



Northumberland
County Council

Workforce Equality Report 2022

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Introduction

For Northumberland County Council, the communities we serve are at the heart of everything we do. We are proud to represent the people of Northumberland, and we will consistently strive to do our very best to deliver and commission a range of services that are first rate, accessible to all and reflective of our diverse and culturally rich communities. Equality, diversity and inclusion are extremely important to us as a Council, and we are absolutely committed to providing services that truly meet the needs of all our residents, regardless of

- age.
- gender reassignment.
- being married or in a civil partnership.
- being pregnant or on maternity leave.
- disability.
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin.
- religion or belief.
- sex
- sexual orientation

Our belief is that to deliver our values of respect, residents first, excellence and quality and keeping our communities safe and well, we need to demonstrate that we are truly inclusive and equitable in our approach. We understand that this needs to be driven from within. Our workforce is integral to our success as an organisation, and we cannot underestimate the importance of nurturing an engaged, invested and valued workforce, and above all, one which is reflective of those communities we serve.

Under the Equality Act 2010, Northumberland County Council, as a public body, has a duty to publish our employee data on an annual basis. As an organisation, we welcome the opportunity to do so. It provides us with an opportunity to take stock of where we are now, and what we have done well. Most importantly however, it allows us to focus on what else needs to be done and where we can improve in the future, so that we can truly become the employer of choice within Northumberland.



Leanne Furnell

Interim Service Director for Human Resources & Organisational Development

1. About Northumberland

Northumberland is the northernmost county in England; Berwick upon Tweed in the far north of the County lies approximately 2 miles from the Scottish border. Northumberland is geographically one of the largest Counties in England and has the lowest population density of any County within England. It is home to around 323,820 people. The population is however growing and is forecast to increase by 4.4 per cent to 339,415 people between 2022 and 2043. Northumberland's population is also living longer. 25.1 percent of the population of Northumberland is aged 65 and over, and this set to rise to 33 percent by 2043. The population of Northumberland is predominantly White British; in the 2011 census, 98.43% of people declared themselves as white.

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 4,500 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% 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. Cragston 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.

2. 2021 Highlights and Achievements

2.1 Northumberland Communities Together

2021 was an extraordinary and unprecedented year as we, like many others across the globe grappled with the Covid-19 pandemic. As restrictions begin to ease across the UK, we have had time to reflect, and as an organisation we are incredibly proud of what we have achieved. Our communities needed us more than ever, and we rose to the challenge. Northumberland Communities Together was launched in direct response to the pandemic, and worked with volunteers, community groups and other partners across Northumberland to support communities throughout the crisis, whether through the provision of business support grants, the delivery of food and shopping to the clinically vulnerable or by simply providing a friendly ear and someone to talk to for those isolated members of the community.

Winter 2021 saw Storm Arwen hit Northumberland with devastating impact. It was referred to as a 'once in a generation' storm. It was followed less than two months later by two further storms of similar magnitude. As an organisation we again rose to the challenge on each occasion. Our staff worked tirelessly to support our response effort, from supporting Community Hubs which provided residents with warmth, food, electricity and wash facilities

in the worst hit areas to visiting and checking on residents who had no power and assisting with the clean-up of fallen trees and debris. One of our four corporate values is 'keeping our communities safe and well' and our response to the challenges we have faced as an organisation over the last twelve months has demonstrated our determination to live by these values.

2.2 Our Staff Network Groups

Northumberland County Council's Staff Network Groups continue to go from strength to strength. These 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.

2021 saw the addition of the Apprenticeship Network Group and the Armed Forces Network Group, bringing the current number of groups to eight:

- Apprenticeship staff network group
- Armed Forces staff network group
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) staff network group
- Carers staff network group
- Enable (disability) staff network group
- LGBT+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) staff network group
- Menopause staff network group
- Mental Wellbeing staff network group
- Race Equality staff network group

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.

2.3 Gender Pay Gap

At Northumberland County Council we have adopted a Pay Policy which is based upon consistency, fairness and transparency to ensure reward is given fairly and irrespective of gender. We have worked hard to reduce and eliminate disparities in pay across the organisation and this is borne out in our latest [Gender Pay Gap Report](#). The mean gender pay gap in hourly pay as a percentage for Northumberland County Council is 1.41%. This is lower than the previous year where the average hourly rate for men was 2.30% greater than women and shows that we are making tangible progress.

The Gender Pay Gap within Northumberland County Council is one of the lowest compared to other north east regional local authorities that have published data for 2020. It is also considerably lower than the national average figure for all employees which is 15.4% (Office of National Statistics – 2021 Gender Pay gap in the UK). While our latest reporting figures

are positive and show that we are working in the right direction, we recognise that we still need to make improvements. As an organisation we are committed to further reducing and hopefully reducing any pay gap between genders and we have set out several key actions in our Gender Pay Gap Report which will further address current pay imbalances.

2.4 Our People Strategy

In 2021, the Council's HR & Organisational Development Directorate set out its People Strategy for the years 2021 to 2025. The document sets out five strategic aims for the service, at the core of which is our commitment to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion for everyone. As an organisation we want to deliver the very best services to our communities, and to do that we need to develop an environment where our staff feel valued, respected, and empowered. We need to build an organisation where protected or other personal characteristics do not act as a barrier to success or progression, and where everybody is afforded equality of opportunity.

The Covid 19 pandemic has shown us that we no longer need to be office based, and this has presented new and exciting opportunities for the organisation. The population of Northumberland is significantly less ethnically diverse than much of the UK, but we recognise that we are not bound by geography or local demographics. We will expand and develop our recruitment strategy to attract talent from outside of the region thereby broadening our recruitment pool and increasing diversity within our workforce.

2.5 Our Policies

We regularly review our HR policies to ensure that they are up to date, relevant and reflective of best practice. We complete an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that our policies are fair and equitable to all and free of discrimination, and 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. Over the course of the next twelve months and as a sign of our commitment to providing accessibility for all we intend to embark on an extensive programme of updating our policies to make them simpler, clearer, and accessible. We will adopt 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, Carers in Work, Dignity at Work, Domestic Abuse, Equality and Diversity, Learning and Development, Psychological Wellbeing, and Trans-Inclusion

2.6 Our Equality Strategy and Equality Objectives

In the Spring of 2021, the Council published its updated Equality Strategy. This ambitious document set out how we hoped to build upon work done to date to develop a culture of inclusion, and one where equality, diversity and inclusion are integral to everything we do. Underpinning our strategy were 4 key objectives, which reflected and embedded our core corporate values: Residents first; Excellence and Quality; Respect; and Keeping our Communities Safe and Well.

In line with our commitment to ensuring that our communities are at heart of everything we do, we ran a public consultation on our proposed objectives from 12 March 2021 to 9 April 2021. The consultation attracted a total of 216 responses, and our draft equality objectives and vision were viewed positively by respondents. Our survey asked whether respondents agreed with our vision and each individual objective; over 95% of respondents agreed that they did. Notwithstanding this, a number of key and consistent themes came through responses, and following [analysis](#) of the findings we revised our objectives to reflect the feedback that we had received. Our new agreed objectives 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.

2.7 Awards and Recognition

Northumberland County Council currently has an 80 strong HR and Learning & Organisational Team and our achievements in workforce innovation continue to be recognised regionally and nationally. In 2021 we were proud to be named as a winner in the 'Best HR / Trade Union Partnership and Best Health and Wellbeing Initiative in the Public Services People Managers Association (PPMA) Awards. We were also shortlisted with several other organisations including Personnel Today and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) in categories including Excellence in Inclusivity and Diversity, Best Inclusivity & Diversity Programme and HR Team of the Year.

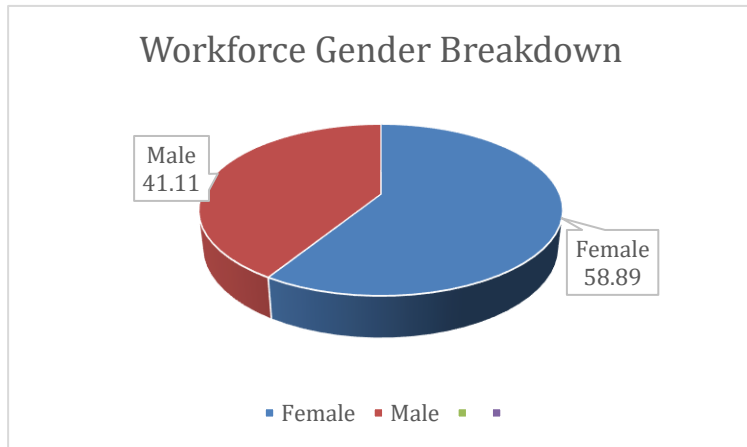
3. Our Workforce Profile

With almost 5,000 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%. This section provides an analysis of our workforce composition by protected characteristic and covers the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. It should be noted that we do not have complete data for all sections of our workforce. We are acutely aware that we need to improve declaration rates, and this has been highlighted as part of our equality strategy. Recent initiatives to

encourage employees to submit 'equality data' met with some degree of success, but we currently have a limited picture of our overall workforce. It is clear that we have been unable to breakdown reluctance amongst large numbers of staff towards disclosing personal data. We will continue to work with our Network Groups and Trade Union colleagues to identify and understand what is driving this reluctance, and to break down these barriers.

The following pages of this report provide a detailed breakdown of our staff profile by protected characteristic.

3.1 Gender



Our data shows that we employ significantly more women than men. This gap has widened over the last twelve months. In 2021, 55.01% of our employees were female. This figure now stands at 58.89%.

The gender split of Northumberland is roughly equal. Figures from the 2011 census showed that women made up 51% of Northumberland’s population, and men 49%. This figure was mirrored nationally.

Chart showing the breakdown of staff by gender and band

Pay Band	% of Women Employed (2022)	% of Women Employed (2021)	% of Men Employed (2022)	% of Men Employed (2021)	% of Women Employees who work Part-Time (2022)	% of Women Employees who work Part-Time (2021)	% of Male Employees who work Part-Time (2022)	% of Male Employees who work Part-Time (2021)
Apprentice & Band 1	71.89	70.04	28.11	29.96	89.1	81.67	50.11	46.75
Bands 2 & 3	46.17	47.32	53.30	52.68	53.44	57.42	12.85	13.33
Bands 4 & 5	63.38	62.73	36.62	37.27	50.23	52.66	9.26	10.76
Bands 6 & 7	57.59	56.72	42.41	43.28	31.99	34.40	10.11	12.54
Bands 8 & 9	64.23	59.89	35.77	40.11	21.01	26.25	5.45	6.17
Bands 10 & 11	64.22	56.99	35.78	43.01	10.71	13.21	3.85	11.25
Band 12 and above	54.02	47.57	45.97	52.43	11.94	18.37	5.26	5.56
Other	51.63	27.98	48.37	72.02	43.5	40.56	4.56	2.45

Chart showing the breakdown of staff by gender and pay band

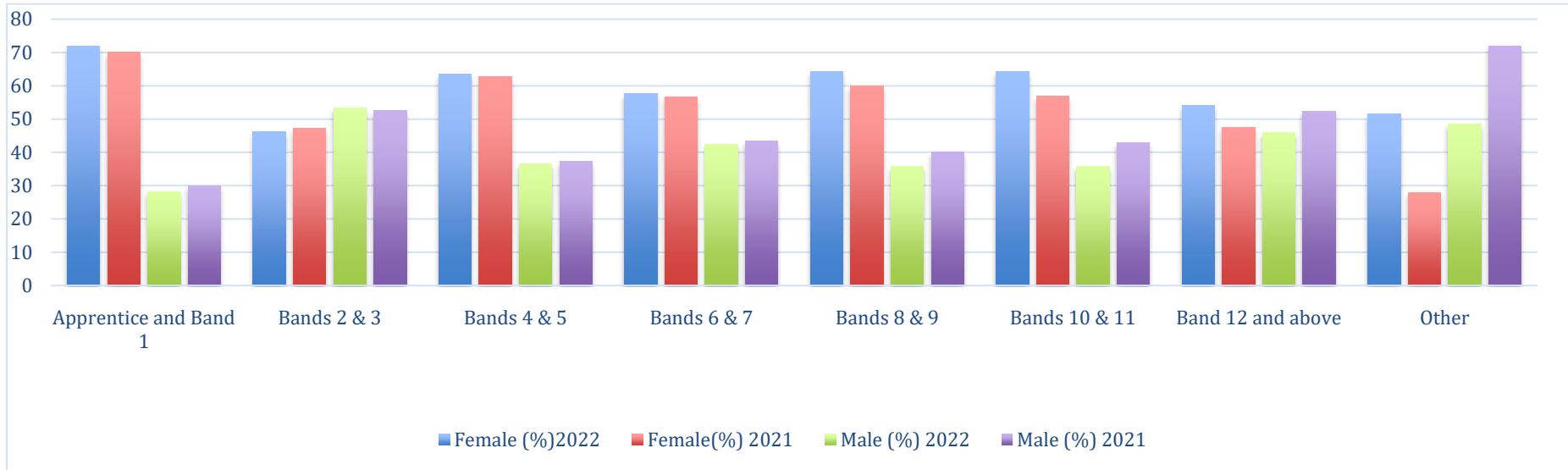
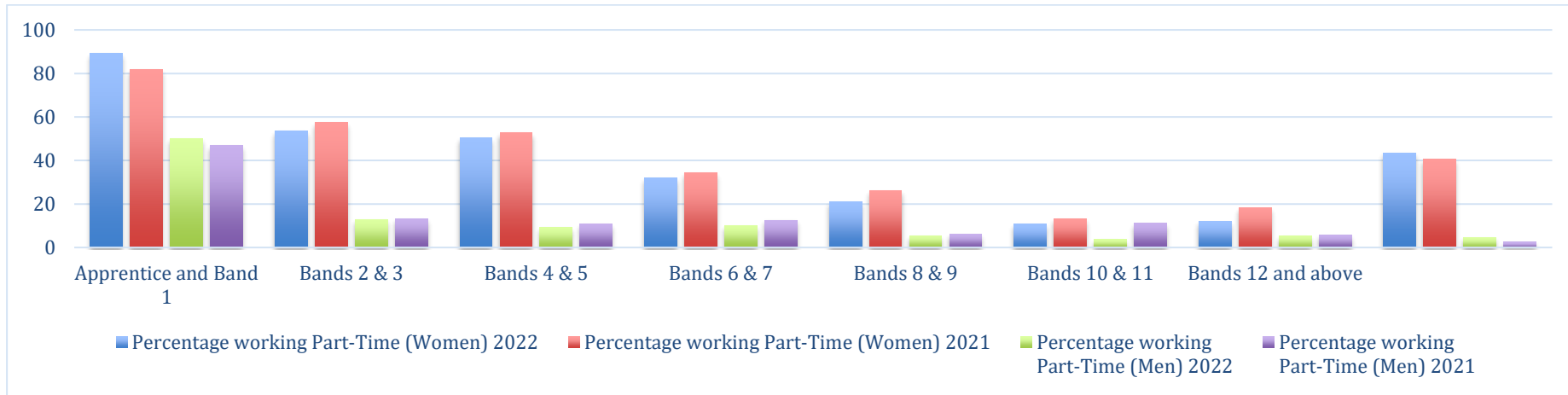


Chart showing the breakdown of staff by gender, pay band and Part – Time Status



- Our data shows that women outnumber men in almost every pay band. To a large extent, this 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, 71.89% 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 however appear to be a direct correlation however 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
- Women outnumber men across the organisation, and we would therefore expect that numbers of women would outnumber men in each pay band. Women are proportionally well represented in the middle to upper pay bands (bands 8 -11). It is noticeable however that the gap decreases when we look at bands 12 and above. This would suggest that to some degree there still exists a ‘glass ceiling’ for women, where progression up the pay scale becomes difficult.

- Our data shows that the majority of our part-time workers are employed at the lower end of the pay scale, and that women form the majority of part-time workers throughout the organisation. This may be due to childcare responsibilities and the perceived role of women as primary childcare givers. We also need to recognise however that growing numbers of men want to become more involved with the upbringing of their children and we need to ensure that men are afforded equal opportunity to work part-time should they so wish. 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 hope will redress this imbalance and we are committed to ensuring that all of our adverts state that our posts are open to flexible working.

- The importance and benefits of work / life balance are becoming increasingly clear and part-time working should not be a barrier to achievement or career progression. The number employees working part time at band 12 and above are very low, and again this is something we can look to address through our family friendly policies, job share arrangements and similar measures.

3.2 Ethnicity

Table showing the breakdown of staff by ethnicity

Please indicate which of these groups you consider you belong to	% of Total Responses 2022	% of Total Responses 2021
Asian - Asian British	0.10%	0.09%
Asian - Asian British - Bangladeshi	0.05%	0.04%
Asian - Asian British - Indian	0.10%	0.13%
Asian - Bangladeshi	0.05%	0.09%
Asian - Chinese	0.20%	0.22%
Asian - Indian	0.24%	0.31%
Black/African/Caribbean - African	0.05%	0.90%
Black/African/Caribbean - Black British	0.15%	0.90%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - Any other Mixed/multiple ethnic background	0.05%	0.90%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White and Asian	0.10%	0.90%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White and Black African	0.05%	0.04%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White and Black Caribbean	0.05%	0.04%
No Response Given	4.21%	3.37%
Prefer not to say	1.02%	0.99%
White - Any other White background	9.68%	3.59%
White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	83.5%	90.35
White - Gypsy/Roma	0.10%	0.09%
White - Irish	0.29%	0.27%

Table showing the breakdown of staff by ethnicity and pay band

Pay Band	% of Employees who are not identified as 'White British' (2022)	% of Employees who are not identified as 'White British' (2021)
Apprentice and Band 1	2.43%	3.57%
Bands 2 and 3	9.21%	7.14%
Bands 4 and 5	36.33%	14.29%
Bands 6 and 7	20.92%	35.71%
Bands 8 and 9	15.01%	28.57%
Bands 10 and 11	6.14%	3.57%
Bands 12 and above	2.90%	3.57%
Other	7.07%	3.57%

- Our workforce data shows that a significant majority of those employees who have chosen to declare their ethnicity describe themselves as being White – English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British of other White background. This is unsurprising given that Northumberland has a relatively less ethnically diversified population in comparison to the UK as a whole; in the 2011 census, 98.43% of people declared themselves as white.

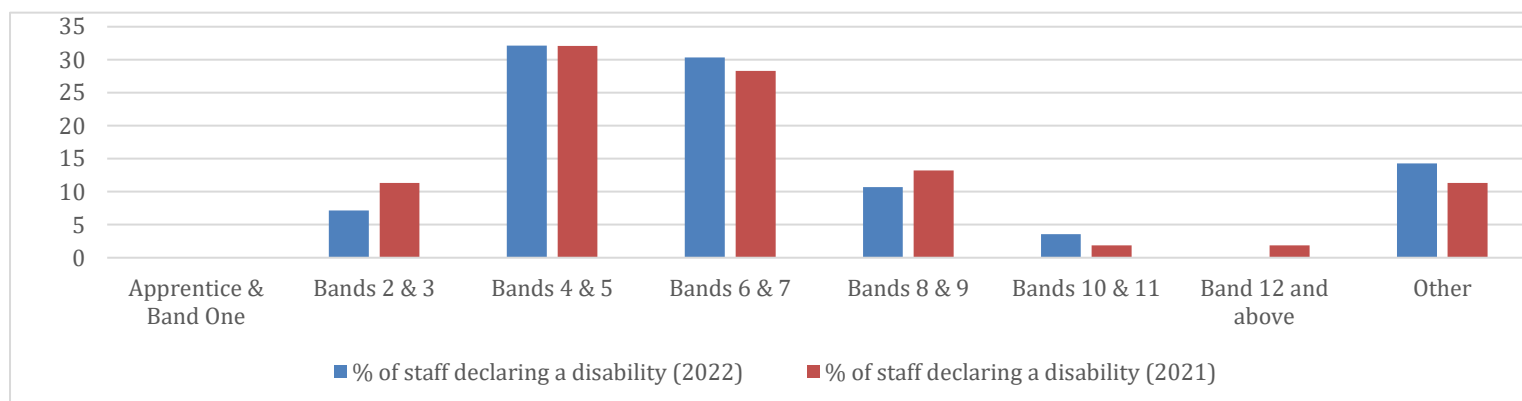
- Despite the current imbalance, it is pleasing to note that there appears to be an upward trend in the numbers of our employees identifying as something other than English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British of other White background. Numbers within this category have fallen from 90.35% in 2021 to 83.5% in 2022. We do not know the detail behind this as yet; it may however be due to an increase in the numbers of employees from the European Union or because our push to encourage employees across the organisation to submit their data has led to us capturing increased data from this group of people, thus providing a more accurate picture of numbers.
- Despite a reduction in the number of employees who identify as being White British, there has not been a significant shift in numbers in terms of those employees who identify with other ethnicities; particular around those ethnicities aligned with the Asian Sub-Continent
- The Covid pandemic has demonstrated that our employees no longer need to be restricted to the confines of an office. Throughout the pandemic, most of our office-based employees worked from home, and by and large they did so with overwhelming success and continued to deliver against performance standards. We have carried out a number of staff surveys throughout the pandemic to gauge feelings amongst staff, and while some employees understandably found the lack of face-to-face contact difficult, the overwhelming majority of employees felt that their work / life balance had improved and that they felt happier as a result of working from home. As an organisation we have had no hesitation in adopting a hybrid working model going forward. Our Worksmart Model which comes with the tagline; 'it's what you do, not where you do it' has been approved by the Executive Team and from April 2022 we intend to reduce the desk space ration in Council offices from 7:10 to 3:10. Our new hybrid working and the recognition that staff can effectively do their job from anywhere will allow us to look again at how we recruit people and where we recruit people from. The fact that there are few barriers to recruiting the right candidate from outside of Northumberland or the wider North East means that we can now widen our recruitment pool. We hope that in turn this will help us diversify the ethnic mix of our workforce.
- Our figures show that the bulk of those employees who identify themselves as not being White British seem to be employed at the lower end of the pay scale (bands 4-7). We will work with our BAME Network Group to understand why this may be, and what barriers may be in place that prevent some employees from progressing through pay grades. We will review the way in which jobs are advertised to see if there are any further opportunities to encourage applications from underrepresented groups, and will consider targeting specific media channels used by BAME communities to advertise posts. In October 2021, we participated in a local recruitment event to help BAME and disabled employees find work, and we will continue to participate and increase our presence in similar events

3.3 Disability

Table showing the breakdown of staff declaring a disability by pay band and part-time status

Pay Band	% of staff declaring a disability (2022)	% of staff declaring a disability (2021)	% of staff declaring a disability who are part-time (2022)	% of staff declaring a disability who are part-time (2021)
Apprentice & Band 1	0.00	0.00	0%	0
Bands 2 & 3	7.14	11.32	6.7%	16.67%
Bands 4 & 5	32.14	32.08	40%	41.18%
Bands 6 & 7	30.36	28.3%	20%	20%
Bands 8 & 9	10.71	13.21%	13.33%	28.57%
Bands 10 & 11	3.57	1.89%	0%	100%
Band 12 and above	1.79	1.89%	0.00%	0.00%
Other	14.29	11.32%	11.49%	50%

Chart showing the breakdown of staff declaring a disability by pay band – 2022



- 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 have received wide 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

- Our data suggests that most disabled employees appear to fit within the middle pay bands, with very little representation at the more senior end of the pay scale. We will work with our network support group; Enable to understand what barriers remain in place that prevents our disabled colleagues from progressing further through the organisation and will put measures and resolutions in place to address this.
- Our figures appear to show that disabled employees are under-represented at the very lowest level of our pay scales. This needs our attention, and we will work with Enable and local partners to understand what we can do to address this issue. We know however that this may, to some extent, be explained by the quality of our data; we have developed our apprenticeship programmes to support disabled our special needs apprentices, and we have seven SEND apprentices within our apprenticeship ranks. This does not appear to be reflected in our statistics.

3.4 Sexual Orientation

Table showing sexual orientation declared by employees

Sexual Orientation	% of Employees (Declared) (2022)	% of Employees (Declared) (2021)
Bisexual	0.68%	0.55%
Gay or Lesbian	1.31%	1.18%
Heterosexual or Straight	90.96%	90.96%
Prefer not to say	6.91%	7.31%
Other	0.00%	0.00%

Table showing distribution of employees who have declared they are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual by pay band:

Pay Band	No. of Employees (2022)	No. of Employees (2021)
Apprentice and Band 1	0	0
Bands 2 and 3	4	6
Bands 4 and 5	10	8
Bands 6 and 7	11	10
Bands 8-12	8*	8*
Other	8	8*

Data amalgamated to preserve anonymity

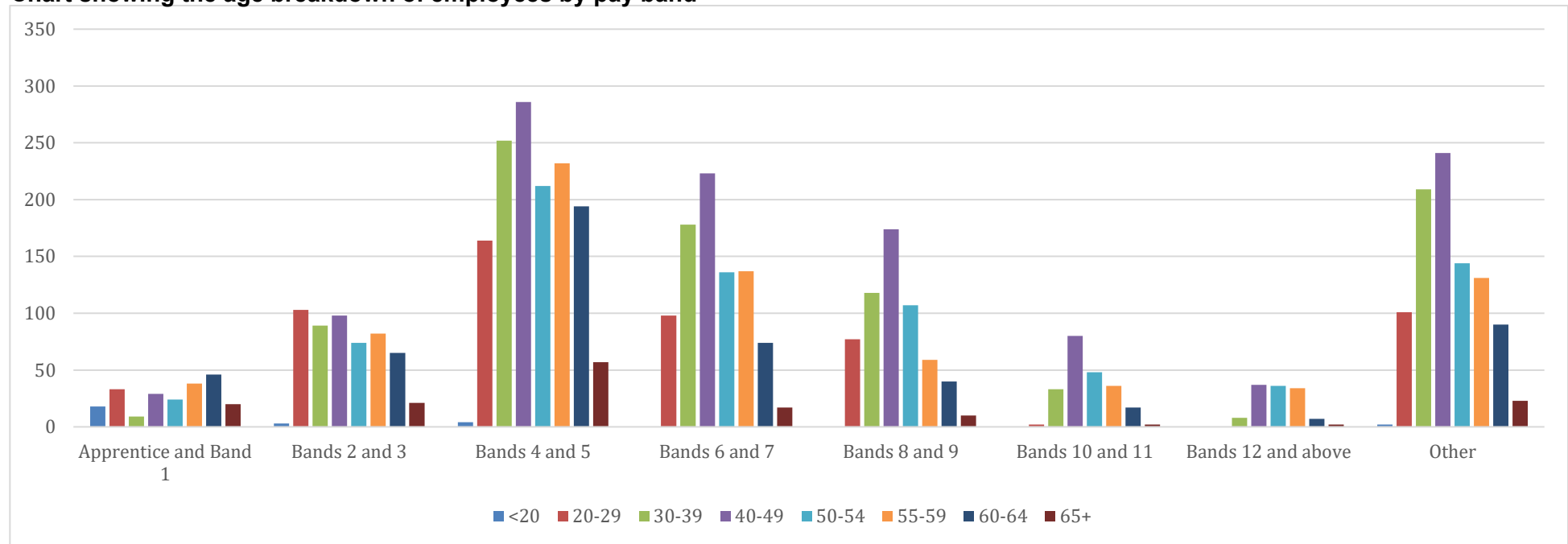
- There is no specific measure in place locally for recording sexual orientation or gender identity other than cisgender male or female but the most recent national data indicates that approximately 2.3% of the country records a sexual orientation other than heterosexual. Our workforce figures would therefore suggest a broad reflection of those national estimates; 1.99% of those we employ declared that they were of a sexual orientation other than heterosexual.
- We do not know how many of our employees who chose not to record their sexual orientation have an orientation other than heterosexual. However, the fact that our figures are broadly in line with national trends is pleasing in that it shows that we have instilled a culture where employees feel comfortable and empowered to express who they are.
- What is encouraging is that for the most part, those people who have declared a sexual orientation other than heterosexual seem to be spread out across the pay grades with a number of employees in the top grades. Of course, we do not know whether these individuals are open about their sexual orientation to colleagues, but we hope it demonstrates that as an organisation what matters to us is talent and commitment, not who you are.
- The unknown quantity here is how many people chose not to disclose their sexual orientation. 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. We currently do this in a number of ways, including through our LGBT + Champions and employee's network group, our staff training, our Equality and Diversity Policy which makes a specific commitment to LGBT+ equality, our Trans-Inclusion Policy and our attendance at the Northumberland Pride event.

3.5 Age

Table showing the age breakdown of employees by pay band

Pay Band	Under 20 2022 (2021)	20-29 2022 (2021)	30-39 2022 (2021)	40-49 2022 (2021)	50-54 2022 (2021)	55-59 2022 (2021)	60-64 2022 (2021)	65+ 2022 (2021)	Grand Total 2022 (2021)
Apprentice and Band 1	18 (30)	33 (51)	9 (18)	29 (32)	24 (29)	38 (38)	46 (43)	20 (16)	217 (257)
Bands 2 and 3	3 (4)	103 (111)	89 (84)	98 (88)	74 (75)	82 (86)	65 (74)	21 (19)	535 (541)
Bands 4 and 5	4 (2)	164 (147)	252 (241)	286 (267)	212 (214)	232 (237)	194 (183)	57 (56)	1401 (1347)
Bands 6 and 7	0 (0)	98 (66)	178 (149)	223 (225)	136 (110)	137 (146)	74 (65)	17 (13)	863 (774)
Bands 8 and 9	0 (0)	77 (61)	118 (111)	174 (155)	107 (102)	59 (85)	40 (47)	10 (5)	585 (566)
Bands 10 and 11	0 (0)	2 (3)	33 (28)	80 (65)	48 (38)	36 (33)	17 (18)	2 (1)	218 (186)
Band 12 and above	0 (0)	0 (0)	8 (5)	37 (33)	36 (29)	34 (27)	7 (7)	2 (2)	124 (103)
Other	2 (2)	101 (61)	209 (136)	241 (151)	144 (74)	131 (46)	90 (35)	23 (6)	941 (511)
Grand Total	27 (38)	578 (500)	896 (772)	1168 (1016)	781 (671)	749 (698)	533 (472)	152 (118)	4884 (4285)

Chart showing the age breakdown of employees by pay band



- Our data show that there is broadly an even spread of age groups across the organisation, and this in line with what we would expect. It is however noticeable that the younger age groups are less represented. This could be down to several factors. On a positive note, we know that a lot of our employees have spent most of their career in local government. We have a relatively low turnover, and the fact that so many staff choose to stay with us tells us that we are doing a lot of things right.
- On a less positive note, our data suggests we are struggling to either attract young talent into the workplace or to retain 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.
- 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.

3.6 Religion

Religion	% of Employees 2022	% of Employees 2021	% Northumberland Population (from Census 2011)
Did not declare	76.39	84.60	
Christian	12.05	7.31	68.60%
No Religion	10.35%	7.13	23.90%
Other	0.05%	0.00	0.30%
Buddhist	0.10%	0.09	0.20%
Muslim	0.10%	0.09	0.30%
Hindu	0.00%	0.00	0.10%
Sikh	0.24%	0.18	0.20%
Prefer not to say	0.73%	0.50	6.40%

- Our data shows that an overwhelming majority of our employees have chosen not to disclose their religion. 76.39 of our employees had not indicated their religion in the reporting period, and a further 0.73% indicated that they preferred not to say.
- The number of employees who chose not to disclose their religion is less than the figure reported in 2021 and that is encouraging. However, it is clear that there is a reluctance amongst employees to provide details of their religious beliefs. We have categories for ‘prefer not to say’ and ‘no religion’ so we can reasonably conclude that employees have deliberately and consciously chosen not to answer this question. This may be because employees may see religion as being something very private of personal to them, because of the sometimes divisive nature of religion, or because of something entirely different.
- At Northumberland County Council we embrace diversity and tolerance and want our employees to feel comfortable that they can practice whatever religion or belief they choose; we believe that choice of religion is a fundamental right, and we will treat all our employees equally despite their religious differences. We understand and accept that religion is a very private matter to some, but equally we want to make absolutely sure that there is no concern amongst employees that awareness of their religion may somehow be detrimental to them.