Our people

Annual People Report 2025 to 2026

"Serving the people of Hampshire with purpose and pride to improve lives today and for tomorrow."

Hampshire County Council

Contents

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Where does the time go? So much has changed in the past year - globally, nationally and locally - and yet many things remain constant. Our strong performance in service delivery, our embedded values, and our commitment to telling the story of our people (our employees) through our Annual People Report are just a few examples.

1.2 Our 2025 to 2026 Report covers a lot of ground, telling that story of our people, our most valuable asset. I accept that in some organisations perhaps, these words may be ‘spoken’ rather than ‘lived’ but it is my experience that at Hampshire County Council **we mean them**. They are reflected in how we work and in the behaviours that we see day-to-day. I recognise that not every colleague who works in this great organisation will enjoy every aspect of their job at all times, nor agree with their manager on every issue, however feedback and our performance indicate that most people do feel positive about their work on most days. This is something I am proud of and find greatly encouraging.

1.3 2025 to 2026 has seen a change in Chief Executive, with the retirement of Carolyn Williamson and the appointment of Gary Westbrook in the summer. Gary has maintained a strong focus on our organisational priorities; delivering services to the people of Hampshire, Devolution, Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), the Role of the Manager and of course our ongoing financial pressures. Gary’s appointment has brought an increased focus on engagement with our elected Members, employees, and external stakeholders; on compliance, ensuring that our strong governance and assurance frameworks remain purposeful and proportionate; and on organisational culture, ensuring we remain a diverse and inclusive organisation where our values and behaviours are active and relevant, regardless of the subject or focus of our work or discussions.

1.4 In terms of this year’s People story, you see reference in the report to:

- Local Government Reorganisation
- Devolution
- Budget and finance
- Changes to our operating model and People Services functions
- Accommodation strategy
- The Employment Rights Act 2025 changes.

1.5 In writing these introductions, there are two things that I unashamedly repeat, year in – year out. The first is that it continues to be an honour to be the Director of People and Organisation at Hampshire County Council – I started this year with hope and expectation and I haven’t been disappointed. As I approach next year, with the additional responsibility of being the Deputy Chief Executive, I remain hopeful and expectant. The second is a heartfelt ‘thank you’. Everyone who works here, whether as a directly employed member of staff or as part of our agency workforce, does an amazing job in increasingly challenging circumstances. You are seen, you are appreciated and you are amazing!

Jac Broughton FCIPD, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of People and Organisation

2.0 Context

2.1 This People Report for the period April 2025 to March 2026 sets out our priorities, successes, challenges and changes relating to our people.

2.2 The report includes a high-level overview of key people data and highlights relevant trends to inform our future people strategies and priorities. In addition, it:

- forms part of the corporate Performance Assurance Framework, providing elected Members with robust assurance of our overall performance.
- provides an overview of initiatives and strategies that have been put in place to meet our organisational people needs and ensure performance assurance.
- is a means for us to publicly publish information as part of our Public Sector Equality Duty.

2.3 As in previous years, the report is split into two parts – Our Organisation, and Our People - and follows the structure of an 'employee lifecycle' as shown in Figure 4.

Part 1: Our Organisation

3.0 Our purpose, vision, values and brand

3.1 We continue to be a high performing democratic body that serves the residents and businesses of Hampshire.

3.2 We are responsible for a wide range of services across the whole county. Our role is to act strategically and implement policy as determined by our local Cabinet. This means delivering services to the people of Hampshire (and sometimes beyond) in an open and cost-effective way.

Our priority commitments

3.3 Our priority is to ensure that we can continue to provide high-quality services to the people of Hampshire.

3.4 The four important commitments that shape how we spend our time are.

- Keeping you Healthy, well and independent
- Giving your communities the best chance to thrive

- Keeping you, your families and friends safe
- Providing innovative services, you need and value.

3.5 These are delivered through strategies such as the Local Transport Plan, the Public Health Strategy, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, the Adult's Health and Care Strategy, and associated work programmes – all of which rely on our people.

3.6 For more information, see the Strategic Plan 2025 to 2028 Strategic Plan 2025 to 2028.

Our vision, values and behaviours

3.7 We continue to deliver against our vision and be guided by our values and behaviours: *"Serving the people of Hampshire with purpose and pride to improve lives, today and for tomorrow".*

Figure 1: Our values

Working as one organisation

We **collaborate** with each other and our partners for the good of our service users. Support each other to recover quickly from setbacks and take responsibility in managing our personal and organisational **wellbeing**. We work together to ensure we are a healthy and resilient organisation.

Integrity and respect

We value and encourage every individual for their unique strengths, and demonstrate our confidence in each other through our language and behaviour. We are fair, honest, and reliable in everything we say and do.

Professionalism

We work hard to deliver the best services that we can and we hold ourselves **accountable** for our performance. We have pride in what we deliver and enable.

Making a difference

Our work puts people at the forefront of what we do and helps communities across the county to thrive. We **care**.

Continuous improvement

We are **ambitious**. We challenge ourselves to innovate, be **creative** and work to create a sustainable, future-proof Hampshire.

4.0 Our progress 2025 to 2026

We have once again seen changes in our people profile notably a decrease in headcount and a correlating increase in external leavers, a more detailed explanation of why we are seeing these changes is referenced throughout the report.

4.1 A summary of changes is shown in the table below:

Figure 2: An overview of changes to our data for 2025 to 2026

Metric		March 2025	Trend	March 2026
Headcount		12,438	▼	11,158
Full-time equivalent		10,086	▼	9,396
Headcount	Male	3,053	▼	2,960
	Female	9,385	▼	8,198
Part-time headcount	Male	749	▼	683
	Female	4,978	▼	3,800
Under 25 headcount		366	▲	460
Over 55 headcount		3,611	▼	2,983
Declared ethnicity %		99%	=	99%
% in senior roles (H+)	Females	57%	▲	58%
	Ethnic minority	3.9%	▼	3.7%
	Disability	7.9%	▲	9.3%
Minority sexual orientation		3%	▲	5.2%
Gender pay gap %		12.8%	▼	11.2%
Overall external turnover % (Annual)		19%	▲	21%

5.0 Our Corporate Management Team (CMT)

5.1 The Corporate Management Team (CMT) now consists of five chief officers and is led by the Chief Executive. CMT continues to give direction to the County Council as one organisation, determining its strategic objectives and policies. It is also jointly accountable for our activities to third parties and stakeholders, taking decisions on behalf of the whole organisation.

Gary Westbrook, Chief Executive

5.2 The Chief Executive leads our staff and the strategic vision set out by the County Council's elected Leader, mobilising strategies, plans and policies to ensure it is successful. The Chief Executive holds the responsibility for major organisational decisions, manages an annual budget of £3.3 billion and leads a workforce of over 11,000 employees directly (and many more indirectly, including hundreds of Hampshire schools) who deliver a wide range of services to over 1.4 million residents.

Patrick Blogg, Director of Universal Services

5.3 The Director of Universal Services is responsible for leading the delivery and development of our services which are accessible to all residents of Hampshire, and services relating to strategic development of the county.

Jac Broughton, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of People and Organisation

5.4 The Director of People and Organisation is responsible for supporting frontline services and our employees. They lead on planning and delivering the people and organisational strategies across the council. In addition, Jac holds the responsibility of the Deputy Chief Executive.

Steph How, Director of Children's Services

5.5 The Director of Children's Services is responsible for the leadership, strategy and effectiveness of Children's Services. They are responsible for securing the provision of services which address the needs of all children and young people, including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, their families and carers.

Jess Hutchinson, Director of Adults' Health and Care

5.6 The Director of Adults' Health and Care is responsible for enabling the people of Hampshire to stay well and live independently, providing support to the most vulnerable within our communities.

Andy Lowe, Director of Corporate Operations and Chief Finance Officer (CFO)

5.7 The Director of Corporate Operations is responsible for the technical and financial infrastructure that supports and protects frontline services and employees. This role is also responsible for the delivery of services under the Shared Service Partnership, where transactional activities such as payroll and finance are provided jointly to a wide group of public service organisations to maximise efficiency for all partners. The services in Corporate Operations play a key role in all of Hampshire County Council's partnerships.

Changes to the Corporate Management Team since 1 April 2025

5.8 Andy Lowe was appointed Director of Corporate Operations and Chief Finance Officer.

5.9 From January 2026 important work previously undertaken by Hampshire 2050 directorate was embedded within Universal Services and People and Organisation, removing the Hampshire 2050 directorate.

Our Chief Officers Group

5.10 Our Chief Officer Group includes our Chief Executive, Directors and Senior Officers, who provide support to CMT. Details of our Senior Officers can be found here: https://www.hants.gov.uk/aboutthecouncil/governmentinhampshire/seniorofficers

Our Senior Managers

5.11 Our people fall into one of 7 tiers of management. Within the first 6 tiers, most people undertake some form of line management responsibility, however, in a minority of instances a person is employed at a tier of management due to their specialist professional expertise and without line management responsibilities (principal, senior or junior specialists):

- Tier 0 – Chief Executive
- Tier 1 – Directors
- Tier 2 – Deputy Directors and Assistant Directors
- Tier 3 – Senior Leaders, or Principal Specialists (K and J grades)
- Tier 4 – Service Managers, or Senior Specialists (H and I grades)
- Tier 5 – Team Managers, or Specialists (F and G grades)
- Tier 6 – Supervisors, or Junior Specialists (C, D and E grades)
- Tier 7 – Team Members all of whom have no line management responsibilities (A and B grades).

6.0 Our extended organisation

6.1 Our extended organisation can be viewed at: https://www.hants.gov.uk/aboutthecouncil/extended-organisation. This shows the range of organisations that we work with, partner with, provide services to, and support in a strategic or operational capacity.

7.0 Strategic planning

7.1 This reporting period sees us entering a period of unprecedented change driven by structural changes to local government, continued financial challenges and significant changes to employment regulation.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

7.2 Hampshire County Council and the 14 other councils in the area will be replaced by five unitary councils from April 2028 - four of the new unitary councils will be on the Hampshire mainland, and a standalone council on the Isle of Wight. This presents the opportunity to simplify local government and deliver services differently and more efficiently for the people of Hampshire. Responsibility for the delivery of services remains unchanged until 2028, and as such we must balance continuing to deliver strong services for Hampshire residents now, with planning for the future.

7.3 A programme of work has been established within the County Council to prepare for LGR. Moving forward there will be an area-wide programme that Gary Westbrook, our Chief Executive, has been appointed to lead as the Senior Responsible Officer. He will be supported by an implementation team which will include the Chief Executives of the existing county, district and unitary councils.

7.4 The programme of work to achieve LGR will require significant resources both in terms of project and programme management and subject matter expertise. Creating this capacity, while ensuring there are sufficient resources to deliver day-to-day services will be a significant recruitment and financial challenge.

7.5 The change arising from LGR is unprecedented in its scale and complexity with a need to consider how all aspects of service delivery, resources, data, systems and other essential operational aspects will be moved to the 4 new mainland authorities. As a result, staff may understandably feel anxious about the level of change and uncertainty. We are supporting staff through this by providing clarity where we can and where we don't know the answers now being clear about when information is expected to be known. There is a Hantsnet page where staff can access information and ask questions. Moving forward we will also equip line managers through leadership and management development so that they feel confident and able in creating change ready and resilient teams.

Devolution

7.6 Alongside, but separate from LGR, devolution will transfer certain responsibilities from central government to a new strategic authority led by an elected mayor. The new mayoral authority will enable decisions to be made closer to the communities they affect and will cover areas such as transport planning and improvement, economic growth and skills development, and housing and regeneration. The new 'Hampshire and the Solent Combined County Authority' is expected to be established by Summer 2026; although the election of a mayor for the area has been delayed until 2028.

Budget and Finance

7.7 The financial picture during 2025 to 2026 continued to be extremely challenging, although success continued to be made in reducing costs through effective spend control measures.

Accommodation strategy

7.8 We take a flexible and pragmatic approach to office attendance, ensuring staff work from the right place to deliver services effectively, support collaboration, and meet residents' needs, while recognising that many roles must be based in communities or operational settings.

7.9 Changes to ways of working and/or working patterns have enabled a major reduction in our office estate, cutting running costs, generating significant savings and capital receipts, and ensuring we only retain buildings we genuinely need. It has also meant that we remain competitive in the labour market.

7.10 A strategic approach to the consolidation and rationalisation of 40 corporate office locations across Winchester and wider Hampshire was approved by the Executive Member in 2023 and 2024 respectively. Significant progress has been made to implement these strategies with staff relocated into fewer buildings and surplus assets released in Winchester, Farnborough, Alton, Eastleigh, Hedge End, Fareham, Havant, Romsey and the New Forest. Further reorganisation is planned for Basingstoke, Andover and Aldershot. It is anticipated that 16 of the original 40 office locations will be retained once these projects are completed.

7.11 The exit and disposal of surplus office accommodation is expected to realise in the region of £1.8 million of recurring revenue savings from reduced operating costs, alongside a reduction in annual facilities management and building maintenance costs. Disposal of surplus freehold buildings is forecast to realise a total capital receipt in the region of £25 million, with £9.325 million already secured through completed sales. Disposal of these assets is also avoiding capital maintenance liabilities in excess of £7million.

7.12 Strong governance arrangements are in place to oversee workforce performance and office accommodation decisions, with further agreed changes to be delivered as part of the ongoing office rationalisation programme.

Employment Rights Act

7.13 The Government's manifesto pledge to 'Make Work Pay' is being implemented through the Employment Rights Act 2025, laying the path for a significant number of employment reforms during 2026 and 2027.

7.14 The government has set out its timeline for implementation for changes coming into effect in 2026, although many changes have an unspecified implementation date in 2027.

Figure 3: Employment Rights Act timeline summary 2026

April 2026

Parental unpaid Leave becomes a day-one right	Statutory Sick Pay reforms
Paternity Leave becomes a day-one right (but not pay)	Voluntary gender pay gap action plans
Increase in protective award for failure in collective consultation	Voluntary menopause action plans
Fair Work Agency introduced but not yet functional	Bereaved Partners' Paternity Leave (unrelated to ERA)
Whistleblowing protections for sexual harassment	Obligations to record holiday entitlement and pay

August 2026

Electronic and workplace balloting for Statutory Trade Union ballots & following this, removal of the 50% turnout requirement

October 2026

Adult Social Care Negotiating Body established	Other Trade Union reforms (new role of Equality Officer, new protections, increase in facilities time)
Obligations if outsourcing public sector employees "Two tier workforce"	Increase in Employment Tribunal time limits (no earlier than October 2026)
Stronger duty to prevent sexual harassment & harassment by 3rd parties	

7.15 The most significant reforms include changes to the length of service required for an employee to claim unfair dismissal; the introduction of two new Negotiating Bodies with a remit to set pay and terms and conditions of staff; changes to collective consultation; restrictions on fire and rehire of staff; and new obligations to avoid a two-tier workforce when outsourcing public sector employees.

7.16 A programme of work is in place to coordinate the implementation of these legislative changes, ensuring these are embedded within people policy and guidance.

8.0 Our employee lifecycle

Figure 4: Our employee lifecycle

Attract – Being an inclusive employer of choice

9.0 Attract – Being an inclusive employer of choice

9.1 Recruitment challenges continue to be widely recognised across the public sector.

9.2 During the reporting period, in support of our increasing efficiency, we have continued to implement cost-control measures that mean that while directors have continued to prioritise recruitment into critical vacancies (particularly in front-line roles), there is now additional scrutiny about whether to replace colleagues who are leaving or to fill new or changed posts.

9.3 In some service areas, recruitment and retention continues to be a challenge. The focus has continued to be on recruitment and retention of business-critical roles and addressing recruitment hot spots as highlighted through the report.

The recruitment landscape

9.4 The economy started 2025 strongly as households and businesses brought activity forward, however growth slowed from Q2. The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) now forecasts modest UK GDP growth of 1.5% in 2025 and 1.4% in 2026, with tighter fiscal policy and global uncertainty weighing on the economic outlook.

9.5 Labour market conditions continue to soften. Unemployment has risen above 5% nationally amid falling vacancies and flat employment rates. PAYE jobs are declining, although remain relatively high. Higher employer National Insurance Contributions and weak sentiment are dampening hiring. Inflation remains persistent and wage growth, though easing, is still elevated. The OBR expects unemployment to remain close to 5% until 2027.

9.6 In Hampshire, working-age claimant unemployment stabilised in 2025 at around 2.4%. Unemployment among 18–24-year-olds has risen more sharply, with younger and lower-paid workers hit hardest by rising labour costs, particularly in sectors such as hospitality and food services, which typically have higher concentration of younger and early-career workers. As shown in Figure 2, our under-25 headcount has increased over the last year.

Our recruitment

Advertising

9.7 We advertised 1,160 roles for appointment on employment contracts (excluding recruitment through agencies). This was 5% lower than the previous year. However, the range of roles advertised has continued to reflect the full range of core services delivered by the County Council. The reduction in the number of roles advertised is likely attributable to the additional spend control measures that have been put in place.

9.8 To ensure we remain competitive in the recruitment market we have updated our external facing recruitment webpages: https://www.hants.gov.uk/jobs

9.9 On these pages we provide information on what we offer as ‘Reward’, which includes salary, pension and paid leave, and also provide information on ‘Working here’ and ‘Your development’.

Recruitment ‘hot spots’

9.10 The profile of our recruitment ‘hot spots’ (roles which have a lot of vacancies, a high turnover and may be hard to fill) remains the same as in recent years, including, care assistants (subject to georgical location of the home), nurses, and social workers. However, recruitment and retention initiatives, such as recruitment and retention payments continue to be in place to help support more recruitment into these roles.

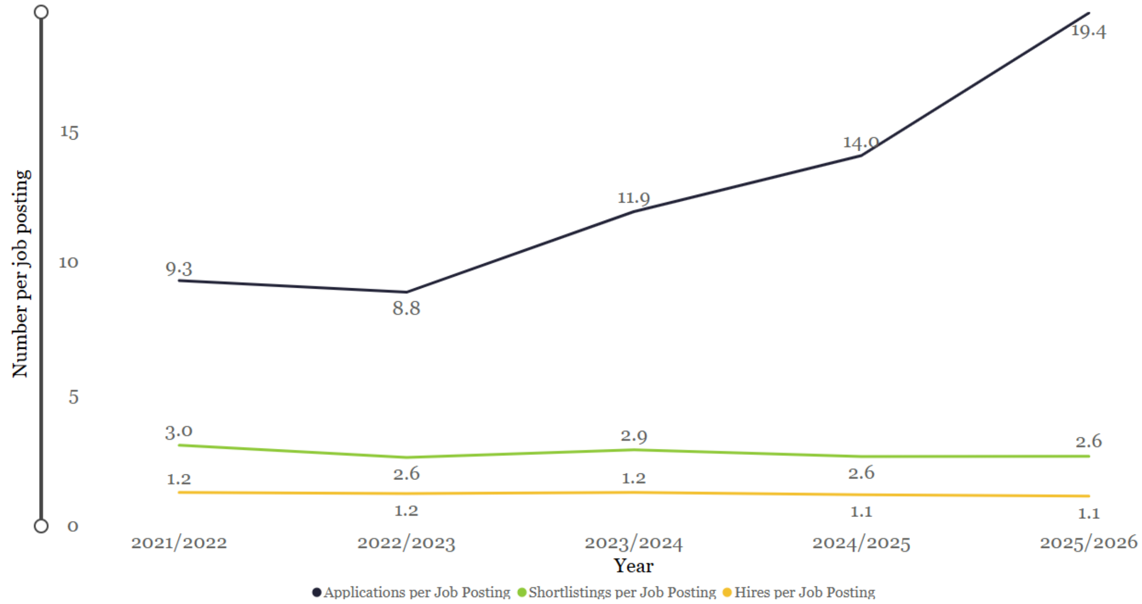
Applications

9.11 In the last 12 months, like the previous year, most applicants applied for our roles through external career websites (40%) such as Indeed, and tour own website (31%). Analysing which routes our candidates apply through provides us with added insight to determine our future advertising strategies.

9.12 The number of applications increased from 16,006 last year to 22,521 this year.

9.13 The average number of applications per role also rose, from 14.0 to 19.4, in this reporting year, as shown in Figure 5, suggesting we remain a popular choice for employment.

Figure 5: The number of applications/short listings/hires over time



9.14 The proportion of applicants shortlisted for assessment or interview decreased from 18% to 13% in this reporting period. Some managers have fed back a sense of increased 'speculative' applications for roles from unqualified/inexperienced individuals which may be an indicator of market factors at play.

9.15 Of the 3,024 applicants shortlisted, 42% (1,273) were hired. This represents an increase from 37% (1,064) hired in the previous reporting period indicating a stronger progression rate from shortlist to hire.

9.16 Additional recruitment guidance has been published to support external applicants with providing the information required in the recruitment application. This can be viewed at: https://www.hants.gov.uk/jobs/jobapplication/jobapplicationguide

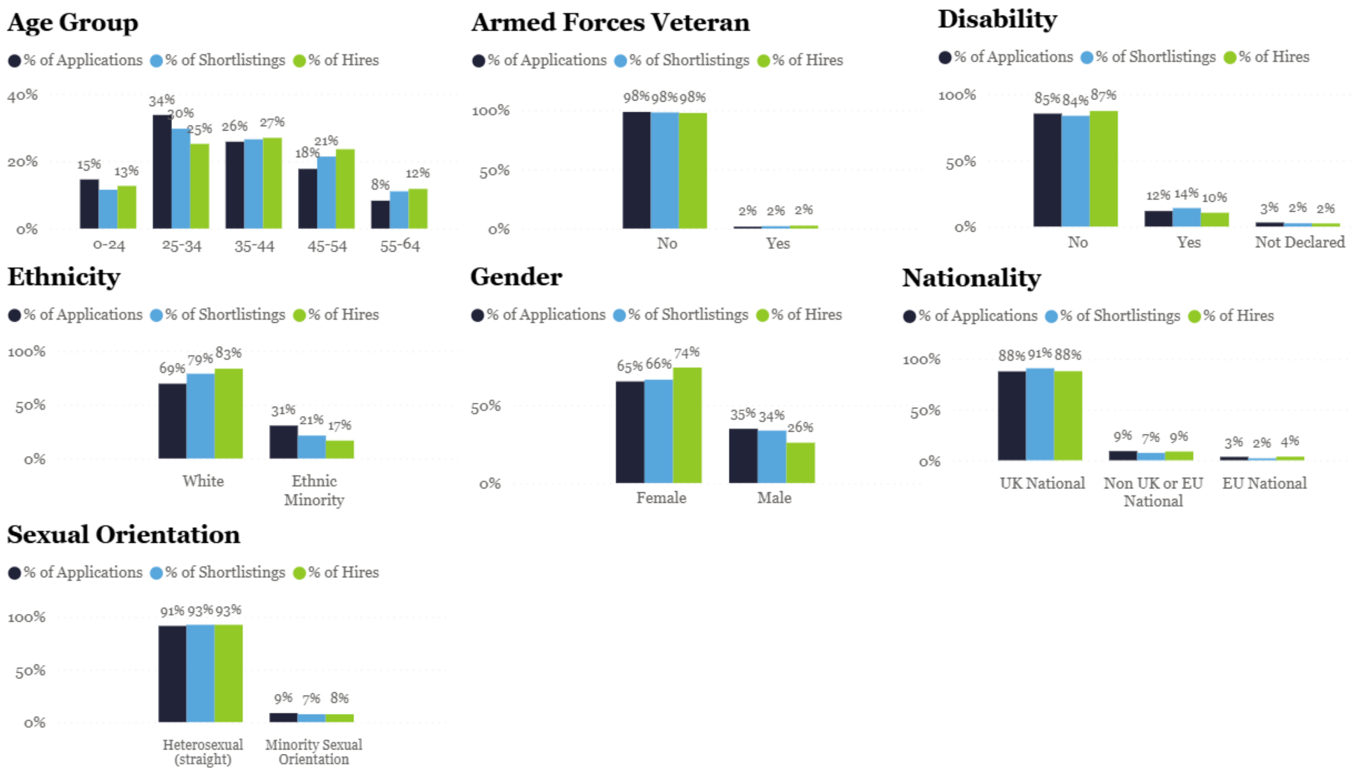
Recruitment profile

9.17 The recruitment profile of data provided by our applicants is as follows:

- **Age –** 60% of applications were aged between 25 and 45. Applicants aged 35 to 44 were more likely to be hired (27%) than other age groups. This is very similar to last year and applicants aged 25-34 were the next age group more likely to be hired (25%).
- **Armed Forces Veterans –** 2% of applications were from Armed Forces veterans, consistent with the previous three years. Veterans also made up 2% of shortlisted applicants and 2% of hires. This indicates that veterans progress through the recruitment process at a similar rate, with no evident barriers or adverse impact at the shortlisting or hiring stages.
- **Disability –** People declaring a disability accounted for 12% of applicants, 14% of shortlisted candidates, and 10% of hires. This represents a slight increase in the hire rate (up from 9%) in this reporting period.
- **Ethnicity** – 31% per cent of applicants were from ethnic minority backgrounds, consistent with last year. The percentage shortlisted (21%) represents an increase from last year (17%). In addition, the proportion hired rose to 17%, up from 14% last year.
- **Gender** – The applicant split this year was male 35% and female 65%, consistent with last year.
- **Nationality** – approximately 88% of applicants this year were UK nationals, 3% were EU nationals, and 9% were other non-UK nationals. This is consistent with last year.
- **Sexual orientation –** 9% of applicants declared a minority sexual orientation. 7% were shortlisted and 8% hired. Overall, this represents a slight increase compared with last year, with no evident barriers or adverse impact at the shortlisting or hiring stages.

9.18 New recruitment e-learning is available for hiring managers that includes information on equalities. Hiring managers do not have access to equalities data through the recruitment process.

Figure 6: The profile of our applicants across applications, shortlisting and hires



Internal versus external applications

9.19 Of the 22,521 applications received in this year, 8% (1,804) were from internal employees, (compared to 10% last year).

9.20 Internal applicants made up 23% of those shortlisted (420), an increase from 17% last year and internal applicants continue to be around 4 times more likely to be hired than external applicants.

9.21 The internal recruitment profile broadly mirrors the overall applicant profile (Figure 6). Key highlights from the data provided by internal applicants are as follows:

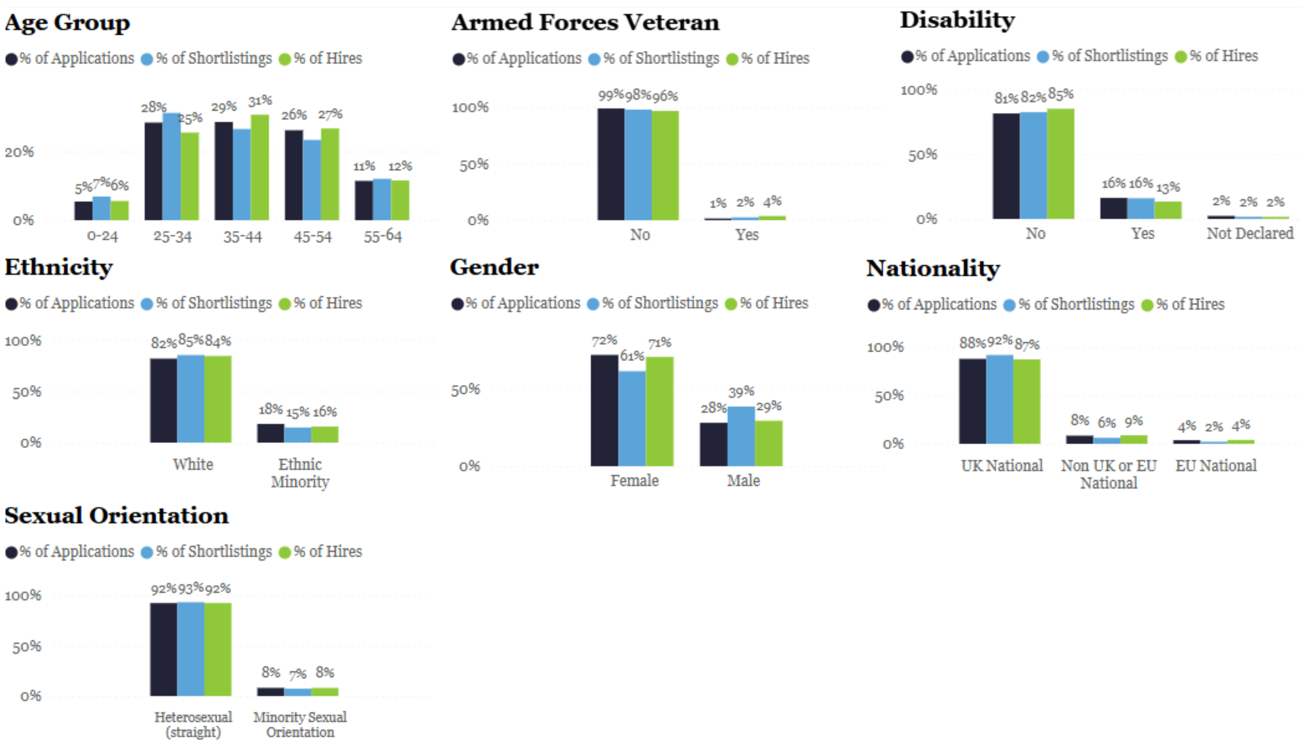
- **Age –** Applications are highest from employees aged 35–44 (29%), consistent with last year and closely followed by employees aged 25–34 (28%). Appointments are also highest in the 35–44 age group (31%).
- **Disability** – 16% of employees applying have declared a disability - this is an increase from 13% last year. Employees with a disability accounted for 13% of internal hires, up from 8% in the previous year.

- **Ethnicity** – 18% of internal applicants and 16% of internal hires were from a minority ethnic group. Both figures represent increases compared with last year (16% and 12% respectively).

- **Gender** – Female employees accounted for 72% of applications and 71% of internal hires, while male employees accounted for 28% of applications and 29% of hires. This reflects a slight increase in the proportion of internal male hires compared with last year. As shown in Figure 25, our people are 73.5% female.

- **Sexual orientation** – people declaring a minority sexual orientation made up 8% of internal applicants and 8% of internal hires, an increase from 4% last year.

Figure 7: The profile of our internal applicants across applications, shortlisting and hires



Resource
– Facilitate all available talent to apply

10.0 Resource – Facilitate all available talent to apply

10.1 Our workforce strategies continue to enable the effective deployment of a range of resourcing options, recognising that no one option would work across the breadth of services we deliver.

10.2 We continue to offer a range of contracts, opportunities for progression and flexible working options.

10.3 Our people comprise of permanent and temporary employees, agency workers, sponsored overseas workers and external contractors or consultants.

10.4 The chart below shows our total people costs, split by ‘resource’ type:

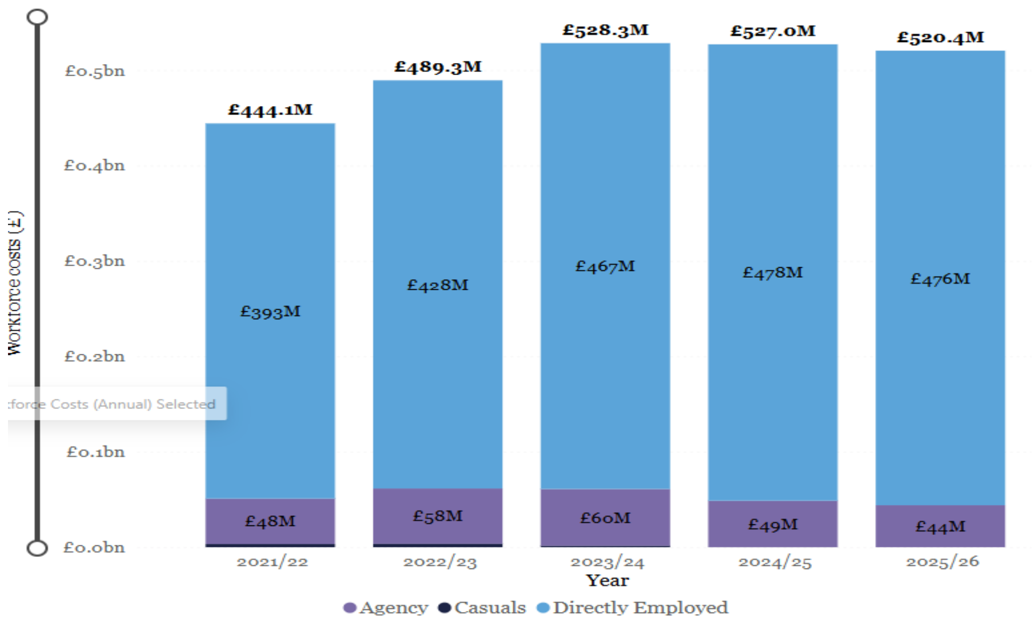
- directly employed (permanent / temporary)
- agency (Connect2Hampshire - our main supplier of agency and contractor workforce - and other contractors / consultants, where agreed in line with internal governance and procurement processes).

10.5 At the end of March 2026, 91% of our people costs were for directly employed staff, this is the same as the previous reporting period.

10.6 The overall cost of people (salaries with on costs) working at the County Council is shown in Figure 8. The decrease in people costs can be attributed to the reduction in headcount. In April 2025, there was an increase of 3.2% pay increase for employees on EHCC and Soulbury terms and conditions.

10.7 The use of agency workers remained at 9%, in line with last year.

Figure 8: Total people costs £m



Headcount and full time equivalent (FTE) changes

10.8 There has been an 10% decrease in our directly employed headcount since last year, and a 7% decrease in FTE. Most of this decrease happened in the lower to middle pay grades. People are leaving across many parts of the organisation, but there has been a clear rise in leavers in grades A–D, this is mainly because Education Catering Services transferred out of the organisation under TUPE (1,015 employees).

10.9 The main changes to headcount and FTE summarised above are shown in Figure 9, represented across grades.

Figure 9: Workforce headcount and full-time equivalent (FTE) changes

	Headcount			FTE		
Grade	**2024/25**	**2025/26**	**Change**	**2024/25**	**2025/26**	**Change**
Other	450	434	-4%	326.9	319.7	-2%
K	10	12	20%	10.0	12.0	20%
J	84	78	-7%	82.1	76.5	-7%
I	202	200	-1%	189.3	187.0	-1%
H	362	365	1%	353.4	355.0	0%
G	941	929	-1%	872.8	868.6	0%
F	1,766	1,845	4%	1632.6	1719.2	5%
E	2,255	2,201	-2%	2072.9	2022.1	-2%
D	2,092	2,019	-3%	1701.5	1642.0	-3%
C	2,378	2,079	-13%	1828.8	1610.9	-12%
B	1,053	935	-11%	614.8	536.0	-13%
A	820	61	-93%	381.	47.3	-88%
Total	**12,413**	**11,158**	**-10%**	**10,066**	**9,396.3**	**-7%**

Changes in total headcount and full time equivalent (FTE) figures from those reported in last year's report, are due to adjustments made to the HR system across the year as detailed further in section 19.0. 'Other' refers to staff who are not on EHCC T&Cs.

Market supplements

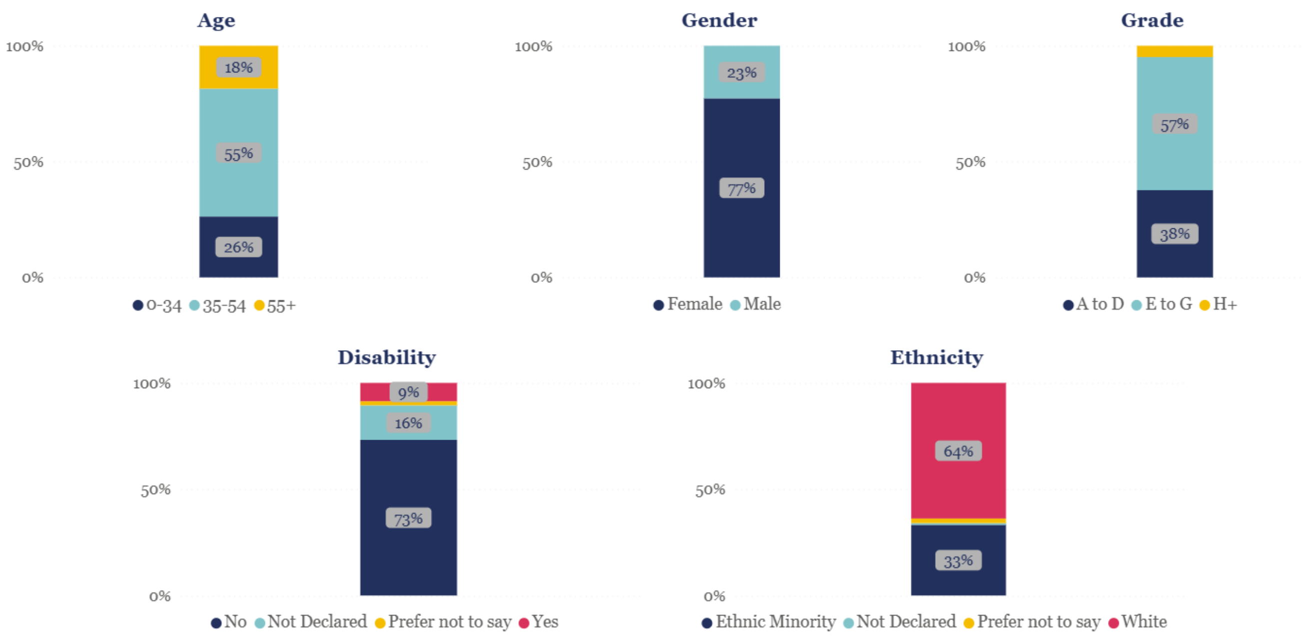
10.10 A market supplement may be considered where there are specific pressures in attracting and retaining employees with a particular skill, specialism or qualification, and there is evidence of a market pay issue. Market supplements are temporary, additional payments to provide a higher rate of pay to align to the labour market. A market supplement may be paid to an individual, to some or all employees in a specific role, or a defined group of roles. Each market supplement must be supported by a business case.

10.11 Reviews of market supplements are undertaken by directorates and CMT to help identify and address specific pressures in recruitment and retention.

10.12 There are 62 roles receiving market supplements. This is an increase from the 58 roles with market supplements last year. We continue to review all current market supplements, recruitment and retention payments.

10.13 Figure 10 shows the profile of employees receiving a market supplement. The majority are applied to roles within Children's Services and Adult Health and Care. These service areas have historically had a predominantly female workforce, which explains why 77% of market supplements are paid to female employees. They also have higher representation of employees from ethnic minority backgrounds, explaining why 33% of market supplements are paid to employees from an ethnic minority background. The overall cost of these market supplements was approximately £10 million.

Figure 10: Profile of employees receiving market supplements



Recruitment and retention payments

10.14 Recruitment and retention payments support the effective resourcing of directorates experiencing sustained and evidenced difficulties in recruiting to, and/or retaining, specific roles. Payments are one-off and may be made to new and/or existing employees where recruitment and retention difficulties cannot be addressed through wider market mechanisms (such as market supplements), due to the absence of strong market data evidencing broader market pressure.

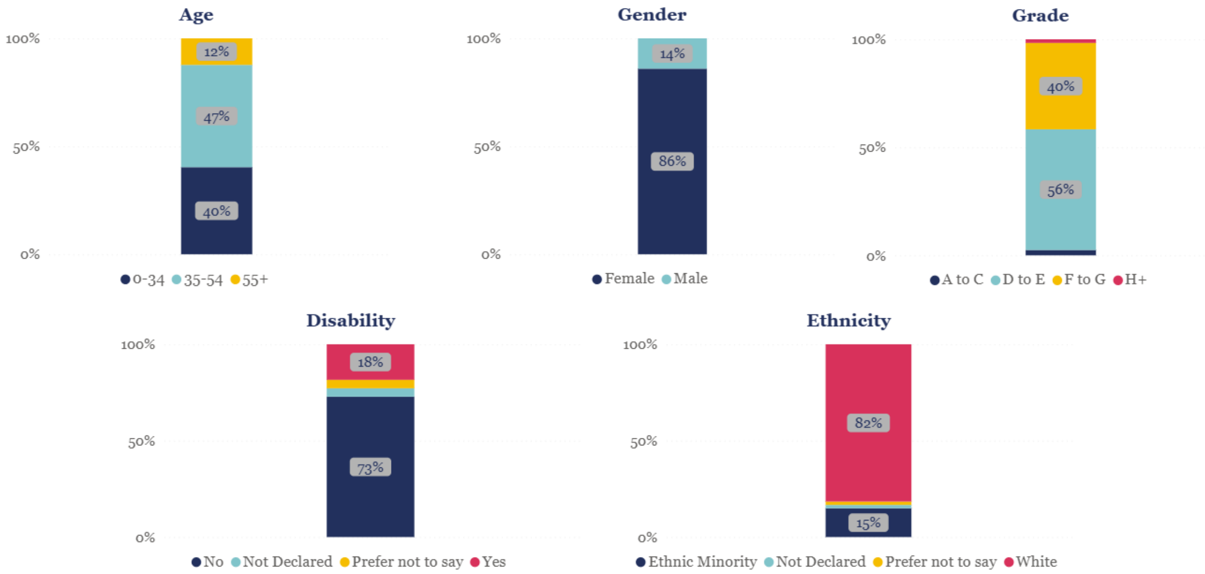
10.15 In 2025 to 2026 the overall cost of recruitment and retention payments was £201k.

10.16 All recruitment and retention payments are time-limited and subject to an approved business case. Payments are also conditional on employees meeting agreed scheme requirements (as set out in the Recruitment, Retention, and Market Supplement How to Guide), including commencing and/or remaining in post to an agreed date and maintaining satisfactory performance and conduct.

10.17 To date, five role profiles have been approved for recruitment payments and five for retention payments. Use of these payments has been concentrated predominantly within Children's Services and Adults' Health and Care, where they have supported recruitment to social care, children's residential, and special educational needs roles. These payments continue to contribute to increased application volumes, the appointment of high-quality candidates, and improved retention.

10.18 Figure 11 shows the profile of employees receiving a recruitment and retention payment. These service areas have historically had a predominantly female workforce, which is reflected in this year's data, with 86% of recruitment and retention payments being paid to females.

Figure 11: Profile of employees receiving recruitment and retention payments



Refer a Friend

10.19 The 'Refer a friend' scheme provides our staff the opportunity to recommend their friends for selected roles. In return a payment is made to the employee if the recommended candidate is successfully appointed and completes a qualifying period of employment (for example, three calendar months), with payment processed through payroll and subject to statutory deductions. 11 referrals were successful during the reporting period.

Connect to Hampshire

10.20 Connect2Hampshire (C2H) is a joint venture partnership between Hampshire County Council and Commercial Services Kent Ltd (a wholly owned subsidiary of Kent County Council), which performs a fundamental role in sourcing temporary workers to supplement our permanent workforce.

10.21 C2H has now completed its seventh year of trading. Throughout 2025 to 2026, overall agency performance has continued to strengthen, demonstrating the service's capacity to successfully meet the majority of our temporary staffing requirements. This has been achieved through both direct sourcing of workers and the effective utilisation of their contracted supply chain. The support provided includes agency workers, as well as bank workers recruited to support services on an as required basis. We continue to work closely with C2H to enhance joint approaches to attraction, recruitment, and retention of agency workers, particularly in the context of ongoing market challenges.

10.22 A key strategic priority for C2H remains the expansion of its directly sourced candidate pool. This direct sourcing enables them to provide workers without reliance on third party agencies, contributing to improved service quality, consistency, and workforce resilience. C2H also supports our permanent recruitment pipeline by actively encouraging conversion from agency assignment to permanent employment, with no additional cost when appropriate to do so.

10.23 During 2025 to 2026, we submitted requests to C2H for 538 distinct roles, reflecting the wide variety of positions C2H is able to support. Over the year, 1,472 agency workers were engaged across the Council, filling 1,856 vacancies of varying durations and covering 15,903 shifts in Adults' Health and Care and Children's Services residential settings. While this represents a planned reduction compared with the previous year, overall demand for C2H's services remains strong.

10.24 Agency staffing requests primarily relate to roles where directorates continue to experience significant recruitment challenges. These include:

- Qualified Social Workers, particularly within Children's Services
- SEN Caseworkers and Educational Psychologists
- Non-qualified care roles within Adults' Health and Care and Children's Services residential settings
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Tutors to support resettlement programmes

10.25 The highest use of agency workers continues to be within Adults' Health and Care largely in residential care homes and Children's Services, covering both social care and residential support roles.

10.26 C2H has seen a stable volume of candidate registrations over the year. However, sourcing for some hard-to-fill roles particularly Qualified Social Workers in Children's Services remains challenging. Despite ongoing demand for Special Educational Needs and Educational Psychologist roles, C2H has strengthened both its directly sourced talent pool and its relationships with supply agencies. This has resulted in a more consistent and efficient recruitment process across these service areas.

10.27 Overall C2H continues to provide a robust and commercially stable managed service which meets our temporary workforce needs. As anticipated in last year's Annual People Report, our spend during 2025 to 2026 was slightly lower than the previous year, reflecting improved permanent recruitment in some service areas (reducing reliance on agency workers), the wider financial pressures faced by the organisation, and shifts in the employment market.

Apprenticeships

10.28 Apprenticeships remain a core element of our workforce strategy, helping us recruit, retain and develop talented people to deliver high quality services to residents. Since the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in 2017, we have invested £28 million of levy funds in developing our staff through apprenticeship training in both schools and directorates. This investment supports both early career entry routes and the upskilling and reskilling of existing colleagues, strengthening succession pipelines, improving retention, and building capability in roles that are critical to service delivery.

10.29 As at the end of February 2026, our 2025 to 2026 programme continues to perform strongly, with 445 apprentices enrolled across 70 apprenticeship standards, and a total of 940 employees currently undertaking apprenticeship-based learning. We continue to see notable successes across Social Work, Civil Engineering, Education, Business Administration, Data and Digital, and many other areas of our organisation. We maintain a strong emphasis on quality and governance. Provision is commissioned through compliant routes and monitored for performance and learner experience. We work with quality assured providers and ensure appropriate safeguarding, health and safety, and reasonable adjustments, supporting inclusive participation for colleagues of all ages and backgrounds.

10.30 A number of apprenticeship policy reforms are being implemented. These include the confirmed defunding of Level 7 apprenticeships for new starters aged 22 and over, while protecting existing learners. Further reforms to the apprenticeship offer are being phased in by the UK Government from 2025, with implementation continuing through 2026 and into 2027.

10.31 We are assessing the impact of these changes on workforce planning and commissioning, providing timely guidance to managers and learners, and ensuring that current learners are supported while future starts remain aligned to service priorities.

Sponsorship of overseas workers

10.32 Sponsoring workers enables individuals to work in the UK where no alternative right-to-work route is available. Sponsorship is more costly than standard recruitment but can be necessary to fill hard-to-recruit roles. In March 2026 we were sponsoring approximately 167 people which is a reduction from the 180 people sponsored in March 2025. Sponsored workers are primarily concentrated in social work roles within Children’s Services and caring roles within Adults’ Health and Care.

10.33 The number of sponsored workers fluctuates throughout the year as individuals move into new roles, transition to other right-to-work routes, or leave the organisation.

10.34 Over the past year, UK immigration policy has undergone significant reform, largely following the publication of the 2025 Immigration White Paper. The White Paper set out a clear intention to reduce net migration, prioritise domestic skills, and tighten employer sponsorship requirements. These changes have included higher skill and salary thresholds for Skilled Worker routes and a narrower list of eligible occupations, making overseas recruitment more challenging, particularly for lower-paid roles.

Onboard –

Making sure people are welcomed and inducted

11.0 Onboard – Making sure people are welcomed and inducted.

11.1 This continues to be a crucial time for both the new starter and the organisation as it covers the initial welcome and introduction of new employees into the organisation. It goes beyond the first day and week and involves activities and processes that help new starters become familiarised, productive, and engaged in their roles.

11.2 **Onboarding** - Covers the whole process from a candidate's contact with us during the hiring process, being offered the role, starting the role, understanding the ways of working and getting up to speed in their role.

11.3 **Induction** - Is a process when employees first join us, the first few weeks are key in ensuring they settle in well and feel supported. Through their induction they are equipped with all the information, training and knowledge required to do their job to a high standard.

11.4 We know from the feedback we receive from our new starters that a positive introduction sets the stage for a successful employee journey.

11.5 In the reporting period, we welcomed 1,141 people. All new permanent and temporary staff are inducted through a formal process led by their line manager, delivered virtually, in person or through a hybrid approach. In-person induction, particularly during the first week, is recommended and is consistently valued by new starters for helping them settle into the organisation and their roles more quickly. All new employees must also complete the mandatory learning as part of their induction programme.

Face to face feedback

11.6 Regular check-ins are an expectation of managers and are scheduled with new starters to gather feedback, address any concerns, and ensure that they are adapting well to their new roles. This helps in identifying and addressing potential issues early on, and links to our work on the role of the manager, which is about establishing clear and consistent expectations for people management across the organisation.

11.7 We continue to hear feedback through our Chief Executive new starter meetings that 'in-person' time really helps people to embed themselves within the County Council and get up to speed in their role more quickly than just meeting virtually. This year we have heard multiple stories of extremely positive introductions to our organisation with high praise and regard being expressed for new line managers and new colleagues/teams. We also consistently hear how engaged our new employees are with the outcomes we are seeking to achieve, our strategic objectives, and how important it is that they can connect their work, whatever that might be, to our service users and to ‘making a difference’. Increasing the innovative thinking and desire for continuous improvement dominates the feedback we receive from new starters – both in terms of their own personal desires but also in terms of their engagement in ongoing transformation.

Perform –
Having regular robust conversations about performance to support growth and meet the needs of the business

12.0 Perform – Having regular robust conversations about performance to support growth and meet the needs of the business.

12.1 The “Perform” part of the employee life cycle primarily focuses on the ongoing management, development, and evaluation of employees’ performance within the organisation. This phase is crucial for aligning individual contributions with our vision and values, providing feedback, and fostering continuous improvement.

12.2 As a high performing local authority, it is imperative that our people are clear about what is expected of them, including both what they do and the behaviours they exhibit whilst at work. A clear performance management framework underpinned by strong leadership and management capability helps the workforce to feel more engaged, improves morale and retention and underpins our ambition to be a ‘learning organisation’ committed to continuous improvement.

12.3 Our objectives are to:

- Set expectations and build desire for managers to manage performance and attendance in their team or service areas.
- Enable managers to take appropriate action based on relevant people data and business insight.
- Build confidence and capability (skills and knowledge) to improve performance and attendance.
- Provide effective policies and procedures that best enable the organisation to improve performance and attendance.

12.4 Quarterly workforce reports ensure that directorate management teams understand trends across their workforce and. changes in our People Services operating models, specifically, the shift to management-led casework in certain circumstances, makes these reports even more important.

12.5 There has been an investment in on-line resources to support managers manage performance and attendance and improve their confidence and capability to manage issues, supplemented with access to specialist professional HR advice in complex cases.

12.6 While the programme of work continues, to date it has delivered the following:

- Implementation of an updated Managing Misconduct Policy (January 2026) aligning with the amended Managing Sickness Absence and Managing Performance policies
- In April 2026, an updated Managing Workforce Change policy, with a stronger focus on supporting managers to confidently lead and deliver

change was published. The new toolkits and resources are designed to provide managers and People Services with a consistent set of practical materials that strengthen decision making and help ensure changes are applied fairly and effectively. The updates place greater emphasis on a manager's role in shaping and managing workforce changes, while retaining support from People Services. When managers lead workforce change well, it creates the conditions for sustained and high-quality employee performance.

12.7 The Valuing Performance framework supports our people (managers and staff) in having meaningful conversations about performance.

12.8 In a high performing organisation such as ours we would not expect to see high numbers of formal performance management cases and our policies support the informal resolution of issues, including performance, where it is possible and appropriate to do so.

12.9 Where there are instances of underperformance, we deal with this through management measures, which include support and development. However, incremental salary progression can also be withheld where appropriate.

Performance

12.10 Overall staff performance remains strong across the organisation, with almost all employees meeting expected standards during 2025 and only a very small minority rated as poor performers.

12.11 Our employees' performance continues to be measured and reviewed on an individual basis through the Valuing Performance framework (section 13), which is aligned with our values and behaviours and the Leadership and Management Behavioural Framework. Regular performance discussions take place throughout the year between managers and employees. These discussions focus on performance against targets, areas for improvement, career development and aspirations, as well as health, wellbeing, and resilience.

12.12 We provide a clear performance management framework, and we are committed to our organisational culture of continuous improvement. While we seek to support an employee to improve their performance, we recognise that in some situations this may not be achievable.

12.13 There were 22 new performance cases (23 less than last year) and 6 dismissals (3 more than last year) due to performance during the reporting period. However, this may be due to changes in the People Services operating model, with HR Advisers now only normally involved at the dismissal stage, limiting the data available on performance cases

12.14 Our Managing Performance Policy allows for a contract of employment to be ended by mutual agreement. This approach is considered where an employee is unlikely to achieve the required standards for their role, or unlikely to do so within a reasonable timeframe, and the employee does not wish to participate in a formal process. Any such agreement is normally based on the employee's contractual entitlements, rather than an enhanced or discretionary settlement.

12.15 In 2025 to 2026, 6 employees left by way of a mutual/settlement agreement or resignation mid-way during the performance review process (4 last year).

Misconduct

12.16 Of the 114 new misconduct cases in 2025 to 2026, the largest proportion were due to 'behavioural reasons' (43%) and 'failing to follow instruction, policy, procedure or a professional code of conduct' (36%).

12.17 117 misconduct cases were resolved in 2025 to 2026. In 15% of cases the individual resigned and 1% left under a settlement agreement. 42% of cases resulted in informal action. 13% of cases resulted in the employee's dismissal and 19% resulted in a formal warning being issued. Overall, 36 staff resigned, retired, agreed an exit or were dismissed, representing 30.8% of the 117 resolved cases. This is slightly higher than last year (29.9%).

Attendance management

12.18 Our average absence rate for 2025 to 2026 has remained consistent with last year at 4%.

12.19 The number of sickness days lost has reduced from 114,000 last year to 111,000 this year.

12.20 Mental Health (Anxiety, Stress, Depression, and Mental Health) remains the top reason for absence in this reporting year. This is consistent with last year and according to the CIPD's 'Health and wellbeing at work 2025', reflects the wider national picture of mental ill health being the leading cause of long-term sickness absence.

12.21 The other most common reasons for absence remain consistent with previous years, as follows:

Figure 12: Top sickness reasons

12.22 In respect of tackling absence and attendance issues, managers work in accordance with our attendance management policies. Managers only receive support from HR in the most complex of cases, or if ill health retirement, or dismissal of an employee is contemplated.

12.23 Absence and attendance cases which had direct HR support in this reporting year have been a mix of long term (55%), short term (30%) and health cases where the employee is not absent from work, but where action and/or adjustments are required to sustain their attendance (9%).

12.24 There were 22 new HR-supported absence cases in 2025 to 2026. Of the HR-supported cases concluded during the year 34 cases (45%) resulted in the employee's employment ending.

12.25 The number of staff leaving employment due to attendance has shown a downward trend. However, this may be due to changes in the People Services operating model, with HR Advisers now only involved at the dismissal stage, limiting the data available on absence cases.

12.26 Absence-related reasons resulted in 18 dismissals, 7 mutual/settlement agreements, and 9 resignations from employees who chose not to go through the full formal managing attendance process.

Compassionate leave

12.27 As part of our wider approach to supporting employees to perform effectively, we provide access to compassionate leave where appropriate. The purpose of compassionate leave is to offer immediate paid time off to our people to support them at the time of the death or serious illness of a close relative. Used judiciously, compassionate leave helps employees manage difficult situations while minimising additional pressure, supporting their wellbeing and enabling them to return to work better able to focus on their role.

12.28 Over the last 12 months compassionate leave was taken by 1,123 employees, this totalled 3,133 days, these figures are similar to the last reporting year.

Resolving workplace issues

12.29 No matter how successful the organisation is, there are issues that prompt an employee to submit a 'grievance' through our Resolving Workplace Issues Policy.

12.30 We recognise that from time to time, conflict may arise in the workplace and that it is important for all involved to be able to access the right information and support for issues to be addressed and resolved.

12.31 In most cases a workplace issue will be raised with the employee's line manager, or grandparent manager. However, in exceptional cases, employees can raise issue to People Services. People Services will ensure an appropriate person is identified to be responsible for the issue:

- within the line management chain, or
- within the directorate but outside the line management chain, or
- in another directorate.

12.32 During 2025 to 2026, there were 58 new resolving workplace issue cases dealt with through a formal process across our directorates, an increase to the number of cases (50) in the previous year. Not all 'resolving workplace issue' cases that are raised proceed to formal resolution; some are dealt with informally. Some grievances will be dealt with by the line manager without the support of People Services and are therefore not recorded in this data. Of the new formal cases:

- The majority (29) related to working relationship issues with colleagues and management. This is a slight increase on the previous year when there were 24 cases of this nature.
- 8 cases were categorised as related to bullying or harassment compared to 10 cases last year.
- 4 cases were categorised as related to discrimination compared to 9 cases last year.

12.33 There were 50 formal resolving workplace issue cases that were resolved within 2025 to 2026 of which 24% were upheld or partially upheld. 42% were not upheld, 8% resulted in a settlement agreement, 8% were dealt with informally and 4% were withdrawn.

Whistleblowing

12.34 This year we have improved our reporting to be able to include the number of whistleblowing cases received. In 2025 to 2026 there were 4 whistleblowing cases, an increase from 3 reported last year.

12.35 These cases relate to a range of issues including legal and safeguarding responsibilities, adherence to governance and management practices and health and safety compliance. They are ongoing and no outcomes have been determined yet.

Develop and progress – Supporting our people to grow, develop and learn

13.0 Develop and progress – Supporting our people to grow, develop and learn

Leadership and Management Development

13.1 A key priority is to ensure our leaders, managers, and aspiring managers have the skills and behaviours needed to shape and improve the future organisation in line with our strategic objectives and intent.

13.2 We use the Leadership and Management Behavioural framework (Figure 13) along with making support and guidance available for people to develop the required behaviours.

13.3 The framework comprises: lets just insert the diagram here and remove the words

Figure 13: The Leadership and Management Behavioural Framework

13.4 Alongside our online support and guidance, we have worked with an award-winning supplier to deliver a Leadership and Management Development Programme, funded through the Apprenticeship Levy. Following recent government changes to apprenticeship funding, it will no longer be possible to use the levy to fund leadership and management apprenticeship programmes. However, we remain committed to developing our leaders and managers and will continue to explore alternative routes to support this development into the future.

Valuing performance

13.5 Valuing Performance is our commitment to supporting and developing our employees to drive high performance, particularly in a challenging environment where financial pressures and limited incentives can impact motivation. High performance is sustained through strong leadership, clear accountability, and meaningful engagement between managers and employees.

13.6 Valuing Performance centres on regular conversations between employees and their manager throughout the year, focusing on:

- performance
- wellbeing
- development

The critical role of managers

13.7 Managers play a critical role in the success of Valuing Performance as effective people management is key to supporting motivation, engagement, and retention. Managers are expected to lead by example and are accountable for creating an environment where performance, wellbeing, and development are consistently discussed and supported through effective performance conversations.

13.8 To support this, all employees are encouraged to use Personal Development Plans to identify and plan individual development needs, to act upon. This ensures development discussions are meaningful and focused, supports employee ownership of growth, and aligns development activity with role requirements and organisational priorities.

Secondments / acting up arrangements / promotions

13.9 Across directorates, another way in which we resource our workforce is to provide ‘acting up’ roles, secondments, and promotions. These offer a flexible solution to staffing needs while simultaneously developing staff skills which benefit both the employee and the Council. During the last 12 months there have been approximately 875 employees securing such roles which is a small reduction from approximately 900 last year. This decrease is likely to be due to a reduction in the number of vacancies advertised arising from the slight reduction in overall headcount.

Reward and Recognise – Ensuring the efforts of our people are recognised

14.0 Reward and Recognise – Ensuring the efforts of our people are recognised

14.1 In today's fast-paced work environments, we recognise that fostering a sense of belonging and appreciation is more critical than ever. By understanding the psychology behind acknowledgment, it is important that our employees feel seen, heard, and valued. Saying thank you is a very important starting point as our employees' dedication, talent, and commitment drive our success.

14.2 We continue to reward our employees both formally and informally. Our Employee Value Proposition includes the following:

Why choose us?

14.3 Our aim for people in Hampshire is to live safe, healthy and independent lives; enjoy a rich and diverse environment; be part of thriving, inclusive communities, and benefit from strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity. To support this, we strive to remain a diverse and inclusive employer, recruiting the very best people to work for us – from a wide and diverse pool of talent.

14.4 Along with our vision detailed in section 3.0:

"Serving the people of Hampshire with purpose and pride to improve lives, today and for tomorrow".

14.5 Our values and behaviours as an organisation guide everything we do.

The benefits of working for us

14.6 Our work is rewarding in all sorts of ways, but of course the financial benefits are a key part of the package.

14.7 Our employees have access to a wide range of discounts on products and services, including grocery shopping, fitness, broadband and dining – as well as specific help with travel costs.

14.8 Our benefits package is shown at: https://www.hants.gov.uk/jobs/why-choose-us

Special Recognition Payments (SRPs)

14.9 In early 2025, CMT took the decision to temporarily suspend the use of End of Year SRPs. In November 2025, the decision to continue the temporary suspension was reviewed and the suspension will continue for the 2025 to 2026 performance year. This is reflecting that during a time of exceptional financial pressure; all resources must be dedicated to delivering our core purpose and ensuring that all spend is focussed on keeping vital services running and protecting the most vulnerable. The position will be reviewed again in Sept 2026.

14.10 CMT has committed, particularly but not exclusively because of the above, to pay special attention to recognising ‘in the moment’ exceptional performance outcomes or behaviours, identifying that performance or behaviour verbally or in written form throughout the year.

Gender Pay Gap

14.11 The Gender Pay Gap report published in March 2026 for 2024 to 2025 shows an overall mean gender pay gap of 11.2% in favour of men. This is a decrease from 12.8% reported for 2023 to 2024.

14.12 The gender pay gap of 11.2% is not as a result of paying men more than women for the same or equivalent work. We continue to deliver services that other equivalent organisations have either outsourced or no longer provide, such as school crossing patrol and passenger transport assistants. As such, the gender pay gap exists as a result of the workforce profile – the roles which men and women undertake within the County Council, and the salaries that these roles attract.

14.13 We aim to achieve equality in our pay and reward arrangements. It ensures that employees are paid the correct salary and allowances in accordance with the Employment in Hampshire County Council (EHCC) 2007 Agreement and subsequent variations. The Korn Ferry Hay job evaluation scheme provides an objective and gender-neutral framework to evaluate the jobs that are carried out within the County Council.

14.14 Within our Gender Pay Gap Reports we have reported how we continue to work to reduce our gender pay gap.

14.15 Our gender pay gap figures 2024 to 2025 are set out as follows:

Figure 14: Gender pay gap overview

Pay	
Mean gender pay gap in hourly pay (men currently earn more)	11.2%
Median gender pay gap in hourly pay (men currently earn more)	13.0%
Bonus	
Mean bonus gender pay gap (men currently earn more)	6.6%
Median bonus gender pay gap (men currently earn more)	0.0%
Proportion of males receiving a bonus payment	7.8%
Proportion of females receiving a bonus payment	5.9%

Pay beyond usual salary

Overtime

14.16 As a local authority, we have a duty to deliver statutory and critical services.

14.17 The use of overtime allows us to:

- maintain staffing levels during unexpected demand (emergencies, staff shortages, surges in workload)
- avoid service failure when work cannot be deferred
- meet legal or statutory obligations to the public.

14.18 Without overtime, we would either have to suspend services, or permanently overstaff, which is neither viable nor cost-effective.

14.19 Our normal working week is 37 hours. When an employee on EHCC terms and conditions, up to and including grade D, is asked to work beyond 37 hours under one single contract of employment, then the additional hours are classified as overtime and the appropriate enhanced payment will be paid. These are shown in Figure 16.

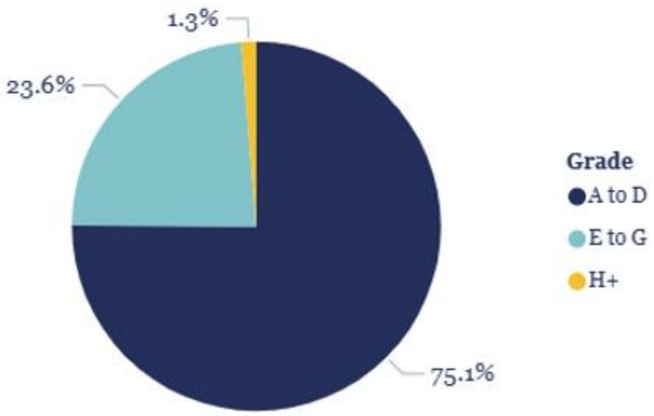
14.20 Employees contracted to work fewer than 37 hours per week are paid at their normal hourly rate for any additional hours worked up to 37, with overtime payments only applying once hours worked exceed 37 in a week.

14.21 Non-contractual overtime applies to employees who may be asked to work overtime, but where the overtime is not part of their contracted hours. Contractual overtime is explicitly set out in an employee's contract of employment and requires them to work beyond their normal working hours, either on a regular basis or as required under the terms of their contract. A breakdown of overtime is shown in Figure 15.

14.22 To reduce the number of hours worked by employees beyond their contracted time, all overtime working is kept to the minimum necessary to ensure operational effectiveness.

14.23 Overtime may also be paid to employees graded above Grade D in certain approved circumstances.

Figure 15: Contractual and non-overtime



Additional hours

14.24 Additional hours are claimed when employees contracted to work fewer than 37 hours per week may be asked to work additional hours. Where these extra hours increase their total working time to below 37 hours in a week, they are not eligible for overtime. The additional hours are paid at the normal hourly rate. 100% of additional hours worked across the reporting period are by employees in E to G grades.

Figure 16: Number of people claiming payment for additional hours and overtime

Type	2024 to 2025 Total (£)	2025 to 2026 Total (£)
Additional Hours	25,925	20,901
Contractual Overtime	288,469	258,996
Non-Contractual Overtime	7,625,679	7,424,131
Total	**7,940,073**	**£7,704,028**

14.25 During the year, a total of £7.7 million was spent on additional hours, contractual overtime and non-contractual overtime, this is a decrease from last year’s £7.9 million (Figure 16).

Working from home/office allowance

14.26 Employees who are contractual home workers (388), who are required to work from home and do not have a dedicated workspace on Council premises, receive a home working allowance to cover the additional costs of working from home. The total cost of this allowance to the organisation is £49,280.

14.27 This allowance is not paid to employees who are able to choose to work from home under our Open Workplace Policy.

Retain –
Encouraging our people to stay

15.0 Retain – Encouraging our people to stay

15.1 We recognise that there needs to be a balance between retaining employees and employees leaving. Having new employees allows us to develop and grow. However, there are direct and indirect costs associated with external turnover. Direct costs include recruitment and while we welcome new employees and see the benefits of new insight and ideas, recruitment can be a time consuming and costly activity, along with the costs of training new employees. Indirect costs include losing knowledge, skills, experience, and employee morale. All of these can have a significant impact on the performance of the organisation. Therefore, it is important that we monitor the number of leavers we have to ensure we have this balance. We also want to understand why people are choosing to leave, so we can identify if there are any common trends which we have the ability to influence and develop strategies to increase retention.

15.2 Our current employees have been with us for an average of 8.4 years. This is slightly lower than the average of 9 years reported for 2024 to 2025. 1,430 employees have over 20 years' service.

15.3 As with all organisations we know there are several factors as well as reward, benefits and development opportunities, that impact on employee retention, to name a few:

- **Employee engagement** – ensuring that our people are engaged and listened to on the full range of organisational issues.
- **Inclusion, diversity and wellbeing** – ensuring our people feel valued and treated fairly and creating a healthy, supportive, engaged and productive workforce.
- **Zero tolerance** – treating each other with respect and kindness. We expect this from our colleagues, partners and customers.
- **Flexibility and agility** – equipping our employees with the skills needed for a rapidly changing work environment and enabling flexible working where appropriate that aligns with business needs to support an agile workforce.

Employee engagement

15.4 Employee engagement is central to our ambition to remain a high-performing organisation. We continue to grow and develop by using employee feedback to inform future strategies and ensure employees feel their contributions are valued and recognised.

15.5 We understand that engaged employees are less likely to leave their jobs, reducing turnover and associated costs for recruitment and training. We aim to create a culture of engagement that promotes trust, transparency, and open communication, creating a positive work environment where employees feel valued and respected. Engagement takes place in multiple ways, such as regular Chief Executive and director blogs, all staff briefings and team meetings.

Employee Wellbeing Pulse Survey

15.6 Each month, one twelfth of the organisation is asked to take part in this study, which means all employees are invited to participate once per year. This is the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) survey and respondents are asked to identify which things have the most influence on their wellbeing, so we can ensure that the support provided is suitable for its employees.

15.7 3,368 responses were submitted to the employee wellbeing pulse survey in 2025 to 2026. All factors asked around wellbeing have remained generally consistent over the past year, with no notable differences identified when comparing results from March 2026 with the same period the year before.

Inclusion and Diversity

15.8 Inclusion work has helped us to ensure that our services are relevant to, and effective for, those who use them. Our efforts have led to improvements in processes, culture, and policies. Colleagues tell us that they have appreciated the work we've done. We are very proud to be respectful and understanding of people's differences, not only among the staff that work for us, but also among the residents for whom we work.

15.9 We continue to monitor our progress and report on the inclusivity of our workforce because our people and our service users tell us that it matters to them for us to do so. Further information on our staff networks and an analysis of our data can be found in Part 2 of this report.

Wellbeing

15.10 The three key aims in the Wellbeing Programme have continued to be our focus in this area. These are:

- embedding health and wellbeing in the organisation
- progressing the wellbeing session schedule
- continuing to provide manager support and toolkits.

15.11 We continued to strengthen our strategic approach to employee wellbeing, with a clear focus on embedding wellbeing into everyday working life and reinforcing a culture aligned with its vision and values. This means we want our people to feel confident and comfortable to speak about their wellbeing and know how to seek help, if required. We want to empower people to learn for themselves, explore creating healthy habits and/or share tips and techniques to support wellbeing.

15.12 Over 30 employee-informed virtual wellbeing sessions were delivered across the year, with sessions on pensions, menopause, personal finance and the Employee Assistance Programme.

15.13 A central strand of activity is the development of manager capability. Building on staff survey feedback and recognising that managers are uniquely placed to influence day-to-day experience at work, we invested further in Connect 5 training (a mental health and wellbeing training). Connect 5 training supports the Public Health strategy by equipping our staff to have effective wellbeing conversations that can prevent the escalation of issues through supportive early intervention and build individual and team resilience.

15.14 This has been an important investment in strengthening our culture of openness, curiosity and early support around mental health and wellbeing. During 2025 to 2026, 170 employees completed the programme, in addition to the 800 managers trained the previous year, meaning at least one-third of managers in every directorate have now participated. Feedback demonstrates increased confidence, practical skill development and strong advocacy for the programme's role in normalising supportive wellbeing conversations.

15.15 The organisational framework for responding to complex and sensitive issues was also strengthened through refreshed suicide prevention guidance and the introduction of postvention guidance for managers, supporting clearer, more compassionate and consistent responses where additional support is required.

15.16 In addition, workplace health checks were introduced from February 2026 as part of a preventative health approach. The initiative, funded by Public Health, supports earlier identification of cardiovascular risk factors, diabetes and other preventable conditions, and should contribute to longer-term workforce health and resilience.

Zero tolerance

15.17 We have seen a notable increase in the number of Customer Contact Warnings and Customer Contact Restrictions issued. The following unreasonable actions by customers were received in 2025:

- 175 unreasonable actions by customer referrals were submitted via the online form.
- 116 customer contact warnings were issued.
- 18 warnings progressed to customer contact restrictions.
- 45 customer contact restrictions were implemented in total.
- 3 restrictions were continuations of restrictions already in place from the previous year.

15.18 In addition, violent incidents against staff are reported, these are incidents recorded on our Health and Safety incident/accident reporting tool. Incidents of violence and aggression are defined as "any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances related to their work". On average across 2025 for both schools and directorates, 300 incidents were recorded each month.

15.19 Our staff undertake difficult work, often in difficult circumstances and we believe in treating each other with respect and we expect this from our colleagues, partners and customers. This is important because it is simply the right thing to do and because our organisation performs at its best when everyone feels respected, in line with our vision and values.

Our Zero Tolerance Statement:

15.20 We are a diverse organisation. We take pride in promoting, valuing and celebrating diversity as an inclusive employer. As a public body serving Hampshire, we seek to ensure zero tolerance of harassment, discrimination, bullying and abuse and will respond promptly to any incidents of these.

15.21 We are committed to advancing equality and inclusion in all our responsibilities – as an employer, as a provider and commissioner of services, and as a partner in the local economy. We expect all employees, as well as those providing services on its behalf, are treated with dignity and respect at all times. Unacceptable behaviour towards any employee will not be tolerated, and all incidents reported will be taken seriously.

15.22 Our Zero Tolerance resources and guidance have been reviewed during the year. Also, a 'Zero Tolerance: Unacceptable Customer Actions in Social Care Settings' web page has been provided, designed specifically for, and in consultation with, colleagues in Adults' Health and Care and Children's Services.

15.23 The updated guidance highlights the four-step Stay Safe response, helping people prioritise their safety, apply zero tolerance principles, report and record incidents promptly, and maintain the organisation's duty of care. The Unacceptable Actions by Customers Policy launched in December 2024, has strengthened support for our people where customers display aggressive, abusive or otherwise unreasonable behaviour. Importantly, it provides a clear and consistent framework that helps our people feel confident, supported, and empowered to raise concerns and address issues appropriately where customers display unreasonable behaviours.

15.24 A new reporting database is being developed to give Elected Members visibility of any customer contact restriction notices (CCRNs) applied to individuals within their division. This ensures Members are kept informed and aware of where formal measures are in place to manage unreasonable or aggressive behaviour towards employees and allows the organisation to maintain a consistent approach when issuing and implementing CCRNs.

Flexibility and agility

15.25 We remain committed to the benefits of flexible working for individual employees and the organisation, with a range of formal and informal arrangements that support work life balance, as well as recruitment and retention. For example, use of part-time or condensed working and other flexible working arrangements are supporting the resilience and retention of a variety of critical roles.

15.26 No employee is paid a full-time salary for working part-time hours.

15.27 We aim to provide modern, efficient, and productive ways of working to better support the needs of our organisation and our people. Our open workplace policy, which supports managers to agree role-appropriate alternative working locations, is now embedded across directorates.

15.28 Although services delivered directly to the people of Hampshire continue to be conducted primarily face to face, many office-based employees work flexibly between home and office locations, with careful consideration being given to working from the office ‘with a purpose’. The hybrid way of working continues and is an asset in our recruitment and retention space. In addition, we are seeing other benefits as an organisation such as the review and consolidation of our office accommodation which is providing savings from reduced running costs and capital receipts from sale of surplus assets.

Leave – Learning from those who leave

16.0 Leave – Learning from those who leave

16.1 There are a range of reasons why people leave an organisation and it is important for us to understand why people leave so that we can identify if there are any improvements that can be made to the working environment.

16.2 Learning from those who leave is an ongoing process, integrated into our organisational culture of continuous improvement. By regularly seeking feedback from both current and departing employees and taking proactive steps to address issues identified, we aim to create a positive and supportive work environment that fosters employee engagement and loyalty.

16.3 As well as looking at annual turnover and the reasons for leaving, it has been beneficial to identify the number of employees leaving in their first 3 and 12 months of employment.

Turnover

16.4 Our overall external annual turnover has increased from 19% to 21%.

16.5 A total of 2,481 employees left, an increase of 88 leavers from last year.

Voluntary turnover

16.6 As shown in Figure 17, there were 1,248 voluntary leavers, a decrease of 614 compared with last year (1,862).

16.7 However, if we exclude the 348 leavers approved under the Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme (MARS) last year, then the decrease compared with last year is 266.

Involuntary turnover

16.8 As shown in Figure 17 there were 1,233 involuntary leavers, an increase of 702 from last year (531). Involuntary turnover can be contributed to the following:

- 1,016 employees (41%) left through Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment rights (TUPE) arrangements. 1,015 transferred out under TUPE were employed by Education Catering, which is no longer part of the County Council.
- 57 employees (2.3%) left through redundancy.

16.9 The total number of dismissals (189) is less than last year (255). These dismissals include the 57 who left under redundancy, 62 who left at the end of a fixed term or temporary contract, and 43 who have left on medical grounds.

16.10 The data below in Figure 17 represents information recorded on the employee’s date of leaving. By contrast, data in section 12, is drawn from the casework database and is captured when the case is formally closed. These systems therefore operate on different points in time, which may result in differences between the datasets.

16.11 Reasons for leaving are shown in the table below:

Figure 17: External leaver reasons

External leaver reasons	Headcount
Involuntary	**1,233**
Death in Service	16
Dismiss – Redundancy	57
Dismiss	132
Mutual/Settlement Agreements	12
TUPE Transfer	1,016
Voluntary	**1,248**
Resign	1,040
Retirement	208
Total	**2,481**

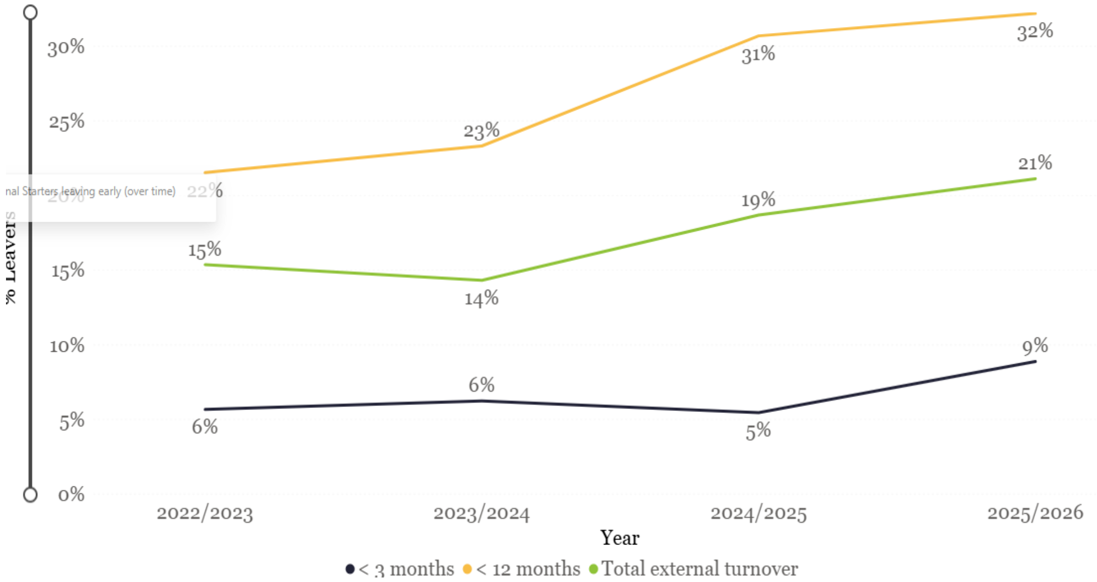
Leavers in the first three months of employment

16.12 9% of the 2,481 employees who left last year did so within their first three months of employment, an increase from 5% in the previous year (Figure 18). This increase is largely due to Catering Assistants being transferred out of Educational Catering under TUPE, with Care Assistants and Residential Care Workers accounting for most of the remaining early leavers.

Leavers in the first twelve months of employment

16.13 The number of leavers in their first 12 months of employment increased from 31% to 32% (Figure 18). The main roles that employees leave within their first twelve months of employment are similar to those seen leaving within 3 months, namely Catering assistants, Care assistants and Residential Care Workers and Administrative assistants.

Figure 18: External starters leaving within 3, 12, and 12+ months service across the last 4 years – moving annual turnover (MAT)



Gaining insight from our leavers

16.14 We continue to encourage our leavers to complete the leaver questionnaire and review different ways to capture more information from them. Data from our leaver questionnaire is provided to directors on a quarterly basis.

Conclusions

17.0 Conclusions

17.1 Throughout this report we have highlighted the challenging financial environment that we are working in and the work that we are doing to limit the impact of this.

17.2 We have made reference to key pieces of work:

- Local Government Reorganisation
- Devolution
- Budget and finance
- Changes to our operating model and People Services functions.
- Accommodation strategy
- The Employment Rights Act 2025 changes

17.3 **Attract**

- We have advertised 5% fewer roles this year. However, our recruitment adverts have continued to generate more applications to our vacancies. We continue to be more attractive to the female labour market. The applicant split this year is male 35% and female 65%.
- People declaring a diverse ethnicity accounted for 32% of applicants, consistent with last year. The proportion shortlisted increased to 22%, representing a significant improvement. In addition, the proportion of hires rose to 17%. Consistent with previous years, internal applicants are approximately four times more likely to be hired.

17.4 **Resource**

- We continue to fill our roles through a multitude of means such as directly employed staff, agency workers and contractors. At the end of March 2026, 91% of our people costs were for directly employed staff.
- Our Headcount and FTE have both decreased from last year, along with our workforce costs.

17.5 **Onboard**

- We welcomed 1,141 people, to the organisation.

17.6 **Perform**

- We remain a high performing local authority with a clear performance management framework underpinned by strong leadership and management capability.
- We continue to manage attendance, performance and misconduct cases as appropriate and necessary, and our organisational sickness absence rate remains consistent with last year at 4%.

17.7 **Develop and progress**

- In 2025 to 2026 we enrolled 445 employees into 70 different apprenticeship pathways and now have a total of 940 employees undertaking apprenticeship-based learning.

17.8 **Reward and Recognise**

- The performance of our people continues to be high.
- Our mean Gender Pay Gap has decreased to 11.2%.

17.9 **Retain**

- Our current employees have been with the County Council for an average of 8.4 years. 1,430 employees have over 20 years' service.
- We have introduced a range of retention strategies to support directorates in retaining our people.

17.10 **Leave**

- Turnover has increased to 21% and in directorates retention challenges are still being faced in specific roles, and in particular geographical locations across the county.
    - A total of 2,481 employees left, an increase from last year.
    - There were 1,248 voluntary leavers, a decrease from last year (1,862).
    - There were 1,233 involuntary leavers, an increase from last year (531).
- The percentage of employees that left in their first 3 months of employment has increased this year to 9%, however, this can be attributed to the TUPE out of Education Catering.
- The percentage of employees that left within their first 12 months of employment has increased, again this will have been impacted by the TUPE out of Education Catering.

Our people

Part 2 Our People

18.0 An overview summary of our people data

18.1 We continue to explore different ways to analyse our people data to better understand our people.

Equality Act 2010

18.2 The Equality Act 2010 (Specific duties) Regulations 2011 requires listed public authorities to publish equality information on an annual basis. The diversity information contained within this report complies with those regulations and the legal requirements and supports the development of valuable insight to help us become even more inclusive.

18.3 We are required to have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010 to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

18.4 We support the aims of the Equality Duty and are committed to:

- ensure that services are inclusive and diverse, proactively increasing understanding between and within communities.
- attract and retain a diverse workforce, with equal opportunities for career progression.
- ensure zero tolerance of harassment, discrimination, bullying and abuse, dealing effectively with incidents when they occur.

Confidentiality and employee data

18.5 Personal data is treated confidentially. Personal information relating to sexual orientation and gender identity is not seen by managers or administrators. This data is on personal records but securely hidden and access restricted to those in a few specific roles for reporting purposes. Managers can view if a member of their team has chosen to declare if they have a physical or mental health conditions or illness lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more, however, they cannot see the condition or illness declared.

18.6 Data is not and will not be published in any way that allows an individual to be identified. Line managers cannot access this information or run diversity reports that include this data for their teams.

Intersectionality

18.7 We remain conscious that whilst we report about our people in specific communities, for example our ‘ethnic minority community’, or our ‘female community’, we are in fact all unique. Many of us will associate with more than one of these communities at any given time. ‘Intersectionality’ refers to the fact we all have multiple identities which shape our life experiences. We are therefore seeking not only to understand the different employee communities that exist, but also how these overlap for individuals, to shape each separate employee’s experience at work.

Staff Networks and Trade Unions

18.8 Our Staff Networks continue to make a valuable contribution to our organisational effectiveness. Our staff networks are:

- Black and Minority Ethnic Network (BME)
- Carer and Working Parents Network
- Disability Network
- LGBT+ Network
- Women’s Network

18.9 Likewise, our Trade Unions continue to play a valuable part, working closely with managers in the shared best interest of our service users and the employees who provide those services.

18.10 Our Unions and professional bodies:

- Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP)
- GMB
- Prospect
- Royal College of Nursing (RCN)
- UNISON
- Unite
- National Education Union (NEU)
- NASUWT – The Teachers' Union (NASUWT)
- National Association of Headteachers and Deputies (NAHT)
- VOICE – (formerly Professional Association of Teachers)

Our people data

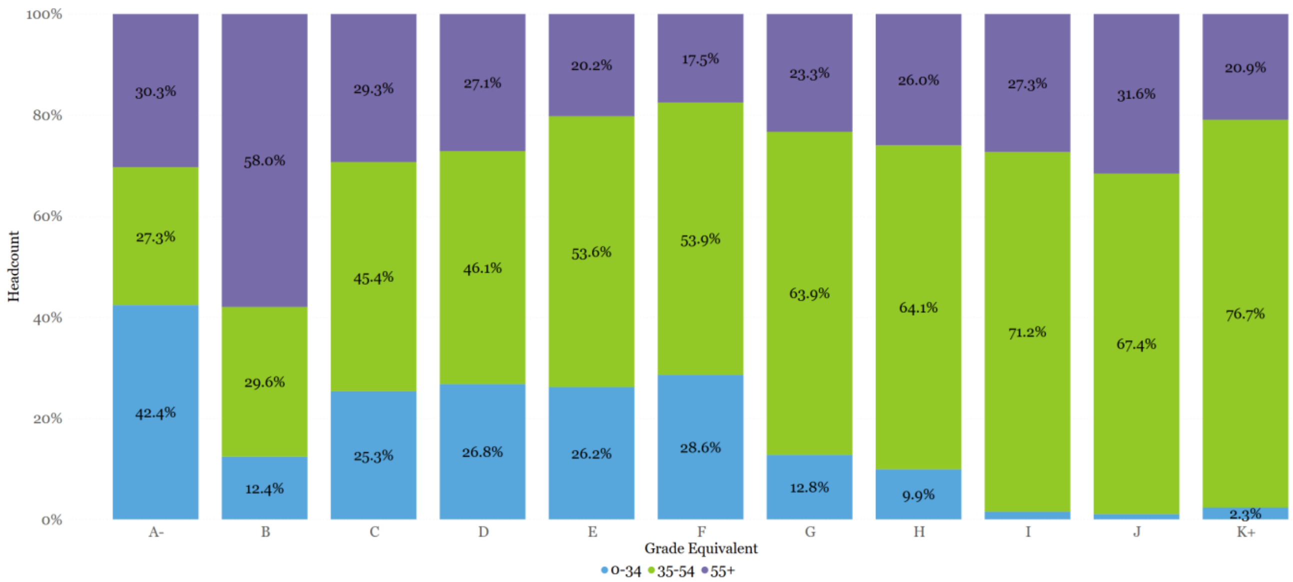
Age

18.11 Overall, the mean average age of our people has reduced from 46 to 45 this year.

18.12 Employees under the age of 25 continue to be underrepresented; however, headcount in this group has increased from 366 in the previous year to 460.

18.13 Our age profile across grades is shown in Figure 19.

Figure 19: Age across grade



Armed Forces

18.14 Our commitment to the county's Armed Forces community is ongoing and is reflected in both the delivery of our statutory responsibilities (as defined by the Armed Forces Act 2021 and referred to as "The Covenant Duty") and a number of discretionary responsibilities that we are committed to enabling in support of our "Covenant Pledge".

18.15 Our "Covenant Duty" is limited to healthcare and education. These Covenant Duties are fulfilled through the relevant service Directorates, namely Adults' Health and Care for the 'Healthcare' duty and Children's Services for the 'Education' duty.

18.16 Further to the provision of our statutory duties, in October 2023, the Leader of the Council re-signed the Armed Forces Covenant "pledge" reinforcing our commitment to the Armed Forces communities of Hampshire.

18.17 As part of our responsibilities under the Armed Forces Covenant, we recognise that attracting more armed forces veterans to apply for our roles has the potential for:

- Bringing varied skills, knowledge, and experience
- Adding to the different lived experiences and perspectives
- Increasing the skills available in languages, handling hazardous substances, HGV driving, engineering, first aid and catering to name a few
- Supporting our Inclusion and Diversity strategy more generally.

18.18 We are keen to attract Armed Forces applicants to our roles, as the skills they bring are transferable and may be well suited to the roles in our recruitment ‘hot spots’. Currently, 1.9% of our people have identified themselves as Armed Forces veterans.

Carers

18.19 16% (802) of employees identified as having caring responsibilities for someone with a long-term physical or mental health condition or illness, or due to age-related needs. This includes 15% of full-time employees and 19% of part-time employees. Caring responsibilities were reported by 17% of female employees and 10% of male employees. It should be noted that this information is self-reported and may not reflect the full picture.

Disability (any physical or mental health conditions or illness lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more)

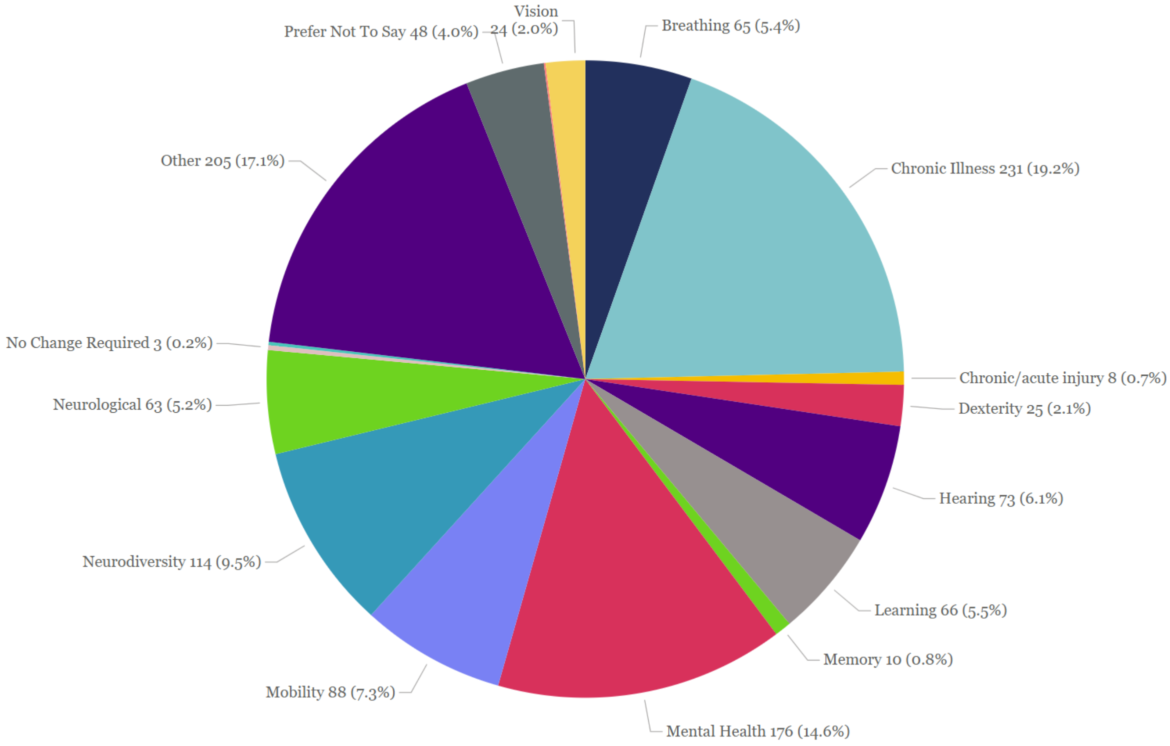
18.20 The number of people declaring their data has increased over time. This year 13% (1,227) of our people recorded themselves as having physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more, compared to 12% last year. Employees are encouraged to talk to their manager if they need support.

18.21 However, we still recognise that not all our people have shared this information with us.

18.22 In our workforce, 14% (940) of females and 12% (287) of males have recorded a disability and our data shows that this year those declaring a disability are evenly represented across all ages.

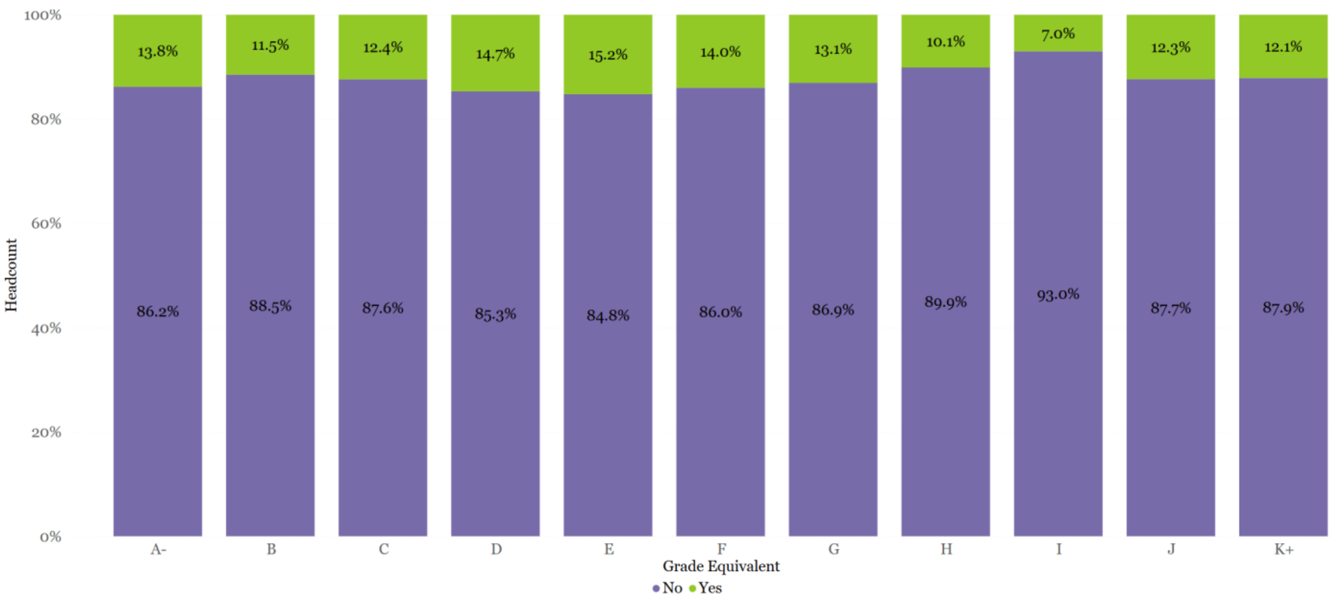
18.23 A breakdown of this data shows the following responses by employees to the types of illnesses or disabilities that they have recorded.

Figure 20: Types of disabilities and physical and mental health conditions



18.24 The graph below shows the representation of employees recording themselves as having physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months, demonstrating broadly even representation across all grades. In H+ grades, 9% have recorded this information, an increase from 7% last year.

Figure 21: A graph to show disability by grade

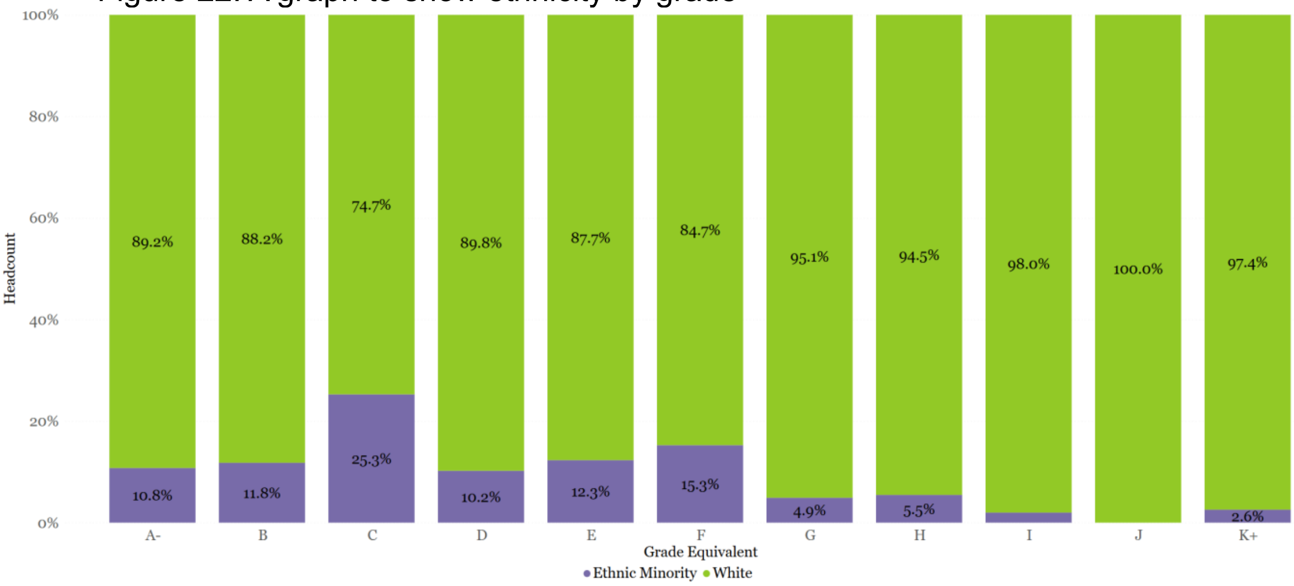


Ethnicity

18.25 The graph below shows 87% of our people classify themselves as white and 13% classify themselves as from an ethnic minority. This is an increase in employees from an ethnic minority from last year, which may be due to an increase in staff declaring this information.

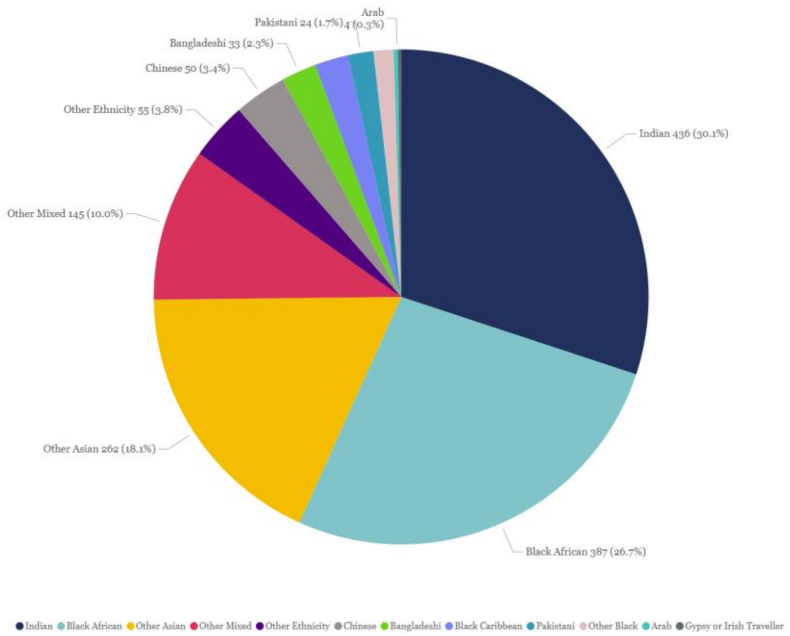
18.26 The graph below reflects how ethnicity is broken down across grades. Ethnic minority employees are concentrated predominantly in grades C followed by F and E grades.

Figure 22: A graph to show ethnicity by grade



18.27 The 13% of ethnic minority employees can be further broken down as follows:

Figure 23: Minority ethnicities



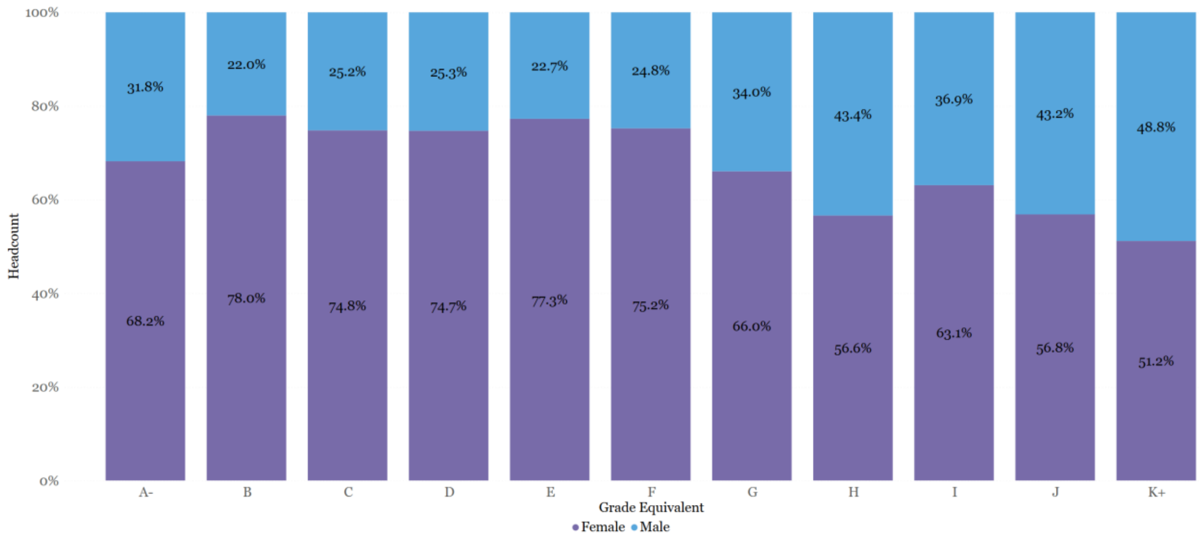
18.28 Among employees declaring ethnic minority backgrounds, a higher proportion are male (16%) compared to female (12.5%).

Gender

18.29 Figure 24 shows the gender representation across grades. In H+ graded roles, 58% are females, this has increased from 57% last year.

18.30 Following the Supreme Court's clarification that "sex" under the Equality Act 2010 refers to biological sex, we are awaiting the updated statutory guidance for employers.

Figure 24: Gender by grade

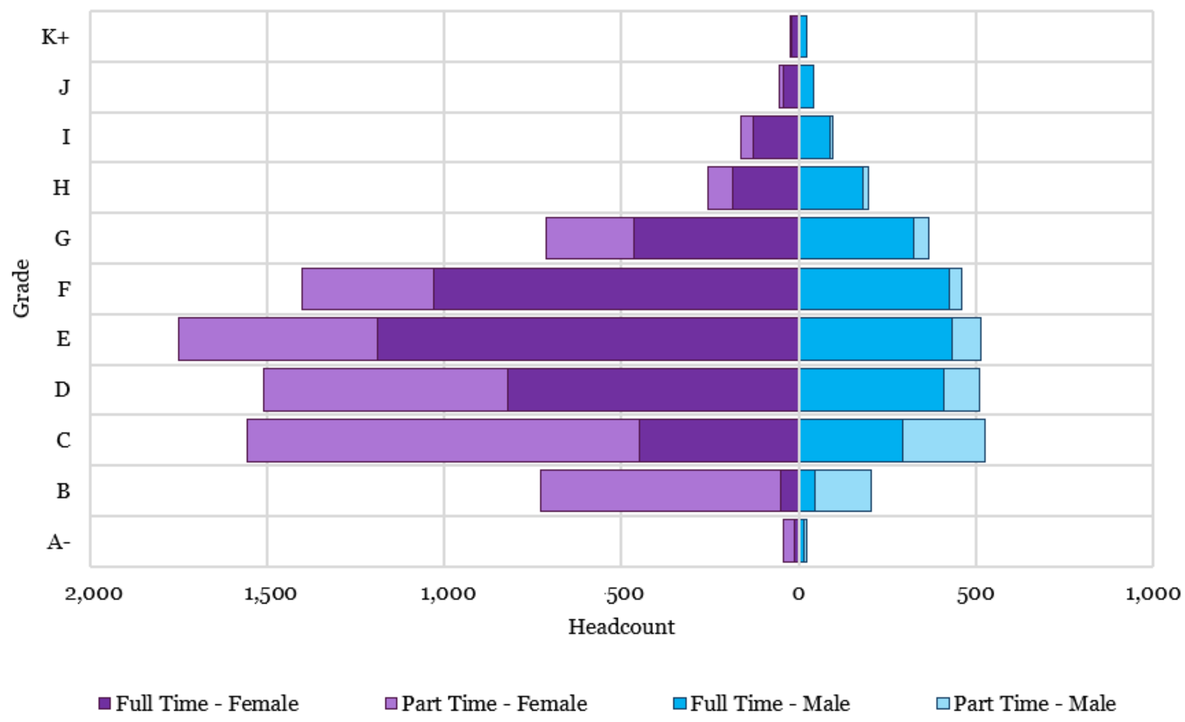


18.31 Figure 25 presents headcount by gender and full-time and part-time status as of 31 March 2026. The workforce remains predominantly female. 34% of female employees work part-time, down from 40% last year, while 6% of male employees work part-time, unchanged. The reduction in female part-time working is largely due to the TUPE transfer out of Education Catering Services.

Figure 25: Gender representation across grades, full-time and part-time roles

Gender Grade	Female Full Time Headcount	Part Time Headcount	Total Female Headcount	Male Full Time Headcount	Part Time Headcount	Total Male Headcount
K+	48.8%	2.3%	**51.2%**	48.8%	0.0	**48.8%**
J	47.4%	9.5%	**56.8%**	43.2%	0.0	**43.2%**
I	49.2%	13.8%	**63.1%**	33.5%	3.5%	**36.9%**
H	41.2%	15.4%	**56.6%**	40.1%	3.3%	**43.4%**
G	42.9%	23.1%	**60.0%**	29.9%	4.1%	**34.0%**
F	55.3%	19.9%	**75.2%**	22.8%	1.9%	**24.8%**
E	52.5%	24.8%	**77.3%**	19.2%	3.6%	**22.7%**
D	40.6%	34.1%	**74.7%**	20.2%	5.0%	**25.3%**
C	21.7%	53.1%	**74.8%**	14.0%	11.2%	**25.2%**
B	5.3%	72.6%	**78.0%**	5.0%	17.0%	**22.0%**
A-	19.7%	48.5%	**68.2%**	24.2%	7.6%	**31.8%**
Total average %	**39.4%**	**34.1%**	**73.5%**	**20.4%**	**6.1%**	**26.5%**

Figure 26: Gender representation across grades, full-time and part-time roles



18.32 Overall, our people are concentrated in the lower to middle grades. Across almost all grades, females make up a higher proportion of employees, particularly in grades C to F, which together represent the largest population groups.

18.33 These grades also show the highest levels of part-time working among female employees, with the single largest group being females in grade C who are employed part time. This indicates that flexible working arrangements are most prevalent in the lower and middle grades.

18.34 Part-time employment among male employees exists but remains comparatively limited across all grades.

18.35 At the most senior grades (J to K+), part-time working is minimal for both males and females, and the gender split narrows.

Gender identity

18.36 In addition to recording gender, employees can choose to record their gender identity by answering the question, “Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?” 1% have responded “no”, while 70% of employees have not declared this information. These figures are comparable with last year.

Nationality

18.37 Our nationality profile is shown below.

Figure 27: Nationality profile

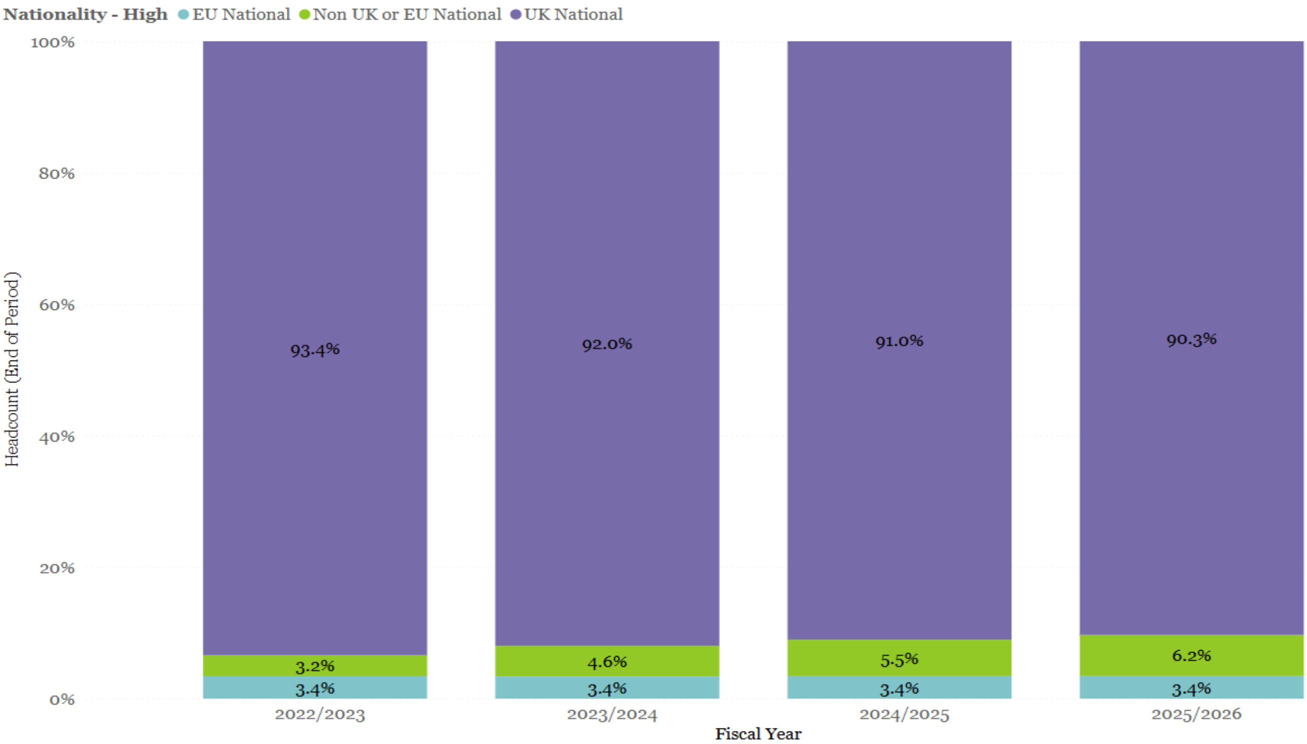
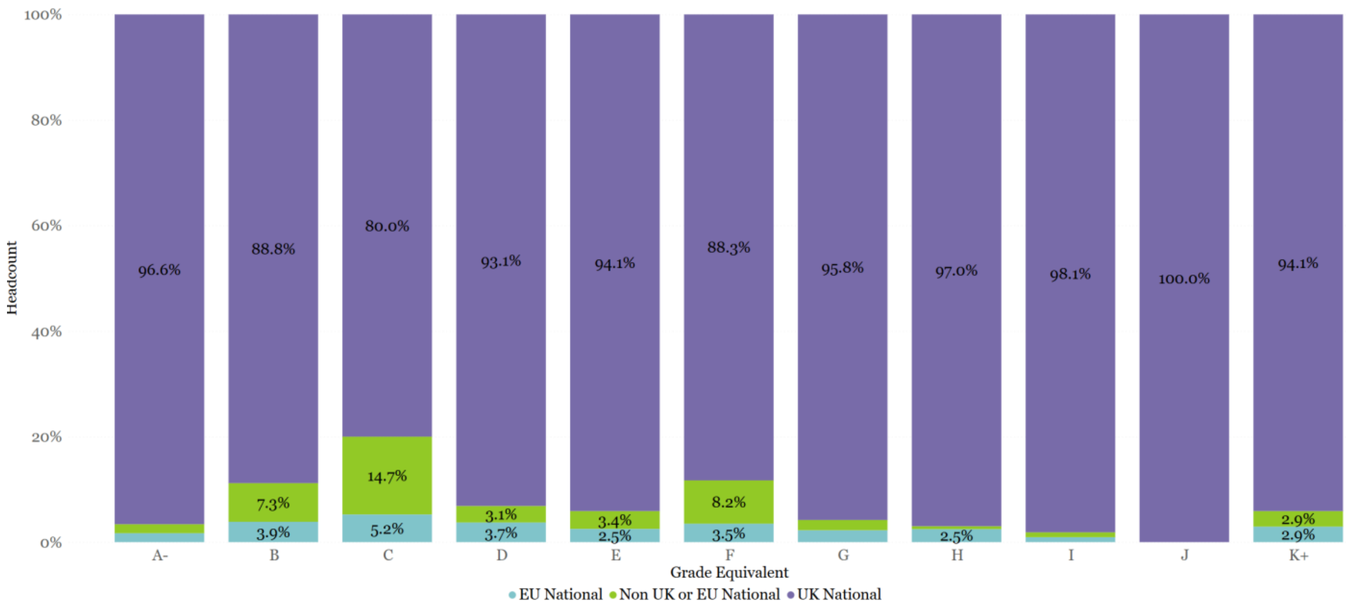


Figure 28: Nationality by grade



Pregnancy and maternity

18.38 The below table shows the number of employees who started, or were on maternity leave, in the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. It also shows the number of employees (headcount) who have taken shared parental leave, adoption leave and paternity leave.

Figure 29: Types of family friendly leave

Types of leave	Headcount
Maternity leave and maternity support leave	387
Paternity leave	61
Shared Parental leave	12
Adoption leave	6
Keep in touch days	Average 3 days per employee on maternity leave

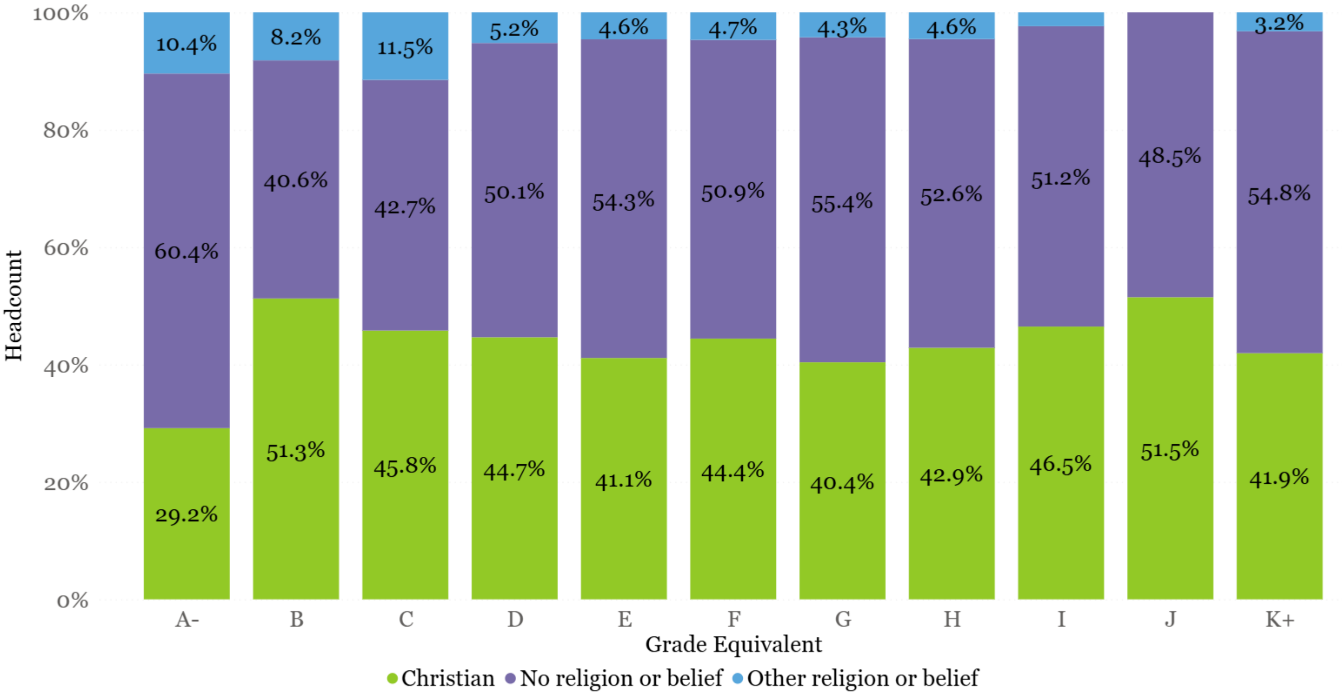
18.39 There is a slight reduction in the number of employees taking maternity leave compared to last year. There has been a slight increase in the number of employees taking paternity leave.

Religion and belief

18.40 It is important for us to understand and be sensitive to the religious beliefs of our people to help promote an inclusive working environment. We encourage employees to share information with colleagues around religious festivals and celebrations that they are involved in, to help educate and inform others.

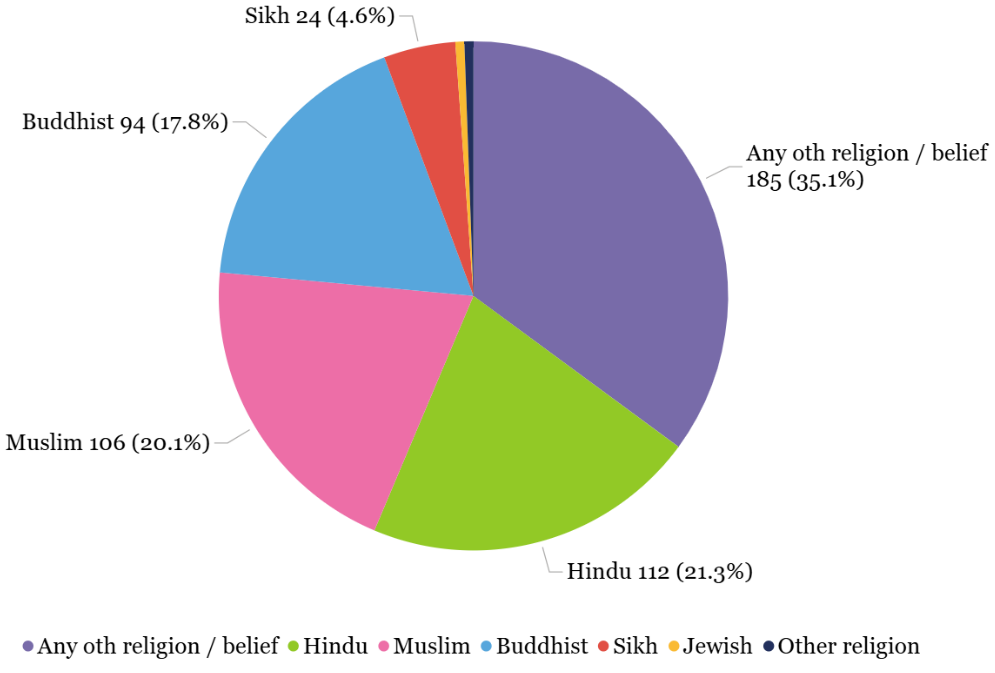
18.41 76% of employees have declared their religion or belief, an increased from 73% last year. The religious profile across our grades is as follows:

Figure 30: Religion and belief by grade



18.42 The religion and belief profile is broken down into more detail and shown below:

Figure 31: Minority religions and belief representation



Sexual orientation

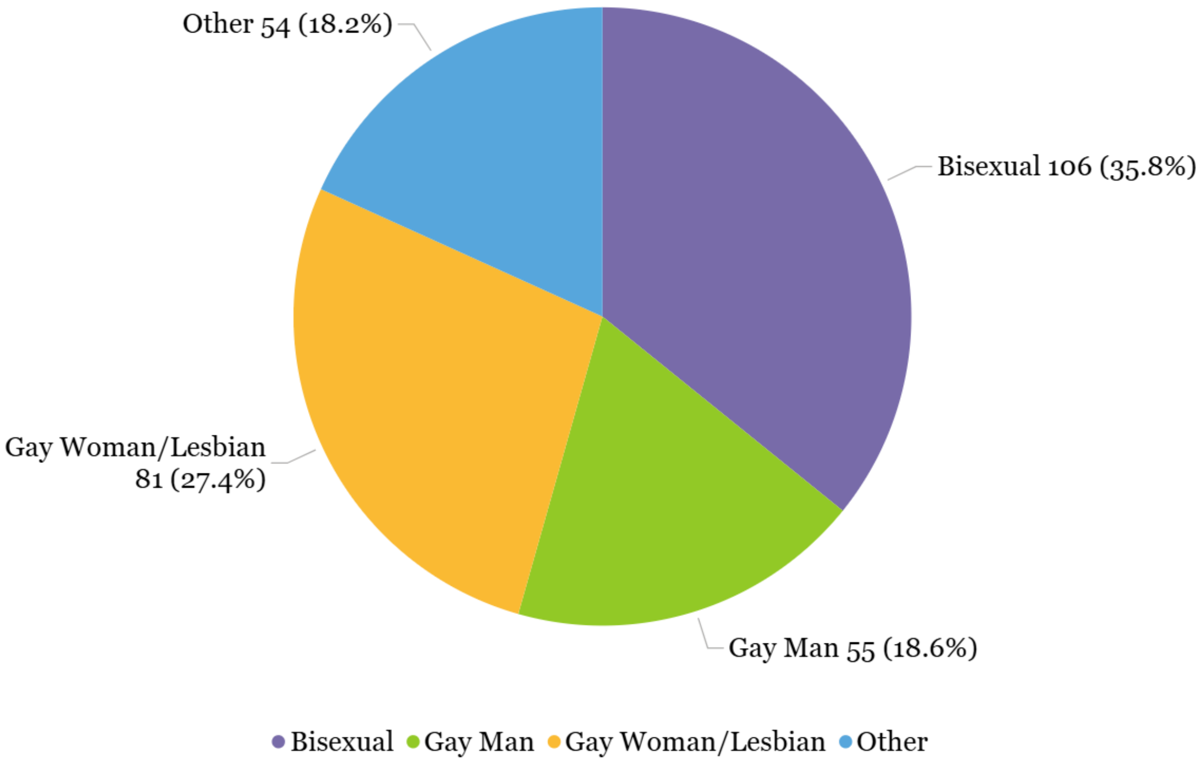
18.43 55% of employees have provided their information. We recognise and appreciate the trust placed in the organisation by those who have chosen to share this data.

18.44 We can report on this information at an organisational level; however, it is not accessible to individual line managers in order to protect anonymity. The purpose of reflecting it here is to help inform our strategies and target initiatives, supporting our aim to create a more inclusive workplace for LGBT+ employees.

18.45 Currently, 5.2% of employees have recorded a minority sexual orientation, an increase from 3% last year.

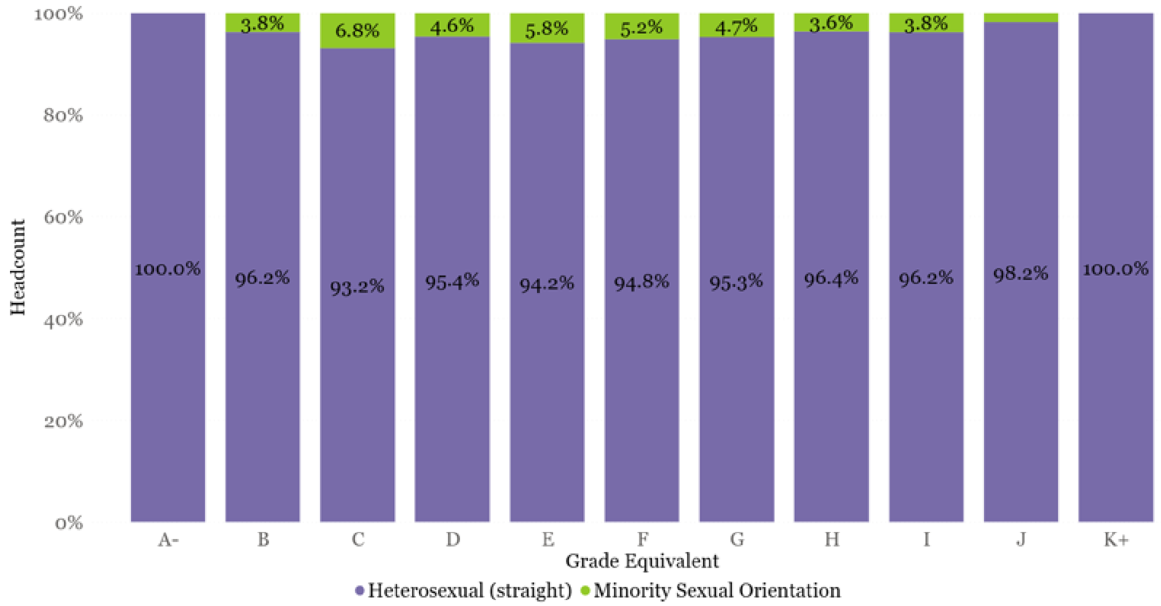
18.46 The minority sexual orientation profile is shown below:

Figure 32: Minority sexual orientation representation



18.47 Figure 33 shows sexual orientation representation across grades. Employees declaring a minority sexual orientation are more represented in the lower to middle grades, which may largely reflect the higher proportion of younger employees in these grades, who may be more likely to disclose a minority sexual orientation.

Figure 33: Minority sexual orientation by grade



19.0 Data assumptions and limitations

19.1 The data comparisons used in this report show either trends over previous years or are at a specific point of time (i.e., 31 March 2026).

- Categorisations may change between reports e.g. the groupings of individual ages into age groups. This can happen when categorisations change, and we have to amend past data.
- Figures may differ from previous year reports as past data can change. For example, someone's leaving date could be changed, which would change when they became an external leaver. Data used in this report is as we currently hold it, to ensure we have the latest "version of the truth".
- Variations to data year on year might be as a result of changes in business process or changes to how data has been recorded.
- We exclude employees with undisclosed personal characteristics from any analysis referencing the percentage of employees who are in certain personal characteristics groups.
- We include our people on Employment of Hampshire County Council (EHCC) and Soulbury terms and conditions and do not include teachers in schools, councillors, casual workers, contractors, and agency workers from all analysis of personal / protected characteristics.
- Grades referenced may vary. In some graphs and tables, employee salaries that are not on EHCC terms have not been converted. This includes, for example, Soulbury staff, teachers within Children's Services, redeployees on protected salaries, and employees who transferred under TUPE. These employees are shown collectively as "Other". This is because for data over time people can move between grades, and this is to avoid double counting.
- All data has been rounded to the nearest decimal place.

19.2 We continue to explore how we can make better use of our data through data cleansing to improve the accuracy of our insight.

Hampshire
County Council