



# Employee Workforce Report

2024 - 2025

Human Resources

## Contents

Executive Summary .....	4
Employee Lifecycle.....	4
Our People .....	5
Corporate Workforce Data .....	5
Diversity .....	6
Age .....	7
Gender .....	7
Gender Identity:.....	10
Ethnicity .....	10
Disability.....	11
Time off for new parents.....	12
Employee Lifecycle – Attract.....	13
Disability Confident Employer .....	13
Employee Benefits .....	14
Make a Difference campaign.....	14
Recruitment Events.....	14
Diversity of Applicants and Hires .....	15
Agency Spend Information .....	17
Employee Lifecycle – Engage.....	20
New Starters .....	20
Induction .....	20
Employee Groups .....	21
Employee Lifecycle – Develop.....	22
Training and Development 2024 – 2025 .....	22
Corporate Training 2024 – 2025 .....	23
Inclusion and wellbeing .....	24
Apprenticeships.....	25
Performance Reviews .....	26
HR Ratios .....	26
Perform and progress.....	27
Performance .....	27
Misconduct .....	28
Resolving Workplace Issues.....	28
Attendance Management .....	29

Flexible Working .....	29
Policy Reviews.....	29
Employee Lifecycle – Reward.....	31
Reward .....	31
Annual Pay Information .....	32
Employee Lifecycle – Retain .....	34
Retain.....	34
Conclusions .....	36
Our People .....	36
Attract .....	36
Engage .....	37
Develop .....	37
Reward .....	37
Retain.....	37
Next Steps .....	38

# Executive Summary

This employee workforce report reviews data from April 2024 – March 2025. It aims to overview key workforce data and the relevant trends in the Council’s workforce strategies and priorities.

This report also gives an <sup>1</sup>overview of initiatives in place to support our colleagues over the past year.

Trend data is given throughout the report where its applicable or available. The workforce data included in this report is our directly employed workforce and does not include temporary agency workers. Statistics quoted are as of 01 April 2024.

## Employee Lifecycle

The structure of the report represents workforce statistics based on a typical employee lifecycle. An employee lifecycle is a HR model that identifies the stages an employee advances through an organisation. For employees, it sets out a consistent series of steps through which their career might be expected to move and for the Council it provides a useful means of understanding the workforce.

The HR department aims to support adaptable, flexible and modern organisation structures that can respond to the changing working environment and meet the Councils priorities. The Council continues to strive to be an ‘employer of choice’. The below employee lifecycle will be used in this report to present the Councils current workforce statistics.



---

1

# Our People

## Corporate Workforce Data

Total employees and full time equivalent (FTE's) 2023 – 2025:

	01 April 2023	01 April 2024	01 April 2025
Headcount	783	804	824
FTE	690	715	731

Breakdown of permanent, fixed term and casual employees 2023 – 2025:

Role Type	01 April 2023	01 April 2024	01 April 2025
Permanent	732	749	761
Fixed Term	37	42	45
Casual	14	13	18

Workforce Headcount and FTE by grade 01 April 2025:

Grade Name	FTE	Headcount	Headcount % workforce
Apprentices	2	2	0.24
BAND 1	4.6	17	2.06
BAND 2	86.6	89	10.80
BAND 3	54.0	76	9.22
BAND 4	165.3	196	23.79
BAND 5	90.4	98	11.89
BAND 6	101.2	107	12.99
BAND 7	98.9	105	12.74
BAND 8	58.2	61	7.40

BAND 9	40.3	42	5.10
BAND 10	6.7	7	0.85
BAND 11	14.0	14	1.70
BAND 12+	10	10	1.21

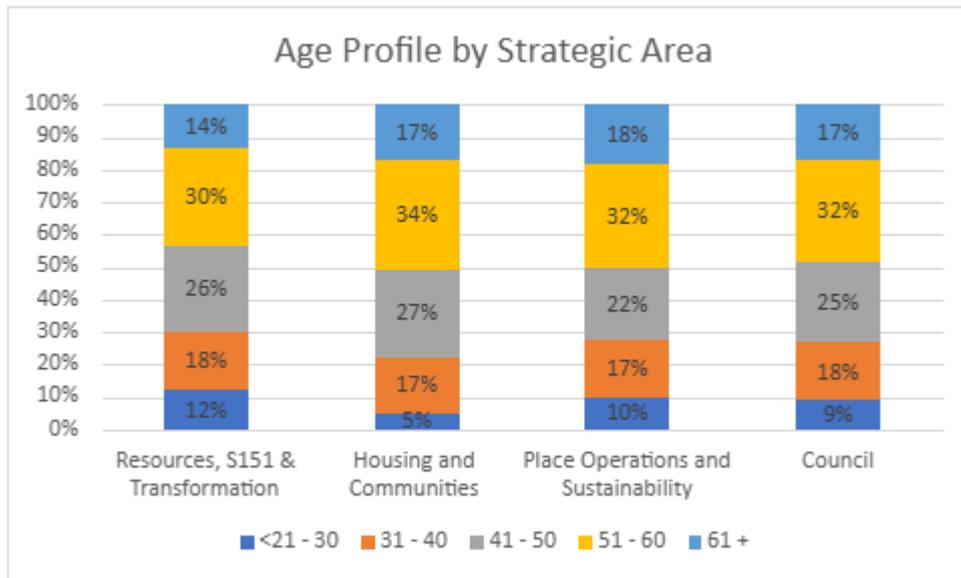
## Diversity

The Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities to publish equality information on an annual basis. The diversity information contained within this report supports this and is used to support the building of valuable insight that will aid us in becoming more inclusive.

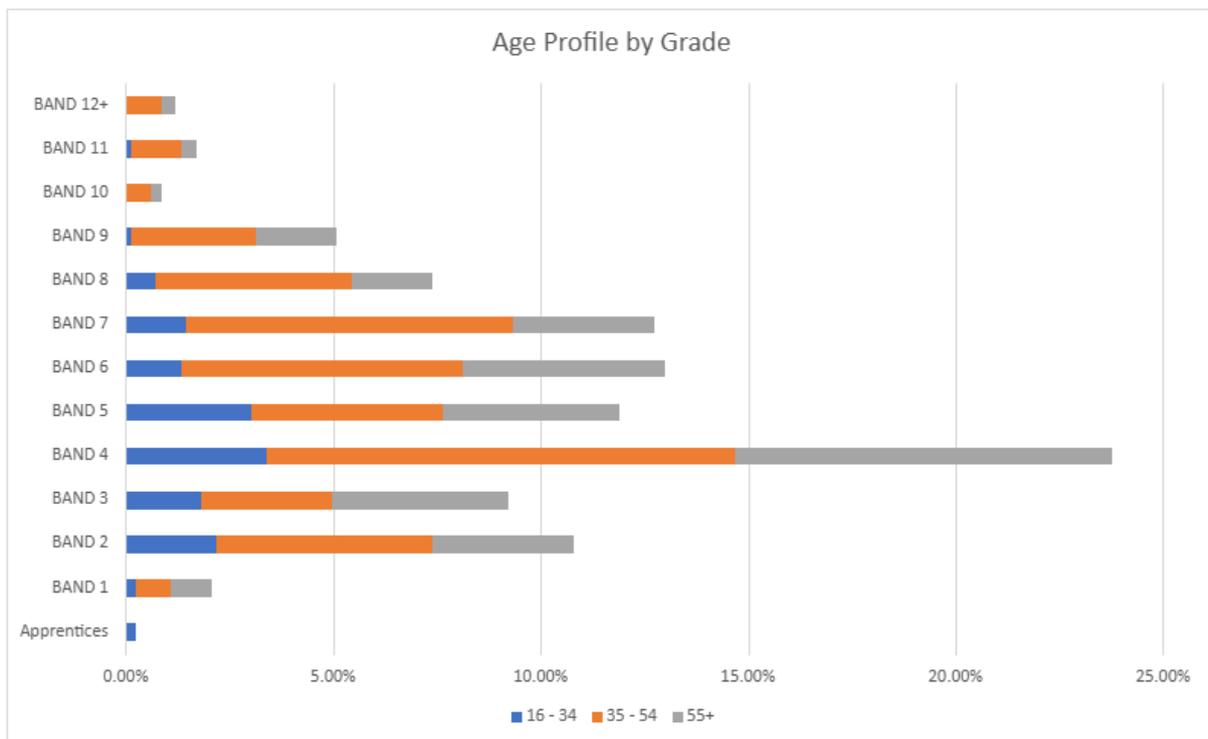
We continue to encourage employees to declare their personal diversity information, however it remains discretionary. In the last financial year, we reviewed the language used to describe all diversity data and aligned this with the most recent census and ACAS recommendations. All colleagues were encouraged to review their personal information on the HR Management System and update this. This year we are continuing to review ways to incorporate and raise awareness about inclusive language amongst NFDC employees through e-learning modules, HR brief bites and toolbox talks.

## Age

Age profile by strategic area as of 01 April 2025:



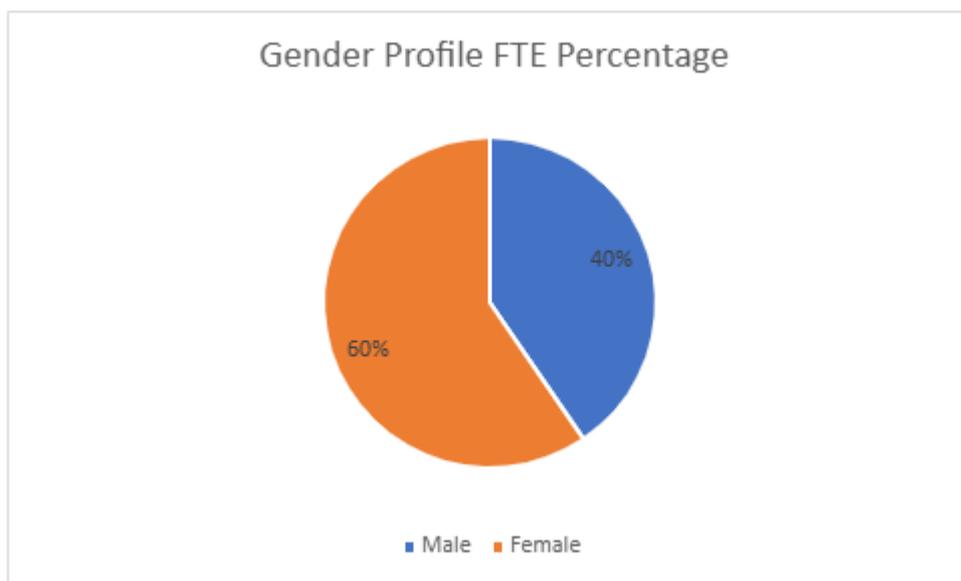
Age profile by grade 01 April 2025:



## Gender

Gender by headcount and FTE 01 April 2025:

	Headcount	FTE
Male	360	296
Female	464	435



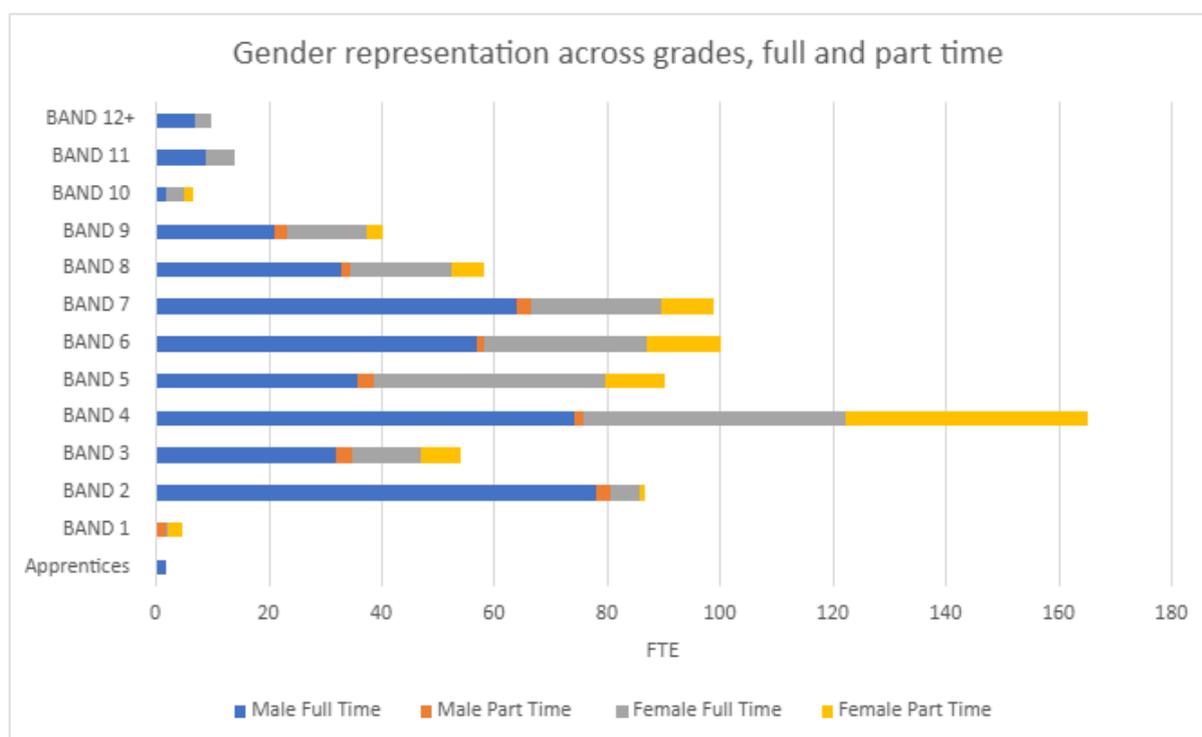
The Council's gender profile has changed significantly from the previous year with 60% of females FTE and 40% males FTE in 2024-25, compared to 39% of females FTE and 61% of males FTE in 2023-24.

Gender FTE profile by grade 01 April 2025:

	Male Full Time	Male Part Time	Total	Female Full Time	Female Part Time	Total
Apprentices	2	0	2	0	0	0
Band 1	0	1.89	1.89	0.27	2.48	2.75
Band 2	78	2.83	80.83	5	0.81	5.81
Band 3	32	3.03	35.03	12	6.99	18.99
Band 4	74.12	1.83	75.95	46.22	43.1	89.32
Band 5	35.81	2.92	38.73	41	10.7	51.7

Band 6	56.86	1.29	58.15	29	13.08	42.08
Band 7	64	2.63	66.63	22.89	9.34	32.23
Band 8	33	1.62	34.62	18	5.61	23.61
Band 9	21	2.43	23.43	13.91	2.94	16.85
Band 10	2	0	2	3	1.67	4.67
Band 11	9	0	9	5	0	5
Band 12+	7	0	7	3	0	3
Total	414.79	20.47	435.26	199.29	96.72	296.01

Gender FTE representation across grades, full and part time:



The table and graph indicate that females are more highly represented in part-time roles across the organisation compared to males. Although there is a mix of both genders across all grades, the data shows a slightly lower proportion of females to males overall. This representation is particularly noticeable in higher band roles.

The Council's Gender Pay gap information is detailed in a separate report to HR Committee.

## Gender Identity:

Gender identity refers to a person's (internal) sense of their own gender, which may be male, female or another category such as non-binary. This identity may or may not align with the sex assigned at birth (census 2021). Employees have the option to record their gender identity neutrally by using 'MX' as their title in the Council's HR Management System, iTrent. As of 1 April 2025, 0.12% of employees have chosen this title. We also support employees who wish to include their pronouns in their NFDC email footer. Our application form includes the following options for gender identity: female, intersex, male, non-binary, and prefer not to say.

## Ethnicity

Ethnicity by percentage of headcount 01 April 2025:

Ethnicity	Percentage of headcount
Asian or Asian British	0.8%
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African	0.7%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	0.4%
Other ethnic group	0.2%
Prefer not to say	2.4%
White	79.5%
No ethnicity data	15.9%

The table shows that 79.5% of our employees identify as white and 2.1% identify within an ethnic minority (the previous year was 2.61%). The census 2021 results show that 3.2% of New Forest residents do not identify as white.

The Council does not hold data for 15.9% of colleagues. This is up from 14.66% the previous year. Though, in the previous 12 months the HR team have updated the sensitive information categories on the HR management system, so they are reflective of the most recent census and have periodically raised the profile across the workforce for the importance of updating and providing personal information.

## Disability

As of 01 April 2025, 39 employees (4.73% of the workforce) have recorded on the HR system they are managing a long-term health condition or disability. This is an increase of 15.37% from the previous year. 11 of these employees are supported by reasonable adjustments to their role/working environment. We believe this figure is likely to be higher, with employees managing their health conditions themselves informally and not recording this on the HR management system.

However, we are pleased to see an increase in the last year of employees feeling comfortable to record their health conditions. The HR team has worked hard to raise the profile of why recording this information is important and supportive of the employee.

The census 2021 results show that 18.5% of New Forest residents identify as disabled and 7.3% of these feel they are limited a lot by their disability.

The management of reasonable adjustments was formalised in January 2023. This included:

- improved employee and management guidance to agree reasonable adjustments
- documenting tailored support
- ongoing review of tailored support (based on employee circumstances)

The Council continues to work with Occupational Health and Access to Work to support and implement employee adjustments.

## Time off for new parents

Numbers of family leave from 01 April 2024 – 01 April 2025

Type of leave	Headcount
Maternity	9
Paternity	7
Shared Parental Leave	0
Adoption	1
Keep in touch days	7

There are numerous benefits for both employees and the Council in using KIT days, so we continue to encourage their use to increase participation. We continue to work with managers to support employees on maternity leave as well as to encourage KIT days. Upon returning from maternity leave, employees are well supported from their managers, who work closely with the HR department to ensure a smooth and well-supported transition back into the workplace.

# Employee Lifecycle – Attract

## Disability Confident Employer

NFDC remains focused on our roles being attractive to as diverse a talent pool as possible, preferably reflective of our local labour market. This includes attracting new employees and developing existing employees.

The Council is an inclusive organisation and takes pride in valuing and celebrating diversity. As a public body we aim to ensure a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment across our workforce and respond promptly to any incidents.

As a Disability Confident Employer, we are dedicated to fostering an inclusive and equitable workplace for all employees. We:

- aim to implement best practice in all ongoing and future work
- remove discrimination against any employee or applicant in their access to employment, training, working conditions, promotion or dismissal
- ensure our recruitment process is inclusive and accessible
- communicate and promote our vacancies in methods accessible for all
- offer interviews to any disabled person who meets the essential criteria for the role
- anticipate and make reasonable adjustments for staff and candidates, as required
- support existing employees who acquire a disability or long-term health condition.



## Employee Benefits

A vital part of making sure we are an inclusive employer of choice is ensuring our benefits package remains attractive. This was reviewed back in 2022 and resulted in a new and refreshed employee benefits package. This included the introduction of employee discounts across national and local retailers and access to the Governments Cycle to Work Scheme. The full employee benefits package is detailed externally to potential applicants: [Employee Benefits](#)

In early 2024, the Council conducted a comprehensive review of the benefits package offered to employees. As part of our commitment to enhancing employee satisfaction and work-life balance, we introduced a new policy allowing the buying and selling of annual leave. This policy, which has been available to all colleagues starting since April 2025, is designed to provide greater flexibility and autonomy over their time off. We are dedicated to continually assess and improve our benefits package throughout 2025 to ensure it meets the evolving needs of our workforce.

## Make a Difference campaign

During December 2024 and January 2025, we took part in the LGA's national recruitment campaign, 'Make a Difference'. This involved us working across the south as well as nationally with other councils and designing updated recruitment materials to incorporate our branding along with the national branding. We worked with our Communications team to do this, and created a new email footer, new signage for our adverts on our vehicles, updated website images, and a new recruitment video. We were asked by LGA to present how we approached this, along with one other council, as an example of good practice, and this was presented at an event attended by over 150 councils.

## Recruitment Events

We have attended 8 recruitment events over the past year. These have ranged from job centres, schools, colleges, and Get Inspired event covering the whole of Southampton and the New Forest for 13-14 year olds. The aim is to promote the different types of careers we cover, and the type of apprenticeships we offer.

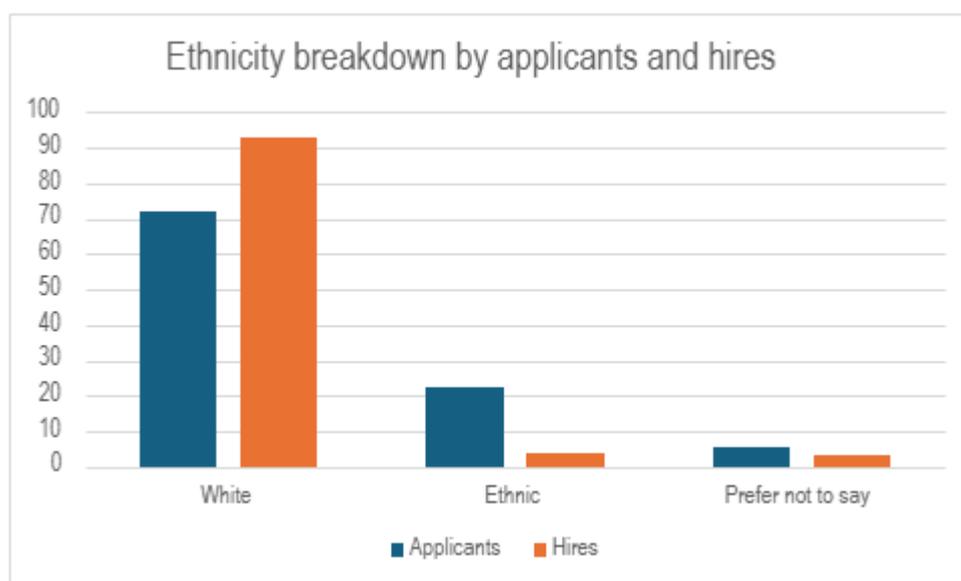
## Diversity of Applicants and Hires

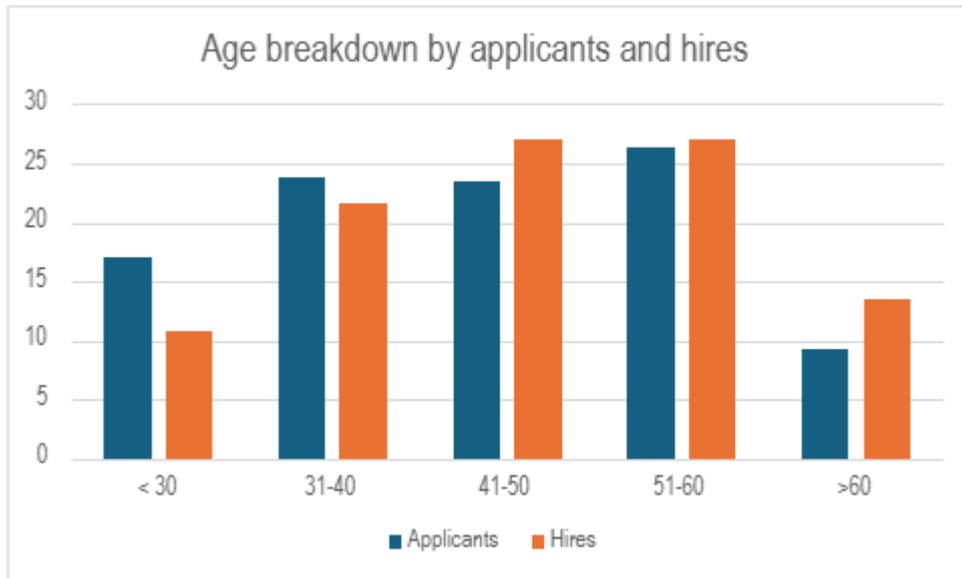
The table below shows the number of recruitment campaigns in 2024-2025 to the previous two years:

	2023-2024	2024-2025
Number of recruitment campaigns	179	227
Percentage of posts filled first time	78%	84.9%
Number of applications	1752 (9.78 per campaign)	4430 (16.93 per campaign)

There were 4430 applicants in the last financial year and 130 new starters. 53 were female (41%) and 77 were male (59%).

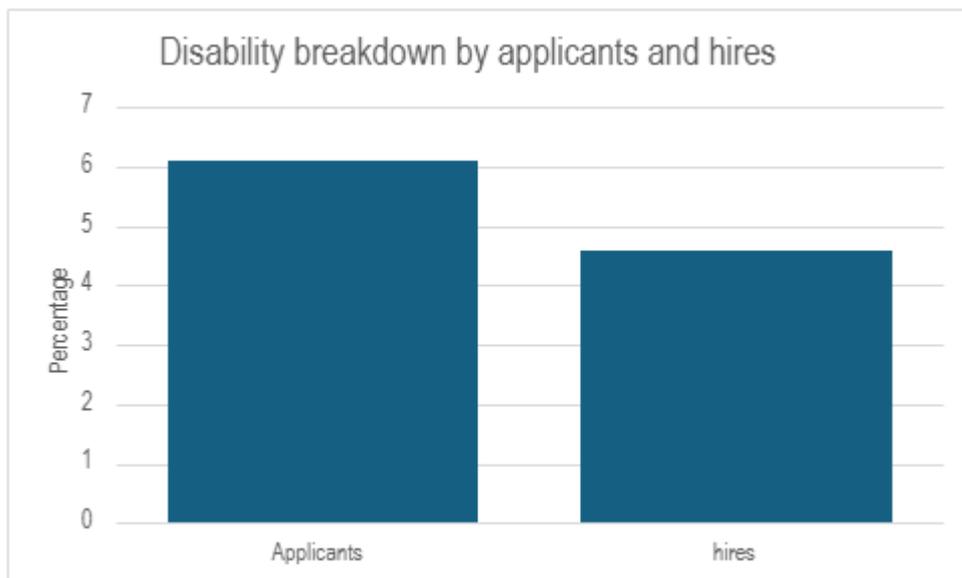
The below graphs identify the diversity of new starters in comparison to applicants. In the most recent financial year the Councils applicants were 22% ethnically diverse. This is increased from 17% in the previous year.





The Council is attracting applications from all age ranges which is reflected in the diversity of our roles and the full range of services that the Council delivers.

The Council continues to support all applicants and new starters who are managing long term health conditions with reasonable adjustments. The number of disabled applicants has decreased from 7% to 6.1% in this financial year, but hires have increased from 4% to 4.6%.



## Agency Spend Information

In exceptional circumstances Service Managers approve the use of agency workers, or for recruitment agencies to carry out searches for us.

Following a formal tender exercise renewed every 4 years, the Council has its own framework agreement with 15 agencies, and a procedure for how we work with these agencies including rates of pay and induction processes to ensure fair and safe employment. These agencies must be approached first, but if unsuccessful Managers may use any other suitable agency.

For the year to 31 March 2025 agency spend was:

Under the framework: £478,045.75

Outside the framework: £696,404.80

For the year to 31 March 2025, agency spend was as follows: £1,174,450.55

Non-agency framework usage:

### Strategic Area - Place, Operations and Sustainability:

Service	Spend
Cemeteries and Amenities	£1,639.68
Cleaning Public Conveniences	£6,039.53
Cleaning Depot Offices	£2,752.73
Refuse Collection	£198,505.29
Street Scene	£36,559.54
Place Operations Strategy and Performance Manager	£91,200.00
Cemeteries/Grounds Maintenance Ops	£69,413.64

### Strategic Area - Housing and Communities:

Health Commercial	£15,888.00
Hsg Maint - Shared Support Hub	£9,579.04
Hsg Maint - Operations Management	£10,173.61

Hsg Maint - Comp & Asset Man - Gas Voids	£16,141.38
Cleaning Sheltered Housing	£974.88

### Strategic Area Corporate Resources, Section 151 and Transformation:

Electoral Services (730)	£3,826.17
Information and Communications Technology (736)	£10,566.35

### Agency framework usage

Strategic Area	Service	Spend
Place Operations and Sustainability	Strategic Director - Place, Operations and Sustainability	£272,979.20
	Economic Development	£46,597.19
	Policy and Plans	£84,867.36
	Conservation and Urban Design	£67.58
	Refuse Collection	£65,232.10
	Place Operations Strategy and Performance Manager	£5,785.00
Corporate Resources, Section 151 and Transformation	Strategic Director- Corporate Resource and Transformation	£19,928.00
	Information, Governance and Complaints	£7,150.00
	Democratic Services	£2,904.50
	ICT Digital Projects & Services	£16,470.60
	Valuers	£18,080.00
Housing and Communities	Health Commercial	£42,224.25
	Pollution	£80,435.33

	Estate Management	£21,388.79
	Homelessness and Advice	£12,294.90

The Council continues to monitor agency spend and aims to minimise wherever possible. The front-line Refuse Collection service has continued to use agency staff to fulfil front-line service delivery over the last 12 months and this is always likely to be the case.

We asked managers who procured outside of the framework for their rationale, and all were due to not being able to source the right resource through the Framework suppliers. We have a new framework in place from August 2025 with a range of different suppliers. A start off meeting has been arranged with all 16 suppliers to detail how we can all work together for the best outcomes.

# Employee Lifecycle – Engage

## New Starters

In 2024 – 2025 there were 130 new starters. The workforce profile of new starters was 41% female and 59% male. The average age of a new starter was 44.

All new starters complete a 6-month probationary period. The purpose of this is to allow both the new starter and the Council to establish their suitability for the role. 92% of new starters were successful in completing their probationary period in 2024 – 2025. This is slightly lower than the success rate in the previous year which was 95%. If employee performance during probation establishes that additional support is needed, the probation period may be extended by 3 months. This happened in 5% of probationary periods in 2024 – 2025, up from 3% last year.

## Induction

All new employees are inducted into the Council through an induction process that is led and facilitated by their new line manager. This will include a role specific induction training plan. A corporate induction with HR forms part of the induction process. This is regularly reviewed and covers information relating to the Councils culture, size, leadership and political structure. It also supports new employees with relevant policies and the HR Management System. All new recruits also complete a suite of e-learning modules. All new line managers have an induction with the HR Advisory team to introduce them to people management at NFDC.

The HR Corporate induction is ordinarily delivered in person, and new employees are encouraged to work with their line manager on role specific hybrid working during the initial stages of induction.

As part of an ongoing programme of employee engagement the Leader, Chairman of the Council, Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team meet new starters on a quarterly basis. The primary purpose of this is to welcome and engage with new employees, provide more council wide context, and find out about their initial experiences.

## Employee Groups

Colleagues are engaged through various employee groups, including Employee Forum, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Staff Group and the LGBT+ employee led network.

The Employee Forum has been meeting for a number of years and is facilitated by the chief executive to talk through corporate issues impacting staff and to allow colleagues the opportunity to raise questions as they wish.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion staff group have been meeting since July 2023 and is facilitated by the chief exec with the assistance of the senior HR Advisor from the HR Advisory team. The aims of this group are to help raise awareness of EDI issues across NFDC, build trusting relationships and support meaningful change by contributing to NFDC equality objectives, policies and initiatives.

The LGBT+ employee network is our first peer led network and launched in June 2024. It remains in its early stages of development but aims to support colleagues, share experience and contribute an LGBT+ perspective to corporate policies and initiatives. The LGBT+ group is actively planning ways to raise awareness across the council and encourage more people to attend their meetups.

# Employee Lifecycle – Develop

## Training and Development 2024 – 2025

We continue to invest informally and formally in our people. The below table compares training spend over the last three years.

	2022 – 2023	2023 – 2024	2024 - 2025
Amount Spent	£138,090	£211,131.87	£304,571.72
Spend per employee	£178.18	£269.64	£369.63
% of pay bill spend	0.44%	0.69%	0.85%

2024 - 2025	Amount Spent	Amount Budgeted
Corporate budget	37,249.90	32,000.00
Service area budget	267,321.82	254,950.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>304,571.72</b>	<b>286,950.00</b>

The overall training spend has increased this year, likely supported by the investment in a corporate leadership development programme. The Council continues to prioritise training and will expand the leadership development programme over the coming year.

The increase in spend aligns with the 2024/25 base budget, which rose by £11,000 compared to the previous year—supporting strategic priorities around leadership and workforce capability.

The Council continues with their investment of a learning management system launched during 2023-24 to support all colleagues with new eLearning packages and broader training opportunities, including taught courses. This system allows training needs to be added to job roles or teams, enabling progress to be tracked corporately by HR, as well as by managers, employees, and eLearning module owners (e.g., Health & Safety) to ensure full compliance.

The table below provides details of corporate training for the year ending 31 March 2025. We are unable to report on service and role-specific training, as this has been organized on an individual and service-specific basis

## Corporate Training 2024 – 2025

Course	Internal/External	No. of sessions	No. of delegates
Brief Bites - Bullying and Harassment	Internal	2	19
Brief Bites - Day to Day Performance Management	Internal	2	34
Brief Bites - Mental Health and Wellbeing for Managers	Internal	2	38
Brief Bites - Performance Management - when things go wrong	Internal	2	28
Brief Bites - Recruitment & Selection	Internal	2	23
Brief Bites - Sickness & Absence	Internal	2	24
Conflict Management	External	1	10
Leadership Development	External	1	7
Management Development	External	4	58
Mental Health First Aiders Refresher	External	3	14
Safeguarding L2	Internal	11	283
Workplace Coaching and Mentoring	External	1	7

For the last two years the Council has run a leadership development programme for 25 leaders across the Council supported by an external trainer. 2 cohorts continue to run which included 4 modules and 5 masterclasses. The leadership development programme has recently been extended to middle managers in the last 6 months.

The Council has various e-learning modules for employees to complete depending on their role. Most modules need regular renewal and are alerted to this through the new learning management system. Module owners have access to a weekly report on who has completed the module and those that are outstanding.

The LMS details all training undertaking by employees, records can be viewed by manager and employee as well as HR. Corporate training course dates and details are recorded in the system and employees can self-book, with alerts to their manager for approval.

## Inclusion and wellbeing

Inclusion and wellbeing continue to be ongoing themes for our development. Wellbeing support for all employees remains a priority. The below lists various preventative support promoted by the HR Team:

- Ongoing promotion of the Employee Assistance Programme offering 24/7 support for all of life's events, including emotional/personal, legal, financial, addiction and career
- A suite of Wellbeing Champions is available and the benefits of using the support promoted to the workforce. Regular group meetings are held to improve skills and a consistent approach.
- Championing managers to support employees with Wellbeing Action Plans. These help managers to develop an awareness of working style, stress triggers and responses. The aim is to support employee wellbeing at work.
- Employee Forum offers employees the chance to directly raise issues with the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council. This group serves as an additional communication channel between employees and management, aiming to ensure that every service and team is represented.
- Employee groups, including the EDI group and LGBT+ group, hold regular meetings to discuss updates and changes related to inclusion and wellbeing. They brainstorm ways to incorporate these initiatives across the council.
- HR conducted a review of our sickness policy and processes for both short-term and long-term sickness to better support the wellbeing of our colleagues. This updated policy was launched in January 2025.

- HR regularly promotes and utilizes return-to-work interviews, as well as occupational health referrals and guidance, to support line managers in maintaining employee wellbeing.
- Ongoing review of up to date and ongoing mental health resources on our pages

All employees' complete equality training every two years. All colleagues are currently completing the new content on the learning management system as they are now required to complete two modules. One focuses on Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging and the other on Dignity at Work to support colleagues in understanding the impact of their behaviour on others.

## Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships in the Council continue to be offered, providing skills development and training pathways that benefits department service areas and employee professional development. These are available as new apprenticeship contracts or as a training route for existing employees.

Since the Apprenticeship Levy was introduced in 2017, the Council has enrolled nearly 78 employees onto 17 different types of apprenticeships that's include programmes for business administration, customer service, mechanic, management, landscaping, accounts, ICT and more.

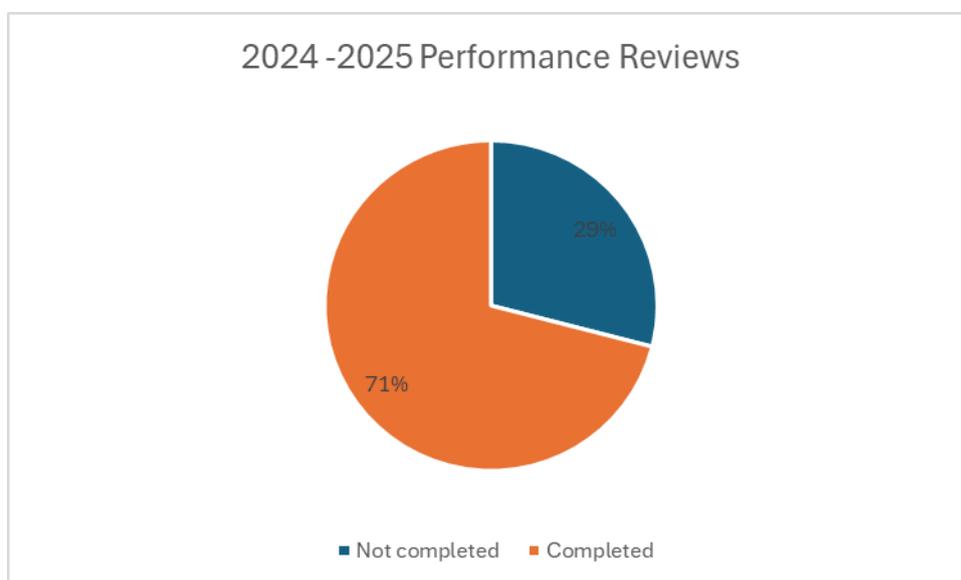
In the last year 18 employees have been enrolled on to programmes and continue to support the work of the Council whilst learning new skills.

Year	Number of Apprenticeships
2017 - 2018	22
2018 - 2019	4
2019 - 2020	15
2020 - 2021	4
2021 - 2022	4
2022 - 2023	8
2023 - 2024	12

2024 - 2025	18
-------------	----

## Performance Reviews

The Council has an annual performance review system aiming to measure employee performance and review training and development opportunities. In the year 2024 – 2025 there was a completion rate of approximately 71% (this is an approx. figure based on the results available). We have continued to communicate on the benefits of performance reviews as well as a clear timescale for them to be completed across all levels.



## HR Ratios

The table below shows the number of HR employees per headcount of the Council. This figure does not include those employed in Payroll or Health and Safety but does include HR Advisory support to the National Park.

	HR Headcount	Headcount (including NPA)	Ratio
2023/2024	10 (8.67 FTE)	804 (877)	1:80 (1:88)
2024/2025	13 (11.67 FTE)	824 (908)	1:63 (1:70)

The latest Brightmine (formerly Xpert HR) survey from January 2024 for both private and public sector shows an average of employees per HR practitioner as 1:74. Comparing this to our figures for 2024/25:

- HR Headcount: Increased from 10 (8.67 FTE) in 2023/2024 to 13 (11.67 FTE) in 2024/2025.
- Headcount (including NPA): Increased from 804 (877) in 2023/2024 to 824 (908) in 2024/2025.
- Ratio: Improved from 1:80 (1:88) in 2023/2024 to 1:63 (1:70) in 2024/2025.

This indicates that our HR team has grown and is now better equipped to manage employee needs, with a more favourable ratio compared to the industry average. This improvement suggests enhanced capacity for supporting employee performance, wellbeing, and development.

## Perform and progress

The HR Advisory Team train and support managers on effective day to day management to prevent employee issues escalating. The primary focus is always initially on early, informal resolution to support employees moving forward. The performance review process supports managers to hold meaningful conversations about performance and provide support and development where it is needed.

There are a small proportion of underperforming employees, who despite proactive management support, are managed using the Councils Capability or Disciplinary policies.

## Performance

Our policies support informal resolution of issues wherever possible; therefore, we do not expect to see high numbers of formal performance management cases.

Resolution Type	Number of cases
Informal capability	1
Resignation	3

Formally resolved	0
-------------------	---

## Misconduct

The Council continues to resolve misconduct cases promptly and aims to resolve informally where possible. The aim is to understand issues and address learning points moving forward to prevent future issues from happening. In 2024 – 2025 there were 22 resolved misconduct cases, 13 of these were formal misconduct hearings. This year has seen a slight decrease of approximately 8.33% of total misconduct cases compared to 2023-24.

Resolution Type	Number of cases
Informally resolved	12
Stage 1, 2 or 3 hearings	8
Stage 4 hearings	2
Number of dismissals	2
Number of appeals	1

## Resolving Workplace Issues

The Council always endeavours to resolve issues informally as a first port of call between employees and managers as promptly as possible. However, there are occasions where this isn't successful or appropriate and therefore the employee may submit a grievance. In 2024 – 2025 there were 9 resolved cases, of which 4 were resolved informally. This is the same from 9 in the previous year.

The Council has reviewed its approach to bully and harassment in the last year, this included a refreshed, standalone policy separate to the grievance procedure. It aims to resolve issues quickly and fairly for all involved and supports our culture of a zero-tolerance approach to any form of bullying and harassment.

Resolution type	Number of cases
Informally resolved	4
Stage 1	2

Stage 1 not upheld	2
Number of Stage 1 cases progressed to Stage 2	1

Since early 2025, the HR Advisory team has developed a case manager dashboard which enables managers to view their team and service area data. This tool will help them to make informed decisions and provides oversight for each directorate. The HR Advisory team can use this dashboard to analyse trends, identify common ER reasons, and monitor the volume of ER work coming across the entire organisation. The dashboard is still in its early stages but is expected to be used proactively in day-to-day management.

## Attendance Management

A full attendance management report is available online. This shows that in 2024 – 2025 the percentage of working time lost was 3.38%, this is reduced from 3.53% in the previous year.

## Flexible Working

In the past year there were 14 flexible working requests. 12 of these were agreed and approved but 2 were declined. There were no appeals.

The primary reasons for the requests were twofold: firstly, employees sought changes to their working hours to better accommodate their personal and professional needs. Secondly, there were requests for flexible retirement options, allowing employees to transition gradually into retirement while maintaining some level of work engagement.

## Policy Reviews

Since April 2024, there have been multiple employment legislation changes impacting HR policies. This includes the protection provided to employees returning from maternity or shared parental leave, time off for carers leave, neonatal care leave, flexible working and the duty of employers to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.

The HR Advisory Team has reviewed all impacted policies and ensured they are reflective and supportive of our workforce. With the assistance of HR Admin and Payroll, these updates have been implemented in our relevant systems and for payroll. Any amendments have been, and will continue to be, taken to EMT for approval before being launched to the wider workforce. Plans for communication and rollout were drafted, incorporating these important updates into our weekly all-staff communications email, ForestNet pages, and posters for operational departments at our depots. The HR Advisory team continues to highlight these important legislative changes during the HR brief bite sessions with managers and supervisors.

With the recent changes in employment law regarding employers' duty to prevent workplace sexual harassment, and with support from our Health and Safety team, we have successfully launched our corporate sexual harassment risk assessment. This initiative is one of the measures we have implemented to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.

We have updated our bullying and harassment brief bite sessions to incorporate recent changes in employment law. Additionally, we have added a new e-learning module to the mandatory training list on our learning management system. This ensures that line managers are well-equipped and prepared to handle such issues if they arise as well as awareness for all employees. Furthermore, we have recently introduced an anonymous 'Raise a Concern' form to provide employees with a confidential way to report any concerns. This is still in its early stages to measure success.

The Council introduced Support Leave to enable colleagues with caring responsibilities up to one working week paid leave in a year. The HR Team will continue to review the use of this and ensure it remains supportive.

# Employee Lifecycle – Reward

## Reward

We reward and recognise our people in many ways, both formally and informally. We value our workforce, and this is shown in their commitment to their work and our communities.

In addition to our salary and expense arrangements, managers can reward exceptional performance through increment advancements or bonuses (where appropriate). The table below details additional pay information in comparison to the previous year.

	2023/24	2024/25
Double Increments/Advancements	10 employees (3 males, 7 females)	7 employees (3 males, 4 females)
Increment Withheld	1 employee	3 employees
Increment Progression (in line with T&C's)	245 employees	236 employees
No increment due (top of band, at bar in career grade, on fixed term contract, casual or started after September)	564 employees	580 employees
Additional payments (bonus/market supplement/honorarium)	Bonus: 9 Honorarium: 30 Market Supplement: 85	Bonus: 5 Honorarium: 28 Market Supplement: 76

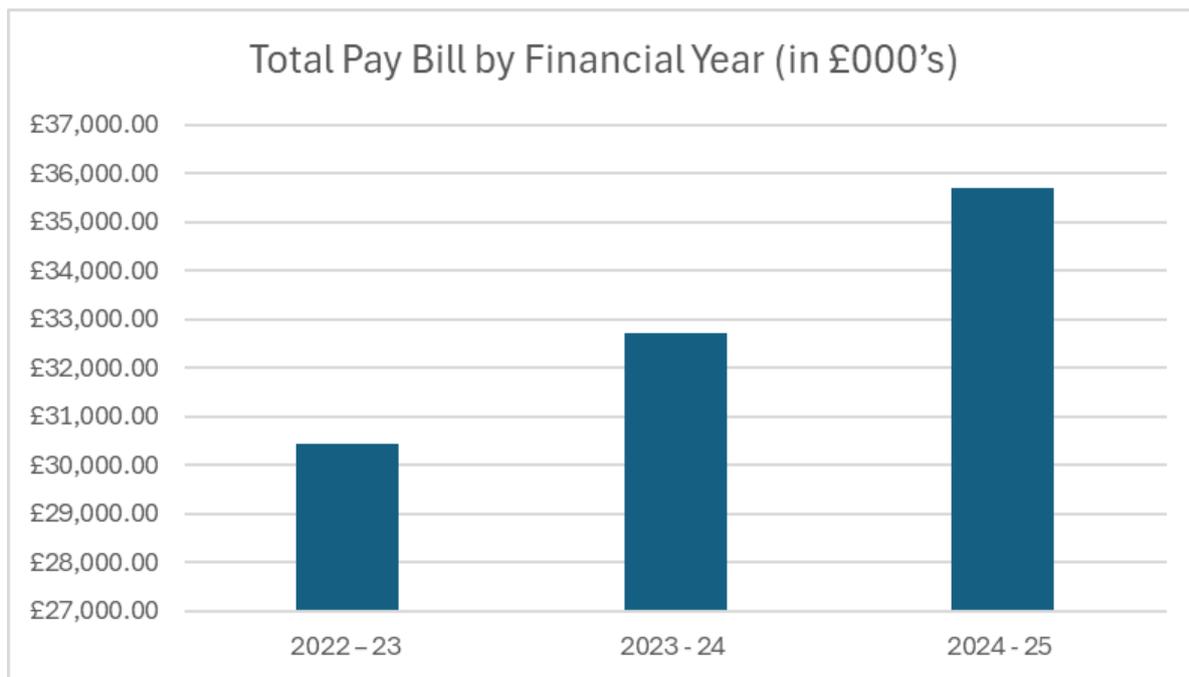
In August 2024 the Council extended its use of Market Supplements to include Bands 11 and 12. This was in response to recruitment difficulties at senior levels. In exceptional circumstances, and where approved by relevant parties, the market supplement could be increased up to 15%. This applies to all posts up to and including Band 12.

In accordance with the Local Government Association guidance on the Governments requirement for reporting remuneration relationships (the ratio between the highest paid employee and the median average earning across the organisation as a multiple). Based on pre 25/26 pay award salaries for 1<sup>st</sup> April 25:

Chief Executive Remuneration	£140,941
Employee Median Average Remuneration	£29,430
Ratio	4.79

## Annual Pay Information

	2022 - 23	2023 - 24	2024 - 25
Total Pay Bill (£'000's)	30,429	32,703	35,693



2024 - 2025	£	Total £	Paybill as %
Total Gross Pay	28,138,990.74		
Employers NI	2,743,578.43		
Employers Super	4,810,825.44	<b>35,693,394.61</b>	
General Fund Original Budgeted Expenditure	78,515,390		
HRA Original Budgeted Expenditure	36,186,640	<b>114,702,030</b>	<b>30.88%</b>

# Employee Lifecycle – Retain

## Retain

We aim to support employee retention with positive employee engagement, proactive health and wellbeing support and reward a range of benefits and development opportunities.

Equally the Council has appropriate mechanisms in place to support our people to move on when performance does not meet organisational expectations.

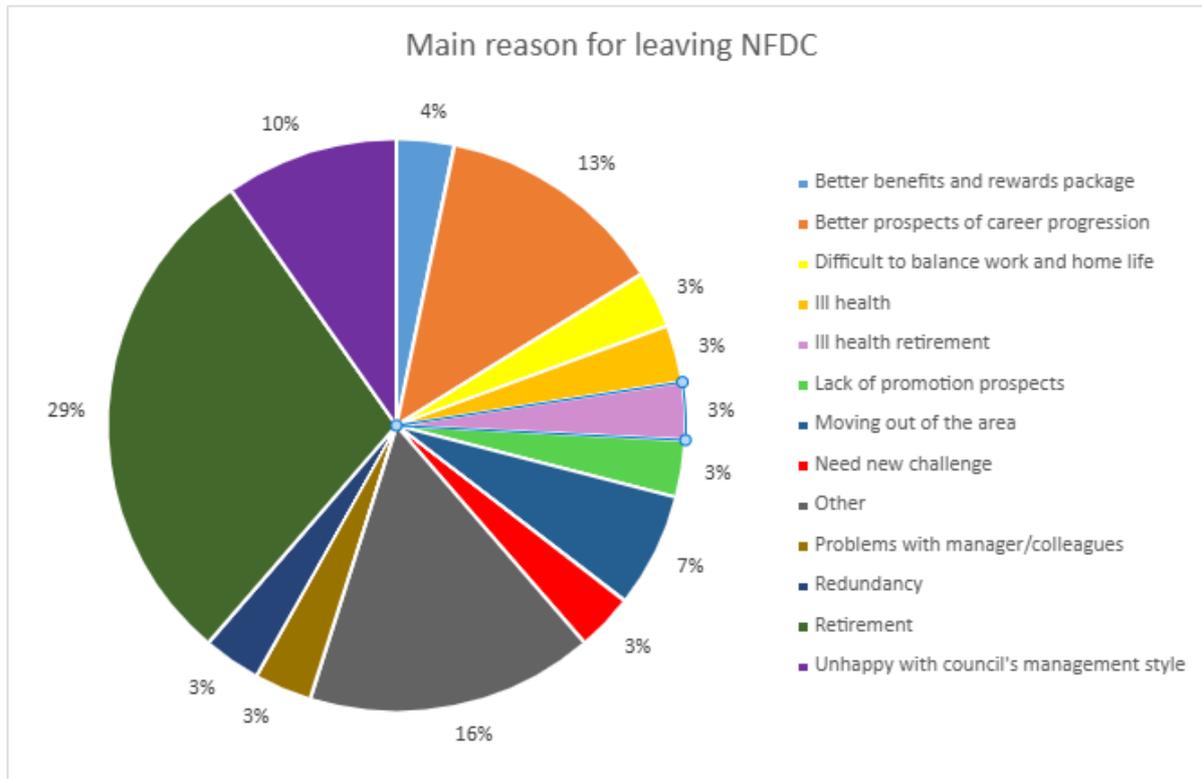
### External turnover rates 2022 – 2025:

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/2025
Voluntary Resignations	12.32%	11.31%	10.2%
Contract Terminations	1.16%	2.36%	3.2%
Turnover	13.48%	13.68%	13.4%

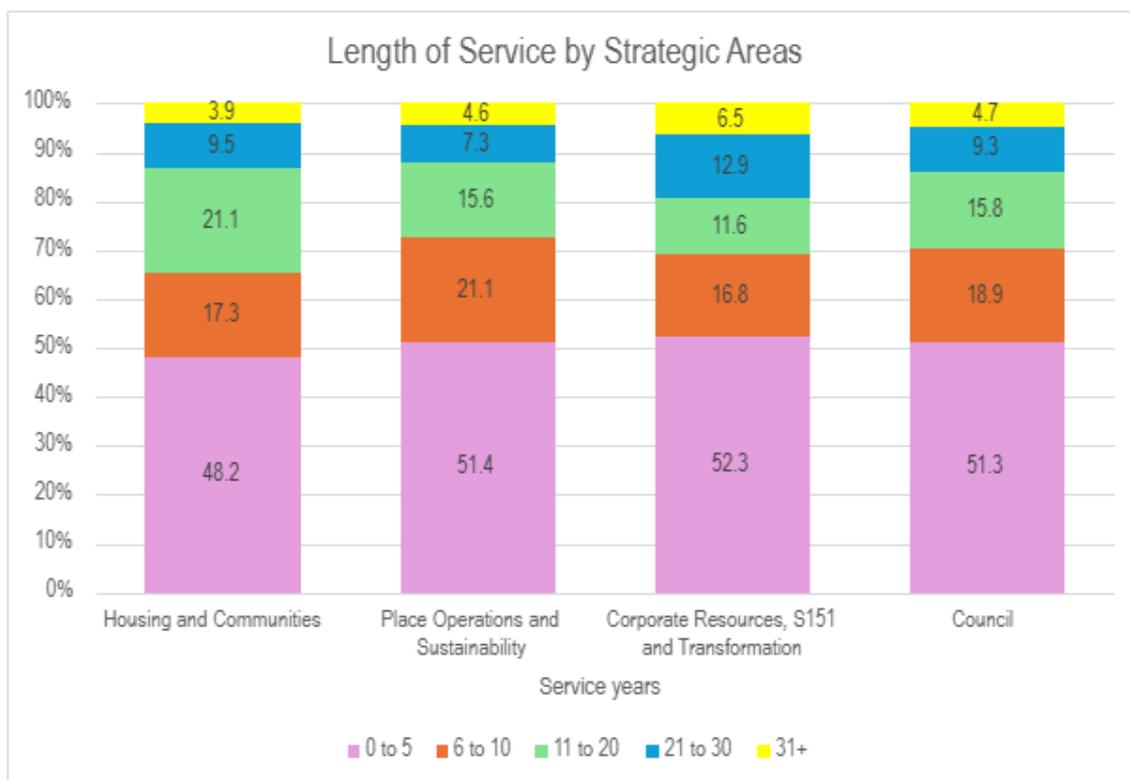
22.9% of new starters left within 12 months of joining, 24% of those were either on fixed term contracts, or did not meet the requirements of their probation. 56% of those who left were in office-based roles, 44% in operational roles.

### Reasons for Leaving

42% of leavers who were sent the leavers questionnaire, completed it. The highest reason for leaving was retirement, followed by 'Other' due to varying reasons. The leavers questionnaire data was used to support the development of the people strategy.



## Length of Service



# Conclusions

## Our People

Over the past year, our workforce profile has experienced slight changes, reflecting our ongoing efforts to encourage colleagues to update their personal information on the HR Management System. This initiative will continue in the coming year to ensure our data remains current and accurate.

Our organisation's data is largely representative of the New Forest Community, as indicated by the 2021 census ([New Forest population change, Census 2021 – ONS](#)). The Council remains committed to encouraging employees to declare their personal diversity information, aligning with the latest census and ACAS recommendations. We are actively raising awareness about inclusive language through various channels, including e-learning modules, HR brief bites, and toolbox talks.

There has been a significant shift in our gender profile, with females now representing 60% of the FTEs and males 40% in 2024-25, compared to 39% females and 61% males in 2023-24. Females are more highly represented in part-time roles across the organization.

The number of employees recording a long-term health condition or disability has increased, with 11 employees receiving reasonable adjustments. The Council continues to collaborate with Occupational Health and Access to Work to support and implement these adjustments.

Regarding parental leave, the Council supports employees on maternity leave and encourages the use of Keep in Touch (KIT) days to increase participation and ensure a smooth transition back into the workplace.

This comprehensive overview emphasises the Council's dedication to diversity, inclusion, and employee support, fostering a positive and productive work environment.

## Attract

The number of applicants per recruitment campaign has increased from 9.78 per campaign in the previous year to 16.93.

The diversity of applicants continues to increase, 22% were ethnically diverse in comparison to 17% the previous year.

## Engage

All new employees are welcomed to the Council with induction remaining critical to the process. Further plans for engagement are in process, which we expect to see more of in the next financial year. This will enable us to strengthen our stakeholder relationships, drive higher levels of participation, and ultimately achieve our strategic goals more effectively; all in line with the new People Strategy.

## Develop

We continue to invest in our employees through an overall corporate training budget (decreased by 1.4% for the 25/26 financial year), and role specific training. 0.85% of the pay bill was spent on training in 2024-25, increased from 0.69% the previous year.

Casework and workplace issues continue to contribute to the workload of the wider HR team. All teams aim to support managers in finding the right resolutions to these issues whether it be employment relations, recruitment or payroll focused.

## Reward

Reward remains critical to our people. Market Supplements were extended to Bands 11 and 12 in August 2024 in response to senior recruitment difficulties.

## Retain

Over two thirds of our colleagues are at the top of their salary scale (70%), which indicates healthy retention levels. External turnover has decreased from 13.68% to 13.40% and remains at a healthy level.

## Next Steps

We continue to explore different ways to analyse and present workforce data to understand more about our people. In the next 12 months the HR Advisory team will be looking to support:

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion staff group continue to meet quarterly, reviewing processes and policies and raising awareness for EDI issues across the workforce. The Councils LGBT+ Network is an extension of this, supporting colleagues across the Council. Our equality objective 'encourage diversity and champion equality within our workplace, developing and supporting an inclusive working environment where all staff are respected with zero tolerance of bullying and harassment' continues to be a focus of the EDI group over the coming 12 months. The HR Team will support the Council to meet the recent legislative requirement to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, with the support of the EDI group and Health and Safety.

The Employee Forum continue to meet quarterly raising and resolving relevant issues. Following the recent staff survey, the employee forum will continue to review any agreed action plans. These plans, which have been developed based on the survey feedback, will be assessed to determine how the employee forum can best support their implementation. This ongoing review process ensures that the forum remains actively engaged in addressing employee concerns and contributes to creating a more positive and productive workplace environment.

We continue to embed health and wellbeing into the organisation and support managers and employees in this. We do this by proactively supporting all colleagues with wellbeing champions and an established Employee Assistance Programme. We also use tools to support colleagues managing wellbeing issues, for example the HSE Stress Questionnaire, Wellbeing Action Plans, return to work meetings and occupational health referrals. The Councils proactive approach to supporting employees with reasonable adjustments remains a priority and colleagues supported by reasonable adjustments are recorded using a plan with regular manager reviews.

The employee benefits package will be reviewed this year looking at the support and services we offer and whether this remains attractive to both current and prospective employees for the future.

Recruitment processes have been continuously enhanced, notably with the introduction of a simplified application form and a comprehensive candidate pack for all vacancies last year. These initiatives have garnered positive feedback from both candidates and recruiting managers, highlighting their effectiveness. The improvements are designed to streamline the recruitment process, boost efficiency, and attract a diverse pool of high-quality candidates. Looking ahead to the new financial year, we plan to review the current business case template and update our processes to further refine our recruitment strategy.

The report reveals that 22.9% of new starters leave within their first 12 months of employment. In response, the HR team will undertake a comprehensive review of the induction process. This review will explore the potential benefits of implementing group induction sessions to enhance the onboarding experience. Additionally, feedback from exit interviews will be analysed to identify specific areas for improvement. These measures aim to reduce early turnover rates and ensure new employees feel supported and integrated into the organization from the outset.

The Learning Management System remains firmly embedded across the workforce and serves as a primary learning resource for the Council. The Learning & Development team prioritises compliance while also supporting the workforce development and career pathways. Monthly meetings are held with our operational supervisors to work towards completion of tailored mandatory modules, and we are now also developing new, non-mandatory content available to all employees as supplementary learning opportunities. These range from 'stepping up to leadership', 'handling interruptions and distractions', to 'understanding anxiety', this will be developed more during 2025/26.

Three cohorts of development sessions for our middle managers ran from Sept 24 – July 25, with 60 managers having completed the programme. This concludes our current round of leadership and management development in its current form. We will reflect on the programmes, and more development will be delivered in 25/26 to meet our future needs at all levels from supervisor upwards, in line with our People Strategy action plan linked to our behaviour's commitments, and leadership competencies which will be designed later in 2025 and into 2026.

