



Northumberland
County Council

Equality Information Report 2024

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Contents

Foreword from our Chief Executive.....	6
Introduction.....	7
About Northumberland.....	9
Our Priorities, Values & Equality Objectives.....	11
Our Priorities.....	11
Our Values.....	11
Our Equality Objectives.....	12
Understanding Northumberland Residents' Profile.....	13
Population.....	13
Age.....	13
Sex.....	14
Ethnicity.....	14
Religion and Belief.....	14
Disability.....	15
Sexual Orientation.....	16
Gender Identity.....	16
Carers.....	17
Meeting Our Equality Duty.....	18
Equality Impact Assessments.....	18
Annual Equality Information Analysis.....	18
Understanding and Engaging with our Communities.....	19
Northumberland Communities Together.....	21
Public Health.....	25
Environment & Transport.....	27
Waste Services.....	27
Hazardous Household Waste Service.....	27
Waste Services Customer Satisfaction Survey 2022/2023.....	27
Household Waste Recovery Centres (HWRCs).....	28
Green Spaces and Countryside Team.....	28
Country Parks Users Customer Satisfaction Survey.....	28

Review of and refurbishment programme for Public Conveniences 2023.....	28
National Highways and Transport Survey.....	28
Council’s Rights of Way Improvement Plan.....	29
Adults, Ageing & Wellbeing	30
Age	30
Engagement with older people - Ageing Well Programme	30
Disability.....	31
Race / Ethnicity	32
Religion or belief	32
Sex.....	34
Sexual Orientation.....	34
Gender reassignment.....	35
Complaints	37
Access to Services.....	39
Children & Young People.....	40
Sex.....	40
Race.....	40
Religion and belief.....	40
Disability.....	41
SEN Support Pupils	42
Education, Health & Care Plan Pupils	43
Children’s Social Care	44
Consultation & Feedback	46
Special Educational Needs – responses of service users 2023 – 24	47
Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS).....	50
Consultation & Feedback	50
Training & Development	51
Planning Services	53
Consultation and Engagement.....	53
Neighbourhood Planning.....	53
Pre-Application Service.....	53

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)	53
Planning Applications	54
Training and Development	54
Housing Services	55
Asylum Seekers and Refugees	56
Gypsy Roma Travellers Service (GRT)	57
Homelessness & Housing Options	57
Ethnicity, Gender and Age	58
Temporary Accommodation	59
Safeguarding	59
Our People	61
Engagement	61
Recruitment	61
Strategic Change	62
Corporate Finance	63
Commissioning and Procurement Service	63
The Council’s Budget	64
Data Sources & Useful Links	66

Foreword from our Chief Executive

Welcome to our Equality Monitoring Report 2024. This report details how we are working towards meeting our general and specific duties as defined in the Public Sector Equality Duty, whilst also looking at how we are addressing and making progress against our Equality Objectives for 2021- 2025.

This report covers the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 and provides us with a great opportunity to demonstrate how we continue to support Diversity, Equity and Inclusion across our workforce and our communities, recognising the breadth of personal knowledge and experience that each staff member and resident of Northumberland brings.

As a Council, we continue to be committed to making progress on our priorities of economic growth, inequalities, and value for money. Equality is a cornerstone of the work we are carrying out across the organisation and is very much embedded within our core vision and values.

We remain fully committed to fostering a culture of diversity, equity & equality and inclusion across our county and to support this aim we have moved from Equality, Diversity and Inclusion to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to reflect that our organisation recognises and embraces diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences. By leading with diversity, we acknowledge the immense value varied workforce and communities bring regarding innovation and creativity.

Moving from Equality to Equity is also an important change. While equality ensures equal treatment, equity strives for equal outcomes by addressing individual needs and circumstances and we have formed a new, dedicated team to help identify and lead on change across our services to ensure that Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are embraced across all of our services.

As an organisation, we are wholeheartedly dedicated to tackling inequalities, prejudice and discrimination that impact residents and communities across our Northumberland. This report underpins our approach to ensure that our commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is embedded within our services and throughout our workforce.

Helen Paterson – Chief Executive, Northumberland County Council

Introduction

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Equality Duty) Northumberland County Council as a public body is required to publish equality information annually, and to report on progress with achieving our equality objectives. As part of this duty, we collect and publish information about our services and the actions we are taking to progress our equality objectives, which are to:

- Strengthen our knowledge and understanding of the needs of our communities.
- Listen to, involve, and respond to our communities effectively.
- Improve the diversity and skills of our workforce to help us embed equality, diversity and inclusion in how we deliver services and support our staff.
- Create a positive culture, with a clear leadership commitment to improving equality diversity and inclusion both within the council, with our partners and the wider community.

Whilst we are required to publish this information, we welcome the opportunity to reflect on the valuable work done throughout the year that has enabled us to further diversity, equity and inclusion across our organisation and our communities.

Moreover, we value this time to assess where we are now and commit to clear enhancements that we can make to become even stronger as an organisation. The Council's organisational values outline our commitment to Northumberland's residents and communities. Key to the successful delivery of these values is our workforce, which is why it is extremely important that both our workforce and residents are engaged, heard, and valued.

We are wholly committed to ensuring that we do not discriminate or otherwise treat unfairly any individual on the grounds of:

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

This report provides an overview of the Council's performance in relation to equality through the lens of the protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010). It also provides

an insight into the work, initiatives and partnerships around equality, diversity, and inclusion across the workforce and within our communities.

About Northumberland

Northumberland is England's northernmost county, bordering Cumbria to the west, County Durham and Tyne and Wear to the south and Scotland to the north. Berwick upon Tweed in the far north of the County lies approximately 2 miles from the Scottish border, and much of the county lies further north than the southernmost Scottish border.

From ancient castles and stunning landscapes, picturesque coastal and market towns, Northumberland is a diverse county. Our economy boasts a growing, internationally recognised offshore and renewable energy hub delivering clean and green growth. Industry, from pristine beaches to wild countryside.

The county is the largest unitary authority by geographic coverage with the greatest area of Green Belt of any Local Planning Authority. With an area of 5,013 km² and a population of 323,820 (2020), Northumberland is the least densely populated of the North-East region's 12 local authority areas and the sixth most sparsely populated in England. The different parts of the county have distinct characteristics, from urban to rural, coastal to upland and well-connected to remote.

The south-east of the county is the most densely populated, with the three largest towns, Blyth, Cramlington and Ashington. These act as main employment centres, drawing from a wider area than just south-east Northumberland. Beyond the south-east, the county's main settlements are located along the Tyne Valley corridor and along the coast.

Morpeth, Hexham, Prudhoe, Berwick and Alnwick are the main market towns, all of which have significant rural hinterlands. Almost 97% of the county's land area is classed as rural, with just under half of the population living in this area and over half of the population living in 3% of the land area, mainly in the south-east of the county.

Statistics provided by the Office of National Statistics show that in line with the rest of the North East region, Northumberland's population grew at a relatively slow rate in the last decade, with an overall population percentage increase of 1.4% (compared to 6.6% across England).

One of the challenges faced by the Council is Northumberland's ageing population.

Over the last decade, the number of people aged 65 or over has increased by 28.9%, a figure which is significantly higher than the increase across England which in comparison stands at 20.1%. Northumberland County Council appreciates and recognises that this growth in aging population may cause an increase in demand for social care for the elderly. Conversely, Northumberland's population has seen a reduction of 5.9% in people aged 15 to 64 years and a decrease of 3.4% in children under 15 years.

There is a strong reliance on the public sector for employment within Northumberland, with almost one in three people working in the various sub-sectors of health and social work, education and public administration. With 5200 employees (and roughly the same number again employed within schools), Northumberland County Council is one of the largest employers in the county. Our average annual staff turnover rate stands at approximately 11.47% which compares well to the national average of 16.8%.

Our Priorities, Values & Equality Objectives

Our Priorities

The Council's updated Corporate Plan was launched in 2023. This Plan, running from 2023 to 2026, sets out what the Council, both Members and staff, will do, working with partners and communities to deliver on our Vision and Priorities for all of Northumberland's residents in the coming years.

It outlines how we will ensure we are a Best Value Council, delivering value for money services to residents, businesses, and visitors to the county. Building upon achievements from the previous Corporate Plan this plan shapes how we deliver all services and functions, ensuring service plans and staff appraisals are clear on how they will contribute to achieving our Vision and Priorities.

We want to ensure that the county continues to be a land of great opportunities for current and future generations. To achieve this, Members and Council staff are focused on working together to deliver our three Corporate Priorities

1. **Achieving Value for Money** - operating efficiently and effectively
2. **Tackling Inequalities** - supporting everybody to live their best lives.
3. **Driving Economic Growth** - enabling prosperity across the county

Our priorities are interlinked, and all of our actions support the delivery of our vision to be a Land of Great Opportunities. Our actions focus on what we can do as a local authority but, in all of our work, we work in partnership with other organisations and within a local, regional and national context. Our measures reflect both things that we can do as a Council and those things we need to work in partnership to achieve.

Our Values

We recognise that how we deliver is as important as what we deliver, and this is the key to our success. Our Northumberland team, officers and members, have developed a set of shared values that will underpin everything we do. It will guide the decisions we make, the way we work with each other and the difference we make in our communities.

- **People First** - We provide services to our people (residents, colleagues, members, partners, visitors and businesses) through lasting, genuine, relationships that make a positive difference to their lives and their communities. We listen and understand our people's needs and put them at the heart of our decision making.
- **Respect** - We are committed to building a trusting, caring and supportive environment for all our colleagues and communities. That means we are there for each other, act with empathy, value differences and encourage others to

express themselves in order to collectively achieve our common goals. We treat others as they would wish to be treated.

- **Excellence** - We strive for the highest quality delivery of our services. This means being accountable for our actions and delivering on our commitments. We share and celebrate what works, are open and learn from what doesn't and take pride in continually improving.
- **Resilience** - We have robust controls, practices and support in place to protect our residents, our colleagues and our communities and empower them to thrive and live well. We are committed to acting sustainably in order to drive the right impact, over the long term, whilst ensuring best value for money

These values are the standards by which we will hold ourselves and each other to account. They are our promise to our residents.

Our Equality Objectives

As part of our duty under the Equality Act 2010, the council publishes equality objectives every four years. These set out our equality priorities as an employer and for our services.

Our aim is to make equality, diversity and inclusion part of the way the council works, placing it at the heart of everything we do.

Our Equality Objectives for 2021-2025 are:

1. Strengthen our knowledge and understanding of the needs of our communities.
2. Listen to, involve and respond to our communities effectively.
3. Improve the diversity and skills of our workforce to help us embed equality, diversity and inclusion in how we deliver services and support our staff.
4. Create a positive culture, with a clear leadership commitment to improving equality diversity and inclusion both within the council, with our partners and the wider community.

Understanding Northumberland Residents' Profile

Figures are produced at a county level; however, it is acknowledged that this can conceal inequalities that exist in different communities across the county.

Population

The 2021 Census determined that in Northumberland, the population size has increased by 1.4%, from around 316,000 in 2011 to 320,600 in 2021. This is lower than the overall increase for England (6.6%), where the population grew by nearly 3.5 million.

At 1.4%, Northumberland's population increase is slightly lower than the increase for the North East (1.9%). Newcastle upon Tyne and North Tyneside have seen their populations increase by around 7.1% and 4.1%, respectively, while others in the region, such as County Durham saw a smaller increase (1.7%) with Gateshead experiencing a decrease of 2.1%.

As of 2021, Northumberland is the least densely populated of the North East's 12 local authority areas, with an area equivalent to around two football pitches per resident (64 people per sq. km). This is an increase of 1.6% on 2001 when the density was 63 people per sq.km. Northumberland is the 6th most sparsely populated local authority in England.

In 2021, Northumberland ranked 36th for total population out of 309 local authority areas in England, which is a fall of eight places in a decade.

There were 146,900 households with at least one usual resident, an increase of 6.1% on 2011.

Age

Of the four UK nations, England consistently has the highest life expectancy at birth for males and females, and Scotland the lowest. Life expectancy at birth in 2020 to 2022 in England was estimated to be 78.8 years for males and 82.8 years for females¹.

In Northumberland life expectancy for a male from birth is 78.8 years and for a female it is 82.9 years, so very similar to the national picture.

There has been an increase of 28.9% in people aged 65 years and over, a decrease of 5.9% in people aged 15 to 64 years, and a decrease of 3.4% in children aged under 15 years.

¹ National life tables – life expectancy in the UK: 2020 to 2022 - ONS

The largest increase was seen in the 70-74 age band, growing by 50%. The number of people aged between 40 and 49 decreased by 21% over the decade.

Sex

According to the Census 2021 in Northumberland 51.2% of residents are female and 48.8% are male, with a ratio of 95.6 males to every 100 females. This is consistent with the profile of England & Wales with a population of 30,420,202 women (51.0% of the population) and 29,177,340 men (49.0%)².

Ethnicity

As defined by the Equality Act 2010, a race is a group of people defined by their colour, nationality (including citizenship) ethnicity or national origins. A racial group can be made up of more than one distinct racial group, such as Black British.

According to the latest census 2021 the population in Northumberland is predominantly White at 97.7%, with 1.2% Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh, 0.1% Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African and 0.3% Other Ethnic Group³

In addition, 0.7% of Northumberland residents identified their ethnic group within the "Mixed or Multiple" category, up from 0.5% in 2011. This 0.2 percentage-point change was the largest increase among high-level ethnic groups in this area.

Across the North East, the percentage of people from "Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups" increased from 0.9% to 1.3%, while across England the percentage increased from 2.3% to 3.0%.

The percentage of people who identified their ethnic group within the "Other" category ("Arab" or "Any other ethnic group") increased from 0.1% in 2011 to 0.3% in 2021.

- Asian - 3,374 people or 1.2%
- Black - 598 people or 0.1%
- Mixed - 2,557 people or 0.7%
- Other - 1,010 people or 0.3%
- White - 313,027 people or 97.7%

Religion and Belief

As defined by the Equality Act 2010, religion refers to any religion, including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of

² ONS Population and household estimates, England and Wales: Census 2021- 02/11/2022

³ ONS Census 2021

belief. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

In England about 46% of the population is Christian, 7% is Muslim, 2% is Hindu, and Buddhists, Sikhs and Jews are each around 1%. The remainder is split between people with no religion and those who decided not to identify a religion.

The majority of the population of Northumberland are Christian (53.2%). The next largest group those that state they have No Religion at 40.1%. Of the remaining respondents, 0.5% are Muslim, 0.2% are Buddhist and 0.2% are Sikh, 0.1% are Hindu and 0.1% are Jewish. Of the remainder 0.4% identified as Other and 5% did not answer the question. ⁴

Religious groups in Northumberland as detailed within the 2021 census are as follows:

- Christian - 170,669 people or 53.2%
- Buddhist - 752 people or 0.2%
- Hindu - 446 people or 0.1%
- Muslim - 1,635 people or 0.5%
- Sikh - 654 people or 0.2%
- Other (including No Religion) - 146,410 people or 45.7%

Disability

In the Equality Act 2010 a person has a disability if she or he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Information from the Census 2021 details that 8.3% of the population have a disability that limits day-to-day activities a lot, with 11.3% having a disability that limits day-to-day activities a little, a total of 19.6% of the population.

In the 2021 census, 80.4% of Northumberland residents responded that they were not disabled increased from 80.0%

Of those who reported a disability

- 8.3% stated that they were limited a lot by disability.
- 11.3% stated that they were limited a little by disability.

⁴ Census 2021

Sexual Orientation

The 2021 Census reports that 92.11% of the population of Northumberland are straight / heterosexual, with 1.23% Gay or Lesbian, 0.84% are Bisexual and 0.17% from All Other Sexual Orientations. 5.64% of respondents did not answer the question.

- Straight / Heterosexual 92.12%
- Gay or Lesbian 1.23%
- Bi Sexual 0.84%
- All other sexual orientations 0.17%
- Not answered 5.64%

Gender Identity

As defined by the Equality Act 2010, sex is understood as binary being either male or female. It can mean a group of people like men or boys, or women or girls.

There were 30,420,202 women (51.0% of the population) and 29,177,340 men (49.0%) in England and Wales⁵.

According to the Census 2021 in Northumberland 51.2% are female and 48.8% are male, with a ratio of 95.6 males to every 100 females.

The detailed Gender Identity for Northumberland residents over the age of 16 was reported as follows⁶

- Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth 95.48%
- Gender identity different from sex registered at birth but no specific identity given. 0.11%
- Transwoman 0.05%
- Transman 0.05%
- Non-binary 0.04%
- Other Gender Identities 0.02%
- Not answered 4.24%

⁵ Census 2021

⁶ Census 2021

Carers

A carer is a person of any age who provides unpaid care and support to a family member, friend or neighbour who is disabled, has an illness or long-term condition, or who needs extra help as they grow older.

Carers are holding families together, enabling those they care for to get the most out of life, making an enormous contribution to society and saving the economy billions of pounds. Yet many are stretched to the limit – juggling care with work and family life, struggling to make ends meet and often battling with poor health themselves⁷.

Though not a specific Protected Characteristic as defined by the Equality Act it is recognised that people with caring responsibilities can be vulnerable or disadvantaged and therefore should be considered.

The 2021 Census asked people to report on unpaid care that they provide on a weekly basis.

- 90.3% of Northumberland residents provide no unpaid care.
- 4.6% provide care of 19 hours or less.
- 2.1% provide between 20 hours and 49 hours.
- 3.0% provide 50 hours or more care per week.

⁷ Carers UK

Meeting Our Equality Duty

As a public sector organisation Northumberland County Council has a duty to analyse the impact of our services and practices on equality across all the protected characteristics.

This helps us consider if the way we do things has any unintended consequences for some groups, and to check if they will be fully effective for all target groups. It can help us identify practical steps to tackle any negative effects or discrimination, opportunities to promote equality and foster good relations between different groups. We publish equality information and undertake equality impact assessments to help us do this.

Equality Impact Assessments

Our equality information gives the Council an understanding of the overarching impact of its services on diverse groups in the community. There will be key changes, decisions and proposals that will arise during the year that will require an individual and specific equality impact assessment to be completed. To do this, the Council has an equality impact assessment (EIA) tool in place to complement the equality information.

As part of the Council's local commitment to reduce inequalities, work is progressing to develop an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process. Future decisions will not only be screened regarding the need for an equality impact assessment, but also for the impact on a broader range of groups experiencing socio-economic and health inequalities, as well as impacts on the environment.

To implement this new approach, work is ongoing to develop an IIA tool. Once developed, the approach and the tool will be tested, and training and support will be available to ensure officers making decisions and taking decisions through the budget and committee process are fully prepared for this change. The IIA approach will be completed during 2024 and will be implemented for the 2025-26 budget setting process.

Annual Equality Information Analysis

The council completes an annual analysis of its core functions and services and their impact on equality, with an additional analysis covering our workforce and employment issues across the whole Council. This analysis identifies key areas where changes may be needed to ensure that services respond fairly to the needs of different groups and identifies areas where further information and feedback needs to be gathered. It is an ongoing cyclical process which is reported on and published annually and fed into the service planning process so actions and performance can be monitored.

Understanding and Engaging with our Communities

The Council uses various tools to meet the required duties and promote Diversity, Equity, Equality and Inclusion across our communities. We use a range of methods to ensure that we listen to the views of the people who use our services and involve them in decision making. This includes helping us get a better understanding of the specific equality issues that impact on different groups in the community.

High quality, coordinated and proactive consultation and engagement is essential for:

- ensuring all residents have the opportunity to shape services
- good decision-making
- evaluating the Council's progress against strategic priorities and medium and long-term objectives.

We engage with our residents through various means:

- **The People's Panel** - The Council continues to maintain a People's Panel. This is a representative consultative body of local residents, used to help identify local priorities and to consult service users and non-users on a range of customer satisfaction and local quality of life issues.
- **Youth Parliament** - Organised by young people, the parliament provides opportunities for today's youth to use their voice and bring about change. It has four members; the members are elected by other young people in Northumberland. Two deputy members take office each year, joining two current members. Members are elected based on their manifestos for improving Northumberland. These manifestos outline what our young people are passionate about in the county, and the changes they would like to see. The elected members will represent Northumberland on a regional and national platform, working closely with the Youth Cabinet.
- **Youth Cabinet** – The Youth Cabinet are elected annually by young people in Northumberland as a body working to represent the views of their peers within the County to decision makers.
- **Voices Making Choices** is made up of young people aged 14 to 21 with experiences of the care system. They are from diverse backgrounds and have different experiences.
- **Student Inclusion Council** - Northumberland's Student Inclusion Council (SIC.) aims to champion the voice of children and young people with SEND and to drive positive change. The new SIC. members are passionate about making a difference and will work alongside the council's Education and SEND team to

play an active role in shaping the future of education and council services, making sure the voice of all young people with SEND in the county is heard.

- **Tenant Alliance Panel** - As a social landlord for 8,400 properties across Northumberland we have a statutory obligation to engage with tenants to give them the opportunity to shape our service delivery, monitor our performance and make sure our housing service meet the consumer standards set out by the Regulator of Social Housing. We have a main group of tenants who come together every month to look at performance meet with service managers and discuss areas of interest/concern. This group is known as our Tenant Alliance Panel and is made up of tenants from across our estates. The panel acts as a sounding board for us and enables us to consider the tenant perspective in our service delivery. Every tenant has the right to be part of this group should they wish and we a continually recruiting and advertising it.
- Local people are regularly consulted through surveys and service wide consultations further details of this engagement can be found within the service reports included in this report.

In addition

- The Council is supporting Victims and Survivors of Domestic Abuse and has achieved **Accreditation with White Ribbon UK** – The Council received White Ribbon accreditation after the organisation approved its three-year plan and zero-tolerance to Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.
- The Council has maintained its **Gold Standard Award** for the **Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme**. This prestigious award recognises and rewards UK employers and organisations that demonstrate exceptional support for the armed forces community. In 2018, the Council was one of only nine local authorities across the entire UK to receive the coveted Gold Award, which must be revalidated every five years, which was achieved in 2023.

Northumberland Communities Together

Northumberland Communities Together (NCT) continues to make sure residents are kept safe and well and provides coordination to support individual volunteers, voluntary groups and communities across our county.

One of the key responsibilities of NCT is to assist in identifying and developing social value practices and asset-based community development approaches in collaboration with Thriving Together and other statutory and non-statutory partners.

The service is routinely involved in the facilitating and participation in community based conversations, consultation and engagement. Consultations and engagement have included

- Use of NHS Scotland Place Standard Tool
- Hirst Master Planning Consultation
- Heart of Blyth Community Conversation
- HAF+ Consultation
- DWP Household Support Fund Delivery Plan Consultation
- Ipsos Mori HSF4 Evaluation and Community Beneficiary Consultation
- Community Asset Transfer Consultation
- Sport England and Football Foundation Play Zones Consultation
- Partnership for People and Places Consultation.

Throughout the consultation processes there were no identified differences in results for Protected Groups that required adjustment to a policy or process at that time. What was required was a considered and pragmatic approach to how the consultation reached and connected with various groups, such as young people, those with a disability and those rurally isolated as an example.

The service has championed opportunities for those with a physical and/or learning differences to access volunteering and employment opportunities and help prepare for adulthood as well as supporting the national policy agenda for school holiday food and activity support for teenagers (HAF+).

The service has increased access to community based services and activities for new mothers within Community Hub settings (baby feeding spaces, baby feeding classes, post-natal wellbeing sessions) as well as increasing activities and opportunities for older people within community settings which has included social connection and friendship groups, walking and talking groups, Singing for Wellness and Health Checks.

The service has introduced new technologies and resources to support those people with mental health concerns within community settings (activitouch resources) as well as improving facilities for those with physical disabilities within community settings (Changing Places).

NCT has proactively targeted and distributed over £3m of financial support and practical support in kind to Households with Children, Households with Pensioners and Households with Disabilities as part of DWP funded programme during 2023-24 whilst also directly supporting over 10,000 young people to access support over the school holidays through DfE and DWP funded provision.

The service has invested in opportunities to build capacity in our placed based workforce so we can increase levels understanding, insights and needs of our communities. This has included recruitment to Locality Coordinators, Community Development Workers, Community Safety Officers and Rural Advocacy Worker posts.

We have increased the number of community network events delivered through our VCSE Infrastructure Contract 'Thriving Together' providing opportunity for communities to come together, promoting the emergence of new leaders, and facilitating collaborative efforts to cultivate a supportive culture throughout the county, with the overall aim of improving the lives of Northumberland residents.

We have held regular community user groups to help coproduce and shape community led activity and programming in localities.

We have facilitated the use of the Place Standard tool to provide a simple framework to structure conversations about place and community. The tool lets communities, public agencies, voluntary groups and others find those aspects of a place that need to be targeted to improve people's health, wellbeing and quality of life.

Working with our VCS commission and Thriving Together partnership NCT is helping to facilitate the continued expansion and rollout of our social prescribing referral platform and mobile application for Northumberland, commonly known as Frontline. We believe our solution is a truly effective whole community support for health, wellbeing and independence, and can provide everyone with the ability to identify and contact local services quickly. That is why we are encouraging the systematic take up amongst all our partners and across all neighbourhoods and communities. In support of our asset-based approaches to community development the Frontline platform provides the ability to map services easily and generate data on partnership working, search behaviour and identify gaps in services and/or resources.

NCT have secured funding through Partnership for People and Place (PfPP) programme with the aim of piloting a new approach to cross-government working to improve local outcomes and efficiency of policy and programmes designed and delivered in place. Hello Hirst was established to support families, children and young people to increase school readiness and work together to develop impactful support provision.

In response to the 'Cost of Living Crisis', NCT has created a dedicated Cost of Living Support Hub online presence, providing a single point of access for information and support. NCT has also delivered over 70 'Here to Help' community placed based events to support residents, with a total of 110 scheduled by April 2024.

In response to community demand we have helped establish 160 Warm Welcome Spaces including the digital mapping of 105 spaces on the new interactive map whilst in response to community consultation and lessons from major incidents across the county NCT are currently mapping the registration of 90 Community Resilience Hubs to support societal resilience and civil contingencies.

Investment has been committed to deliver the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) platform which is a SaaS based interactive tool that combines Central Government comprehensive welfare policy analytics engine with our own local authority administrative data to drive strategic and operational decisions. The tool helps us to identify financially struggling residents, design appropriate interventions, and track the effectiveness of these interventions

Our Thriving Together contract has helped leverage an additional £2 Million of funding to VCSE organisations across Northumberland through collaborative and partnership approaches to funding bids.

NCT have advocated and help facilitate the training of ABCD (Asset-Based Community Development) approaches across our own and non-domicile workforce to help raise awareness, improve skills and knowledge of our statutory and VCSE sector partners.

We have supported our VCSE workforce, with over 300 individuals having been given 1-2-1 support through our Thriving Together contract to take full advantage of the available resources and enable them to operate safely and legally whilst also training over 1,000 volunteers to support our societal resilience ambitions

In 2024 we will look to implement radical workforce reform through our BEST ways of Working and Communities First Approaches. A dedicated workforce development

work stream will look at the roles, skills, competencies and behaviours of the existing workforce and map those against the requirements for the future and a more blended and integrated way of working within communities as part of multi-disciplinary/multi-agency neighbourhood teams.

Delivery of the Council's Inequality Plan is a regular aspect of team development, service planning and performance review.

Public Health

Reducing Health Inequalities is at the heart of what Public Health seeks to achieve, and there are frequent references to the Inequalities Plan and other health inequalities in everything we do.

It is important that we consider not only protected characteristics but also other groups who face systematic and social driven barriers to good health including people living in more deprived areas, or rural or coastal areas, and inclusion groups such as people with drug and alcohol use disorders, people experiencing homelessness, or people in contact with the criminal justice system.

In face-to-face community conversations using the Place Standard tool people have the opportunity, if they wish, to share data around age, disability, gender reassignment, race, and sex. We currently use the online Platform developed by Our Place Scotland to submit and host our data. Currently, because of disparities in data collection requirements between Scotland and England the only data digitally input and held longer term is age and sex, however we are in conversation with OurPlace Scotland to enable broader characteristics to be available for us to access.

Our Health Trainers /Health Checks and Health Champions undertake routine community engagement and networking, and Focus groups were hosted in parts of Northumberland to inform a Transport and Health Needs Assessment.

We collected some local insight on experiences of ageing in Northumberland to support the 2023 Director of Public Health Report (Ageing Well in Northumberland). A focus group was hosted with older members of Choppington Disability Group, and members of the Ageing Well Network also provided insights which helped inform the report.

The Heart of Blyth project is an asset-based community development project in Blyth. The Heart of Blyth Coordinator has supported women from Ethnic Minority communities and Refugee and Asylum Seekers to take part in consultation events to help shape services. Through the Heart of Blyth project, support, advice and guidance has been provided to residents in Blyth who wanted to hold the first Community Peace Events as part of the celebration of Iftar during Ramadan and Easter, to bring together communities from different beliefs and backgrounds together who don't usually mix to increase awareness and understanding of different culture and beliefs.

Public Health are working alongside colleagues in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the Climate Change Teams to develop an Integrated Impact Assessment which will help the Council develop an inequalities lens and assess the impact of its decisions on groups experiencing inequalities. This will include groups protected by the Equality

Act, but also wider groups experiencing inequalities and socio-economic and geographical inequalities. Decision makers will also need to identify actions to mitigate any negative impact.

As part of the statutory planning process, certain developments require a Health Impact Assessment, this process will require developers to consider the impact on groups experiencing inequalities including those protected by the Equality Duty and will require developers to consider actions to mitigate any negative impact. The Public Health team are in the process of updating the HIA guidance to make this requirement clearer and to provide measures of quality to ensure these assessments are of good quality.

Further work on the place standard tool is planned, working with Northumberland Communities Together and Alnwick Town Council to support community engagement in Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan. Further work is planned with the Glendale Gateway Trust Rural Advocacy Worker and more broadly NCT Locality Co-ordinators as opportunities emerge from their interaction with local communities.

Public Health support the Health and Wellbeing Board with the development of the Council's Joint Strategic Needs and Assets Assessment (JSNAA). This draws together local data and insight to understand the needs of communities across Northumberland. Where data is available relating to personal/protected characteristics, these are reviewed to explore health inequalities. Over the last 12 months Public Health have worked with stakeholders to develop JSNAA chapters about Ageing Well and are currently in process of developing JSNAA chapters about Long-Term Health Conditions.

The Public Health Team Commissions the Northeast Better Health at Work Award and as part of achieving the Silver Award level, employers need to demonstrate their commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion across their workforce.

A recent health equity audit of NHS Health Checks delivered by NHS general practices, which found lower uptake among men compared to women, people 40-59 years compared to 60-74 years, and people in more deprived compared to less deprived areas. Work is ongoing to address these inequalities.

In 2024, Public Health will be undertaking: a health equity audit of sexual health services and development of a sexual health strategy; and service evaluations of the NHS Health Checks community outreach project and Sorted (young persons' drug and alcohol service provided in house by Children's Services).

Environment & Transport

The Environment and Transport Team have 979 employees working in the service, with 82% of the workforce male and 18% female.

Waste Services

The Council empties approximately 7.7 million wheeled bins each year where residents receive an alternate weekly collection of general waste and recycling.

Information about our services and events is routinely provided in English unless requested otherwise. Information on our website is linked to an online translation service and has many different languages available.

All users of our services should be treated equally regardless of their religions or beliefs, in order that unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation are eliminated. There is no evidence to suggest that persons of a certain religion or belief are disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by our services.

Hazardous Household Waste Service

it is important to ensure that the needs of residents are catered for, with 25% of service users aged 65 or over. The service is purely a collection and disposal service, there is no obligation on the waste management service to dismantle or undertake works to the property. Whilst the collection and disposal of hazardous waste is free to the householder, they are required to package the materials ready for collection. However, the council's contractor will package the materials on their behalf where they are unable to do so. The high level of satisfaction with this service (97%) indicates that these measures are acceptable to most service users.

Older people, mobility impaired people, or those with a health condition that prevents them from wheeling their bin to the collection point and collecting the bin may request the Council does this on their behalf, if there is no other non-disabled person over 16 years of age resident at the address. The Council provides 'assisted' collections to 6,066 properties, which equates to 315,000 uplifts per annum. Front line staff have received training in equality awareness which includes disability awareness, and some have received specific deaf awareness training.

Waste Services Customer Satisfaction Survey 2022/2023

Annual online surveys are undertaken to assess residents' satisfaction with waste services, such as kerbside collections and Household Waste Recovery Centres. Responses from the general population are compared with those from protected groups to identify the impacts services have. The survey collects Equality and Diversity information from those who are willing to provide it, and this information is used to analyse service performance and customer satisfaction and inform future

decisions. The findings of the survey carried out in 22/23 were presented in a summary report. No policy or process adjustments were required following results analysis.

Household Waste Recovery Centres (HWRCs)

The sites are tailored to meet the needs of protected groups by being split level to allow residents to deposit waste with the minimum amount of physical exertion, have dedicated disabled parking with a push button to attract the site staff's attention, and employ contractor's staff who receive E&D training and help residents.

Green Spaces and Countryside Team

Country Parks Users Customer Satisfaction Survey

The service collects annual data from sample users of our country parks, sending out the user satisfaction survey with their annual permit renewal. The information provided gives us feedback on customer satisfaction and suggestions for improvement. For the first time in 2023 we included questions on Equality and Diversity. These responses provided us with feedback on disabled parking provision, wheelchair access provision on paths and disabled toilet facilities which we have taken into consideration, although do not require policy change.

Consultations

Review of and refurbishment programme for Public Conveniences 2023

More changing places facilities are planned in the coming year and as part of the wider public toilet refurbishment programme there will be more facilities with improved accessibility and user-friendly facilities for users from the protected characteristics groups.

National Highways and Transport Survey

Each year the service participates in the National Highways and Transport Network (NHT Network) survey. This is a leading benchmarking and service improvement tool for local authorities. The survey collects the public's views on different aspects of highways and transport in the authority's catchment area. A random sample of 3300 households receive the survey.

Blyth Relief Road Consultation

A 6-week public consultation exercise was carried out for the Blyth Relief Road project in November/December 2023. This could opportunities for residents to engage both online and in face-to-face events. Venues for the drop-in sessions were chosen on the basis of being fully accessible. A total of 722 survey responses were

received as part of the consultation. The questionnaire included several Equality and Diversity questions which were analysed and included in the Report of Consultation.

Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Research on the Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan revealed that females are more fearful than males of assaults when using the rights of way network. Women are less likely than men to walk or cycle alone on the rights of way network and are more likely to be accompanied by other family members and dogs. We will ensure that females are not discouraged from using the rights of way network because of changes to the network.

We need to continue to consider the safety and concerns of users our services and whether some users would be reluctant to use our services because of these concerns and put mechanisms in place to reduce these concerns. We will continue to work with partners to overcome barriers to access to the countryside, particularly for women.

Apprentices

Environment and Transport has always supported the Council's apprentice programme and following the introduction of the Apprentice Levy we pledged to support the corporate initiative by providing further placements for apprentices. These placements are filled in the main by young people however there are no restrictions to age limits for those wishing to undertake an apprenticeship and learn a new trade.

The service has also employed an apprentice with a visual disability and has taken the appropriate steps to provide them with support and equipment to get to and from work and to work more easily when performing their duties. This apprentice secured full time permanent employment within the council.

The service has provided placements for young adults with learning disabilities, and for those from a care background to give these young people the skills to gain employment and make positive changes to their life.

Adults, Ageing & Wellbeing

Age

Age equality is concerned with responding to differences between people that are linked to age, and with avoiding preventable inequalities between people of different age groups.

Ageism, the attitudes of others, and the assumptions they make, can have a dramatic effect on people – on their quality of life, access to services and choices, employment, and other opportunities. Research has indicated that the majority of people aged over 65 think that health and social care staff do not always treat older people with dignity.

The need for social care support increases with age and therefore there is a higher proportion of older people accessing adult social care services as shown below:

Age

Age Range	No. of Clients	% of Total
Under 18	34	0.5%
18-24 years	405	5.6%
25-34 years	585	8.2%
35-44 years	524	7.3%
45-54 years	559	7.8%
55-64 years	778	10.8%
65-74 years	905	12.6%
75-84 years	1620	22.6%
85+ years	1766	24.6%

Engagement with older people - Ageing Well Programme

The council has engaged with older people through service user forums, road shows, events and Health Trainer interventions across the county. Ageing Well continues to have active support from statutory, voluntary and community organisations, teams and individuals, through a well-established and vibrant Ageing Well network.

By doing more together locally this allows people to feel more empowered and endorses the role of older people as assets within their community, not a burden. Regular evaluations of programme activities indicate improved social contact and connectedness and enriched health and wellbeing which all support a good quality of life.

Disability

The latest Government estimates indicate 160 million people in the UK had a disability in the financial year 2021/22. This represents 24% of the total population. 11%-13% of Northumberland's population were eligible for disability benefits in February 2023 however not all disabled people qualify for disability benefits.

UK disability statistics: Prevalence and life experiences - House of Commons Library (parliament.uk)

According to our information system (December 2023) 7,176 people are accessing adult social care services in Northumberland. All will have some form of disability, illness or long-term condition. This number can be broken down into the following categories: Physical Disability, Learning Disability and Mental Health – as shown below:

This number can be broken down into the following categories: Physical Disability, Learning Disability and Mental Health – as shown below:

Client Category	Total
Learning Disability	1315
Mental Health	1899
Physical Disability	3962
Total	7176

The proportion of people accessing key services or support is as follows:

Service/Support	No. of Clients	% of Total
Residential / Nursing Care	2193	40%
Home Care Services	2273	42%
Day Care Services	363	7%
Receiving Direct Payments	633	12%

Further statistical information is available on the numbers of disabled people living in Northumberland is available at "How life has changed in Northumberland: Census 2021".

Race / Ethnicity

Ethnic Group (headline categories taken from the 2011 Census)	No. of Clients (December 2023)	% of Total	% in N'land Population (Census 2021)
White	6,932	96.6%	97.7%
Asian / Asian British	35	0.5%	1.2%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	7	0.1%	0.1%
Mixed / multiple ethnic groups	23	0.3%	0.7%
Any other Ethnic Group	15	0.2%	0.3%

Religion or belief

Religious and cultural views on the beginning of life can influence attitudes towards a range of social care and health issues. Views on dying, death and the afterlife can also influence attitudes, for example towards pain relief, coping strategies for people with a disability or illness and for terminally ill people. The degree to which we respect Religion or Belief reflects the organisation's commitment to delivering patient centred care.

The stated Religion or Belief of 48% of people is currently recorded on SWIFT, see table below. We think it is reasonable to assume a large proportion of people who don't see themselves as having a religion or belief have simply declined to answer the question and will therefore be included in the 52% where "not stated" is recorded. In December 2022, 52% had indicated a religion or belief.

Religion/Belief Profile of Adult Social Care Clients

Religion/Belief	No. of Clients	% of
		Total
Not Stated	3728	51.95%
Church Of England	2101	29.28%
Christian	410	5.71%
Roman Catholic	383	5.34%
Methodist	208	2.90%
Church Of Scotland	56	0.78%
Atheist	42	0.59%
United Reformed	42	0.59%
Protestant	31	0.43%
Jehovah's Witness	26	0.36%
Muslim	21	0.29%
Agnostic	17	0.24%
Salvation Army	16	0.22%
Anglican	15	0.21%
Presbyterian	14	0.20%
Buddhist	10	0.14%
Spiritualism	10	0.14%
Baptist	9	0.13%
Pagan	8	0.11%
Church Of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints	6	0.08%
Humanist	5	0.07%
Sikh	5	0.07%
Orthodox	3	0.04%
Evangelist	2	0.03%
Hindu	2	0.03%
Pentecostal	2	0.03%
Church In Wales	1	0.01%
Jewish	1	0.01%
Nonconformist	1	0.01%
Quaker	1	0.01%
Grand Total	7176	

Sex

There are a higher proportion of women accessing social care services in Northumberland than men. This is due mainly to the fact that the life expectancy of women is higher than that of men, although there is evidence that the gap is now narrowing. Currently the proportions of people receiving services or support is:

Sex	
Female	56%
Male	44%

A majority of older people, and in particular frail older people, are women because women tend to live longer than men. 48.8% of people in Northumberland are men, 51.2%⁸women however for people aged over 65 or over, 46.7% are men and 53.3% are women.

In December 2022, no-one declared themselves as anything other than female or male however in December 2023 there were a small number who identified themselves as non-binary.

Sexual Orientation

Like all other people being supported by ASC, LGBTQ+ people need support to live the lives that they choose with choice about their social life, leisure activities and relationships. For many people, this means support to have contact with other LGBTQ+ people. Therefore, this needs to be something that individuals feel comfortable about exploring in assessment and supporting planning, and it is essential that members of staff respond positively when someone shares information about their sexuality to enable them to discuss how this may impact on their choices around services and support.

It is likely that assumptions made by some staff can make it difficult for LGBTQ+ people to talk openly about their sexuality. Assumptions such as, there are not likely to be any LGB people using the service; that disabled people or older people are unlikely to have any issues around sexuality; and that the needs of LGB people are no different to heterosexual people can all have an impact.

LGBTQ+ people are more likely to be single, live alone, less likely to have children and less likely to be in touch with their family. Therefore, they are much less likely to have a carer to support them through illness or disability. Reduced carer support needs to be taken account of in assessment and support planning.

⁸ Census 2021

It is possible that same sex couples may face prejudice in finding care home placements and social housing, and therefore it is important to monitor that the same policies that apply to heterosexual couples wanting to live together in care homes or social housing are applied to same sex couples.

Gender reassignment

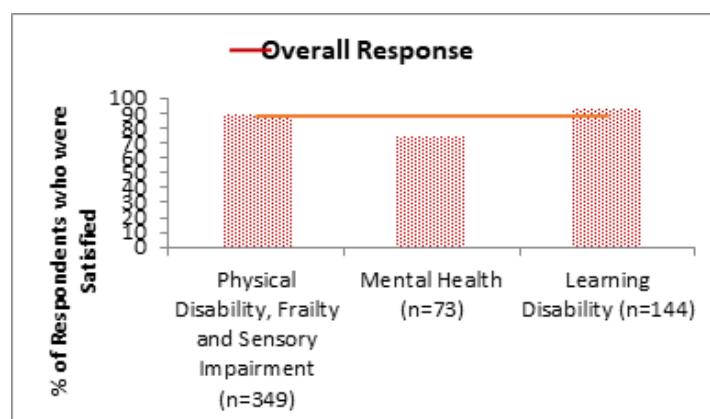
Commissioners and providers of health and social services face challenges in caring for the trans community. The growth in the number of people, of all ages, who are seeking medical treatment for profound and persistent gender dysphoria or who have transitioned will mean services will need to respond to provide appropriate health and social services for trans people in the UK.

We do not currently record on the adult's services system, SWIFT, if someone's current gender is different from their recorded gender at birth, though we do have a record of people who identify as non-binary. That number is currently fewer than five.

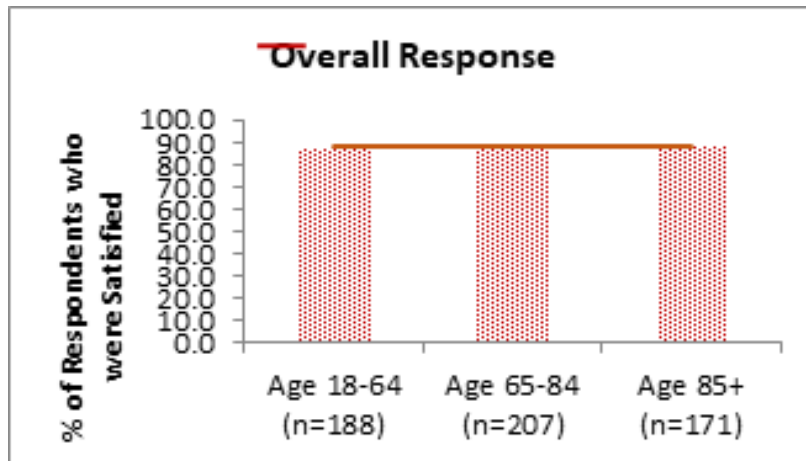
Customer Satisfaction

Regular and on-going mechanisms for gathering people's experiences of using care management and care services are in place and feedback is generally very positive. A survey of clients using our in-house services during 2022-23 showed a high level of satisfaction with the care and support provided. 566 people completed a questionnaire. 88% said they were satisfied.

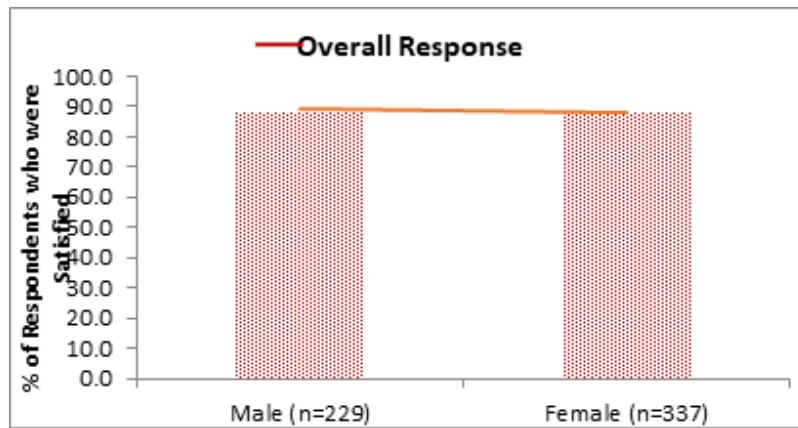
The chart below gives a breakdown of overall satisfaction by primary client group.



The chart below gives a breakdown of overall satisfaction by age group.



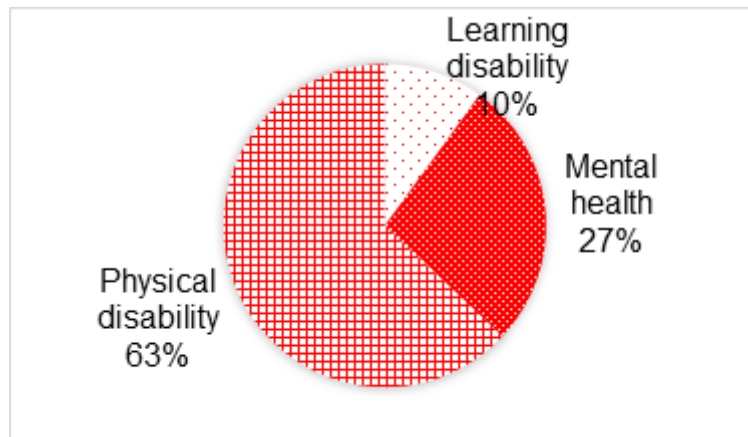
The following chart shows the satisfaction by sex.



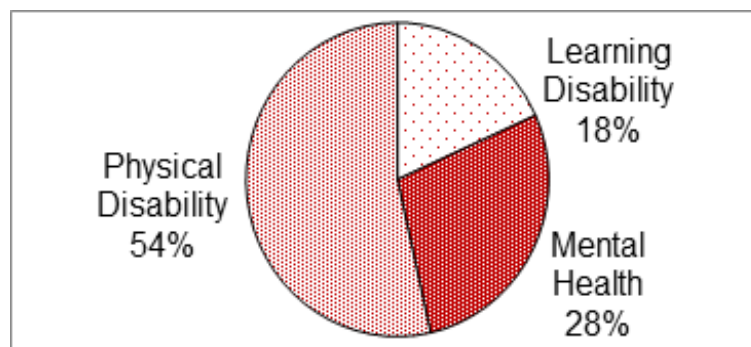
Complaints

The following equality data is based on 30 complaints responded to over 2022/23. The pie charts show proportions, first by complaints, then by adult social care overall, for 'category' then 'sex'. The numbers of complaints responded to are comparatively very small and no conclusions can be drawn although we continue to monitor the situation.

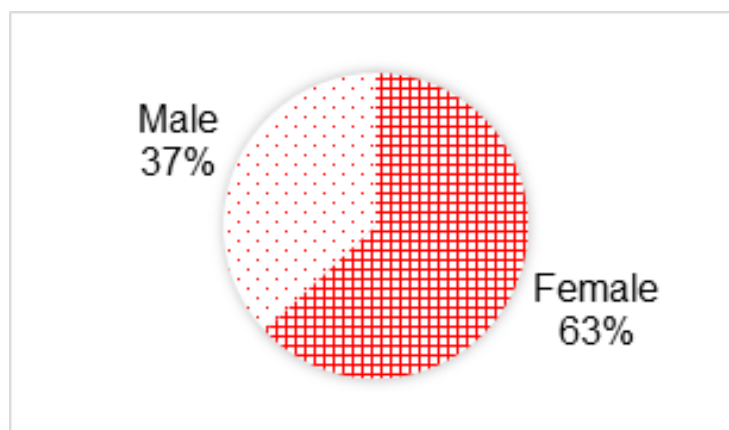
Responded to complaints by client category.



Adult social care by client category



Responded to complaints by sex.



The tables below provide equalities data by ethnic group then by age, with the overall adult social care data alongside the complaints data for responded to complaints. As noted above, the numbers of complaints responded to are comparatively very small and no conclusions can be drawn although we continue to monitor the situation.

Ethnic Group (Headline categories taken from the 2011 Census)	No. of Clients (December 2022)	% of total	% in N'land Population (Census 2011)	Complaints
White	7,181	96.7%	98.4%	100%
Asian / Asian British	38	0.5%	0.8%	0%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	6	0.1%	0.1%	0%
Mixed / multiple ethnic groups	22	0.3%	0.5%	0%
Any other Ethnic Group	12	0.2%	0.1%	0%

Responded to complaints by age.

Age Range	No. of Clients	% of total	No. of complaints	% of total
Under 18	39	0.5%	0	0%
18-24 years	407	5.5%	0	0%
25-44 years	1097	14.8%	5	16.7%
45-54 years	614	8.3%	2	6.7%
55-64 years	795	10.7%	7	23.3%
65-74 years	980	13.2%	2	6.7%
75-84 years	1657	22.3%	5	16.7%
85+ years	1839	24.8%	9	30.0%

Access to Services

The NCC Accessible Information Standard guidance provides information on how staff can provide information in alternative formats as a reasonable adjustment for disabled people and to how to provide key information in alternative languages where there is a need for this.

- There is access to interpreters as well as guidance on the commissioning of local interpreters, including a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter.
- On-line awareness training of accessible information standards for Adult Services staff.
- At point of referral any special characteristics or specific considerations are recorded, and appropriate signposting as required.
- The safeguarding adult review policy requires that protected characteristics are considered as part of the Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) process. Our partner agencies are required to identify special characteristics at point of referral.
- We encourage involvement of service users with lived experience in procurement of services, an example being the procurement of the sensory impairment provision.

When the Local Authority Self-Assessment Information Return (LASAIR) document, part of preparations for CQC inspection was shared at the LD Partnership Board for comment, they suggested an Easy Read version, which we will look to create.

All staff are required to complete mandatory Equality and Diversity training.

Other training courses available to ASC staff include:

Asperger's Syndrome Awareness

Autism Awareness

Default language

Understanding Older Peoples experience of Domestic Abuse

Inclusive language

Pronouns

In addition, the staff Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Hub is a resource available to managers and staff with useful information about supporting colleagues and residents who share one or more protected characteristics.

We plan to embed equality into the Directorate's governance processes to ensure ongoing improvements can be made to the way we gather and analyse information to best inform future decision making and service development.

Children & Young People

The following provides a summary of the data available for services provided to our children and young people.

Sex

The school census is completed by schools annually. In October 2023, the census demonstrated that of 44,653 pupils on roll in schools in the county, Northumberland has 51% male and 49% female pupils in schools.

Race

The census demonstrates that 93% of pupils in schools are white British in ethnicity (the term used on forms rather than race) and 6% are from 'all other ethnic groups combined'. 1% of pupils have not had their ethnicity recorded by their school. We use 'ethnic minorities' to refer to all ethnic groups except the white British group. Ethnic minorities include white minorities, such as Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller groups.

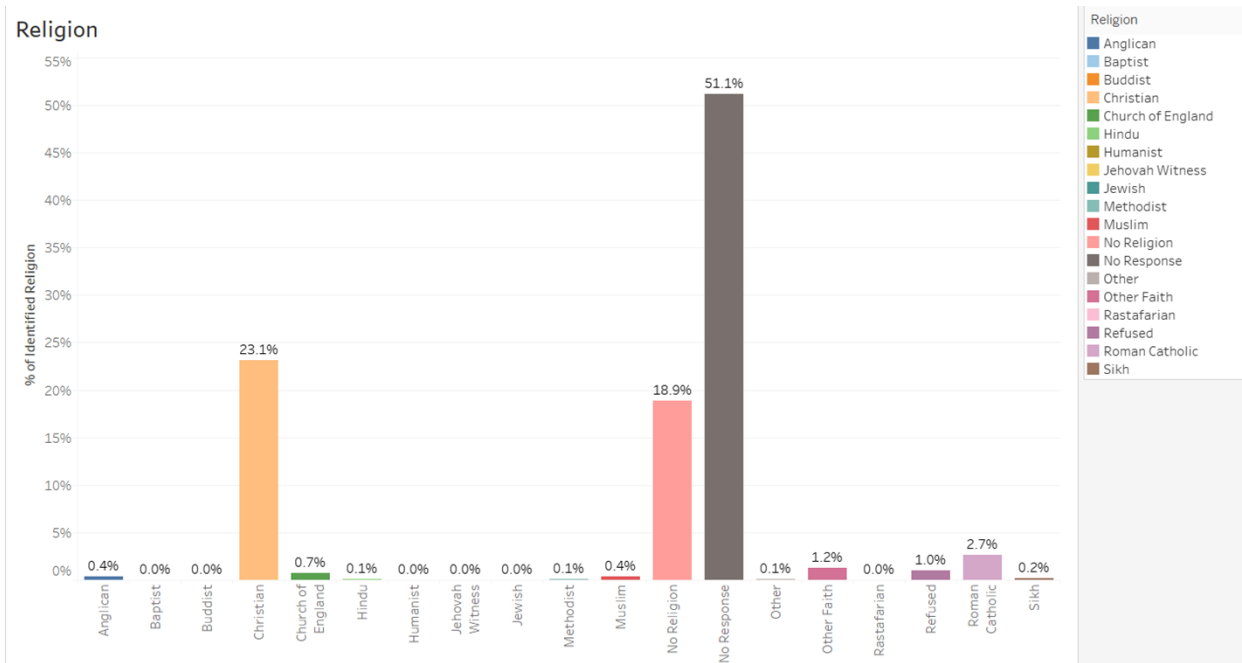
Polish was the most widely spoken community language after English in Northumberland schools followed by Arabic and Chinese. Other than English, a total of 70 languages are spoken by school children in Northumberland at the start of the 2023 academic year (including BSL). This is an increase of 14 languages since the previous year. The most spoken languages after English are:

- Polish 154
- Ukrainian 112
- Arabic 80
- Chinese 64
- Punjabi 47

In 2022/23 Northumberland schools welcomed over 160 Ukrainian pupils who were invited to live with families as part of the 'Homes for Ukraine' Scheme. 31 Afghan children were also housed in Northumberland and welcomed in local schools. There are 3 'Schools of Sanctuary' in the county: two in Ashington and one in Blyth where many Refugee and Asylum Seeker children are first housed when they are brought into the county by the Home Office.

Religion and belief

Where parents have provided this information, the religions represented in Northumberland schools are represented in the table below. Over half do not disclose the information, 19% have no religion and 29% are Christian.



As a directorate, we do not collect data about pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation or gender reassignment in the school aged population.

Schools monitor and hold their own data regarding discriminatory incidents relating to disability, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation and religion or belief.

The number of racist incidents recorded in 2022-23 by the Local Authority was 119.

Disability

The data which follows demonstrates the numbers and proportions of boys and girls receiving SEND support, and with Education Health Care Plans.

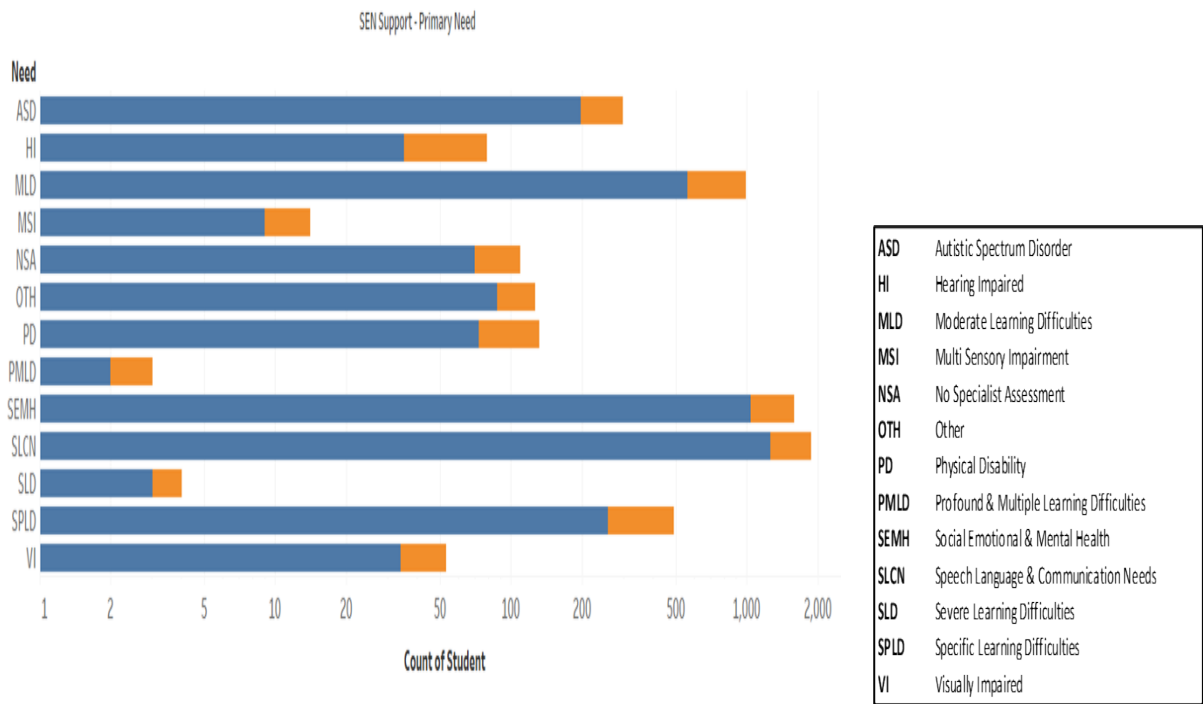
	Male	Female
SEND Support	63% ↓ (65.5%)	37% ↑ (34.5%)
EHCP	73% ↓ (75%)	27% ↑ (25%)

(October 2023 Census)

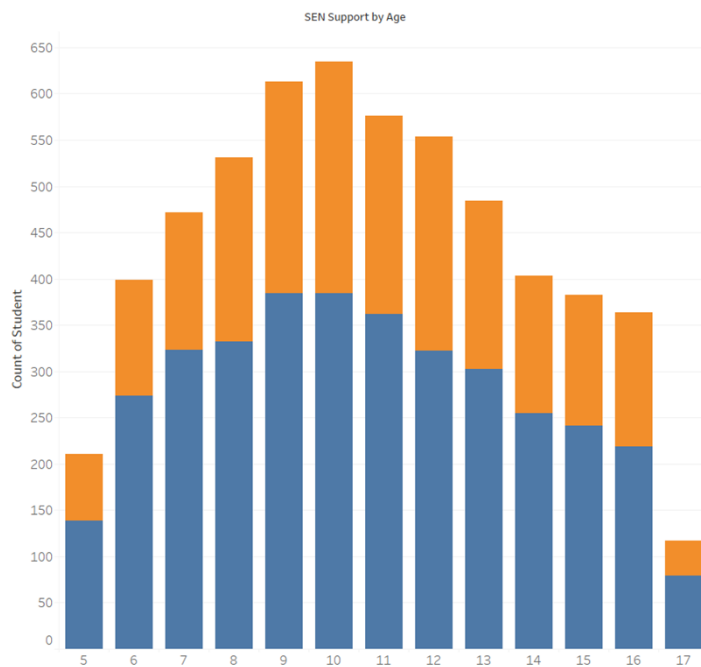
Currently there are 1017 EHCP pupils educated in a Northumberland Maintained Special School, of these 74% are male.

SEN Support Pupils

(MALE: FEMALE)

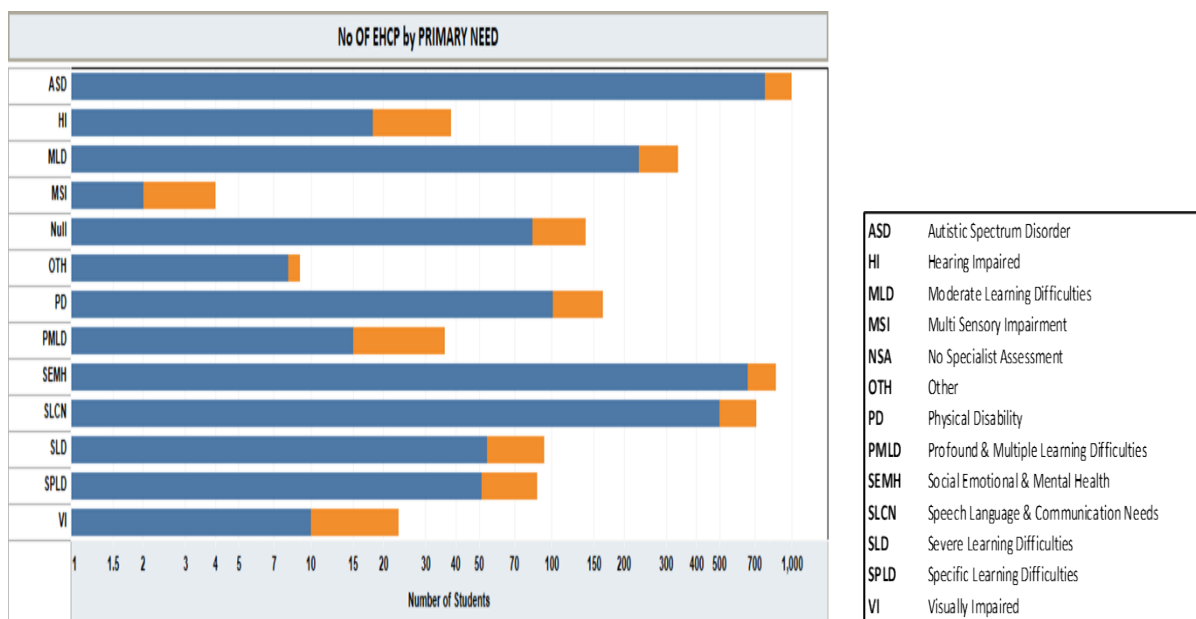


(October 2023 Census)

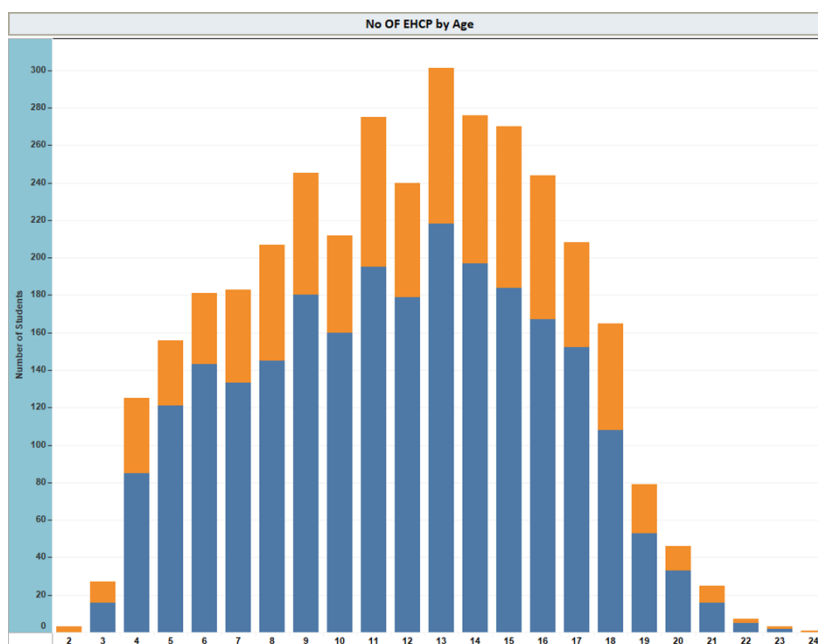


Education, Health & Care Plan Pupils

(MALE: FEMALE)



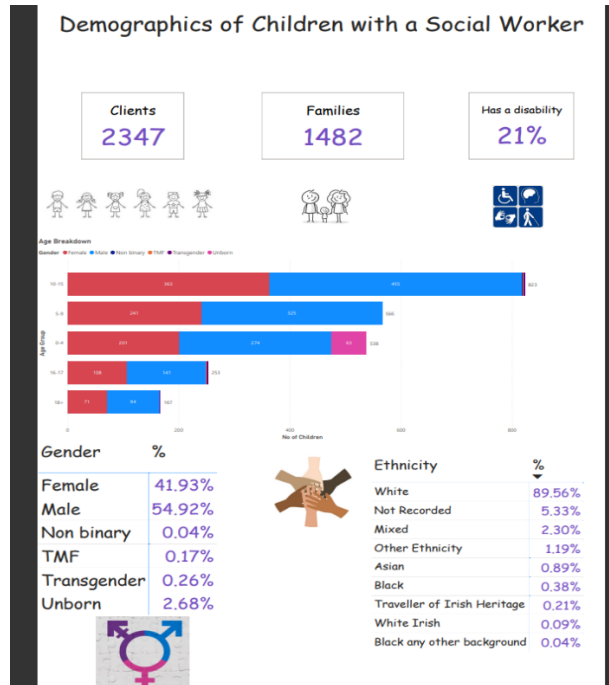
February 2024



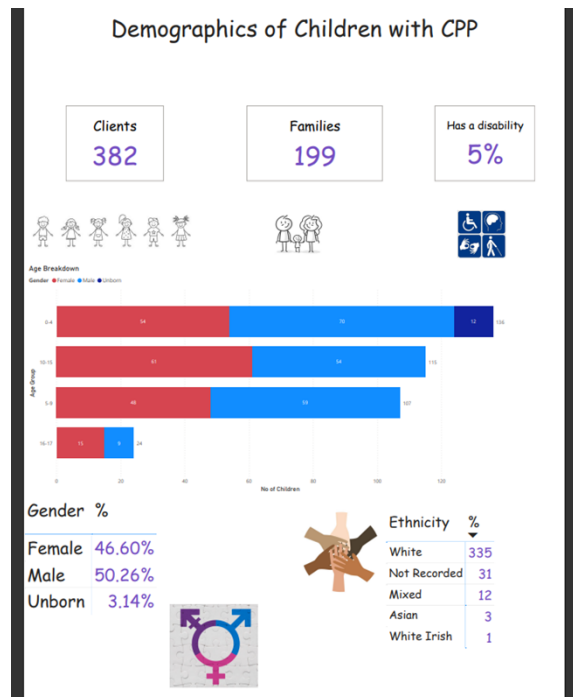
Children's Social Care

Profile of users of Children's Social Work Services

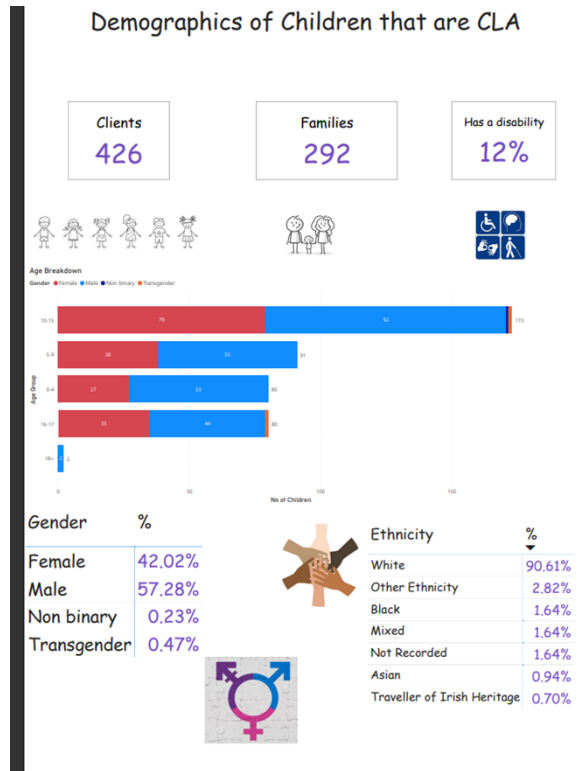
Current cases:



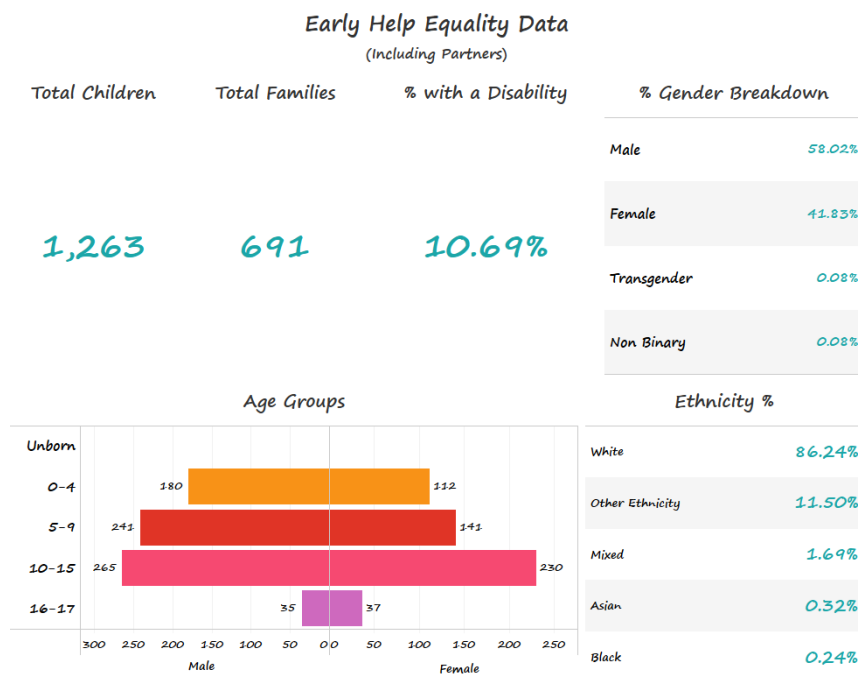
Current Child Protection Plans:



Current Children who are Looked After (Cared for Children):

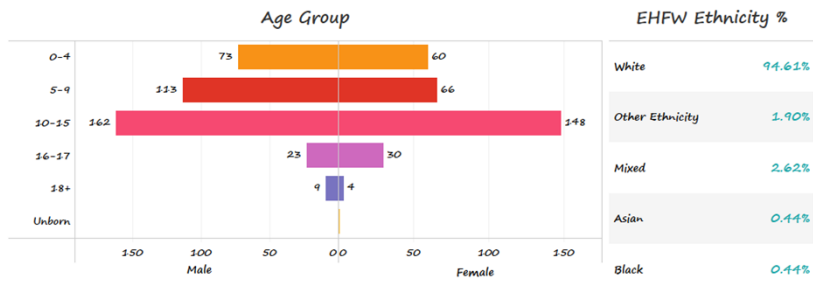


Open Early Help cases as at 24/01/2024



Early Help Family Worker Equality Data

Children	Families	Disability %	% Gender Breakdown	
692	333	10.26%	Male	55.07%
			Female	44.78%
			Non Binary	0.14%



EHFW Ethnicity %	
White	94.61%
Other Ethnicity	1.90%
Mixed	2.62%
Asian	0.44%
Black	0.44%

Consultation & Feedback

The bi-annual Public Health School Health Questionnaire was circulated in December 2023 to all schools, the results from which are still to be confirmed.

The Make Your Mark Survey of children and young people’s priorities is open from January to March 2024, with results to be reviewed when received.

THE Mind of My Own app is a tool which supports young people to have their views heard and listened to. Staff are encouraged to share with children who are open to Children’s Services.

Special Educational Needs – responses of service users 2023 – 24



In 2023, we recognised the presence of a number of LGBTQ+ support groups and Pride Clubs running in Northumberland Middle and High Schools and commissioned local LGBTQ+ support charity Humankind to network and support the teachers who lead these groups through a virtual network which meets once a term.

The voices and lived experiences of vulnerable children and young people, especially those with protected characteristics are visible in the refreshed Terms of Reference of the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership (CYPSP):

‘Current pressures and challenges faced by our children and young people are well documented, in our own service priorities, and in wider society and media. While we recognise that not all of these are within our direct control, tackling inequalities is a corporate priority.’

Children’s Social Care have a Leadership Pledge which is adhered to. It includes;

We will work with others to develop a clear vision and culture that excites, motivates and engages everyone, with a clear focus on making things better for children and young people. We will make sure that equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of all our work.

The Leading in Colour initiative has been delivered to Senior Management within Children's Social Care to raise awareness around leadership and inequity.

Children's Social Work staff have received training in 'Being Culturally Competent'. This has supported staff to be aware of microaggressions, understanding equity and consideration of intersectionality. It also highlights global majority.

Staff are encouraged to partake in The Race Equality Network as participants and allies. The Race Equality Network supports ethnic diversity by highlighting different celebratory days which in turn supports awareness raising of other cultures. Leaders have completed the 'Our Promise; initiative via the Race Equality Matters agenda. The Race Equality Network have secured the bronze status and working towards the silver status.

We will ensure that where we elicit the voice of the child or young person and their lived experience of protected characteristics that we are accountable and communicate with them about their influence. This is being led by NCASP and began in 2023/24 with a review of participation strategies and groups across the council.

Northumberland Parent Carer Forum is the new Department for Education recognised parent carer forum for Northumberland. The forum works with the local authority, health and social care to improve services for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their families.

The 'Being Culturally Competent' training supports awareness raising of the needs of ethnically diverse children and families.

Blyth Family Hub has held specific sessions for women and children from Afghanistan. This has supported inclusion and exposure to other parts of the centre to support children and families to be part of the wider community.

The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership will review and respond to local and national surveys and data which provide insight into the lived experiences, hopes and ambitions of our young people. The vision of the group is *'To work in partnership to prevent harm and develop opportunities for children and young people to thrive and enjoy living their best lives in Northumberland.'*

Part of quality assurance includes the completion of audits. Audits completed within children's social care include children and family feedback options.

Training, resources and updates are offered to schools, the wider children's workforce and governing bodies from teams within SEND, Education and Skills

This includes guidance about legal compliance with the PSED, the language of DEI, Disability Inclusion, English as an Additional Language, Hate Crime and extremism,

Violence against Women and Girls, Traveller Education, Welcoming and integrating Refugee and Asylum Seeker Children, LGBT+ inclusion and race equality.

This offer of support is blended from trainers across teams and from partners such as police, community safety, commissioned services and health.

Staff are supported to attend Bystander Training. The premise is to ensure everyone takes responsibility for their environment/culture regardless of whether they are directly involved in a situation.

In 2024 there will be a particular focus on the involvement of boys and young men in preventing and standing up to gender-based violence and Domestic Abuse. This will be led by the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership and form a significant element of the third year of the NCC White Ribbon action plan.

As part of the 16 Days of Action and Activism in Northumberland (starting in November 2024) an event is being planned for the children's workforce to introduce and raise awareness of the partner organisations which support non-specialists in this area of work.

Four trainers at NCC have completed a 'Lead the Change' programme funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver training to empower the workforce to intervene as active bystanders to challenge violence Against Women and Girls. This training is being delivered in 2023/24.

A Peer Review included bringing together all Network Chairs from across the Council. Consideration was given to intersectionality.

We are a partner organisation of the Sex Education Forum, and member of the PSHE Association.

We recognise the importance of children's entitlement to an education which prepares them well for life in modern Britain, where they learn the values of tolerance, mutual respect and safe and respectful relationships.

Regular meetings (once every half term) of a Personal Development Network for school-based professionals offers a forum for discussion and sharing of best practice with regard to protected characteristics and the wider Personal Development curriculum.

The Virtual School is based in Children's Social Care and is participating in a priority regarding the voice of the child - to inform service delivery and improvements All of this kind of work is captured in the Virtual School Improvement Plan which is evaluated annually, so progress in improving services is monitored and known.

Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS)

NFRS continues to analyse data in order to understand our communities and our current workforce. To support opportunities for recruitment we are reviewing:

- Population of Northumberland breakdown in terms of ethnicity
- Population breakdown of station areas in terms of ethnicity and age (working age) and travel times
- Data on working-age population that live in a station area within the travel time(s); 6, 8 and 10 mins.
- Our existing staff profile.

We are working on developing profiles of the population of each station ground to target recruitment resources more effectively. For example:

- Haltwhistle general population 99.0% are white, 1% other ethnicities
- The total working age population of Haltwhistle within the travel time is 99.04% white, 0.96% other ethnicities
- Of those of 0.96% that are of working age within the travel time of the station 7 Asian, Asian British, 4 Black, Black British, 9 Mixed/multiple ethnic and 4 'Other' = a total of 24 individuals are from a minority background.

Consultation & Feedback

The service sends customer feedback forms to all residents where the service has responded to an emergency at their address.

We send feedback forms to all businesses where we have visited to undertake a Fire Safety Audit.

We have a dedicated website with routes to contact the service as necessary
[Northumberland Fire and Rescue website](#)

We have several active social media accounts (X, Instagram, Facebook & LinkedIn) which the communities regularly engage with.

The last public consultation conducted by NFRS was for the implementation of the Community Risk Management Plan in 2022 [Community Risk Management Plan 2022 Consultation](#)

In 2023 we had a dedicated EDI Lead in the service to support this objective.

Training & Development

Working in partnership with Education partnership North East, the service trialled and evaluated NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Equality and Diversity. (This now forms part of an integrated, long term training programme). It involved three different delivery models to ensure a degree of robustness in the evaluation and to identify which suits the service's business needs best. The delivery models include distance learning, blended and classroom. Developed an EDI Training policy which builds on the e-learning package offered on Learning Together and that details which members of staff will receive ED&I training and what level. This is a long-term, integrated training programme.

In addition, the following training is undertaken by the NFRS workforce:

- Equality and Diversity - All staff - Every 3 years Active Bystander - All staff - Every 3 years
- Be an Active Bystander at Work - All staff - Every 3 years.
- Equality Impact Assessment Training - All staff required to write policies/procedures/project proposals etc that affect service users, residents, or staff - Every 3 years.
- Level 2 Certificate in Equality & Diversity - All staff at supervisory manager or equivalent or working towards supervisory manager or equivalent – Once.
- Level 2 Certificate in Equality & Diversity - All staff at Watch Manager/Station Manager or equivalent or working towards Watch Manager/Station Manager or equivalent – Once.
- Diversity and Inclusion for Middle Managers - All staff at Station Manager/Group Manager or equivalent or working towards Station Manager/Group Manager or equivalent - Every 3 years.
- Diversity and Inclusion for Senior Leaders - All senior leaders at Group Manager or equivalent and above - Every 3 years
- Investigating Officer Training - All members of staff who are going to be carrying out investigations on behalf of the organisation - Every 3 years

We have also delivered EDI-specific sessions at CPD days.

In August 2023, the service commissioned Crosland Consulting Ltd to undertake a DTR of investigations that were requested and notified to His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) for the period September 2017 – March 2023. An analysis of the key findings of the Crosland Review was completed with recommendations following analysis of the review which were

presented in a paper to Directorate Management Team. In addition, the findings of the DTR were cross-referenced with three independent culture reviews recently published to identify any common themes and to maximise learning from findings across the sector.

The latest HMICFRS inspection report of NFRS acknowledges the improvements that have been made by the service since the last inspection:

'The service has a much-improved approach to its values and culture, and this is evident at all levels of the organisation. The newly implemented people strategy bases its expectations of staff on the service's code of ethics. Staff told us that they feel empowered to challenge unacceptable behaviours and are confident they will be supported by managers when they do. • The service has made a commitment to improve its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). This includes assigning a dedicated EDI lead. Staff awareness of EDI issues has improved and continues to do so. There is further work to be done on updating equality impact assessments, and the service recognises the need for this. It would benefit the service if all staff across the organisation developed a better understanding of the need for positive action and how this could improve equality and diversity.'

We have undertaken a review of reports that have been produced for a number of Fire Services across the country in relation to culture and ED&I to inform our current position.

We are working towards the completion of the HMICFRS ED&I action plan based on national learning: [HMICFRS ED&I Action Plan](#)

NFRS signed a pledge to ensure that the national core code of ethics is adopted at an individual and corporate level. The core code of ethics is a national standard based upon ED&I principles: [Core Code of Ethics](#)

Planning Services

Consultation and Engagement

As part of the application process, we consult the public on all planning applications. We have also carried out several consultations/ engagement relating to Planning policy and neighbourhood planning.

Neighbourhood Planning

Dedicated team to support town and parish councils. We are currently working with 28 parish councils on neighbourhood plans. We build up significant knowledge and understanding of the needs of our communities over a longish time (3-5 years to develop and adopt a neighbourhood plan). We build trust and aim to build an effective working relationship with parish councillors and other members of the community involved in neighbourhood planning.

Open Space Survey

As part of our work to undertake an Open Space assessment of the County, we have sought to capture the views and needs of our communities. We want to understand the open spaces they value and why, and their priorities. This will help inform guidance and future planning policy. It will also inform how we work towards future improvements to open spaces e.g. how we try and target 106 contributions to best effect.

Pre-Application Service

We have recently relaunched our pre application service in 2023. We are actively seeking feedback from users of the service to ensure we are meeting their needs. In 2024 we are working to effectively monitor the service with greater data insights and trigger improvements as required.

Community engagement on planning policy

We are looking ahead to how best to work with other departments to improve our engagement and consultation processes on planning policy matters generally. It is hoped that a shift to more digital engagement will open up planning consultations to a wider audience, but also free up resources to enable us to do some more targeted engagement.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

We will be commissioning in 2024, a new SHMA to update our evidence about housing needs across the county. This will provide evidence to support the provision of different types, sizes and tenures, including affordable housing to meet the needs of Northumberland's communities.

Planning Applications

As part of the planning process, we invite the public to provide their views and feedback on planning application proposals which we will consider in the decision-making. We publish all applications online and provide support on request to anyone having issues accessing information. The officer will also produce a report which summaries any comments received and explains how they have reached the conclusion for their recommendation, again this is made public.

The Open space work has sought to source consultation and engagement findings from other services. i.e. rather than relying just on our open space survey work we have been looking to other council consultation exercises to see what people have said that might be relevant to open spaces.

Gypsy and Traveller Transit Sites

Drawing upon the findings of a recent needs assessment, during 2024 we will be seeking to deliver, through planning and development, a transit site for gypsies and travellers.

Training and Development

All our staff complete Equality and Diversity training. Following the results from the last staff survey, we have held several staff workshops and carried out surveys to identify how we can better support staff. We run monthly continuous professional development (CPD) sessions for all staff to attend and introduced internal on-boarding training for all new employees.

We have also put forward a successful funding bid from central Government to support skills development and to reduce backlogs and we have submitted a further 2 funding bids to support system/ digital development. We also remain committed to ensuring all recruitment is in accordance with corporate policies and we have a diverse workforce.

We have improved our communication across the service by having regular team and service wide meetings and also made improvements with our internal newsletters, sharing updates from each team and from senior leaders. We feature articles on health& well-being and share and acknowledge good work/ results. We are currently reforming our website and undertaking a review of all the information to ensure it is in an accessible format, working with customer services to improve customer journeys.

Housing Services

Housing Services provides services to the residents of Northumberland and to its own tenants. As a landlord with over 8500 properties in our portfolio we are one of the largest social landlords in Northumberland, as well as providing other housing-related services.

Housing staff support the White Ribbon Campaign through which we challenge negative attitudes towards, and violence against, women and girls. Work is also being done around raising the profile of services who are able to help and support men who may be experiencing domestic abuse, and it is hoped that this will help to encourage more men affected by this to speak out and seek help.

The Strategic Housing service has part funded a Domestic Abuse Support Service (currently out to tender) which includes specialist support for male victims and LGBTQ victims.

Housing also has representation across teams from staff who have volunteered to become Northumbria Domestic and Sexual Violence Champions, the aim of this being to provide support to colleagues who may be seeking help for tenants they are working with, or who may be experiencing this personally.

We have a network of voluntary Domestic Abuse Champions across our housing teams who are there to advise colleagues working with victims of domestic abuse as well as providing a confidential support service to staff who may be personally experiencing issues. Part of the Champions' role involves raising awareness of current resources and services available locally or nationally to provide professional expertise for victims of domestic abuse.

We are currently looking at the impact of Domestic Abuse on those with protected characteristics because we are aware that these cohorts may be impacted differently or have a range of cumulative issues and could find it more difficult to seek specialist support if they feel there are not services available with an understanding of their unique circumstances.

We are identifying specialist services and resources and ways of breaking down barriers for those with protected characteristics seeking help. In 2024 we will be discussing our findings with our Learning & Organisational Development colleagues to consider some thematic bespoke training for housing staff as well as sharing specialist resources with colleagues to support their work around tenants with protected characteristics and also the wider communities in support of greater understanding.

The service has added an additional disabled access unit for clients requiring temporary accommodation.

Asylum Seekers and Refugees

The Asylum Seeker and Refugee team are responsible for the delivery of NCC's Home Office funded Resettlement Schemes and operate an advocacy model of support with tailored personal support plans agreed with the refugee families shortly after their arrival in Northumberland, which set out in easily understandable terms how the team of family support workers will help individual families initially orientate to their new surroundings, and then, begin to engage with their new host communities and access opportunities for self-development, voluntary work and employment.

The team currently support

- Former Asylum Seekers (FAS) 80 households (115 people)
- Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) 19 households (66 people)
- Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) 23 households (137 people)
- Homes for Ukraine (HfU) 182 households (443 people)

The Asylum Seeker & Refugee team regularly undertake training relating to the clients we support which can include political, historical and cultural subject matters.

The AS&R team employ skilled staff who have arrived in the UK under different resettlement schemes. Anyone in the team with lived experience is able to share insights and knowledge of their communities' cultural and service needs and help the communities in question understand that we are here to help so that they can be open and honest with us. Many of our clients have a very understandable distrust of authority.

The Asylum Seeker and Refugee team encourage and welcome applications from people who have lived experience of the Asylum or Refugee process and who bring with them a wealth of skills, both linguistic and cultural, among others. It adds to the quality of our service offer, and it is important for us to demonstrate practical E&D

The service currently employs a Ukrainian national, an Afghan national and a former Asylum Seeker who have lived experience in common with clients as well as shared language and cultural knowledge.

Gypsy Roma Travellers Service (GRT)

The GRT service is working to provide Negotiated Stopping Locations which will improve facilities for the Travelling community. This will have a positive impact on the management of unauthorised roadside encampments and should lessen tensions with the settled community and have a positive impact on the potential for hate incidents and crimes. It will also result in an improved living environment for nomadic Travellers migrating through the county.

Strategic Housing has introduced a refuse waste management system for unauthorised encampments. Wheelie bins are supplied to enable the Travellers to manage their waste. This lessens conflict with the settled community and environmental impacts and has meant a reduction in complaints. The system has been embraced by the Travelling community and well supported by Local Services This has been embraced by the Travelling community and has had positive impact in community cohesion.

The GRT Officer has devised training specifically around equality, diversity and inclusion for the Gypsy Roma Traveller community this training has been delivered to Northumbria Police Force Northern Area Command and to over 300 neighbourhood police officers. The GRT training will be rolled out annually to specialist nurse practitioners across the region and he is in the process of delivering the training to social workers in Northumberland.

Housing also currently manages the two permanent GRT Sites in Northumberland, providing services to Residents who live on the sites. Currently there are 11 Pitches at Lyneburn Cottages, Lynemouth and 28 pitches at Hartford Bridge, Bedlington.

Homelessness & Housing Options

The homelessness and housing options service gathers equality and diversity information and reports this to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) through Homelessness Case Level Information Collection (HCLIC) via Delta reporting system. The HCLIC collects detailed case-level information on households each quarter, as they progress through each of the prevention, relief, and main duty decision stages of the statutory homelessness system.

The statistics for April 2023 to March 2024 show a total of 2507 households contacted the Homelessness and Housing Options Service of which

- 260 were cancelled or closed
- 1141 were advice and information only
- 170 were prevented from becoming homeless

- 316 were relieved from being homeless
- 105 went through to main duty,
- 85 No duty owed, and
- 2 households were ineligible.
- 428 are currently in progress.

The 591 applications that were reported as prevented, relieved and main duty can be broken down into the categories detailed below.

Ethnicity, Gender and Age

The figures show that of the 676 households who homeless or threatened with homelessness between 01/04/2023 to 12/03/2024.

- 23% (155) were female, white British with an average age of 37 years old with dependent children.
- The total number of applicants where there were dependent children in the household was 235 (35%) with an overall total of 411 children (those under 18 years of age).
- Total number of applications where there was a support need for physical health issues was 63 and 103 for mental health support needs.

Ethnicity

- | | | |
|--|------------|------|
| • White | 597 people | 88% |
| • Black, Black British, Caribbean or African | 14 people | 2% |
| • Asian or Asian British | 22 people | 3% |
| • Mixed or multiple ethnic groups | 3 people | 0.5% |
| • Other ethnic group | 15 people | 2.5% |
| • Preferred not to say | 26 people | 4% |

To assist people where English is not their first language and there maybe difficulty in communication the services, interpreters are employed to ensure that the client fully understands the processes of the homelessness application. The interpreter services have been used **27** times during the specified period from 01/11/2021 to the 31/10/2022.

Gender

The figures on gender show there are 20% more female than male applicants, however due to the way the information is recorded and reported on the system we are unable to determine whether these are joint application or sole applications, we can only determine who the lead applicant is.

- | | | |
|----------|------------|-----|
| • Female | 392 people | 60% |
| • Male | 263 people | 40% |

The figures show that 39% of all applicants were single male without children. A higher number of single males without children than females were accepted as either homeless or threatened with homelessness during the period.

Households without children can be summarised as follows.

- Single female without children 110 16% of all applicants
- Single male without children 215 32% of all applicants

Age

Figures for homeless applicants by age are as follows.

- 18-24 101 people 15%
- 25-44 378 people 56%
- 45-64 150 people 22%
- 65-74 34 people 5%
- 75 & over 13 people 2%

Applicants who are aged under 18 years of age are automatically classed as vulnerable and as such would be given priority for housing and were deemed necessary would be provided with support to enable them to live independently or given a placement in supported accommodation.

Temporary Accommodation

The council has a total of 55 units of temporary accommodation including four temporary accommodation units, with this figure soon to be increased to 65 units. Across the County there is 1 fully adapted room, 3 rooms have access to a disabled bathroom facilities and 9 rooms which are fully accessible.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding and Housing rolled out safeguarding refresher training for all NCC Housing teams in June 2023 which was aimed at supporting older residents who may be vulnerable to domestic abuse. Additionally, plans are in place for a themed workshop to take place in early spring 2023 across NCC Housing Teams and independent social housing partner organisations, which will consider the safeguarding and wellbeing needs of younger tenants, under the umbrella of transitional safeguarding.

Housing safeguarding is working in partnership with NCC's Early Help Service to promote resources across Housing teams for the signposting of tenants and families

to take up support in their area. This includes county-wide services accessible to all such as Family Hubs who are able to provide a range of support and signposting to specialist services and this includes help for pregnancy, early years and breastfeeding.

Ensuring that support for domestic abuse victims is shared with our RSL partners across Northumberland as our safeguarding/domestic abuse responsibilities extend to all tenants within this county. We are currently in the planning stage of building on existing connections to coordinate a sub-group of RSLs to bring us together regularly to share good practice in terms of our statutory domestic abuse and safeguarding responsibilities towards social housing tenants across the county.

The continuation of domestic abuse and safeguarding training packages specifically designed for housing staff on a range of thematic issues, including some of the key NCASP priorities.

The inclusion and involvement of communities - how we equip them with knowledge to recognise the challenges victims face, so they are able to appropriately seek support when they are worried about a family member, friend or neighbour. We have an already established tenant alliance who are involved in consultations and to who we have already delivered information sessions for a range of safeguarding issues with further sessions planned.

Our People

At the time this report was compiled, Northumberland County Council employed a total of **5200** employees (this does not include staff from the council's schools). As at the 8th January 2024, **1736** staff (33.38%) had provided their Equality Information. This section provides an analysis of our workforce composition by protected characteristic and covers the period April 2023 to January 2024.

We recognise that it is important that declaration rates are improved, and that staff recognise the importance of providing this information. This forms a key component of our new People Strategy.

Engagement with hard-to-reach employees remains a priority and we continue to work closely with Staff Network Groups, Trade Union Colleagues and other key stakeholders to address this area and to break down the barriers to engagement.

Our Workforce Equality Analysis Report 2024 is available [here](#)

Our Gender Pay Gap Report 2024 is available [here](#)

Engagement

We have held 2 Pulse Surveys in 2023 to determine the level of wellbeing of our workforce, with any data received anonymised.

We will be undertaking exercises to strengthen the knowledge of our employees' protective characteristics in 2024. To lessen the suspicion that the data will be used negatively and make sure employees know why we ask for such data so we can meet their needs in an improved way. We will undertake a full staff survey in 2024 and will ask for anonymised data that can be broken down into service area to help us understand our makeup.

Service areas do their own individual consultation exercises linked to structure changes where an EIA is advised to be undertaken.

We have reviewed our internal Staff Network groups and are moving to a more consistent approach for all groups with an Executive Director taking a lead role with regular meetings with Network Co-Chairs, Champions and HR OD links to make sure the groups engage and are listened to. The Groups also are involved in the refresh of any HR policies. In addition, we have a clear commitment from our Executive Team with our Executive Director of Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities acting as Champion of Champions and feeding back to Executive Group.

Recruitment

We have actively developed and improved our Recruitment processes, providing additional support and adjustments to enable a wider group of people to apply for

vacant positions. This has been supported through our revised recruitment team and recruitment events.

Strategic Change

The development of our new recruitment system Tribepad was focused on improving the recruitment process and system from a DEI perspective. This included a workshop with representatives from Staff Network Groups, HR and the DEI Lead to explore how the recruitment process could better support people with protected characteristics. The outcome of this work included improvements to the wording within the system, approaches to recruitment (including reasonable adjustments), the type of information available to be shared with applicants and recruiting officers and the interview process as a whole.

As a service that focuses on supporting and enabling change, at the heart of our work are the needs of our communities. We will continue to champion the need to understand communities and within our work challenge ourselves to ensure we understand the needs of communities when working in an area that might impact communities and service users.

Collaboration and engagement are fundamental to effective change and so within our work we will ensure when planning our work, we are looking for opportunities to listen to, involve and respond to our communities.

Throughout 2023 we have delivered several engagement activities with groups of staff. This includes engagement around WorkSmart, PA Review, Tribepad, Fix My Street.

In 2023 a member of our team (as Equality Lead) presented a development session on the Workforce Equality Report to increase understanding within the team of the diversity of the Council workforce and to support discussion how we factor in protected characteristics when considering our reviews. We want to ensure our team when considering improvement work is thinking about the impact of change on our diverse staff groups.

We provided capacity from our staffing resource to deliver the EDI Lead for the Council. This team member supported and encouraged our service to think about the impact of EDI in the work that we do and considering positive opportunities to improve the Council's approach to equality and diversity. This is embedded in our service review approaches.

Corporate Finance

The Corporate Finance team support the development of their staff through various means, enhancing their understanding of DEI and developing ways to improve accessibility for all customers, both internal and external. Staff training includes professional accountancy training, data academy, statutory & mandatory training.

In addition, the service will be developing a customer satisfaction survey to be sent out to customers in 2024 to help identify any additional opportunities to improve accessibility and inclusivity.

Commissioning and Procurement Service

The Corporate Commissioning and Procurement Service does not collect data on employees or organisations that it provides services to as they are employees within the public sector. However the Service does expect successful Tenderers to be equally committed to equality and diversity in their employment practices and service provision and adhere to all anti-discrimination legislation.

As such equality and diversity is considered at the supplier selection stage and in the Invitation to Tender documentation, in terms of specification and contractual terms and allows for the inclusion of policies relevant to the contract which then form a Mandatory Requirement for delivery by the successful Tenderer. This is then subject to monitoring by the nominated Contract Manager as appropriate.

The Service recruited a new post of Social Value and Responsible Procurement Manager to implement the Council's Procurement Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Policy, providing professional advice and guidance to commissioners to deliver wider financial and non-financial outcomes, including improving wellbeing of individuals and communities, compliance with internal policies and procedures, Best Value and best practice.

The Council are hosted a Northumberland Supplier Engagement event on 1st March 2024 to promote opportunities to do business with the Council, to increase the diversity base of suppliers in Northumberland and promote a better understanding of equality, diversity inclusion and social value clauses in contracts. Existing and potential suppliers will be consulted and engaged with to encourage their feedback which will help inform the development of a new commissioning framework for the Council.

The Service also participates in the Voluntary and Community Sector Liaison Group chaired by Councillor Ezhilchelvan to promote collaborative working and provide an opportunity for all VCSE organisations to have a place at the table (regardless of size

or status) to discuss sectorial challenges, debate sector priorities and help shape and influence local policy and strategic priorities.

The Service will be responsible for implementing the new Procurement Act 2023 in October 2024. This will open up public procurement to new entrants such as small businesses and social enterprises so that they can compete for and win more public contracts.

The Council's Budget

The Council's budget is a combination of two parts:

- Revenue: which pays for day-to-day costs such as staff and equipment
- Capital: which pays for major projects such as buildings, schools and roads

The Revenue budget provides both:

- Statutory services: these must be provided by law.
- Discretionary services – services that the Council is not legally obliged to provide.

The County Council has a statutory duty to set a budget and these proposals will include savings of £10.846 million in 2024-25 and £14.95 million in 2025-26 with impacts on several of the Council's services. Also included is a planned core increase, for each of those years, in Council Tax of 2.99% plus an additional 2% adult social care levy to provide funding specifically for adult social care.

The Council's budget is largely funded by combination of government grants, local taxation and fees and charges. The Council has experienced significant pressures on its budget recently from inflation, increased demand for services and new financial burdens.

All individual budget savings proposals for 2024-25 and 2025-26 have been initially screened for potential equality implications, and where this has identified potential equality impacts, specific impact assessments have been or will be carried out – except in cases where the final decision on whether to proceed with the saving will be taken after the budget round. In those cases, impact assessments will be carried out prior to final decisions being made and those assessments could, potentially, lead to decisions that some savings should not be made as currently proposed but should be achieved in other ways.

A significant proportion of the anticipated savings over the two years 2024-25 and 2025-26 are expected to result from multiple projects that will deliver the Council's BEST ways of working programme. The business case for BEST savings was agreed at a Cabinet meeting on 17th January 2023. A key aim of the BEST programme is “no

detriment to residents” therefore consideration will be given to the potential equality impact at the design of each change project option.

During the development of each project, individual project Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out and considered by the Programme Board. These assessments will be updated as the projects develop and both the balance of savings across the programme and the approaches taken within individual projects will be reconsidered if any significant detrimental impact is identified on a group of residents, or staff, sharing protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010.

Our approach remains transformational in terms of service integration and new ways of working, identifying more effective and efficient service delivery, as well as exploring opportunities to generate income. The recent budget set by the council is focused upon protecting frontline services, investing in the future, and looking after the most vulnerable people.

Data Sources & Useful Links

Office for National Statistics – [Northumberland facts and figures](#)

Equality Act 2010 - [Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Public Sector Equality Duty - [Public sector equality duty - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Northumberland County Council Corporate Plan [CORPORATE-PLAN-2023-26.pdf](#)

Northumberland Economic Strategy [Economic Strategy final 2019-2024](#)

Northumberland Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy [Homelessness-and-Rough-Sleeper-Strategy-2022-2026](#)