EDI
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Annual Report
2022 - 23

*Based on our corporate EDI Strategy 2022 - 24

WORCESTERSHIRE
CHILDREN FIRST

worcestershire
county council

Contents

Introduction

As part of our duties under The Equality Act (2010), Worcestershire County Council and Worcestershire Children First, are required to produce and publish an annual report outlining the progress that we have made against our objectives which are set out in our EDI Strategy 2022-24.

This report sets out a summary of the work undertaken in the first year of delivery, so far against our objectives and outcomes, an update on work to meet each objective and finally, our workforce equality data which is also a publishing requirement under The Equality Act (2010).

During the year, progress against our objectives is monitored quarterly by our Strategic Diversity Leadership Group. This group is chaired by the Chief Executive and membership includes Assistant Directors from Commercial and Change Directorate, Human Resources and Organisational Development, People and Communities, Worcestershire Children First, Economy and Infrastructure, and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

At Worcestershire County Council and Worcestershire Children First (WCC and WCF),

we believe that everyone deserves a voice. The current Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy is the benchmark for our ongoing work and priorities and runs until September 2024.

We have learnt a great deal about how we can improve and build on our next strategy, and fully expect to engage, consult and co-produce further work, relevant to our goals of pursuing better inclusion, and outcomes for our colleagues and community in Worcestershire. The EDI Strategy compliments and supports other relevant work streams such as our Workforce Strategy, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, SEND Strategy and plans, and a wide range of other projects. EDI and our Workforce strategies are integral to each other and build on the importance of a workplace culture of inclusion and respect and compliment the work in each directorate.

A council decision by our Chief Officer Group in 2023 agreed to refocus and prioritise the efforts of this work, by carefully reviewing and assessing the needs to be compliant, accountable, and progress the work at pace in line with other local authorities.

It was agreed that the council provide base budget funding for a role to lead and enhance the EDI work, ensuring consistent expertise and resource to a position of EDI Lead. This positive step has meant we can increase, improve and scrutinise our work from a regulatory, strategic and operational point of view, allowing our aspirations for better inclusion county wide, and a collaborative approach across the council.

We are working hard to create an environment where everyone feels included and valued. We celebrate diversity, continue to challenge discrimination and hold ourselves accountable for making positive change.

Through our EDI work and council values, and with close links and collaborative work through our Workforce Strategy, we are creating and driving a culture of inclusion and respect.

"We are committed to delivering our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and embedding equality into everything we do."

We are proud to share the first annual report detailing some of our commitments and examples of the work we are doing to break down barriers and promote inclusion across the county.

The Public Sector Equality Duty is set out within The Equality Act 2010. Details and links to further information can be found in the Supporting Documents to this report.

"There is no standard legal definition of 'due regard', although various court cases have clarified the general duty and what 'due regard' means.

Advancing equal opportunities means:

• Removing or reduce the disadvantage that people with protected characteristics face

• Taking steps to meet the specific needs of people with protected characteristics

• Encouraging people with protected characteristics to participate fully in all activities, especially when they are underrepresented

The General Duties outlined state public authorities have 'due regard' to the need to:

• Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any ither conduct prohibited within The Equality Act 2010

• Advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who don't

• Fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don't

"Fostering good relations means you are taking action to reduce prejudice and increase understanding between different groups of people".

The nine protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, race, sex, and sexual orientation.

We have faced challenges whilst delivering the first phase of the EDI Strategy. It has provided us with an opportunity to make change, transform systems, processes and engage in a fully inclusive way.

Highlighting the changes needed to ensure better access, inclusion and appropriate service delivery in Worcestershire is beneficial, and we strive to listen, adapt and make changes where we can.

We acknowledge that whilst we have a strong foundation of work embedded since the inception of the strategy, we have a significant journey ahead to enable our objectives, culture and engagement work, and the challenge is being met with enthusiasm, passion, commitment and resource to fully and effectively implement the changes we want to see.

Key areas of challenge have been understanding the way in which we capture and categorise data, and the development of the strategy and co-production / engagement, and the lack of committed resource given to EDI work.

Whilst we started to review and subsequently put stronger governance and frameworks in place, we will see significant change moving into the next phases of work.

A lot of positive changes have been made since its implementation, but following feedback, we openly acknowledge and commit to making improvements, to ensure we prioritise and involve our communities and staff across the county.

Joint statement from our Assistant Director for HROD, and EDI Lead:

"We are committed to achieving equality across all of our service areas for the benefit of both our employees and the residents of Worcestershire. We aim to deliver services that are accessible for all Worcestershire residents and to implement robust policies that will ensure equality in the recruitment, training, and development of our employees. We aim to always be inclusive, encourage equality, and celebrate diversity.

This report highlights the work we have achieved and continue to prioritise, as well as providing us with a challenge to make improvements, and significant change to ensure we are accountable, honest and transparent about the opportunities we should take to further develop our practices to fully embed inclusion.

We are on a journey of progression for equality, diversity and inclusion, and whilst we have a way to go to achieve our goals, we acknowledge that we are on the right path and learn quickly, adapting and recognising when we need to take action. Creating change and transforming mindsets is not a quick fix, but we stand strongly committed to making Worcestershire County Council, Worcestershire Childrens First and the communities it serves, a place where people are valued, respected and encouraged to participate in all of our diversity. We continue our work with a focus to succeed and are driven to become better."

> "
> We are working hard to create an environment where everyone feels included and valued.
> "

Who is Worcestershire?

The below information data sets are the results of the county of Worcestershire, from the ONS Census 2021. The findings and additional, sub-category detail can be found online via our website, or government websites. Our Public Health team have shared the data online and this can be viewed in a number of ways, including ward profile demographic detail.

Age

Age Category	0-17	18-24	25-44	45-64	65-74	75-84	85 plus
Total Age	117,938	41,423	140,763	165,515	73,144	47,133	17,759
% of Worcestershire	19.5%	6.9%	23.3%	27.4%	12.1%	7.8%	2.9%

**Worcestershire Age Compared to West Midlands and England Age Breakdown**
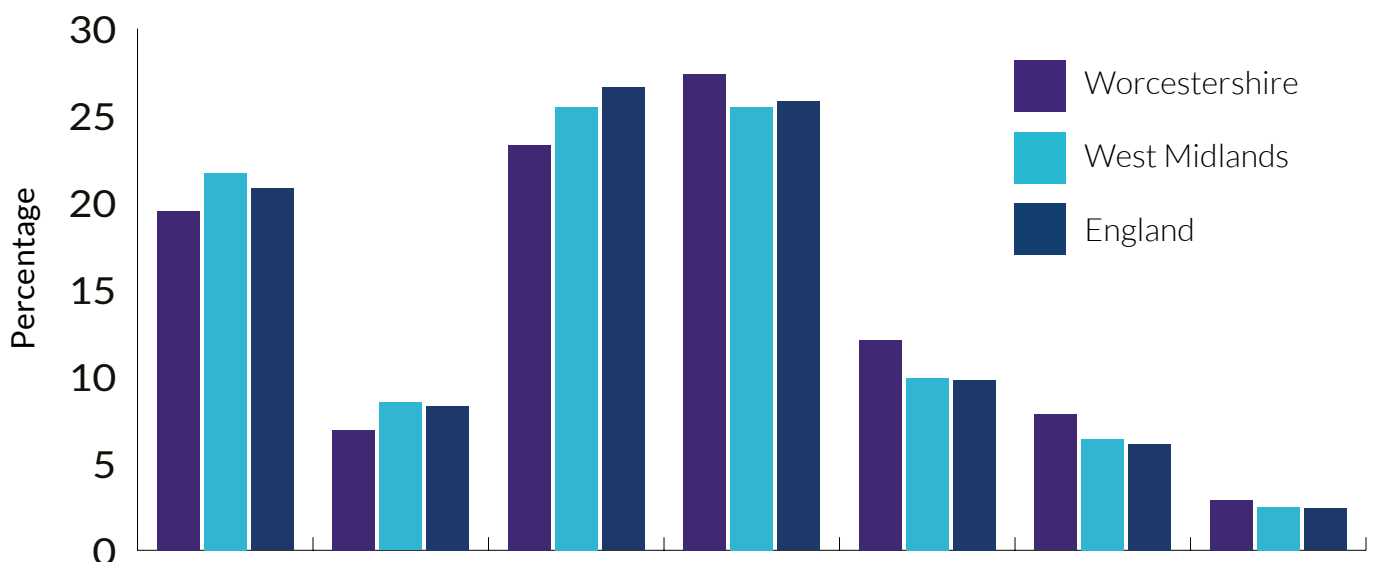
Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Percentage
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: **Bangladeshi**	0.3%
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: **Chinese**	0.3%
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: **Indian**	0.9%
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: **Pakistani**	1.1%
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: **Other Asian**	0.5%
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: **African**	0.3%
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: **Caribbean**	0.3%
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: **Other Black**	0.1%
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: **White and Asian**	0.6%
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: **White and Black African**	0.2%
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: **White and Black Caribbean**	0.7%
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: **Other Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups**	0.4%
White: **English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British**	88.7%
White: **Irish**	0.6%
White: **Gypsy or Irish Traveller**	0.3%
White: **Roma**	0.1%
White: **Other White**	4.2%
Other ethnic group: **Arab**	0.1%
Other ethnic group: **Any other ethnic group**	0.5%

Disability

Disability	Percentage
Not disabled under the Equality Act: No long term physical or mental health conditions	74.3%
Not disabled under the Equality Act: Has long term physical or mental health condition but day-to-day activities are not limited	7.8%
Disabled under the Equality Act: Day-to-day activities limited a little	10.8%
Disabled under the Equality Act: Day-to-day activities limited a lot	7.2%
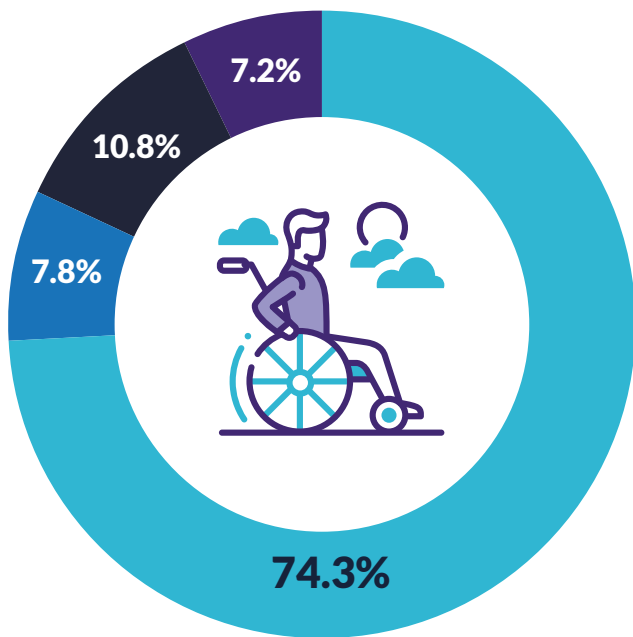
Disability profile in Worcestershire
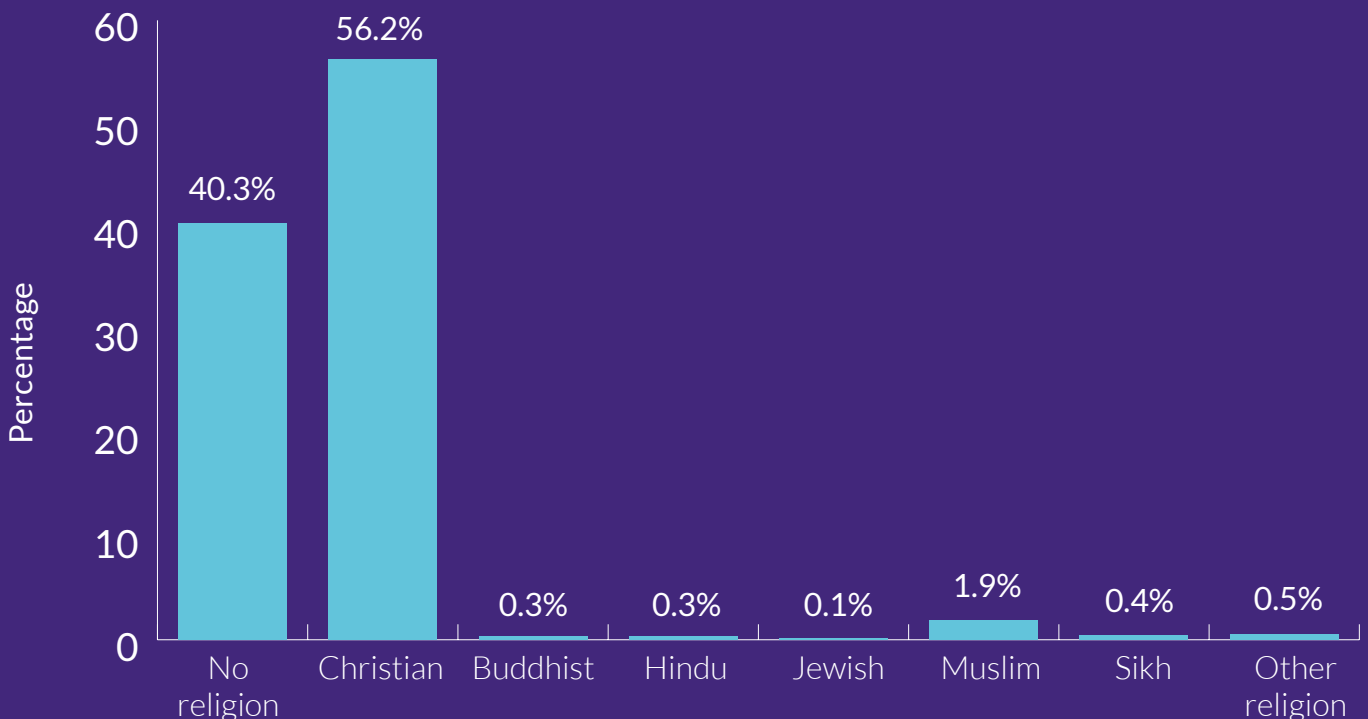
- Not disabled under the Equality Act: No long term physical or mental health conditions
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- Disabled under the Equality Act: Day-to-day activities limited a lot

7.2%

10.8%

7.8%

74.3%

Religion and Belief

Percentage

No religion	40.3%
Christian	56.2%
Buddhist	0.3%
Hindu	0.3%
Jewish	0.1%
Muslim	1.9%
Sikh	0.4%
Other religion	0.5%

Sex profile in Worcestershire

■ Male

■ Female

Sex	Percentage
Male	51%
Female	49%

Gender Identity

| Gender Identity	Percentage
Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth	94.4%
Gender identity different from sex registered at birth but no specific identity given	0.1%
Trans woman	0.1%
Trans man	0.1%
All other gender identities	0.1%
Not Answered	5.2%

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Marriage and Civil Partnership	Percentage
Never married and never registered a civil partnership	32.5%
Married: **Opposite sex**	48%
Married: **Same sex**	0.2%
In a registered civil partnership: **Opposite sex**	0.1%
In a registered civil partnership: **Same sex**	0.1%
Separated, but still married	2.1%
Separated, but still in a registered civil partnership	0%
Divorced	10%
Formerly in a civil partnership now legally dissolved	0%
Widowed	6.9%
Survivng partner from civil partnership	0%

Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation	Percentage
Straight or Heterosexual	91.0%
Gay or Lesbian	1.2%
Bisexual	1.0%
All other sexual orientations	0.2%
Not answered	6.6%

0.2%
1.0%
1.2%
6.6%
91.0%
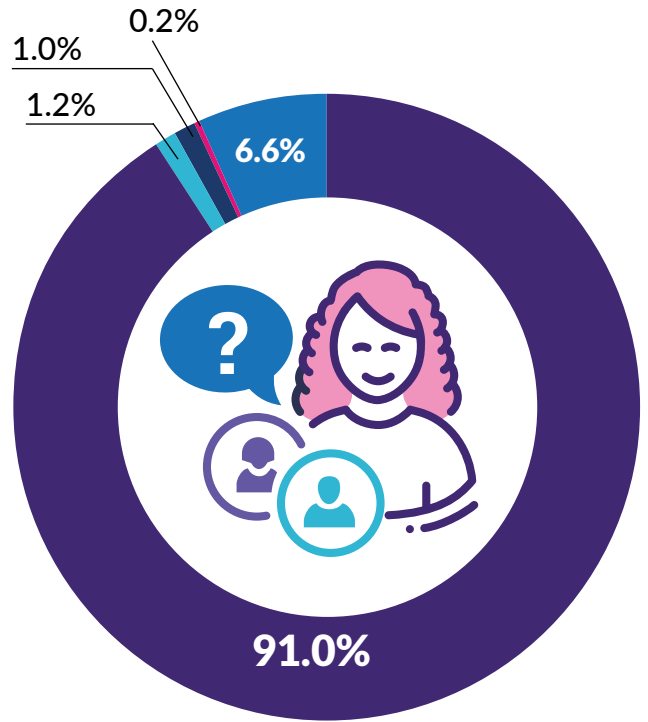
Data captured within the census gives a nationally recognised overview of those who responded to its survey in Worcestershire. However, we cannot state that it is fully representative as the response rate for the census completion or return was not 100%. It is considered by the Office for National Statistics and centralised government, that this data listed is reflective and useful for a range of purposes and offers the best available insight into the demographic makeup of the area, and the UK in general terms.

Equality Objectives

- Engaging and encouraging participation between the communities we serve and Council services and staff.

- Support training, development and employment initiatives; countywide.

- Colleagues contribute, collaborate and drive inclusion forward.

During the reporting period, a collaboration between our People and Economy and Infrastructure Directorates have begun significant work towards objective 1.
The 'Customer Experience Programme' collaborates with various council teams, external partners, stakeholders and importantly, engaging and acting on feedback from our customers; the community we serve across Worcestershire. A focus on the Adult Front Door team and contact routes has been reviewed and improvements have been made to the way we manage requests for help to meet care and support needs in the community.

Equality Objective 1:
Build a resilient, empowered and engaged community that thrives in all of Worcestershire.

The work is progressing with a number of teams across the council, and alongside the Commercial and Change Directorate, we are proactively reviewing development of new technology and systems to ensure a smooth, accessible and better approach for our customers to contact and engage with us. We aim to transform the way our customers access and navigate our services, through this ongoing programme of work. Our focus has been on improving the end-to-end customer journey and customer experience and making it accessible.

With the introduction of advanced new **Call Centre technology**, we have been able to create and analyse new ways of reporting and understanding what our customers are contacting us for during an initial screening call / contact.

This sophisticated dashboard assists our colleagues handling inbound calls, in managing conversations effectively in line with Service Level Agreements and enables preparation of reports on what our residents are contacting us about so that we can do further engagement/ training exercises.

Finding the route cause and being able to highlight and respond to themes relayed by our communities, means we can adapt, prioritise, and enhance the experience of Worcestershire residents.

We have taken onboard challenges and constructive feedback from service users, regulators and partners regarding our website accessibility and how this can be further enhanced and improved to meet specific criteria and enable wider user groups to have equitable access to our information online. This is a vital step towards meeting the statutory standards in place set by the Government Digital Service, of our digital offer. This has formed a key part of our learning journey through digital inclusion, and work in this area remains a priority.

At WCC and WCF, we are ambitious and proactive when it comes to employment opportunities that meet the needs of the council, balanced with the skills and potential of the county. We are passionate about apprenticeships, colleague development and creating a workspace that empowers colleagues to achieve success.

We offer paid internships, work experience, and closely partner with local businesses to ensure we can share opportunities, job roles, and progression routes for people we support. We continue to attend job fayres, events that support career opportunities, engage and work with schools and school leavers as well as higher education facilities and wider community networking platforms.

WORCESTERSHIRE'S LEARNING DISABILITY STRATEGY 2023-2028

In August 2023, WCF launched a new and specific Learning Disability Strategy. The collaboratively developed strategy was designed to be a 'go-to guide' for all organisations and residents across the county, to get involved and to work together to make positive change to the lives of people with Learning Disabilities and their families. It has five key principles: working together, supporting each other, including everyone, treating people fairly, and enabling good lives.

Our registration services play a key part of front facing service delivery during important life events, through births, deaths, and marriage & civil partnerships.

In late 2022, we updated a range of literature and process documentation to ensure we are inclusive of all family arrangements, and are positive and proactive, respectful, and accommodating to same sex, non-binary, or gender non-conforming couples and family / friendship groups.

We value the diversity and individual identity of our residents and have worked to ensure we deliver a service that is suitable, relevant and places importance on those involved, in these life defining moments, treating everyone with dignity.

The way in which we communicate with residents in an inclusive way, is key to how we relay important information. We engage regularly via social media, as well as through other channels, and know that in order for people to feel a sense of belonging and involvement in their community, it is important to advocate for diversity and equitable inclusion. Through a range of activities, the communications team meet and engage with our diverse communities across the county, attending Resident Roadshows. At these events councillors, colleagues and residents can discuss relevant services, topics or issues.

Our Comms Team advocate for visible representation and inclusion, as well as prioritise accessibility at our events, ensuring that we can capture information and engage in a range of ways. Resident Roadshows are available at multiple locations, as well as hosting information online.

During the reporting period, we shared information either internally for staff, or externally on various platforms, about:

- Pride events (throughout the county)
- Black History Month
- Ramadan, Easter, Eid, Diwali, Christmas, and other dates of religious significance
- HIV Awareness
- Neurodiversity

Acknowledging the language, we use plays a part in inclusion, EDI teams and Communications teams regularly meet and discuss best practice, update terminology and enhance understanding, resulting in an informed and empathetic workforce, and relationship building with the community we serve. WCC and WCF shares and highlights dates of awareness, celebration and significance across a range of topics.

SCULPT

We continue to build on the SCULPT methodology developed by council colleagues. Implemented across the council since 2021, SCULPT is the way in which we ensure documents, information and communication can remain accessible in the most relevant way. SCULPT is 'structure, colour and contrast, using imagery, links, plain English, tables'.

Following the principles of SCULPT has meant that the widest audience can understand the information we are providing. All colleagues are encouraged to use SCULPT where possible, undertake training and have access to support and guidance about its use.

Utilising these principles has meant residents receive consistent, user-friendly formats, information, documents and forms, that are accessible and straightforward.

Other schemes of work that support our ambitions within objective 1, are the continued effort and commitment to employment, education and training for the county.

The teams responsible for **Skills 4 Worcestershire** provide information, guidance and support for young people and adults (as well as parents or carers) and our teams regularly collaborate to ensure an inclusive service is delivered to residents.

Inclusive Worcestershire is a programme that promotes inclusion across local business and provides advice and support relating to HR and equality, diversity, and inclusion topics to the networks it engages with, sharing best practice, expertise and specific knowledge relating to workforce diversity.

The People Directorate have implemented the necessity for contract providers for Adult Social Care to have clear commitments and policies relating to EDI in place. Complementing the work, the Directorate Equality Group plans, they support and share training opportunities across service areas via SCIE / ADASS.

Additionally, across the People Directorate we have improved access to interpretation services to support communication with service users where English is a second language and the workforce know where and when this is accessed. We commissioned the Sensory Impairment Service to support access and advice, and moving forward into the next phases of delivery, we aim to become more adept at delivering suitable and accessible services in a proactive and streamlined manner.

A review of policy and process relating to traveller plot allocation took place within the reporting period, and we were able to make amendments and take considerations of protected characteristics into account further. Looking at language, the heritage and the cultural backgrounds of traveller groups in the county, acknowledging and respecting identities, with a focus on inclusion, will hopefully deliver stronger relationships with the council and traveller communities, and show beneficial outcomes for marginalised groups.

The Worcestershire Councillors Divisional Fund (WCDF) provides each of the 57 members of the Council, an allocation of £10,000 (per financial year), to spend on locally determined initiatives within their Divisions. They have reasonable discretion as to how to spend their allocation, as long as they are lawful for the Council, rational and are properly recorded.

You can find out more here:
Councillors' Divisional Fund Scheme | Worcestershire County Council

The WCDF is aimed at one-off items of expenditure or supporting community activity, local and national charities or voluntary organisations within the local Division.

Formal applications for bids to the WCDF can only be submitted by the local County Councillor; however, individuals or organisations can contact their local Councillor and seek support from the Fund.

Some highlights of the use of these community funds have been used regularly in the following areas:

- Scouts
- Christian churches and groups
- Community aesthetics and greening
- Improving buildings and local environments
- Highways development
- Pride events
- Arts
- Cricket
- Queens jubilee celebration

We also publish and make information available for local, national and community funding opportunities. On our website and through our Councillors, we provide information and access to funds for a range of projects, supporting and encouraging participation of individuals and community groups across the county.

Equality Objective 2:
Prioritise and embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at all levels

- Implementing a governance structure for EDI
- Colleagues at senior levels are visible in driving inclusion and challenging behaviours

The first year of delivery for this EDI Strategy, has given significant focus to developing robust and clear frameworks of the EDI work council-wide. Our new framework implemented for the years Sept 2022 – 2024 highlighted the concept and governance structure we would follow, and how our model of EDI would work.

Three distinctive groups were designed, to embed EDI across the council. These were:

Strategic Diversity Leadership Group, which consists of Chief Exec and senior colleagues responsible for decision making regarding EDI works, accountability for compliance and reporting, and being the key figureheads for driving best practice and knowledge throughout their relevant directorates.

Attendees and colleagues who sit within the Directorate Equality Groups and represent their respective service areas are known as Equality Champions. These colleagues are the fundamental link between the strategic work, and the operational or practical delivery of the plans and activities agreed.

Four Directorate Equality Groups who meet regularly, to plan, measure and take actions on the objectives in this strategy, as well as promote plans, ideas and discuss challenges arising from the work. They are chaired by senior leaders who attend the Strategic Diversity Leadership Group, operational activity, projects to support inclusion and training and awareness sessions are also in scope for these meetings. Tracking the progress of the directorates work towards our published objectives is a key part of the work at the Directorate Equality Groups.

Since its inception, this framework model has supported training and upskilling of front facing colleagues, those passionate and engaged in further inclusive practice and has provided an outlet for conversation and cultural change.

EDI Hub

Getting to know you

WORCESTERSHIRE
CHILDREN FIRST

Within WCF, we have made positive steps towards real inclusion and awareness across many topics, and as part of the work the Directorate Equality Group does, is to hear from each other as well as external partners, about various disabilities, conditions and awareness days.

Senior leaders also engage with delivering information sessions and regular attendance occurs at meetings, to ensure clear messages are cascaded. Directorate Equality Groups use emails, newsletters and team meetings to share information about our EDI work, any projects or initiatives, as well as events and resources.

We aim to keep everyone across WCC and WCF informed about the work we are doing, and communicate this through regular workforce updates, the Chief Execs staff briefings, and sharing informally on our intranet pages, including a dedicated site for EDI, our EDI Hub.

The work we have committed to through our Human Resources and Organisational Development (HROD) teams, has increased in visibility and action for our workforce, aligned with our Workforce Strategy.

We have made clear in-roads to furthering inclusion by some specific steps, such as:

- Visibility of senior leadership sharing information and leading initiatives such as our Menopause at Work Programme

- Chief Executive launching the communications for the newly developed Staff Networks

- Inclusion of key celebration or awareness dates are highlighted and included in regular staff briefings and updates

- Training and informal awareness sessions have been advertised and available to all staff to upskill and broaden knowledge around EDI topics

- Mandatory training via our eLearning platform for managers to understand inclusion and diversity in the workplace

Feedback from this reporting period, about some of the awareness sessions we delivered about understanding the topics of anti-racism, respecting pronouns, disability and accessibility, gender identity, and cultural and religious festivals include:

It does really feel to me like the organisation is moving with times and arriving in the real world that exists beyond the walls of WCC!

The comment about values resonated with me massively and it finally does feel like some of the more profound and fundamental values are being met by the organisation.

This course has given me the understanding of myself to go forward and the tools to do it with, I know that I will face resistance but that is what being anti-racist is, to stand up to it, before this session I did not really understand what being anti-racist was.

...It was a great reminder and encouragement to become more informed and involved, and to practice being bolder to challenge myself and others when I see and hear racism

I am pleased to see that the Council is becoming a more inclusive workplace and it's great to see the change in culture as it helps me to feel valued by the authority and I feel it is a safe environment to work in

...feel empowered to confront racism

I valued the drop-in session, it felt so safe to be able to talk and also to listen to others and thank you for setting it up. It's still resonating with me.

Just wanted to thank you for the Ramadan and Eid Mubarak messages on Our Space! It really made me feel more inclusive! I also noticed a mention of Eid at the last Staff Briefing!

During this reporting period, it was identified through our Equality Champions and Directorate Equality Groups, that there was a need, and appetite for a Mentoring and Coaching Programme, to develop personal and professional skills for colleagues.

Colleagues want development opportunities and progression routes, and to realise their potential in a formal way. We plan to implement programmes and opportunities to support this idea, and our Learning and Development team are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about bringing this to fruition, in collaboration with our Directorate Equality Groups input.

As part of our commitment and statutory requirement for reporting, this annual report captures key work towards the objectives from our EDI Strategy. This report will be reviewed and published annually in line with our Public Sector Equality Duty, and will contain the objectives we have developed, highlighting the work achieved, and steps taken so far in the first year's delivery.

This report will also contain the demographic data information available from our workforce. Highlight information, alongside a data narrative can be found within this report and in the contents table section.

We acknowledge that whilst we want to move this work forward at pace, as a refreshed model of EDI across the council in 2022, we have actionable, realistic and achievable plans to ensure we meet our objectives by September 2024.

One way in which we will measure the changes across out workforce will be by capturing information from the yearly performance reviews from staff. Questions added into the review last year (2023) will capture how colleagues feel about the culture, inclusion and sense of belonging at work. This will be analysed and reviewed yearly going forward.

To support colleagues who voices are seldom heard at the authority, or those who are in the minority of our workforce, and to drive further platforms and routes to decision making and collaboration, we have planned to launch and develop our staff networks.

In the summer, we successfully launched a staff network for those who identify as LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and all and every sexual orientation other than straight, including gender identities such as non-binary or gender non-conforming staff).

The network is passionate, engaged and committed to improving the workplace and outcomes for LGBTQ+ staff, who are a minority across the council, and especially at senior levels of the council.

Sharing a safe space to discuss experiences, make suggestions for leadership teams, and contribute to the effective EDI work from perspectives of lived experience is vital to creating a workplace where everyone feels they belong, is valued, listened to and respected and can be themselves at work.

Following the triumph of a proactive and well-attended staff network launch, we have seen the benefits for other groups in a similar format and in Autumn 2023, launched our Disability Staff Network. Our plans to platform marginalized voices and aid better inclusion, will continue with the launch of several other groups in the next year. These groups are supported and encouraged from our senior leadership, and time and energy is displayed from all involved.

A few comments from our Staff Networks are included below:

> Having a Disability Staff Network has been one of the most impactful things for me at the workplace because the initiative makes me feel like I have a voice, a safe space, and a forum to share my concerns and experiences without being judged. This network has made me feel more valued and appreciated for everything I bring to the table being a differently abled person.

> I value the opportunity to be part of the WCC Disability Staff Network.
> This forum provides a safe space to talk to others with shared experiences and understanding.
>
> It enables those colleagues who identify as disabled or as having a disability, in WCC and WCF, to have a collective voice, identifying and raising awareness of specific issues and challenges at work and bringing forward suggestions.
>
> It is also a fantastic way to seek informal support and to learn from others.
> Thank you for this opportunity!

> For quite some time I had wanted there to be an LGBTQ+ Staff Network so it's great that WCC finally has one. Not only for new staff to feel welcome, but also those of us who have worked at the organisation for a number of years.
>
> I'm excited to see what the group can achieve in the future and how WCC can become an even more inclusive employer.

> There is the natural feeling comradery of being with a group of people that 'get it', but there is also the feeling that the organisation wants to listen and understand what is important to us, and how their decisions may impact different communities.
> I only wish more people would join us.

In July, we signed the Business in The Community, Race at Work Charter. A proud signatory amongst 900 other organisations, including a wide range of other progressive local and neighbouring councils.

Signing the Charter means taking practical steps to ensure workplaces are tackling barriers that Black, Asian, Mixed Raced and other ethnically diverse people face in recruitment and progression and that their organisations are representative of British society today.

As a signatory of the charter, we are committing to improving access, outcomes and inclusion for colleagues and residents across the county.
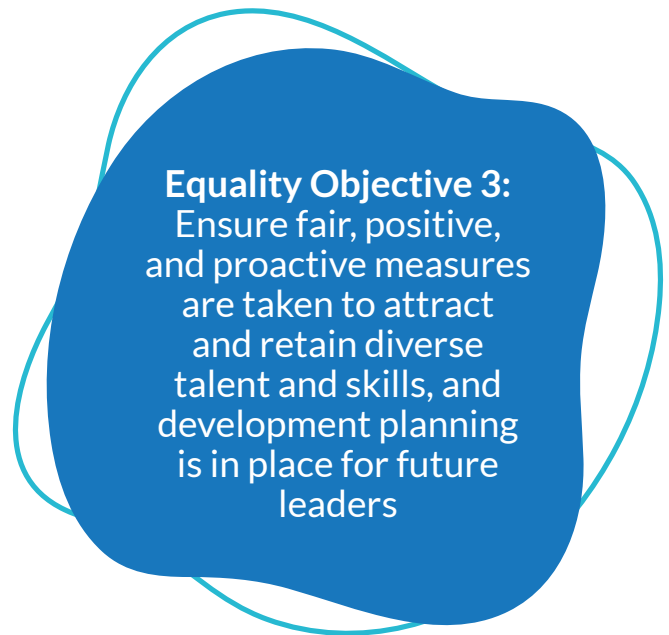
We will map out how we will work towards better inclusion and representation through a number of actions that align with the objectives in the charter, and this will be reported on in our next Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) Annual Report.

- Removing barriers within our recruitment process

- Attract skilled diverse talent to WCC and WCF

- Proactive future proofing and development opportunities for groups historically excluded, or who had barriers to leadership roles

In early 2023, we established a working group across the HROD function, to review recruitment at the council. Looking at the process from job description, advert, application portal and systems, data capture, through to job offers and onboarding of new starters.

Whilst the work is an ongoing project to improve our recruitment journey and experience for applicants, many changes and suggestions have been taken into account and come to fruition. We have changed the demographic data categories asked within our equality monitoring to reflect those asked at the 2021 Census, to ensure we can use comparative data to drive better representation, we have shared additional information about our data, in this report.

Equality Objective 3: Ensure fair, positive, and proactive measures are taken to attract and retain diverse talent and skills, and development planning is in place for future leaders

Our onboarding information has been amended to show colleagues our commitments to inclusion, we share our policy, strategy, framework, EDI groups and staff network support, along with links to our EDI Hub.

The working group consists of our Head of HR, our recruitment manager and EDI teams, data and business analytic support, with input from 'Inclusive Worcestershire', colleagues with specialist or lived experience of Disability Confident schemes and the Armed Forces Covenant. The practical changes we have made have been to ensure that job descriptions are reviewed and updated, as well as widening the approach with advertising positions available.

A highlight during this period, working towards objective 3, has been that our talent and recruitment teams hold sessions for DWP service users from different areas to discuss the council as an employer of choice, showcasing what we can offer as well as sharing advice on job applications / CV writing, interview technique etc.

The next phase of this project will be to use an anonymised and new version of our applicant tracker system, to ensure we are removing bias from the process of recruitment.

The People Directorate have had success in commissioning an external specialist recruitment organisation to develop our microsite and provide a diverse range of social work professionals, this has enabled us to better serve the diverse communities we work with across social work provision. Understanding and responding appropriately to the needs and requirements of those whose culture, background and family environment are diverse has helped us work towards better outcomes and communication in the area.

In November 2022, we launched our EDI Hub, to provide online guidance to our colleagues, accessible at any time. There is information relating to our legal duties, policies, translation provision, events, resources, signposting for specific topics and a space where people can search for topics to enhance their knowledge.

Our Directorates of People, Communities, Economy & Infrastructure, Public Health, and Worcestershire Children First have either developed themselves, or attended non-compulsory training and upskilling sessions relating to EDI.

HROD have also supported and delivered sessions and awareness training, attended by many colleagues across all directorates.

Other teams have also held talks and discussions about sensitive topics relating to EDI, to ensure competency and comfort when approaching support for those we provide services to.

Our Social Work Academy (SWA) are also regularly engaged with EDI work and prioritise learning about diverse service users and care settings frequently, which allows them to provide respectful and relevant care and support to the service users and their families across Worcestershire. Leads within the SWA meet regularly with EDI teams to ensure we can share and highlight best practice and share new skills within the council.

WCF hold regular discussions around awareness days for a number of topics such as:

- Holocaust Memorial Day
- Braille awareness
- LGBTQ+ History Month
- Fostering in the LGBTQ+ community
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month
- HIV and AIDs awareness
- Black History Month
- Suicide Prevention Week
- National Inclusion Week
- Dwarfism Awareness Month
- Discrimination in the workplace
- Diwali.

Economy & Infrastructure have developed their own informal learning sessions that colleagues can attend to workshop ideas, listen to case studies and improve their own work environment. This has allowed open and respectful dialogue for teams involved and has been beneficial in tackling barriers in relationship building and a supportive work environment.

Some of our teams are very proactive in reaching out to potential employees across the county. For example, our People and Communities Directorates have held multiple events, to encourage applications from a diverse pool of candidates, reaching out and advertising on social media, attending community events, collaborating with local community groups.

We have also been holding events celebrating diversity in a range of ways, such as the WCF Diversity Marketplace which is a chance for external partners and groups to share the work they do, as well as getting to know local support available, share information and signpost to additional collaborative services.

We have the opportunity for 'Paid Training Placement' employment scheme which has provided a great opportunity for us to offer continuous employment under this scheme.

It continues to be successful for the teams involved as well as the individuals. Offering ongoing personal and professional development and learning key skills for the position holder whilst undertaking core duties relevant to the roles provided.

A key factor, and contribution to reducing our attrition of disabled colleagues in this period, was the development and launch of our 'Workplace Adjustment Passport'. Spearheaded by our HROD experts and developed collaboratively with colleagues with lived experience of disability, care provision, menopause and neurodiversity, the 'passport', has been instrumental in supporting and learning with our colleagues.

The passport is a live document that colleagues can use to inform their managers / HR about any flexibility or adjustments they may require in order for them to be successful, comfortable and respected in work, whilst using a range of approaches such as changes to hours, equipment use, adjustments to responsibilities, highlighting best ways of communication, and being a useful tool to communicate individual needs to the business effectively.

Retaining talented colleagues is beneficial to everyone; the individual employed, the skills and expertise of the area of work they bring to the council, the local economy, and the local community. In the next phase of our strategic delivery, we are aiming to become Disability Confident Leader level, and commit to further action relating to our Race at Work Charter, including mentoring schemes.

Adult Social Care teams have taken part in the 'Moving Up' programme. Working alongside Skills for Care, the programme is aimed at black, Asian and minority ethnic leaders who are wanting to take the next step in their learning and development.

The programme itself supports managers who have the desire and drive to progress in their career but are facing blockages and resistance preventing them from doing so. This exciting training initiative is a good way to establish positive action, and support and retain talented colleagues at WCC and WCF.

Staff have given feedback that some of the following key areas are reasons they enjoy working for WCC: the wellbeing support they receive (including initiatives, events, webinars, policies), the staff networks that support them, the flexible approach to work where possible, our commitments to inclusion, and the visibility of actions taken to improve awareness of EDI.
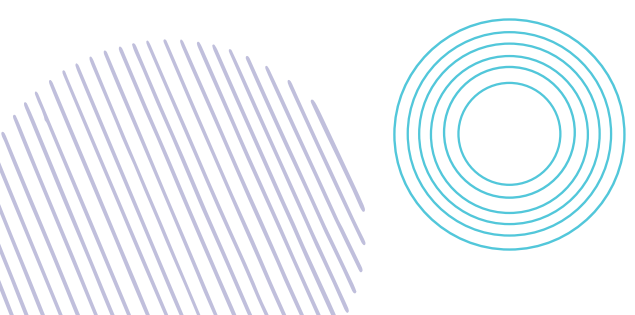
Equality Objective 4: Collaborate effectively and empower our employees to be accountable for our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion approach across Council

- Building confidence & skills in our colleagues leading on EDI work (Equality Champions)

- Encouraging regular updates of colleagues' personal data (in line with current GDPR, privacy policy and Data Protection)

- Communications promote inclusion and belonging; our diverse current and potential workforce are valued, respected, and celebrated

The majority of what we do as a local authority requires us to be collaborative. We seldom work on a project with a singular department, and teamwork is essential to ensuring we can provide effectively deliver relevant and inclusive services to residents and clients. We know that creativity, innovation and equality, diversity and inclusion go hand in hand when it comes to supporting colleagues and residents, alike.

The work we have completed and committed to since launching the EDI Strategy is supported at every level and is lead and driven through so many proactive teams and passionate individuals. We have policies that back up our commitments, we have an EDI Policy that establishes our purpose and processes for those who face discrimination, and we aim to consistently address inequality at given opportunities.

Our Equality Champions received bespoke training sessions around the basic principles of inclusion and wider EDI work, including legislation, our Public Sector Equality Duty, the protected characteristics, discrimination types and impacts, bias and terminology.

Raising awareness through our Equality Champions, meant that they could relay important information back to wider council teams, and ensure that messaging was relevant, effective and appropriate for their areas of work.

Enhancing knowledge and engaging with those most passionate about informing positive culture change, has been vital. We will continue to work on measuring our success and deliverables, through our Workforce Strategy updates, and Annual Performance reviews, as well as collate and share information in our next annual report.

We have continued or started to be involved and actively collaborate with a range of stakeholders, organisations, local community groups, and individuals in Worcestershire, and hope to improve this further over the next phase of the strategy. We have also developed our own forums to support residents and service users.

A Building Together forum has now been launched for people in Worcestershire to ensure we have people with lived experiences voices truly shaping services and leading on the co-production of service developments.

We have a Worcestershire Learning Disability Partnership Board who support a 'Peoples Parliament' to ensure inclusion and platforming of voices across the county, we have a range of representatives on the ICS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Autism Partnership Boards who work closely with various teams across the authority, and the co-production of a new ICS Herefordshire and Worcestershire All-Age Autism Strategy took place during the above reporting period.

Senior managers from WCC and WCF are instrumental in our cooperative approach to EDI in external forums and groups too, with attendance at regular meetings for West Midlands Association of Directors for Adult Social Services (ADASS), West Midlands Local Authority Equality Network, Worcestershire ICS / ICB Equality groups and sub-committees, and offer continued support for new members of groups in providing expert advice and guidance.

Co-producing strategy, and effectively communicating between groups has been made a priority during this reporting period and positive outcomes and information will be reported within the next annual report. Each directorate is encouraged and supported to develop and deliver EDI initiatives and model inclusive behaviours.

During this reporting period, we reviewed and updated HR policies for menopause, supported conversations about transitioning and provided resources for colleagues to enhance knowledge around anti-racist practices.

Both Herefordshire and Worcestershire Autism Partnership Boards co-produced how a new strategy should be approached and the engagement methods to use. Engagement included workshops, facilitated groups and a questionnaire. There were over 400 responses to the questionnaire from a range of different stakeholders. Co-production continued to produce a final strategy in September 2023 and since this time, has been going through the sign off process. Co-production will continue through the development of annual implementation plans and reported on next year.

We were also able to access grant funding that enabled us to commission a free on-line autism awareness training package from the National Autistic Society in April 2022 to raise awareness amongst external organisations and businesses in Worcestershire of Autism, and were able to extend into 2023.

In partnership with the University of Worcester, we have also developed a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller eLearning. This eLearning was co-produced with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community as well as frontline workers who are working with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families and individuals.

The feedback received has been extremely positive with **99%** of people who have completed the eLearning feeling confident to apply the learning in their role and felt their knowledge and skills were enhanced as a result of the eLearning.

I feel that I have a much better understanding of how to support families... understanding the difficulties faced by GRT families. It was also really useful to have the resources and signposting at the end of the training, and I will be adding this to our list of services and information that we can use with and give to families.

Gave me a better insight in building trust and also what is available to the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community and also the Law.

This e-learning is unique and helpful.

It has helped me to understand the historical background which I wasn't aware of and raised my awareness re the prejudice and discrimination faced.

Our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion eLearning launched as part of our Mandatory Learning Courses. This eLearning was developed to ensure we can create a positive impact, not just at work, but within our communities and provides employees with the skills and confidence to not only comply with legal requirements but to be allies and help make the workplace a more supportive and inclusive environment.

This eLearning has been completed by 95.5% of our WCC employees during Sept 2022-23. In addition to this, employees also have access to our Unconscious Bias and Unconscious Bias for Managers eLearning.

Equality Monitoring and Capturing Data

Gender Pay Gap Report 2022 - 2023

A Gender Pay Gap (GPG) is the difference between the average earnings of men and women, expressed relative to men's earnings, for example, '**women earn 15% less than men**'. It is an indicator of the differences in opportunity and choices of men and women within the workplace. It is not a measure of equal pay i.e., whether men and women receive equal pay for equal work.

Our 2022-2023 Gender Pay Gap Report showed the mean has decreased from 10.12% to 8.40% (£1.46) and the median from 9.74% to 8.85% (£1.35).

Quartiles show almost identical splits to previous years. Our full Gender Pay Gap Report will be available on our website. Our figures compare favourably against the ONS benchmarking data.

The data we report on, and the figures for our gender pay gap are based on Worcestershire County Council employees only and exclude schools. Worcestershire Children First report separately.

We are making improvements in areas we know are effective in reducing the pay gap, such as reviewing recruitment processes, our people policies, ensuring transparency in pay processes, developing our wellbeing approach and providing leadership development, all of which support the objectives of our Workforce Strategy.

- You can read the full report here for Worcestershire County Council: **https://gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk/EmployerReport/zKucQ7oe/2023**

- You can read the full report here for Worcestershire Children First: **https://gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk/EmployerReport/gRur4XgP/2023**

Workforce Data

As captured in August 2023, **4121** employees were recorded (excluding schools total 7232 / 11353). This data is taken from our HR system and includes all employees across the Council including Worcestershire Children First.

Employees are encouraged and able to submit their demographic data on our HR Systems and update and edit this when and if necessary. When new starters are onboarded, we show how this can be done, we also prompt colleagues throughout the year to ensure data is still relevant for them.

We know that our current Workforce Data is limited with an average overall completion of **46.7%** when looking at the protected characteristics detailed below.

We are also aware that the options and categories available in the questions asked on our HR Systems do not align with the 2021 Census topics and are not a clear representation of each demographic.

This was updated recently, along with a positive data capture campaign due to be launched this year and will be reported on in the next annual report. This will allow us to compare and analyse data effectively looking at the demographics of Worcestershire versus our current workforce.

Below is a breakdown of the percentage completion for each of the areas.

Protected Characteristic	Percentage Completion (WCC/WCF)	Percentage Completion (Schools)
Religion	14.8%	2.3%
Marital Status	48%	29.7%
Sex Profile	100%	100%
Ethnicity	59.4%	60%
Sexual Orientation	26.8%	9%
Gender Reassignment	19.7%	19.7%
Disability	58.4%	51.1%
Age	87.5%	N/A

As the data shows, the highest completion is sex profile and age which is automatically input onto the system when employees start in the organisation. Our lowest completion is Religion, followed closely by Gender Re-Assignment.

Religion

Religion	WCC/WCF Percentage	Schools Percentage
Buddhist	<1%	0%
Christian	7.1%	1.42%
Hindu	<1%	0%
Jewish	<1%	0%
Muslim	<1%	0%
Sikh	<1%	0%
No Religion	5.9%	<1%
Other	<1%	<1%
Prefer not to say	<1%	<1%
Blank	85.2%	97.7%

WCC/WCF Data Analysis:

Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Sikh and anyone who selected 'Other' and 'prefer not to say' in this question category are all below 1%. This area has received the lowest completion rate and shows that we need to take two clear actions as mentioned; reflect the correct terminology and use of categorisation for the demographic options; actively increase confidence and trust in WCC and WCF so employees feel comfortable enough the share their information.

Marital Status

Marital status	WCC/WCF Percentage	Schools Percentage
Civil partnership	12%	<1%
Cohabiting	3.5%	<1%
Divorced	3.1%	<1%
Married	26.3%	17.52%
Not Specified	<1%	<1%
Partner	1.7%	<1%
Prefer not to say	<1%	<1%
Separated	<1%	<1%
Single	10.8%	9%
Widowed	<1%	<1%
Blank	52%	70.3%

WCC/WCF Data Analysis:

Currently, the highest marital status is 'married' at 26% followed by 'Single' at 10.8%.

Sex Profile

Sex identifier	WCC/WCF Percentage	Schools Percentage
Female	74%	74%
Gender fluid	<1%	<1%
Male	25.6%	25.6%
Non-binary	<1%	<1%
Other	<1%	<1%
Prefer not to say	<1%	<1%
Transgender	<1%	<1%

WCC/WCF Data Analysis:

100% of our workforce have their biological sex added to the system automatically when they start, and therefore this is reflected in a positive capture detail. This category as per The Equality Act 2010 and within the data questions of the Census 2021, finds this category needs to reflect binary 'sex', and not 'gender identity' and has therefore been changed and updated in our system to show this, and will be analysed in our next annual report.

Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation	WCC/WCF Percentage	Schools Percentage
Bisexual	<1%	<1%
Gay man	<1%	0%
Gay woman / lesbian	<1%	<1%
Heterosexual	2.8%	<1%
Heterosexual / Straight	20.9%	6.5%
Other	<1%	<1%
Prefer not to say	1.4%	<1%
Blank	73.2%	91.02%

WCC/WCF Data Analysis:

As shown above, 73.2% have not disclosed their Sexual Orientation and therefore we do not have an accurate representation for our organisation. Categories and questions asked were not comparable to census data. This has been changed and updated in our system to show correct data questions and will be analysed in our next annual report.

Gender Reassignment

Gender Reassignment	WCC/WCF Percentage	Schools Percentage
Information refused	<1%	<1%
No	19%	3.3%
Prefer not to say	<1%	<1%
Yes	<1%	<1%
Blank	80.3%	96.55%

WCC/WCF Data Analysis:

Census data shows that 94.4% of Worcestershire are the same gender as registered at birth. Categories and questions asked were not comparable to census data. This has been changed and updated in our system to show correct data questions and will be analysed in our next annual report.

Disability

Self-certified disabled	WCC/WCF Percentage	Schools Percentage
No	51.4%	40.4%
Yes	6%	<1%
Not known	1%	1.3%
Blank	41.6%	48.9%

WCC/WCF Data Analysis:

Categories and questions asked were not comparable to census data. This has been changed and updated in our system to show correct data questions and will be analysed in our next annual report.

Age Profile

Age	WCC/WCF Percentage
Under 20	<1%
20-29	7.8%
30-39	18%
40-49	22.7%
60-69	28.5%
70-79	15.3%
80+	1.8%
Blank	0.2%

We were unable to report on data for Schools so this data is not included in this report and will be analysed in our next annual report.

Ethnicity

Ethnic Origin	WCC/WCF Percentage	Schools Percentage
African	<1%	<1%
Other Asian Background	<1%	<1%
Bangladeshi	<1%	<1%
Other Black Background	<1%	0%
British	4.1%	4.1%
Carribean	<1%	<1%
Chinese	0%	<1%
English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish	50.4%	50.4%
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	<1%	<1%
Indian	<1%	<1%
Irish	<1%	<1%
Other Mixed Background	<1%	0%
Not Known	<1%	<1%
Other Ethnic Group	<1%	<1%
Other White Background	<1%	<1%
Pakistani	<1%	<1%
Prefer not to say	<1%	<1%
White English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish	<1%	0%
White and Asian	<1%	<1%
White and Black African	<1%	<1%
White and Black Caribbean	<1%	<1%
White Irish	<1%	<1%
White Other	1.3%	1.3%
Blank	40.6%	40.6%

WCC/WCF Data Analysis:

Due to the way we previously asked and captured categories of ethnicity, we cannot make assumptions of 'ethnicity' or race based on the answers provided. For example, we have not asked the accurate categories of how ethnicity or race should be captured, and this information therefore is not useful. This has been changed and updated in our system to accurately reflect race data and this and will be analysed in our next annual report.

Summary

The table below sets out a summary of key achievements during this reporting period against each of our Strategic Equality Objectives and outcomes. Further details on activities can be found in the relevant sections of the report.

Objective	Key Progress and Achievements
Build a resilient, empowered and engaged community that thrives in all of Worcestershire	• Registration services updated guidance and information for services to become more inclusive. • WCC and WCF shares and highlights dates of awareness, celebration, and significance across a range of topics.
Prioritise and embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at all levels	• Framework to capture and measure progress and areas of improvement and lead by Strategic Diversity Leadership Group. • Staff network groups launched. • Race at Work Charter signed.
Ensure fair, positive, and proactive measures are taken to attract and retain diverse talent and skills, and development planning is in place for future leaders	• Collaborating and supporting DWP service users with CV, job application and interview support • Adult Social Care participating in '**Moving Up**' programme • Workplace Adjustment Passport implemented
Collaborate effectively in our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion scheme of work and plans across the Council.	• Building Together Forum launched • Autism Awareness training • Gypsy, Roma and Traveller eLearning developed and delivered

The work we have started in 2022 has set us on a path of improvement in terms of our awareness, compliance, collaboration, and continuous learning as an organisation. This report shows a lot of the positive progress we have made, and as it is a report on the work and commitments towards our objectives, this may seem to show a picture of only positives. This is not the case for all the work we aim to achieve, and we have been transparent at various intervals since 2022, that we still have a long way to go, to ensure we are meeting and adhering to our duties, how we face challenges, and what measures we are taking to enhance this work and correct any issues and areas of discrimination.

The work continues at pace, having a committed resource, a framework to measure our impacts and objectives, and a strong foundation on which to build and increase our efforts for inclusion.

We aim to address and remove barriers, promote and increase inclusion, accessibility, and cohesion. We have not reached our goals yet and have significant work ahead in order to bring our ambitious plans to fruition.

The next steps in our EDI work, are to develop a new strategy for 2024. The next few months will see us aim to achieve and deliver against our objectives, and the next years report will highlight all relevant work, gaps, challenges and opportunities we have met, or have failed to meet.

We look forward to building on the positive work, and correcting issues we identify along the way, to ensure we empower our communities, workforce and stakeholders to take positive action, prioritise EDI and lead by example to improve outcomes across Worcestershire.

Supporting Documents

- Worcestershire County Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy:
  Equality and Diversity Policy (PDF)

- Worcestershire County Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy:
  Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022 to 2024 (PDF)

- **Funds and bids | Worcestershire County Council**

- **Our Plan for Worcestershire | Worcestershire County Council**

- **Councillors' Divisional Fund Scheme | Worcestershire County Council**

- **Census 2021 | Worcestershire County Council**

- **Census - Office for National Statistics**

- **The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) | EHRC**

- **Public Sector Equality Duty: guidance for public authorities - GOV.UK**

- **Homepage | EHRC (equalityhumanrights.com)**

- **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) | Worcestershire County Council**

- **Learning Disability Partnership Board | Worcestershire County Council**

- **Learning Disabilities Strategy | Worcestershire County Council**

- **Sensory impairment and physical disabilities | Worcestershire County Council**

- **Race at Work Charter - Business in the Community**

- **New Inclusivity Events Launched to Empower Worcestershire Businesses | Worcestershire County Council**

- **Worcestershire Children First | Worcestershire County Council**

- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care System**

- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy: Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care System**

- **Slavery and Human Trafficking statement (PDF)**

- **Gender Pay Gap Report 2022 (PDF)**