



## **Meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty 2020-2021**

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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 at a glance**

Here are some key facts on County Durham taken from Durham Insight which is a website providing information, data and research about the county.<sup>1</sup>

- 530,000 people live in the county – the highest population of any council area in the North East region
- 1 in 5 are aged 0-17 years
- 1 in 5 are aged 65 years and over, a 36% increase since 1991
- 3 in 5 are aged between 18 and 64, a 2% increase since 1991
- Between now and 2035 the number of people aged over 65 is likely to increase by 31% and people over 85 increase by 82%
- 2% of the population are minority ethnic
- Just over 23% of the County's population have a disability, it's around 18% for the working age population which is high compared to other parts of England
- Although accurate numbers are not reflected in census data there is a large Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community resident in the county
- There are over 240,000 households in the county with 2 in 5 in rural areas
- The county covers an area of 862 square miles

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.durhaminsight.info/keys-facts/>

- There are 11 major centres with a population of over 6,000 people: Barnard Castle, Bishop Auckland, Chester-le-Street, Consett, Crook, Durham City, Newton Aycliffe, Peterlee, Seaham, Spennymoor and Stanley
- 72% of working age population are in employment
- 1 in 3 people are employed in public administration, health and education
- There are a high proportion of children and young people with special educational needs, currently over 13,000 school aged children and young and people across the county.

#### 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 Policy 2020<sup>2</sup> 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.
- **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**
  - Through our transformation programme we will become a more inclusive organisation by improving our staff engagement through the

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

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 initial progress we have made against our new equality objectives during 2020/21 including our planned areas of focus and action going forward.

### ***We will improve employment opportunities for disabled people***

We achieved Disability Confident<sup>3</sup> Leader status in December 2019. 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 to date have been the introduction of the 'reasonable adjustment passport' to support disabled employees to discuss disability with their managers and agree any adjustments which may be required. A new disability and allies' staff network launched in February 2021 to provide additional support for disabled staff and to act as a reference group for policy development and service improvement. A review of the recruitment and selection policy has been undertaken which includes new guidance for managers on reasonable adjustments with a specific focus on inclusion for people with autism. The council's new procurement strategy includes an action to utilise award criteria in support of disability confident employers.

Going forward we will better analyse our recruitment and selection data and develop proactive approaches to attracting and welcoming a diverse workforce. We will utilise our employability services<sup>4</sup> and programmes such as Durham Works<sup>5</sup>, to engage with local employers to improve the level of inclusion and support provided to the working age population across the county. This will include encouraging more local employers to become Disability Confident signposting to DWP who provide the necessary support for organisations.

### ***We will build inclusive communities***

A programme of events is under development to underpin positive community relations. For example, we organised virtual events on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021 to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day. Over 100 participants took part in a community focussed event involving a guest speaker talking about his experience as a child during the Bosnian genocide with questions and poetry from local schools. A further 49 people attended a live event facilitated by Durham County Record Office called 'Never again: the 113<sup>th</sup> Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment and the liberation of Belsen, April -May 1945'. A recording of the community event remains available on

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

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.durham.gov.uk/employability>

<sup>5</sup> <https://durhamworks.info/>

the council website alongside other resources and past recordings to remember Holocaust Memorial Day<sup>6</sup>. The event provided the opportunity for wider awareness raising of issues such as hate crime affecting protected groups.

Going forward we will ensure that all our festivals and events fully optimise opportunities to be as inclusive as possible by improved access and ensuring an inclusive event programme. This will include events such as Lumiere, food festivals, book festival and Brass. We will also continue to support county wide events delivered by partner organisations such as Durham Pride.

***We will build an inclusive and welcoming employee culture***

A number of employee networks have recently emerged including; disability and allies, lgbt+ and allies, Black and Asian and carers networks. Work is ongoing to ensure these networks can influence change and drive an inclusive workplace culture. This includes support for new employees, feedback on policy and initiatives such as buddying and reverse mentoring which involves pairing members of staff from different teams or levels within the organisation, in particular staff with protected characteristics, to learn from one another.

Improvements to how we collect and analyse data via our HR system MyView are underway and a full communication exercise will roll out in 2021 to explain the importance of staff data, how we analyse this data and to encourage all staff to upload their personal equality data via the improved MyView system. Sound data analysis will allow us to have an evidence based approach to monitoring the diversity of our workforce, address policy gaps and seize opportunities to improve inclusion.

We have carried out gender pay gap (GPG) reporting for the past four years and details are published on the council's GPG web page<sup>7</sup>. For 2020 our calculations show that women's mean hourly rate is 2.65% lower than men and women's median hourly rate is 4.93% lower than men. We continue to strive to close the gap through various initiatives, for example, in March 2021 we celebrated International Women's Day through a media campaign on women's achievements in Durham County Council, especially highlighting 'non-traditional' careers pursued by women such as engineering and women in senior leadership roles. Further information on the gender pay gap is contained in the workforce equality data section of this publication.

Going forward we aim to improve how we engage and listen to staff to ensure we have a welcoming and inclusive workplace culture for all. The impact of Covid has accelerated new ways of working which will inform how we move forward post pandemic and ensure that all staff have opportunities for progression and be able to achieve work life balance. Our ongoing work with staff networks, awareness raising

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.durham.gov.uk/hmd>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.durham.gov.uk/genderpaygap>

events, feeding the 'voice of staff' into policy development and improved data collection and analysis will drive this.

## **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 during the challenging circumstances presented by the global Covid 19 pandemic 2020/21. The council's quarterly performance management reports provide more in-depth data analysis and can be found on the council's Cabinet Reports web page<sup>8</sup>.

### ***Covid Response***

The pandemic has exposed and magnified entrenched inequality within our communities, in particular the disproportionate health and economic impact in terms of age, disability, race and sex. Durham County Council has a public health role and continues to be at the forefront of responding to the pandemic. Restrictions to contain the spread of Covid19 have widely affected council services with non-essential services suspended, buildings closed and services moving online or delivered remotely.

The council's emergency response included quickly rolling out a community hub, providing support for our most vulnerable especially those that were shielding or at greater risk of serious illness because of Covid 19 which included higher proportions of older people, men, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities. Also, those experiencing greater financial impact as the pandemic disproportionately impacted families with children, women and disabled people. Support included food delivery services, free food parcels, book delivery and access to counselling and befriending services. Several access channels were available for the hub including an increased use of telephone and postal contact as it was evident that some of the most vulnerable were digitally excluded. Although our data shows that more residents are creating online accounts because of the pandemic to access council services in general, we continue to provide alternate routes to services to ensure inclusion and provide reasonable adjustments where requested.

As the pandemic progressed during 2020 and further data emerged on the impact on particular groups several targeted initiatives were introduced. This included a new triage system for domestic abuse incidents and expansion of the child exploitation vulnerability tracker to all children affected by domestic abuse, not just those deemed high risk. The infant feeding team now provides video support to increase

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<sup>8</sup> <https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CIId=154&Year=0>

accessibility. This, in addition to increased social media has resulted in improved rates of breastfeeding.

As it quickly became apparent that Covid related data was rapidly changing and based on many variables, we speedily developed data dash boards to ensure that key decision makers had access to the most up to date data in order to make reasonably informed decisions in dynamically changing circumstances. Key dashboard information is disaggregated by age bands where possible and continues to be made available to decision makers and the general public via the Durham Insight website.

### ***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.

Several Covid related equality impact assessments were undertaken during 2020, including:

- Covid Community Hub – to ensure the process in accessing support was as inclusive as possible, for example communication and language support was properly recorded and addressed. Also, the availability of different access channels, especially to address the digital exclusion of some groups.
- Furlough for those eligible employees in Culture, Sport and Tourism (potentially 699 employees). The EIA examined the council's approach and how affected staff would be engaged and kept informed. The profile of eligible staff (61% female, 39% male) was broadly similar to the overall employee profile so there was no disproportionate gender impact. There were positive impacts of the scheme for some groups especially where this allowed the opportunity to undertake care responsibilities.
- Emergency business support and grant allocation was also subject to EIA. Our approach on small business grants was to provide targeted support. This meant that nurseries were a priority group to ensure their sustainability which the EIA highlighted as positive for women who predominately work in nurseries and also for families with young children where women predominately have care responsibilities.

### ***Engagement and consultation***

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.
- **People's Parliament:** Durham County Council's People's Parliament, comprises of people with a learning disability and those who have an interest in the issues that affect people with a learning disability, especially carers. They provide a useful engagement and consultation forum.
- **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.

### ***How we use consultation feedback and equality analysis in shaping services***

Consultation feedback helps us with 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 take part in our consultations.

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. Covid restrictions have presented challenges and to overcome these we have ensured that methods such as capturing feedback via telephone and posting printed information are available (in conjunction with methods such as Teams focus groups and online surveys) to ensure as many individuals as possible can participate.

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 2020 we carried out public consultation which included infrastructure development, school mergers, policies and new proposed services or changes to services. The consultation examples below provide a snapshot of how equality analysis has been used:

- **Durham History Centre:** This was stage three of a phased consultation on Durham History Centre. The new centre received planning permission in September 2020 and the consultation sought views on the expectations for the new centre; activities, events and digital engagement. Stakeholder mapping ensured we engaged with protected groups such as disability partnership, women and carer groups, ethnic minorities, lgbt+ rainbow alliance and youth groups. Focussed sessions took place where appropriate, especially important as consultation methods needed to adapt to Covid restrictions (in place at the time) which meant facilitated virtual meetings for disability partnership and AAP representatives. Information and a questionnaire were available to all members of the public. Also, opportunities to provide feedback via telephone and offering information in different formats including easy read. Collaborative work is continuing to address the equality specific issues highlighted which included greater representation of lgbt+ and ethnic minority communities in exhibitions, a dementia friendly café and autism inclusive facilities. A full access audit has been undertaken and ongoing work on this is

progressing in collaboration with our disability partnership to ensure a high level of accessibility for the new centre which is due to open in 2022.

- **Durham city bus station rebuild:** Engagement methods and groups involved were similar to the approach for Durham History Centre. Work continues to address the equality specific feedback which include a changing places facility and parent and carer facility as part of building design and exploring further with disability groups certain access issues such as tactile markings. Furthermore, the project manager is continuing to work with groups in formulating facility management solutions to address perceptions of hate crime and/or harassment specifically highlighted by younger/older people, lgbt and disabled people as part of consultation feedback.
- **Secondary school admissions policy:** We consulted on our proposal to change the oversubscription criteria for community secondary schools. A full equality impact assessment accompanied the consultation and decision making process. Equality analysis found the proposed criteria fair with no disproportionate negative impact for any equality group. Pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) are automatically admitted into the school named in the EHCP.

## 7. Workforce Equality Data

Durham County Council is a large employer of around 8,500 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. This section covers our employee data by headcount as at 31 December 2020. Also, an overview of the impact of Covid for employees and headline HR policy data analysis, including data on apprentices, gender pay gap and talent management.

### Overall number of employees and breakdown by sex

Table 1: Profile female and male

Gender	Headcount	Per cent
Female	5287	62.6%
Male	3160	37.4%
Total	8447	100%

Our workforce is around two thirds female. There has been a steady decline in the overall number of employees in recent 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 and use of improved technological solutions.

### **Age profile of employees**

Table 2: Profile by age

<b>Age range</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
16-24	579	6.9%
25-44	3138	37.1%
45-64	4465	52.8%
65+	265	3.2%
Totals	8447	100%

Just over half (52.8%) of all staff are aged 45-64 years. Nearly seven per cent of staff are aged 16-24 years up from only 2.2 per cent in 2017 which is encouraging. This is predominately as 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 3.2% 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, 78 per cent of staff (6607 individuals) have provided this information, of which 178 staff are minority ethnic, which represents around 2.7% of employees providing this information. This has grown steadily over previous years and is now broadly equivalent to ethnic minority population data for the county.

### **Disability profile of employees**

3,206 employees have disclosed their disability status which equates to around 38 per cent of the total workforce. Of those staff who have provided disability data, 267 state they have a disability which represents an employee disability rate of around 8.3 per cent. 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.

We aim to encourage more staff to provide their equality data and improvements to the way we collect data via MyView are underway. Data for disability 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 in our own organisation as a key area of focus for our equality objectives.

### **Sexual orientation employee data**

Over 27 per cent of staff (2307 individuals) have recorded their sexual orientation which is broken down in the following table.

Table 3: Sexual orientation data breakdown

<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Lesbian, gay or bisexual	67	3%
Heterosexual	2240	97%
Totals	2307	100%

We aim to encourage more staff to provide their equality data and improvements to the way we collect data via MyView are underway.

### **Religion and belief**

Nearly 27 per cent of staff (2268 individuals) have recorded their religion or belief or if they have no religion or belief which is broken down in the following table.

Table 4: Religion or belief data breakdown

<b>Religion or belief</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
Agnostic	26	1%
Atheist	37	1.5%
Christian	1294	57%
Humanist	10	0.5%
Other religions or belief	65	3%
No religion or belief	836	37%
Totals	2268	100%

We aim to encourage more staff to provide their equality data and improvements to the way we collect data via MyView are underway.

### **Employees returning from maternity or adoption leave**

Our data for 2020 shows that of those staff who returned from either maternity or adoption leave, none left work within three months of returning. This is encouraging evidence of our employee retention rate but is also likely to be connected to working from home and furlough for some staff due to the pandemic.

### **Impact of Covid on employees**

Covid has presented many challenges for local authorities which has been shouldered by council employees alongside rapid and dynamic changes to systems, processes and policies to ensure the council met, and continues to meet, it's emergency response. It has undoubtedly been an extremely pressurised and stressful period for all employees. However, it has accelerated the pace of change in new ways of working and improved understanding of working and care responsibilities and reasonable adjustments, for example. Learning from which will be beneficial in how we adapt and recover post pandemic and will support a positive culture shift going forward.

Home working has highlighted the potential benefits in retaining employment and achieving a better work life balance, although it is recognised that a mixture of home/office working will be best for most people when we can return to workplaces. This is likely to be more beneficial in terms of disability, women and some age groups. Overall sickness levels fell during 2020 to an average of 9.7 days, down from 10.7 days. This could indicate the benefits of new ways of working for some staff, especially if managing a health condition, disability and/or care responsibilities. Analysis of 2021 employee and policy data will allow us to examine this further.

The safety of our employees is paramount, especially those staff who cannot work from home such as refuse collection and social workers. A review of our occupational risk assessment process was undertaken in light of the disproportionate impact of Covid for some working age groups, in particular those with certain health conditions, BAME and men. This ensured that all front-line employee's personal circumstances and risk factors were appropriately considered and addressed. The risk assessment is being updated further to ensure adequate consideration of disability and reasonable adjustment as part of plans to return to the workplace.

A dedicated intranet page holds all key policy and frequently asked questions on Covid related workplace issues in one area to allow easy access for staff and managers. A concerted communication programme via the internal staff publication 'Buzz', use of social media and blogs from senior managers/CEO, ensures that all staff are kept informed of changing circumstances, requirements to work from home and how to access personal support. Virtual events delivered by the head of HR and occupational health and safety manager were held for all council managers to

underpin the requirement to look after staff needs and where managers could seek further guidance and support.

In response to some of the detrimental impact of Covid on employees, support mechanisms such as access to health and wellbeing support were ramped up. Public health utilised a number of national campaigns to support the mental and physical wellbeing of staff. Mental health and resilience courses are available to all staff. Access to networks such as the carers network and the new emerging disability and lgbt+ networks support this and will also help to shape our recovery and return to the workplace.

### **Apprenticeship programme**

As at 31 March 2020, we employed 118 apprentices, and this is set to increase as a further recruitment drive takes place during 2021. There is a 10% increase in the number of male apprentices (67% in 2020 compared to 57% in 2019), and there are fewer female apprentices overall (33% in 2020 compared to 43% in 2019). However, women apprentices are being attracted into more male dominated roles including civil engineering and countryside wardens.

### **Gender pay gap (GPG) data**

We have produced mandatory gender pay gap (GPG) reporting for four 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<sup>9</sup>.

The mean and median percentage pay gaps continue to be lower for women compared to men as summarised in the table below.

Table 3: Gender pay gap mean and median data 2017-2020

<b>Year</b>	<b>Mean % gap lower for women</b>	<b>Median % gap lower for women</b>
2020	2.6	4.9
2019	3.6	4.3
2018	1.9	4.8
2017	3.4	4.3

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.durham.gov.uk/genderpaygap>

Although a detrimental pay gap for women, Durham County Council's gender pay gap is much lower than pay gaps in some other sectors and is one of the lowest pay gaps when compared with regional data for other local authorities.

The council has a range of policies and working practices to promote and sustain work life balance including various flexible working patterns e.g. part-time, flexitime, home working, maternity, paternity, adoption, dependent and shared parental leave. Analysis of the 2019/20 GPG data set revealed 48%% of female employees work a part-time working pattern, compared to 19%% of male employees. Furthermore, 106 employees are classified as permanent 'homeworkers', and of these 84% were female.

Going forward we will monitor the impact of Covid on women working for the council and if this has affected the gender pay gap, for example has there been a disproportionate number of female employees leaving the council during 2020/21. Also, the impact of home working during the pandemic, early data on the retention rate of employees returning from maternity and adoption rate shows an improved retention rate of those staff.

### **Talent management**

We have an inclusive approach to talent management and have in place a comprehensive Employee Learning and Development programme, including access to over 300 digital and e-learning resources, together with a Leadership and Management Development Programme to support all employees to grow and develop in their roles. Our Leadership and Management Programme covers 1,149 Leaders and Managers, of whom 41.5% are male employees and 58.5% are female employees. We are currently establishing a more robust approach to support employees to progress in their careers through bespoke support, development programmes, apprenticeships, mentoring and career pathways.

We have in place a coaching framework where employees can access coaching delivered by professionally trained colleagues on a one to one basis or through an external coach. The coaching framework helps to support employees to reach their full potential and career goals. Those accessing our internal coaching offer are 50% male and 50% female.

## Contact Details

You can contact Durham County Council's equality team as follows:

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## **Appendix 1: Summary of key outcomes for equality objectives 2016-2020**

The council's previous equality objectives were embedded as part of the council plan 2016-2019 under the priority theme 'Altogether Better Council':

- putting the customer first
- working with our communities, and
- supporting our people through change

### ***Putting the customer first***

Key achievements included:

- Extending the range of routes for customers to access services to allow for more convenient and inclusive access and maintaining routes such as face to face and text messages for those customers who needed this.
- Developing responsive and customer focussed services built on ongoing customer feedback and/or via public consultation on service development.
- Ensuring people are treated fairly and differences are respected through ongoing staff training and collecting and analysing equality monitoring data.

### ***Working with our communities***

Key achievements included:

- Ensuring communities and stakeholders are engaged and communicated with which included extensive public consultation opportunities on service change and development and analysis of feedback by protected characteristic. Strong communication and engagement channels are in place including area action partnerships to ensure effective localised community engagement and relationships with specific groups representing equality such as disability groups, rainbow alliance, youth groups, age UK and faith groups.
- Ongoing effective partnership working via the County Durham Partnership with key public, private and voluntary organisations, that work together to improve the quality of life for all people in County Durham. The thematic partnerships includes: children and families; economic; health and wellbeing; safe Durham; and, environment.

### ***Supporting our people through change***

Key achievements included:

- Employee wellbeing was more effectively supported through focussed HR support from the people and talent management service. The HR policy

review was underpinned by new core values and behaviours which have equality and inclusion at their heart. The transformation programme encouraged and supported more flexible and home working providing an improved work life balance. Data shows that women were more likely to utilise flexible working, part time working and accessing parental leave although the numbers are increasing for men which is encouraging. This early work provided a firm foundation for acceleration of home working once Covid hit.

- A structured employee support programme aimed to support all staff through change especially for staff involved in a restructuring process and/or at risk of redundancy. This included access support in interview skills, career planning and counselling services.
- The better health at work initiative brought together a number of support mechanisms for staff health and wellbeing which although beneficial to all are of particular benefit for carers (who are disproportionately women), staff with disabilities and a range of age groups.