

Item: 6

Policy and Resources Committee: 22 September 2026.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Priorities – Progress Report.

Report by Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development.

1. Overview

- 1.1. This report presents the annual report on progress with Equality Outcomes and related actions, for approval for publication.
- 1.2. The Equality Outcomes Plan 2023 – 2027, which was approved by Council in October 2024 insofar as it related to the Council, sets out priority areas to address inequalities identified from national and local contexts, covering issues relating to employment, educational attainment, community empowerment and accessibility in licensing processes and transport.
- 1.3. Delivery Plans detailing the specific actions required to support the achievement of the Equality Outcomes underpin the implementation of this four-year plan.
- 1.4. Appendix 1 to this report sets out the third update on progress with the Equality Outcomes and their related actions.
- 1.5. Appendix 1 also sets out how the Council fulfils its mainstreaming duty under the Equality Act 2010 and provides details relating to the gender pay gap and occupational segregation, ethnicity pay gap and disability pay gap as at 31 March 2026.
- 1.6. Annex 1 to the Appendix also provides a summary of employee information as at 31 December 2025, to comply with the duty to gather and use employee information by protected characteristic as required by the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that members of the Committee:
 - i. Approve for publishing the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Priorities Progress Report 2025/2026, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, insofar as it applies to the Council.

3. Key Highlights

- 3.1. The report, attached at Appendix 1, demonstrates progress against all seven Equality Outcomes, with examples spanning employment, education, transport, participation, accessibility and inclusion. There are several strong examples of practical delivery including:
 - Supported employment opportunities through St Colm's.
 - Development of an All Age Work Experience Framework.
 - Equally Safe at Work activity and policy development.
 - Introduction of the £2 Bus Fare pilot.
 - Inclusive education work with Time for Inclusive Education.
 - Improved accessibility of licensing processes.
 - Inclusive sports, play and youth engagement initiatives.
- 3.2. Mainstreaming of equalities is well embedded across Orkney Islands Council ensuring fairness and equality are considered in all aspects, including employer responsibilities, service delivery and decision-making.
- 3.3. There are several examples that demonstrate practical accessibility improvements which provide strong evidence around reducing barriers and inclusive service design. These include:
 - Orkney's first fully inclusive play park.
 - BSL (British Sign Language) Plan delivery.
 - Inclusive sporting opportunities.
 - Digital licensing forms.
 - Neurodiversity training.
 - Accessible transport initiatives.
- 3.4. Orkney Islands Council's gender pay gap (mean) has reduced to 2.3% from 3.05% in March 2025.
- 3.5. The percentage of women employees in the top 5% is at 35.4%, up from 33.3% in March 2025.
- 3.6. The Council continues to experience both vertical and horizontal segregation with more women in lower graded posts and higher concentrations of women in 'traditionally female' dominated roles such as Social Care Assistants, Care at Home, Cleaning and Administrative roles.

- 3.7. Over the past year, work from the Equally Safe at Work accreditation programme has been focusing on analysing pay gap and occupational segregation data and identifying actions and initiatives to be implemented over the next 12 months.
- 3.8. Disclosure rates of employee protected characteristics remain low especially among new starters, impacting the reliability of the data. Work continues to actively increase these rates through updates to our New Employee Induction programme and the Annual Good Conversation process.

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Implications of Report

1. **Financial:** There are no financial implications for the Council arising directly from this progress report. Costs in the delivery of the Equality Outcomes Plan 2023 – 2027 are required to be met from existing approved budgets, or from successful external funding awards. Appendix 1 provides narrative on the funding for each of the examples listed at section 3.1 above. Inclusive sports on p6, and the others in the progress update section, p11 to p17.
2. **Legal:** There are no legal implications for the Council arising directly from this progress report.
3. **Corporate Governance:** Not applicable.
4. **Human Resources:** There are no human resources implications for the Council arising directly from this progress report.
5. **Equalities:** An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for performance reporting.
6. **Island Communities Impact:** An Island Community Impact Assessment is not required for performance reporting.
7. **Links to Council Plan:** The proposals in this report support and contribute to the improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Council Plan strategic priorities:
 - ☐ Growing our Economy.
 - ☒ Strengthening our Communities.
 - ☐ Developing our infrastructure.
 - ☒ Transforming our Council.
8. **Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan:** The proposals in this progress report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities:
 - ☐ Cost of Living.

- ☐ Sustainable Development.
- ☒ Local Equality.
- ☐ Improving Population Health.
- 9. Environmental and Climate Risk:** There are no environmental or climate risks associated with this progress report.
- 10. Risk:** There are no risk implications for the Council contained in this progress report.
- 11. Procurement:** Not applicable.
- 12. Health and Safety:** There are no health and safety implications for the Council contained in this progress report.
- 13. Property and Assets:** Not applicable.
- 14. Information Technology:** Not applicable.
- 15. Cost of Living :** Not applicable.

List of Background Papers

[Equalities Mainstreaming and Outcomes Report 2023 - 2027](#)
[EDI Priorities Progress Report 2024/2025](#)

Appendix

Appendix 1: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Priorities Progress Report 2025/2026.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Priorities Progress Report 2025/2026

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Orkney Islands Council Equality Statement

We are committed to fulfilling the three key elements of the general equality duty as outlined in the Equality Act 2010:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. This means removing barriers, meeting different needs and encouraging participation.
- Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, improving integration, building understanding, and reducing bullying and harassment.

The protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010 are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race, this includes ethnicity, colour, and national origin
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage or civil partnership

Everyone has protected characteristics, but it is the treatment individuals and groups experience, the level of autonomy they have, and the positive or negative outcome for them, that are its focus. As a Council we will seek to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics
- Meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people
- Encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or other activities where their participation is disproportionately low
- Be transparent, accessible and accountable

Mainstreaming Equality

Mainstreaming is an approach to delivering equality within an organisation and it contributes to continuous improvements and performance. It is aimed at ensuring that equality principles and practices are integrated into every aspect of an organisation from the outset. The focus should not only be internal mainstreaming equality principles into procedures and systems, but also external mainstreaming equality principles into policies and customer service delivery. Mainstreaming provides a framework that facilitates and complements equalities legislation and other equality measures.

This simply means integrating equality into our day-to-day work. We take equality and fairness into account in the way we go about our business when acting as an employer, when planning and providing services and when making decisions.

Mainstreaming ensures that equality becomes part of our culture. This benefits both employees and service users who know that they will be treated fairly and contributes to continuous improvement and better performance.

We are committed to promoting equality, which means recognising that everyone has different needs and taking action to ensure that we are all able to participate in society. Our aim is that Orkney is a community where we all have the opportunity to fulfil our potential.

Orkney Islands Council (OIC) is the public body responsible for all local government services in Orkney. We have an impact on many aspects of everyday life, and our activities touch the lives of everyone living in our island community, from schools to the care of older people. Our councillors meet regularly to make decisions about local services and about various aspects of life. These decisions are then implemented by our workforce. With equality at the heart of everything we do, we never forget that we are here to serve the public and have a big role to play in improving the quality of life enjoyed by people throughout the islands.

Leadership

Our Elected Members have responsibility for promoting equality and diversity within the Council and externally. They engage and listen to the views of our local communities through a range of methods enabling them to take a more collaborative approach to addressing inequalities within Orkney.

Supporting inclusive access to Elected Office

The Access to Elected Office Fund (Scotland) helps remove barriers that disabled people may face when standing for election by providing funding for practical support and

reasonable adjustments, such as communication support, transport and personal assistance.

We promoted awareness of this fund to support greater equality of opportunity in democratic participation and encourages a more diverse and representative range of candidates for elected office. Please visit our webpage for more information [Access to Elected Office Fund](#)

This promotion contributes to EDI objectives by improving accessibility, reducing barriers to participation and supporting the inclusion of disabled people in public and political life.

Policies and practices

Policies and practices internal to our organisation should not be discriminatory. Equality, diversity and inclusion issues are fully considered when developing new policies and processes and when they are reviewed periodically.

Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR and OD) delivers a programme of workshops and training for colleagues to ensure that our people policies and procedures are understood. This includes training in Recruitment and Selection, Grievance, Managing Sickness Absence and Learning and Development policies.

Equally Safe at Work policy development

As part of our Gender Pay Gap action plan and our commitment to achieving the Equally Safe at Work accreditation, we have reviewed and strengthened our policy framework to better reflect on our commitment to preventing gender-based violence and creating a safe, supportive workplace for everyone.



This work included updating existing policies and introducing new policies to ensure that employees experiencing the impacts of gender-based violence have access to appropriate support and are able to work in a safe and inclusive environment.

The updated policies were:

- Flexible Working Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy now Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy

New policies:

- Sexual Harassment Prevention, Awareness and Support Policy
- Supporting Colleagues Experiencing Gender-Based Violence, including Domestic Abuse Policy

These new and updated policies align with best practice and reinforce our commitment to fostering a workplace culture that is respectful, inclusive and free from gender-based violence.

Raising and maintaining awareness

It is important in mainstreaming equality that OIC builds and maintains awareness of our duties as an employer and service provider. All employees are required to periodically complete an e-learning course which aims to raise awareness about the importance of equality and diversity. The course covers equality legislation and is designed to encourage employees to think about and challenge their own perceptions. Equality and diversity awareness forms part of the induction programme for Elected Members, as well as ongoing briefings relating to the general equality duty, updates on changes to equality legislation and other equality-related topics.

Increasing awareness of the value of diversity helps embed equality, diversity and inclusion across our organisation. Throughout the year, regular organisation-wide communications are used to highlight EDI related topics and key awareness campaigns including Trans inclusion, Pride Month, International Women's Day and Carers Week.

With the launch of OIC's new website, we will be taking the opportunity to review and strengthen our EDI communications over the next year, with the aim of increasing visibility of awareness-raising activities, improve engagement across the organisation, and support participation within the wider community.

Education

Mainstreaming equalities is integral to the delivery of education services and are embedded through supporting strategies, plans and activities including Orkney Children's Services Plan, Equity and Excellence in Education plan, Good Parenting Plan, Community Learning and Development Partners Plan, Local Employability Plan and within work relating to the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

Sport and Leisure

The sport and leisure and community learning and development teams brought a SportScotland Kits for All initiative to Orkney, inviting the community to donate pre-loved sportswear to help remove financial barriers to sport and physical activity. The aim of this project was to tackle the cost of buying sports clothing, which prevents many people from participating in physical activity and the environmental impact of waste. Running from 3 November until 5 December, the campaign aimed to collect sportswear for both children and adults. All donated items were redistributed free of charge to individuals and families who needed them most. The campaign formed part of our commitment to improving access to sport and physical activity to everyone, whilst supporting environmental sustainability through re-use and recycling.

Improving access and inclusion to summer sport

The Summer of Sport 2026 programme demonstrates Orkney's commitment to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion through increased access to sporting opportunities for young people. Funded through a £51,000 award from SportScotland, the initiative provided free activities across Orkney, helping to reduce financial barriers to participation.

A wide range of sports, including football, athletics, hockey, fencing, netball and swimming, were delivered across the mainland and outer isles, ensuring opportunities were accessible to young people regardless of where they lived. The programme also included dedicated inclusive sessions, supporting participation for those who may face additional barriers to sport and physical activity.

By removing cost barriers, reaching rural and island communities, and providing inclusive opportunities for young people of all abilities, the Summer of Sport 2026 programme supported greater participation, wellbeing and community engagement across Orkney.

Orkney's first fully inclusive play park

The redevelopment of the Manse Road play park which reopened in July, is Orkney's first fully inclusive play park, highlighting our commitment to creating a more inclusive community.

Shaped in partnership with Inclusive Orkney, the play park offers accessible play opportunities for children of all abilities, helping to remove barriers to participation and ensuring that all families feel welcome. Visitors have praised features such as the trampoline, sensory footpath and swings, which have quickly become personal favourites. The project showcases inclusive design in action and supports our broader ambition to make services and public facilities accessible to everyone.



Community Learning, Development and Employability



The Community Learning, Development and Employability (CLDE) team organised a programme of free neurodiversity training for parents, carers, volunteers and professionals who support children and young people in community settings. Delivered by Neurodiversity Training UK, the sessions provided accessible, evidence-based learning tailored to local needs, following consultation with families and support services.

The training offered clear introduction to neurodivergence, including key conditions, executive functioning and emotional regulation, alongside practical strategies to support communication, sensory needs, wellbeing and inclusive practice. Separate sessions are delivered for parents and for professionals and volunteers, ensuring content is appropriate to different roles and contexts.

By providing free, locally tailored training with both in-person and online delivery options, the programme improved access to specialist knowledge in an island community, helping to build confidence and capacity among those supporting neurodivergent children and young people. This contributes to more inclusive environments across homes, community groups and activities, and supports improved outcomes for participants.

Orkney Youth Conference – Supporting Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing

Delivered by the Community Learning, Development and Employability (CLDE) Youth Services Team in partnership with Scottish Action for Mental Health (SAMH), the Orkney Youth Conference 2026 - Your Mind. Your Voice. Your Future, provided young people from across Orkney to come together to learn about mental health, wellbeing and self-care in a supportive and inclusive environment.

The conference aimed to bring together young people from across the islands to participate in discussions and included a dedicated session for pupils from Westray to ensure equitable access.

Through interactive workshops and discussions, young people explored mental health, resilience, coping strategies and available support services. The event encouraged participants to share their views, challenge stigma and develop confidence in discussing wellbeing.

This initiative helped to promote positive mental health and reduce barriers to support, ensuring participation for young people from rural and island communities, and to empower young people to have a voice in issues that affect them.

Local Employability Partnership

The Local Employability Partnership (LEP) is a collaborative network of employers, public sector organisations and support agencies working together to improve employability, promote inclusive recruitment practices and support workforce development across Orkney.

In November 2025, the LEP hosted an employment support showcase, bringing together local employers and support organisations to promote inclusive employment and workforce development across Orkney. Throughout the day, attendees heard from a range of partners on topics including Employability Recruitment Incentives (ERIs), work experience opportunities, Access to Work, Disability Confident, job carving, workplace wellbeing, and support for employees affected by drug and alcohol issues.

The programme combined presentations, case studies and networking opportunities, allowing employers to learn about the practical support available to help recruit, retain and develop a diverse workforce. A marketplace session enabled attendees to engage directly with partner organisations and discuss their individual business needs.

The event concluded with a feedback and commitment session, encouraging employers to consider actions they could take to create more inclusive workplaces and strengthen employment opportunities within the local community. Overall, the event successfully raised awareness of available support services and fostered stronger connections between employers and partner organisations.

Licensing

Although the Licensing Board has a separate legal status from Orkney Islands Council it is resourced entirely by the Council. The close connection between the Board and the Council enables the Board to benefit directly from the Council's awareness building, training and actions relating to equality, diversity and inclusion. This means taking into account the way in which the Board achieve their day-to-day business and integrating equalities into everything they do such as regularly equality impact assessing licensing related policies.



The poster for the Employment Support Showcase features a green header with the Orkney Local Employability Partnership logo and registration information. The main title 'Employment Support Showcase' is in white on a dark blue background, with a subtitle 'Discover support to recruit, retain and grow your workforce.' Below this is a photo of people at a meeting. The event details are in a green box: 'Friday 14th November, 9am - 3pm at The Old Library'. A dark blue box at the bottom contains the 'Schedule' of events.

Register your interest at www.workney.gov.uk/ole

Employment Support Showcase

Discover support to recruit, retain and grow your workforce.

Friday 14th November, 9am - 3pm at The Old Library

Drop in for free advice, funding information, and expert support from guest speakers. Refreshments and lunch provided.

Schedule

9:15 Welcome & refreshments	10:45 Orkney Local Employability Partnership overview	12:15 Lunch & marketplace
9:30 Orkney Local Employability Partnership overview	11:15 Break	1:00 Public Health Scotland & the Orkney Alcohol and Drugs Partnership
9:45 Employer Recruitment Incentives - benefits and funding	11:30 Department for Work and Pensions Access to Work & Disability Confident schemes	2:00 Feedback & evaluation
10:15 Developing the Young Workforce Work experience programmes & pathways to employment	12:00 Orkney Islands Council In work support for parents	2:15 Marketplace - speak to partners about available support

British Sign Language Local Plan 2024 – 2030

As required by the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015, Orkney Islands Council launched our BSL Plan in 2024 and set out actions which will improve the way BSL users find out about our services and have access to them. A BSL version of the plan is available [here](#).

The BSL Progress Group continues to meet to review progress, actions, feedback and opportunities to deliver on our BSL Local Plan 2024 - 2030. In January 2026, a Teacher of the Hearing Impaired was appointed to post, following a one-year empty vacancy after the previous postholder left. A member of the NHS Audiology team now attends the meetings, which has strengthened representation. However, overall representation within the group remains limited. As a result, the group will review its members to identify any gaps and explore opportunities to broaden participation.

Kirkwall Christmas tree lighting

An example of the work to integrate more inclusive communication is the Kirkwall Christmas Tree Lighting event in 2025. Bringing the community together to celebrate the festive season in a welcoming environment and showcasing the participation of school children, who incorporated signing as part of their performance.



Events like these help raise awareness of different communication needs and highlight the importance of accessible communication. By incorporating signing into community events, we promote equality and inclusion whilst showcasing the positive contribution young people can make to their communities. You can watch the highlights of the event [here](#).

Other key actions delivered through the Council and NHS Orkney's BSL Local Plan included:

- BSL pen drive training resource provided to all schools.
- BSL and hearing support resources regularly provided to Nurseries.
- Delivery of short online BSL courses at Stromness Academy and Kirkwall Grammar School.
- Let's Sign established as the resource to be used in Orkney Schools and resources regularly updated and shared.
- Class signing projects with signed stories and signed songs.
- S3 Wider Achievement BSL class delivered at Kirkwall Grammar School.
- 6 people including one student at KGS have completed the Level One BSL course

Equality Outcomes 2023 – 2027 progress update

We are committed to pursuing objectives that make real improvements for people by reducing inequalities and increasing inclusion, whilst fostering good relations and building connections between communities.

These equality outcomes set in 2023 were designed to focus on the areas that we consider most important, and that we have the scope to realistically influence in the four-year period as an employer, service provider, and as a partner with communities and other organisations within Orkney, including UHI Orkney.

Delivery plans were developed for each outcome, and progress is reported below on the third year of related actions.

Outcome	Progress
Increase number of people accessing employment, who declare protected characteristics, in particular disability.	St Colm's supported employment Through the No One Left Behind Local Employability Partnership (LEP) funding, twelve supported employment opportunities have been created within St Colm's Café and Crafts for people who face barriers to employment, including those with learning disabilities. Four people have started supported employment placements, providing valuable experience and helping them develop transferable skills and confidence in a workplace setting. These opportunities currently range from 5.5 hours to 10 hours per week, depending on the candidates' circumstances, support needs and capacity to understand work opportunities. The further eight people are currently progressing through recruitment and pre-employment checks. The Council continues to support employment pathways through work experience and placement opportunities, helping people with protected characteristics gain workplace experience and improve their confidence. These initiatives contribute to the Council's commitment to creating accessible employment opportunities and increasing

Outcome	Progress
	workforce participation among underrepresented groups. All Age Work Experience project Over the past 12 months the LEP has funded two temporary posts to work on an All Age Work Experience and Work Placements Project. This project focused on developing a flexible and inclusive framework to support people of all ages, particularly those facing barriers to employment, to access meaningful work experience opportunities with OIC. Stakeholder engagement with employability partners, managers and internal services informed the creation of participant pathways, manager guidance, buddying arrangements and supporting resources. A temporary project support post funded by the LEP, will now be recruited to lead the wider organisational engagement and implementation over the next 5-6 months. The project supports our aim to attract more diverse talent and increase workforce diversity by reducing barriers to employment and creating more accessible routes into the organisation for under-represented groups.
The Council will aim to reduce the gender pay gap.	Equally Safe at Work (ESAW) accreditation We have demonstrated a commitment to addressing the structural inequalities that contribute to the gender pay gap through our work under the Equally Safe at Work programme. This has included analysis of the gender pay gap data to identify areas influencing women's representation and progression within the workforce. Over the past 18 months, we have implemented a range of measures that support gender equality in employment, including the promotion of flexible working in the recruitment, awareness-raising on gender

Outcome	Progress
	inequality and violence against women, and a review of recruitment and progression practices. We have enhanced our organisational understanding of barriers to progression through employee engagement and focus groups and committed to improving the use of gender-disaggregated workforce and recruitment data to inform decision-making. To support awareness and implementation of the policies and commitments, a range of ESAW iLearn modules on Sexual Harassment, Violence against Women and Flexible Working have been implemented and promoted. These modules will also be incorporated into the People Manager Induction and People Manager Essentials training to help ensure managers have the knowledge and confidence to support colleagues, apply policies consistently and promote a safe and inclusive workplace. We continue to embed gender equality within our wider workforce and organisational development priorities through leadership support, partnership work, employee engagement and the development of policies that support women's safety, wellbeing and career progression. These actions contribute to creating a workplace where women are better supported to enter, remain and progress in employment, helping to progress towards reducing the gender pay gap over time.
People have increased confidence and opportunities to express their views and influence decision making and service design.	Increasing confidence and opportunities to influence decision making and service design The Stromness Safer Route to School Project aims to improve safety and accessibility on Ferry Road, particularly for people walking, wheeling and cycling.

Outcome	Progress
	The project created opportunities for residents to influence local decision making and service design through a public survey, community engagement events and participation in a Community Advisory Group. This collaborative approach places local voices at the heart of shaping proposed improvements, ensuring community priorities, needs and aspirations are reflected in project outcomes. By involving residents, local stakeholders and design specialists in the design process, the project supports the Council's objective of increasing confidence and opportunities for people to express their views and influence decisions that affect their communities. Further information: Ferry Road's 'Safer Route to School Project' moves to Collaborative Design Phase
People in Orkney have improved accessibility to all transport services.	Introduction of £2 Bus Fare Orkney Islands Council supported the introduction of the Scottish Government's £2 Bus Fare Cap Pilot, aimed at improving the affordability of public transport across Orkney. The scheme helps reduce travel costs in rural and island communities, where journeys can be longer and more expensive. By making bus travel more affordable, it supports access to employment, education, healthcare and other essential services, particularly for lower-income households. This initiative contributes to advancing equality of opportunity by improving connectivity and reducing barriers to participation. It also supports wider sustainability goals by encouraging increased use of public transport.

Outcome	Progress
	The Council will continue to work with partners to monitor the impact of the pilot and ensure it provides inclusive and accessible transport for all.
Pupils have a greater sense of belonging and safety in schools.	Supporting Positive Experiences for LGBT Young People An LGBT Inclusive Education Implementation Plan 2026-2029 has been created. The plan will ensure that the national Scottish Government expectations, LGBT-inclusive education is implemented through Curriculum for Excellence. This will be one part of wider work to promote inclusion, equality, wellbeing and respectful relationships. Further work to develop anti-racism and gender-based violence is planned. The power to implement LGBT Inclusive Education lies within the Director of Education, Communities and Housing within the scheme of delegation. The education service has made an operational decision to use Time for Inclusive (TIE) materials and resources to support the delivery of the plan. This includes professional development for staff. Engagement opportunities for parent council chairs occurred on 17 March and a week of engagement with parents, staff and members occurred in August. The plan was noted at the Education Communities and Housing committee on 9 September.
Young people facing barriers are supported and leave school with sustained positive destinations.	Reducing barriers and supporting positive outcomes for young people Young people facing barriers are being supported through a range of targeted interventions designed to improve

Outcome	Progress
	engagement, achievement and progression into positive destinations. CLDE Youth Services are working closely with schools to improve the tracking and recognition of young people's achievements, ensuring that wider skills and accomplishments are captured alongside academic attainment. At Stromness Academy, Pupil Equity Funding has been used to employ a Pupil Engagement Worker for a few hours to support attendance, engagement and wider achievement opportunities for pupils who may face additional barriers to learning and participation. Young people are also being supported to gain recognised qualifications and accreditation through initiatives such as the Participatory Democracy Certificate and wider youth work awards. During 2025-26, the CLDE Service supported young people to achieve 305 accredited awards, helping them develop transferable skills, confidence and evidence of achievement that can strengthen progression into further learning, training and employment. In addition, Papdale Primary School are piloting new approaches to recognising and evidencing skills developed through youth work, including a national YouthLink Scotland tracking project and the development of a digital learner profiling platform in partnership with Skills Development Scotland and Education Scotland. These initiatives aim to help young people better develop their skills and achievements. Together, these activities contribute to improved attendance, attainment, wider achievement, confidence and employability

Outcome	Progress
	skills. This supports more young people, particularly those facing disadvantages or additional barriers, to leave school and move into sustained positive destinations.
People in Orkney will have improved choice and accessibility to licensing application processes.	The Licensing Team has improved accessibility and choice within application processes by introducing editable PDF forms. This move enables people to complete and submit applications digitally, reducing reliance on paper-based processes and improving convenience for users. The move to editable PDF forms supports greater accessibility by making applications easier to access, complete and return, particularly for those who may face barriers related to location, mobility or time. Overall, this action demonstrates progress toward a more inclusive and user-friendly licensing service.

Equal Pay

Orkney Islands Council is required to publish information on the percentage difference among our employees between men's average hourly pay (excluding overtime) and our women's average hourly pay (excluding overtime). This is known as the gender pay gap.

The gender pay gap figures are calculated using the average (mean) as well as the median average which gives a greater indicator of any gender inequalities in pay.

- The **mean**, sometimes referred to as the 'average' is where we add up all the numbers and then divide by the number of numbers.
- The **median** is the 'middle' value in the list of numbers. To find the median, we list our data in numerical order from smallest to largest, so we can identify the middle entry from the list and find the median.

The figures have been calculated based on permanent employees and relief workers have not been included. For the purposes of equal pay calculations, the data relating to sex has been taken from the payroll records of employees. This is a separate record to that of the general diversity data held for each employee which relies on self-declaration.

We are committed to ensuring that the process of determining pay and conditions of employment for all our employees is free from bias and should not discriminate. There are however, some service areas that are traditionally more male-dominated, such as Marine Services and Towage. These services are competing for applicants within private industry such as the oil and renewable energy sectors and therefore the level of pay reflects this.

Although we acknowledge that employing a complex and diverse workforce across a range of services and professional areas further adds to the impact of societal and educational factors on the gender pay gap, reducing pay gaps at the Council remains a long-term goal.

The following data are the most recent snapshot figures **as at 31 March 2026** relating to pay gaps. These figures are used to inform ongoing actions within the plan.

Gender Pay Gap

Women continue to be represented within the highest earning roles across OIC. Of the 96 employees within the top 5% of earners, 34 are women representing 35.4% of this group. This is an increase from 33.3% in 2024/25.

The overall mean hourly rate for female employees is £19.34 compared with £19.79 for male employees, resulting in a mean gender pay gap of 2.3%. This represents a relatively small difference in average hourly earnings between male and female employees.

Analysis of full-time and part-time employees shows a different position. Female full-time employees have an average hourly rate of £23.28 compared with £21.86 for male full-time employees, resulting in a mean pay gap of -7%. Female part-time employees have an average hourly rate of £17.63 compared with £16.35 for male part-time employees, resulting in a mean pay gap of -7.8%. Negative pay gap figures indicate that women have a higher average hourly rate than men within these employee groups.

The median hourly rate for female employees is £15.79 compared with £15.38 for male employees, resulting in a median gender pay gap of -2.6%. This indicates that the middle-paid female employee earns slightly more than the middle-paid male employee. The same pattern is reflected within both full-time and part-time employee groups.

These figures suggest that pay rates across the organisation remain broadly equitable. Whilst a mean pay gap exists, the median pay gap and the pay gap figures for both full-time and part-time employees are in favour of women. We will continue to monitor pay gap information and workforce trends and will take forward actions that support equality of opportunity, career progression and representation across all levels of the organisation.

Whilst OIC's gender pay gap figures appear favourable to women across full-time and part-time, these results should be considered alongside the wider workforce profile. Women continue to be disproportionately represented in a number of lower-paid occupational groups across the organisation. Consequently, although mean and median pay gap figures indicate that women earn slightly more than men in certain areas, occupational segregation remains evident. This highlights the importance of considering pay gap data alongside workforce composition, career progression opportunities, and representation across different job types and grades. Further analysis of occupational segregation is provided below and identifies areas where women remain concentrated in lower-paid roles.

Gender Representation in the Top 5% of Earners					
Category	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022
Total number of employees in top 5% of earners	96	96	96	94	92
Total number of women employees in top 5%	34	32	33	36	28
Percentage of women employees in top 5%	35.4%	33.3%	34.4%	38.3%	30.4%

Mean Gender Pay Gap					
Post Type	Female count %	Male count%	Female mean hourly rate	Male mean hourly rate	Mean pay gap%
All	68.3%	31.7%	£19.34	£19.79	2.3%
Full-time	20.7%	19.8%	£23.28	£21.86	-7%
Part-time	47.6%	11.7%	£17.63	£16.35	-7.8%

Median Gender Pay Gap			
Post Type	Female Median £	Male median £	Median pay gap%
All	£15.79	£15.38	-2.6%
Full-time	£15.79	£15.38	-2.6%
Part-time	£15.79	£15.38	-2.6%

Ethnicity Pay Gap

Our pay gap information for black and minority ethnic employee groups are based on a calculation for minority ethnic combined employees in comparison to white combined employees and does not include data for employees not stating their ethnicity.

No pay gap has been identified based on ethnicity however we acknowledge that we report low figures for ethnic diversity within our workforce. Work continues to address the gaps in employee diversity data.

Disability Pay Gap

The disability pay gap as at the reporting date is -3.65%, indicating that employees who have declared a disability have a slightly higher average hourly rate than employees who have declared no disability. The mean hourly rate for disabled employees is £20.35 compared to £19.63 for non-disabled employees.

While no adverse disability pay gap has been identified, we remain committed to supporting an inclusive workplace through our Disability Confident Employer status and by promoting fair recruitment, progression and development opportunities for disabled employees.

Work continues to improve workforce diversity data, with increasing disclosure rates remaining a key priority. Better data will support future analysis and monitoring.

Disability	Post Type	Total %	Mean hourly rate	Median hourly rate
Yes Disability	All	4.9%	£20.35	£17.00
	Full-time	39%	£24.60	£22.38
	Part-time	61%	£17.63	£15.39
No Disability	All	59.7%	£19.63	£15.97
	Full-time	40.6%	£22.65	£20.01
	Part-time	59.4%	£17.56	£15.17
Prefer not to say	All	2.2%	£19.49	£17.51
	Full-time	42.6%	£20.47	£20.59
	Part-time	57.4%	£18.76	£15.39
No data	All	33.2%	£19.10	£15.39
	Full-time	40.5%	£22.33	£18.98
	Part-time	59.5%	£16.90	£14.69
Disability Pay Gap				-3.65%

Occupational Segregation

Occupational segregation is the concentration of certain groups of employees in particular grades and occupations.

- **Horizontal segregation** is when women and men are concentrated into different types of work.
- **Vertical segregation** is when women and men are concentrated into different levels of work

For example, women tend to be found in lower paid jobs such as in care, cleaning or admin roles and these jobs are also lower paid. It is one of the major causes of the gender pay gap.

From the figures below there is evidence of vertical segregation based on gender. There are high concentrations of women within the lower grade posts. These grades contain the traditionally female dominated roles such as Social Care Assistants, Care at Home, Cleaning and Administrative colleagues. Unlike some councils, OIC continues to directly employ people in lower-paid roles such as cleaning, which has an impact on gender pay gap figures particularly when making comparisons with benchmark data.

Figures show that more women are in lower graded posts across the OIC and more men are holding higher grade posts. This changing point is around grade K and is influenced by the significant horizontal and vertical segregation within the Neighbourhood Services and Infrastructure directorate (as per the organisational structure for this reporting period). The figures also show there are more women than men in part-time roles, and it is noted that part-time work is often lower paid with fewer opportunities for progression. This means the gender pay gap is more apparent when comparing women's average hourly part-time wage versus men's average hourly full-time wage.

Occupational segregation data has been reviewed through the Equally Safe at Work working group to better understand the factors contributing to the trends and identify opportunities to address them. A targeted action plan is being finalised, with initiatives to be implemented over the next 12 months to help reduce occupational segregation and support greater balance across roles and grades within OIC.

The following Occupational Segregation report is reported by directorate based on the structure new management structure implement in 2025:

- ECH – Education, Communities and Housing
- ER – Enterprise and Resources
- IOD – Infrastructure and Organisational Development
- OHAC – Orkney Health and Care
- CX – Chief Executive Services

Figures in the following table give a snapshot as at 31 March 2026 and are rounded to closest whole number.

Occupational Segregation by Service and Sex 2026

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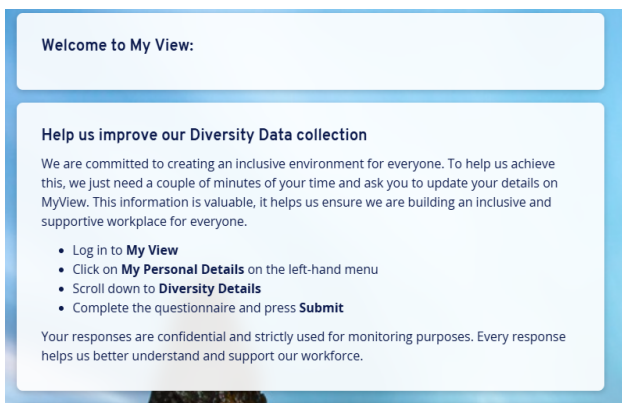
Grade	ELH		ESR		NSI		OHAC		SPBS		All Services	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Teachers	79%	21%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	79%	21%
(Depute) Head Teachers	75%	25%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	75%	25%
Others	100%	-	2%	98%	-	-	-	-	-	-	6%	94%

Annex 1 - Equalities monitoring data

Employee diversity and monitoring

Orkney Islands Council undertakes its equality duty to monitor and report on specific information about employees to help identify any trends and to address any identified inequalities. We collect, publish and monitor information about the diversity of our employees to help us check that we are supporting a culture of diversity and inclusion and identify areas for improvement. Whilst employees are asked to keep their diversity information up to date, we recognise that this is voluntary and not everyone chooses to disclose all information. Increasing disclosure rates on the diversity of our workforce is ongoing work.

When colleagues across OIC feel safe, supported and confident in being themselves at work, we gain the benefit of diversity across our organisation. Diversity of thought, expression and belief impacts how we deliver our services and increases the resilience of our organisation, increasing our ability to respond to the diverse needs of our community.



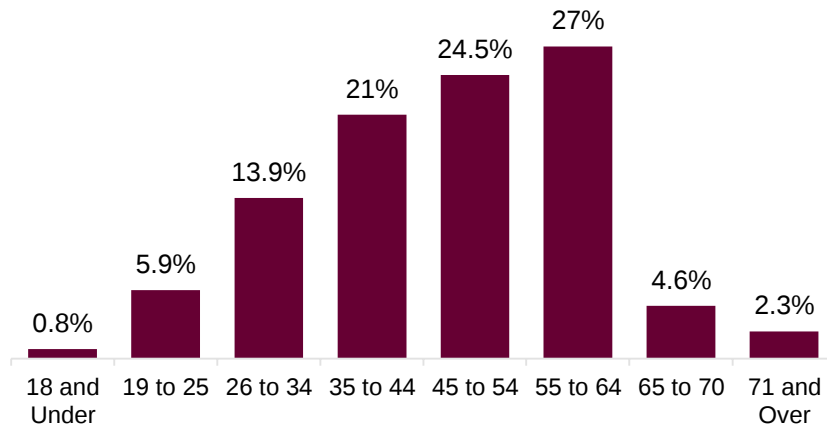
Employees are asked to update their personal information held on the electronic HR system MyView. This includes the ability to update details relating to the protected characteristics which can be updated at any time through the self-service system. This process is part of our Corporate Induction and regular organisation-wide communications are issued encouraging employees to update their details on MyView.

Accurate and up-to-date data helps us better understand the diversity of our workforce, identify any potential inequalities, and ensure that employees can access appropriate support when required. Work is ongoing to improve the disclosure rate of diversity details and includes:

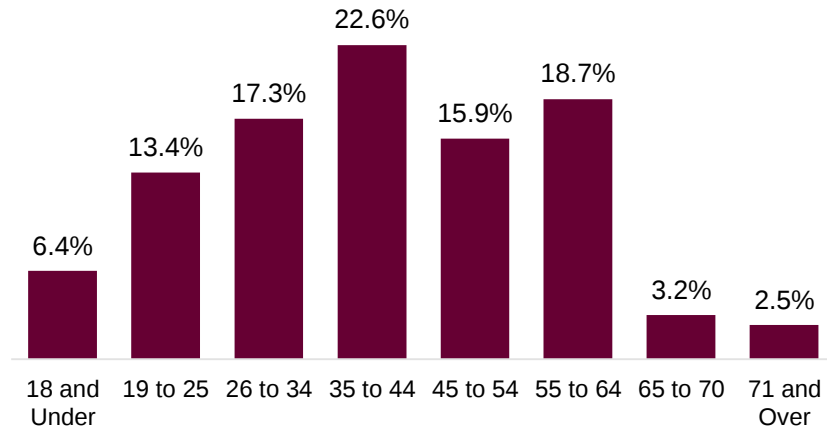
- An additional section on diversity data in the New Employee Induction programme, to specifically improve disclosure rates for new starts.
- A specific prompt within the Annual Good Conversations process for employees to review and update their diversity information, in order to help improve disclosure rates across the organisation and raise awareness and understanding of why this is important.

About our workforce

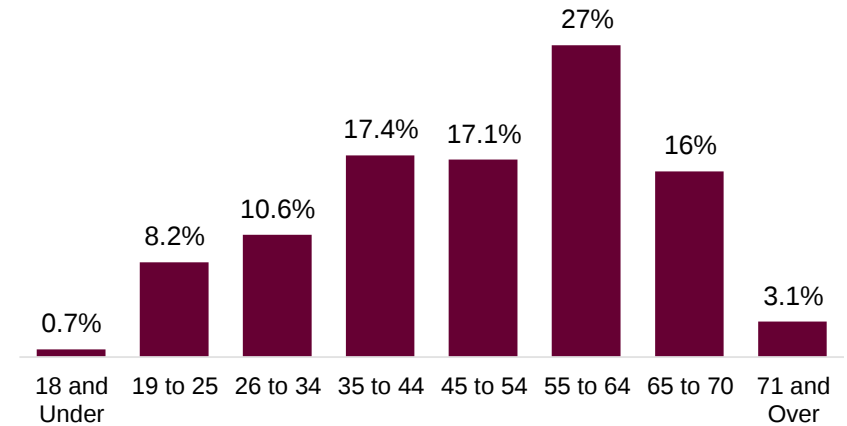
Age - All employees



Age - new starts



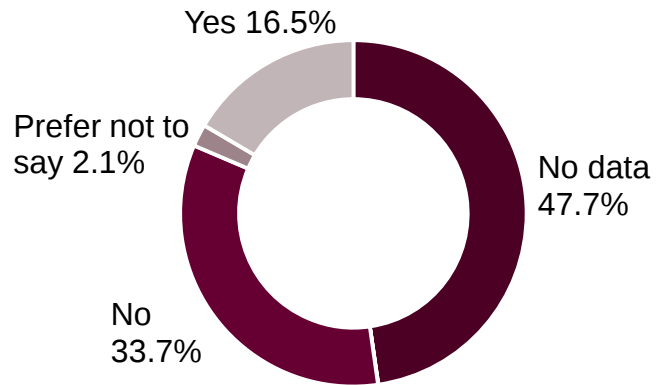
Age - Leavers



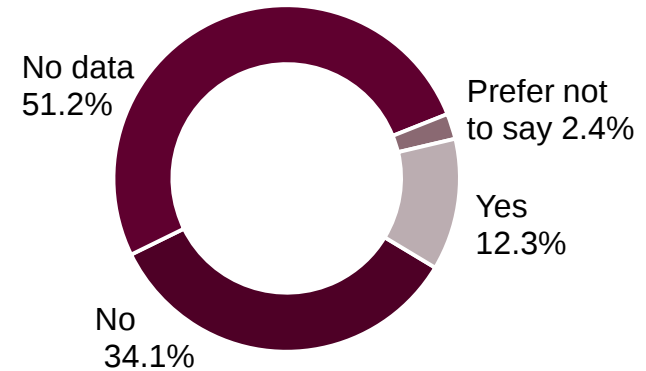
New starters have a slightly younger age profile than the overall workforce. The largest proportion of new employees were aged 35 to 44 (22.6%), with almost 20% of new starts aged 25 and under, including 6.4% aged 18 and under.

Leaver data continues to reflect the ageing workforce, with the highest proportion of leavers aged 55 to 64 (27%), followed by 45 to 54 (17.1%) and 35 to 44 (17.4%). Employees aged 65 to 70 also represented a notable proportion of leavers (16%).

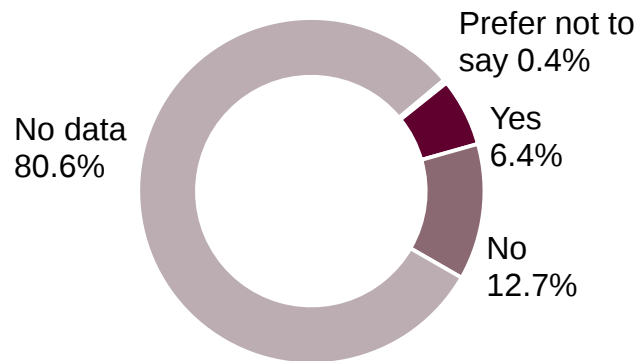
Carers - All Employees



Carers - leavers

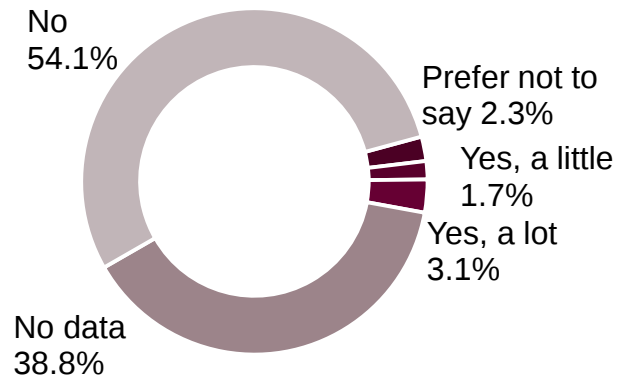


Carers - New starts

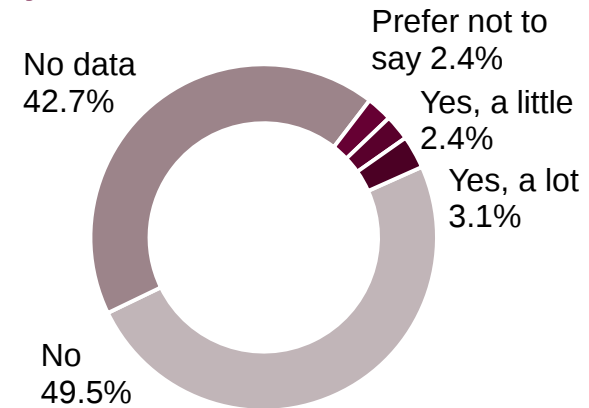


The data on caring responsibilities has remained similar to previous reporting periods. Compared with the previous reporting year, there has been a 3.66% increase in the number of new employees declaring that they have caring responsibilities. This may indicate improved awareness and confidence in providing diversity information during the recruitment process.

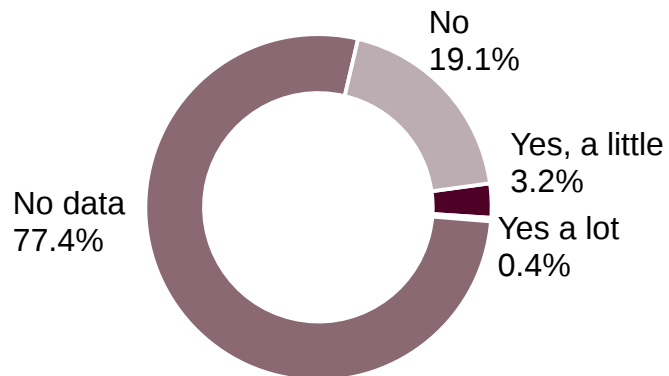
Disability - all employees



Disability - leavers



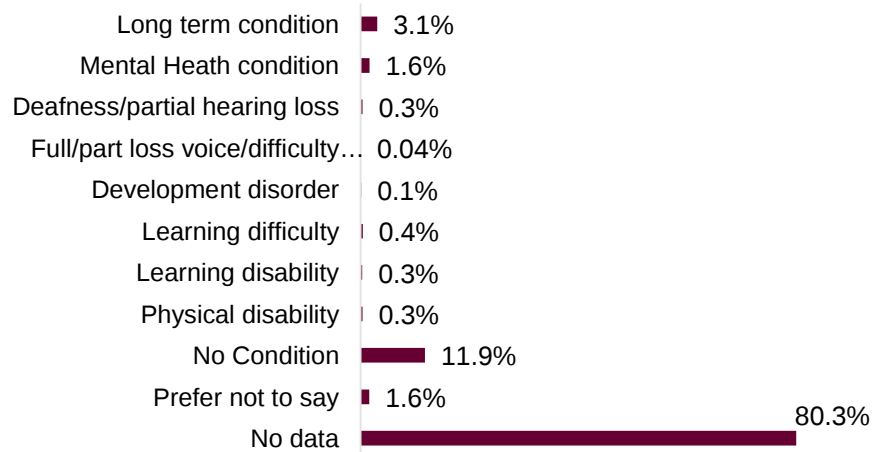
Disability - new starts



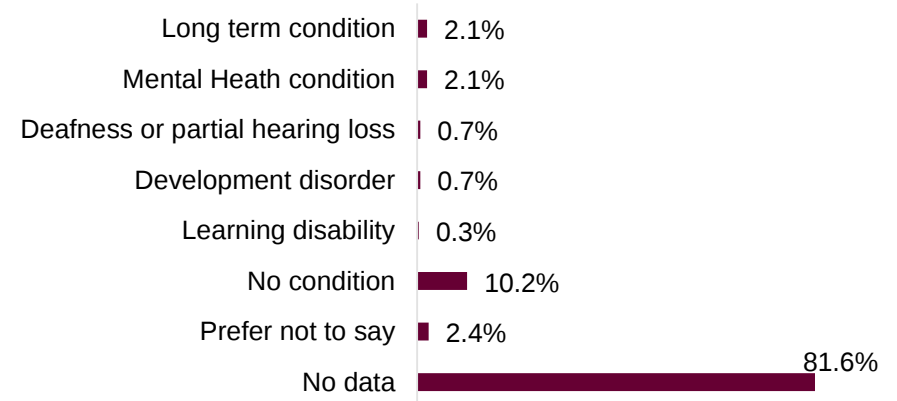
The disability data has stayed similar previous reporting periods across both the overall workforce and leavers.

There has been an increase of almost 2% of new employees declaring that they have a disability that affects them a little since last year. This may indicate growing confidence amongst new employees in disclosing disability information.

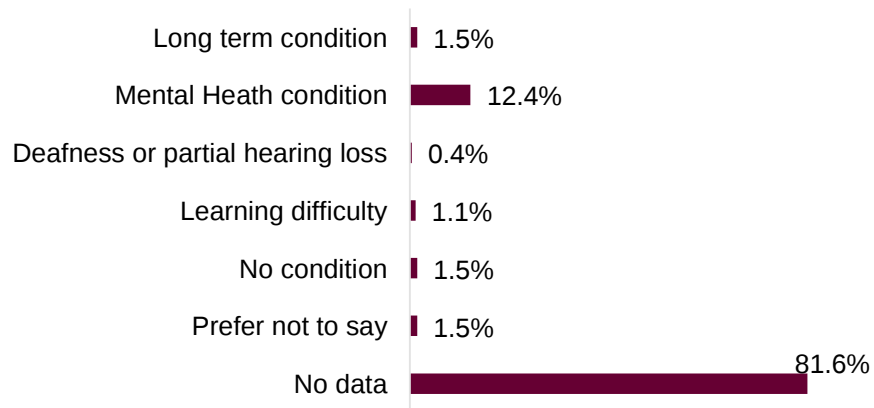
Health condition - all employees



Health condition - leavers



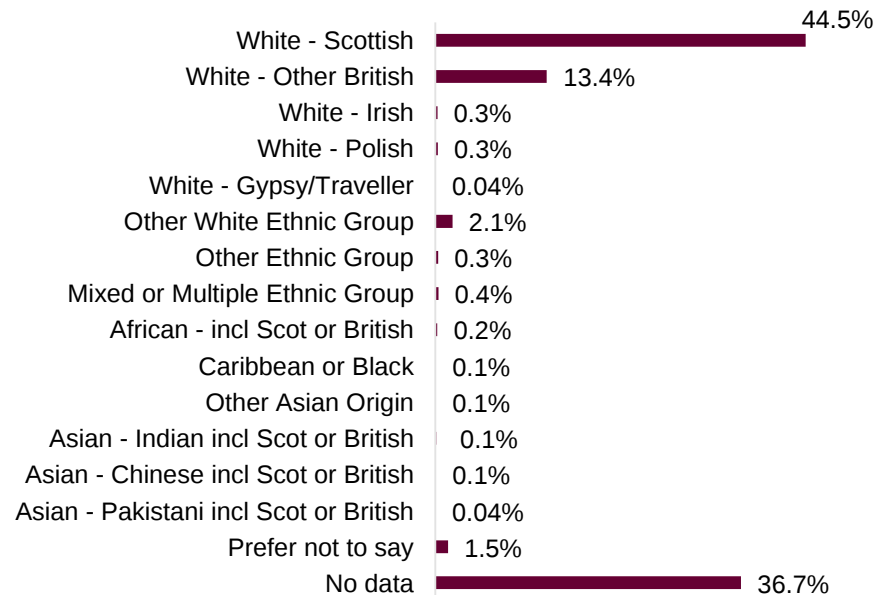
Health condition - new starts



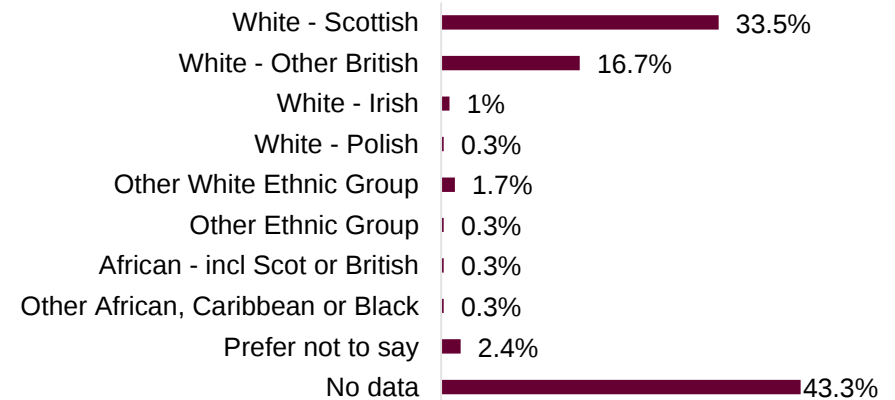
Long-term health conditions and mental health conditions continue to be the most reported health conditions where information has been provided.

There has been a slight increase in new starters disclosing a long-term health condition, while declaration rates for leavers have improved through a reduction in records recorded as 'no data'.

Ethnicity - all employees

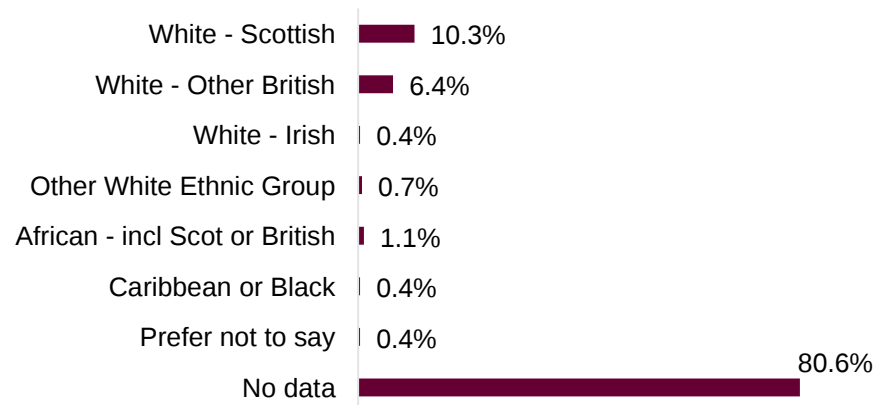


Ethnicity - leavers



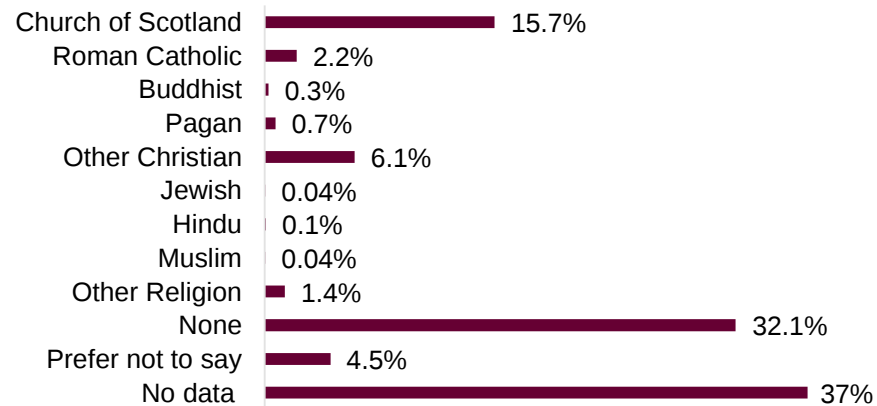
Ethnicity data remains consistent with the previous reporting, with White Scottish and White Other British employees continuing to represent the largest ethnic groups.

Ethnicity - new starts

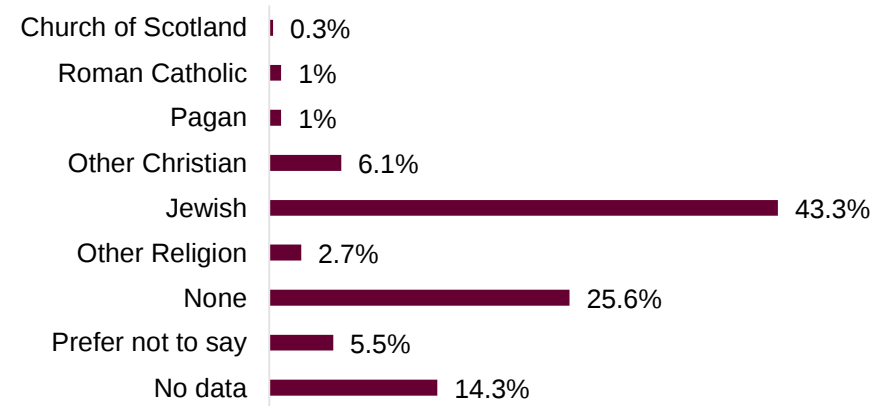


No significant changes were identified in the ethnicity profile of the workforce, new starters or leavers. However, ethnicity disclosure rates remain low, particularly amongst new starters.

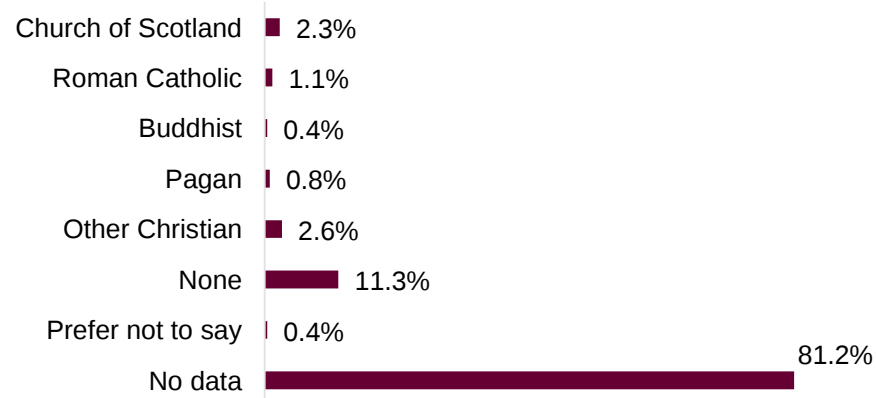
Religion or Belief - all employees



Religion or Belief - leavers



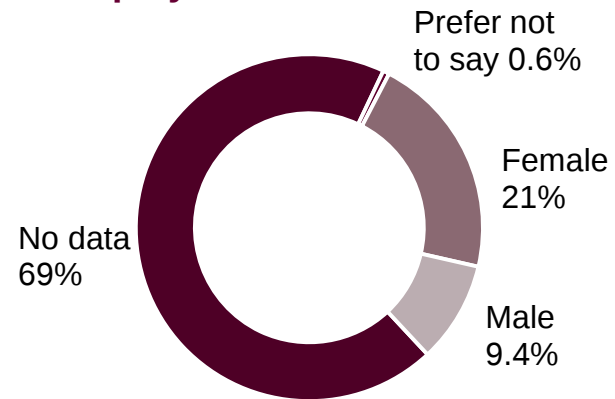
Religion or Belief - new starts



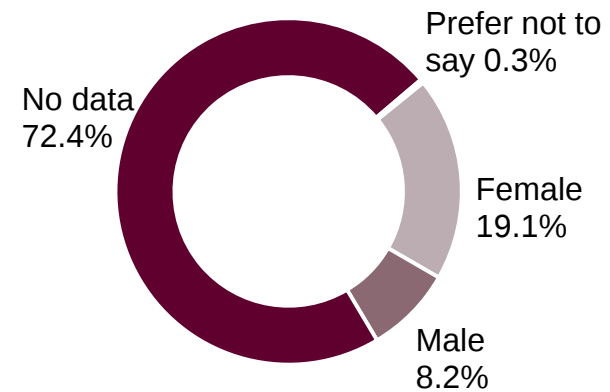
Religion and belief data has remained consistent with the previous reporting period. Employees reporting no religion or belief continue to represent the largest declared group, followed by Church of Scotland, Other Christian and Roman Catholic.

No significant changes have been identified in the religion and belief profile of the workforce.

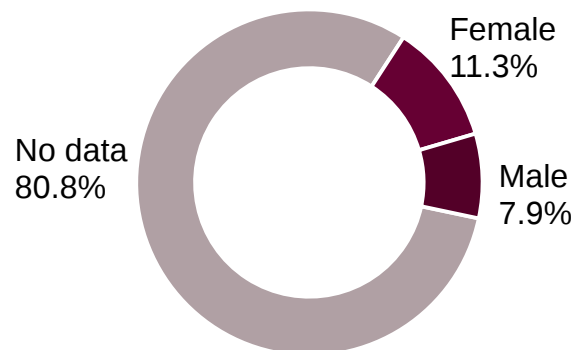
Sex - all employees



Sex - leavers



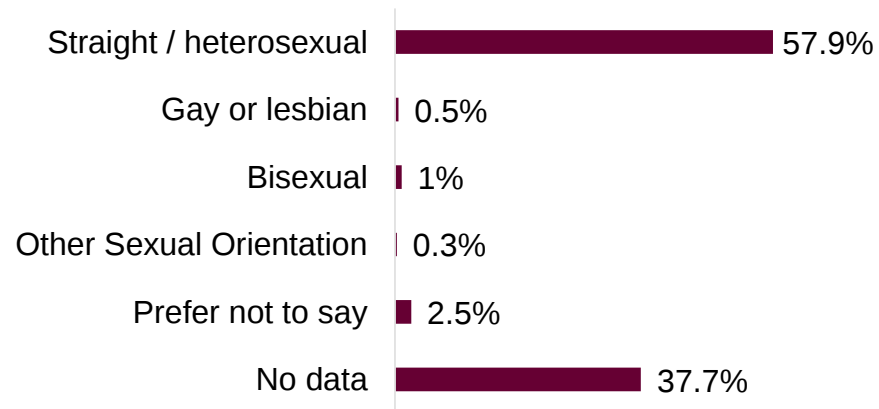
Sex - new starts



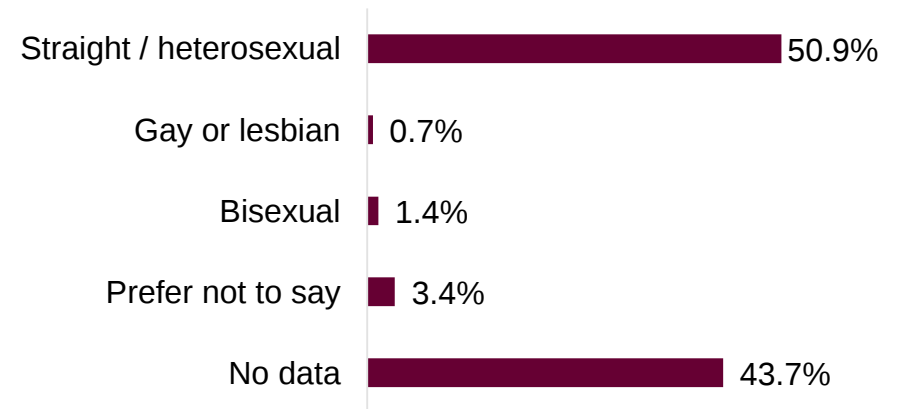
No significant changes have been identified in the sex profile of employees, new starters or leavers. While the proportion of female and male leavers has changed slightly year on year, overall trends remain stable.

Performance management statistics show that of the employees involved in either a grievance, disciplinary or dignity at work process, 50% are women and 50% are men.

Sexual Orientation - all employees

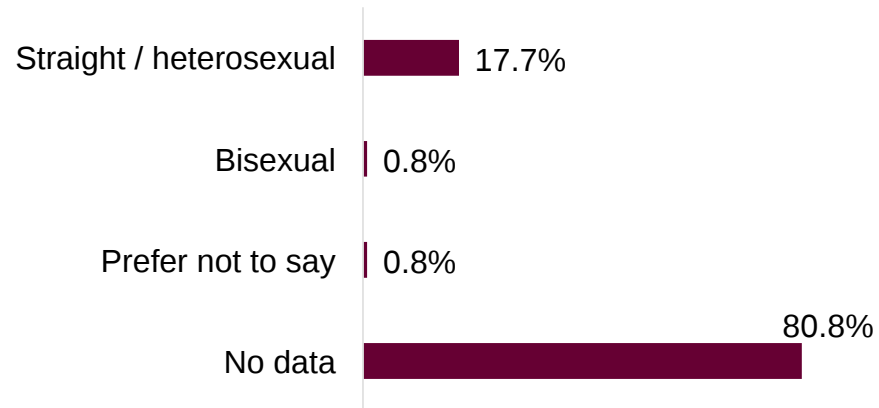


Sexual Orientation - leavers



Sexual orientation data has remained consistent with previous reporting periods, with the majority of employees who provided information identifying as straight/heterosexual.

Sexual Orientation - new starts



Transgender employees

Figures are collected for Transgender employees, new starts and leavers and these remain low (less than 1%) but analysis shows that these are consistent with previous years' data.