

Employees' Consultative Forum

Minutes

12 January 2022

Present:

Chair: Councillor Natasha Proctor

Councillors: Camilla Bath Mina Parmar
Philip Benjamin Varsha Parmar
Angella Murphy-Strachan Sachin Shah

**Unison
Representatives:** Ms S Haynes Mr J Royle
Mr D Searles

**GMB
Representative:** Ms P Belgrave
Ms A Jones

**Apologies
received:** Louise Crimmins Anne Lyons

71. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance.

72. Membership of the Forum

The Chair welcomed Sharon Haynes to her first meeting of the Forum.

RESOLVED: To note the appointment of Sharon Haynes, Unison Representative, by Cabinet to the vacancy on the Employees' Consultative Forum.

73. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note the declarations received and published prior to the meeting as set out on the Council's website and that no additional declarations were made at the meeting.

74. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2021, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

75. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions had been received.

76. Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at this meeting under the provisions of Executive Procedure Rule 48 (Part 4D of the Constitution).

77. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received.

Resolved Items

78. Draft Revenue Budget 2022/23 and draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 to 2024/25

The Forum received a report of the Director of Finance and Assurance, which set out the draft revenue budget for 2022/23 and the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2022/23 to 2024/25 which had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting in December 2021. The report also referenced that the budget and the MTFS would be brought back to Cabinet in February 2022 for final approval and with a recommendation to full Council.

The Director of Finance and Assurance introduced the report and informed the Forum that the approach taken by the Council to the budget setting process was different to that of previous years. There was a legal requirement for the Council to deliver a balanced budget and, in order to do this, the Council was proposing to manage the budget gap for 2022/23 by using its reserves of £15.7m as a one-off measure to 'plug' the budget gap. The Director added that it was not ideal to use reserves to manage budget gaps but the alternative was to make immediate substantial cuts which would not be sustainable. She added that the Council was working on a strategy for future years with a view to managing the gap over the MTFS.

The Director responded to a question from a Member on the interest rate income that would be lost if reserves were withdrawn and used to manage the funding gap for 2022/23. She explained that the loss of interest would be

marginal compared to other measures. She reiterated that there was a legal requirement on the Council to set a balanced budget for 2022/23.

A Unison representative asked how the loss of reserves would be funded in future years. The Director referred to table 1 (summary of key financial changes 2013/14 to 2022/23) and table 2 (changes to MTFS – prior to indicated finance settlement) of her report and explained that a further saving of £14.8m would have to be found in future years. For example, this could be achieved by restructuring debt and/or reducing expenditure. She added that various assumptions had been built-in, such as additional grant settlements from the government, an increase in Council Tax of 2.99% per annum, demographic of Harrow and expected inflation levels.

The Unison representative urged caution in that whilst an increase or a change in demographic could result in an increase in Council Tax, it would also mean that more Council services would be required and provided for. The Director of Finance acknowledged this point and stated that contingencies/growth would always be put in place.

The Director responded to additional questions from Unison and GMB representatives as follows:

- How would the sale of the Civic Centre site impact on the budget? The Director informed the Forum that this question was related to the HSPB (Harrow Strategic Partnership Board) where the Council will be putting in the Civic Centre land and equity over the period of the HSPB. She added that the Council would receive capital receipts, interest and dividends in future years;
- What would be the Impact on the Council and its staff if budget gaps could not be met? The Director stated it was crucial that the Council reduced its expenditure to meet future funding gaps and lived within its budget envelope. The challenge was how this could be done in a safe manner so that staff and residents were not put at risk. It was important that the Council had a strategy in place setting out its plan for the next two years. The Council's budget was also dependant on the grant it received from the government. The Council needed to learn to manage the various pressures within the budget envelope in order to deliver balanced budgets in future years.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the comments made by the Forum be referred to the February 2022 meeting of the Cabinet for consideration.

79. Annual Workforce Equality Report 2020-2021

The Forum received a report of the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, which provided a detailed breakdown of the Council's workforce from 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021, as set out at appendix A to the report. The report contained a snapshot of the current workforce, broken down into each of the protected characteristics where data was available, providing an overview of the diversity profile of the Council's

workforce and how this compared with the population of Harrow and the London average.

The report stated that the data would help inform the Council's workforce planning and decision-making processes in relation to the levelling up of the Council's offer for under-represented groups. It was intended that the report would help shape the development of workforce initiatives to further improve the representation of minority groups within the Council, and to ensure more inclusive processes and practices across the organisation.

An officer introduced the report and made a presentation which is attached as an appendix to these minutes for reference purposes. She reported as follows:

- the Annual Workforce Equality Report 2020-21 provided a data driven snapshot of the Council's current workforce, which was made up of 2,071 full time and part time staff (excluding school staff) and had been compared to the populations of Harrow and London. The workforce had been broken down into the following groups where data was held - age, disability, race, sex, religion, LGBTQIA+, maternity;
- a detailed analysis of protected groups had shown the interconnected nature of social categorisation, for example, disability and sex, race and sex, age and pay band;
- the report highlighted a number of issues around particular groups, and further conclusions would be drawn to inform the next phase, which would form part of the Council's internal Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy;
- the report would help shape the development of workforce initiatives to further improve the representation of minority groups within the Council, to ensure more inclusive processes and practices across the organisation.

The officer extracted the key points from each of the presentation slides relating to Age, Disability, Race, Race and Sex, Sex, Religion, LGBT QIA+, Maternity and Recruitment, details of which are set out in the appendix to the minutes. In relation to the presentation slide on Recruitment, the officer informed the Forum that, currently, no information was available on the jobs that women had been successful in securing under the gender section.

The Forum was advised of the following emerging recommendations which needed to be taken forward by the Council:

- create safe spaces for staff to share their personal and confidential data in order to increase the completion rate to allow the Council to better analyse the Annual Workforce Equality Report in the future;
- consider how the Council monitored agency staff and senior interim staff who made up a significant part of the workforce;

- monitor the impact of Diversity Talent Programmes which were launched in 2021 to identify progression of female and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff. The officer stressed that the Talent Programmes were open to all staff;
- undertake a deep dive of the Council's current recruitment practices with a view to improving the rate from application to shortlisting and appointment, including the challenges faced by applicants, for example those under the age of 24 years.

A couple of the Members asked questions which were responded to by the officer and the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development as follows:

1. Why was there no analysis or commentary in respect of marriage and civil partnerships, including on the protected characteristic, caste? The officer replied that no analysis was available, but she welcomed this question and undertook to discuss it with the Corporate Strategy Board. In terms of the query relating to the breakdown of certain staff in terms of caste, she undertook to explore this in the next iteration of the report.
2. Had the Council's Occupational Health provider been involved in the issue of the disability status which remained low for the Council when compared to other London boroughs? The Director informed the Forum that the Council relied on data gauged from the information provided by staff - self-defined disability or long-term health condition in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The approach taken by the Council was deemed to be in line with best practice.
3. What procedures were used to capture the data in relation to maternity and religion? The Director stated that the data covered the period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021 and was limiting in that it relied on the information provided by staff. However, the staff survey and the pulse survey also asked for such information. She added that, as part of the People Strategy and the Race Equality Action Plan, the Council was intending to promote staff awareness on the importance of sharing and making such diversity information available.
4. Were staff aware that their personal information would be treated in a confidential manner? The Director assured that confidentiality was retained. However, the issue was about the level of confidence that staff had in the Council on this key issue. Of significance was the data available on disability and LGBT status which was underreported. She acknowledged that emphasis on the privacy aspect needed to be highlighted and that staff need assurance that their personal data would not be divulged and that sharing their diversity status would not undermine their employment or career progression.

5. The report was driven by data. Did the Council have an understanding of why when 69% of applicants were from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background, only 28% were successful appointments? Did the Council know what actions were required to rectify this situation? The Director replied that this was an area that had been captured as an emerging recommendation and she acknowledged that the differences were stark as outlined in slide 11 of the presentation attached to the minutes. A priority was to carry out a deep dive of the Council's current recruitment practices with a view to improving the rate from application to shortlisting and appointment stages. This exercise might help address this issue, including the challenges faced by applicants, for example those under the age of 24 years.

The Director also highlighted the importance of having a diverse panel when shortlisting and appointing staff in order to improve the success rate of applicants from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background. However, a key issue that needed to be addressed was why of the 69% job applications from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background only 22% were shortlisted for interview. It was important to understand the barriers from the application to the shortlisting stage and whether or not the applications received from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background were incomplete. Once the barriers had been identified, interventions and measures could be put in place.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

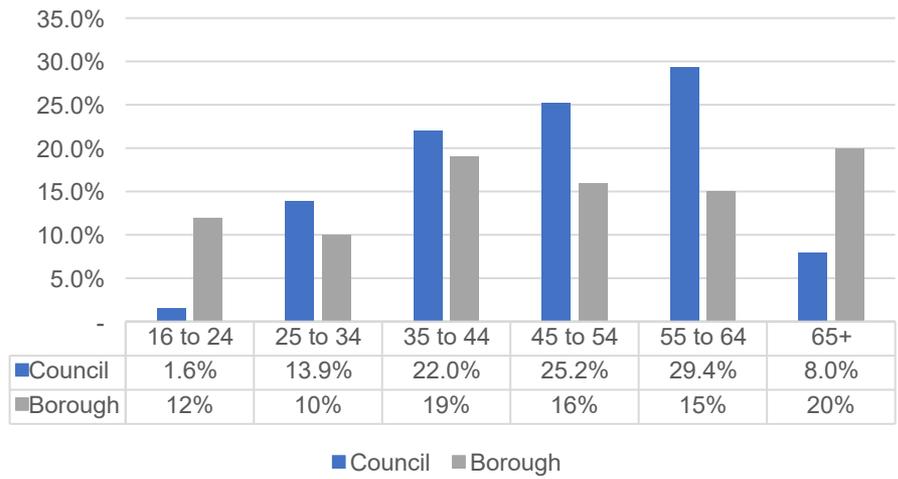
(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.32 pm, closed at 7.22 pm).

(Signed) Councillor Natasha Proctor
Chair

Harrow Council Annual Workforce Equality Report 2021

- The **Annual Workforce Equality Report 2020-21** provides a data driven snapshot of the council's current workforce, which is made up of 2,071 full time and part time staff (report excludes school staff), this has been compared to Harrow's resident population and London.
- We are required to publish our equality information annually as part of the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011. Our Annual Workforce Equality Report for 2020-21 covers the period between the 1st of April 2020 – 31st March 2021. The report contains a current snapshot of our workforce, broken down into the following groups where data is held (age, disability, race, sex, religion, LGBTQIA+, maternity).
- The report relies on the completion of data on SAP, which has been around 30% of our overall staff population in some areas, while we have 100% completion for other protected characteristics (such as race, sex and age).
- Internal data has been drawn from SAP ERP system as at 31 March 2021, Staff completion of SAP data 2021, Harrow Council Scorecard 2021, and Maternity returners 2018-19. Benchmarking data has been drawn from The Human Capital Metrics Survey 2020 – 2021, Office of National Statistics, Greater London Authority, Government Equalities Office
- Now a greater analysis of intersectionality - included a detailed analysis of protected groups to show the interconnected nature of social categorisation, for example, disability and sex, race and sex, age and pay band, etc.
- The report is factual and highlights a number of issues around particular groups, and further conclusions will be drawn to inform the next phase, which will form part of the council's internal EDI strategy.
- The report will help shape the development of workforce initiatives to further improve the representation of minority groups within the Council, to ensure more inclusive processes and practices across the organisation.

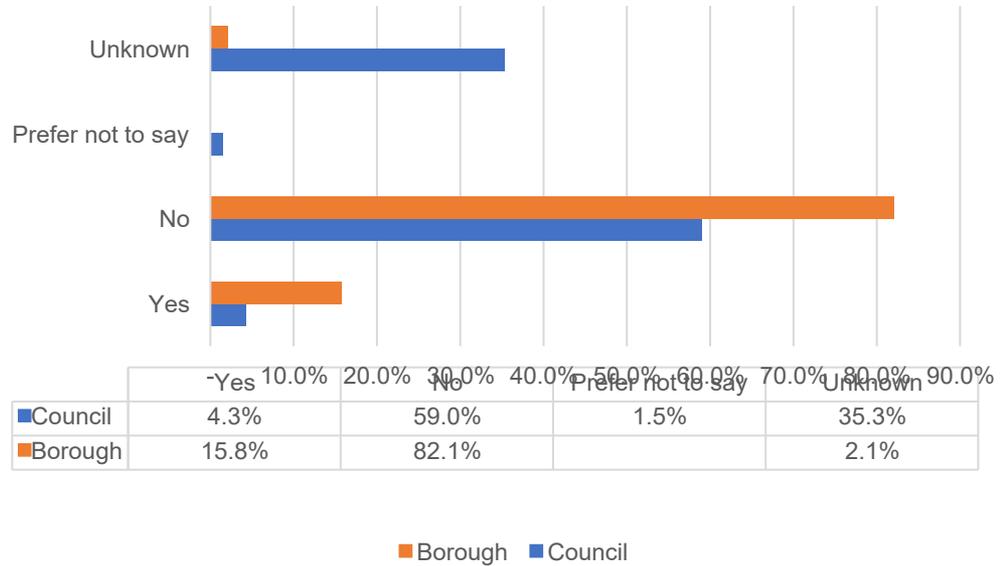
The majority of our workforce is aged between 35-64 (76%), under-representation of 16-24 year olds (1.6%) which is lower than the London average (2.8%).



The proportion of employees aged less than 25 in the council is lower than the London average, at 2.8%.

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	London
Proportion of employees aged less than 25	2.4%	1.7%	2.2%	1.6%	2.8%

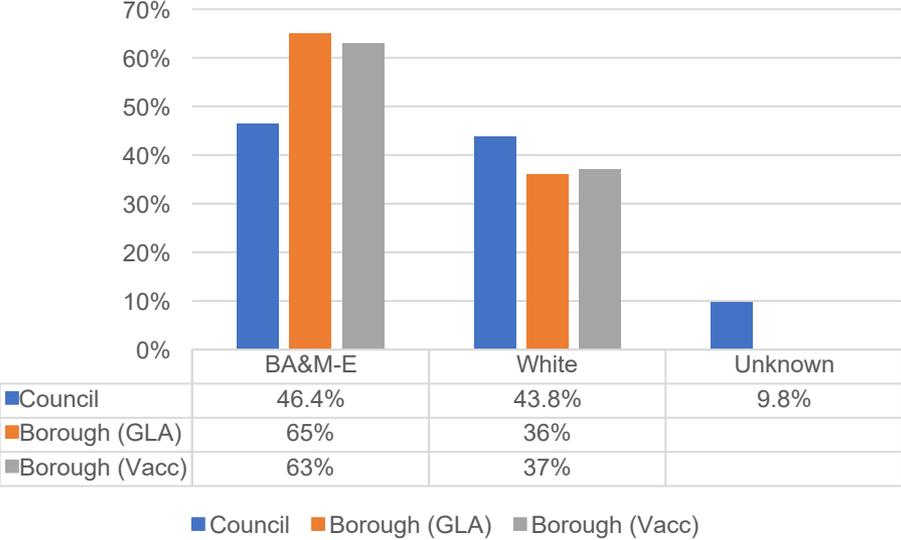
Staff sharing their disability status remains low (4.3%) this is also lower compared to other London councils (5.4%). The majority of staff declaring a disability are women ((66%) compared to men.



The top 5% of earners with a disability is 4.9%, which is above the London average (4.25%).

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 (Q1)	London
The percentage of the top 5% of earners in the authority with a disability	3.9%	4.7%	5.1%	4.9%	4.25%

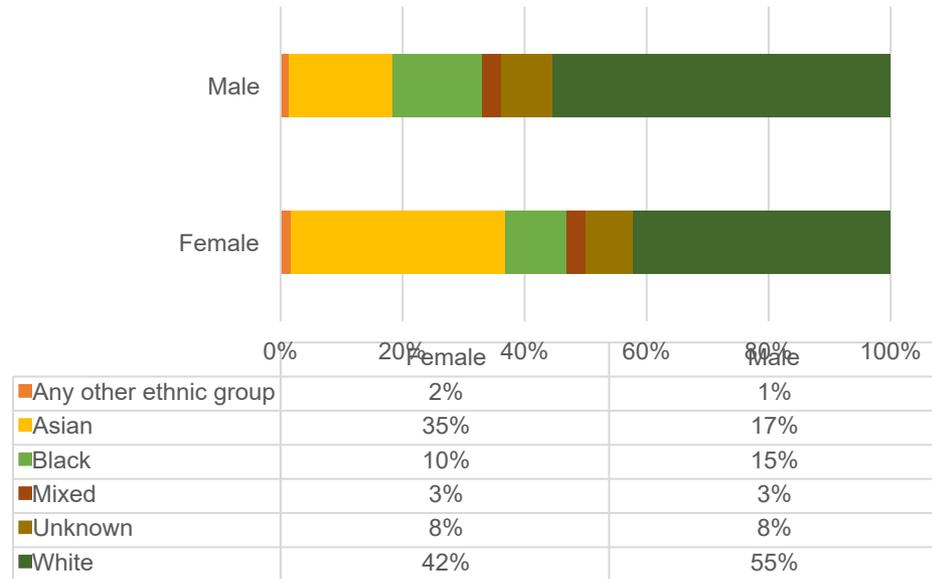
An under-representation of Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic staff across the council (46%), however this is higher than other London boroughs.



In 2020-21, 25.5% of our top 5% of earners were from a Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic background. This is higher than the London average (19%).

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 (Q1)	London
Percentage of top 5% earners from BAME communities	25.5%	27.1%	25.3%	25.5%	19%

Over 55% of our male workforce is white. By contrast, 50% of our female workforce are from Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic communities, with the largest proportion coming from an Asian background (35%), compared to 42% of our female workforce that is white.

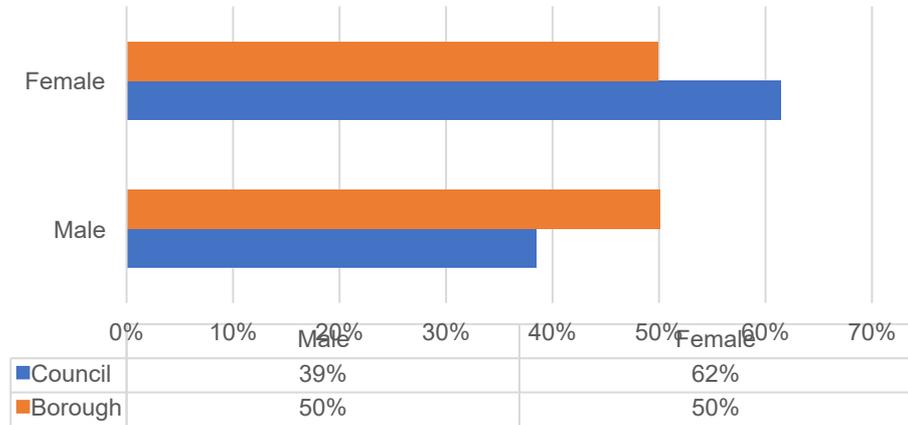


Any other ethnic group Asian Black Mixed Unknown White

A further breakdown of ethnicity pay band data by gender gives a more detailed picture of where ethnic groups are concentrated according to gender. 66% of women in pay band 5 and 6 are white female staff compared to 28% female staff from Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic communities. By contrast, pay bands 1 and 2 have an over-representation of female staff from Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic communities (53%) compared to 38% of white, female staff.

Similarly, pay band 5 and 6 is disproportionality over-represented by white male staff (76%), compared to 16% male staff from Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic communities. However, pay bands 1 and 2 also have an over-representation of white male staff (52%), compared to 39% of male staff from Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic communities.

The majority of our workforce is female (60%) compared to men (39%), although there is good representation across the pay bands, women in senior pay bands remains low, with men making up 64% of those within pay band 6.



■ Borough ■ Council

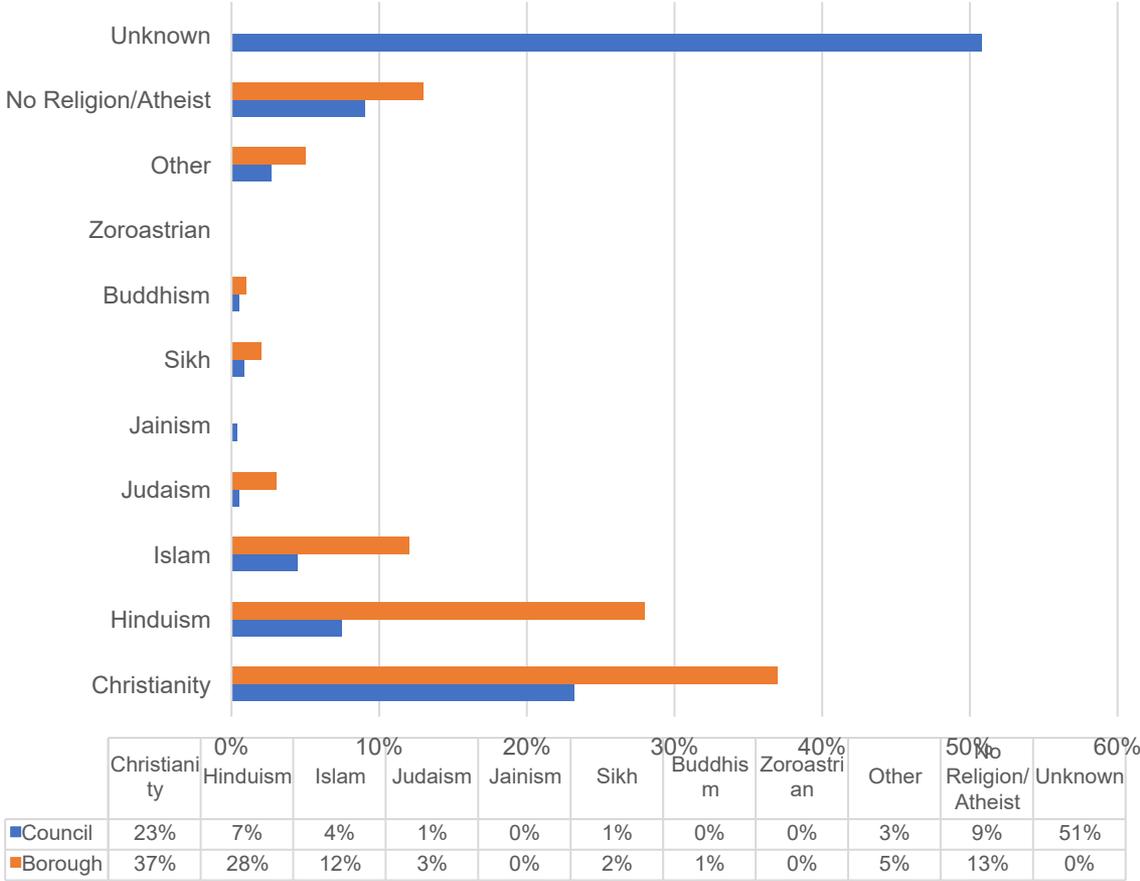
Although women are fairly represented across the organisation, representation at senior pay bands remains low. Despite 60% of our workforce being female, only 53% of our top 5% of earners are women and men make up 64.3% of our highest pay band

Our top 5% of earners who are women increased by 1.4% between 2019-20 to 2020-21. This is above the London average (50%) at 53.9%.

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21)	London
Percentage of top 5% earners that are women	52.0%	55.1%	52.5%	53.9%	50%

Religion

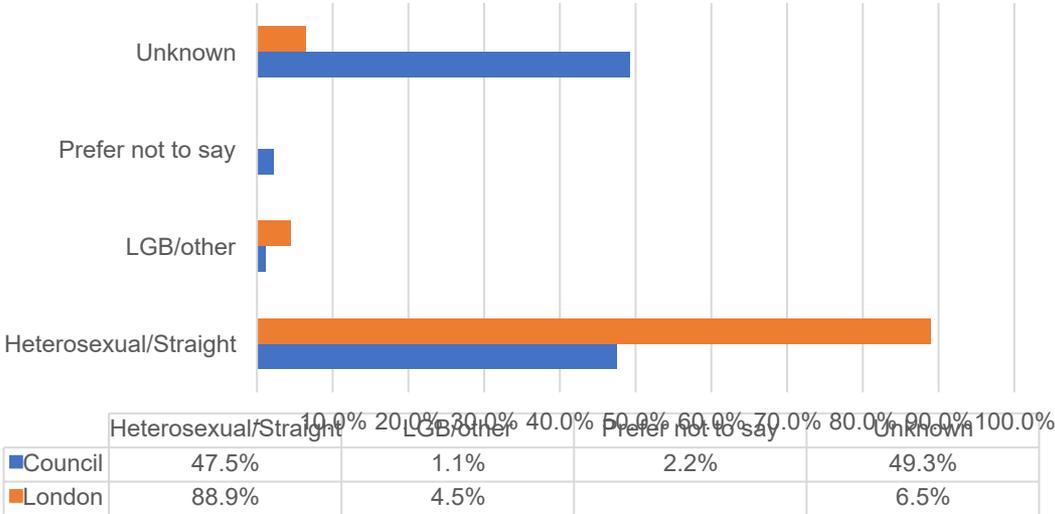
Religion and belief are massively underreported in the council, with over 50% unknown. The top three religions were 23% Christianity, 8% no religion/atheist, 7% Hinduism, which are fairly represented across all pay bands.



■ Borough ■ Council

LGBTQIA+ is underreported, with around 1% reporting on this and 49% unknown.

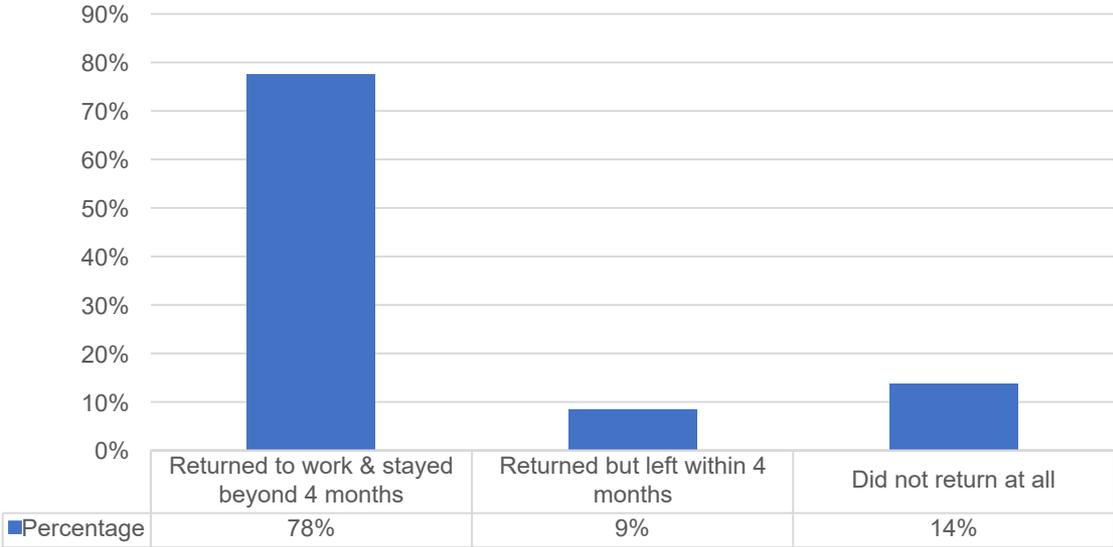
Sexual orientation - Council



London Council

A larger number of people returned to work and stayed beyond 4 months (77%), compared to those who left within 4 months (8%) and those who did not return at all (13%).

Maternity Returners



- **Age:** More 25-36 year olds applied (25%) and were successful in 2020-21 (26%). 45-54 year olds had a higher success rate from application (14%) to appointment (24%). 12% of applicants were aged 16-24 (12%) with a success rate of just 6%.
- **Disability:** The majority of applicants did not declare a disability (96%). Of the 2% that did declare a disability, 5% were successful.
- **Ethnicity:** 69% of applicants were from a BAME background, compared to 28% who were white, however the success rate for BAME applicants is lower than their white counterparts, with 22% of BAME candidates being shortlisted for roles, compared to 25% of white candidates. Of this, 28% of successful appointments were from a BAME background, compared to 40% of white candidates.
- **Gender:** There was a higher rate of applicants from women (60%) compared to men (40%), with more female candidates being shortlisted for roles (60%) and 39% of male candidates. 65% of female candidates were successfully appointed to roles compared to 35% of male candidates – a breakdown of appointment types was not available.
- **Religion:** The top three applicants according to religion were Christianity, Hinduism and Islam, which mirrors the borough demographics. Of this, the appointment success rate of these groups was 13% Christianity, 12% Hinduism and 1% Islam.
- **LGBTQIA+:** Almost all applicants were heterosexual or preferred not to say. 6% of applicants were bisexual and gay/lesbian, and the success rate of these applicants was the same.



1. Create safe spaces for staff to share their personal and confidential data with us in order to increase the completion rate which will allow us to better analysis our Annual Workforce Equality Report in the future.
2. Consider how we monitor agency staff and senior interim staff who make up a significant part of the workforce.
3. Monitor the impact of Diversity Talent Programmes which were launched last year on progression of female and BAME staff.
4. Undertake a deep-dive of our current recruitment practices with a view to improving the rate from application to shortlisting and appointment.