual events (face to face events may take place in the Spring, where Covid safety is ensured). Focus groups are planned with representative equality groups including the Youth Council, Disability groups, Age UK and Durham Carers. Feedback will be disaggregated by protected characteristic and used to update the equality impact assessment. This allows for comparative analysis and will help us to ensure subsequent proposals are inclusive and address the needs of our diverse communities. Key data, including current user and population data, as contained in the impact assessment helps us understand and target library users and also, importantly, identify gaps and reach out to non-users. This helps us to understand what we could do to encourage more people, particularly under-represented groups, to use library services and promote the activities and resources available via the library service; digital resources, community library bus and book delivery service for customers who cannot leave their homes. Our baseline current library user data includes:

- 53,160 active borrowers (including prisons)
- 13,469 under 18s and 39,691 adults (over 18 years)
- Female 57.5%, Male 42.5%
- Books on Wheels, Care Home, Concessionary registered users: 2,346
- Digital book usage in 2020-21 saw a large increase with 317,751 checkouts compared to 135,907 in 2019-20

6.3 Groups we engage and work in partnership with

Before making any significant changes to any of our services we carry out public consultation to help us to understand the impact on different groups of people. We want to provide people the opportunity to comment on how we can improve our services and influence the decisions we make. This is done through ongoing engagement and consultation via various channels and methods to ensure participation is inclusive. Channels include the Voluntary and Community sector (VCS) and partnership working via the County Durham Partnership. Specific council led engagement mechanisms include:

- **Area Action Partnerships:** We have 14 Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) which cover the whole county and allow residents to set local priorities which are acted on through local projects. The AAPs are a useful mechanism to use as a key stakeholder when the council is carrying out wider consultation as they are broadly representative of the population and can also provide specific engagement with communities of interest including ethnic minorities.
- **Youth Council:** Our Youth Council is a group of young people aged from 11 to 18 years who live in County Durham. It allows young people to be involved in making and influencing important decisions about issues and services that affect them in order to make positive changes. It provides a collective voice that is listened to and acted upon by crucial decision makers. It is open to all young residents and provides ways for young people who don't want to be an active member of the Youth Council to still be involved in decision making.

- **Disability Partnership:** We facilitate a county wide disability partnership which is made up of individuals with a disability or who are disability allies and of representatives from local and national disability organisations. Representatives include: Blind Life in Durham, Durham City Access for All, Guide Dogs UK and National Association of Laryngectomy Clubs. The partnership provides the opportunity for disabled people to raise any concerns on council services and partake in decision making such as providing feedback on the council's budget consultation, proposed infrastructure developments and satisfaction with service provision.
- **People's Parliament:** Durham County Council's People's Parliament, comprises of people with a learning disability and those who have an interest in the issues that affect people with a learning disability, especially carers. They provide a useful engagement and consultation forum.
- **Service specific engagement:** Services have set up various stakeholder groups to allow for continuing and focussed engagement such as a group for parents and carers of children and young people with autism. The council's comments and complaints process also allows us to address issues raised to ensure we continue to provide services that are inclusive.

6.4 Inclusive consultation and use of feedback

Consultation feedback helps us with our overall equality analysis allowing us to ensure our services are inclusive and meet the needs of our communities. We believe that involving people in decision making is important and we aim to make it easy for everyone to take part in our consultations.

Consultations are designed to be as inclusive as possible and capture views from a wide range of stakeholders including service users, partners and elected members. We use different ways to consult with people including online surveys, public meetings, focus groups and direct contact with organisations representing different interests. When we plan a consultation we try to make sure that there is more than one way to take part, for example, when we do online surveys we provide paper copies for people who cannot use, or don't have access to, a computer. Covid restrictions have presented challenges and to overcome these we have ensured that methods such as capturing feedback via telephone and posting printed information are available (in conjunction with methods such as Teams focus groups and online surveys) to ensure as many individuals as possible can participate.

An equality impact assessment is undertaken prior to consultation where relevant and is developed into a full assessment once the consultation results have been analysed. Consultations are structured in a way that results can be disaggregated via protected characteristic in order to analyse participation and help us to understand responses in relation to the protected groups. Going forward the equality analysis helps us to shape new service delivery models and/or policy development.

During 2021/2¹⁶ we carried out public consultation which included infrastructure development, town master plans, school mergers, household impact of Covid, and proposed policy reviews and/or services changes. The following consultation Leisure Transformation example provides a snapshot of how we ensured an inclusive consultation and the use of equality related feedback:

- **Leisure transformation:** Consultation has taken place in phases to gather feedback on proposals for the potential new build of three leisure centres and refurbishment of remaining leisure centres. The most recent consultation for site selection of new builds took place in September 2021. Specific groups were engaged (as listed above) to ensure we received feedback from different protected characteristics. Initial consultation on site selection revealed that one potential site was used as a temporary stop over area for Gypsies, Roma and Traveller (GRT), although this site was rejected for a number of reasons this was positive in terms of not negatively impacting GRT provision. A quarter of leisure centre users are aged under 18 years so it was important we heard the voice of younger people via the youth council as well as AAPs and younger respondents of the general survey. It was noted that ensuring younger people had easy access to leisure, especially as they rely more on public transport, walking or lifts from family and friends, was important.

6.5 Employability Services

We have several employability programmes which support people in finding and retaining employment. These programmes not only directly link to the council's vision of 'more and better jobs' but this approach also supports our equality objective to 'improve employment opportunities for disabled people', as one of the main barriers to employment is long term health conditions and poor mental health. Key data includes:

- **Employability Durham:** Since July 2018 the programme has received 4184 referrals from partners of clients interested in accessing support to help them overcome barriers and move back into Employment, Education or Training. Around a quarter declare a health condition, the most common being a mental health condition followed by Musculoskeletal Problems.
- **Refugee mentoring:** Across nine arrival phases we now have 164 participants eligible to access employability support from two full time mentoring officers. In addition, several year 10/12 young people have benefitted from additional information, advice and guidance on their options for further study which has been provided in the family settings when visiting with key workers and (where needed) interpreters. Our work with the newest arrivals has already led to engagement with 11 individuals which is very encouraging.

¹⁶ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/consultation>

- **Durham Enable** launched in February 2021, which has been challenging due to the pandemic. The service is ESF funded and receives referrals from partners such as adult social care, job centre plus and local colleges for people with a disability who would benefit with support from a dedicated job coach is seeking, securing and retaining employment. Data is minimal at this time although the majority of referrals are male (approximately 65%) and younger age groups. The service aims to conduct more targeted promotion, especially with older age groups.

7. Workforce Equality Data

7.1 Workforce equality profile data

Durham County Council is a large employer of around 8,500 employees (excluding school based staff). We are the largest council in the north east region and one of the largest unitary authorities in the country. This section covers our employee data by headcount as at 31 December 2021. Also, a snapshot of current HR policy data analysis, including gender pay gap data and our progress with staff networks.

Overall number of employees and breakdown by sex

Table 1: Profile female and male

Gender	Headcount	Percent
Female	5302	62.5%
Male	3184	37.5%
Total	8486	100%

Our workforce is consistently around two thirds female. Although the overall number of employees has plateaued at around 8,500 since 2017, there has been a steady decline in recent years from around 10,500 staff in 2011. This staff reduction reflects savings to meet financial planning requirements and potentially new and more flexible ways of working alongside improved technological service delivery solutions.

Age profile of employees

Table 2: Profile by age

Age range	Headcount	Percent
16-24	589	6.9%
25-44	3150	37.1%
45-64	4486	52.9%

65+	261	3.1%
Totals	8447	100%

Just over half (52.9%) of all staff are aged 45-64 years. Nearly seven per cent of staff are aged 16-24 years up from only 2.2 per cent in 2017 which is encouraging. This is predominately as a result of our successful apprenticeship programme although it needs to be noted that there is no age restriction in applying for an apprenticeship. The proportion of staff over the age of 65 years has risen from around 2% throughout 2011-2016, to just over 3 per cent in recent years which appears to represent an upward trend of more employees working to an older age.

Ethnicity profile of employees

Although we don't have complete data sets for ethnicity, 74 % of staff (6,253) have provided this information, of which 205 staff (3.3%) are minority ethnic, which represents around 2.3% of the total workforce. This has grown steadily over previous years and is now broadly equivalent to ethnic minority population data for the county. We have recently improved HR data monitoring systems and are encouraging staff to self update their personal data which will allow us to provide improved data analysis on ethnicity data going forward.

Disability profile of employees

3,174 employees have disclosed their disability status which equates to around 38% of the total workforce. Of those staff who have provided disability data, 250 state they have a disability which represents an employee disability rate of around 8%. Although this provides an indication of our employment rate for people with disabilities, due to under disclosure of this information, it may not be truly reflective of the wider workforce.

We are encouraging staff to provide their equality data have improved our data collection systems which will improve analysis going forward. Disability data is especially important as we know that as a county our population has relatively high levels of disability and as a large employer we want to improve the employment rate of disabled people in our own organisation as a key area of focus for our equality objectives.

Sexual orientation employee data

Over 28 per cent of staff (2392 individuals) have recorded their sexual orientation which is a small increase on the previous year. Data is broken down in the following table.

Table 3: Sexual orientation data breakdown

Sexual orientation	Headcount	Percent
Lesbian, gay or bisexual	74	3%

Heterosexual	2317	97%
Totals	2392	100%

We aim to encourage more staff to provide their equality data including data on sexual orientation going forward.

Religion and belief

Nearly 28 per cent of staff (2347 individuals) have recorded their religion or belief or if they have no religion or belief which is a small increase on the previous year. This is broken down in the following table.

Table 4: Religion or belief data breakdown

Religion or belief	Headcount	Percent
Agnostic	24	1%
Atheist	41	1.5%
Christian	1331	57%
Humanist	11	0.5%
Other religions or belief	54	3%
No religion or belief	886	37%
Totals	2347	100%

We aim to encourage more staff to provide their equality data including data on religion or belief going forward.

7.2 Impact of Covid on employees

Covid has presented many challenges for local authorities alongside rapid and dynamic changes to systems, processes and policies to ensure the council met an emergency response, and continues to delivery services to all residents. It has undoubtedly been an extremely pressurised and stressful period for all employees. However, the accelerated pace of change in new ways of working and improved understanding of working and care responsibilities and reasonable adjustments, has been helpful. Learning from which will be beneficial in how we adapt and recover post pandemic and will support a positive culture shift going forward.

Home working has highlighted the potential benefits in retaining employment and achieving a better work life balance, although it is recognised that a mixture of home/office working will be best for most people and the council has formulated

hybrid working policies in response to this. This is likely to be more beneficial in terms of disability, women and some age groups. Overall sickness levels fell during 2021 to an average of 9 days, down from 10.7 days in 2020. This could indicate the benefits of new ways of working for some staff, especially if managing a health condition, disability and/or care responsibilities.

The safety of our employees is paramount, especially those staff who cannot work from home such as refuse collection and social workers. A review of our occupational risk assessment process highlights the disproportionate impact of Covid for some working age groups, in particular those with certain health conditions and/or disabilities, particular ethnic minorities and men. This ensures that all front-line employee's personal circumstances and risk factors are appropriately considered and addressed. Frequent updates of Covid HR guidance, supported by mandatory manager training sessions, has ensured the needs of protected groups are carefully considered, in particular, reasonable adjustments for employees with a disability, as part of plans to implement hybrid working.

A dedicated intranet page holds all key policy and frequently asked questions on Covid related workplace issues in one area to allow easy access for staff and managers. An ongoing communication programme via the internal staff publication 'Buzz', use of social media and blogs from senior managers/CEO, ensures that all staff are kept informed of changing circumstances, current guidance on hybrid working and how to access personal support. Virtual events delivered by the head of HR and occupational health and safety manager are held for all council managers to underpin the requirement to look after staff needs and where managers could seek further guidance and support.

In response to some of the detrimental impact of Covid on employees, support mechanisms such as access to health and wellbeing support were ramped up during 2020 and have been enhanced during 2021. Public health continue to utilise a number of national campaigns to support the mental and physical wellbeing of staff. Mental health and resilience courses are available to all staff.

7.3 Employee Networks

We have a range of employee networks with over 200 members in total, including: lgbt+ and allies, disability and allies, Black and minority ethnic, carers and menopause networks. The networks are ideally placed to support staff and the council with a programme of activities and events that promote inclusion and foster good relations. Access to networks are helping to shape our post-pandemic recovery and implementation of hybrid working.

To date networks have:

- Provided valuable feedback on HR policy, in particular policies in response to Covid and hybrid working.
- Reviewed the council's equality training offer including e-learning modules which has been refreshed and re-launched.

- Produced information on the use of pronouns, for those willing to support this on their email signatures and demonstrate allyship.
- Supported a highly successful programme of drop in and awareness sessions to mark International Day for People with Disabilities. This included speakers on autism, reasonable adjustments, dyslexia and access to work funding.
- Organised a highly successful lgbt awareness raising event in conjunction with Stonewall for any member of staff who wanted to attend

7.4 Gender pay gap (GPG) data

We have produced mandatory gender pay gap (GPG) reporting for five years. Data is taken at the snapshot date of 31 March each year. Our annual reports can be found on the council's GPG website page¹⁷. Pay gaps continue to be detrimental for women, as summarised in the table below, however the gap is narrowing.

Table 5: Gender pay gap mean and median data 2017-2021

Year	Mean % gap lower for women	Median % gap lower for women
2021	1.9	3.9
2020	2.6	4.9
2019	3.6	4.3
2018	1.9	4.8
2017	3.4	4.3

Although detrimental for women, the gender pay gap for Durham County Council is much lower than pay gaps in some other sectors and is one of the lowest when compared with regional data for other local authorities. This year there is narrowing of the pay gap as compared to previous years which is positive. The council has a range of policies and working practices to promote and sustain work life balance including various flexible working patterns e.g. part-time, flexitime, home working, maternity, paternity, adoption, dependent and shared parental leave.

¹⁷ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/genderpaygap>

Contact Details

You can contact Durham County Council's equality team as follows:

Email: equalities@durham.gov.uk

Telephone: 03000 268019

or contact council general enquiries: 03000 260000