

**Item: 12**

**Policy and Resources Committee: 23 September 2025.**

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Priorities Progress Report.**

**Report by Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development.**

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## **1. Overview**

- 1.1. 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.
- 1.2. Delivery Plans detailing the specific actions required to support the achievement of the Equality Outcomes underpin the implementation of this four-year plan.
- 1.3. This report provides the second update on progress with the Equality Outcomes and their related actions.
- 1.4. This report also sets out how Orkney Islands 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 2025.
- 1.5. Annex 1 of the report also provides a summary of employee information as at 31 December 2024, 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 2024/2025, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, insofar as it applies to the Council.

### 3. Key Highlights

- 3.1. 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.
- 3.2. Ongoing progress is being made against all Equality Outcomes and specific Delivery Plans are developed identifying further actions against each of the outcomes.
- 3.3. Orkney Islands Council's gender pay gap has reduced to 3.05% from 4.45% in March 2024. This is attributed to adjustments in the pay structure with higher pay awards for lower-graded roles (A and B).
- 3.4. The percentage of women employees in the top 5% is at 33.3% and down from 38.3% in March 2024.
- 3.5. 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.
- 3.6. Work from the Equally Safe at Work accreditation is focussed on analysing pay gap and occupational segregation data and exploring opportunities for improvements in this area.
- 3.7. 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.

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#### **Implications of Report**

1. **Financial:** There are no financial implications for the Council arising directly from this progress report, resources expended being met from existing approved budgets.
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](#)

[Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Priorities Progress Report 2023/2024](#)

### Appendix

Appendix 1: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Priorities Progress Report 2024/2025.



# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Priorities Progress Report 2024/2025

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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 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.

Work is ongoing to foster a culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion. This year, the Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development played a leading role in marking International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT), reinforcing the Council's commitment to creating a safe and respectful environment for all.

In light of the UK Supreme Court's recent clarification on the legal definitions of 'woman' and 'sex' under the Equality Act 2010, a legal briefing on the potential implications was circulated within the organisation. In addition, an organisation-wide message was sent acknowledging the concerns this ruling may raise for LGBTQ+ colleagues and the local LGBTQ+ community. Senior leaders used this opportunity to provide reassurance, affirming that transgender individuals remain protected under the Act and that the Council remains deeply committed to supporting all colleagues and community members.

To ensure meaningful support, the Council signposted a range of resources, including:

- **Employee Assistance Programme** – offering free, confidential 24-hour support.
- **LGBT Health and Wellbeing Helpline** – providing emotional support and guidance.
- **LGBT Youth Scotland Digital Support** – offering live chat services for young people.
- **Mindline Trans+ and LGBT Switchboard** – national helplines for mental health and community support.
- **Third-Party Hate Crime Reporting Centres** – available locally in Kirkwall for confidential reporting.

We acknowledge there are still a number of challenges to fully understand the implications relating to the Supreme Court judgement. We are actively working with Equalities leads from other Local Authorities across Scotland as part of the Scottish Councils Equality Network (SCEN), to establish a shared understanding of potential next steps which will be informed by further clarification and guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Taking a proactive approach to demonstrate leadership in areas that impact employees and community members reflects the Council's core value of putting people first and its ongoing commitment to protect individuals from discrimination. Through visible leadership, inclusive messaging, and accessible support, Orkney Islands Council continues to build a workplace and community where everyone can thrive.

## **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.

Our family-friendly policies have recently been reviewed and now include provisions for neonatal care leave and pay, and parental bereavement leave and there have also been updates to our Adoption and Surrogacy policies offering greater support to employees.

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, Dignity at Work and Learning and Development policies.



Employee mental health and wellbeing remain priorities with ongoing support and guidance provided through the new Employee Assistance Programme, wellbeing themed webinars and dedicated wellbeing content available through the [Council website](#). A series of regular communications and roadshows have been developed to increase engagement and awareness of the resources available across the organisation, with particular focus on colleagues who don't have regular access to computers as well as isles-based colleagues.

A new Wellbeing Network has been introduced this year designed to promote positive mental health and wellbeing across the organisation. The network introduces two key roles: Wellbeing Champions and Wellbeing Supporters. Champions will serve as primary contacts for colleagues needing wellbeing advice, offering direct support and signposting and promoting wellbeing initiatives, while Supporters will primarily focus on raising awareness and aiding Champions. Both roles will actively promote wellbeing initiatives, activities, and resources and will provide valuable feedback on key themes of concern to the HR and OD, to help shape future mental health and wellbeing initiatives.

This initiative focusses on the importance of wellbeing for productivity and morale and is based around a five-pillar approach to wellbeing encompassing emotional, financial, physical, purpose, and social aspects. This initiative is in the first phase providing resources and training for Champions and Supporters before being launched more widely in September.

## **Assessing impact**

Orkney Islands Council has systematic arrangements in place to ensure that equalities considerations are embedded within decision-making processes. A key mechanism supporting this is the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) process, which ensures that the potential positive and negative effects of policies, strategies, and service changes on different groups within the organisation and across the wider community, are carefully considered.

An online EqIA training resource has been developed and launched this year, targeted at our manager population. This training is a mandatory requirement for Service Managers and above and is designed to build skills and knowledge to carry out EqIAs effectively, ensuring that services are inclusive, equitable, and compliant with legal and policy requirements.

An annual quality assurance process has also been launched this year reviewing a sample of EqIAs from across the key committee meetings to ensure consistency, compliance and to identify areas for further development.

## **Raising and maintaining awareness**

It is important in mainstreaming equality that the Council 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 can help further mainstream equality within the Council. Regular organisation-wide communication is utilised to raise awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion related topics throughout the year including, Pride month, International Women's Day, Menopause Awareness Day, Carers Week and National Inclusion week. The introduction of an upcoming diary of events is planned to further improve proactive engagement and support for awareness raising initiatives across the organisation and community.

This year the Council supported Neurodiversity Celebration Week to help raise awareness and further promote inclusion. The organisation-wide communication campaign focussed on introducing the concept of neurodiversity, explaining the



range of neurological differences it encompasses such as ADHD, autism and dyslexia, and emphasised the importance of understanding these differences to ensure that all colleagues receive the support they need to thrive. The campaign signposted colleagues to educational resources and a schedule of free online events to encourage wider participation and learning.

The campaign was also used to spotlight the Employability work that is delivered by the Council and highlighted the collaboration between the Employability Support Team, People Managers and HR, and OD colleagues, to create inclusive employment opportunities through initiatives such as Job Carving; a method of tailoring job roles to match individual strengths. A success story from our Caretaker Team was also shared, celebrating Jack's journey into employment through the Supported Employment process. This story demonstrates the positive impact of inclusive recruitment practices, and the value neurodivergent individuals bring to the workplace. Jack's story can be found here: [Supported Employment - Jack's Story](#).

## **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, Good Parenting Plan, Community Learning and Development Partners Plan, Local Employability Plan and within work relating to the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

Orkney Islands Council continued to provide summer holiday free school meal payments to families whose children received support during the 2024/25 school year, with around 240 children from 139 families benefiting from this scheme. Families are regularly encouraged to check eligibility for future holiday payments, free school meals, and the school clothing grant (£150 for secondary pupils, £120 for primary). This support aims to reduce financial

pressure and promote equal access to education, especially for low-income households and those facing disadvantage.

Working in partnership with the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA), the Council launched a fully funded training and support programme to encourage more people to become professional childminders and help tackle childcare shortages in the Orkney. The Programme for Scotland's Childminding Future supports new childminders in Orkney with participants receiving free training, one-to-one support, and a £750 start-up grant upon registration with the Care Inspectorate. The initiative aligns with local plans to boost employment and business start-ups as well as improve outcomes to reduce inequalities for women. With only 19 registered childminders remaining in Orkney down from 30 in 2016, the need is especially urgent in rural and island communities, and the lack of availability of child-care support can have particular impact on women, further impacting inequalities such as the gender pay gap.

## Inclusive Communication

Work to improve the way in which the Council communicates is ongoing, and the Communications Team has run a campaign to support clear and accessible communication. This campaign included a five-step guide to creating accessible information to help ensure content is inclusive for all, drop-in sessions offering a support to colleagues in implementing these guidelines, and updated templates designed to ensure information is accessible and consistent across the organisation.



## Transport

The Council is committed to continuing the programme to improve accessibility to all transport services, taking advantage of contract, vehicle, infrastructure and vessel replacement and renewal opportunities where possible.

Orkney Islands Council's Transportation team were named 'Local Authority Team of the Year' at the 2025 Scottish Transport Awards. The team were recognised for its work across buses, ferries, and airfields, and for the strategic planning for future transport needs. The ongoing work that the Transport team delivers includes:



- Improved accessibility: Introduction of low-floor, accessible buses boosting passenger numbers and making travel easier for people with disabilities and older residents.
- Community reinvestment: Fare income being used to expand bus services in remote areas, supporting rural communities and promoting social inclusion.

- Infrastructure upgrades: New airfield terminals being built in Stronsay, Papay, Eday, and Westray, improving travel for island residents and visitors.

The team's success reflects a commitment to inclusive, sustainable transport that benefits people across all protected characteristics, including age, disability, and rural isolation.

## Sport and Leisure

Athletes across Orkney continue to benefit from the Athlete Travel Award Scheme. This initiative provides funding of up to £1,500 to help cover travel costs for athletes and is designed to assist athletes in regions where the cost of accessing development opportunities is higher, ensuring they can pursue their sporting goals without needing to relocate from their communities.



Orkney Library and Archive has worked with St Colms Café and Crafts to create an interactive Orcadian trail of native flora in the library forecourt. The project has introduced five raised wheelchair accessible planters, sensory panels, sound chimes and a wooden finger maze. QR codes are mounted on each of the planters for people to scan to hear poems and original works around some of the native plants in the Orcadian dialect, bringing to life the trail. More information on the project can be found on the Orkney Library and Archive website here: <https://orkneylibrary.org.uk/interactive-orkadian-flora-trail/>

Orkney Library and Archive have also hosted the national *Share the Vision* campaign in May 2024, spotlighting resources that support people with vision impairments and promoting accessible library services. The library offers large print books, audiobooks (CD and digital), e-magazines, magnifiers, and large-format games. It also has a Sensory Room with an interactive floor projector, light up bubble tubes and other projecting equipment. The floor projector uses light, sound and colourful visuals and is particularly popular with children and can be useful for users with other sensory conditions. The library supports the local Visually Impaired People's (VIP) group and the Orkney Talking Newspaper, helping ensure inclusive access to news and community life.

These services reflect the Council's commitment to equality, ensuring that people with disabilities can continue enjoying reading and learning throughout their lives. The library's inclusive approach helps reduce barriers and promote participation for all.

## 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.

# 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](#).

Building on our partnership with NHS Orkney, they have now adopted the OIC British Sign Language Plan and we will now be working towards the same goals and outcomes from the communities in Orkney. The NHS Orkney page detailing this can be found [here](#) and there is a screenshot below:

## British Sign Language (BSL) Plan

NHS Orkney works towards the goals in the British Sign Language Plan developed by Orkney Islands Council for the population of Orkney. The plan can be found [here](#).

UHI Orkney has published a separate plan, however, we will continue to take a partnership approach in the delivery of the outcomes of these plans wherever possible.

The BSL Progress Group continues to meet regularly to review actions and feedback. There have been some changes to the key leads in this area of work and so there will be a review of the group attendees to establish gaps and to explore a wider range of representation.

Key actions delivered through the Council's first 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.

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



| Outcome   | Progress   |
|---|--|
| <p>The Council will aim to attract more diverse talent by reviewing policies and practices to ensure that there are no barriers to entering and sustaining employment for under-represented groups.</p> | <p><b>Reasonable adjustments guide for recruitment</b></p> <p>A Reasonable Adjustments for Recruitment Guide has been implemented as part of the recruitment and selection policy review. The guide provides recruiting managers with practical advice on how to create an inclusive recruitment process. It outlines the steps to ensure that candidates with disabilities or long-term health conditions are given fair opportunities to demonstrate their full potential. The guide includes information on identifying and discussing disabilities, preparing for and conducting inclusive interviews, and making necessary adjustments throughout the recruitment process. It also highlights the Council's commitment as a Disability Confident Employer and provides resources and legal considerations to support managers in their recruitment efforts.</p> |
| <p>Aim to Increase the diversity of employees throughout the organisation.</p>  | <p><b>Disability Confident review</b></p> <p>We continue to deliver work to maintain Disability Confident Employer status as part of our commitment to increase the diversity of our workforce. A specific example of this is highlighted above. We acknowledge that disclosure rates continue to remain relatively low for some protected characteristic employee data and so we actively encourage employees to complete their diversity details, with regular communication campaigns advising colleagues on how to update this information and why it is important.</p>  |

| Outcome   | Progress  |
|---|---|
| <p>The Council will aim to reduce the gender pay gap.</p> | <p><b>Equally Safe at Work action plan for bronze award accreditation.</b></p> <p>The Council began the bronze award accreditation in 2024 and is now progressing through the related action plan. There has been senior leadership endorsement of the programme with both <a href="#">organisation-wide</a> and <a href="#">community-wide</a> communications.</p> <p>Close the Gap have been on-site carrying out in-person focus groups targeting specific colleague groups and have conducted an organisation-wide survey, seeking views on a range of topics including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attitudes and awareness of gender inequality</li> <li>• Workplace culture</li> <li>• Violence against women</li> </ul> <p>Close the Gap have produced a summary of the focus group and survey results along with recommendations for action aligning to the Equally Safe at Work criteria.</p> <p>An Equally Safe at Work Working Group has been established and is chaired by the Head of HR and Organisational Development. The group meets on a monthly basis to move forward with the actions highlighted from the employee survey run by Close the Gap.</p> <p>More details on the Equally Safe at Work accreditation can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p> |



| Outcome  | Progress   |
|--|--|
| <p>People have increased confidence and opportunities to express their views and influence decision making and service design.</p> | <p><b>Communication and Engagement Strategy.</b></p> <p>At the end of 2024 the new Communication and Engagement strategy was approved. The strategy places a strong emphasis on making communication inclusive and accessible for all. It commits to using plain, clear language, ensuring information is easy to find and understand, and tailoring communication methods to meet the diverse needs of Orkney’s communities. Recognising that not everyone engages digitally, the Council aims to balance online and in-person communication, particularly for those affected by digital exclusion, disabilities, or living in remote island communities. Publications and digital platforms will be reviewed to meet accessibility standards, and efforts will be made to engage typically lesser-heard voices. This inclusive approach ensures that everyone has the opportunity to participate meaningfully in Council activities and decision-making.</p> <p>Orkney Matters, our community engagement programme, was initially held in 2020-21 and saw partners from across the Orkney Partnership meet with communities across Orkney to identify key issues to these areas. The second round of Orkney Matters was undertaken between May and October 2024, with 243 people participating. 158 took part in the community meetings and 85 participated in the arts based lesser heard voices engagement project. Work is underway to analyse the responses.</p> |

People in Orkney have improved accessibility to all transport services.

### **Extend Under 22 Concessionary Scheme to Inter Island Ferry and Air Service for residents.**

Building on the provision of affordable travel to those in the outer isles, the Council has rolled out free inter-island ferry travel for residents under 22 following the new Scottish Government funding. The scheme enables young residents to travel for free as foot passengers on inter-island ferry services within Orkney. This initiative is something that young people living on the islands have been campaigning for over the last couple of years and supports efforts to help eradicate child poverty and grow the economy by providing young people with free access to education, employment and social opportunities.

### **Implementation of Thistle Assistance card and App.**

The Transport team launched the Thistle Assistance Card initiative in November 2024. The card, developed by Transport Scotland, Disability Equality Scotland and The Scottish Government, aims to increase the accessibility of transport systems whilst improving the journey experience for anyone who requires extra assistance while travelling. The team have partnered with local transport providers including Loganair, NorthLink, Stagecoach and Pentland Ferries as well as the team at Orkney Ferries to roll out this initiative.

### **Introduce Audio-At-Stops**

Orkney Islands Council has collaborated with Stagecoach to introduce audio announcements at bus stops throughout mainland Orkney. This initiative assists all passengers and specifically those with sensory impairments. With the audio information providing the current location and

| Outcome | Progress  |
|---------|---|
|         | <p>destination, as well as electronic displays showing current location of the bus along the route, improvements have been made in wayfinding and accessibility for all passengers.</p> |

| Outcome  | Progress  |
|--|---|
| <p>Pupils have a greater sense of belonging and safety in schools.</p> | <p><b>Increased awareness in schools of gender-based bullying and harassment and LGBTQ+ based bullying.</b></p> <p>Orkney Rape and Sexual Assault Service (ORSAS) provide sessions to schools including delivery of sexual violence prevention education and support to vulnerable young people.</p> <p>Other identified actions in this area are currently being reviewed and progress will be reported in the next update.</p> <p><b>Continued implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights for the Child (UNCRC).</b></p> <p>A UNCRC Implementation group was formed in May 2024 and is working to embed children's human rights approaches into various aspects of practice, including decision-making, budget allocation, inclusive communication, awareness raising, participation of children and child friendly complaints and advocacy. The group has representatives from Educational Psychology, Health, Community Learning and Development, Educational Attainment, Policy and Schools.</p> <p>In November 2024, the Improvement Service's UNCRC Implementation Project Manager held workshops in Orkney to improve local knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC. The group is planning an online awareness raising event with a renewed focus on ensuring stakeholder engagement from all partners.</p> |

| Outcome  | Progress  |
|--|---|
| <p>Young people facing barriers are supported and leave school with sustained positive destinations.</p> | <p>The Young Persons Guarantee delivered through the Community Learning, Development and Employability Service (CLDE) supports this outcome by aiming to connect every 16- to 24-year-old to an opportunity including a job, further or higher education, apprenticeship, volunteering or an enterprise opportunity. The 2023-24 figures for participation can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>Tracking young people's achievements has been agreed as a priority and an initial meeting has been held between CLDE and Education Scotland's Attainment Advisor for the Local Authority, to identify opportunities for progressing this action. A pilot project is currently being developed, initially between CLDE and Stromness Academy, to improve the tracking of young people's achievements outwith school, to develop a more holistic picture of pupils' interests and achievements. Work on this is due to start in the new academic year.</p> <p>A Review of the Senior Phase Curriculum is in the Education Service Plan for 2024-25. This review is looking at alternative learning pathways which where appropriate, will support young people to gain level 5 qualifications other than the traditional National 5s and alternative routes to attainment for those pupils for whom traditional Highers are not appropriate.</p> |

| Outcome   | Progress  |
|---|---|
| <p>People in Orkney will have improved choice and accessibility to licensing application processes.</p> | <p><b>Providing increased choice for people accessing licensing applications.</b></p> <p>The Licensing team have now implemented a range of editable PDF forms for Street Traders Licence and Public Entertainment Licence applications, thereby increasing accessibility of the application process. Feedback is now being monitored following roll-out.</p> |

# 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 2025** relating to pay gaps. These figures are used to inform ongoing actions within the plan.

## Gender Pay Gap

The Council's gender pay gap reduced to 3.05% during 2024/25, down from the previous year of 4.45%. This decrease is largely due to the adjustments in our pay structure in this reporting period. The minimum hourly rate of pay has increased, and lower graded roles (A and B) received a higher pay award in comparison to grades C to N, contributing to a more equitable pay distribution across the organisation.

Note: because the median looks at the middle value in a list of hourly rates, where there are more women in mid-level roles and more men in higher paid roles, the median hourly rate for women will often be higher than men, as seen below. The median figure can also be impacted by smaller sample sizes and where there are small number of women in higher paid roles.

| Sex              | Post type | Total % | Average (Mean) Hourly Rate | Median Hourly Rate |
|------------------|-----------|---------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Female           | All       | 68.6%   | £18.45                     | £15.18             |
|                  | Full-time | 30.6%   | £22.07                     | £15.18             |
|                  | Part-time | 69.4%   | £16.85                     | £15.18             |
| Male             | All       | 31.4%   | £19.03                     | £14.80             |
|                  | Full-time | 63.1%   | £21.25                     | £14.80             |
|                  | Part-time | 36.6%   | £15.24                     | £14.80             |
| Gender Pay Gap % |           |         | 3.05%                      |                    |

During this reporting period, a review has been undertaken of the management structure implemented in 2022 and has included the Council move to a structure made up of four Directors rather than the previous five. This review has had an impact on the top 5% earner figures as illustrated below:

| Category                                       | 2024/2025 | 2023/2024 | 2022/2023 | 2021/2022 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Total number of employees in top 5% of earners | 96        | 96        | 94        | 92        |
| Total number of women employees in top 5%      | 32        | 33        | 36        | 28        |
| Percentage of women employees in top 5%        | 33.3%     | 34.4%     | 38.3%     | 30.4%     |

## Ethnicity Pay Gap

Pay gap information for black and minority ethnic employee groups is 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

Disability pay gap information is based on a calculation for disabled employee groups in comparison against employees with no disability. These calculations do not include the data for employees not providing information relating to this protected characteristic, however this information is included in the table below for transparency in terms of declaration rates.



Among employees who disclosed a disability, 64.9% are in part time roles, compared to 59.3% of non-disabled employees. Whilst declaration rates remain low, this may indicate that disabled employees are more likely to be employed in part-time positions, which typically offer lower pay. The average hourly rate for disabled employees in part-time roles is £16.38, significantly lower than the £24.00 average for their full-time counterparts.

Despite this, the overall disability pay gap is relatively small at -1.79%, indicating that, on average, disabled employees earn slightly more than non-disabled employees. However, this is only an indicator due to the low declaration rates and may also be influenced by a smaller number of disabled employees in higher paid full-time roles. Work continues to explore potential barriers to full-time employment for particular groups of colleagues to ensure equitable access to career progression opportunities.

| Disability             | Post Type | Total % | Average (Mean) Hourly Rate | Median Hourly Rate |
|------------------------|-----------|---------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Yes Disability         | All       | 4.6%    | £19.06                     | £15.76             |
|                        | Full-time | 35.1%   | £24.00                     | £24.31             |
|                        | Part-time | 64.9%   | £16.38                     | £14.53             |
| No Disability          | All       | 61.8%   | £18.72                     | £15.18             |
|                        | Full-time | 40.6%   | £21.67                     | £18.76             |
|                        | Part-time | 59.3%   | £16.70                     | £14.47             |
| Prefer not to say      | All       | 2.3%    | £17.90                     | £15.08             |
|                        | Full-time | 42.9%   | £18.92                     | £18.26             |
|                        | Part-time | 57.1%   | £17.13                     | £14.13             |
| No data                | All       | 31.3%   | £18.42                     | £14.80             |
|                        | Full-time | 41.4%   | £21.57                     | £18.25             |
|                        | Part-time | 58.5%   | £16.19                     | £14.13             |
| Disability Pay Gap (%) |           |         | -1.79                      |                    |

# 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, Orkney Islands Council 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 Council 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.

Work is being undertaken to analyse this further as part of our Equally Safe at Work accreditation action plan. This includes assessing the data by grade to identify where part-time posts are concentrated and opportunities for part-time staff to progress into other roles, for example through flexible working and better training opportunities.

The following Occupational Segregation report is reported by directorate based on the structure prior to the management structure review:

- ELH – Education, Leisure and Housing.
- ESR – Enterprise and Sustainable Regeneration.
- NSI – Neighbourhood Services and Infrastructure.
- OHAC – Orkney Health and Care.
- SPBS – Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions.

Figures in the table on the following page give a snapshot as at 31 March 2025 and are rounded to closest whole number.

| Occupational Segregation by Service and Sex |        |      |        |      |        |      |        |      |        |      |              |      |
|---|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------------|------|
| Grade                                       | ELH    |      | ESR    |      | NSI    |      | OHAC   |      | SPBS   |      | All Services |      |
|   | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female       | Male |
| A   | 44%    | 56%  | 33%    | 67%  | 68%    | 32%  |        |      | 38%    | 62%  | 61%          | 39%  |
| B   | 74%    | 26%  |        | 100% | 27%    | 73%  | 77%    | 23%  |        | 100% | 71%          | 29%  |
| C   | 81%    | 19%  | 23%    | 77%  | 29%    | 71%  | 58%    | 42%  | 67%    | 33%  | 65%          | 35%  |
| D   | 90%    | 10%  | 50%    | 50%  | 3%     | 97%  | 87%    | 13%  | 71%    | 29%  | 73%          | 27%  |
| E   | 90%    | 10%  | 21%    | 79%  | 33%    | 67%  | 84%    | 16%  | 87%    | 13%  | 76%          | 24%  |
| F   | 82%    | 18%  | 65%    | 35%  | 17%    | 83%  | 93%    | 7%   | 92%    | 8%   | 80%          | 20%  |
| G   | 82%    | 18%  | 44%    | 56%  | 50%    | 50%  | 71%    | 29%  | 79%    | 21%  | 73%          | 27%  |
| H   | 62%    | 38%  | 56%    | 44%  | 29%    | 71%  | 85%    | 15%  | 25%    | 75%  | 59%          | 41%  |
| I   | 69%    | 31%  | 57%    | 43%  | 32%    | 68%  |        |      | 55%    | 45%  | 51%          | 49%  |
| J   | 88%    | 12%  | 80%    | 20%  | 40%    | 60%  | 89%    | 11%  | 100%   |      | 80%          | 20%  |
| K   | 44%    | 56%  | 38%    | 63%  |        | 100% | 67%    | 33%  | 33%    | 67%  | 32%          | 68%  |
| L   |        |      | 33%    | 67%  |        | 100% | 0%     |      | 0%     | 0%   | 20%          | 80%  |
| M   | 40%    | 60%  | 50%    | 50%  | 23%    | 77%  | 100%   |      | 56%    | 44%  | 47%          | 53%  |
| N   |        |      |        | 100% |        | 100% |        |      |        |      |              | 100% |
| Chief Officials                             | 33%    | 67%  |        | 100% | 50%    | 50%  | 100%   |      |        | 100% | 25%          | 75%  |
| Lecturers                                   | 65%    | 35%  |        |      |        |      |        |      |        |      | 65%          | 35%  |

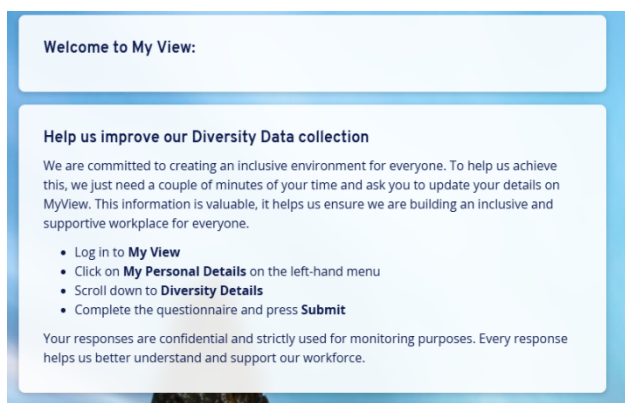
| Grade                  | ELH    |      | ESR    |      | NSI    |      | OHAC   |      | SPBS   |      | All Services |      |
|------------------------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------------|------|
|                        | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female       | Male |
| Teachers               | 78%    | 22%  |        |      |        |      |        |      |        |      | 78%          | 22%  |
| (Depute) Head Teachers | 76%    | 24%  |        |      |        |      |        |      |        |      | 76%          | 24%  |
| Others                 | 100%   |      | 2%     | 98%  |        |      |        |      |        |      | 6%           | 94%  |

## Annex 1 - Equalities monitoring data

### Employee diversity and monitoring

The 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, the Council recognises 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 Orkney Islands Council 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.

#### Posters

have also been distributed to all work locations across the Council targeting colleagues who are not predominately desk based.

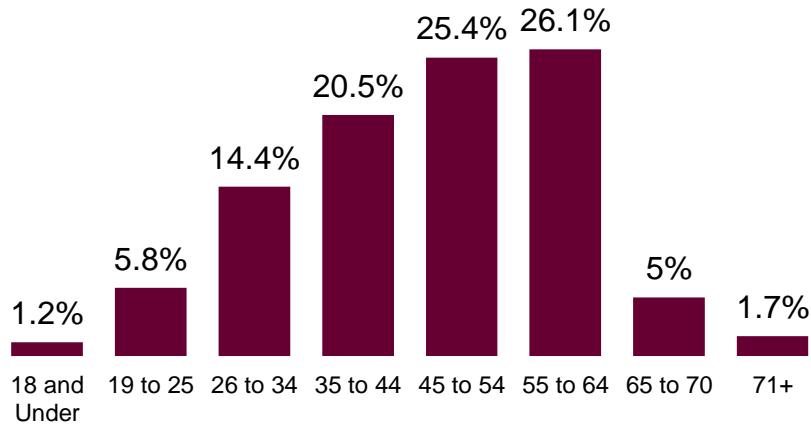
Disclosure rates continue to remain low and there is an ongoing focus to make improvements year on year. This reporting period highlights the significantly low numbers of new starters providing diversity details on MyView. The online Induction programme and Manager toolkit highlight the requirement to complete the diversity data section on MyView for all new employees. A review of this Induction programme is planned to help identify improvements for new starter declaration rates in this area.

Other routes for raising awareness and encouraging increase disclosure on protected characteristics are being explored.

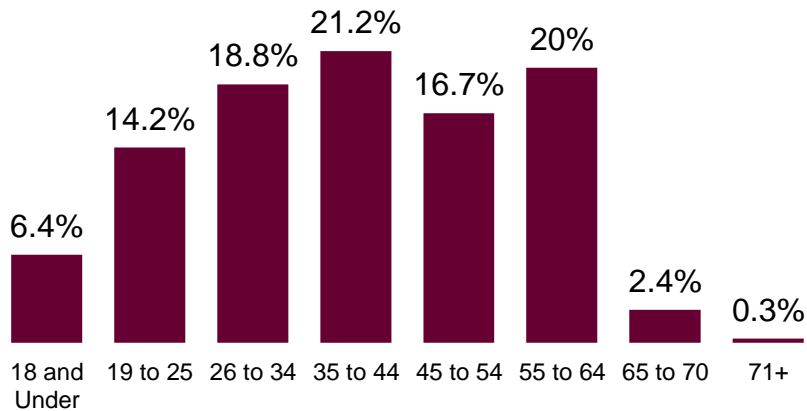


## About our workforce

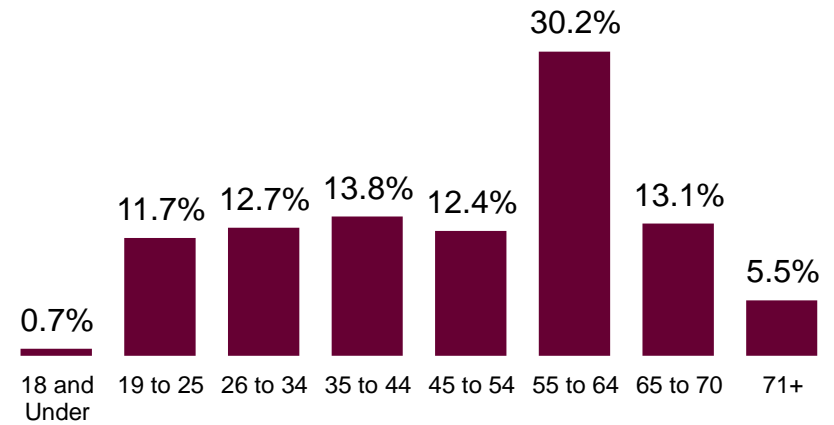
### Age - all employees



### Age - new starts



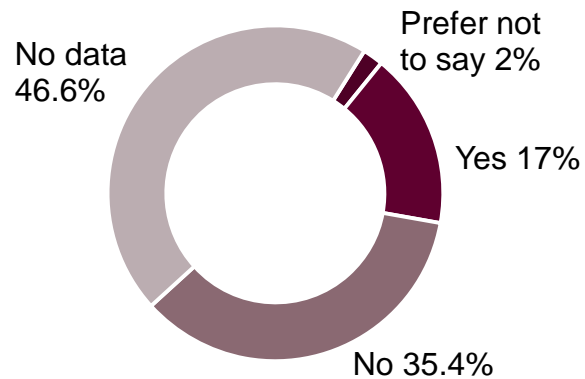
### Age - Leavers



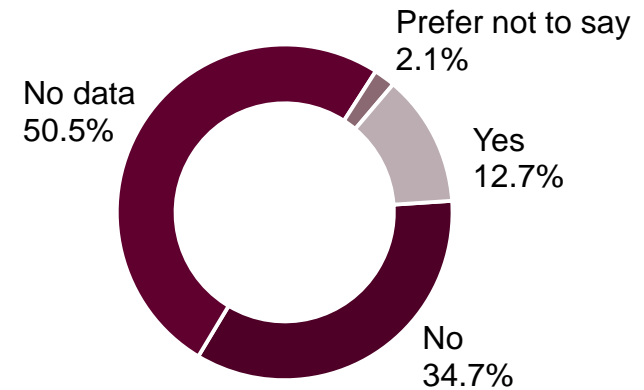
The age profile of the workforce hasn't changed significantly from previous reporting figures with the largest proportion of our employees remaining between the ages of 35 and 64. There has been a 2.2% increase of the percentage of 18 and under new starts in comparison to 4.2% as at 31 December 2023. There has also been a 2.3% decrease in leavers aged 19 to 25 in comparison to the previous years' figures.

Performance management statistics show of the employees involved in either a grievance, disciplinary or dignity at work process, the majority are between the ages of 45 and 64. These figures are reflective of the age profile of our employees and do not significantly differ from previous years' figures.

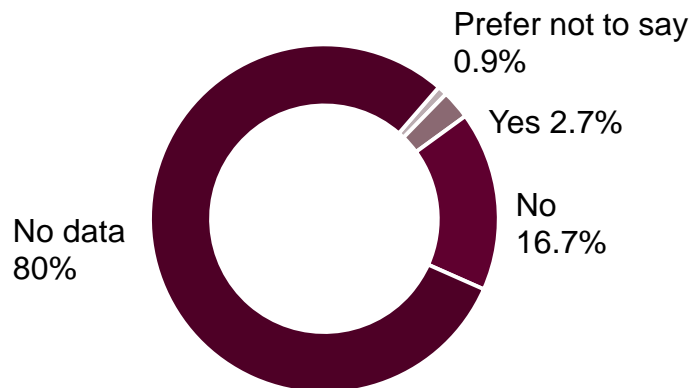
### Carers - all employees



### Carers - leavers



### Carers - new starts

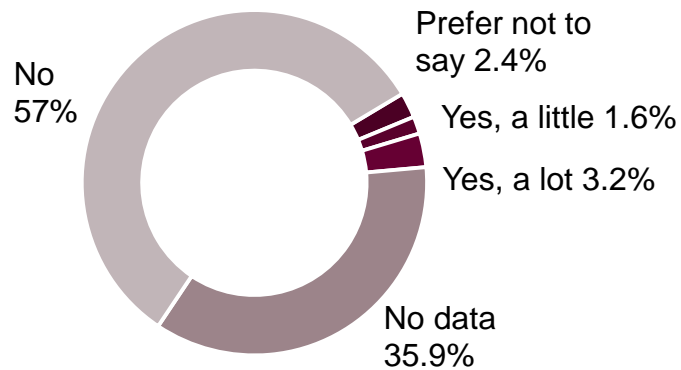


The number of employees reporting a caring responsibility has seen a slight decrease year on year, however, there has been a slight decrease (1.3%) in the number of leavers with caring responsibilities since the previous report.

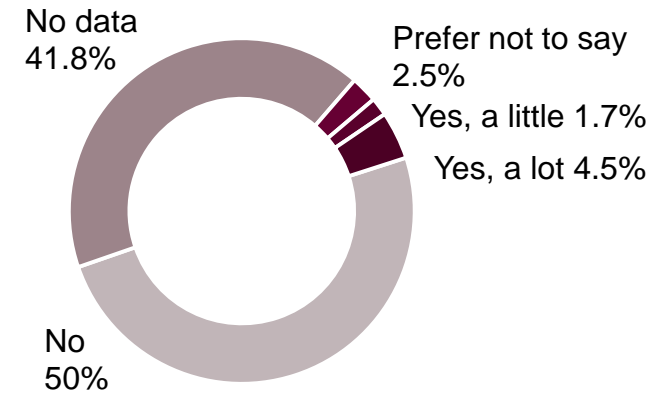
We continue to experience low disclosure rates for diversity information among new starters and work is underway to review the new starter process and Corporate Induction to make improvements in this area.



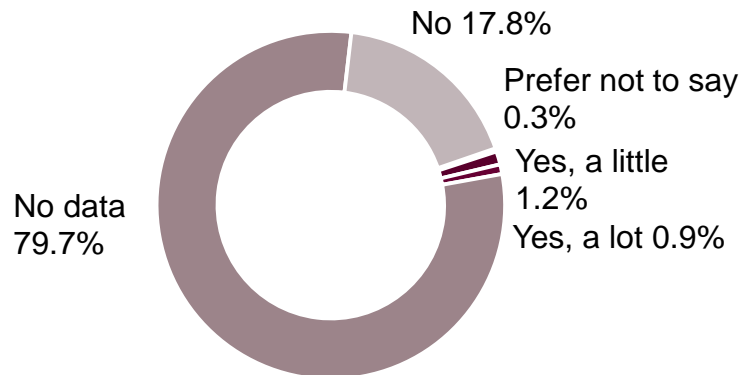
### Disability - all employees



### Disability - leavers



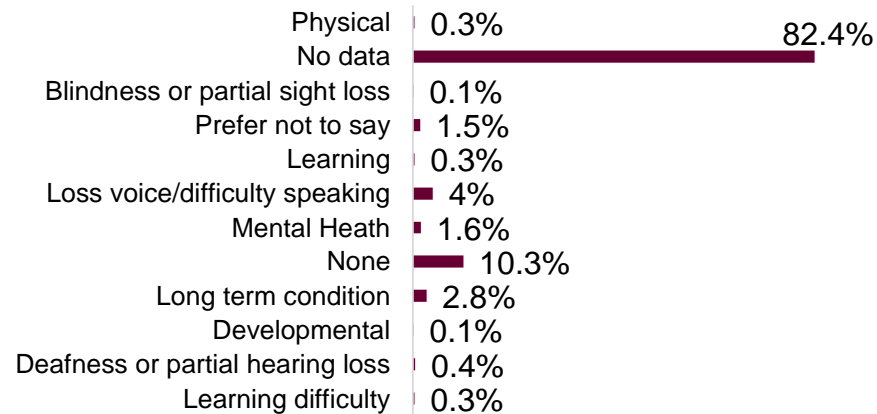
### Disability - new starts



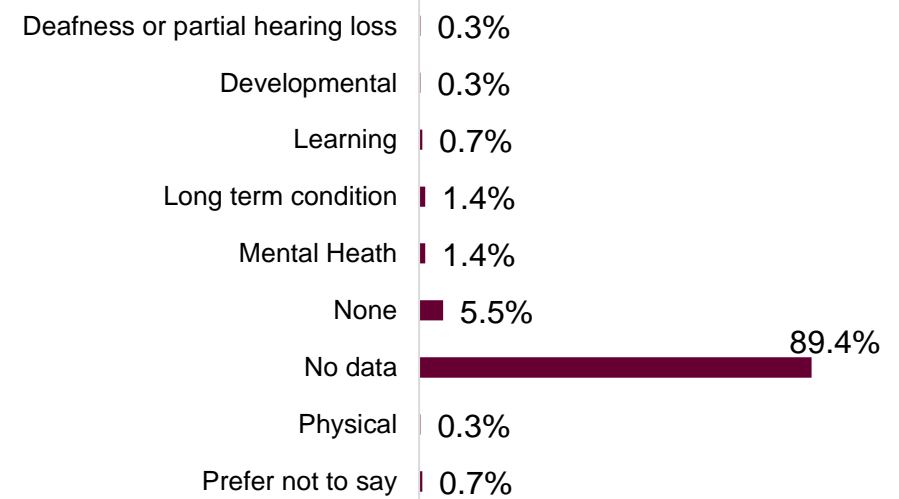
Employee disability figures have remained similar over the past two years, with little change noted during the reporting periods.

As a Disability Confident Employer, our long-term goal is to improve declaration rates in this area and to raise awareness and improve confidence in sharing disability related details. Work is also focussed on better equipping managers to support team members who have or acquire a disability. This links to the Equality Outcome to increase the diversity of our workforce.

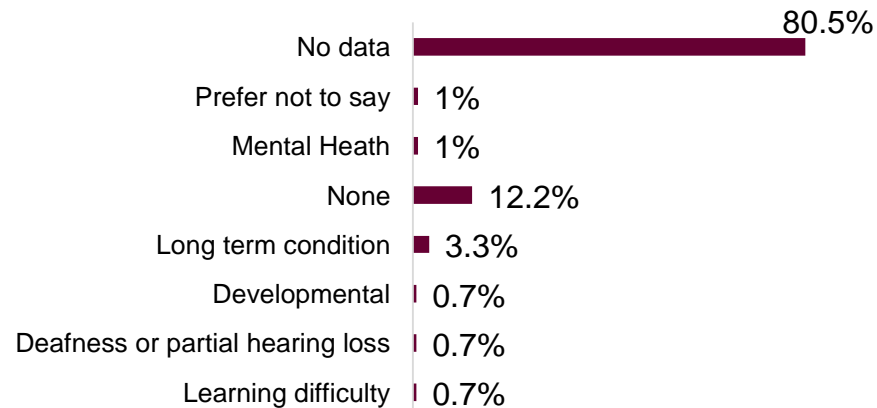
## Health condition - all employees



## Health condition - leavers



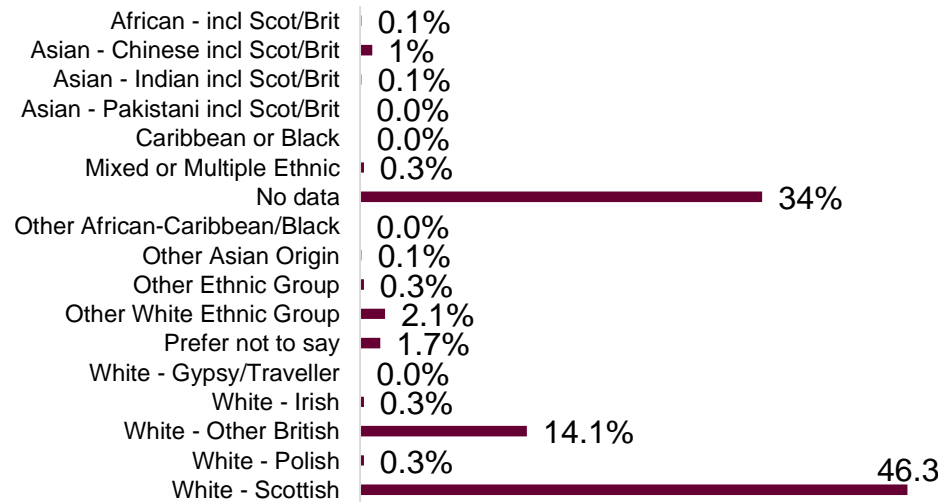
## Health condition - new starts



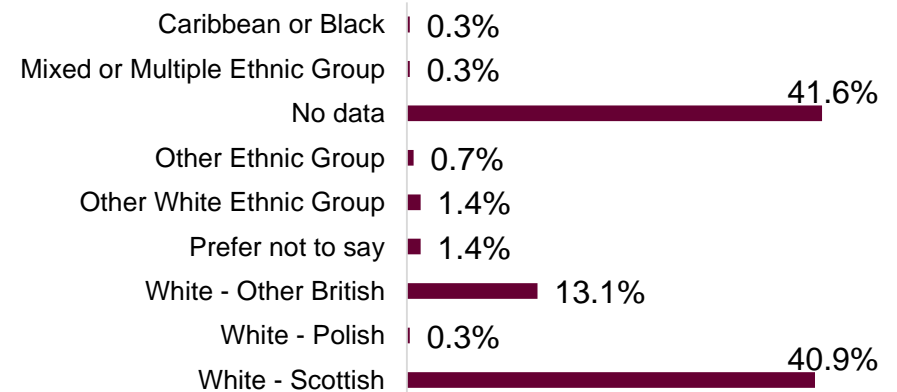
There has been a slight increase (1.4%) in the number of new starts disclosing a long-term health condition since our previous report, although declaration rates for new starts remain low. Improvements have been made in declaration rates for leavers, seeing a decrease in the levels of no data by 6.9%.

This data highlights the importance to continue efforts to encourage disclosure and provide support to employees with a range of health conditions, ensuring inclusive workplace practices.

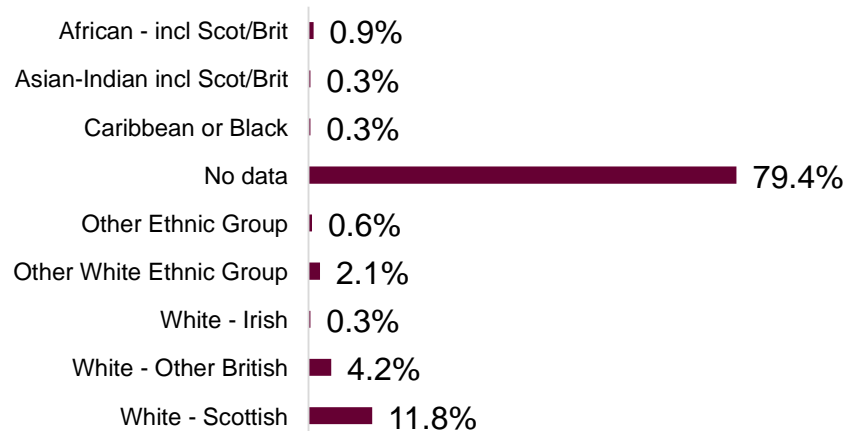
## Ethnicity - all employees



## Ethnicity - leavers

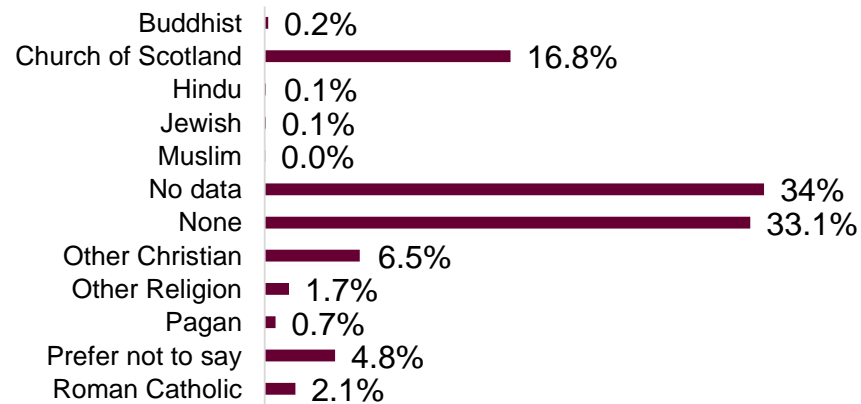


## Ethnicity - new starts

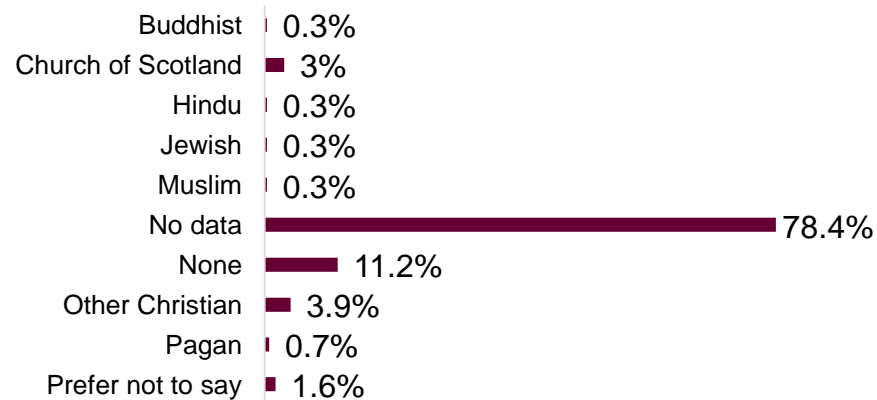


Ethnicity figures have shown minimal change over the past two years. For new starts there has been a slight decrease in those identifying as White – Scottish (-3.9%) and White - Other British (-1.4%), which may be accounted for by the slight increase in new starter records with no data.

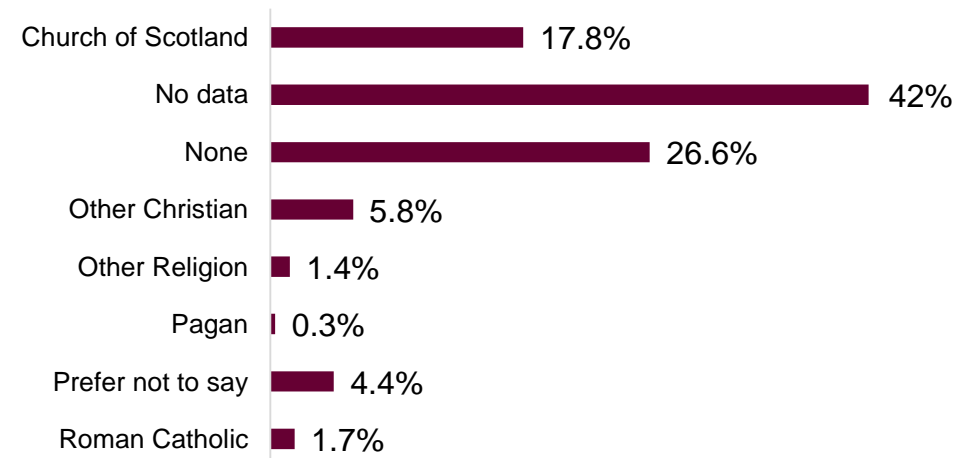
## Religion or Belief - all employees



## Religion or Belief - new starts

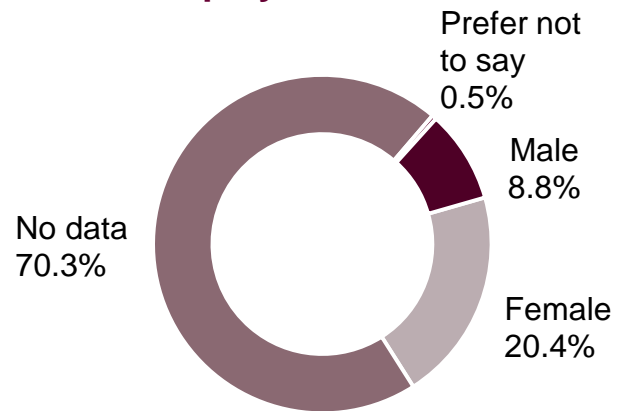


## Religion or Belief - leavers



The data shows no significant change from the previous reporting period with 33.1% of employee records held declaring no religion or belief. Among those who did declare a belief, the most common was Church of Scotland (16.8%), followed by Other Christian (6.5%) and Roman Catholic (2.1%). Smaller groups included those identifying as Pagan, Other Religion, and Buddhist. Very small percentages identified as Muslim, Jewish, or Hindu. Additionally, 4.8% of employees prefer not to disclose their religion of belief.

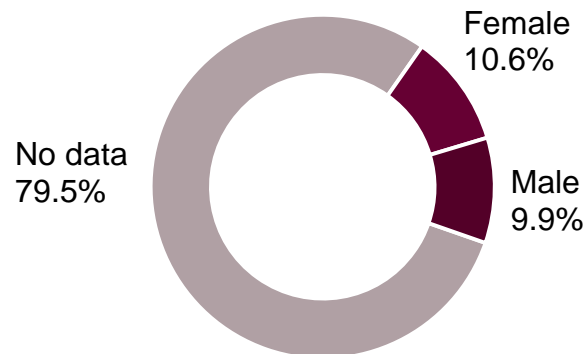
### Sex - all employees



### Sex - leavers



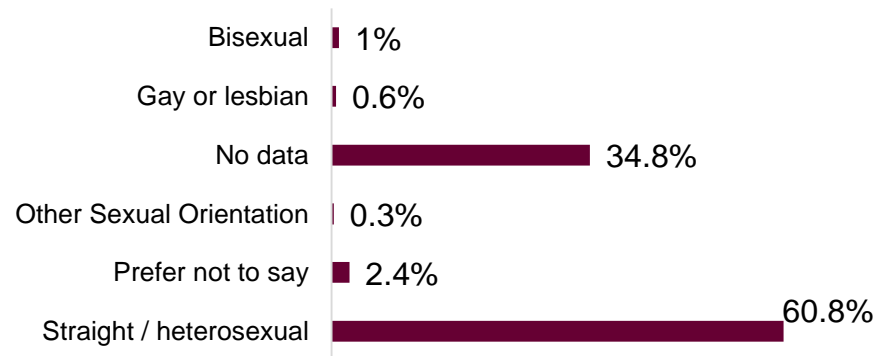
### Sex - new starts



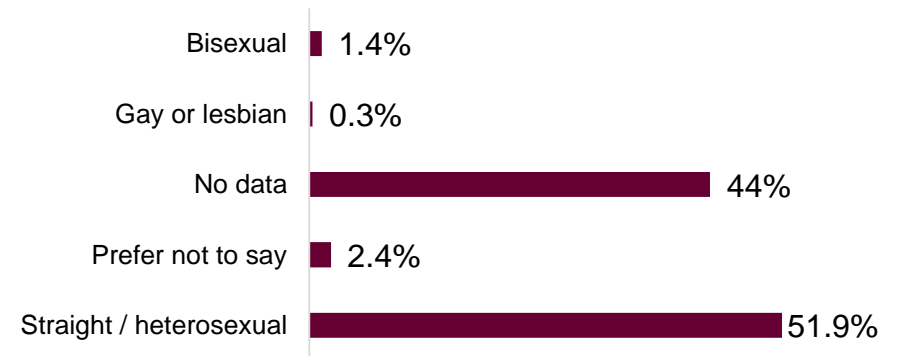
Data relating to sex has remained consistent over the past two years. According to the leavers data, the proportion of women leaving increased by 8.5% compared to the previous reporting period, and the proportion of male leavers increased by 2.5% over the same period. These statistics will continue to be monitored to identify any potential trends as low disclosure rates impact whether or not these are representative across the whole employee population.

Performance management statistics show of the employees involved in either a grievance, disciplinary or dignity at work process, 69% are women and 31% are men. These figures are not significantly different from previous years' figures.

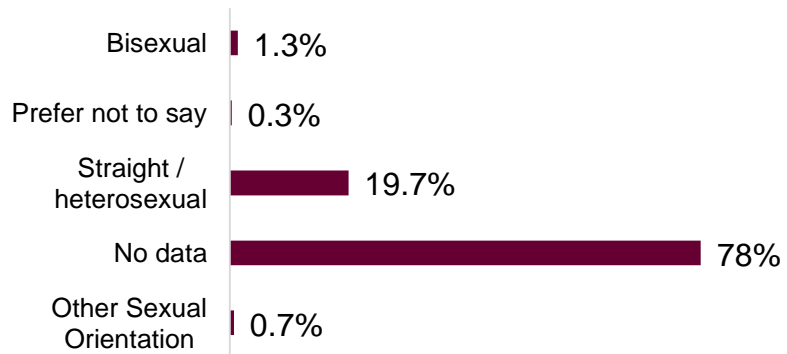
## Sexual orientation - all employees



## Sexual orientation - leavers



## Sexual orientation - new starts



Overall figures relating to sexual orientation have remained similar over the last two years. New start declaration rates are low and are reflective of the other protected characteristic disclosure rates.

## 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.