




Staff Annual Equalities Report

2024/25



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Introduction

This report provides a detailed analysis of the council's workforce and external applicants applying for jobs, by the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010. This report relates to staff and employment only.

The Equality Act (2010) consolidated the legislation for groups protected by previous equalities legislation. Everyone has the right to be treated fairly and the Equality Act protects people from discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics.

The Act sets out the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender), sexual orientation, and marriage and civil partnership.

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 require public sector bodies with more than 150 employees to publish data on equality in their workforces annually.

The council is committed to complying with the Equality Act across all its services and continues to increase awareness and understanding through its policies, training and staff groups.

This report provides a detailed analysis of the available monitoring data for 2024/25.

It covers five areas:

- Employee Profile
- Recruitment
- Discipline and Grievance
- Training
- Leavers

Executive Summary

Employee Profile

The council's employee profile as at the end of March 2025 is broadly reflective of the profile of the working population in County and the East of England in terms of ethnic origin, religion and belief, disability and sexual orientation. The areas where the employee profile is not as closely reflective are sex (gender), age and disability.

The council has a considerably higher percentage of females than males (72%:28%) compared to the working population of County (51.6%:48.4%), however this is common in the public sector and is further impacted at Council by many of the more traditionally male areas of work such as refuse, and grounds maintenance being contracted out.

The council has a considerably higher proportion of employees aged between 50 and 64 compared to Council residents. The size and structure of the council means that there are a limited number of entry level posts meaning that the majority of posts require experience and are likely to be filled by older individuals who have the required experience. In recent years the council has introduced more trainee and career graded posts which require less experience and support staff developing in the role to both increase the younger age profile and provide succession planning but these posts can also be filled by career changers. The council also has a significant number of long serving employees which also impacts on the workforce age profile. There are fewer employees under the age of 20 (0.3%) compared to Council residents (5.7%) however it must be noted that it is compulsory to remain in full time education or training until the age of 18.

5% of employees at the council have a disability, which is significantly less than the Council residents with a disability (13.6%). It is worth noting however that people with a disability may be unfit to work.

Recruitment

In 2024/25 the council was successful in attracting a diverse range of external applicants in terms of most of the protected characteristics. The council was particularly successful in attracting applicants from the 20-29 and 30-39 age groups, from minority ethnic groups and applicants who are lesbian, gay or bisexual, when compared with the overall Council population.

The conversion from application to appointment is closely aligned for both females (54.5% to 57%) and for males (39.5% to 36.7%). There is an increase in the percentage of white applicants from application to appointment (64% to 86.1%) and a decrease in applicants from the 'Black African/Caribbean/Black British' (11.3% to 2.5%) and 'Asian/Asian British' ethnic groups (14% to 3.8%). However this is most likely due to the fact that we do get a significant number of applicants from abroad who not have the right to work in the UK so

their applications are automatically rejected. Despite this, the percentage of appointees in all of the ethnic minority groups is higher than the percentage of Council residents in these groups. In the 30-39 age group the percentage of applicants to appointees reduced whereas it stayed broadly the same or increased for the other age groups. 5% of applicants had a disability but none of the appointees had a declared disability (they were all unknown or declined to answer). The percentage of lesbian, gay or bisexual applicants increased from 6.8% at application to 8.9% at the appointment stage.

Discipline & Grievance and Training

There were 2 formal probation cases, 1 grievance and 2 disciplinary cases in 2024/25. We are unable to report on equality data due to the possibility of the individuals being identifiable.

We are satisfied that training and development are provided on a fair and equal basis across the council and that all employees are allowed to take advantage of the opportunities.

Leavers

There was a higher of proportion of male leavers when compared to the overall employee profile. The percentage of leavers with a disability (7.1%) was also slightly higher than the percentage of employees with a disability (5%). There was a slightly higher percentage of leavers from the 'Asian/Asian British' group when compared to the percentage of employees from that group. The percentage of leavers in the 65-75 age groups was much higher than the percentage of employees in this age group but this is due to employees in this age group taking retirement. HR have reviewed exit questionnaires which has not indicated any concerns in any of these areas.

Recommendations

All recommendations for 24/25 have either been progressed or rolled forward into 25/26.

Achievements against July 2024 – June 25 staff & employment equality recommendations

Recommendation	Progress
Employee Profile	
To complete the required annual Gender Pay Gap report for 2025.	This was published in March 2025
Work collaboratively with colleagues in Housing & Health on the refreshed Equalities Strategy to ensure a best practice approach connecting staff and residents.	Due to staff absence in Housing & Health the Equalities Strategy has not progressed but HR will support this at the appropriate time.
Send all staff a reminder to check and update their personal details on MyView ahead of the data being analysed for the next annual equalities report to ensure we have fuller rather than partial data (especially religion, sexual orientation and disability) reminding staff that we are not interested in their individual data but global percentages.	A message regarding this was included in Team Update.
Recruitment	
To work with the new ATS provider regarding the reporting options with the aim of getting equalities data at the shortlisting stage.	It is possible to get this data from the new ATS however we haven't been able to use it in this report as we only started using the new system in February 2025 and its not been possible to merge the data from the two systems in order to report on it. Therefore only the data from the old system is included in this report. For the 25/26 report it will be possible to include shortlisting data.
Discipline, Grievance and Probation	
Continue to monitor equalities data for all disciplinary, grievance and formal probationary cases.	This data has been collected and is contained within this report.
Training	

<p>Continue to ensure that all staff complete the equality and diversity module as part of the mandatory e-learning training programme. Offer further equalities-based training as identified by annual training needs analysis.</p>	<p>Staff are automatically reminded 12 months after they last completed the mandatory equality and diversity module to go back into the system and refresh their training. Service managers are currently completing a training needs analysis for their service areas. On the back of that analysis we will be prioritising statutory training needs in the first instance.</p>
<p>The HR & OD Service manager is developing a strategy to further leverage our apprenticeship levy pot to grow our own approach with professional training and the development of officers into specialists or aspirant leaders. This will address both skills gaps and some equity gaps in the workforce.</p>	<p>We continue to use the levy pot to fund professional training and have employees in Revenues & Benefits, Finance, and Planning accessing it currently. We are also looking into utilising level 7 apprenticeships before the funding ceases in January.</p>
<p>Continue to promote equalities-based events such as International Women’s Day. Maintain a sufficient bank of Mental Health First Aiders to support staff experiencing mental health issues and run refresher training.</p>	<p>We have continued to promote equalities-based events where possible.</p> <p>Refresher training for Mental Health First Aiders was delivered in February 2025.</p>

Employee profile

Introduction

This section provides information on employees employed by the council as at 31 March 2025. Casual employees, agency workers and contractors are not included. The total number of employees employed by the council as at 31 March 2025 was a headcount of 315. This has decreased slightly from 317 in the previous year.

The data has been analysed using 6 of the 9 protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 as follows:

- Sex (Gender)
- Ethnic origin
- Age
- Religion or Belief
- Disability status
- Sexual orientation

Although marital status data is recorded this is not reportable from the HR system.

Pregnancy is not a permanent characteristic but a state in time. 5 employees took maternity leave in 2024/25 and it should be noted that no concerns have been raised regarding this protected characteristic.

Although the HR system has capacity for employees to indicate if they are transgender the new starter forms do not request this and instead the council has focused on the current gender and not the past in line with our recruitment forms. It is worth noting there have never been any complaints in this area. The council has employed staff who have changed gender without any complaints being made.

Various comparison data has been used to understand how the employee profile of the council compares to the wider context in which it operates and to identify whether there are any areas of concern which the council needs to take action on. Comparisons have been made at the most local level (i.e. with Council residents) using the 2021 Census data.

Sex (Gender)

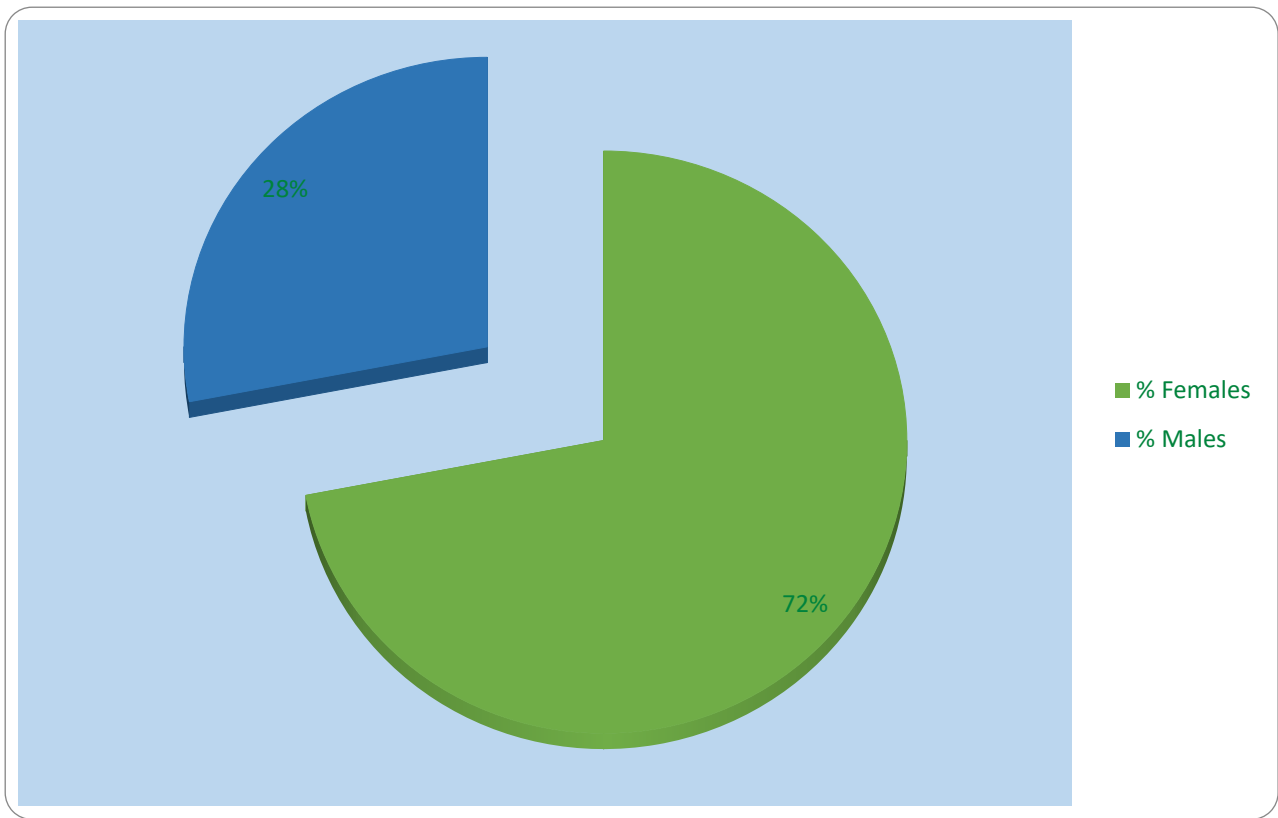


Figure 1.0 Employee profile by sex

Figure 1.0 shows the sex profile of employees at the council. The profile does not closely reflect that of the Council working population. The council has a considerably lower percentage of male employees (28%) compared to the overall male population in Council (48.4%) (Census 2021). The percentage of male employees has decreased slightly from 30% in 2024/25.

A high female to male workforce ratio is common in public sector with 68% being female and 32% being male (ONS: Public sector employment by gender (2015)). In addition, the council has contracted out many of the more traditionally male dominated areas of work such as refuse, grounds maintenance and IT which has affected the male to female ratio further.

Ethnic origin

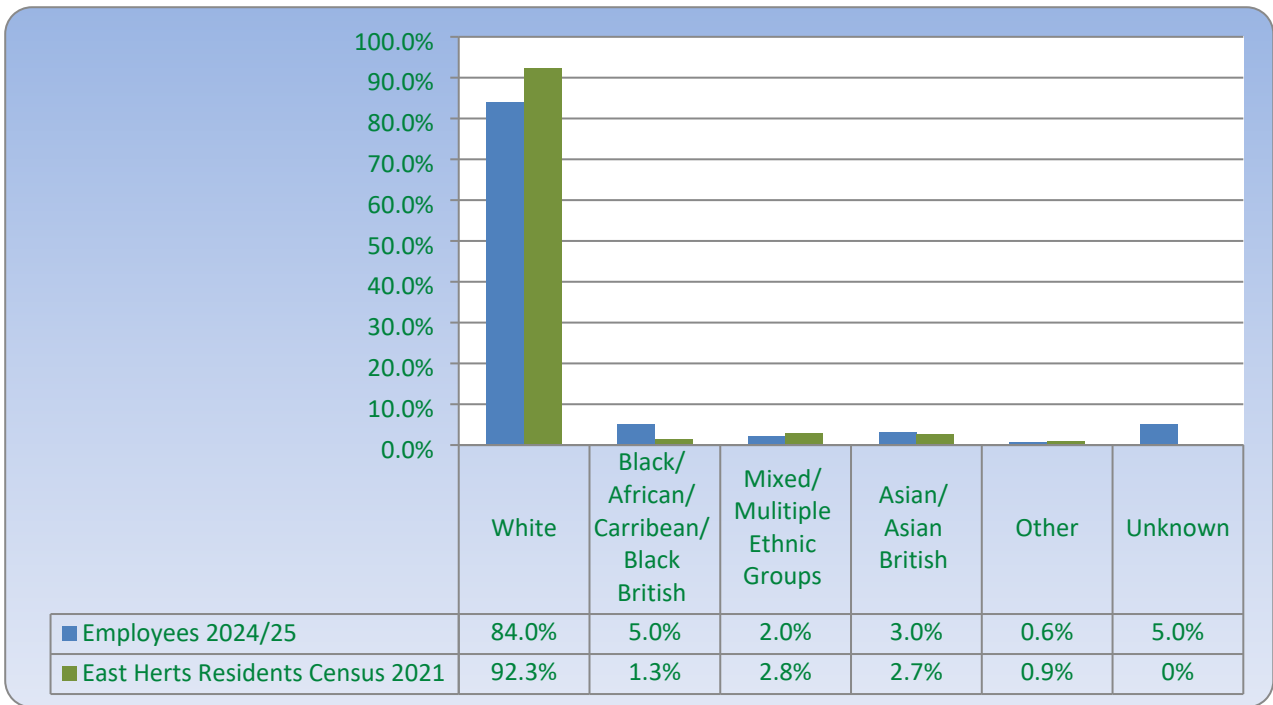


Figure 2.0 Employee profile by ethnic origin

Source: ONS Census 2021 - Ethnic Group by Measures

Figure 2.0 shows that the percentage of employees from most of the minority ethnic groups are above that of Council residents as at the Census in 2021. The percentage of white employees is 8% less than the Census but 5% of staff are unknown which will account for some of this.

Age

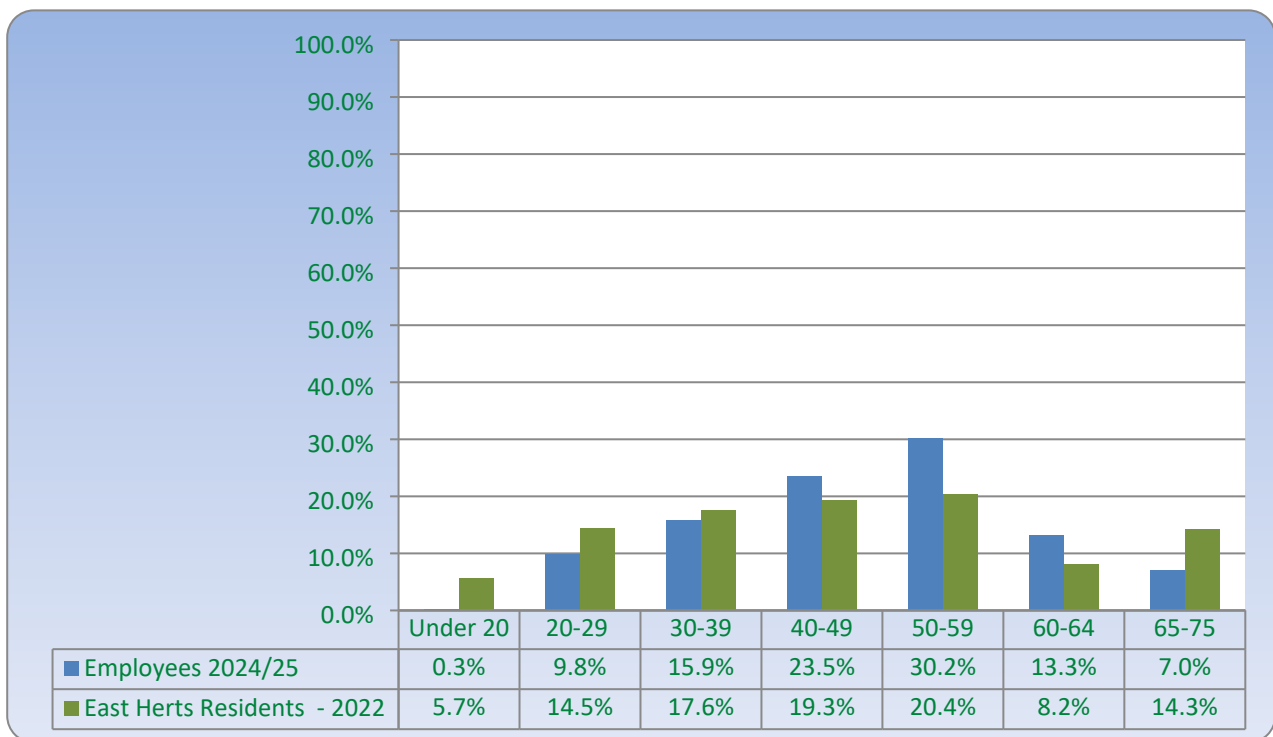


Figure 3.0 Employee profile by age

Source: Nomis Official Labour Market Statistics – Population Estimates in Council (2022)

Note: The percentages shown for Council residents are the percentage of 16-75 year olds, not the total population.

Figure 3.0 shows that the council has a considerably higher proportion of employees aged between 50 and 64 compared to Council residents. 43.5% of employees are in the 50-59 and 60-64 age groups compared to 28.6% of Council residents in these age groups. The size and structure of the council means that there are a limited number of entry level posts meaning that the majority of posts require experience and are likely to be filled by older individuals who have the required experience. The council has introduced more trainee and career graded posts in recent years which require less experience and support staff developing in the role to both increase the younger age profile and provide succession planning but these posts can also be filled by career changers with appointment based on merit. The council also has a significant number of long serving employees which also impacts on the workforce age profile. The percentages of staff in the different age groups has not substantially changed over the past 5 years.

Although there are differences in the age profile of the workforce to that of the Council residents there are no significant concerns or evidence of discrimination or bias.

Religion and Belief

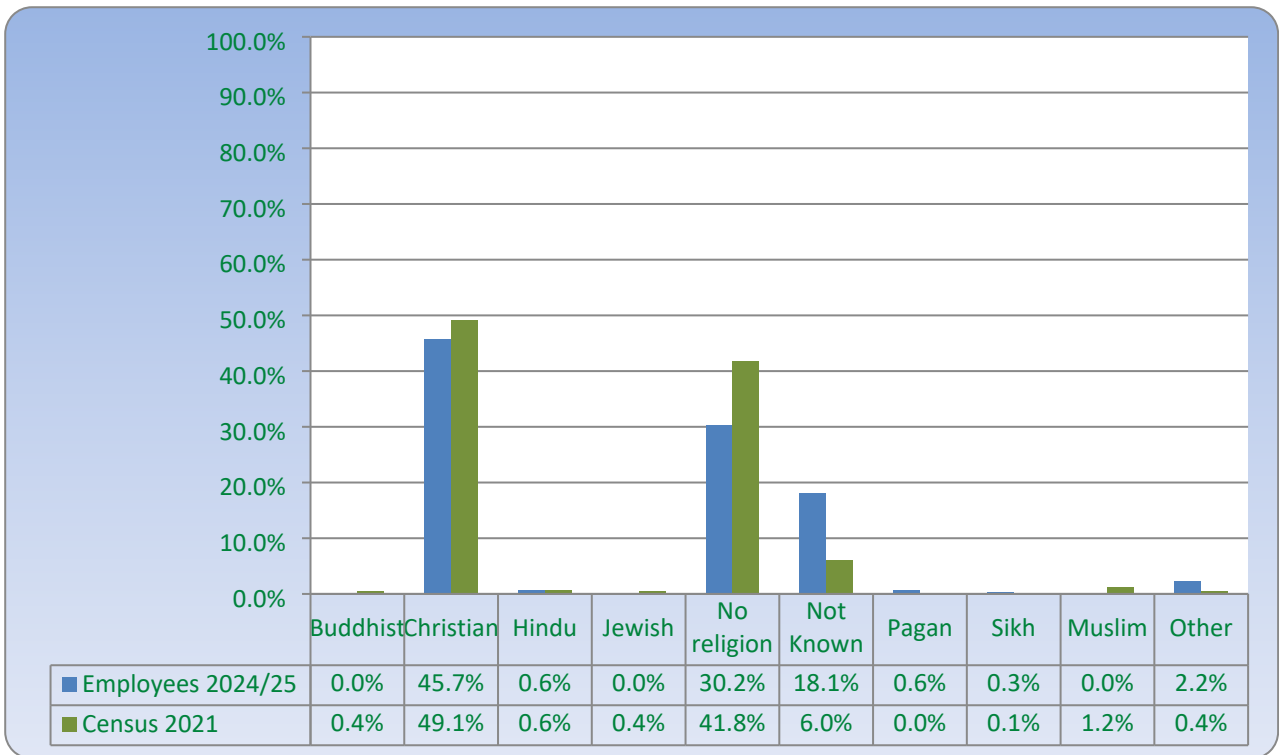


Figure 4.0 Employee profile by religion and belief

Source: ONS Census 2021 - Religion

Figure 4.0 shows that the religions and beliefs of employees are generally reflective of Council residents and therefore there are no suggested concerns in this area. As is common with employment data on Religion (staff often do not wish to state) a significant amount of staff (18.1%) have not stated or have indicated they do not wish to. The percentages of staff under each religion remain similar over the past few years.

Disability

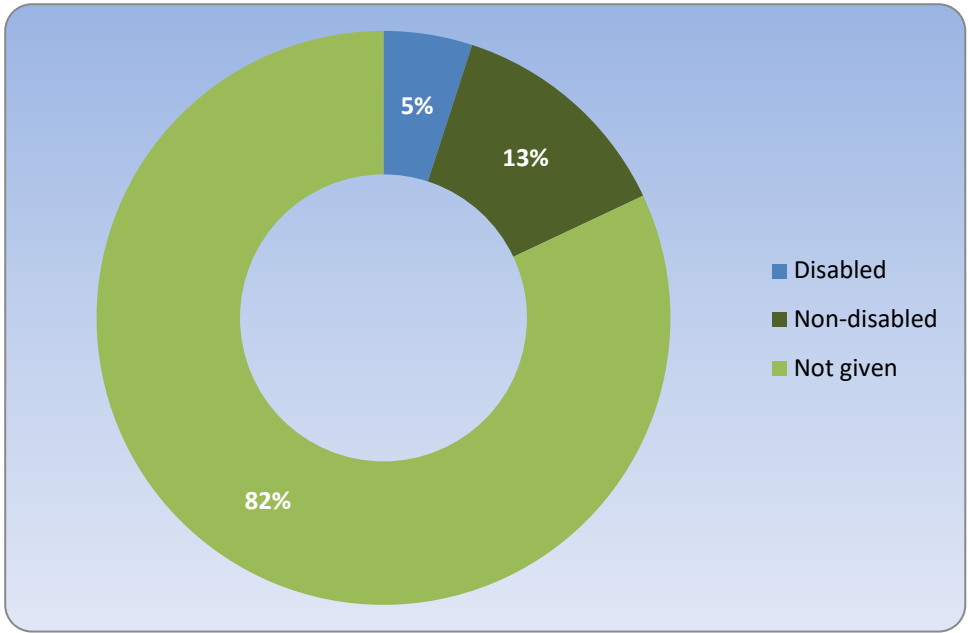


Figure 5.0 Employee profile by disability status

Figure 5.0 shows that as at 31 March 2025, 5% of employees had a disability, which is one percentage point lower than 2023/24. This is significantly less than the Council residents with a disability (13.6%) (ONS Census 2021). It is worth noting however that people with disability may not be able to undertake meaningful employment in light of their disability.

Sexual Orientation

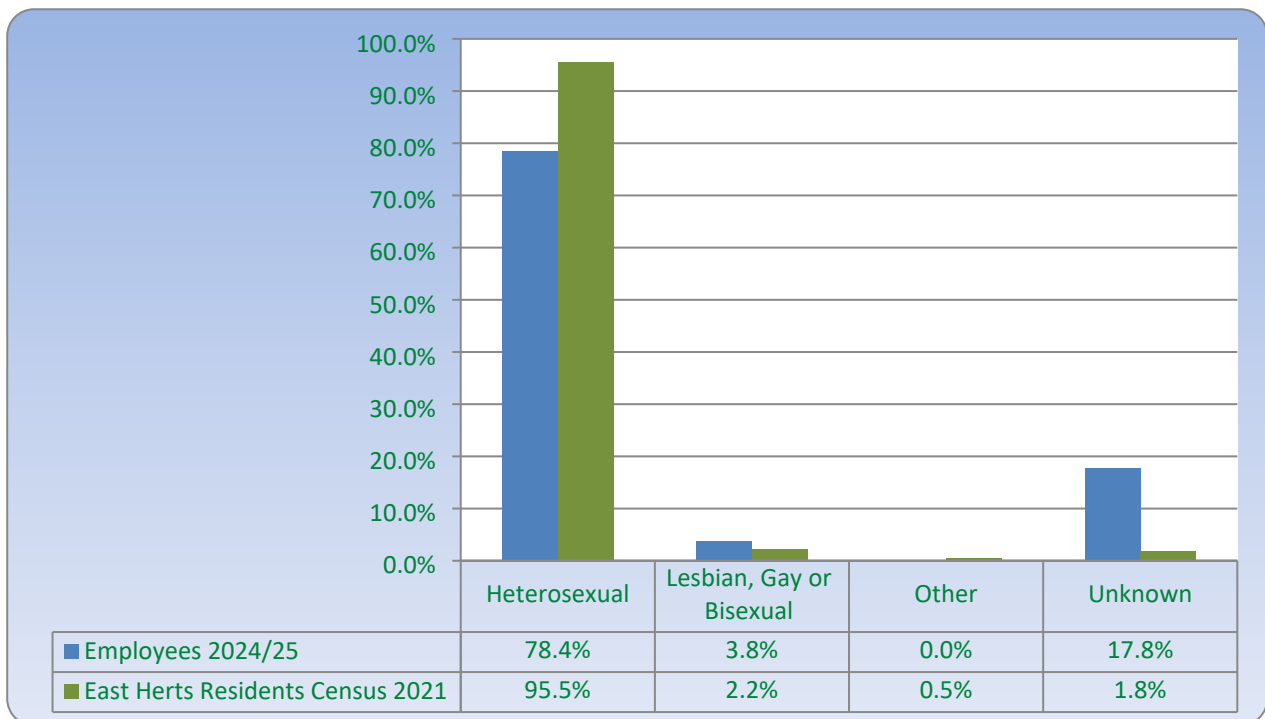


Figure 6.0 Employee profile by sexual orientation

Source: ONS Census 2021 – sexual orientation

Figure 6.0 shows that there are no indicated concerns with regard to the council’s employee profile in terms of sexual orientation when compared to the Census 2021 data. The council has less heterosexuals in terms of percentage but has a higher unknown percentage which could close the gap. The council has a higher percentage of lesbian, gay and bisexual employees (3.8%) compared to residents in Council (2.2%). The percentage of lesbian, gay and bisexual employees has decreased slightly from 4.1% in 203/24 to 3.8% in 24/25.

Recruitment

Introduction

This section provides information on external applicants who applied for jobs at the council between 1 April 2024 and 31 January 2025. We moved to a new Applicant Tracking System (ATS) in February 2025 and it has not been possible to merge the data from the two systems in order to analyse due to there being different parameters (age groups for example) and descriptors (ethnicity groups for example). Therefore, we have only analysed the data from the old ATS (10 months' worth) and in 2025/26 we will have a full year's worth of data from the new system.

Data has been collected at the application and appointment stages. The council's old ATS did not allow us to report on equalities data for applicants at the shortlist stage as it only allows us to report on the stage that applicants are in at the point of running the report, and not the history. As stated above, we have now procured a new ATS which has better reporting functionality so from 25/26 we will be able to report on the shortlisting stage too. A total of 1612 external applicants applied for jobs with the council between 1 April 2024 and 31 January 2025 and 79 appointments were made.

Recruitment data has been analysed using 5 of the 9 protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010:

- Sex (Gender)
- Ethnic origin
- Age
- Disability status
- Sexual orientation

The council's position is that Transgender people should be respected as part of the gender they have chosen and therefore does not monitor separately in terms of their past gender or transition they have undertaken.

In terms of pregnancy and marital status these are not asked for at the recruitment stage. Regarding pregnancy, individuals may not wish to disclose this and by asking the wrong message may be given to potential candidates and this also applies to a lesser extent to marital status (this is also a protected characteristic that can change and again could cause concern for candidate if asked based on previous discrimination in the employment market to newly married women re potential pregnancy/maternity in the future).

Although data is collected for religion or belief, this has not been reported on due to the low number of applicants reporting a religion other than Christian or not stated.

The data has been collected from the Equalities Monitoring Forms which are part of the application form. Although equalities data is mostly known for appointees we have chosen

not to populate the data with this known data on our HR system for appointees and have used the original equalities monitoring forms for applicants. By adding data in for appointees this can distort the data when looking at the conversion of applicants from application through to appointment.

Comparisons have been drawn to the profile of the working population of Council to understand whether the council has been successful in attracting a diverse range of applicants that are reflective of the local population. Comparisons have been made at the most local level (i.e. with Council residents) using the 2021 Census data.

The equalities data of applicants being appointed has been compared to the data of all applicants to understand whether certain groups are being disadvantaged. The data will include applicants without the right to work in the UK and speculative applicants who do not meet the person specification. The ATS auto rejects applications who do not have the right to work so they are rejected at the application stage.

Sex (Gender)

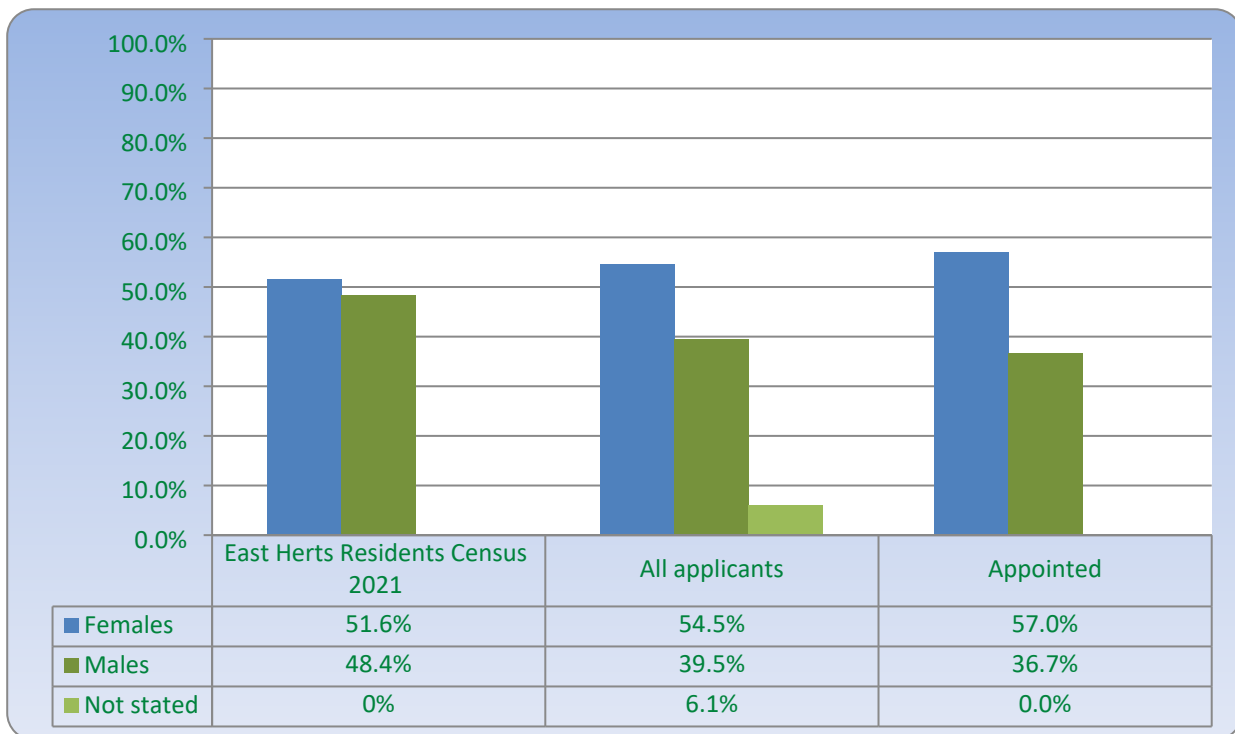


Figure 7.0 Applicant profile by sex compared to the population of Council

Source: Census 2021

Figure 7.0 shows that in 2024/25, there was a higher proportion of female applicants than male applicants: 54.5% of applicants were female and 39.5% were male compared to the profile of the working population of Council (51.6% and 48.4% respectively). However, as can be seen from the data, 6.1% of applicants did not disclose their gender.

Figure 7.0 shows that of the 79 applicants appointed, 57% were female and 36.7% were male. The conversion from application to appointment are closely aligned for both females (54.5% to 57%) and for males (39.5% to 36.7%).

Ethnic origin

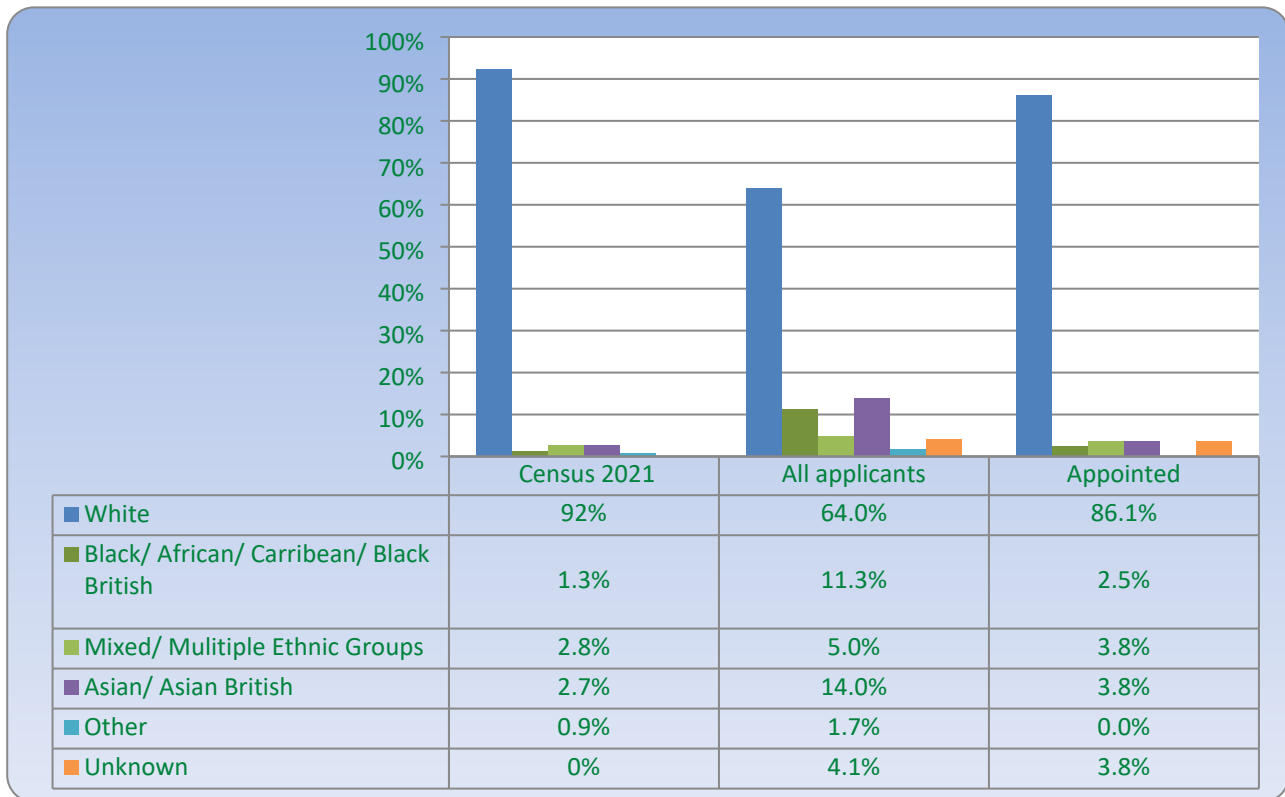


Figure 8.0 Applicant profile by ethnic origin compared to the population of Council

Source: ONS Census 2021 - Ethnic Group by Measures

Figure 8.0 shows that in 2024/25 the council attracted applicants from a diverse range of ethnic groups. There is an increase in the percentage of white applicants from application to appointment (64% to 86.1%) and a decrease in applicants from the 'Black African/Caribbean/Black British' (11.3% to 2.5%) and 'Asian/Asian British' ethnic groups (14% to 3.8%). However this is most likely due to the fact that we do get a significant number of applicants from abroad who do not have the right to work in the UK so their applications are automatically rejected. Many of these were from the Asian/Asian British ethnic group, which accounts for the bigger percentage drop in the number of applicants to appointments in this ethnic group. We do state clearly on our application form that we do not offer sponsorship for overseas applicants. Furthermore, the percentage of appointees in all of the ethnic minority groups is higher than the percentage of Council residents in these groups.

It should also be noted that Council has not had challenge from a candidate suggesting any bias or discrimination over a shortlisting or appointment decision. The shortlisting and interview processes involve a panel scoring candidates against the job person specification criteria and the scores are collected by HR to evidence the merit based scoring undertaken.

Age

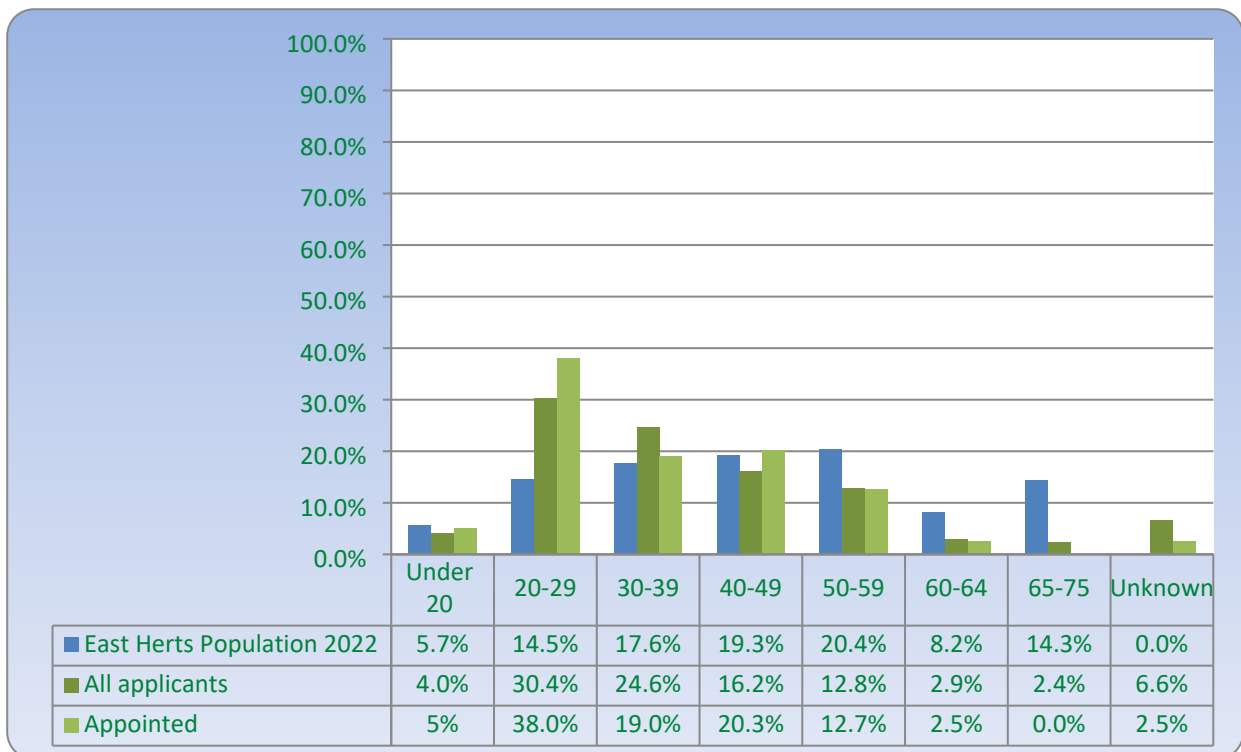


Figure 9.0 Applicant profile by age compared to the working population of Council

Source: Nomis Population estimates - local authority based by single year of age (2022).

Note: The percentages shown for Council residents are the percentage of 16-75 year olds, not the total population.

Figure 9.0 shows that the council attracted applicants from a wide range of age groups. However, the percentages do differ from the Council residents in these age groups. Percentages of applicants in the 20-29 and 30-39 age groups are higher than the percentage of Council residents in these age groups. This is not unexpected as people in this age group are more likely to be applying for jobs and looking to progress in their careers. In the other age groups the percentage of applicants is lower than the percentage of Council residents in these age groups. In the older age groups it is likely to be due to people taking retirement. The percentage of applicants under the age of 20 has increased since 23/24 (0.5% to 4%) which is positive and brings the percentage closer to Council residents in that age group.

There is some variation in the percentages of applicants at the various age groups and the percentage of those appointed. In the 30-39 age group the percentage of applicants to appointees reduced whereas it stayed broadly the same or increased for the other age groups. Despite the slight variations there are no obvious areas for concern.

Disability status

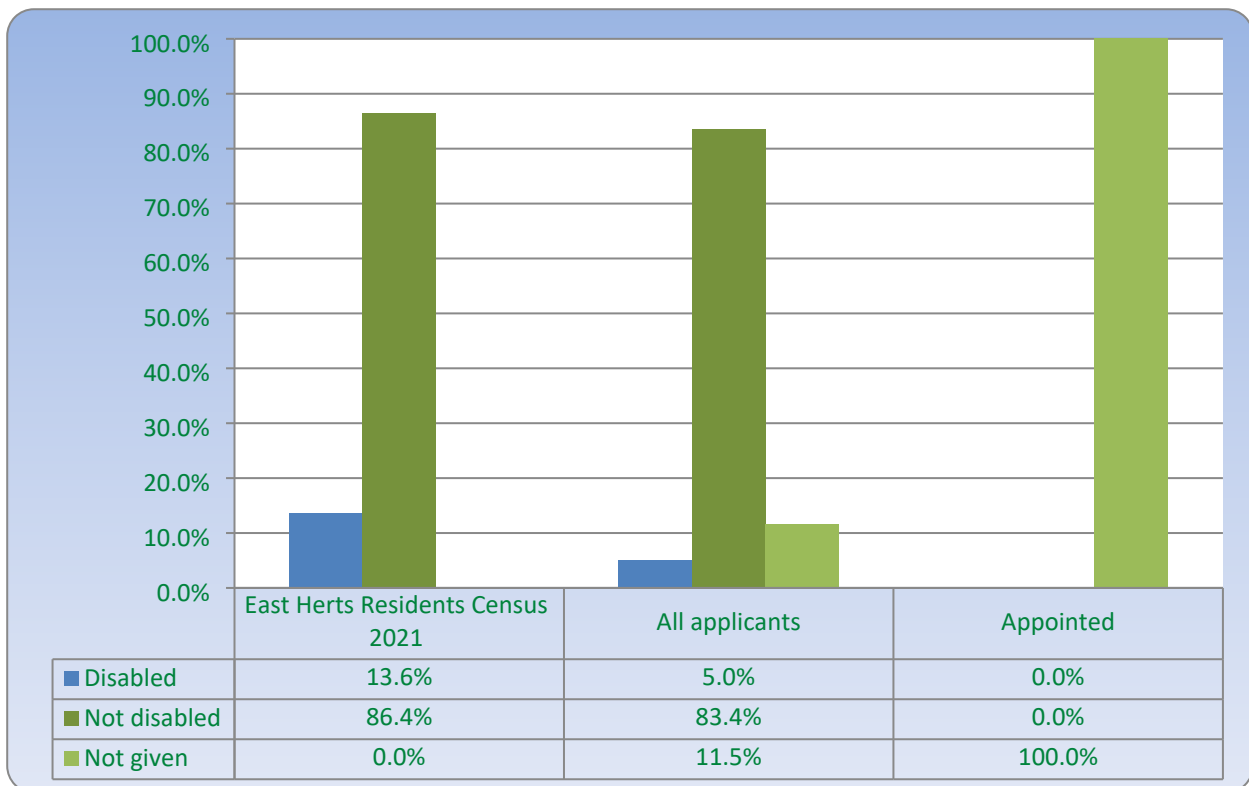


Figure 10.0 Applicant profile by disability compared to the working population of Council (Disability status)

Source: ONS Census 2021 - Disability

Figure 10.0 shows that 5% of applicants had a disability in 2024/25 which is lower than Council residents with a disability (13.6%) but is an increase from the 2023/24 figure of 3.8% which is positive. The council would like to attract more applications from disabled people but it is worth noting when comparing the figure to that of Council residents that people with a disability may be unable to work.

The council guarantees that disabled applicants under the Disability Confident Scheme will be invited for an interview if they meet the minimum essential criteria for the role (the Symbol is displayed on our recruitment messages and our website to help attract disabled candidates). 5% of applicants had a disability but none of the appointees had a declared disability (they were all unknown or declined to answer). This is a concern and is lower than the percentage of disabled appointees last year (3.8%). However it is possible that some of the appointees were disabled but chose not to answer the question on their application form. It should also be noted that Council has not had challenge from any candidate suggesting any discrimination over a shortlisting or appointment decision

Sexual orientation

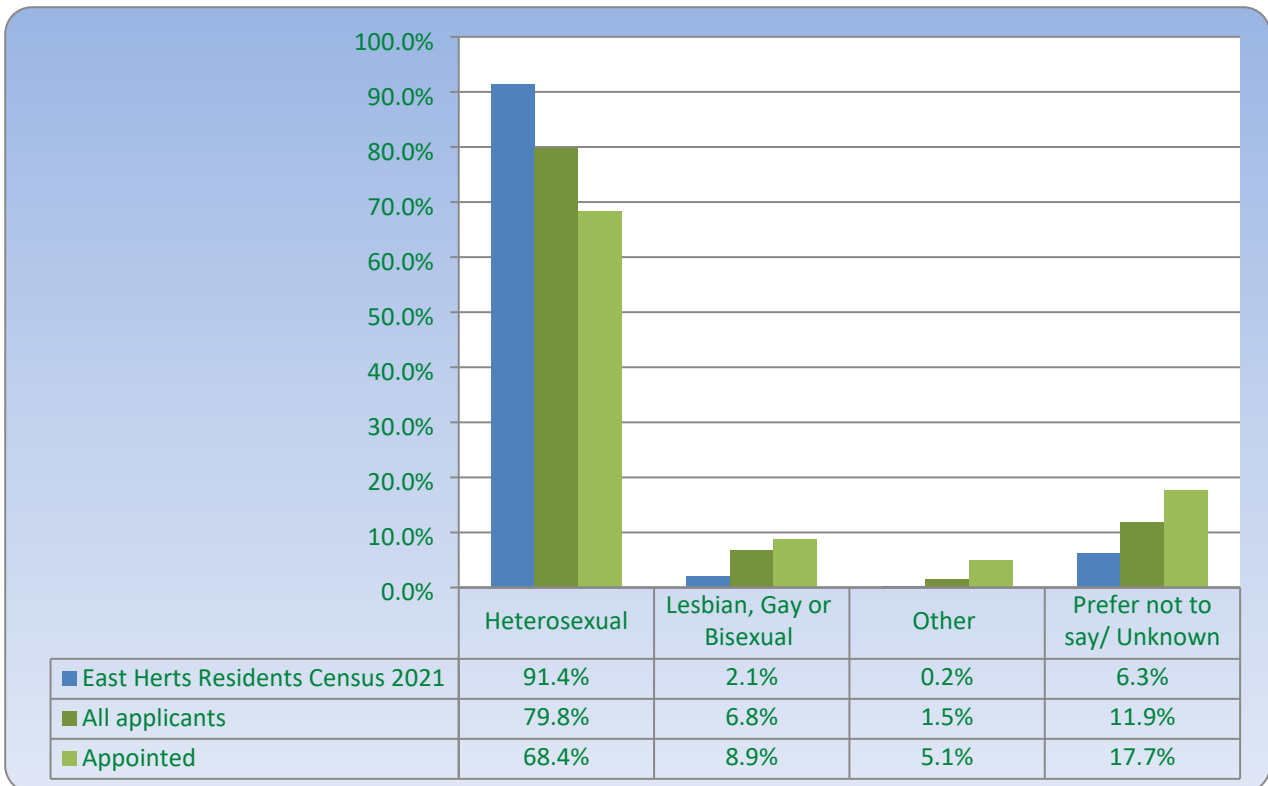


Figure 11.0 Applicant profile by sexual orientation compared to the East of England

Source: ONS Census 2021 - Sexual orientation

Note: Numbers could not be added to this chart due to the size of the columns.

Figure 11.0 shows that 6.8% of applicants in 2024/25 were lesbian, gay or bisexual which is higher than the percentage for the East of England population (2.1%) This increases to 8.9% at appointment which is a significant improvement when compared to 2023/24 (0%).

Disciplinary, Grievance and Probation (Grievance includes Bullying & Harassment complaints)

There were 2 formal probation cases, 1 grievance and 2 disciplinary cases in 2024/25. We are unable to report on equality data due to the possibility of the individuals being identifiable.

Training

The 2024/25 Learning and Development Programme offered a range of learning and development opportunities designed to meet corporate, service and individual needs. Development needs were identified corporately and through individual PDRs. The delivery of development opportunities available for staff was adjusted to align with the move to hybrid working. Training was delivered via facilitated virtual events, virtual coaching,

webinars, face to face sessions and e-learning. All employees were trained in equality and diversity, sexual harassment, safeguarding, health and safety and data protection as part of the council's annual mandatory training programme.

Corporate training events are advertised to all staff via the intranet or employees are contacted directly for specific events. Attendance is subject to manager approval and places are offered on a first come first served basis. Requests for funded professional and vocational training are approved by Leadership Team.

For 2025, to ensure training and development opportunities at the council are made available on a fair and equal basis, we will be prioritising statutory training needs in the first instance. These will be identified by all service areas by completing a training needs analysis.

Leavers

Introduction

This section provides information on employees who have left the council (both voluntarily and involuntarily) between the period 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. The figures exclude casual employees who have left the council and those who are on a career break.

The total number of leavers during the period is 56. Of these, 44 left voluntarily and 10 left involuntarily. There were also 2 deaths in service. The involuntary leavers include those whose temporary contract had come to an end, dismissal, ill health retirement or redundancy. Please refer to the Annual Turnover Report for 2024/25 (Human Resources Committee June 2025) for full details in terms of reasons for leaving, leavers by length of service, leavers by service area etc. This section looks at leavers in terms of equalities and protected characteristics but does not go in the same details as the Turnover Report.

Leaver data has been analysed using 5 of the 9 protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 as follows:

- Sex (Gender)
- Ethnic origin
- Age
- Religion or Belief
- Disability

Sexual orientation was not provided due to the small numbers of employees in some categories which may identify individuals. There are no concerns in this area.

Although marital status data is recorded this is not currently reportable from the system.

Pregnancy is not a permanent characteristic but a state in time. 5 employees took maternity leave in 2024/25 and it should be noted that no concerns have been raised regarding this protected characteristic.

Although the HR system has capacity for employees to indicate if they are transgender the new starter forms do not request this and instead the council has focused on the current gender and not the past.

Sex (Gender)

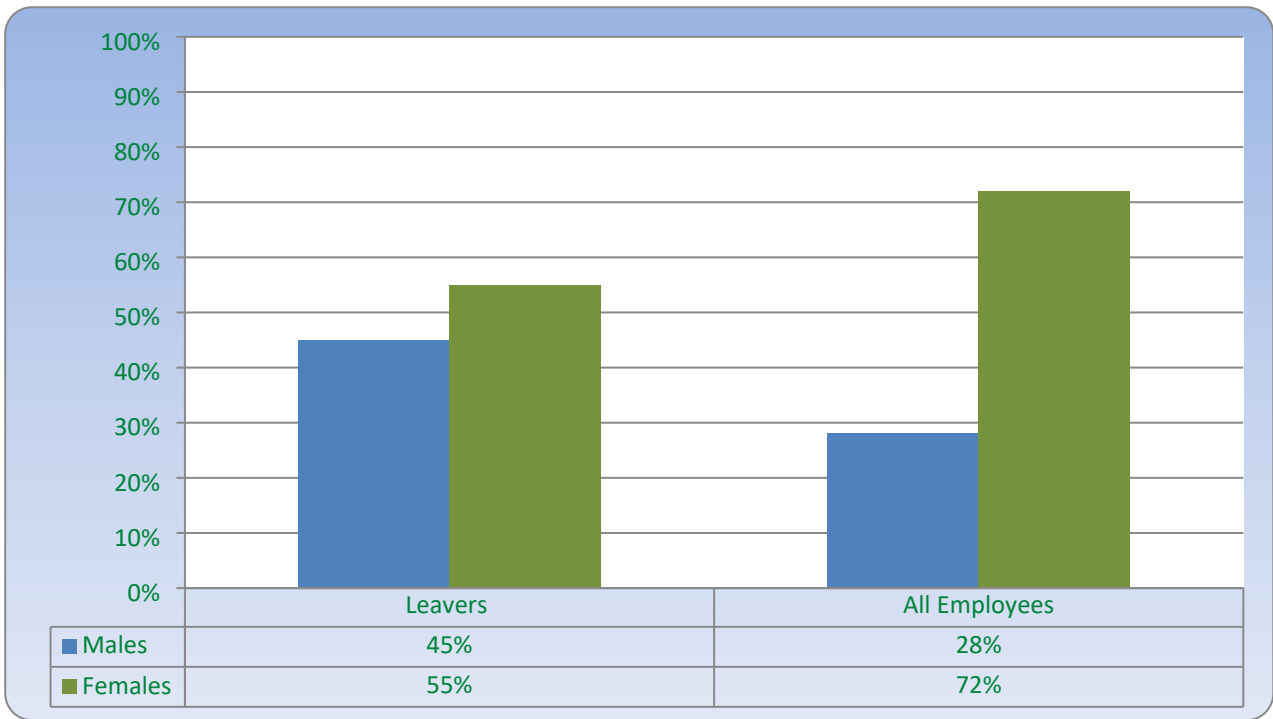


Figure 12.0 Leavers by sex

There were a higher of proportion of male leavers when compared to the overall employee profile. HR have reviewed exit questionnaires which has not indicated any concerns regarding gender.

Ethnic Origin

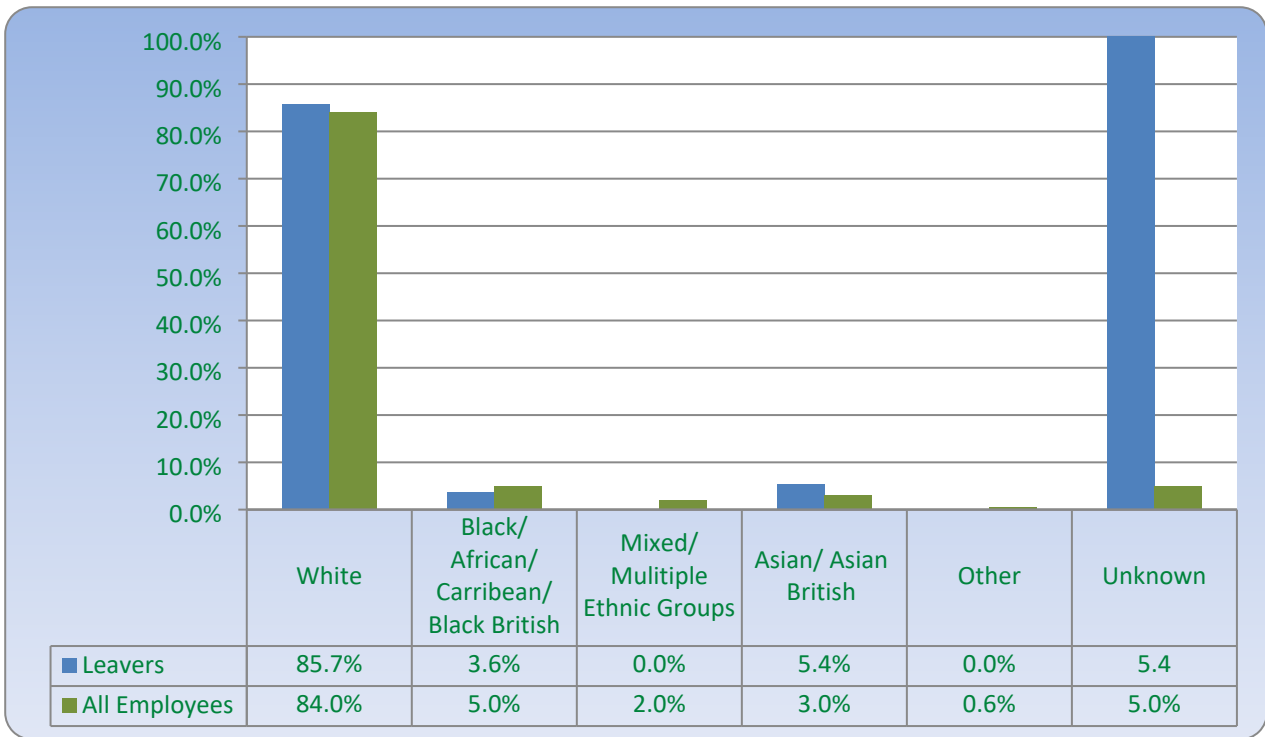


Figure 13.0 Leavers by ethnic origin

Figure 13.0 shows that there was a slightly higher percentage of leavers from the 'Asian/Asian British' group when compared to the percentage of employees from that group. There were no leavers from 'Mixed/Multiple Ethnic' or 'Other' groups. HR have reviewed exit questionnaires which has also not indicated any concerns regarding ethnic origin.

Age

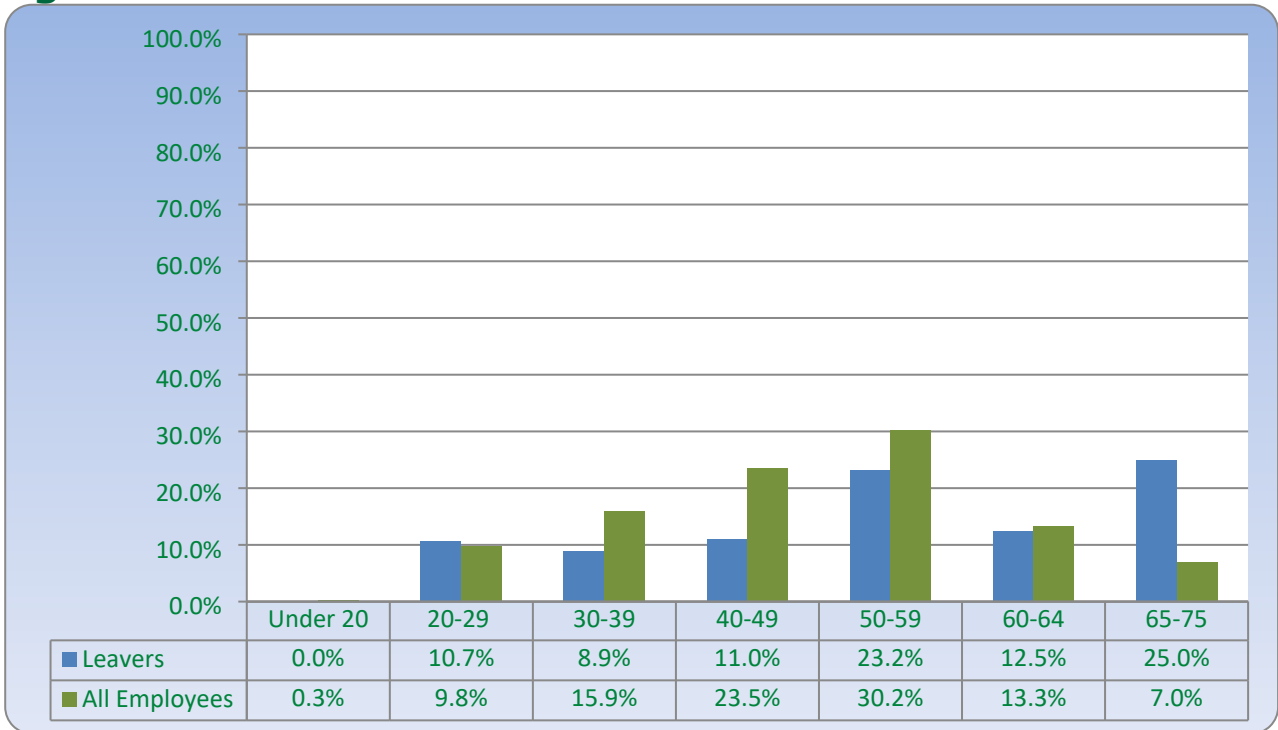


Figure 14.0 Leavers by age

Figure 14.0 shows that the percentage of leavers in the 65-75 age groups was much higher than the percentage of employees in this age group but this is due to employees in this age group taking retirement. The percentage of leavers in the 20-29 age group was very slightly higher than the percentage of employees in this age group but this is in part due to employees in this age group leaving the council to seek promotion. The percentage of leavers in the other age groups were all lower than the percentage of employees in these age range.

Religion or Belief

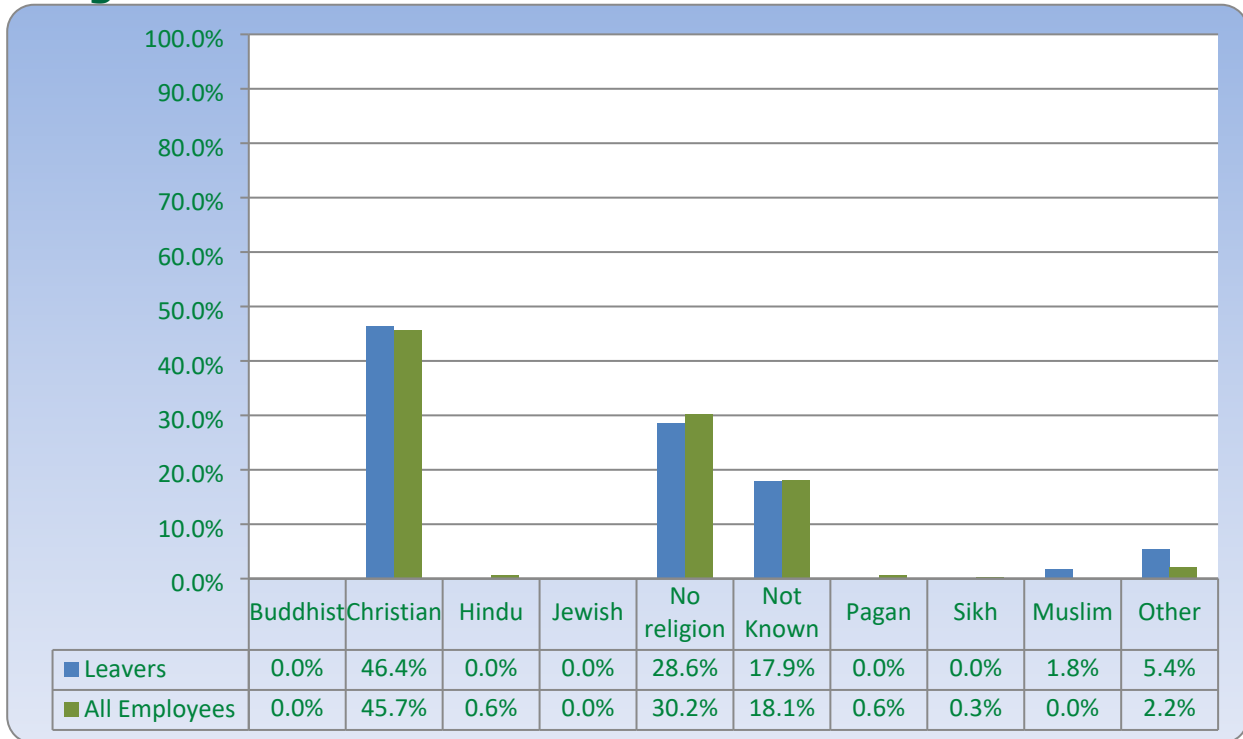


Figure 15.0 Leavers by religion

There are no concerns in this area, the religious belief of leavers in 2024/25 were generally reflective of the overall employee profile given the small numbers involved. The 'all employees' data is from a single date – 31 March 2025 whereas the leaver data is from 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025. This is why it shows 0% for Muslim employees but 1.8% for leavers, i.e. they left the council before 31 March.

Disability

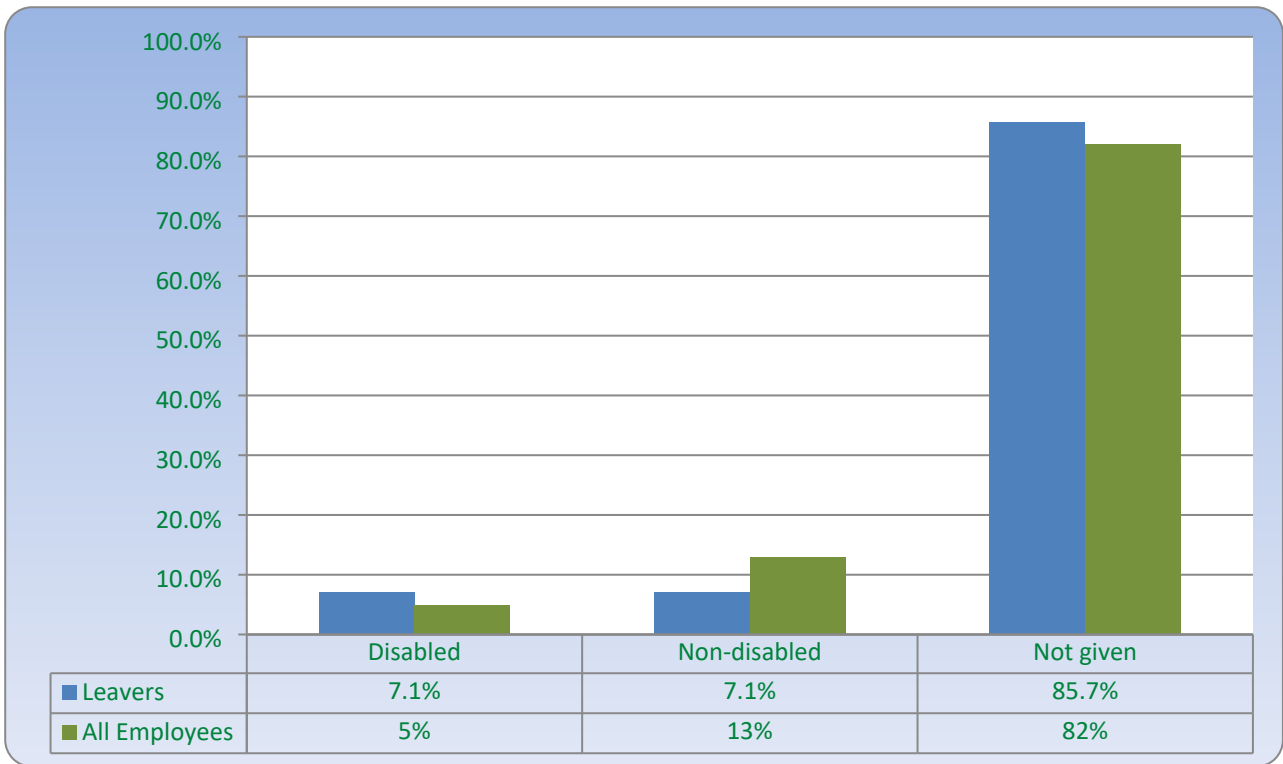


Figure 16.0 Leavers by disability

Figure 16.0 shows the percentage of leavers with a disability (7.1%) was slightly higher than the percentage of employees with a disability (5%). HR have reviewed exit questionnaires which has also not indicated any concerns regarding disability.

Staff and Employment Equality Recommendations 1 July 25 – 31 June 26

The recommendations listed below refer to staff and employment only.

Recommendation	Timescale
Employee Profile	
To complete the required annual Gender Pay Gap report for 2025.	Published by March 2026.
Work collaboratively with colleagues in Housing & Health on the refreshed Equalities Strategy to ensure a best practice approach connecting staff and residents.	HR will support this work as and when required.
Send all staff a reminder to check and update their personal details on MyView ahead of the data being analysed for the next annual equalities report to ensure we have fuller rather than partial data (especially religion, sexual orientation and disability) reminding staff that we are not interested in their individual data but global percentages.	Reminder to go out in Team Update in February 2026.
Recruitment	
To ensure equalities data at the shortlisting stage is included in next year's report.	August 2026.
Discipline, Grievance and Probation	
Continue to monitor equalities data for all disciplinary, grievance and formal probationary cases.	We will continue to collect this data for any disciplinary, grievance and formal probationary cases.
Training	
Continue to ensure that all staff complete the equality and diversity module as part of the mandatory e-learning training programme. Offer further equalities based training as identified by annual training needs analysis.	Staff are automatically reminded 12 months after they last completed the mandatory equality and diversity module to go back into the system and refresh their training. Directors were asked to complete a training needs analysis for their services in August 2025.
Continue to promote equalities-based events such as International Women's Day. Maintain a sufficient bank of	Equalities-based events will be promoted as and when they are relevant. Refresher training for Mental Health First Aiders has already

Mental Health First Aiders to support staff experiencing mental health issues and run refresher training.	been delivered in 2025 but will be arranged again as and when necessary.
The East Herts Together Group's remit is being expanded to ensure minority groups are represented and celebrated	The group will be run by staff and, as well as suggesting improvements following the staff survey, they will produce plans to celebrate religious festivals, learning at work, black history, Pride etc.