



**Meeting the Public Sector Equality
Duty 2022-2023 – Annual Review of
Progress**

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1. Introduction

Equality and inclusion are at the heart of Durham County Council's vision and core values. We recognise that inequality continues to affect different people and communities in different ways. We are committed to creating and sustaining a modern and supportive working environment for our employees and tackling the inequalities, prejudice and discrimination affecting the diverse communities which we serve.

This publication outlines Durham County Council's approach to delivering equality and inclusion in our services and as a large public sector employer. It outlines the legal framework for equality and provides an overview of the progress we are making against our equality objectives, how we ensure equality and inclusion in service provision and an analysis of our workforce equality data.

2. Legal framework

The Equality Act 2010 brought together a number of existing laws making it a more streamlined piece of legislation. It sets out the personal characteristics that are protected by the law and behaviour that is unlawful. The nine protected characteristics under the Act are:

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

As a local authority we are subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as set out in the Act to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

We are also covered by the specific duties contained in the Act which mean that we must:

- Publish information to demonstrate how we are complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty, and
- Prepare and publish equality objectives (at least every four years).

This document is published in support of our specific duties and provides equality information in relation to the way we provide services, employ people and make decisions. Collecting, using and publishing our equality information helps us to identify and understand key equality issues for our organisation and demonstrate to the public how we are performing and what we are achieving in terms of equality and inclusion. Setting equality objectives which are specific and measurable helps us to better perform the public sector equality duty and focus attention on priority equality issues identified during public consultation that affect our communities and/or staff.

3. County Durham population data at a glance

Here are some key facts about County Durham taken from Durham Insight which is a website providing information, data and research about the county.¹ 522,100 people live in the county – the highest population of any council area in the North East region.

- The county covers an area of 862 square miles
- 234,800 households across the county
- Population density is 235 persons per square kilometre
- Median age is 43 years
- 51.1 % of population are female, 48.9% male
- 73.3% employment rate
- 48th/151 deprivation rank
- 34.9% of children and young people in relative poverty

The following tables summarise first release Census 2021 equality related data for County Durham:

Table 1: County Durham: Age (Census 2021)

Age	Percent
Under 15 years	16.9%
16-64 years	61.8%
Over 65 years	21.3%

¹ <https://www.durhaminsight.info>

Table 2: County Durham: Sex (Census 2021)

Sex	Percent
Women	51.1%
Men	48.9%

Table 3: County Durham: Ethnicity (Census 2021)

Ethnicity	Percent
Asian, Asian British/Welsh: Bangladeshi	0.1%
Asian, Asian British/Welsh: Chinese	0.5%
Asian, Asian British/Welsh: Indian	0.4%
Asian, Asian British/Welsh: Pakistani	0.1%
Asian, Asian British/Welsh: Other Asian	0.3%
Black, Black British/Welsh/Caribbean/African: African	0.2%
Black, Black British/Welsh/Caribbean/African: Caribbean	0.1%
Black, Black British/Welsh/Caribbean/African: Other Black	0%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian	0.4%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African	0.2%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean	0.2%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups: Other Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	0.2%
White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	94.7%
White: Irish	0.3%
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.2%
White: Roma	0%
White: Other White	1.6%
Other ethnic group: Arab	0.2%
Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group	0.2%

Table 4: County Durham: Disability (Census 2021)

Disability	Percent
Disabled under the Equality Act: Day to day activity limited a lot	10.4%
Disabled under the Equality Act: Day to day activities limited a little	12.0%
Not disabled under the Equality Act	77.6%

Table 5: County Durham: Gender Identity (Census 2021)

Gender Identity	Percent
Gender identity same as registered at birth	95.07%
Gender identity different from sex registered at birth	0.14%
Trans woman	0.07%
Trans man	0.08%
Non-binary	0.05%
All other gender identities	0.03%
Not answered	4.56%

Table 6: County Durham: Sexual Orientation (Census 2021)

Sexual Orientation	Percent
Straight or heterosexual	91.38%
Gay or Lesbian	1.42%
Bisexual	1.19%
All other sexual orientations	0.25%
Not answered	5.77%

Table 7: County Durham: Religion (Census 2021)

Religion	Percent
No religion	38.6%
Christian	54.6%
Muslim	0.6%
Buddhist	0.2%
Hindu	0.2%
Sikh	0.2%
Jewish	0.1%
Other religion	0.4%
Not answered	5.1%

4. Our Equality Objectives 2020-2024

Our equality objectives for 2020-2024 were identified as part of extensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and general public for a shared vision for the county. One key area of feedback highlighted the issues and barriers our disabled residents faced in securing employment and this has provided a key area of focus for our current equality objectives. Aligning with this consultation feedback, means that our objectives support the 2035 vision that 'County Durham is a place where there are more and better jobs, people live long and independent lives and our communities are well connected and supportive of each other'.

Our equality objectives are included as part of our Equality Policy² and are embedded in the current council plan and planning framework which also includes a fourth ambition to be an excellent council.

Our equality objectives for 2020-2024 are:

- **We will improve employment opportunities for disabled people**
 - As a Disability Confident Leader, we will improve recruitment and retention rates of disabled people within the council and work with businesses locally to improve disability employment rates countywide and through our approach to procurement.

² <https://www.durham.gov.uk/media/1001/Equality-Policy-2020/pdf/EqualityPolicy2020.pdf?m=637484033808470000>

- **We will build inclusive communities**
 - To connect our communities and improve levels of tolerance and integration for our diverse communities we will support better partnership working on equality. This work will support a series of events that foster good relations between groups.
- **We will build an inclusive and welcoming employee culture**
 - We will become a more inclusive organisation by improving our staff engagement through the development of staff networks and improving how we collect, monitor, analyse and utilise staff diversity data.

5. Progress against our equality objectives

This section provides an overview of the progress we have made against our new equality objectives during 2022/23 including our planned areas of focus and action going forward. More detailed data analysis on specific topics is included in sections six (service delivery), and seven (workforce equality data) of this report.

We will improve employment opportunities for disabled people

We achieved re-accreditation of our Disability Confident³ Leader status in November 2022. As a leader organisation we focus not only internally in improving the recruitment and retention of council employees with disabilities, but also externally in how we work with local businesses and through our approach to procurement.

Our key achievements 2022-23 include:

- Re-accreditation of our Disability Confident leadership status provided a promotional opportunity to highlight the impact of being a disability confident employer and the support we provide to our employees with a disability. Durham's Disability Partnership, who validated our evidence, attended our event⁴ to celebrate this achievement which allowed for networking opportunities with employment support services.
- As a leader organisation we have supported, reviewed and accredited one other local council on their journey as a disability confident leader.
- Our employability services⁵ continue to engage with local employers to improve the level of inclusion and support provided to the working age population across the county and encourage more local employers to become Disability Confident signposting to DWP who provide the necessary support.

³ <https://disabilityconfident.campaign.gov.uk/>

⁴ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/28892/We-are-proud-to-be-a-Disability-Confident-Leader->

⁵ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/employability>

- Growth continues of our disability and allies' staff network which provides additional support for disabled staff and acts as a reference group for policy development and service improvement.
- Improved information on the Jobs North East webpage, where all of our job vacancies are advertised, to encourage applicants with disabilities to apply. This includes information on the disability staff network and guaranteed interview scheme. Our vacancies are promoted with organisations supporting disabled people to secure employment.
- DurhamEnable⁶ is now well established with a team of job coaches providing job support for residents with a disability and/or mental health condition. (Programme data for this and other employability programmes who work closely with local employers, is provided in the service delivery section below).
- Ongoing programme of disability awareness training sessions open to all staff, to raise awareness of the types of support required by staff with particular conditions to ensure they are included in the workplace and can carry out their roles to the full. These include sensory support requirements and neurodiversity.
- Improvements made to the way we record staff disability data now allow us to carry out better data analysis.

Going forward we will build on our improved recording of staff data and better analyse our recruitment and selection data to develop further proactive approaches to attracting and welcoming a diverse workforce. Work is underway to develop manager and employee guidance on neurodiversity including training modules.

We will build inclusive communities

Our programme of events underpins positive community relations, whether equality focussed or wider events that optimise opportunities to advance equality.

Events for 2022-23 included:

- **Durham Pride UK⁷** took place 29 May. The council recognises the importance of Pride as an inclusive and celebratory event for our LGBT+ community and provides ongoing support terms of event planning, promotion and financial contribution, also support through political leadership. The 2022 event and saw the return of the parade through the city, the first time since covid. A nominal £5 ticket fee was charged for the main event at the Sands, with concessions for some including families. Ticketing helps with the smooth and safe management of the event. A free family fun day, took place the previous day. The council's LGBT+ employee network provided valuable event support with marshalling and ticket scanning. A variety of service provider stalls were present including DurhamEnable, fostering and One Point as the event provides a key community engagement opportunity.

⁶ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/DurhamEnable>

⁷ <http://durhamprideuk.org/index.php/sample-page/>

- **Gypsy Roma and Traveller History Month** takes place every June and celebrates 500 years of Gypsy and Traveller culture and history in the UK. The awareness month brings together local Gypsy and Traveller communities to ensure past traditions are remembered and continued for years to come. Within Durham we have a long-established history of GRT community within the county. We celebrated GRT History month with a number of community and school workshops and a talk was delivered on the history of the Victoria Cross winner John 'Jack' Cunningham's life. The exhibition was produced by the Gypsy, Roma Traveller Service in conjunction with partners from the Durham County Records Office.
- **Remembering Srebrenica**, 11 July, was marked in recognition of the Bosnian genocide 1995, the worst atrocity to take place on European soil since World War II. The Srebrenica Remembrance flag was flown at County Hall and an event took place at Durham Castle where the Council Chair attended. Events and media releases help us to raise awareness of the importance of community cohesion and tolerance.
- **International Men's Day**, 19 November, involved the promotion of a range of support available to men. This was underpinned by awareness raising of issues such as male health conditions including cancer, mental health and problems with substance abuse, also awareness of the disproportionate rates of suicide for men and the support available.
- **Holocaust Memorial Day** is commemorated each year on 27 January. This was the first time since covid where we could offer live events. The main event was hosted by The Gala Theatre for schools and the public. Our guest speaker was Professor Marek Szablewski of Durham University who shared the story of his family's life in occupied Poland during the Second World War⁸. The event was supported by Belmont, Durham Johnston and Framwellgate schools. County Hall was lit purple on the evening and Durham Cathedral hosted a display of artwork by St Leonard's and Belmont schools to reflect the Holocaust Memorial Day theme for 2023, 'Ordinary People'. An online event was provided by The Story; 'Never Again, Never': The 113th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment and the liberation of Belsen, April - May 1945. Previous recordings to remember Holocaust Memorial Day remain available on the council's website⁹. Our approach continues to provide wider awareness raising of issues such as hate crime affecting protected groups.
- **International Women's Day**, 8 March, was marked with a social media campaign highlighting leadership across the County including the Council, Police and University who all have female leaders. This aimed to break gender stereotypes and inspire women and girls. Additional vlogs by senior women within the council was shared internally. Women and girls were celebrated in a free exhibition 'The Being Inbetween', showcasing the

⁸ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/28950/Wartime-stories-to-be-shared-as-County-Durham-marks-Holocaust-Memorial-Day>

⁹ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/hmd>

transition from child to adult, at Bishop Auckland Town Hall. To coincide with the exhibition a special event took place on 8 March with the Lord Lieutenant of County Durham Sue Snowdon. A further exhibition launched, 'Missing Women', a collaborative led by the council, Creative Youth Opportunities and The Auckland Project, working with young people from Auckland Youth and Community Centre, Ash Green Way Traveller Site, St John's Catholic School and Sixth Form College and Parkside Academy.

Going forward we will ensure that all our festivals and events fully optimise opportunities to advance equality and be as inclusive and accessible as possible.

We will build an inclusive and welcoming employee culture

During 2022-23 a number of key initiatives have been implemented to help us build an inclusive and welcoming employee culture.

Key achievements 2022-23 include:

- Employee networks, many of which were formed during the pandemic, are thriving and making a real impact. Our networks include; Disability and allies, LGBT+ and allies, Race, Menopause, Carer, Armed Forces and Christian networks. Areas of impact include review of staff training, awareness sessions for all senior managers, recognition of specific dates including lgbt+ history month and International Day for Disabled Persons, and review and influence of key HR policy including recruitment and selection practice. Networks provide a valuable engagement mechanism to ensure the council fosters an inclusive workplace culture. Further information on our networks is provided in the workforce equality data section of this publication.
- The HR system MyView has been updated to allow employees to more easily self-record their personal equality characteristics. A full communication exercise supported this upgrade to explain the importance of staff data and how it is used. Sound data analysis allows us to have an evidence based approach to monitoring the diversity of our workforce, address policy gaps and seize opportunities to improve inclusion.
- The impact of Covid has accelerated new ways of working and introduced 'hybrid working' for many of our employees. This step change will help us to ensure that all staff have opportunities for progression and are able to achieve an improved work life balance.
- We have carried out gender pay gap (GPG) reporting for the past six years and details are published on the council's GPG web page¹¹. For 2022 our calculations show that women's mean hourly rate is 0.07% lower than men and women's median hourly rate is 5.68% lower than men. Compared to other councils and national data this is much lower than average gaps which is positive although we strive to make this zero. Further information is contained in the workforce equality data section of this publication.

¹¹ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/genderpaygap>

Going forward, now that the HR data collection system has been upgraded we will better analyse our staff equality to identify trends and address gaps. This includes better analysis of recruitment and selection data. Our ongoing work with staff networks will continue to help us to feed the 'voice of staff' into policy development. The Disability and allies' network will establish a buddy system to provide support for any disabled member of staff who requires extra support.

6. How we have met the public sector equality duty in service delivery

The following equality information provides a snapshot of how we have met the public sector equality duty in service delivery 2022/23. We are now transitioning into a post-pandemic world, but the impacts of COVID-19 are evident in some areas. Achieving the required £55 million of savings over the next four years will be extremely challenging and it is becoming more difficult to protect our frontline services as savings in managerial and back-office efficiencies are becoming exhausted due to delivering £250 million of savings up to 31 March 2023. The council's quarterly performance management reports provide more in-depth data analysis and can be found on the council's Cabinet Reports web page¹².

6.1 Key highlights from our performance monitoring

Equality and inclusion are at the heart of Durham County Council's vision and core values and runs through everything we do. We work hard to provide the best services for people living in, working in and visiting County Durham. We report our progress and highlight any gaps in quarterly monitoring reports¹³.

Key equality related highlights include:

- In the six months ending 30 September, 883 families were turned around via the Stronger Families programme with 822 having attained significant and sustained outcomes and 61 maintained continuous employment.
- Face-to-face breastfeeding support groups have been re-established, with additional targeted support in the east of the county where rates continue to be lower than other localities. Just over 30% of women are breastfeeding 6-8 weeks after birth, an increase compared to just under 28% for the same period last year. Work is underway to better understand the barriers to breastfeeding. The findings will help shape our future programme of education and promotion.
- Children's services were subject to an inspection from Ofsted in 2022 which found our services to be good overall with outstanding leadership. The inspection noted comprehensive assessments in the disabled children service

¹² <https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=154&Year=0>

¹³ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/2427/Quarterly-reports>

lead to clear recommendations for services and there was evidence of creative direct work with non-verbal children and good evidence of sensitive partnership work with parents.

- 89% of people discharged from hospital into reablement or rehabilitation services remained at home 91 days later, the highest figure for four years.
- The average age of people entering permanent care has shown little change over the last ten years (varying between 83 and 85 years). Over the same period, the number of people entering permanent care has also remained stable, except for the last two years.
- Just under 41% of carers (adult social care) are satisfied with the support and services they receive. Whilst this is the lowest result since the survey started nine years ago, it is in line with national trends.
- High demand for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) for children continues. More than 500 requests were received in the year ending June 2022 - higher than in the same period in any of the last three years.
- Cabinet adopted the County Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy in December 2022. The strategy was developed through the County Durham Economic Partnership and was subject to several rounds of public and partnership consultation. The strategy is a framework for an inclusive economy, focusing on People, Productivity, Places, Promotion and Planet. In terms of people, the strategy aims to raise the aspirations of young people and support people into education, training and jobs, including support for disabled residents in securing employment and training opportunities.

6.2 Equality impact assessments

The council uses an evidence-based process of equality impact assessment (EIA) to ensure we analyse impact, across all protected characteristics, of policies and decisions, including our Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings proposals. Assessments allow us to remove or minimise any negative impact, formulate mitigating actions and capture evidence of where we are advancing equality. They are a key part of our decision-making processes and are published where relevant, such as Cabinet reports.

For example, here is a summary of the equality impact assessment for the Children and Young People's Strategy, named 'Growing Up in County Durham':

- **Growing Up in County Durham:** The strategy is a high level partnership plan on what we are going to do to achieve our vision for children, young people (CYP) and their families. The impact assessment¹⁴ commenced early in the development process to capture baseline equality data and ensure disaggregated consultation feedback informed strategy development. There was a three staged consultation approach and inclusive consultation methods

¹⁴ <https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s165109/Appendix%20-%20-%20GUICD%20Strategy%202023-25%20EIA.pdf>

were deployed to engage broad range of stakeholders and ensure the voice of the child was captured. This included involvement of the Youth Council.

- Baseline data for the strategy included:
 - Census 21 data shows there are 115,369 children aged 0- 19 living in County Durham, 49.1% are female, 50.9% are male
 - There are almost 4,800 live births annually
 - Around 10,400 school age pupils have SEND, 16.4% of the school age population
 - There are an estimated 10,000 children and young people in County Durham with a diagnosable mental health problem
 - 5.8% of school children come from an ethnic minority group.
 - 1,442 CYP are known to early help
 - 1,992 are Children in Need
 - 914 are Children Looked After
 - 483 CYP are subject to a current Child Protection Plan
 - 7 out of 10 children are receiving a good level of development at end of reception
 - Childhood vaccination take up is better than average
 - 91% of 16-17 year olds are in education or training
 - The county's care leavers are more likely to be in education, employment and training than in other areas
 - 1 in 4 children live in a household which cannot afford all the basics such as their food and fuel bills
- In summary, the equality assessment found that although beneficial to all to children and young people, the aims of the strategy are likely to have a positive impact for vulnerable groups in relation to age, pregnancy and maternity with disability. Our approach will be targeted to areas and families most in need.

6.3 Groups we engage and work in partnership with

Before making any significant changes to any of our services we carry out public consultation to help us to understand the impact on different groups of people. We want to provide people the opportunity to comment on how we can improve our services and influence the decisions we make. This is done through ongoing engagement and consultation via various channels and methods to ensure participation is inclusive. Channels include the Voluntary and Community sector (VCS) and partnership working via the County Durham Partnership. Specific council led engagement mechanisms include:

- **Area Action Partnerships:** We have 14 Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) which cover the whole county and allow residents to set local priorities which are acted on through local projects. The AAPs are a useful mechanism to use as a key stakeholder when the council is carrying out wider consultation as they are broadly representative of the population and can also provide specific engagement with communities of interest including ethnic minorities.

- **Youth Council:** Our Youth Council is a group of young people aged from 11 to 18 years who live in County Durham. It allows young people to be involved in making and influencing important decisions about issues and services that affect them in order to make positive changes. It provides a collective voice that is listened to and acted upon by crucial decision makers. It is open to all young residents and provides ways for young people who don't want to be an active member of the Youth Council to still be involved in decision making.
- **Disability Partnership:** We facilitate a county wide disability partnership which is made up of individuals with a disability or who are disability allies and of representatives from local and national disability organisations. Representatives include: Blind Life in Durham, Durham City Access for All, Guide Dogs UK and National Association of Laryngectomy Clubs. The partnership provides the opportunity for disabled people to raise any concerns on council services and partake in decision making such as providing feedback on the council's budget consultation, proposed infrastructure developments and satisfaction with service provision.
- **Service specific engagement:** Services have set up various stakeholder groups to allow for continuing and focussed engagement such as a group for parents and carers of children and young people with autism. The council's comments and complaints process also allows us to address issues raised to ensure we continue to provide services that are inclusive.

6.4 Inclusive consultation and use of feedback

Whenever it is appropriate to consult, Durham County Council wants to listen to the voices of local people, service users, partners and other interested parties. This helps us ensure our services meet the needs of our communities. For details on how we consult with people, please see our [Consultation Statement](#).

Public consultations are designed to be as inclusive as possible and capture views from a wide range of stakeholders including service users, partners and elected members. We use different ways to consult with people including online surveys, public meetings, focus groups and direct contact with organisations representing different interests.

When we plan a consultation we try to make sure that there is more than one way to take part, for example, when we do online surveys we provide paper copies for people who cannot use, or don't have access to, a computer. We may offer focus groups or actively engage with groups or partnerships with a specific subject interest.

An equality impact assessment is undertaken prior to consultation where relevant and is developed into a full assessment once the consultation results have been analysed. Consultations are structured in a way that results can be disaggregated via protected characteristic in order to analyse participation and help us to understand responses in relation to the protected groups. Going forward the equality analysis helps us to shape new service delivery models and/or policy development.

During 2022/3¹⁵ we carried out public consultations which included digital services, school mergers, budget proposals, sport and leisure offer and infrastructure projects such as Bishop Auckland bus station and parking, also, proposed policy reviews and/or services changes, including proposed budget savings. Current consultations are published on our [website](#).

The council has also adopted the [Approach to Wellbeing](#) as a means to putting people at the heart of everything we do and underpins our work to achieve the County Durham Vision. The [AHS Wellbeing Self-Assessment Framework](#) has been developed to support the introduction of the County Durham Approach to Wellbeing. It poses questions that can help to structure conversations and inform future decisions about how local work and activities can support the wellbeing of people living in communities.

This approach helps frame our overall equality analysis allowing us to ensure our services are inclusive and meet the needs of our communities. We believe that involving people in decision making is important and we aim to make it easy for everyone to engage, take part in our consultations and co-produce services.

6.5 **Employability Services**

We have several employability programmes which support people in finding and retaining employment. These programmes not only directly link to the council's vision of 'more and better jobs' but this approach also supports our equality objective to 'improve employment opportunities for disabled people', as one of the main barriers to employment is long term health conditions and poor mental health.

Durham Enable¹⁶ launched in February 2021, and works 1-to-1 with jobseekers and employers, to break down the barriers to paid work experienced by people with disabilities, neurodiversities, and long term health conditions. The service receives referrals from partners such as adult social care, Job Centre Plus and local colleges for people with a disability who would benefit with support from a dedicated job coach is seeking, securing and retaining employment. Please see the [DurhamEnable](#) website for our client stories. The following tables set out our most recent client data:

Table 8: DurhamEnable Participants

DurhamEnable Participants	Number	Percentage
Total participants	484	100%
Male	327	67.5%
Female	152	31.5%
Other/unknown	5	1%
Unemployed	233	48%

¹⁵ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/consultation>

¹⁶ <https://durhamenable.info/>

Economically inactive	251	52%
18-25 years	208	43%
26-33 years	116	24%
34-49 years	112	23%
Over 50 years	48	10%
Minority ethnic	10	2%
Job outcomes	106	22%

Table 9: DurhamEnable Participant categories (contains duplicates)

DurhamEnable Participants	Number	Percentage
Mental Health Condition	256	53%
Autism	165	34%
Physical and/or sensory impairment	136	28%
Learning Disability	136	28%
Learning Difficulty	110	23%
Homeless or history of homelessness	29	6%
Ex-offender	23	5%
Special educational needs and disability	8	2%

Employability Durham¹⁷ provides job support for individuals aged 25 years and over and for employers, including support in setting up a business. For 2022/3 the programme has registered 338 clients with disabilities, however not all clients who have a disability declare this so this is likely to be an under-representation. The programme has supported 233 Ukrainian arrivals in the past year, also 24 new Syrian refugees. Please see our [Client Stories](#) to better understand the personal impact of employment support.

6.6 Humanitarian Support: Refugee Resettlement

Following significant developments globally and nationally, the county is now engaged in five different programmes delivering refugee and asylum support, some developed at speed in response to global emergencies. Cabinet¹⁸ received an update in October 2022 on County Durham's support for vulnerable individuals and families under Government schemes to assist refugee resettlement, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, Afghan resettlement and relocation programmes and the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme.

- **United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)** We have been supporting vulnerable families under Government resettlement schemes since May 2016, when the county welcomed its first refugee arrivals. The resettlement scheme initially focused on supporting those fleeing conflict in Syria; but was later expanded to the Middle East and North Africa.

¹⁷ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/employability>

¹⁸ <https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s163393/Humanitarian%20Support%20in%20County%20Durham.pdf>

A model for resettling refugee arrivals in County Durham was developed by services and partners, recognising the county's distinctive characteristics, including the challenges presented by smaller and rural communities, the lack of diversity in many areas and communities and the lack of established infrastructure and support mechanisms. Our agreed principles are:

(a) resettling arrivals in the county's main towns/areas, avoiding isolation in smaller villages and settlements (a scheme review recommended larger villages/areas with good access and transport links to the city centre should also be considered, in consultation with partners to confirm suitability);

(b) assisting family groups, who are more likely to support one another and settle within County Durham's communities;

(c) resettling arrivals in clusters of small family groups, offering self support within communities.

- A phased approach has been adopted, welcoming arrivals to the county in two main phases each year. Each phase comprises of 5-6 families, approximately 25-30 individuals. This allows effective programme planning, enabling the Council to arrange accommodation in appropriate areas and provide the full range of resettlement support services during the first year, including education, English language, employability and resettlement support, and ensures best value from allocated funding.
- Cabinet's commitment to support between 250 and 300 vulnerable refugees by 2020/21 has been delivered, with the county resettling 60 families, comprising 280 individuals, from Syria, Iraq and Sudan. Families resettled in 2016 and 2017 have been resident in the county for five years and have been supported to access legal advice and gain leave to remain in the UK.
- In 2020 the UK consolidated the resettlement programmes into a global United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS). In January 2020 Cabinet agreed County Durham's participation in the UKRS over four years following the conclusion of current resettlement schemes, proportionate with the county's share of the national population, which at the time was estimated to be in the region of 200 people over four years. In March 2021, the county welcomed its first UKRS family, with a further phase of six families resettled in the county during January-March 2022. The global pandemic, travelling restrictions and the emergency response to the Afghanistan evacuation have restricted the county's aim to support refugees in two phases each year in 2020 and 2021, a situation repeated in other council areas.
- 'Homes for Ukraine': In response to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, in March 2022 the Government announced two schemes to support Ukrainians to come to the UK. Each scheme has different eligibility criteria, conditions and associated support. 438 of the 524 people who had established contact with residents through the scheme have arrived in the county.

7. Workforce Equality Data

7.1 Workforce equality profile data

Durham County Council is a large employer with nearly 8,800 employees (excluding school based staff). We are the largest council in the north east region and one of the largest unitary authorities in the country.

The following sections cover our employee data by headcount as at 31 March 2023 and HR policy analysis, including; gender pay gap, progress with our staff networks, employee wellbeing initiatives, analysis from the working well survey and achievement of disability confident leader status.

During 2022 we improved how we collect employee data and asked staff to review and self-update their personal information. Monitoring categories are aligned with Census categories and Equality Act definitions (e.g. definition of disability) to allow for comparative population analysis. We have complete data for age and sex, all other categories can be self-updated by employees via the MyView system and all include a 'prefer not to say' category. We explain to staff how this information is used anonymously for statistical purposes only, such as update of this publication.

Overall number of employees and breakdown by sex

Table 10: Profile female and male

Female/ Male	Headcount	Percent
Female	5561	63.3%
Male	3226	36.7%
Total	8787	100%

Our workforce is consistently around two thirds female. Although the overall number of employees has plateaued at around 8,500 since 2017, there had been a steady decline in previous years from around 10,500 staff in 2011. This staff reduction reflects savings to meet financial planning requirements and potentially new and more flexible ways of working alongside improved technological service delivery solutions.

Age profile of employees

Table 11: Profile by age

Age range	Headcount	Percent
16-24	697	7.9%
25-44	3274	37.3%

45-64	4502	51.2%
65+	314	3.6%
Totals	8787	100%

Just over half (51.2%) of all staff are aged 45-64 years. Nearly eight per cent of staff are aged 16-24 years up from only 2.2 per cent in 2017 which is encouraging. This is predominately a result of our successful apprenticeship programme although it needs to be noted that there is no age restriction in applying for an apprenticeship. The proportion of staff over the age of 65 years has risen from around 2% throughout 2011-2016, to over 3 per cent in recent years which appears to represent an upward trend of more employees working to an older age.

Ethnicity profile of employees

Although we don't have complete data sets for ethnicity, 64.2% of staff (5,637) have provided this information, of which 132 staff are minority ethnic, which represents around 2.3% of those who have provided this information (1.5% of total workforce). We aim to increase the amount of data held for ethnicity and continue to encourage staff to self update their ethnic background information to allow us to provide improved analysis.

Disability profile of employees

3,809 employees have disclosed their disability status which equates to around 43.3% of the total workforce. Of those staff who have provided disability data, 246 state they have a disability which represents an employee disability rate of around 6.4% (2.8% of total workforce). Although this provides an indication of our employment rate for people with disabilities, due to under disclosure of this information, it may not be truly reflective of the wider workforce. For example, a third (3,052) of the workforce responded to the Working Well Survey in 2022 and of those respondents nearly 14% identified as being disabled, so we know there is some disparity with levels of self updated information held on the MyView HR system.

To improve analysis going forward, sustained communications aims to encourage staff to provide their disability status by explaining the importance of this and providing reassurance as to how data is stored and utilised. We know that some people may not identify as disabled although they meet the Equality Act definition, and also recognise, that people need to feel included, supported and represented in the workplace in order to provide this information. Disability data is especially important as we know that as a county our population has relatively high levels of disability and as a large employer we want to improve the employment rate of disabled people within our own organisation as a key area of focus for our equality objectives. Data is key to transparency and driving workplace disability inclusion.

Sexual orientation employee data

Over 37 per cent of staff (3261 individuals) have recorded their sexual orientation which is nearly a 10% increase on the previous year which is encouraging. Data held is broken down in the following table.

Table 12: Sexual orientation data breakdown

Sexual orientation	Headcount	Percent
Lesbian, gay, bisexual or self described	97	3%
Heterosexual	3164	97%
Totals	3261	100%

We aim to encourage more staff to provide their equality data including data on sexual orientation going forward.

Religion and belief

Over 36 per cent of staff (3194 individuals) have recorded their religion or belief or if they have no religion or belief which is an 8% increase on the previous year which is encouraging. This is broken down in the following table.

Table 13: Religion or belief data breakdown

Religion or belief	Headcount	Percent
Agnostic	62	2%
Atheist	127	4%
Christian	1691	53%
Muslim	15	0.5%
Other religions or belief	52	1.5%
No religion or belief	1247	39%
Totals	3194	100%

We aim to encourage more staff to provide their equality data including data on religion or belief going forward.

7.2 Employee Wellbeing and Working Well Survey

The pandemic presented many challenges for local authorities with rapid and dynamic changes to systems, processes and policies to ensure the council met the emergency response to delivery of services for all residents. It was undoubtedly an extremely pressurised and stressful period for all employees. However, the accelerated pace of change in new ways of working and improved understanding of working alongside care responsibilities and reasonable adjustments, has been helpful in developing a supportive and inclusive workplace culture going forward.

During 2022 the council formally adopted a hybrid working policy for suitable job roles which means at least two days a week in the workplace/office and the remainder working from home. Employees have the choice to come into the workplace for up to 100% of their working week if required as this is beneficial for some, such as mental health reasons, limited workspace within the home environment, or because the home environment is not a safe space. Potential benefits of hybrid working include improving work life balance and helping the council to attract and retain a committed workforce. It is likely to be more beneficial in terms of disability, women and some age groups, although it is recognised that hybrid working or complete home working should not be taken as a 'blanket' reasonable adjustment for staff with disabilities.

The council has a dedicated wellbeing portal and frequently raises awareness of health and wellbeing issues and the support available across various mediums including the staff magazine Buzz, social media and via manager briefings. The portal provides information and advice across: physical health, nutrition, fitness, emotional wellbeing, stress, sleep and mental health, and support for a range of specific issues such as domestic abuse, bereavement and substance misuse. In November we achieved White Ribbon Accreditation¹⁹ as part of 16 days of action to highlight the issues of domestic abuse. We now have 100 workplace champions in place to provide specific support for people experiencing domestic abuse and our Chief Executive is the DCC lead White Ribbon Male Ambassador. All employees have free 24/7 access to the Employee Assistance Programme delivered by Health Assured which provides a range of psychological support services.

The Working Well Survey was conducted during 2022 to collect information about the views of employees on workplace wellbeing issues including mental health, engagement and communications. The survey is aligned with questions recommended by the Health and Safety Executive around workplace mental health and wellbeing. A total of 3,052 responses were received which represents around one third (34.7%) of the workforce. Overall, the findings are broadly positive although there is a slight deterioration since the previous survey in 2017, however this period included the pandemic and immense organisational change. Combining responses

¹⁹ [White Ribbon Organisations — White Ribbon UK](#)

where people said 'always' and 'mostly', indicates that (previous survey results from 2017 in brackets):

- 83% (89%) have sufficient information to work effectively;
- 91% (93%) knew what was expected of them in their role;
- 70% (77%) feel free to express their views to managers;
- 65% (61%) have a team meeting at least once a month;
- 73% (75%) would speak highly of the council outside of work

Over three quarters of respondents (77%) agreed their working time can be flexible. Further to this, 71% agreed that the council tried its best to help agree working arrangements to suit employees needs.

Common suggestions on how flexible ways of working could be further improved included to deregulate rigid homeworking/in-office requirements (180 responses), to increase flexibility of hours (core, start/finish times, shifts – 111 responses) and to allow full-time home working (93 responses).

Equality monitoring of Working Well Survey respondents showed:

- 71.8% female, 28% male, 0.2% other gender
- 80.4% full time, 19.6% part time
- 16-34 years 14.1%, 35-54 years 59.5%, 55+ years 26.4%
- Disabled 13.7%, Not disabled 86.3%
- Caring responsibilities: 52%, no caring responsibilities 48%
- Religion or belief: Christian 56.1%, other religion or belief 1.2%, none 42.8%
- Sexual orientation: Heterosexual 95.8%, gay, lesbian and bisexual 4.2%
- White British 97.9%, minority ethnic 2.1%

7.3 Employee Networks

We have a range of employee networks with over 300 members, including: lgbt+ and allies, disability and allies, Race, carers and menopause networks. The networks are ideally placed to support staff and the council with a programme of activities and events that promote inclusion and foster good relations. Access to networks not only provide valuable peer support but also help to shape policy development and implementation.

To date networks have:

- Organised awareness raising activity for lgbt History Month, Disability awareness, carers awareness week etc.
- Provided valuable feedback on HR policy, in particular hybrid working, neurodiversity guidance and recruitment and selection policy

- Reviewed the council’s equality training offer including e-learning modules which has been refreshed and re-launched. Provided direct input for training modules on neurodiversity
- Produced information on the use of pronouns, for those willing to support this on their email signatures and demonstrate allyship
- Supported community events such as Durham Pride

The Director of Resources is the leadership champion for our networks and provides the necessary support to advance progress and visibility of the networks at a leadership level at every opportunity. The director meets with the network chairs at least twice a year to discuss their agendas and current issues.

7.4 Gender pay gap (GPG) data

We have produced mandatory gender pay gap (GPG) reporting for six years. Data is taken at the snapshot date of 31 March each year. Our annual reports can be found on the council’s GPG website page²⁰. Pay gaps continue to be detrimental for women, as summarised in the table below, however the mean gap is narrowing.

Table 14: Gender pay gap mean and median data 2017-2022

Year	Mean % gap lower for women	Median % gap lower for women
2022	0.1	5.7
2021	1.9	3.9
2020	2.6	4.9
2019	3.6	4.3
2018	1.9	4.8
2017	3.4	4.3

Although detrimental for women, the gender pay gap for Durham County Council is lower than pay gaps in many other sectors and is one of the lowest when compared with regional data for other local authorities. This year there is narrowing of the mean pay gap however the median pay gap has widened 1.8 percent compared to the previous year. Durham County Council is committed to using the findings of the gender pay gap to inform and shape its processes and workforce development plan.

The council has a range of policies and working practices to promote and sustain work life balance including hybrid working and flexible working patterns. Policies are

²⁰ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/genderpaygap>

available to all employees however, analysis shows that higher proportions of female employees take advantage of such policies. For example, between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, we received 105 requests to change working hours for the reason of 'Family Leave Policy', and 95.24% of these were submitted by female employees. Family friendly policies therefore assist the council in retaining a highly skilled female workforce.

The council's apprenticeship programme is an integral part of the council's approach to address current and future skills needs. Apprenticeships help us to attract and retain the very best talent and to benefit from a skilled, motivated, and flexible workforce. We highlight opportunities available to women in roles traditionally perceived as 'male' roles, such as those in highways, finance, ICT and fraud. Through our apprenticeship recruitment women are being attracted into more male dominated roles including Civil Engineering and Countryside Wardens and we are strengthening links with schools, colleges and universities to promote the range of opportunities available.

Initiatives such as work experience and internship opportunities to do project work and gain work experience are in place to help support people into employment. The council has previously participated in the National Local Government Graduate Programme to help attract future leaders into Local Government. The council also supports the Change 100 Programme talent programme which supports paid summer work placements and mentoring for disabled undergraduate students and recent graduates.

Women occupy senior level positions in the council and we will build on this by championing our female managers, especially those in occupations which traditionally attract male applicants. 61% of our 'leader' and 'manager' roles are occupied by females, and 46% of our tier 4 and above positions are occupied by females, an increase of 1.43% points from 31 March 2021. We will build on attracting females into senior roles by continuing to showcase our female managers where appropriate.

We have in place a coaching and mentoring framework where employees can access support via professionally trained colleagues on a one-to-one basis or through an external coach or mentor where appropriate. The coaching and mentoring framework helps to support employees to reach their full potential and career goals.

National research into the topic of Menopause, suggests almost 900,000 women have left their employment due to menopause symptoms. By signing the Menopause Workplace Pledge as an employer, we are demonstrating our intentions to support women to remain in employment as long as possible through our supportive approach to wellbeing. In addition, the development of the Menopause staff network will continue into the coming months and years. This network will raise awareness within the workplace and amongst managers, as well as providing support, ensuring women can access help and advice.

7.4 Disability Confident Leader

We have been a Disability Confident Leader organisation since November 2019 and re-accreditation of our leadership status in November 2022 was another important milestone in our journey as a disability inclusive organisation. Establishment of the disability and allies staff network was key to our re-accreditation and going forward we aim to introduce a buddy system to provide personal and tailored support for our employees with a disability.

As part of the news release to celebrate our re-accreditation ²¹ our staff network chair said "Since joining the council over 16 years ago, my experience has been very positive. Anything identified as a barrier to my work was adjusted. The support from Access to Work, a genuine crown jewel of the welfare state, is invaluable. I am delighted that we have renewed our Disability Confident accreditation and look forward to the network continuing to provide peer support, raise awareness and act as a voice for colleagues with disabilities and health conditions so that we can fulfil our potential in serving the people of County Durham."

Other personal stories shared by our employees includes one of our social workers who works for the sensory support team who has lived experience of deafness and often experiences challenges on a daily basis due to communication needs not being met. She feels that the council is a supportive and inclusive employer and as part of our news release to mark Deaf Awareness Week said "When I first started in this role, I was overwhelmed to find that the council's Sensory Support Team members have various levels of sign language ability. This was a huge relief and is a unique situation that I have not come across for a long-time. It feels a very supportive environment."

We view it as important to share personal experiences with our employees and prospective employees to help break down barriers, remove isolation and drive disability inclusion.

²¹ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/28892/We-are-proud-to-be-a-Disability-Confident-Leader->

Contact Details

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