



Workforce Equality Report - 2023



Northumberland
County Council

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Foreword

The year 2022/23 has seen a period of significant change for the Council. The Workforce Equality Report provides valuable insight into the diversity of our workforce and how we engage with them to ensure all voices are heard. The achievements outlined in this report, affirms where our strengths truly lie as an organisation: within our people.

Throughout this period of change, we have sought the opinions of our workforce, from the re-evaluation of Council Values to the return of our Staff Survey. Their feedback will inform our approach for the forthcoming year and help us develop further as an organisation. This report outlines some findings from these activities, alongside other key data insights, which allow us to better understand our workforce.

As an organisation, our people are our key asset, and it is critical that every single individual within our workforce feels valued and respected for who they are and for what they bring to the organisation, and that each individual is given as much opportunity to flourish and develop within the Council as the next person.



There are many highlights and key areas of progress outlined within this report, driven by the ideas of our people. We are proud of all they have achieved and continue to achieve. Our aim is to propel this further by remaining fully committed to fostering a culture of equality, diversity, and inclusion within the organisation.

**Sarah Farrell,
Director of Workforce and OD**

Foreword

“As a Council, we are especially proud of the dedication and unwavering commitment shown by employees in the wake of unprecedented challenges, such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Our workforce has continued to ensure that Northumberland’s residents and communities receive the levels of exemplary service they deserve.

Throughout this time, our staff have adapted to different ways of working and shown great innovation in tackling these challenges. It is in our diversity and difference that we thrive and can be truly innovative as a workforce. By embracing our individual strengths and understanding how we can work together, we discover our potential.



We will capitalise on new opportunities, brought about by challenge and change, and work together to build upon our strengths. The Workforce Equality Report showcases the talent within our organisation, and we strive to shape a workforce which is as varied and diverse as the communities we serve.”

**Cllr Wendy Pattison,
Cabinet Member for Adults’ Wellbeing**

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 workforce and the actions we are taking as an employer 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.

As part of this duty, we collect and publish information about our workforce and the actions we are taking as an employer to progress these objectives. While we are required to publish this information, we welcome the opportunity to reflect. Firstly, to reflect on the valuable work done throughout the year that has enabled us to further equality, diversity, and inclusion within our organisation. 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 employer.

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 employees are engaged, heard, and valued at work. 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

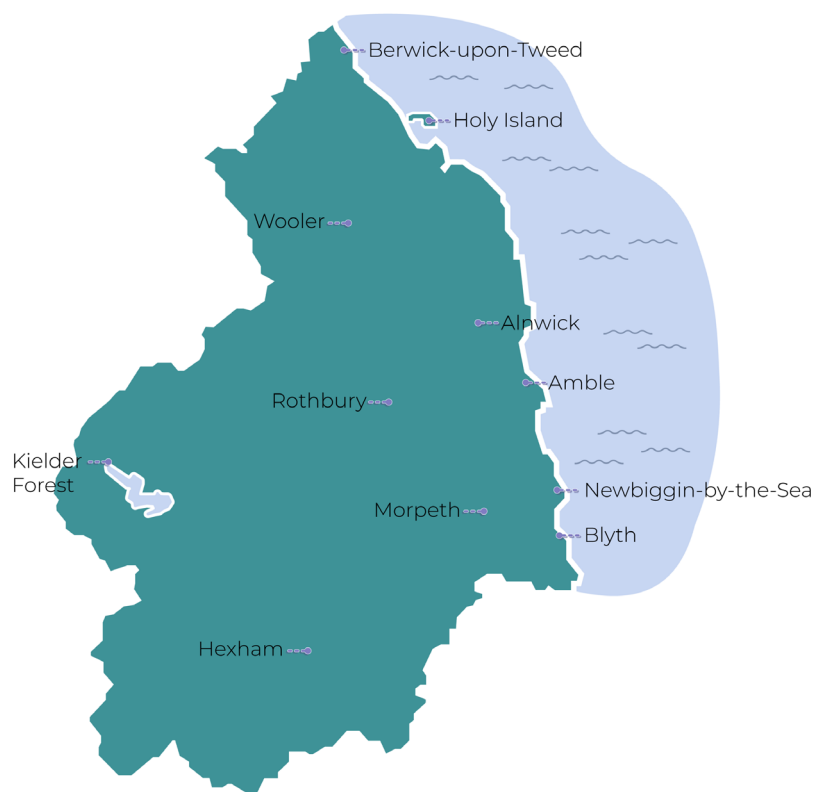
This report provides an overview of the Council's performance in relation to equality and employment through the lens of the protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010). It also provides an insight into the work, initiatives and partnerships around equality, diversity, and inclusion across the workforce and within our communities.

About Northumberland

Northumberland is the northern most county in England, 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.

With an area of approximately 1,936 square miles, Northumberland is the 7th largest county in England. Conversely, with a population of approximately 320,600 it has one of the lowest populations of all English counties and is therefore one of the least densely populated.

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.



About Northumberland

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 almost 5096 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 11.63% which compares well to the national average of 13.8%.

Northumberland is a popular visitor destination renowned for its rural beauty covering over 500,000 hectares. It has 5,616 listed buildings, including many sites of importance to the country's national heritage. Alnwick and Bamburgh are internationally renowned for their castles. Cragside and Wallington Hall head a list of nationally important buildings/estates operated by the National Trust and are two of the many listed buildings in the county. Holy Island and Hadrian's Wall are also ancient sites of worldwide historical interest within the County.

Highlights and Achievements

Menopause pledge



Trailblazer

Disability confident



White ribbon



Our Staff Network Groups

The council's Staff Network Groups go from strength to strength and continue to be a driving force behind our commitment to create a workplace environment which promotes diversity, fairness and equality for all.

Our Staff Network Groups also act as an important barometer and critical friend to measure how well we are meeting this commitment. The various Network Groups were formed in response to feedback received through our employee surveys; they are run by staff, for staff and provide opportunities for peer networking, mutual support and staff development. Each network group is also assigned an Executive Team sponsor who will champion the network at senior level, thereby ensuring that equality and diversity are always at the forefront of senior leadership thinking.

We currently have nine network groups across the Council:



We work closely with our staff network groups in the review and development of our new and existing HR policies, to ensure that the views of those who are often unrepresented are heard and considered when formulating Council policy.

Our Values

2022 saw the Council embark on an ambitious programme to review and refresh our current core corporate values. Our corporate vision of “One Council that works for everyone” has, since 2019, been underpinned by 4 key values;



**Excellence
and
Quality**



**Keeping our
Communities
Safe and Well**



**Residents
first**



Respect

In the Autumn of 2022, we commenced a series of workshops and consultations with staff and members to determine whether our values remained relevant and, to develop a behavioural framework to underpin those values and help support a journey of cultural change. Initial feedback from our staff achieved through ‘quick fire’ polls across a variety of communication channels indicated that those who responded overwhelmingly felt that our current values were still relevant and / or fit for purpose. 96% of respondents answered in the affirmative with the provision that some of these believed that our current values required marginal refinement. Early analysis from our staff survey which ran in the last quarter of 2022 showed a positive response in terms of understanding and awareness amongst staff of the current values and how they support the services we provide. There were also positive indicators around how the values are being demonstrated by colleagues and by managers.

Following on from our initial findings, we have now delivered a series of workshops with over 300 colleagues and members from across all areas and levels of the Council, allowing us to co-design the new framework. The focus during these workshops has been to discuss the current values, what they mean in the context of our work and how they are lived through staff behaviours at different levels.

Our Values

We are now moving into the second phase of our programme which has a number of key strands and objectives:

- ◇ Development of our draft framework informed by the feedback and insight received to date
- ◇ Pressure test the draft framework through a series of focus groups with a broad spectrum of staff and via a member workshop
- ◇ Work with our Staff Networks to test our framework for any hidden bias
- ◇ Identify next steps for integration throughout all our people practices
- ◇ Develop a communications plan to facilitate the promotion, roll out and embedding of the values and new behaviours frameworks
- ◇ Identify success measures

Staff Survey

In the Autumn of 2022, staff across the whole organisation were invited to respond to our Staff Survey. We received a total of 2,614 responses which equates to approximately 51% of our workforce excluding schools. Response rates to staff surveys will of course vary from organisation to organisation, and there is some evidence to suggest that larger, more complex organisations such as the Council will tend to have lower response rates. We are very grateful to all those staff who took the time to respond to our survey. Under current plans, staff surveys will take place on an 18-month cycle, and in the interim, we will seek to understand why significant numbers of staff chose not to complete our survey and look at ways of improving engagement levels ahead of the next scheduled survey.

Our staff survey produced some very useful feedback about how staff see our organisation, what we do well as an organisation and what we could do better. Detailed analysis of survey results will lead to an action plan, and we will work alongside Service Directors, Heads of Service and other senior managers within the organisation to address areas of concern.

65% of all respondents to our latest survey were female (females form 60.36% of our workforce) and almost 57% of all respondents were aged between 45 and 64.

At a very basic level this means that we have much lower levels of engagement with the staff survey amongst men and younger employees, and we will work to understand why this is the case.

Throughout this report under each section dedicated to one of the protected characteristics, we will provide further highlights from our survey.

Our Policies

As an equal opportunity employer, we welcome employees of all backgrounds, appreciating the benefits of being able to tap into a range of skills and ideas. Different people bring different perspectives, ideas and abilities. By employing a diverse workforce, the Council can be progressive, solve problems and innovate.

In addition, NCC has a statutory duty under the Equality Act to recognise the needs of its employees in relation to the 9 protected characteristics. We have a responsibility to prevent discrimination and ultimately our aim is to improve the chances, experiences and daily lives of people who work for us or who access our services. Whilst we acknowledge our duties and responsibilities under the Equality Act, we have ambition to go beyond the legislation, we want to positively celebrate diversity and we aspire to establish a reputation as a truly inclusive employer and a brand which incorporates our values.

To be the best organisation we need the best employees, so we need to reach out and be fully inclusive in our practices

If we get it right for the most vulnerable members of our workforce, we get it right for everyone. To support this we regularly review our HR policies to ensure that they are up to date, relevant and reflective of best practice. We regularly conduct Equality Impact Assessments where a change is to be made to ensure that our policies are fair and equitable to all and free of discrimination. We have worked closely with our staff network groups in the development of new and existing policies to ensure that the voices and views of those groups are heard. Following feedback from our staff network groups, we have begun to make changes to how our policies are set out to make them clearer, simpler and more accessible. We hope to accelerate this programme of change over the next twelve months. Our aim is to embark on an extensive programme of updating our policies, adopting best practice and technologies and work with our network groups to produce our policies in formats which meet the diverse needs of our employees.

We have a range of HR policies which underpin our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion across the organisation, and we have recently adopted several policies which help to promote equality and inclusivity across the organisation and remove barriers to success. They include Agile Working, Breastfeeding Policy, Carers in Work, Dignity at Work, Domestic Abuse, Equality and Diversity, Learning and Development, Psychological Wellbeing, and Trans-Inclusion.

Our Workforce Profile

At the time this report was compiled, Northumberland County Council employed a total of 5,096 employees, not including the council's schools, therefore the data contained within this report does not include school's staff. This section provides an analysis of our workforce composition by protected characteristic and covers the period April 2022 to March 2023. It should be noted that we do not have complete data for all sections of our workforce, and staff are under no obligation to provide personal data.



We are acutely aware that we need to improve declaration rates, and this is a key component of our equality strategy. Previous efforts to increase both the quality and volume of our data through a number of focused initiatives have met with varying degrees of success. While we have seen small numbers of staff volunteering information where it was not held, engagement with hard-to-reach employees was on the whole disappointing, and we will 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.

The following pages of this report provide a detailed breakdown of our staff profile by protected characteristic. Alongside each breakdown we offer commentary and key highlights from our staff survey.

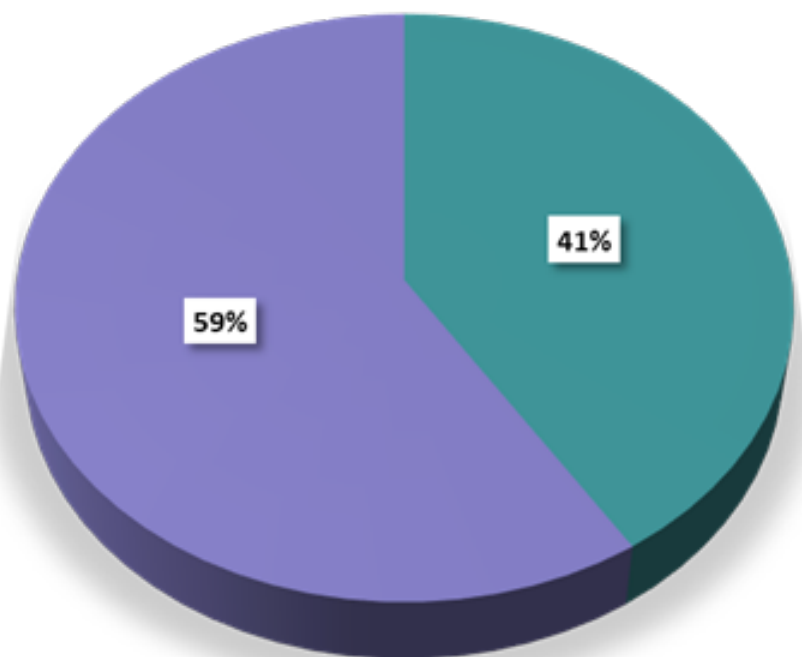
Sex

The split of males to females across Northumberland is roughly equal. According to mid-year population estimates published by the ONS in 2021, males account for 48.8% of Northumberland's 321,558 population, while females made up 51.2% of the total.

Our data shows that in line with historical trends, females continue to outnumber males. Females currently make up 59.14% of our workforce. This a slight increase from the previous year (58.89%). Males currently make up 40.86% of our workforce.

Whole Workforce Gender Breakdown

■ Male ■ Female



Sex

Our data shows that women outnumber men in almost every pay band. To a large extent, this is to be expected, given that women outnumber men across the Council as a whole (by a ratio of approximately 3:2)

It is noticeable that there is a much greater density of women than men at the lowest pay band. Of those employees who are paid at Apprentice or Band One, 83.78% are women. This may be linked to historic factors. While there has been a pleasing shift away from the traditional work roles, many women have still had more caring responsibilities and have experienced more barriers to career progression. There does not appear to be a direct correlation between age and low pay as evidenced in section 3.5 and there may therefore be other factors in play. Our employees come from a very diverse range of social backgrounds; Northumberland has areas of great affluence and extreme deprivation, and women may therefore experience a range of different barriers to career progression. The number of women in the lowest pay bands has increased quite significantly since we reported on our figures in March 2022. We as an organisation recognise this and seek to further understand what the driving factors are behind this discrepancy and ensure that any barriers in place for women who want to join or progress in our organisation are removed.

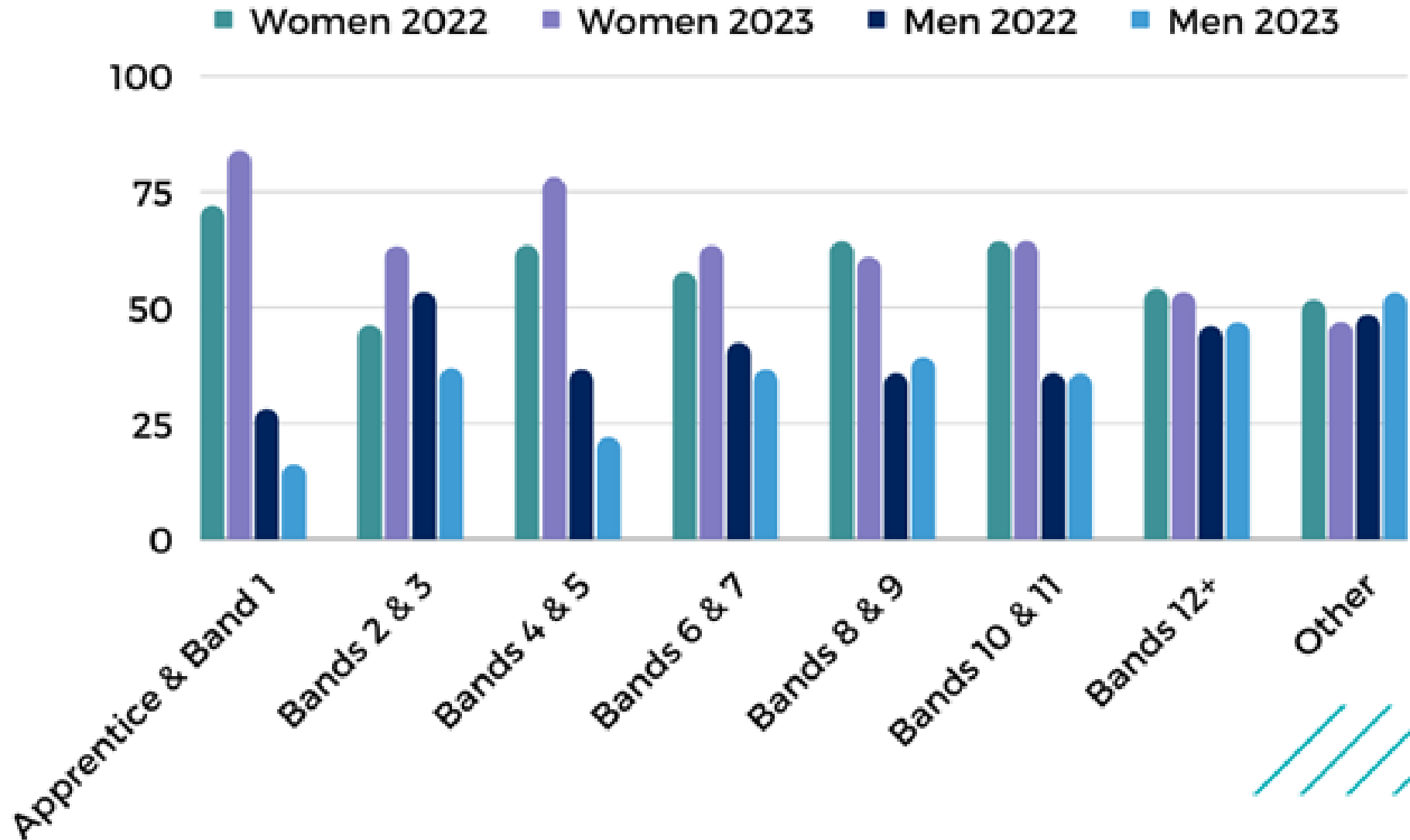
In contrast it is positive that women hold the majority of the more senior positions within the Council. However, numbers tend to taper as we move through to the senior grades. When we consider women outnumber men across the organisation, women are proportionately underrepresented at senior grades. We would expect slightly higher numbers and while there are many females who operate very successfully at senior positions within the Council, figures would suggest that there still exists to some degree a 'glass ceiling' which is preventing females from reaching their full potential, and that at some point, continued progression up grades becomes challenging.

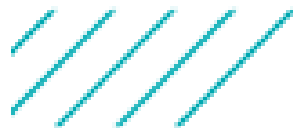
The number of females in part-time roles continues to outnumber males across almost all pay bands. Additionally, most of our part time workers are employed at the lower end of the pay scale. This may be due to childcare responsibilities and the perceived role of women as primary childcare givers. We have a range of family friendly policies including a Shared Parental Leave Policy and Family Leave Policy which apply to men and women equally and which we may improve this balance. We are also committed to ensuring that the personal choice to work part time should not impact upon an individual's career progression, and for this reason and we are committed to ensuring that all of our job adverts state that our posts are open to flexible working.

Furthermore, we acknowledge that we have staff who identify in a different way to male/female and gave this as an option in our recent staff survey. We will amend our data collection systems to allow people who identify in a different way to be able to record this in the future. In some situations, such as for payroll or records for HMRC this may not be possible as only sex recorded at birth or on a gender recognition certificate can be recorded in these systems this is a requirement set by an external agency that we have to comply with.



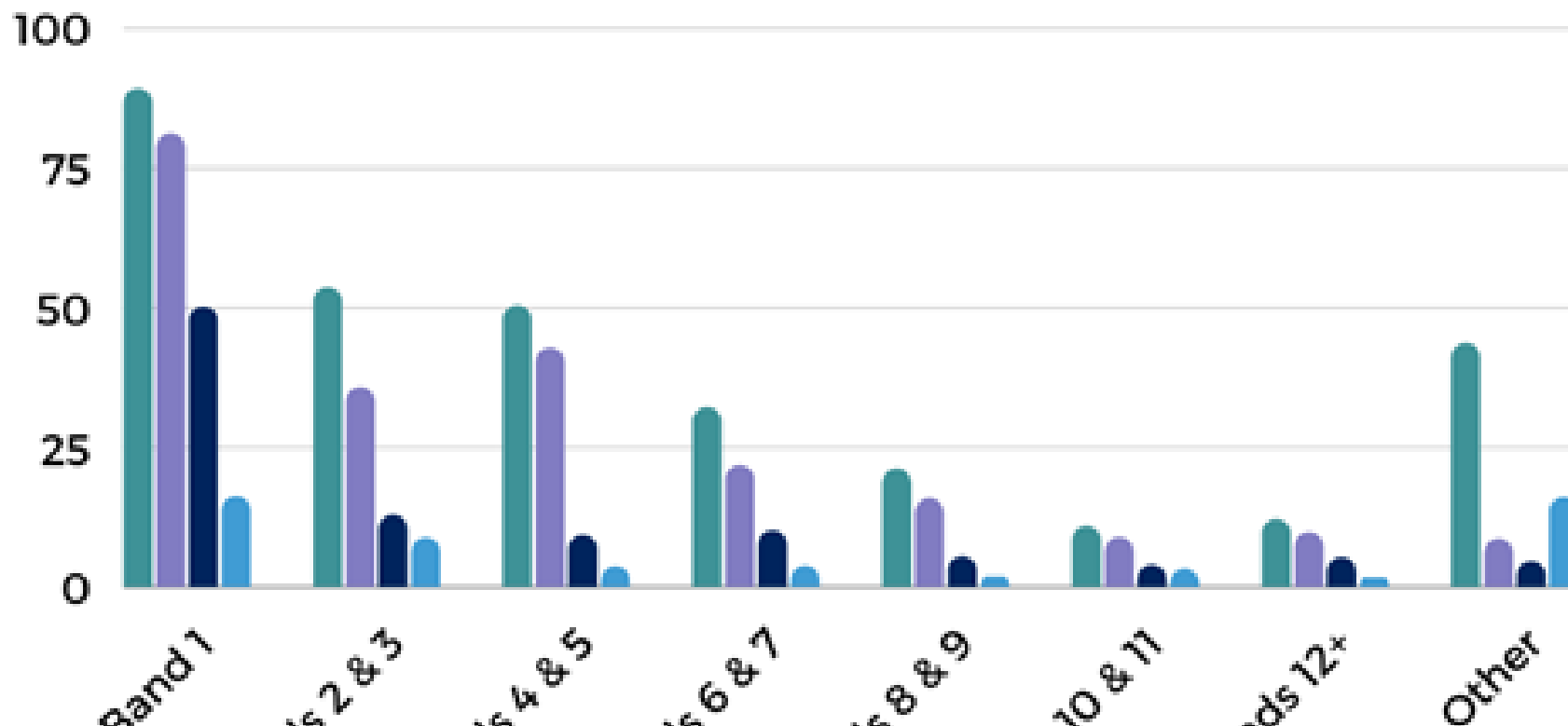
% WOMEN & MEN EMPLOYED FULL-TIME (2022-2023)





% WOMEN & MEN EMPLOYED PART-TIME (2022-2023)

■ Women 2022 ■ Women 2023 ■ Men 2022 ■ Men 2023



Apprentice & Band 1

Bands 2 & 3

Bands 4 & 5

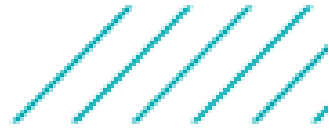
Bands 6 & 7

Bands 8 & 9

Bands 10 & 11

Bands 12+

Other

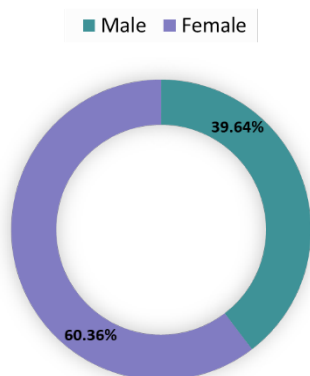


Payband	% of Women employed (2023)	% of Women employed (2022)	% of Men employed (2023)	% of Men employed (2022)	% of Women Employees who work Part-Time (2023)	% of Women Employees who work Part-Time (2022)	% of Male Employees who work Part-Time (2023)	% of Male Employees who work Part-Time (2022)
Apprentice & Band 1	83.78	71.89	16.22	28.11	81.08	89.1	16.22	50.11
Bands 2 & 3	63.16	46.17	36.84	53.50	35.67	53.44	8.77	12.85
Bands 4 & 5	77.97	63.38	22.03	36.62	42.63	50.23	3.65	9.26
Bands 6 & 7	63.34	57.59	36.66	42.41	21.70	31.99	3.74	10.11
Bands 8 & 9	60.81	64.23	39.19	35.77	15.75	21.01	1.83	5.45
Bands 10 & 11	64.29	64.22	35.71	35.78	8.73	10.71	3.17	3.85
Band 12 and above	53.23	54.02	46.77	45.97	9.68	11.94	1.61	5.26
Other	46.86	51.63	53.14	48.37	8.57	43.5	16.00	4.56

Gender Pay Gap

We have recently published our gender pay gap information, [click here to view the report based upon a snapshot of data on 31 March 2022.](#)

The Gender Pay Gap within Northumberland County Council remains one of the lowest compared to other North East Regional Authorities that published data in 2022. Latest figures show that the median pay gap within the organisation stands at 0.00% (against a provisional national average of +14.9%), while the mean average pay gap is -0.59%; indicating women within the organisation are paid slightly more than men.



We are extremely proud of the efforts we have made to ensure that all of our employees are treated equally; the fact that women in our organisation get paid narrowly more than men (as evidenced by the negative mean pay gap) is very much the exception to the norm across the UK, and the figures outlined in this report bear testament to our commitment that we will eradicate unequitable disparity in pay across the organisation.

Supporting gender equality

We run extensive campaigns to promote International Women's Day which are actively and enthusiastically supported by our many senior female leaders, and Council Members.

Latest figures show that the median pay gap within the organisation stands at 0.00%



We work closely with local schools and colleges within the county to showcase the range of opportunities available for young people, and to promote our ambition to be the employer of choice within Northumberland.

Our collaboration work with local 6th forms and colleges provides work placements for those that are studying specific courses, enhancing essential employability skills through real life work experiences. We are active supporters of National Apprenticeship week, and our apprenticeship programme helps to break down barriers for young women and gain skills and expertise in areas which were historically gender biased. This has included a campaign of apprentice females in work, celebrating those in manual roles who work alongside male-predominated workforce areas.

Supporting Gender Equality

We have a 9 Staff Network Groups across the Council, and these continue to grow in strength and number. With over 100 active members and growing faster than any other network is The Menopause Staff Network Group. Members agree this provides guidance, advice and mutual support and has been invaluable for many females in the organisation.



Wellbeing of Women Menopause Workplace Pledge (pictured above). The Council is also recognised as 'Committed to being a Menopause Friendly Employer' by Menopause Friendly, and are currently working towards accreditation, following an independent assessment.

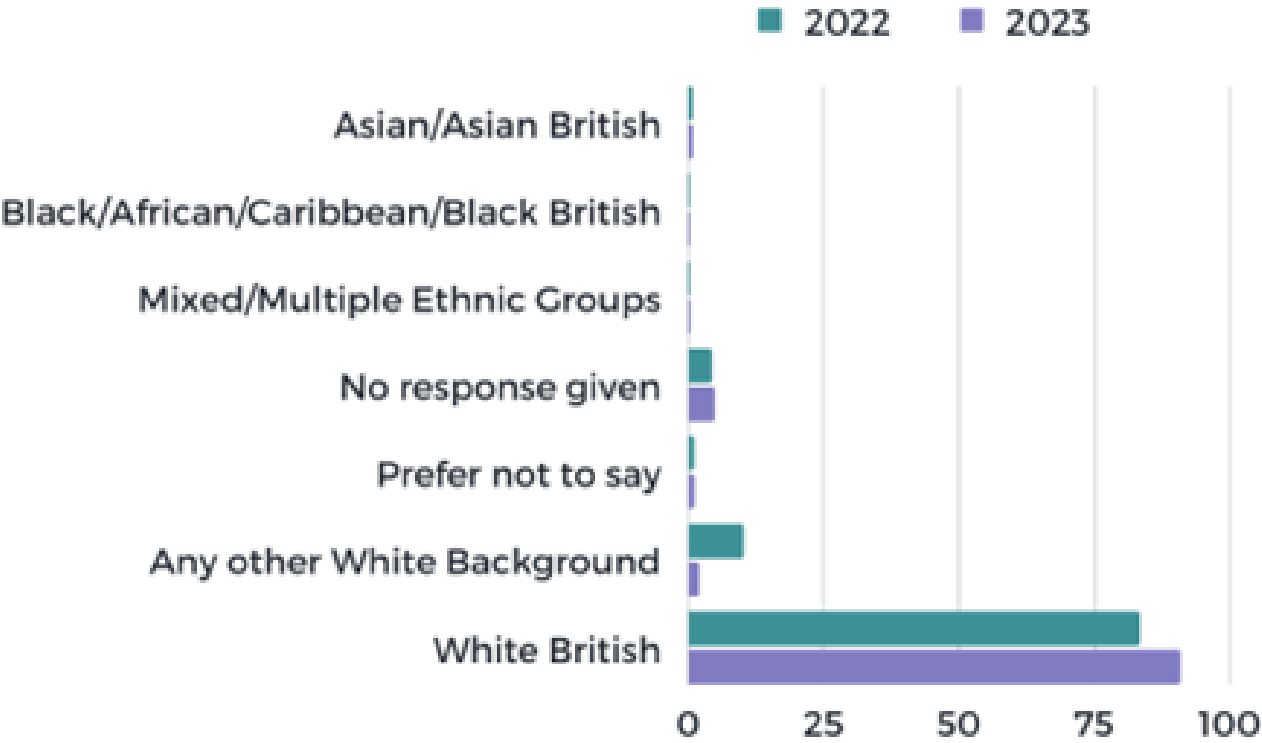
We have a range of policies and working practices to promote and sustain work life balance including various flexible working patterns for example part-time, flexitime, home working, maternity, paternity, adoption, dependent and shared parental leave. As a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the council reviewed it's working arrangements and implemented a WorkSmart approach, bringing a hybrid approach to home / office working. This continues to provide many of our employees, particularly those with childcare or other caring responsibilities with a much higher degree of flexibility.

Our Shared Parental Leave policy means that fathers can apply to take shared parental leave so that they too can spend more time with their children during their early, formative years. Furthermore, we are proud supporters of Men's Health Week and run a series of programmes and initiatives, ranging from guest speakers including the Newcastle United Foundation, free health checks and a dedicated space on our Health and Wellbeing staff portal offering a range of guidance and materials for male colleagues.

Ethnicity

In 2023 the number of our employees identifying as English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British of other White background has increased from 83.5% to 90.94%. In comparison to the above, the Office of National Statistics, (2021), indicates that a higher volume of residents categorises themselves as 'White' within the Ethnic groups in Northumberland. This figure represents 97.6% of our residents' ethnicity. Our workforce representation of staff from non-white category's is therefore higher by 6.6% than that of the residents in Northumberland of which we represent.

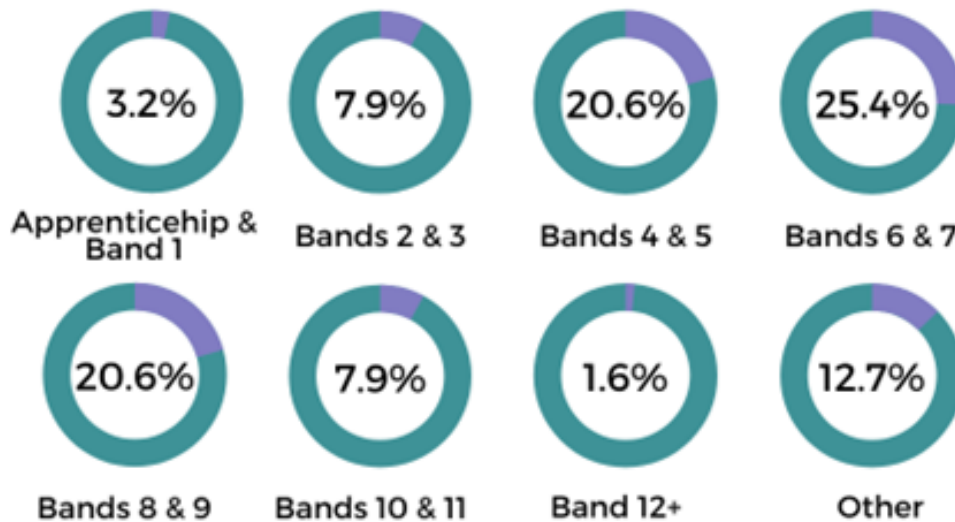
ETHNICITY % OF WHOLE WORKFORCE 2022-2023



When comparing ethnicity and pay band, our data shows the fluctuation of the volume and distribution of those staff who do not identify themselves as White British. For example, there is a decrease since 2022 in volumes of staff employed in pay bands of 6 and 7, but who do not identify as White British. However conversely and more positively this also shows an increase across higher bands of 10 and 11

Ethnicity

% of Employees who do not identify as 'White British' 2023 - Separated by Pay Bands



To improve an even spread of our non-white British cohort of staff across pay bands we will continue to work with our Race Equality staff network group to understand this in more detail and explore what barriers may be in place that prevent some certain ethnic groups applying or progressing through the council. In addition, we are currently undertaking and refreshing the way in which we advertise jobs and exploring further opportunities to encourage applications from underrepresented groups and are considering targeting specific media channels used by people from ethnic minority backgrounds to advertise posts.

Furthermore, a positive effect of our WorkSmart approach and hybrid working has improved the flexibility in some job posts, meaning many of our job roles can be performed predominantly from home. This has created the opportunity for much greater geographical scope and reach of potential candidates from which we can recruit, enabling us to recruit more ethnically diverse talent.

As mentioned above, as we do not have data for all our workforce, and our current data may not accurately represent our workforce breakdown. Therefore, as previously mentioned we intend to review and refresh data capturing approaches, to achieve and strengthen our evidence database. This will influence and steer improvement and achievement of our inclusive employer approach. Work has already commenced on this and we have embedded the need for robust data collection in our Equality Strategy. To measure our progression and success we are using the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG, 2021) to guide our improvement in staff engagement, data collection and data sharing. This will support positive progression towards encouraging greater ethnic diversity within our workforce.

Ethnicity

Please indicate which of these groups you consider you belong to	% of Total Responses 2023	% of Total Responses 2022
Asian - Any other Asian background	0.05%	0.00%
Asian - Asian British	0.11%	0.10%
Asian - Asian British - Bangladeshi	0.05%	0.05%
Asian - Asian British - Indian	0.11%	0.10%
Asian - Bangladeshi	0.05%	0.05%
Asian - Chinese	0.21%	0.20%
Asian - Indian	0.21%	0.24%
Black/African/Caribbean - African	0.11%	0.05%
Black/African/Caribbean - Black British	0.11%	0.15%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - Any other Mixed/multiple ethnic background	0.11%	0.05%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White and Asian	0.11%	0.10%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White and Black African	0.05%	0.05%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White and Black Caribbean	0.05%	0.05%
No Response Given	4.69%	4.21%
Prefer not to say	1.06%	1.02%
White - Any other White background	1.71%	9.68%
White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	90.94%	83.5%
White - Gypsy/Roma	0.11%	0.10%
White - Irish	0.21%	0.29%

Supporting Race Equality

Our staff networks at Northumberland County Council are crucial to our workforce and members of the Network are at the heart of the Council's ambition to create meaningful change through the sharing of lived experiences. Our Race Equality Network continues to grow in member size and creates a range of positive effects to not only its network members but continues to cause a ripple effect across the organisation.

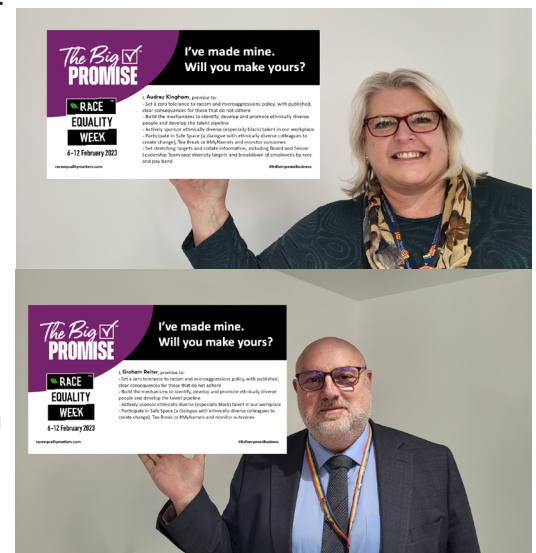
Key achievements are celebrated such as:

- ◇ A valued space for ethnically diverse employees to meet and discuss ideas for positive change
- ◇ Greater awareness and understanding across the workplace of race equality and the importance of diversity at work
- ◇ Open and honest conversations around unconscious bias, being an active bystander, and why allyship is imperative to achieving racial equality
- ◇ Collaboration with underrepresented groups across the Council's nine staff network groups, outlining a commitment to change and equality for all

96% are White English/Welsh/
Scottish/Northern Irish/British

In February 2023, the Council was awarded the Race Equality Matters (REM) Bronze Trailblazer status in recognition of its work to challenge and address racial inequality within the organisation. The Council took part in Race Equality Week during February and a number of senior leaders made their commitment to action that drives change via the Race Equality Matters BIG Promise. Amongst those making a public commitment to create a positive change were the senior management sponsors of the Council's Race Equality Network, Audrey Kingham, Executive Director of Children's Services, Graham Reiter, Service Director for Children's Social Care and our Equality, Diversity and inclusion Team. Promises made include:

- ◇ Set a zero tolerance to racism and microaggressions policy, with published, clear consequences for those that do not adhere
- ◇ Build the mechanisms to identify, develop and promote ethnically diverse people and develop the talent pipeline
- ◇ Actively sponsor ethnically diverse (especially black) talent in our workplace
- ◇ Participate in Safe Space (a dialogue with ethnically diverse colleagues to create change), Tea Break or #MyNames and monitor outcomes
- ◇ Set stretching targets and collate information, including Board and Senior Leadership Team race diversity targets and breakdown of employees by race and pay band.



Ethnicity

Pay Band	% of Employees who are not identified as 'White British' (2023)	% of Employees who are not identified as 'White British' (2022)
Apprentice and Band 1	3.17%	3.57%
Bands 2 and 3	7.94%	7.14%
Bands 4 and 5	20.63%	14.29%
Bands 6 and 7	25.40%	35.71%
Bands 8 and 9	20.63%	28.75%
Bands 10 and 11	7.94%	3.57%
Bands 12+	1.59%	3.57%
Other	12.70%	3.57%

Disability

We are committed to ensuring that disability is no barrier to progression in the workplace. We are a Disability Confident employer and guarantee to interview disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria for a job. We provide guidance to hiring managers around job descriptions and person specifications. This ensures they concentrate on output rather than process, thereby not inadvertently discriminating against disabled people.

We are proud to encourage applicants with a disability or Special Educational Need Diagnosis (SEND) not only into traditional banded roles but also across our apprenticeships and other employability routes into the council. Our apprentices have been instrumental in promoting roles to those with a disability or SEND, planning and producing an open and honest short video to talk about their disability and the support which the council has provided to them to help them develop and succeed in their chosen apprenticeship. This has been extremely useful at school events and is online for anyone to watch. Furthermore, collaborative work by the Human resources and Learning and Organisational Development team and Northumberland Skills Employability programmes and HR/OD has promoted vacancies to those hard-to-reach groups. Partnership work across the DWP initiative, The Work and Health Programme, promoted vacancies to those who are long-term unemployed, disabled or have a long-term health condition which may have previously prevented them from working.

**97% of staff said that the council
is respectful of the diverse
communities we serve**

That's a 22% increase since 2019

Continuing into 2023 Northumberland County Council are proud to provide supported work placements for 12-week periods via the Health Education England Supported Internship Programme, Project Choice. This Specialist Post-16 College aims to support young adults between the ages of 16-24 with disabilities, learning disabilities, difficulties and/or Autism to gain work experience and improve employability and independence skills. We pride ourselves on working with these interns after their placement has ended to promote other opportunities such as paid work, Apprenticeships or further work experience to promote us as an inclusive employer and increase our workforce via this diverse talent pool.

Disability

Further achievements have included recognition for our efforts in supporting Health and Wellbeing amongst staff, and we have a dedicated staff portal which provides support, courses, material, and general guidance on a range of physical and mental health issues. Our Human Resources Team has also recently appointed a Psychological Wellbeing Co-ordinator, who along with our colleagues at Northumbria Healthcare NHS Trust can provide immediate guidance and intervention for employees who are struggling with their personal wellbeing.

Since June 2022, members of the Mental Wellbeing Staff Network have facilitated 'Time to Keep Talking Sessions'. These hour-long virtual drop-in sessions are crucial and provide staff the opportunity to talk openly and honestly about their current feelings and address any mental health difficulties without judgement and with support from colleagues. Building upon this success and in response to the success of a special Time to Talk Day lunchtime talking session in February 2022, co-chairs of the Mental Wellbeing Staff Network later launched a series of virtual drop-ins for staff.

Every month since June 2022, the Network have given an hour of their time to help combat loneliness and give staff the chance to open up about their struggles, without judgement and with the support of colleagues. Open to all staff, the sessions and special drop-ins throughout the year are often arranged, including sessions around World Mental Health Day (October), Stress Awareness Day (November) and Time to Talk Day (February), in addition to the quarterly Mental Wellbeing Staff Network meetings.

Top tips from our workforce
Employees explain the type of support that could assist them in their day-to-day duties.

Matt Alder, Digital Marketing Apprentice
"Prior to my start date, it really helped meeting the team I would be working with and seeing the environment I'd be working in. This made me less nervous when I joined the team."
Autism awareness
Pleased to meet you!

Council employee
"Please find out from me if I would like my colleagues to know about my autism."
Autism awareness

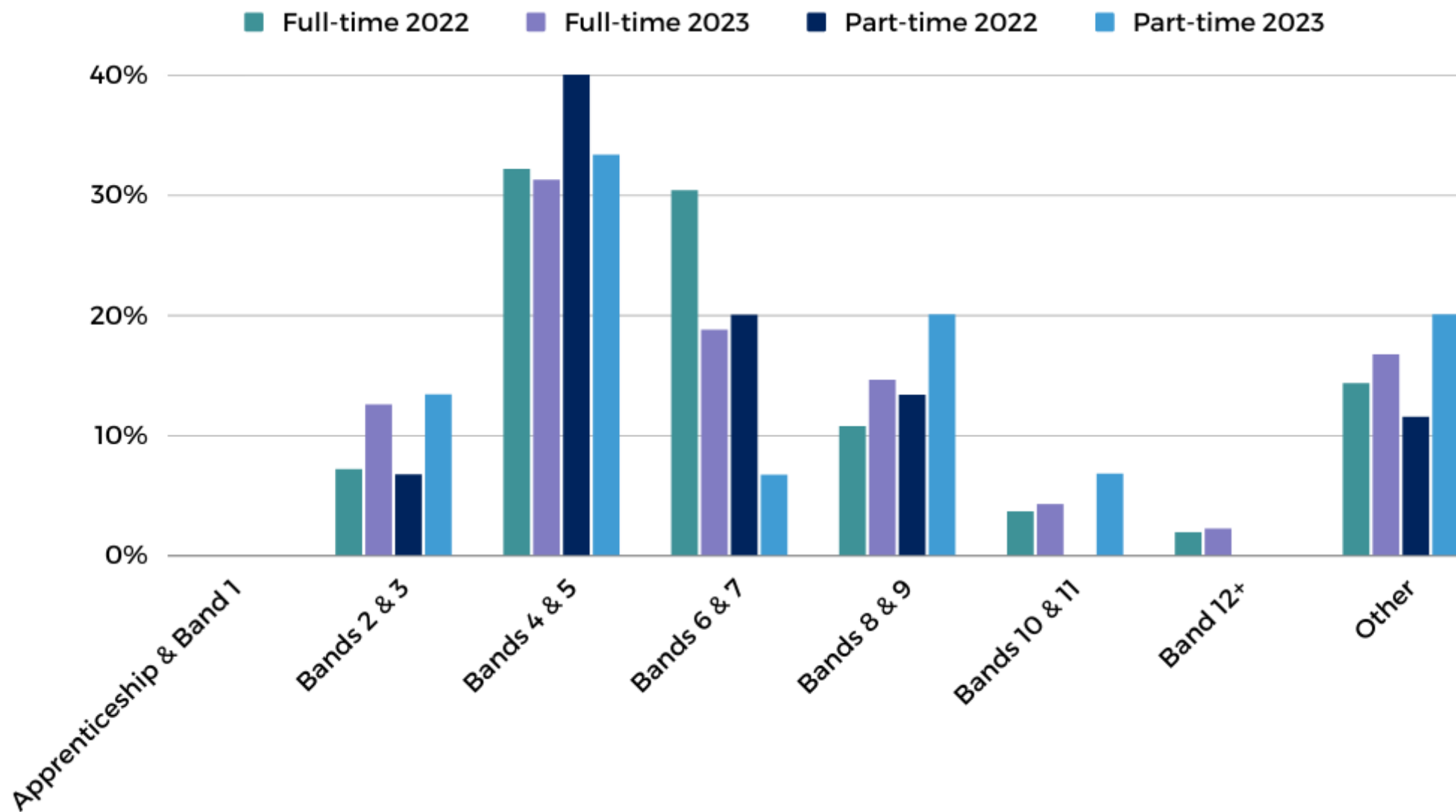
Council employee
"I've found that in my manual job, I need to take notes to ensure I'm on track. My manager will often provide print outs or notes about the job I'm working on to help support me."
Autism awareness

Furthermore, our Autism Spectrum Disorder Network marked Autistic Pride Day on 18 June 2022 - a day for autistic people to celebrate their neurodiversity and differences. The day originated from and is led by autistic people. It aims to show others that autistic people are not defective and have the right to live happy and fulfilled lives.

The rainbow infinity sign is used as the symbol of this day, representing "diversity with infinite variations and infinite possibilities". Members of the ASD Network shared what they're most proud of about themselves in our Staff Facebook Group.

The Council celebrated Disability History Month with a number of events, with many of our staff coming forward to share personal stories on matters such as living with Lupus, life with Luekaemia and stammering awareness.

% OF FULL-TIME & PART-TIME STAFF DECLARING A DISABILITY 2022-2023



Disability

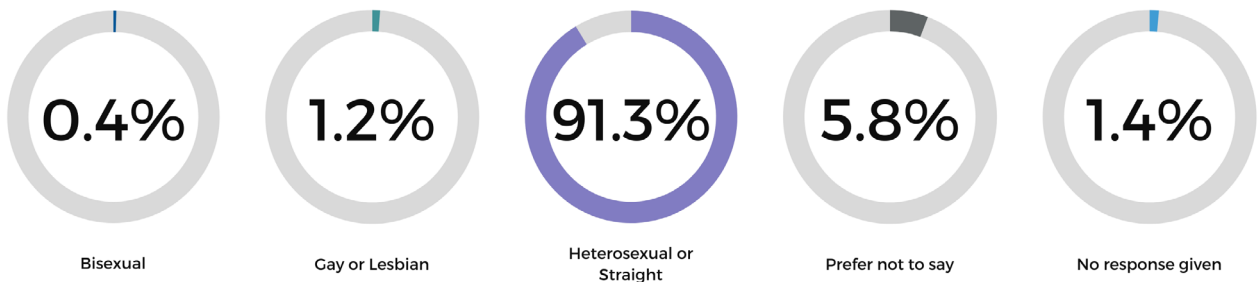
Pay Band	% of staff declaring a disability (2023)	% of staff declaring a disability (2022)	% of staff declaring a disability who are part-time (2023)	% of staff declaring a disability who are part-time (2022)
Apprentice and band 1	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Bands 2 and 3	12.50%	7.14%	13.33%	6.70%
Bands 4 and 5	31.25%	32.14%	33.33%	40.00%
Bands 6 and 7	18.75%	30.36%	6.67%	20.00%
Bands 8 and 9	14.58%	10.71%	20.00%	13.33%
Bands 10 and 11	4.17%	3.57%	6.67%	0.00%
Bands 12+	2.08%	1.79%	0.00%	0.00%
Other	16.67%	14.29%	20.00%	11.49%

Sexual Orientation

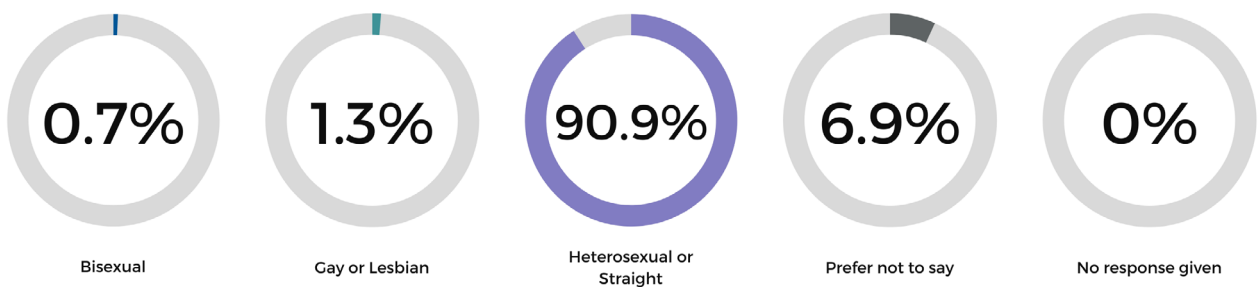
As demonstrated in The Office of National Statistics (ONS) data, 2021, 92.11% of residents over the age of 16 in Northumberland identify as straight or heterosexual. Positively, Northumberland County Council workforce is slightly lower than this average with 91.3% identifying as straight. Gay and Lesbian staff are well represented among the County's residents matching ONS, 2021 data at 1.2%.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

% OF EMPLOYEES (DECLARED) 2023



% OF EMPLOYEES (DECLARED) 2022



Census data

Gay or Lesbian	Bisexual	Pansexual	Asexual	Queer	All other sexual orientations	Not answered
1.23%	0.84%	0.11%	0.04%	0.01%	0.01%	5.64%

Sexual Orientation

The numbers of employees identifying with a sexual orientation other than Heterosexual or Straight are dispersed across all bands which is broadly to be expected. The exception to this is at the lowest pay bands where there were no declarations.

The unknown quantity here is how many people chose not to disclose their sexual orientation (5.76%) or did not provide a response (1.39%). We cannot simply assume that these individuals are of a sexual orientation other than heterosexual, as there can be many factors at play. We understand however that this could remain indicative of the suspicion and fear of discrimination which remains within the LGBT community, and we will make every effort to ensure that our LGBT staff feel safe, secure, supported, and valued.

Staff data

Sexual Orientation	% of Employees (Declared) (2023)	% of Employees (Declared) (2022)
Bisexual	0.43%	0.68%
Gay or Lesbian	1.17%	1.31%
Heterosexual or Straight	91.26%	90.96%
Prefer not to say	5.76%	6.91%
No response given	1.39%	0.00%

Pay Band	No. of Employees (2023)	No. of Employees (2022)
Apprentice and Band 1	0	0
Bands 2 and 3	6	4
Bands 4 and 5	6	10
Bands 6 and 7	8	11
Bands 8 - 12	3*	8*
Other	4	8

Supporting sexual orientation equality

As a council, all of our policies and benefits are LGBT inclusive and there are specific policies which provide targeted support, for example the Dignity at Work policy Benefits provided for spouses are also available for civil partners.

We also have a Trans Inclusion Policy. The Council aims to recruit a diverse workforce and encourages applications from suitably qualified LGBT applicants. We have a nominated HR partner who can offer support and advice to Trans* and non-binary job applicants who may have questions about the recruitment process and what information to record on application forms.

Our LGBT staff group meets regularly to talk about how things can be improved and provide support. The group is open to LGBT and non-LGBT staff with an interest in creating a more inclusive workplace.



94% are heterosexual and 3.41%
LGBT+ (compared to 3.1% UK)

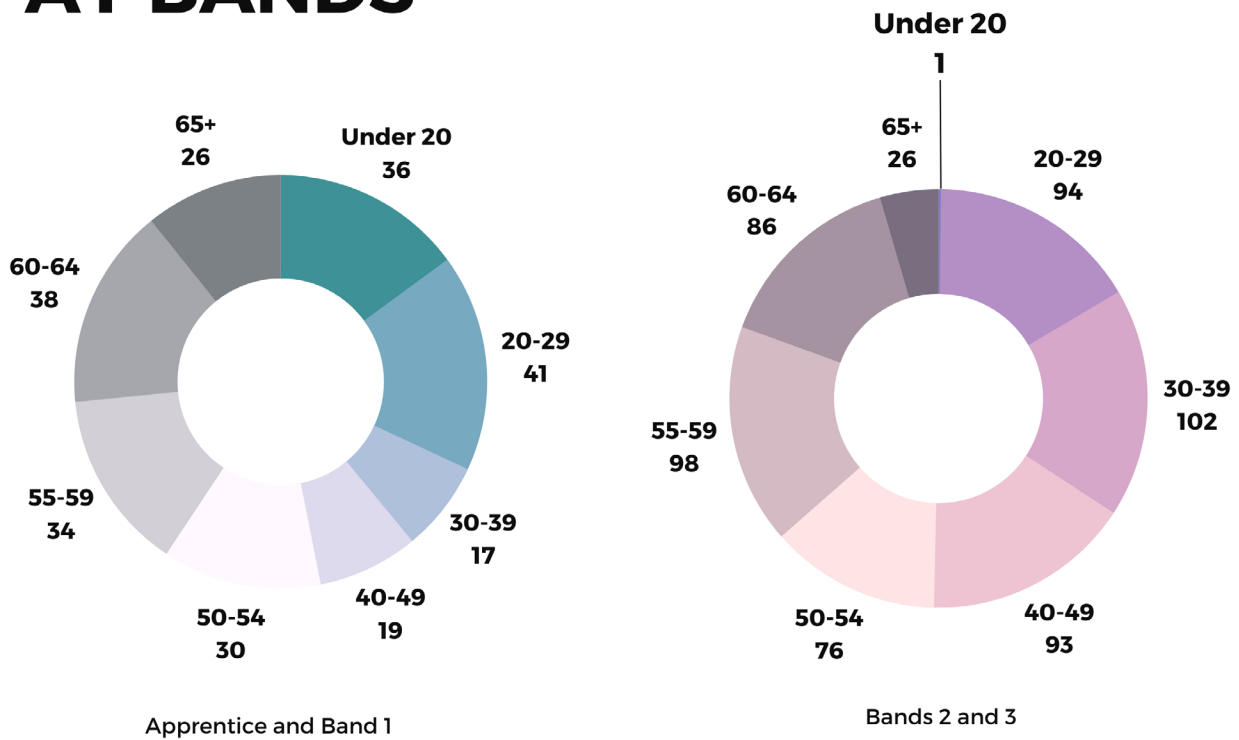
Northumberland County Council are proud sponsors of Northumberland Pride, and host regular events to celebrate LGBTQ+ people, communities and equality in Northumberland. The Council continue to attend these events with many staff from across the organisation, including representation from our LGBT+ Staff Network Group and Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service, coming forward to attend and engage with residents.

Age

Our data shows that the majority of our employees fall within the 40 – 49 age range. Numbers of employees aged over 49 remain quite high, and this is pleasing in that suggests that significant numbers of people are happy to work at the Council, do not seek careers outside of the organisation and remain happy to see out their working life at the Council.

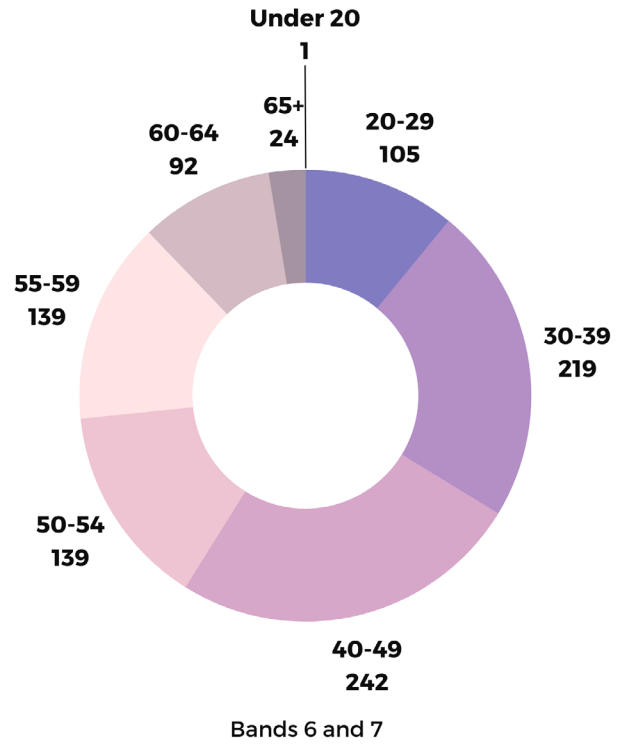
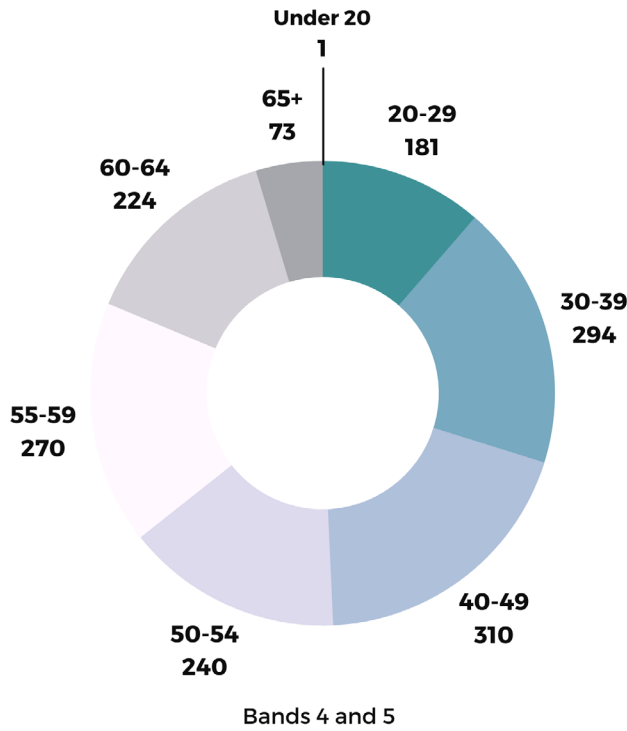
Numbers of employees in 30 -39 bracket remain relatively high. The number of employees below the age of 30 remain lower than most other age groups. In order to ensure that as an organisation we are fit for the future, this is an area which we need to address. We need to ensure that we are recruiting, and more importantly retaining young talent. We need to look at our recruitment strategy and ways of making local government careers more attractive to young people. We can do this in several ways, by for example using social media in a targeted way, by increasing our presence at local job fairs, and by forging stronger links with our many local universities.

PAY BANDS

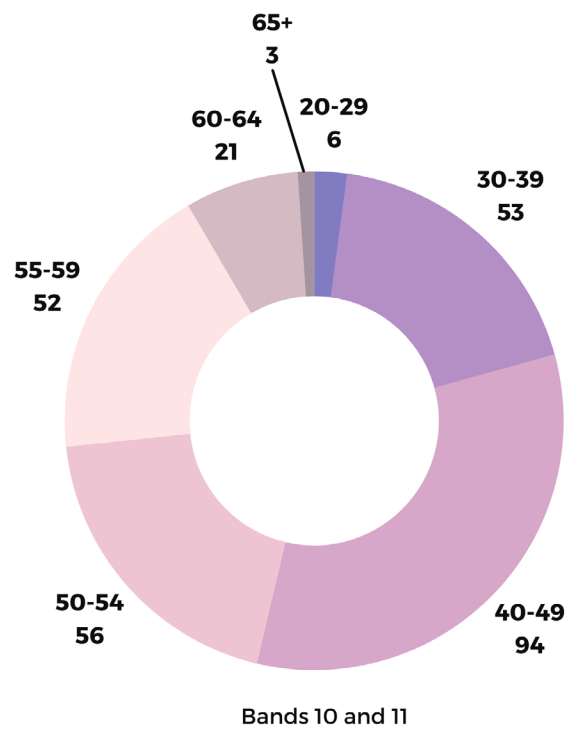
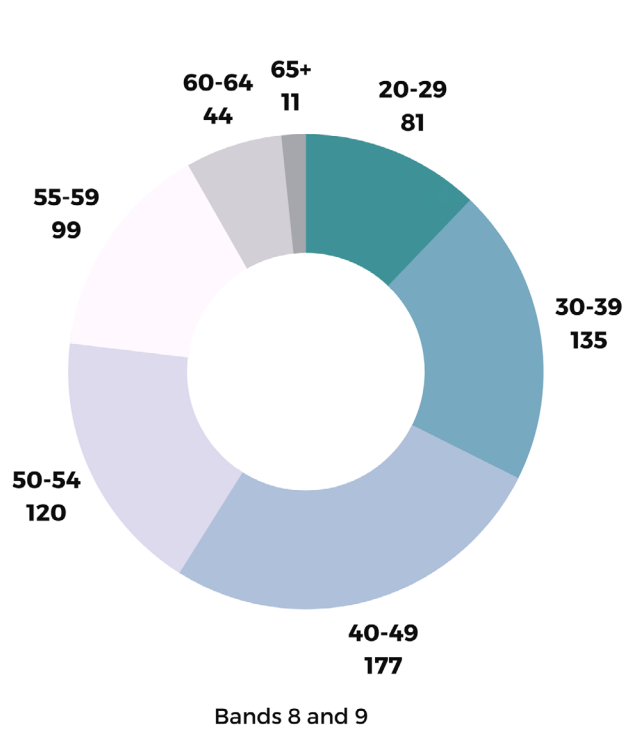


Age

PAY BANDS

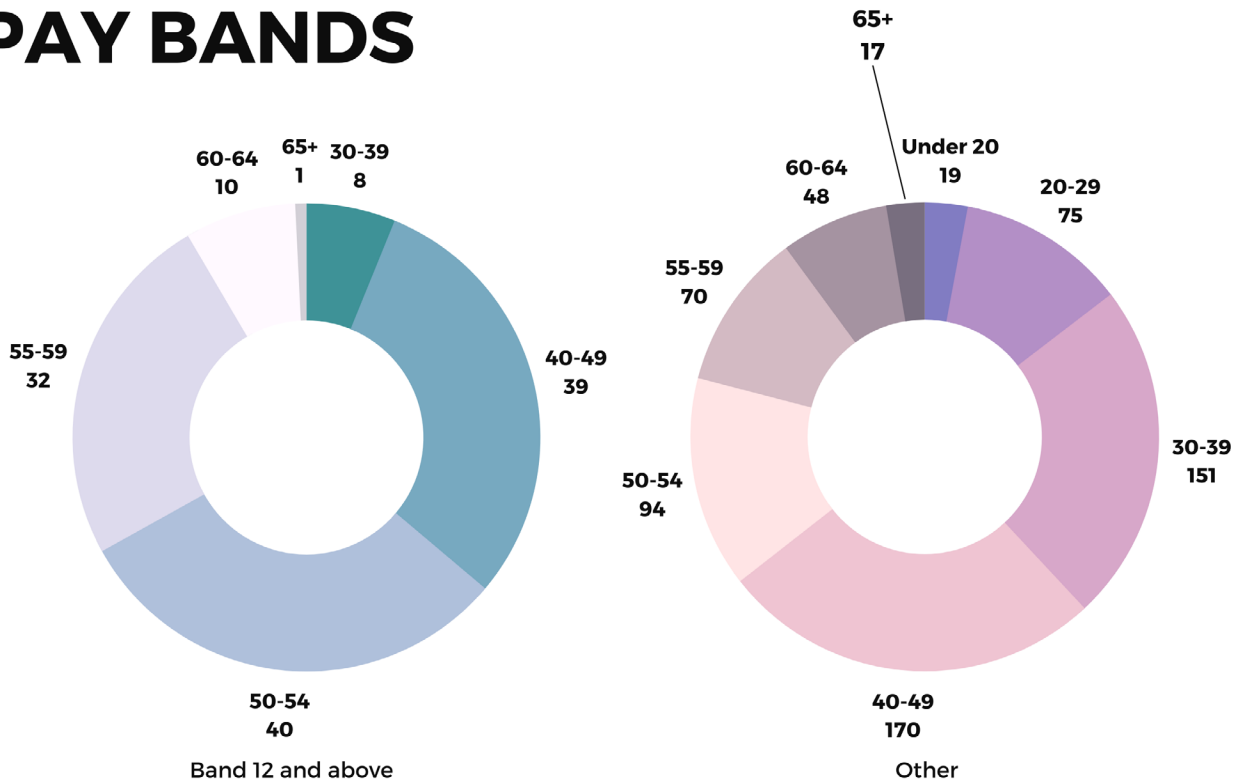


PAY BANDS



Age

PAY BANDS



There is some degree of correlation between an employee's age and their pay band. The older an employee, the more likely they are to be employed at a higher pay band. This may be expected to a degree as older employees are likely to have acquired and developed skills throughout employment. However, we also need to ensure that employees are not simply progressing through our organisation because they have been with us for a while. We also need to ensure that we have the capacity to fast track young talent through the organisation; this will also help us to attract and retain young people.

Supporting age equality

Staff in the 18-24 age bracket were significantly less stressed and feel more satisfied to the extent the organisation and their colleagues value their work.

We have taken positive action to support young people within the care system offering them additional support to apply for our apprenticeships with a commitment to offer a guaranteed interview to these young people. In 2022, the Council employed more than 60 apprentices. We have also dispelled the myth that apprenticeships are only for young people and we have supported a number of our older staff with upskilling through an apprenticeship.

Age

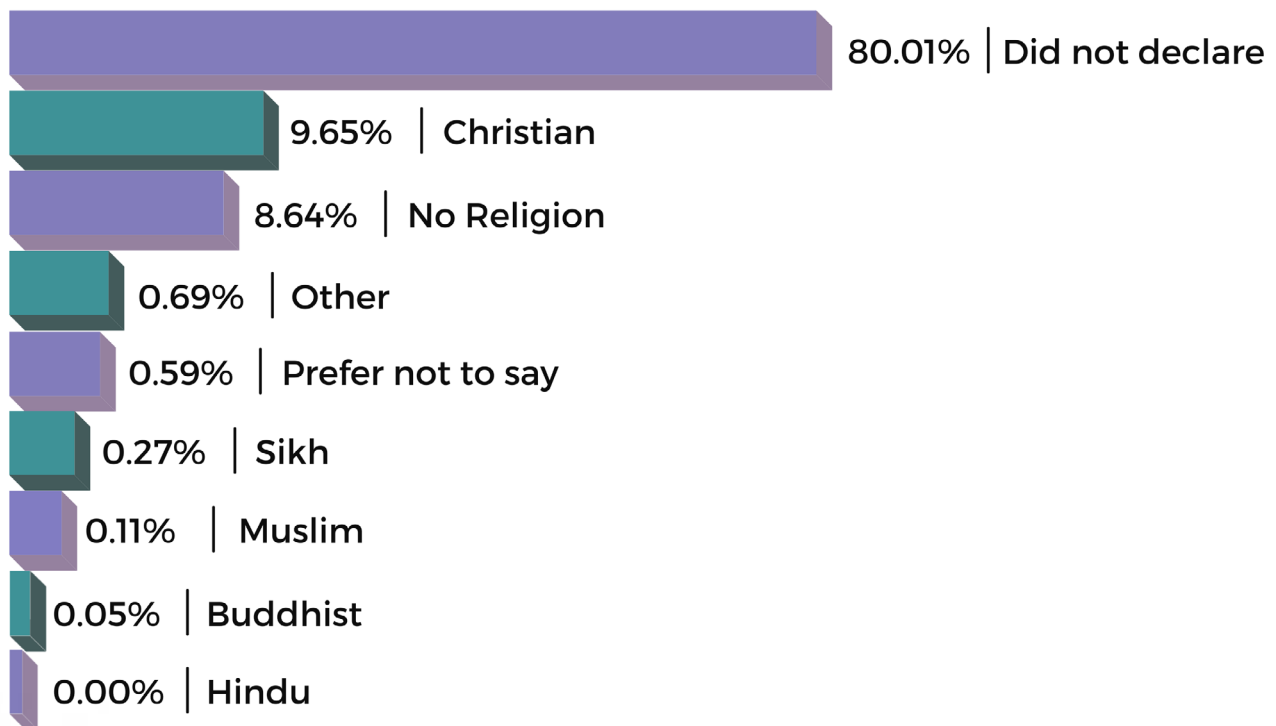
Pay Band	Under 20	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65+	Grand Total 2023
Apprentice and Band 1	36	41	17	19	30	34	38	26	241
Bands 2 and 3	1	94	102	93	76	98	86	26	576
Bands 4 and 5	1	181	294	310	240	270	223	73	1,592
Bands 6 and 7	1	105	219	242	139	139	92	24	961
Bands 8 and 9	0	81	135	177	120	99	44	11	667
Bands 10 and 11	0	6	53	94	56	52	21	3	285
Bands 12 and above	0	0	8	39	40	32	10	1	130
Other	19	75	151	170	94	70	48	17	644
Grand Total	58	583	979	1,144	795	794	562	181	5,096

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Other	19	75	151	170	94	70	48	17	644
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Religion and Belief

The large number of our employees (80.01%) have not declared their religion. This is separate from those who either did not hold a religion, or those who specified that they preferred not to state. This figure is similar to findings from previous years. This suggests that for most employees, religion is something that is deeply personal and private to them.

RELIGION AND BELIEF



At Northumberland County Council we embrace diversity, tolerance and mutual respect and want to promote a balanced approach to religion or belief's such as atheism. We support the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and the right to practice a religion or belief where this is in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act and respects the rights of other people.

We understand and accept that religion is a very private matter to some, but equally we want to make sure that there is no concern amongst employees that awareness of their religion or protected beliefs may be detrimental to them

Religion	% of Employees (2023)	% of Employees (2022)	% of Northumberland Population (from 2021 Census)
Did not declare	80.01%	76.39%	5.00%
Christian	9.65%	12.05%	53.20%
No Religion	8.64%	10.35%	40.10%
Other	0.69%	0.05%	0.50%
Buddhist	0.05%	0.10%	0.20%
Muslim	0.11%	0.10%	0.50%
Hindu	0.00%	0.00%	0.10%
Sikh	0.27%	0.24%	0.20%
Prefer not to say	0.59%	0.73%	0.00%

Workforce Equality Report - 2023

Northumberland County Council
County Hall, Morpeth
NE61 2EF



Northumberland
County Council