

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



25/02/2022

Our Ref Joint Staff Consultative Committee/09.03.22
Contact. Committee Services
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To: The Chair and Members of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee of North Hertfordshire District Council

District Councillors Councillor Kate Aspinwall (Chair), Councillor Terry Hone, Councillor Keith Hoskins MBE and Councillor Claire Strong

(Substitutes: Councillors Councillor Sam Collins, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Councillor Tony Hunter, Councillor Mandi Tandi and Councillor Kay Tart)

UNISON Representatives: Dee Levett, Debbie Ealand, Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews and Daniel Washington

Staff Consultation Forum Andrew Betts, Emma Jellis, Christina Coor and Nicola Viinikka
Representatives:

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF A

MEETING OF THE JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

to be held as a

REMOTE MEETING

On

WEDNESDAY, 9TH MARCH, 2022 AT 10.00 AM

Yours sincerely,

Jeanette Thompson
Service Director – Legal and Community

****MEMBERS PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU DOWNLOAD ALL AGENDAS AND REPORTS VIA THE MOD.GOV APPLICATION ON YOUR TABLET BEFORE ATTENDING THE MEETING****

Agenda **Part I**

Item	Page
<p>1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Members are required to notify any substitutions by midday on the day of the meeting.</p> <p>Late substitutions will not be accepted and Members attending as a substitute without having given the due notice will not be able to take part in the meeting.</p>	
<p>2. MINUTES - 15 DECEMBER 2021 To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 15 December 2021</p>	(Pages 5 - 8)
<p>3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS Members are reminded that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Declarable Interest and are required to notify the Chair of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest must withdraw from the meeting for the duration of the item. Members declaring a Declarable Interest, wishing to exercise a 'Councillor Speaking Right', must declare this at the same time as the interest, move to the public area before speaking to the item and then must leave the room before the debate and vote.</p>	
<p>4. STAFF CONSULTATION FORUM To receive the minutes of the Staff Consultation Forum meetings from December 2021, January 2022 and February 2022</p>	(Pages 9 - 20)
<p>5. INFORMATION NOTE - HR UPDATE INFORMATION NOTE OF THE HR SERVICE MANAGER</p> <p>To receive an update on the progress made in the last quarter on the People Recovery Plan and general HR related activities</p>	(Pages 21 - 26)
<p>6. INFORMATION NOTE - EQUALITIES UPDATE MARCH 2022 INFORMATION NOTE OF THE SENIOR HR AND CONTRACTS MANAGER</p> <p>To receive an update regarding equality at the Council</p>	(Pages 27 - 48)
<p>7. STRATEGIC DISCUSSION PAPER To receive a discussion paper on the employer's role in keeping staff healthy</p>	(Pages 49 - 50)
<p>8. FUTURE DISCUSSION TOPICS To consider the subjects for debate at future meetings of the Committee.</p>	

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Public Document Pack Agenda Item 2

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

REMOTE MEETING

ON WEDNESDAY, 15TH DECEMBER, 2021 AT 10.00 AM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Councillor Kate Aspinwall (Chair), Terry Hone, Keith Hoskins and Claire Strong*

In Attendance: *Ian Couper (Service Director – Resources) Rebecca Webb (HR Operations Manager) Laura Bignell (HR Business Partner) William Edwards (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager) Louis Mutter (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)*

Also Present: *Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews (UNISON)*

15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 3:08

No apologies for absence were received from Councillors.

16 ELECTION OF A VICE-CHAIR FOR REMAINDER OF CIVIC YEAR 2021/22

Audio Recording – 3:18

IT WAS AGREED: That a Vice-Chair would not be elected during this meeting; in the absence of The Chair in future meetings during this civic year, the committee will elect a new Chair.

17 MINUTES - 10 MARCH, 9 JUNE, 22 SEPTEMBER

Audio Recording – 5:32

IT WAS AGREED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 10 March 2021, 9 June 2021 and 22 September 2021 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

18 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio Recording – 6:30

There was no other business at the meeting.

19 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 6:35

- (1) The Chair welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;

- (2) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (3) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.

20 STAFF CONSULTATION FORUM

Audio Recording – 6:55

The Service Director – Resources presented the minutes of the Staff Consultation Forums held in September, October and November 2021 and drew attention to points including:

- Updating and refining the Terms of Reference for the Staff Consultation Forum;
- The distribution of a staff survey to gather feedback and raise awareness of the Staff Consultation Forum;
- The reopening and closure of the District Council Offices.

IT WAS AGREED: That the minutes of the Staff Consultation Committee held in September, October and November 2021 to be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Joint Staff Consultative Committee to consider any issues addressed by the Staff Consultation Forum

21 INFORMATION NOTE - HR UPDATE

Audio Recording – 10:16

The HR Operations Manager presented the report entitled HR Update and drew attention to points including:

- The ways of working covered in the report are now outdated due to the closure of the District Council Offices;
- Staff are working from home unless there is an exceptional need;
- There was a small number of staff members in the Council Offices during the last lockdown. Any staff at the Offices at the moment will be looked at on a case-by-case basis;
- The Council is in a good position for when the Offices are reopened, highlighting the desk-booking system and hybrid meeting facilities;
- The ongoing meetings between Council HR departments, sharing experiences and information on particular issues that have arisen;
- Recruitment has continued at a steady level despite the Office closure and should continue at this level;
- Undertaking a review on how temporary workers are used at the Council. As part of this, HR have developed a new fast-track recruitment option to get positions filled more efficiently;
- Pay negotiations are ongoing and the Unions are in the process of balloting for strike action;
- Various types of support available for employees during this time; including online wellbeing classes, mental health drop-in sessions and a project looking at funding a wellbeing app for staff;
- Prepared an update for managers reminding them to check in with their team and that HR are available to support them;
- Personal development days are continuing into 2022 and are well received;

- The Shaping Our Future Committee agreed on the new values of the Council, which now includes inclusion. The Committee are working with a graphic designer to set out these new values in a memorable way;
- COVID absences have increased, which reflects the increasing case numbers in the district. Other absences have remained low;
- The labour turnover trend is continuing to increase.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Kate Aspinwall

In response to questions the HR Operations Manager advised:

- That the discount for the gym and other various discounts are still available across the district for Members and staff;
- That the managers update that is going out will have information surrounding the need to visit the Council Offices, as managers will best know how their staff reacted during previous office closures and are aware that HR are willing to provide support;
- HR will be sending out a 'checking-in' email to staff to ensure they have the support necessary.

IT WAS AGREED: That the Information Note entitled HR Update be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Committee to consider the Information Note entitled HR Update

22 STRATEGIC DISCUSSION PAPER

Audio Recording – 25:26

The HR Business Partner presented the Strategic Discussion Paper on the Modernisation of the Recruitment Process and highlighted points including:

- Effective recruitment means hiring the right candidate to a vacancy with the required skills and experience. Modernising the recruitment process plays a huge part in this;
- Candidates expect to be able to search for jobs and apply online and are able to do this in their own time;
- The Current NHC system allows candidates to pause, amend and check their application before it is sent;
- The NHC website allows the Council to have a shop window to prospective employees, advertising that the Council is a good place to work;
- The online system allows applications to be anonymous and streamlines the application process;
- Advertising is available to all staff on the intranet, including temporary staff;
- External vacancies are also advertised on the NHC website;
- A recruitment video was created in 2020 which is shared online to prospective candidates;
- At the end of 2020 updates were made to application forms to be more inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community. Candidates are now able to declare if they are non-binary or prefer not to say;
- NHC has modernised the process for DBS checks, which is now done by a third-party company Experian;
- NHC have continued to take part in careers fairs at local colleges or schools;
- Looking to review the North Herts Council employer brand;

- Further developments to be made to the recruitment tool, including reminders sent out to applicants who have not finished their application;
- Modernising the new starter process to cut down on administrative burden for managers.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Keith Hoskins
- Councillor Kate Aspinwall

In response to questions the HR Business Partner advised:

- NHC is still attracting a good level of applications for vacancies given the current national employment rate;
- All applications are anonymized via the recruitment tool. Managers only receive answers to shortlisted questions and other information is only discovered during the interview phase.
- Equality data is collated annually.

IT WAS AGREED: That the Strategic Discussion Paper on the modernisation of the recruitment process be noted

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Committee to consider the discussion paper on the modernisation of the recruitment process.

23 FUTURE DISCUSSION TOPICS

Audio recording – 37:28

Members considered which subjects should be discussed at future meetings and

IT WAS AGREED: That the discussion topics for the meetings would be as follows:

- (i) The What's the employer's role in keeping staff healthy? Topic would be discussed with a specific focus on mental health in the backdrop of a pandemic in March.
- (ii) Wellbeing and staff support measures will be discussed as a regular part of the HR update at each meeting.

The meeting closed at 10:52 am

Chair

Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

01/12/2021 DRAFT Minutes

Present: Ian Couper (IC), Andrew Betts (AB), Dee Levett (DL), Emma Jellis (EJ), Rebecca Webb (RW), Christina Corr (CC), Debbie Hiscock (DH), Vic Godfrey (VG), Anthony Roche (AR), Oliver Charter (OC)

Circulation: Global

1. Apologies

Maggie Williams
Nicola Viinikka

2. Matters Arising

No Update

3. NHDC update

The Union have rejected the Employers pay offer and carrying out a Ballot which will end on 14th January. Further guidance will be issued to employees in the new year once it is known what the next steps are.

RW gave a reminder that all staff members are welcome to attend the Inclusion Group. The next meeting is on 7th December 2021 at 12:30 and the discussion is on Sex, Sexual Orientation and Gender Reassignment. The Inclusion Group is fully supported by the Leadership Team and IC meets with members to pass feedback on.

There have been some queries from staff who have been trying to balance childcare and work as some children have caught Covid and are needing to isolate. Annual leave, Flexi and unpaid leave can be options however we encourage staff to discuss flexibility with their manager.

RW gave a reminder about the virtual wellbeing classes. The details are on the intranet and they are free of charge for employees. Details can be found by using the following link - [Virtual Wellbeing Classes | Intranet \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

Following review by the Leadership Team, staff will have the Right to Request Flexible Working from day one of employment. This allows employees the right to request changes to the way they work including number of hours and working pattern,

There was an amendment to the Working Time Regulations (WTR) which allowed additional annual leave to be carried forward due to increased workloads relating to Covid-19. This amendment also covers the next year and gives the provision, if needed, for annual leave left from the current leave year to be carried forward for one more year (April 2022 – March 2023). The Leadership Team recognise that workload has continued to be significant for some teams particularly where resourcing issues have prevented individuals

from taking leave and are keen that no employee loses their leave. As a result, the following has been agreed:

- at the end of March 2023, carry forward will be limited to the **lower of 148 hours** (or the pro-rata equivalent of 4 weeks for part-time staff) and the **amount you carried forward in March 2022** (although if that is less than your weekly contracted hours then you can carry forward up 1 week)
- at the end of March 2024, carry forward will be limited to the **lower of 74 hours** (or the pro-rata equivalent of 2 weeks for part-time staff) and the **amount you carried forward in March 2023** (although if that is less than your weekly contracted hours then you can carry forward up 1 week)
- From March 2024, the normal policy of a maximum of 37 hours (pro-rata equivalent of 1 weeks leave for part-time staff) carry forward will apply in line with the Holiday policy.

IC provided an update on the response to the pandemic. It was noted that some staff are taking a relaxed approach to the current Covid rules in the office. Covid cases in the district and the levels of sickness at NHC related to Covid are on the rise and the rules are in place to keep staff safe, so must be followed.

Any sickness that is a result from taking up the Covid Vaccine is recorded through the normal process on iTrent but will not be included in any sickness triggers.

AR gave a reminder that Cabinet will be deciding the draft Budget later this month.

4. SCF Terms of Reference Update

The survey was issued on 30th November 2021 and responses are required by 23rd December 2021. Reminders will be sent out in between these dates and results will be discussed in the January SCF meeting. There will also be an article in December's edition of Insight.

5. Employee Queries

Question: A member of staff is wanting to do some charity/volunteer work but is wondering whether they can do it during their working hours or do they need to make the time up or use flexi etc?

Answer: Pre pandemic NHC was looking at a volunteering policy for these kinds of situations and it is unsure what stage this got to. Please pass onto HR to respond.

Question: How do we book off Christmas eve?

Answer: The following advice has been sent out globally:

“Christmas Eve*

Finally, a reminder that the main council services will be closed on Friday 24th December as an additional day off. This should be booked as **Other Absence** in iTrent using the absence type “Paid Leave NHDC” and using the absence reason as “NHDC Time off in Lieu”. Note that using Other Absence will not affect your annual leave entitlement.

*Some service areas will continue to be operating over the Christmas period, e.g. Careline, and those working in these areas should speak to their manager about alternative arrangements.”

Question: The office isn't warm despite the temperature displaying 23 degrees? Staff have been sitting at the desks with their coats on. They have turned the temperature up, but it doesn't get warmer.

Answer: We have looked into the issue in Careline, and it appears to be improving. It may be down to more fresh air coming into the building to stop the spread of Covid and it will take a few minutes for it to warm up. Property Services to investigate.

Question: With more teams looking at getting Electric Vehicles (EV), are there plans to install more EV charging points across the district and at the DCO?

Answer: Yes, there are plans to install four charging points at the DCO. We have also been looking at plans to install more in our car parks.

6. IT Update

The Laptop Rollout is now the final stages and will hopefully be finished before Christmas.

There are more docking stations being rolled out at the DCO and HTH. IT are still waiting for more deliveries of docking stations but there isn't huge demand for them in the DCO with an average of 20 people a day across the floors.

IT have arranged cover across the Christmas Closedown to support any IT issues that occur for staff working during the closedown period. VG to publicise contact information.

Normally passwords are required to be changed every 90 days but as of last week this requirement has been relaxed so that staff come back after Christmas and can log in.

Staff and members that use Dell Password Manager will have received an email from IT with details on moving them over to Microsoft Authenticator.

IT are working on a tender for the Microsoft License Agreement for next year.

Question: Is there any update on the room in Hitchin multi-storey car park?

Answer: Yes, it will be going live from 13th December. Parking Services should be contacting Property Services to discuss arrangements.

Question: Are IT working on anything in the background that is causing applications like Northgate, Excel and Word etc. to run slow?

Answer: Information at Work and Northgate still run off of Internet Explorer which is an old browser which could cause speed issues. We are working to improve these applications.

7. Building Services Update

Property Services have been fogging the building, including any meeting rooms, toilets, stairwells, and communal areas, with a solution called 'Shield Me' which is proven to kill Covid and other bacteria.

8. AOB

No Update

Chair for next meeting – Andrew Betts

Have something to say?

If you have an issue you think should be brought to the attention of the SCF, please contact any SCF representative via phone, email or in person. They will raise your issue at the next meeting. You will not be identified unless you want to be.

Issues relating to property e.g. broken lift, non-flushing toilets, etc. must always be reported to Property Services in the first instance: propertyservices@north-herts.gov.uk

Alternatively you can send any issues to the SCF inbox - SCF@north-herts.gov.uk

Representatives (and extension):

Emma Jellis #4312 - MSU team based on Floor 4

Christina Corr #4325 - Senior Technical Officer R&B team based on Floor 5

Nicola Viinikka Visitor Services Assistant based at Hitchin Town Hall and Museum

Andrew Betts #4282 - Contracts Officer Waste Management based at Buntingford

Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

12/01/2022

Present: Anthony Roche (AR), Ian Couper (IC), Rebecca Webb (RW),
Maggie Williams (MW), Emma Jellis (EJ), Christina Corr (CC),
Nicola Viinikka (NV), Dee Levett (DL), Mark Robinson (MR), Anne
Banner (AB)

(Fallon Rumball-Nunan (FRN – notes)

Circulation: Global

1. Apologies

Andrew Betts, Vic Godfrey, Debbie Hiscock

2. Matters Arising

None

3. Revenue and Benefits Restructure

AB presented key points to the attendees regarding a Revenue and Benefits restructure proposal. Due to a number of specialist officers and a lack of resilience, the proposal is to create three roles that incorporate more than one specialist area to better facilitate any leave periods and succession planning.

4. NHDC update

- No Pay Award update, ballot will close on the 14/01/2022.
- Itrent update in February, the functionality will not change but visually will be different. All the user guides will be updated in line with this.
- Holiday Flex applications will run from 1st – 28th February.
- W/C 17th January all employees to receive check in emails with support reminders. Look out details on Headspace - coming soon!
- From 2024 we will have elections every 4 years.
- Final version of the draft budget has been published for the Finance Audit and Risk Committee
- 25th January 2022 Staff briefing to include a detailed budget update.
- All out election decision 2024 – NHC will be recommending to the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) how many councillors are required. This will figure will be decided by full council but final decision to be made by the LGBC.

Question: Are there any mental health and wellbeing provisions in place for councillors?

Answer: Yes, we plan to include them in the check-in emails, however Headspace will be for employees only.

Question: Will the 2023 elections go ahead, or will they defer until 2024?

Answer: Those elected in 2022 are elected for 2 years. 2023 elections will be deferred until 2024.

5. SCF - Terms of Reference/Survey Results

Attendees thanked all those who had taken the time to share views on future of SCF.

Key Topics Discussed:

Employee Representation

The following discussions followed:

How many employee representatives should there be: It was decided that there would be 8 employee representatives in total including an apprentice representative, this was a popular suggestion in survey findings.

Should there be a guest slot: In the survey a guest slot was suggested, such as councillors, it was agreed that this would be inappropriate as SCF an employee forum. JSCC then provides the forum for Councillor input.

How employee representatives should be allocated: It was agreed that no employee should be discouraged, as a representative from each directorate may not be practical.

The length of an SCF employee representative term; a maximum of 3 years was discussed with a proposal that SCF employee representatives can be re-elected if they wish. To be reviewed as part of more detailed discussions.

Attracting new employee representatives. It was agreed that a global email will be sent from the SCF Mailbox asking for volunteers. **All SCF members to contribute, HR to support. MR to adjust SCF Mailbox to allow global emails to be sent.**

Suggestion for SCF to be highlighted in future staff briefing. It was decided that SCF item will be added to Agenda for Staff Briefing on 25 January. **All SCF Members to send content to AR to present.**

Summary of other suggestions:

- Those on shift to alternate employee representation.
- Content of the existing monthly global email to be more varied and invite people to engage.
- SCF Staff queries form on SCF intranet page.
- Monthly SCF Insight articles, e.g., Getting to know your Employee Representatives.

Topics to be covered in SCF



The survey results suggested that the current topics are relevant and should remain. Attendees discussed the additional inclusion of *Green* and *Welfare* issues as these were frequently suggested in survey findings. Proposed new agenda to follow for further discussions. **MW to create amended agenda.**

SCF Terms of Reference

MW to amend TOR based on meeting outcome and issue for discussion at February SCF Meeting to be finalised.

Due to time limitations two further dedicated meetings were agreed to discuss:

- SCF Job Descriptions. **FRN to organise.**
- Future Communications regarding SCF with member of communications team. **SCF members to organise.**

Any relevant information from these meetings will be communicated.

6. Employee Queries

Question: Why does annual leave carry over not come from last year's holiday allowance when I book annual leave?

Answer: The remaining annual leave balance you see from 20/21 should have been carried forward to this year and added to your entitlement. As you have booked leave for this year it will only be taken from 21/22 balance

7. IT Update

- Password policy change from 90 days to 12 months, this will be applied when you next update password.
- Information at Work project – training available and recommended as significant changes to functionality.
- Please contact IT if you have not yet been issued a laptop.
- Reminder to comply with Freedom of Information statutory return times.
- 2021 saw 9947 IT help desk tickets logged.

8. Building Services Update

IC welcomed questions.

Question: If you are only collecting something from the DCO do you need to book a desk?

Answer: No but please make sure you comply with health and safety (Covid-19 and fire) regulations, including making sure that sign in and out of the building.

9. AOB

None

10. Summary of Actions

Action	Responsibility
SCF Global Sent from SCF Inbox	All SCF members to contribute, HR to support. MR to adjust SCF Mailbox to allow global emails to be sent.
SCF added to Staff Briefing agenda – 25 th January	All SCF Members to send content to AR to present.
Amended SCF Agenda for further discussion	MW to amend agenda. FRN to circulate.
Amend TOR based on meeting outcome and issue for discussion at February SCF Meeting to be finalised.	MW to amend TOR. FRN to circulate.
SCF Job Description Meeting	FRN to organise. SCF Members to attend.
Communications meeting with Communications Team	SCF Members to organise. HR to Support.

Chair for next meeting – Dee Levett

Have something to say?

If you have an issue you think should be brought to the attention of the SCF, please contact any SCF representative via phone, email or in person. They will raise your issue at the next meeting. You will not be identified unless you want to be.

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Nicola Viinikka Visitor Services Assistant based at Hitchin Town Hall and Museum

Andrew Betts #4282 - Contracts Officer Waste Management based at Buntingford

Staff Consultation Forum Meeting

02/02/2022

Present: Anthony Roche (AR), Ian Couper (IC), Rebecca Webb (RW),
Maggie Williams (MW), Emma Jellis (EJ), Christina Corr (CC),
Nicola Viinikka (NV), Andrew Betts (AB), Dee Levett (DL), Toby
LeSage (TL)

(Fallon Rumball-Nunan (FRN – notes)

Circulation: Global

1. Apologies

Vic Godfrey, Debbie Hiscock, Chris Jeffrey

2. Matters Arising

None

3. Customer Service Restructure

All attendees given proposed restructure and outline from Chris Jeffrey as unable to attend. Proposal to replace the current vacant deputy Customer Services manager post with two team leaders. Attendees had no questions regarding this.

4. NHDC update

Holiday Flex: Reminder that Holiday Flex window is open for applications and details are on the message board, intranet page and insight article.

Itrent Upgrade: Itrent upgrade on Monday 7th February which includes a “new look” for the log-in and home pages. A global email will be sent out with a new link to the webpage and IT will be updating the quick links on the start button and intranet.

Pay Award: No pay award update – any information will be communicated.

Return to DCO: IC welcomed questions regarding return to office.

AB feedback positive comments he had been given regarding of the approach to returning to the office. AB also raised a query regarding annual leave carry over itrent errors - RW to investigate.

5. SCF – Terms of Reference

Actions from previous minutes:

AR provided an update in the staff briefing on behalf of the SCF.

SCF article will be published in February edition of Insight.

SCF reminder posted on message board prior to current meeting.

Still to be actioned:

Global Email from SCF Inbox – **SCF Employee Representatives to action.**

SCF Representatives to meet with communications team – **SCF Employee Representatives to organise.**

New SCF volunteers to be contacted after response from insight article – **HR to action.**

Apprentices to be contacted for potential Apprentice Employee Representative – **HR to action.**

Following on from the employee representative's role description meeting (a summary of which, can be found [here](#)) a final draft of SCF Terms of reference was circulated to all.

Attendees discussed the final draft of the TOR and finalised some elements concerning, nominations of employee representatives, standing items on the new agenda, meeting practicalities such as frequency, timings and platform and the circulation and publication of the notes.

The finalised SCF terms of reference can be read [here](#).

Amended agenda to include Green update – AR/IC to seek feedback from the Climate Change Implementation Group.

Wellbeing update will also be a recurring topic within the regular HR update.

The finalised Agenda can be read [here](#).

6. Employee Queries

Question: With regards to the Council Asset Disposal Strategy and larger numbers working from home are there any plans to rent out further floors or redesign office areas to be residential?

Answer: With regards to DCO, there is potential to rent out further floors but not until the office pattern of use is clear. Other buildings such as Letchworth museum is currently empty and could potentially become residential, but the layout makes this difficult. Thomas Bellamy house is currently an office space could be expanded to further office spaces/business start-up. Residential, commercial and office usage is being explored but it is dependant on demand and location.

7. IT Update

Reminder: If any current staff without a laptop or managers with new starters imminent please put a help desk ticket in as soon as possible as assigning and building the laptop takes some preparation time.

Please note that Information@Work (I@W) will be off line from 1400 on Friday, 4th February – Monday 7th February (no weekend access) in order for the upgrade to the system to be carried out with the system being made available on Monday. All users should close I@W by 1400 on Friday. You will not be able to index your emails using office connect or word documents during this time.

All import services will be disabled, and all files held safely until the system is enabled on Monday, 7th February.

No users should attempt to access the system on Monday 7th February until you have been advised that the system is available.

Training is currently available (times can viewed on the intranet) and additional training planned after system is live.

Any non-technical issues please check guides available any technical help please log a help desk ticket.

Reminder for anyone returning to DCO that 5 meeting rooms now have audio visual capabilities and a user guide for set up and usage can be found here. [Meeting Rooms with AV | Intranet \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

8. Building Services Update

IC welcomed questions and reminded attendees of covid measures, health and safety and fire regulations if returning to the office.

Question: If you see someone not adhering to the covid measures in place who should you raise this with?

Answer: Your manager in first instance followed by IC.

Question: In the Museum all staff members are continuing to wear masks? Can we still only respectfully request members of the public to do the same.

Answer: That is correct.

Chair for next meeting – Christina Corr

Have something to say?

If you have an issue you think should be brought to the attention of the SCF, please contact any SCF representative via phone, email or in person. They will raise your issue at the next meeting. You will not be identified unless you want to be.

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Nicola Viinikka Visitor Services Assistant based at Hitchin Town Hall and Museum

Andrew Betts #4282 - Contracts Officer Waste Management based at Buntingford

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JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

9 March 2022

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

AGENDA ITEM No.

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: HR UPDATE
INFORMATION NOTE OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES SERVICES MANAGER

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To update the Joint Staff Consultative Committee on the progress made in the last quarter completing HR work and projects as well as our work supporting the people issues during the Coronavirus pandemic.

2. STEPS TO DATE

- 2.1 The HR Update Information Note contains updates regarding the 2021/22 HR Service Work Plan.

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

- 3.1 The terms of reference for the Joint Staff Consultative Committee are to be the corporate interface with employees on major Human Resources issues and to be the Strategic HR Forum for NHC Members. HR projects often require support from other support services such as IT, Finance, Legal Services, and others.

3.2 People Recovery Plan

The pandemic and subsequent restrictions this year have had a big impact on all the normal forward planning carried out by services including HR, as well creating difficulties for forecasting on the economy, labour, market, pay and pensions etc. The People Recovery Plan was developed as an alternative to the People Strategy for 2020-2026 and describes how HR processes have been adapted as a result of the pandemic, and how we are supporting our staff throughout this period of change.

Late 2021 saw the reintroduction of Plan B, which meant a significant number of employees were once again working from home. Since then, restrictions have been lifted and, in February, all employees were allowed to return to office working again. This is expected to be a gradual return for most employees and will be facilitated by the online desk booking system, laptops and video conferencing facilities in meeting rooms. Several measures are still in place to help minimise the risk of infections these include desk cleaning materials, facemasks whilst moving around the building, and social distancing, as well as encouraging staff to use lateral flow tests regularly.

There are specific risk assessments (with measures to help protect employees) in place for non-desk-based work.

3.3 Recruitment

We have seen an increase in vacancies in the last few months which reflects our higher labour turnover. The level of interest from applicants has been good for most positions, although we have had to readvertise a couple of vacancies (one in Revenues and

another in Customer Service) which have both had an improved response rate for the second advert. Professional roles such as Legal and Planning are still proving difficult to fill. We have successfully filled several key roles including Communications Manager, two Environmental Health Officers, Planning Officer and Housing Officer as well as an internal secondment to cover a management role at Hitchin Town Hall. The team have also been working with Careline to improve the effectiveness of the recruitment of Careline operators.

3.4 Temporary workers

The project group on temporary workers, supported by Commercial, continues to explore how the Council's temporary resource needs can be met effectively.

A Fast-Track Temp process has been introduced to allow directly recruited temps to start more quickly. The Use of Temporary Workers Policy has been updated to incorporate this change and to reflect current practice. Accompanying documentation has been reviewed with input from Legal, IT and Property Services and revised versions are now available on the intranet.

3.5 Apprenticeships

We have nine Apprentices in post studying a range of qualifications including Customer Service Specialist, Business Administration, HR Support and Digital Marketing. A further three will be recruited shortly and will be completing the following Apprenticeships: Community Health and Wellbeing, Information Communication Technician and Cultural Learning and Participation Officer.

As the Apprenticeship Levy Scheme becomes more established, new Apprenticeships are available which allow us to provide more specialist learning to suit our varied teams. This will be a great benefit to the Council as we continue to develop the workforce of the future. We are also continuing to utilise the Apprentice Levy Fund for further job-related training for existing staff when the opportunity arises.

Our training providers are still offering remote learning with face-to-face observations, which appear to be the delivery model of many training providers as we move slowly into a new way of working.

3.6 Pay

National Pay bargaining: The pay negotiations for the 2021 general pay award have not yet reached a settlement. From December 2021 to February 2022 unions carried out ballots to seek support for industrial action. The outcome of these ballots so far have not supported strike action.

This is separate from the pay awards for Chief Executives and Chief Officers, which the relevant Unions have agreed at 1.5%. This is lower than the employer offer of at least 1.75% made for other workers.

National Pay bargaining 2022: The National Employers are not expecting the Unions to table their pay claim for 2022 until April. North Herts Council will continue to take part in the National Pay Briefings.

3.7 Employee Benefits

In January the team announced the launch of a new benefit for Council employees, Headspace. Headspace is an award-winning mindfulness and sleep application that supports people to feel less stressed, more focused and sleep soundly. The app has been positively received by employees across the Council.

In December, the Council announced that we would support employees achieve a healthy work life balance by opening flexible working requests to all employees from day one of employment. The benefits of flexible working for both employers and employees are clear and varied, from improved wellbeing and work life balance to greater productivity.

3.8 Mental Health and Wellbeing

As the second Monday of January has become known as Blue Monday, the HR Team emailed all staff during this week, to make personal contact and to take the opportunity to remind them of all the support that is available to them. We also used this as the initial platform to announce the launch of the Headspace App.

We also ensured that our Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA) were available at 3 drop-in sessions on Monday 17th January.

To support staff and encourage them to catch up with colleagues, and following positive feedback that we received during the MHFA drop-in session in January, we held another Virtual Kitchen on 3rd February to coincide with Time to Talk Day. As with the previous Virtual Kitchens, this was very well received by those that attended.

The Hertfordshire HR Leaders project to support employee mental health and resilience is progressing. The allocated funding from Public Health will be invested in tools and training to help staff to develop their resilience. So far this has funded the Headspace application.

3.9 Learning & Employee Engagement

To support the January 2022 Personal Development Session, we ran a Productivity Workshop, which was attended by 90 staff– this workshop provided tips and tricks to help staff who were struggling with constant distractions and information overload, to help them balance productivity and wellbeing. Feedback from attendees has been very positive and a further session is booked for later in the year.

A new suite of Customer Services eLearning is being launched to staff to support in putting our customers at the heart of everything we do.

3.10 Shaping our Future

The Organisational Values have been further developed to be more concise and have been shared with staff through a variety of means, the concise values are as follows; Together, Listening, Learning, Adaptable and Inclusive.

We have now developed an action plan for the future based on the outcomes of the Shaping our Future meetings, these actions align the Council Plan priorities. The action

plan also considers the alignment of training for Officers and Members. This action plan was shared with the Shaping our Future steering group at the end of February. The action plan will form part of our Operational Work Plan.

3.11 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Inclusion group met in December 2021 to discuss Sex, Sexual Orientation and Gender Reassignment. The attendees were provided with the workforce profile in this area and an open discussion followed. The overall feel from the group was that the Council is an inclusive place to work and that it could be more vocal about how it's inclusive and celebrate success.

The group felt it was important to publicise the Council's values, including inclusivity to prospective or new employees and in external messaging.

Although many experiences discussed were positive, the group noted the importance of awareness raising through messaging and training.

It was noted that there are now more female service directors at the Council and the group would be interested in hearing from women in senior positions about their experience in navigating their way to those positions.

The next meeting is due to take place in March and the group will be discussing issues and experiences relating to Religion.

3.12 Absence

Rates of employee absence relating to COVID-19 have been at their highest level to date, reflecting the prevalence of Omicron circulating in the community. In particular, there were 35 cases of absence in the 8 weeks 29th November – 21st January which was almost double the total number of cases in the first two waves. A summary of the number of cases and days lost by quarter is shown below, with January – March 2022 showing cases to date at the time of reporting.

	COVID absences									
	April - June		July - Sept		Oct - Dec		Jan - March		Total	
	Cases	Days lost	Cases	Days lost	Cases	Days lost	Cases	Days lost	Cases	Days lost
2020-21	1	4	2	6	7	27.5	9	38.5	19	76
2021-22	3	14	5	34.5	32	184	22	90	62	322.5

There are a small number of employees on long-term absence at present, and the HR team are actively supporting with assistance from Occupational Health, as well as providing advice to line managers.

Short-term absence has been increasing since October, with the increase in cases of the Omicron variant being a significant factor. The absence figures for the rolling 12-month period are shown below as absence days lost per employee. The short-term absence target is 3.5 days per year, and for the first time in several years we have exceeded this target.

Rolling 12 months	Absence days lost per employee		
	Long-term	Short-term	Total
Feb-21	0.24	0.07	0.31
Mar-21	0.39	0.32	0.71
Apr-21	0.33	0.18	0.50
May-21	0.36	0.25	0.60
Jun-21	0.22	0.23	0.45
Jul-21	0.49	0.30	0.80
Aug-21	0.19	0.23	0.42
Sep-21	0.31	0.25	0.56
Oct-21	0.26	0.35	0.61
Nov-21	0.22	0.53	0.75
Dec-21	0.24	0.54	0.78
Jan-22	0.24	0.42	0.66
Total	3.48	3.67	7.15

3.13 Leavers and Turnover

Turnover figures exclude redundancies, retirement, apprenticeships, and fixed term contracts).

Year (1 April – 31 March)	
2015/16	15.1%
2016/17	9.7%
2017/18	13.0%
2018/19	12.8%
2019/20	10.7%
2020/21	8.1%

Whilst at the start of this year, our labour turnover was at its lowest levels for more than 10 years at 8.1%, the number of employees leaving has increased in line with national trends since April. However, the increase now appears to have slowed with a smaller number of resignations during the last three months (December – February) with 6 resignations compared to 12 during September – November. The labour turnover for the rolling year appears to have peaked in December at 14.3% and has now reduced to 12.1%.

4.0 NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Progress against the HR Service plan, and work on the People Recovery plan as well as work on Shaping our Future will be reported to all quarterly JSCC Meetings.

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JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

9 March 2022

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

AGENDA ITEM No.

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: EQUALITIES UPDATE

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE SENIOR HR AND CONTRACTS MANAGER

1. SUMMARY

This is an update regarding equalities at the Council in respect of:

- Equalities Data
- Equal Pay Review
- Gender Pay Gap

2. STEPS TO DATE

This note is provided to the Joint Staff Consultation Forum to update the Committee on the Council's current equalities profile.

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

3.1 Equalities Data 2021

The equalities data for the Council for the period 1st January 2021 – 31st December 2021 was published on the Council's website in January 2022 in accordance with The Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). The Equality Duty applies to public bodies and others carrying out public functions. The Equality Duty is supported by specific duties which require public bodies to publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating their compliance with the Equality Duty; and to set themselves specific, measurable equality objectives.

The data provided covers recruitment, current staff, application of HR policies, refusal of applications for learning and development, analysis of those taking and returning from maternity leave, analysis of leavers from NHC employment and a summary of the most recently published Gender Pay Gap Report. The Equalities Data Report is available on the Workforce Profile page of the Council's website.

<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/workforce-profile>

The equalities profiles for employees, appointments and those who left the Council in 2021 are shown in chart form in Appendix 1. Current staff figures are taken as a snapshot on 31 December 2021 and starters and leavers are the totals for the full year January – December 2021. For comparison purposes, the figures for the period 2015 -2021 are given in Appendix 2. In the publication of the data, analysis has not been undertaken where overall numbers are less than 10 to protect confidentiality. Figures may not always add to 100% as not all recruits or staff provide information on every protected characteristic and due to rounding. The categories shown for each protected characteristic are in line with those available on the recruitment and iTrent systems, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission's Measurement Framework

for Equality and Human Rights and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) harmonised categories. These are reviewed annually to ensure the most current versions are used for analysis purposes.

The figures show that the make-up of the Council's workforce, appointments, and leavers by protected characteristic remains very stable with few changes. There are however some points to note and these are given by protected characteristic.

3.1.1 Age

- Overall, there has not been much change in the age profile of current employees at the Council. A tranche of employees has moved from age group 45-54 to age group 55-64, and this is now the largest group of employees at the Council, accounting for 27% of all staff.
- 56% of current Council staff are over age 45. Just under 30% of the North Herts population is aged 45-64, which contrasts with 53% of Council employees being in this age bracket.
- For appointments made during 2021 there was a mixed picture regarding the age groups. In the youngest, (under 21), group there was a 1% decrease, the same reduction as in employees of this age. The largest change was in the 35-44 age group which increased 13% and the greatest decrease came in the 10% reduction of recruits from the 45-54 age group. There was also a significant decrease, (8%), in appointments from the 26-34 age group.
- In 2021 there was a sharp increase of 21% in those under the age of 25 leaving the Council, with over a third, 34%, of all leavers being in this age group. Decreases in the percentage of employees leaving in the 26-34, (down 12%), 35-44, (down 3%) and 55-64, (down 6%) age groups were noted in 2021. The downward trend recorded since 2018 in those leaving in the over 65 age group continued with a drop of 1% in 2021.

3.1.2 Disability

- The percentage of Council staff in 2021 who class themselves as disabled, 5%, remained unchanged from 2020. There was however a rise of 10% in those who did not disclose their disability status and this group now represents 30% of all staff. Only 1% of all appointments in 2021 were made from the group who declared a disability, and 3% of leavers during the year declared a disability.
- The low rate of appointments from those who class themselves as disabled is disappointing. Further analysis of the recruitment figures for this group is planned to try to determine why the ratios of applications to appointments and shortlisted candidates to appointments, (33:1 and 22:1 respectively), are so much lower than those for the non-disabled group which stand at just over 7:1 and 3:1.

3.1.3 Ethnic Origin

- There has been no change in the percentage of North Herts employees from a non-white background since 2020. 6% of the workforce declared themselves to be from a non-white background in 2021 compared with 8% in 2019.
- In 2021, the percentage of appointments from those who classify themselves as of an Ethnic Origin other than White was 18%, a drop of 2% from 2020, but still considerably above the average percentage for the previous 5 years which was

7%. In addition, as the total number of recruits in the year increased, more individuals from this group joined the Council in 2021 compared to 2020.

- The percentage of those from non-White backgrounds leaving the Council in 2021 fell by 7% compared to 2020.

3.1.4 Gender

- Looking at the figures for the past 7 years, (see Appendix 2), the proportion of staff who are female has remained largely unchanged at around two-thirds of all staff. This is in significant contrast to the North Herts District which has a split of 51% female and 49% male.
- Following the trend of the previous 2 years, 2021 saw a further drop, (6%), in the percentage of female appointments to the Council. This was the lowest percentage figure of female appointments since 2017.

2021 – 71 Appointments – 37 (52%) female – 34 (48%) male

2020 – 36 Appointments – 21 (58%) female – 15 (42%) male

2019 – 81 Appointments – 58 (72%) female – 23 (28%) male

2018 – 66 Appointments – 40 (61%) female – 26 (39%) male

2017 – 26 Appointments - 13 (50%) female - 13 (50%) male

- The percentage of female leavers from the Council has remained stable over the past 4 years. Almost two-thirds of those leaving the Council for all reasons are female which is broadly in line with the current staff profile. Similarly, 67% of those who resigned from the Council, were female, but the percentage of those retiring, (70%), was slightly higher. Analysis of the other reasons for leaving by protected characteristic was not undertaken as the numbers in each group were less than 10.

3.1.5 Marital Status

- There was a sharp increase of 9% in the number of employees who did not wish to disclose their marital status in 2021 and this was offset by a decrease in the married, single, divorced and separated groups. The co-habiting group increased by 1%, and there was no change in the civil partnership and separated groups.
- There has been a 25% decrease to the percentage of those leaving the Council who have given their marital status as married and an 8% increase in those classing themselves as single. The marital status of leavers in 2021 was spread across all the groups apart from civil partnership.
- Marital status of those joining the Council is not requested during recruitment.

3.1.6 Religion

- The downward trend of those whose religion is Christian continues for employees with a decrease of 7% between 2020 and 2021. At 42% this group now stands at its lowest level in the past 7 years. In 2021 there has been little change in those joining the Council whose religion is Christian and a 25% reduction in those leaving the Council with this faith.
- The percentage of those with no religion working for the Council increased 4% in 2021 and the percentage of those with other religions working for the Council remains unchanged as it has done since 2019. In contrast, there was a significant increase of 9% in those from other religions joining the Council in 2021.

3.1.7 Sexual Orientation

- There has been very little change in the sexual orientation of staff over the past 7 years. Those from the gay, lesbian and bisexual group remained at 1% of staff in 2021. The figure for this group for the East of England area in 2018 was 2.1%.
- There was also only a small difference between the percentage of new joiners (4%) and leavers (3%) from this group during 2021.
- There has however been an 8% increase in those who prefer not to give their sexual orientation and this figure now stands at 30% of current staff.

3.1.8 Full time/Part time

- 63% of Council employees at the end of 2021 worked on a full time basis, which is the same percentage as in the previous year. This compares with 82.4% of the population of North Herts district working full time.
- Following three years of growth, the percentage of the full time workforce who are female fell by 3% in 2020 but has increased by 1% to 58% in 2021. The percentage of full time staff with a disability has also increased by 1%.
- The age shift from cohorts 45-54 to 55-64 shown for all staff is also reflected amongst full time staff as is the 1% decrease in those aged under 21.

3.1.9 Refusal of Learning and Development Opportunities

- As for every previous year of reporting, our records show that there were no applications for learning and development opportunities refused during 2021.

3.1.10 Long Term Sick

- There has been little change in the number of long term sickness cases in the past three years, (2021 – 25 cases, 2020 – 23 cases, 2019 – 24 cases).
- Although the overall number of long term sickness cases remained stable in 2021, and the percentage of those taking long term sick leave who were female was not as high as in 2020, at 84% this group still accounted for more cases than the 68% female 32% male split of the total workforce would indicate. Further investigation into the causes and length of these absences will be undertaken to determine if this trend has any significant factors.
- As might be expected it is the older staff at the Council who are most likely to have a long term absence and 72% of cases occur in those over the age of 45. Only 4% of long term absences are taken by those under 25.

3.1.11 Attendance Procedure

- Cases of staff under this procedure which dropped 62% between 2019 and 2020 from 13 to 5 dropped again in 2021 to just 1. As last year, the periods of enforced remote working due to the pandemic will have had a strong influence on this and it will be interesting to see how this figure changes as the Council moves towards a blended approach to on site and remote working once more.
- Analysis by Protected Characteristic was not undertaken as the total number of cases is less than 10.

3.1.12 Leavers

- 2021 saw the highest number of leavers since 2015 and represents a 50% increase on the 2020 figure.

- The number of staff going on maternity leave in 2021 fell by 1 to 6 compared with 2020 and the number of those who returned from maternity leave increased to 5 from 3 in the previous year.
- During 2021 the percentage of leavers who resigned increased by 4% to 70% of all leavers and this increase was matched by the same decrease in the percentage of retirements, which fell to 14%. There were no departures due to early severance, redundancy or dismissal in 2021.

3.1.13 Data

In 2021 it was noticeable that there was a considerable increase in individuals not submitting data across a range of characteristics. For disability and sexual orientation no data is available for 30% of employees and 28% of staff did not provide information on their religion.

The i-Trent payroll system introduced in April 2020 gives the facility for staff to confidentially record their equalities information. A full picture of its equalities profile enables the Council to better promote its diversity and inclusion agenda in an informed way, so it is proposed to engage with the Inclusion Group on this and to use regular Insight articles and sessions at Staff Briefings to promote trust and understanding of why the data is collected and how it will be used.

It is of significance that the lack of equalities information is prevalent in those with short service at the Council. Consequently, a process to transfer information collected during recruitment to the iTrent system has been introduced which should enhance the data available on the Council's workforce for future reports. During induction, new employees will also be encouraged to complete this personal information when they log onto iTrent via the employee self-service function.

3.2 Equal Pay Review

The Council have carried out regular equal pay reviews since the implementation of the single status agreement and pay review in 2004. These reviews are an important element of ensuring the Council's pay structure is being applied fairly and all reviews so far, including this most recent one, have demonstrated that the Hay job evaluation scheme we use is robust in relation to rewarding our staff in an equitable manner.

NHC's 2021 Equal Pay Review used i-Trent payroll data, which was uploaded to Gapsquare, an analytics tool, to provide insights into pay gaps across the protected characteristics of sex, race and disability. Gapsquare is also used for calculating our gender pay gap.

Basic pay, which does not include allowances, supplements or any other monetary benefit employees may be in receipt of, was used for this equal pay review. The current pay scales for NHC can be found on the Council's website.

For each grade where comparator groups exist, mean average pay is used to identify pay gaps. When analysing pay gaps by grades, headcounts can be relatively low in certain grades and statistically the mean average is more reliable than the median average for small numbers. There are no comparator groups in certain grades for

some protected characteristics, therefore these grades were not included in the results.

In accordance with the methodology recommended by Gapsquare, the analysis by pay grades was broken down into 3 categories: red, where there was a pay gap of more than 5% (+/-), amber for a pay gap between 2% and 5% (+/-) and green, where the pay gap was less than 2% (+/-). A positive result shows that average pay in the first named group is higher than that of the comparator group and a negative result shows that average pay in the comparator group is higher than that of the first named group. Further analysis was carried out on the results in the red category as this could indicate a cause for concern regarding equal pay. In addition, where results in the amber categories were close to the threshold of 5%, the results for these grade comparisons were considered in more depth.

Where a grading system has incremental points reached by service, as at NHC, length of tenure can be a factor in pay differentials between groups. As a result, length of service is generally considered first in analysis of a significant differences in pay between groups at the same grade. Where total tenure at the Council does not explain the pay gap, other factors, such as length of service at that grade, starting pay, or organisational structure will then be considered.

3.2.1 Disability

When comparing those in the non-disabled group with those in the disabled group, 9 grade comparisons can be made. No comparisons fall into the red category and at -4.74%, the largest differential is at Grade 6 and in favour of those with a disability.

The figures for Grade 6 and Grade 11 for this protected characteristic indicate that a good number of new joiners to the Council have not yet input their data to i-Trent, however, there is also more work to be done to overcome the reluctance of a significant number of long serving employees to provide data in relation to their disability status.

3.2.2 Ethnic Origin

When comparing the White group with the non-White groups, (Asian/Black/Mixed/Other Ethnic Group), 13 comparisons can be made across 7 grades. There are two grades in the red group, i.e. the differentials are above 5%, and one in the amber group where the differential is close to the threshold of 5%. Of the 13 comparisons made, 6 are in favour of a non-white group with the highest of these being -4.47% at Grade 6 in the White v Mixed comparison. As with the comparisons between men and women, in all instances the group with the highest pay had the longest service for this protected characteristic.

3.2.3 Gender

Comparisons between men and women show higher average salaries for each group are spread across Grades 1-13 with 4 grades showing men earning more and 9 grades with women earning more. This remains unchanged from the previous review. 5 of the grades which show women earning more on average than men are categorised as red or amber, i.e. with the differences being above 2%. Further

analysis of these comparisons showed in every case that the length of service was longer for the group with the higher pay.

3.2.4 Points to Note

In summary, successive reviews have demonstrated that the figures regarding equal pay at the Council have been very stable for many years, with the workforce profile remaining largely unchanged. The most recent review does not highlight any unexplained significant basic pay inequalities and shows that in a number of cases those from minority groups are earning the same or more than their comparator groups.

As with the equalities data discussed in 3.1 above, it is significant that in the 2021 Equal Pay review there was an increase in the number of staff for whom we have no or little equalities information. The work to explain how data sharing can ensure everyone is being paid fairly and in line with their skills, experience and value, together with how employees can add this to their personal records, will be continued to increase the information currently held and inform future reviews.

3.3 Gender Pay Gap

3.3.1. Background

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 employers with 250 or more employees are required to publish statutory gender pay gap calculations every year. Accordingly, the Council are required to calculate and publish the following gender pay data:

- Gender pay gap (mean and median averages)
- Gender bonus gap (mean and median averages) *
- Proportion of men and women receiving bonuses*
- Proportion of men and women in each quartile of the Council's pay structure

*The Council does not operate any bonus schemes, but the definition of bonus under the Regulations on gender pay gap reporting includes long service and staff recognition awards and for this reason the Council produces bonus figures for publication.

3.3.2 Data

The data must be a snapshot of salary data on 31 March each year and the bonus pay gap must be calculated from all bonus payments made in the 12 months up to and including the snapshot date of 31 March. This data must be published on the NHC website and a government website by 30 March each year.

NHC gender pay reporting figures have been calculated using the standard methodologies outlined in the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017.

The gender pay gap and equal pay are not the same and do not have the same purpose. According to the Equality and Human Rights Commission:

- Equal pay means that men and women in the same employment performing equal work must receive equal pay, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

- The gender pay gap is a measure of the difference between men's and women's average earnings across an organisation or the labour market. It is expressed as a percentage of men's earnings.

The broad purpose of the equal pay provisions of the Equality Act 2010 is to require equality of treatment in employment as between men and women in respect of pay and other contractual terms. The stated aim of the gender pay gap reporting legislation is to introduce greater levels of pay transparency.

Salaries at the Council are determined through a grading system which evaluates the job and not the post holder. It makes no reference to gender or any other personal characteristics of existing or potential job holders. Therefore, we are confident that North Herts is paying the same salary to jobs of equal value and that its gender pay gap may be caused by the roles which men and women undertake within the Council and the salaries and allowances that these roles attract.

3.3.3 Results

The tables below contain a comparison of the NHC Gender Pay Gap figures for the years 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020. The highlighted figures are the ones reported on the Gov.uk website. The figures for 2021 will be reported by 30 March 2022.

Table 1 Gender Pay Gap 2017 – 2020 – Hourly Pay

	Mean Hourly Rate				Median Hourly Rate			
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2017	2018	2019	2020
Female	£13.94	£14.19	£14.47	£15.06	£12.05	£12.48	£13.01	£13.32
Male	£18.57	£18.43	£19.13	£18.85	£18.17	£16.85	£18.33	£15.37
Gender Pay Gap	25%	23%	24%	20%	34%	26%	29%	13%

Table 2 Gender Bonus Gap 2017 – 2020

	Mean Bonus Rate				Median Bonus Rate			
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2017	2018	2019	2020
Female	£73.52	£50.00	£50.00	£96.67	£50.00	£50.00	£50.00	£50.00
Male	£66.67	£50.00	£50.00	£67.86	£50.00	£50.00	£50.00	£50.00
Gender Bonus Gap	-10.27%	0%	0%	-42.46%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Table 3 Percentage of Staff Receiving Bonus Payments 2017 – 2020

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Female	5.2%	0.3%	2.9%	4.0%
Male	1.8%	0.6%	2.4%	1.9%

Table 4 Quartile Pay Bands 2017 – 2020

	Males				Females			
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2017	2018	2019	2020
Lower Quartile	22.8%	30.9%	28.4%	31.0%	77.2%	69.1%	71.6%	69.0%
Lower Middle Quartile	16.3%	17.0%	15.8%	21.8%	83.7	83.0%	84.5%	78.2%
Upper Middle Quartile	41.8%	37.8%	27.2%	25.6%	58.2%	62.2%	72.0%	74.4%
Upper Quartile	58.2%	59.8%	58.5%	51.7%	41.8%	40.2%	41.5%	48.3%

3.3.4 Analysis

Key points to note are:

- The average differences in the pay packets of women compared to men at the Council in 2020 were £3.79 per hour (mean) and £2.05 per hour (median) which is an improvement from 2019 when they were £4.66 per hour (mean) £5.32 per hour (median). This still shows however that using the mean figures above, females at the Council earn £140.23 per week, or £7,291.96 a year, less than males.
- Although the proportion of females in the upper quartile is still considerably lower than in the other quartiles, it shows an increase of nearly 7% since 2019 which is a positive sign.
- The narrowing of the mean and median gender pay gap in 2020 brought them to their lowest levels since reporting began in 2017.

3.3.5 Actions Taken to Date

The actions we have taken in recent years to narrow our Gender Pay Gap are:

- An organisation wide career development survey which resulted in career development discussions and the creation of individual plans for those who want to progress.
- Introduction of tools for ensuring the use of gender-neutral language in recruitment advertisements, job descriptions, person specifications and interview questions and for the calculation and deeper analysis of the Council's gender pay gap, and in time, the ethnic pay gap, data.
- The Council's Recruitment and Selection workshop now includes additional content relevant to addressing the Gender Pay Gap. The training is focused on clear and objective selection criteria and contains an enhanced session covering unconscious bias. Recruitment and selection methods are also being reviewed to use a broader range of selection activities allowing more opportunity for those shortlisted to demonstrate their attributes.
- Eliminating unconscious bias training has been rolled out across the organisation.
- Specific training workshops are being developed on job design (job descriptions and person specifications).

- As part of the Shaping our Future project - which aims to develop a high quality, diverse, inclusive and resilient workforce, the Gender Pay Gap group has widened its remit to become an Inclusion Group, with a focus on all protected characteristics.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1** There will be a further update on equalities prepared for the September 2022 JSCC.

5. APPENDICES

- 5.1** Appendix 1 – NHC Equalities Data 2021 - Charts

- 5.2** Appendix 2 – NHC Equalities Data 2015 – 2021 - Figures

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 6.1** Maggie Williams – Senior HR & Contracts Manager
Tel: 01462 474506 Maggie.williams@north-herts.gov.uk

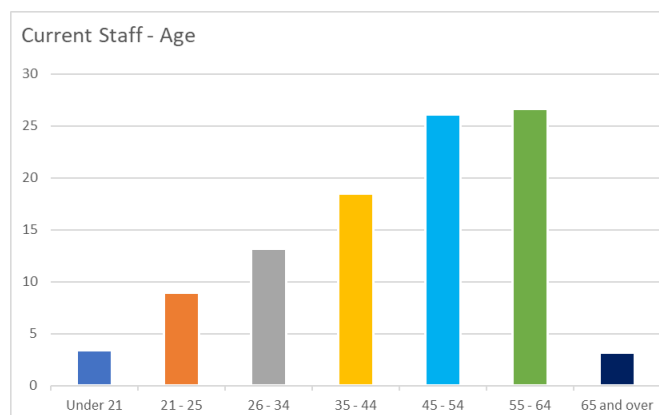
- 6.2** Rebecca Webb - Human Resources Services Manager
Tel: 01462 474481 Rebecca.webb@north-herts.gov.uk

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

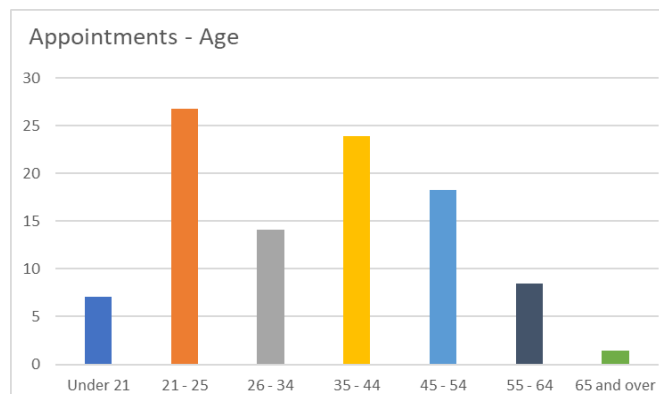
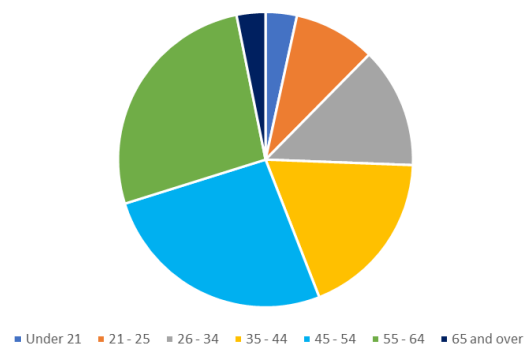
- 7.1** Equalities data for the Council for the period 1 January 2021 – 31 January 2021 published in accordance with The Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). Available on the Workforce Profile page of the Council's website.
<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/workforce-profile>
- 7.2** The Council's Gender Pay Gap Report 2021 published in March 2022 in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017. Available on the Workforce Profile page of the Council's website.
<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/workforce-profile>

NHC EQUALITIES DATA 2021

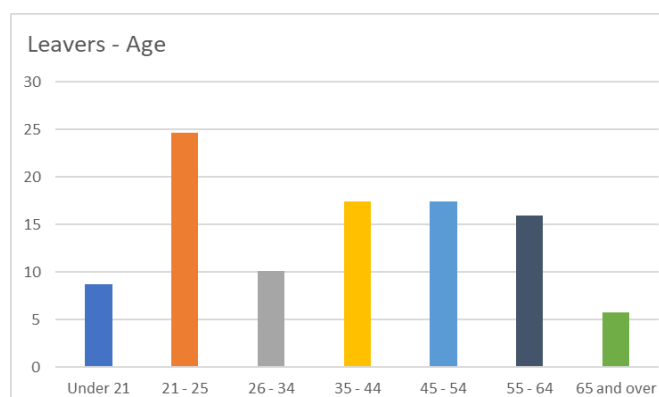
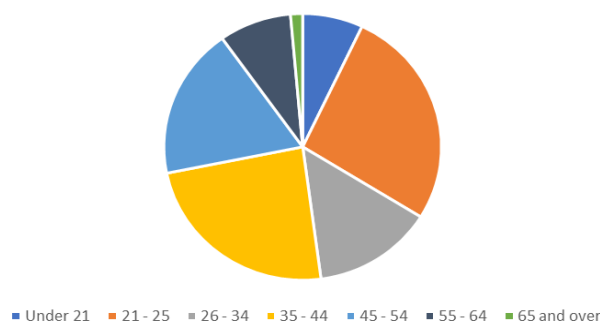
Age



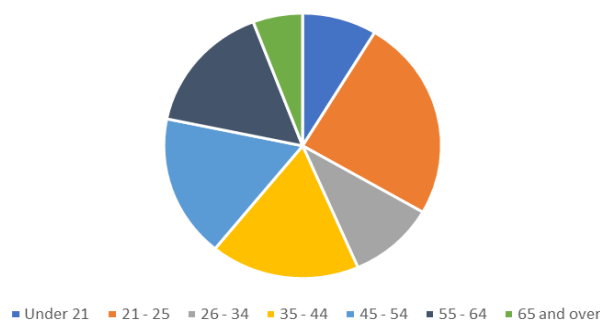
Current Staff - Age



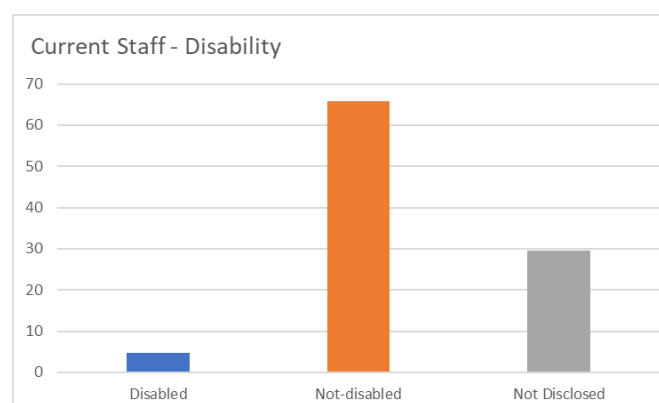
Appointments - Age



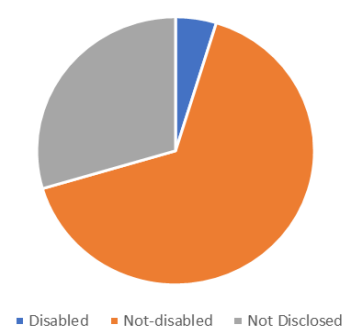
Leavers - Age

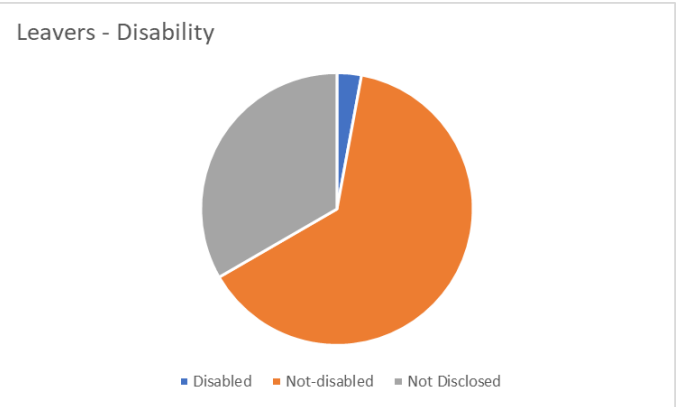
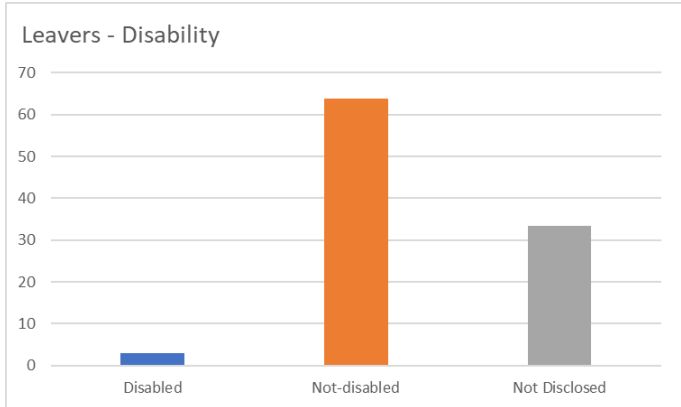
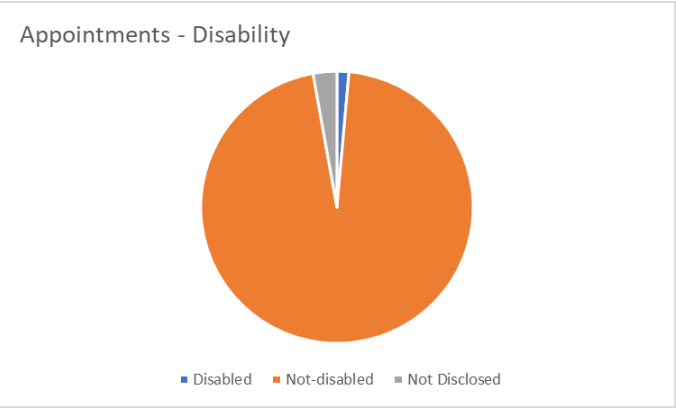
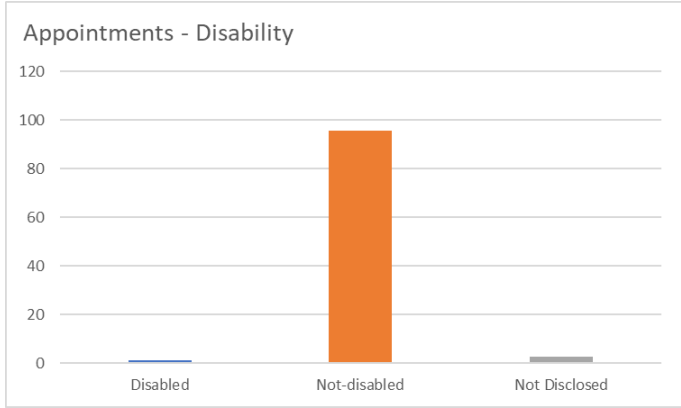


Disability

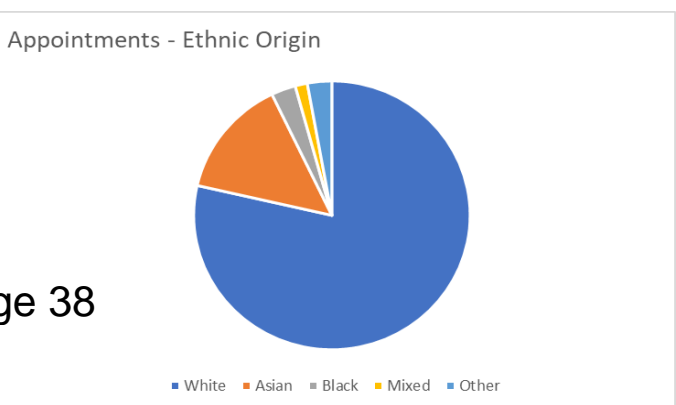
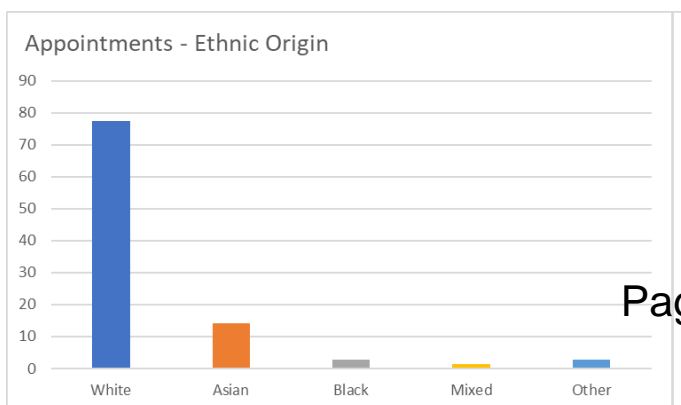
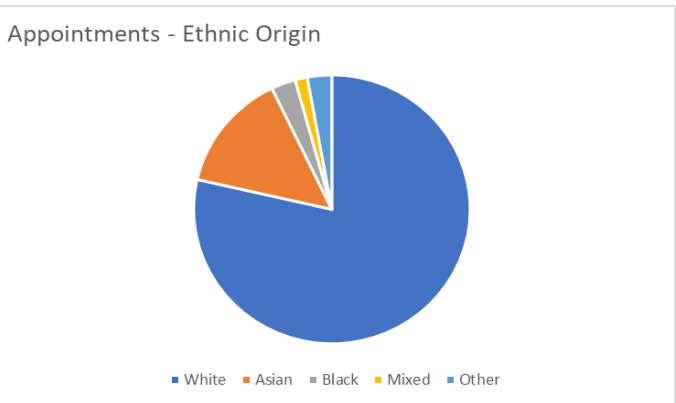
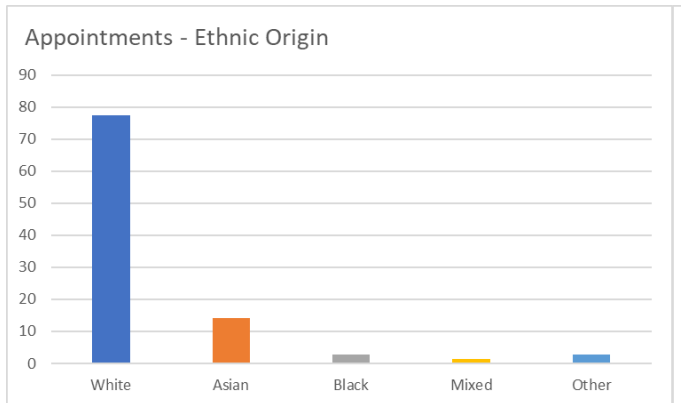
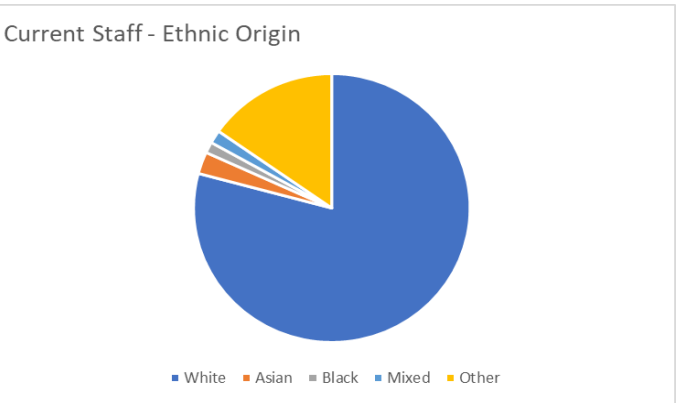
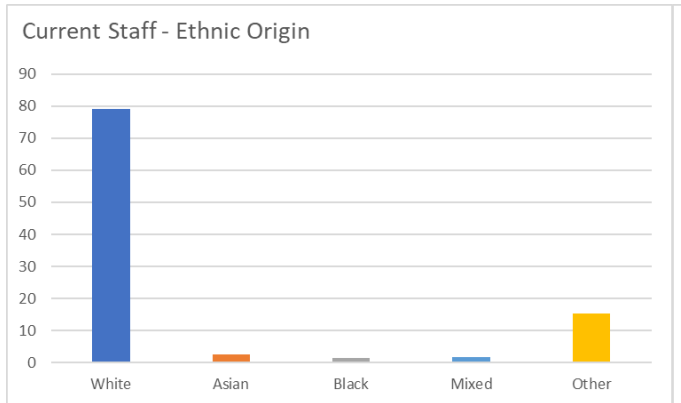


Current Staff - Disability

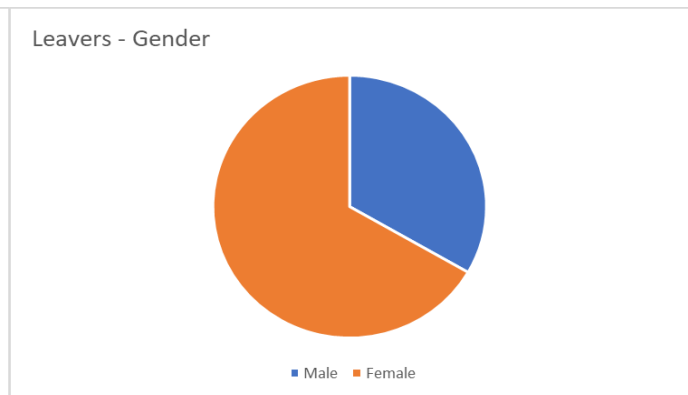
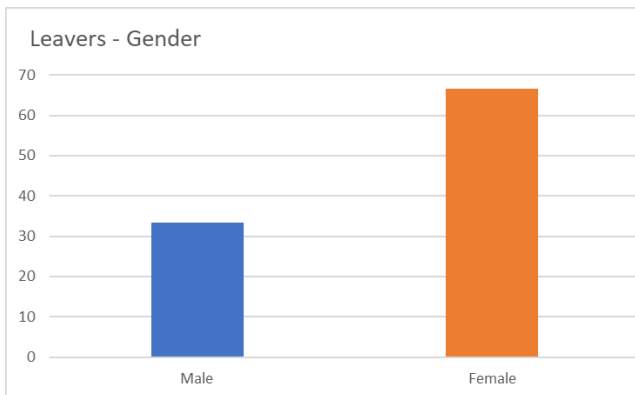
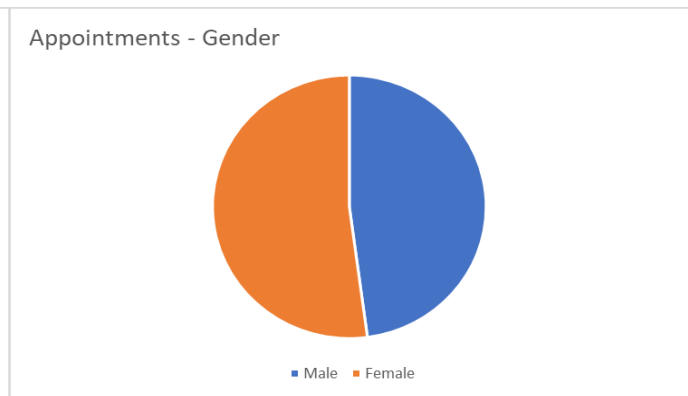
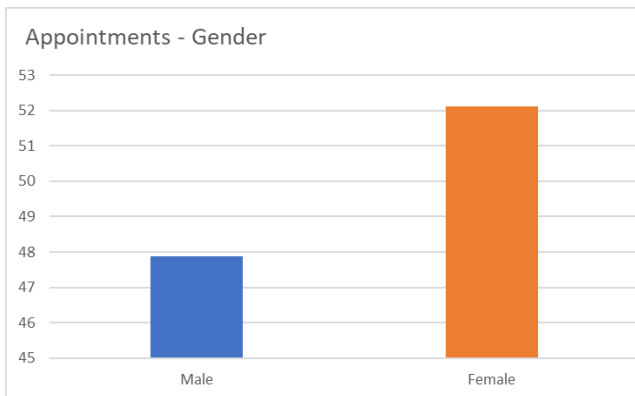
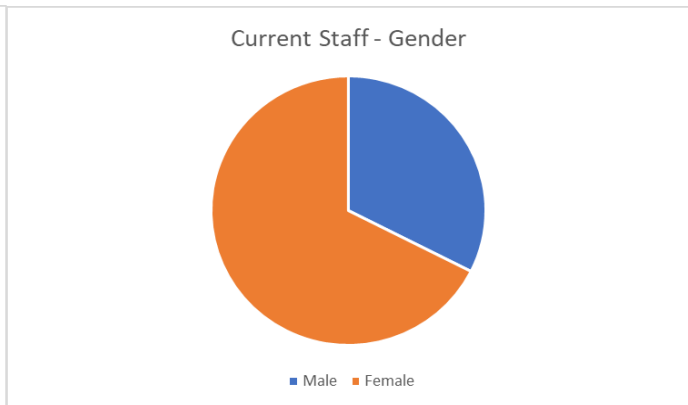
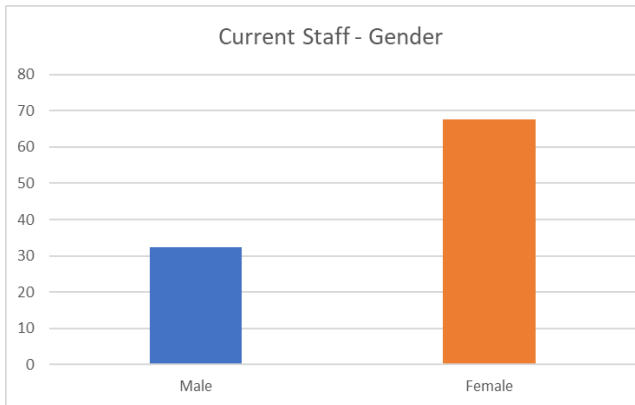




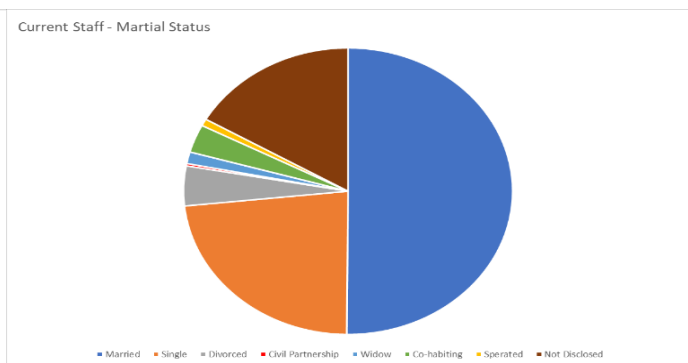
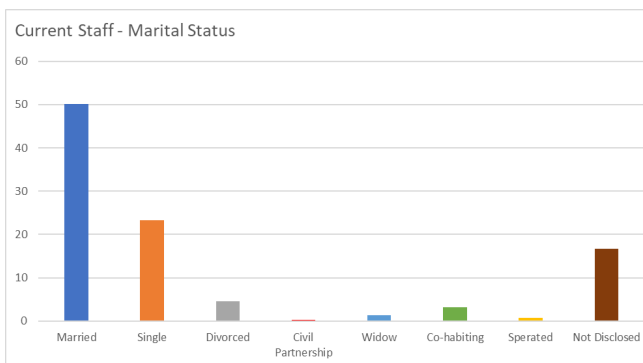
Ethnic Origin

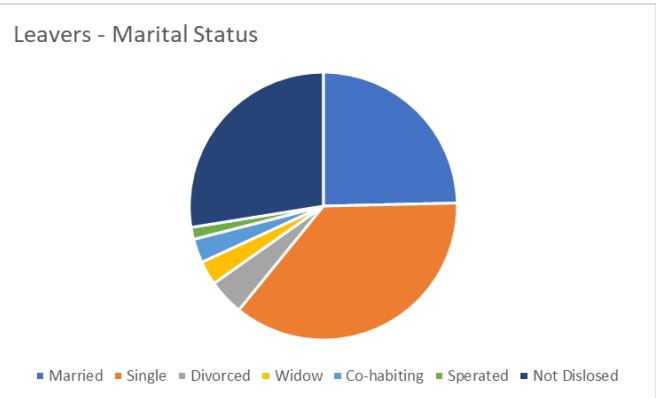
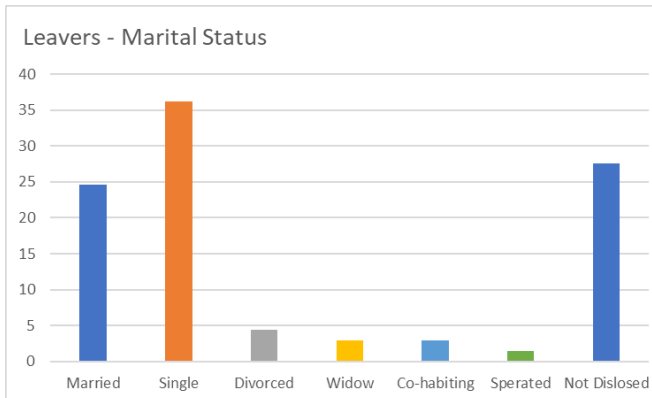


Gender

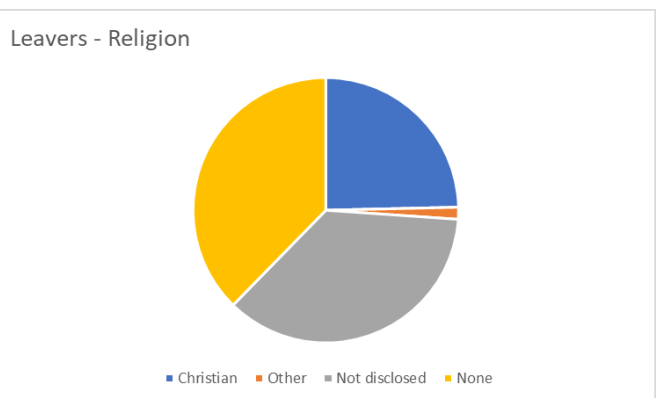
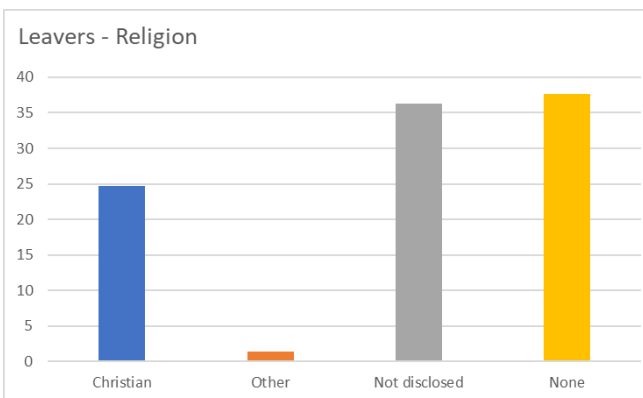
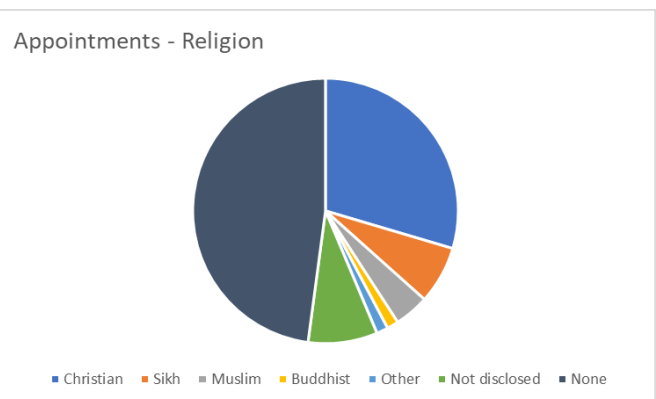
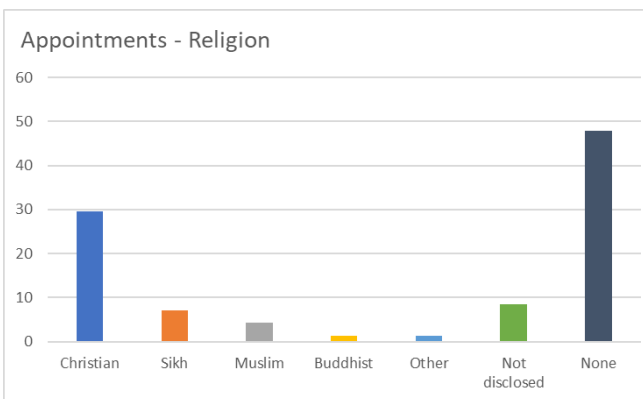
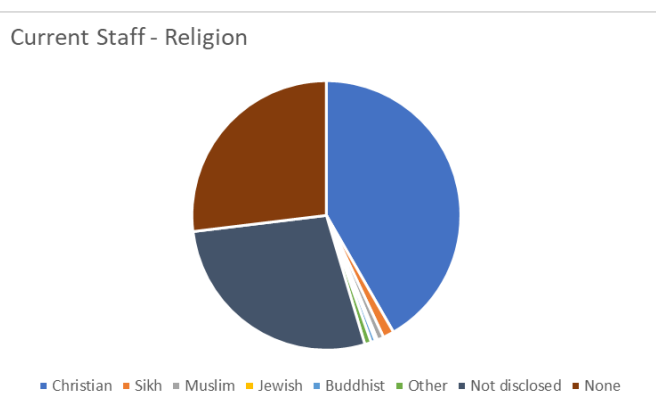
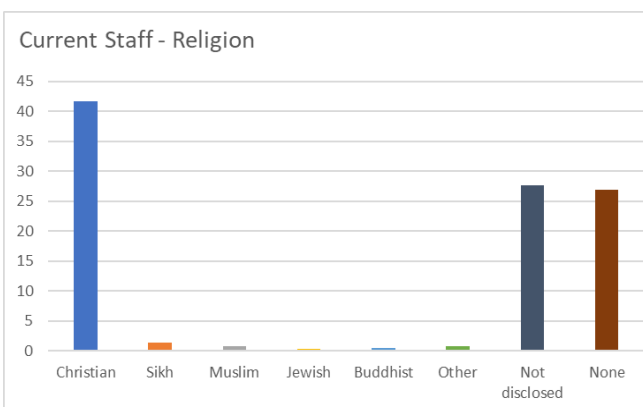


Marital Status

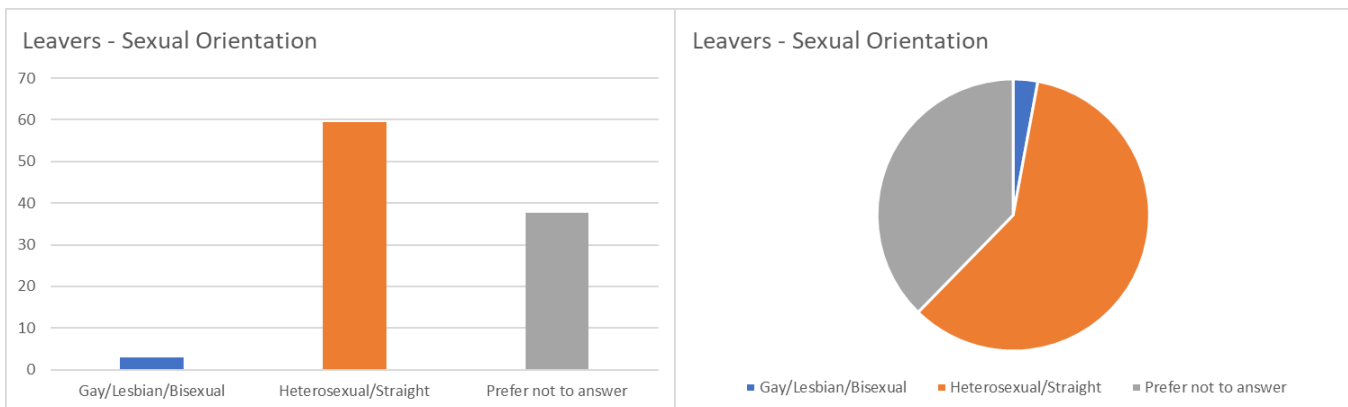
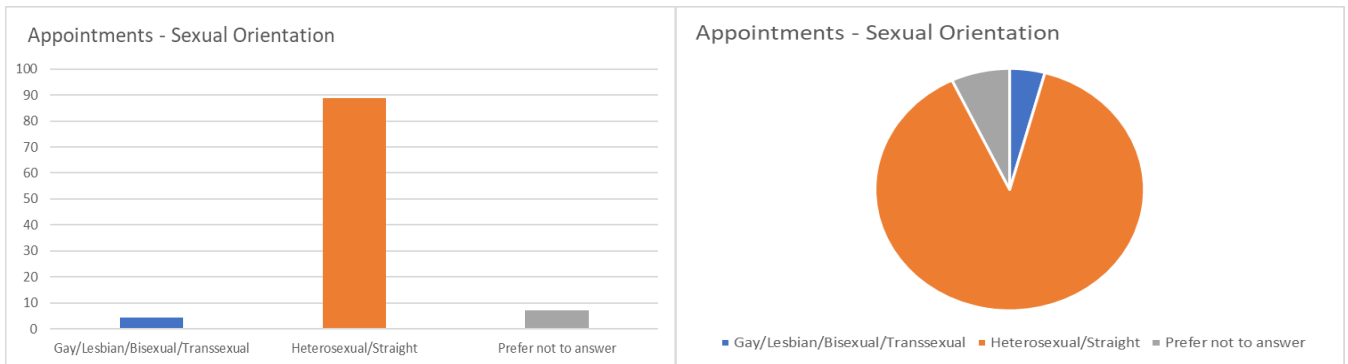
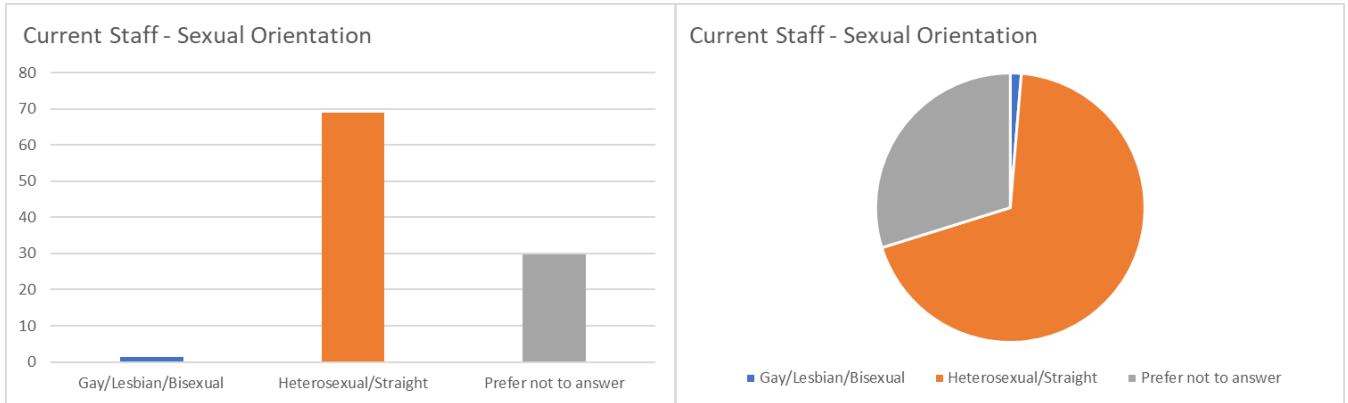




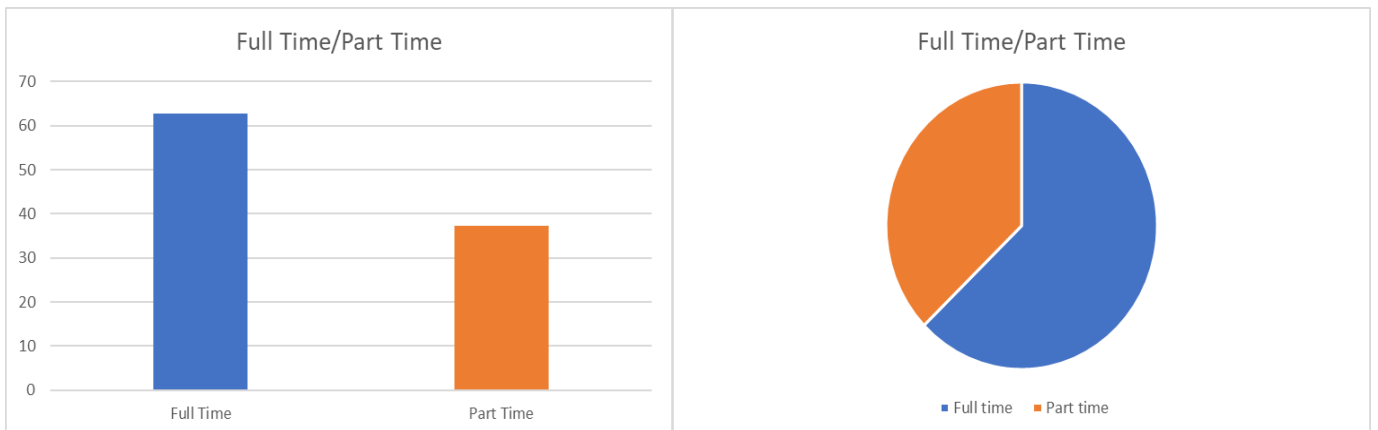
Religion



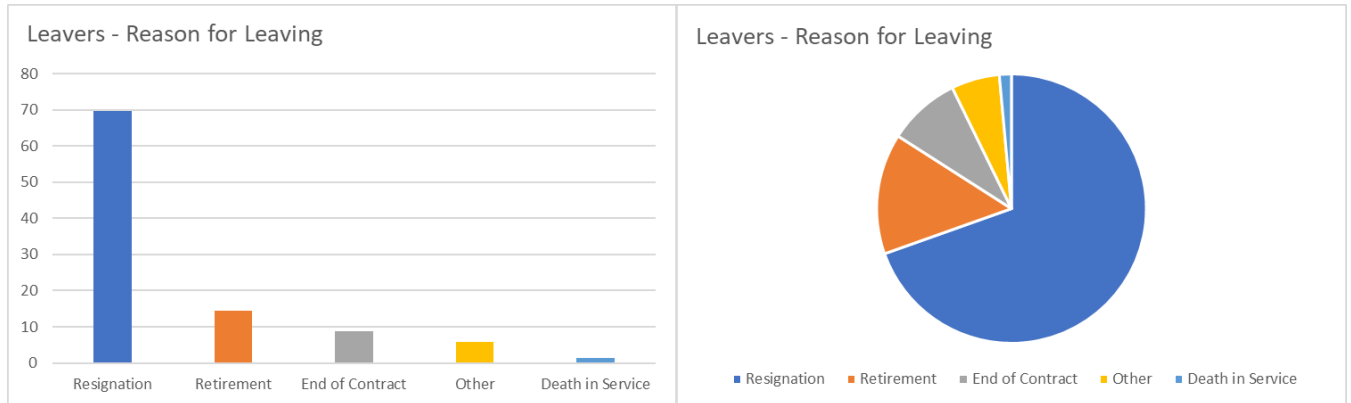
Sexual Orientation



Full Time v Part Time



Reason for Leaving



NHC EQUALITIES DATA 2015 - 2021

Employees 2015 - 2021

Age

2021 - 3% under 21, 9% aged 21-25, 13% aged 26-34, 18% aged 35-44, 26% aged 45-54, 27% aged 55-64, 3% aged 65 and over
2020 - 4% under 21, 9% aged 21-25, 11% aged 26-34, 18% aged 35-44, 30% aged 45-54, 25% aged 55-64, 3% aged 65 and over
2019 - 3% under 21, 8% aged 21-25, 15% aged 26-34, 20% aged 35-44, 28% aged 45-54, 23% aged 55-64, 3% aged 65 and over
2018 - 2% under 21, 7% aged 21-25, 13% aged 26-34, 22% aged 35-44, 31% aged 45-54, 22% aged 55-64, 3% aged 65 and over
2017 - 2% under 21, 5% aged 21-25, 11% aged 26-34, 25% aged 35-44, 32% aged 45-54, 22% aged 55-64, 4% aged 65 and over
2016 - 2% under 21, 6% aged 21-25, 10% aged 26-34, 24% aged 35-44, 34% aged 45-54, 22% aged 55-64, 3% aged 65 and over
2015 - 2% under 21, 5% aged 21-25, 8% aged 26-34, 24% aged 35-44, 33% aged 45-54, 24% aged 55-64, 3% aged 65 and over

Disability

2021 - 66% not disabled, 5% disabled
2020 - 75% not disabled, 5% disabled
2019 - 82% not disabled, 3% disabled
2018 - 80% not disabled, 3% disabled
2017 - 78% not disabled, 4% disabled
2016 - 78% not disabled, 5% disabled
2015 - 75% not disabled, 4% disabled

Ethnic Origin

2021 - 79% White, 6% other ethnic origin
2020 - 88% White, 6% other ethnic origin
2019 - 87% White, 8% other ethnic origin
2018 - 88% White, 6% other ethnic origin
2017 - 87% White, 7% other ethnic origin
2016 - 88% White, 5% other ethnic origin
2015 - 88% White, 6% other ethnic origin

Gender

2021 - 68% female, 32% male
2020 - 68% female, 32% male
2019 - 69% female, 31% male
2018 - 68% female, 32% male
2017 - 66% female, 34% male
2016 - 66% female, 34% male
2015 - 66% female, 34% male

Marital Status

2021 - 50% married, 23% single, 4% divorced, 0% civil partnership, 1% widowed, 3% co-habiting, 1% separated
2020 - 52% married, 29% single, 5% divorced, 0% civil partnership, 2% widowed, 2% co-habiting, 1% separated
2019 - 52% married, 37% single, 4% divorced, 1% civil partnership, 1% widowed
2018 - 55% married, 32% single, 5% divorced, 1% civil partnership, 1% widowed
2017 - 60% married, 27% single, 3% divorced, 1% civil partnership, 1% widowed
2016 - 59% married, 29% single, 3% divorced, 1% civil partnership
2015 - 58% married, 27% single, 4% divorced, 1% civil partnership

Religion

2021 - 42% Christian, 27% no religion, 4% other religions
2020 - 49% Christian, 23% no religion, 4% other religions
2019 - 47% Christian, 27% no religion, 4% other religions
2018 - 49% Christian, 23% no religion, 5% other religions
2017 - 54% Christian, 18% no religion, 4% other religions
2016 - 53% Christian, 18% no religion, 5% other religions
2015 - 53% Christian, 18% no religion, 5% other religions

Sexual Orientation

2021 - 69% heterosexual, 1% gay, lesbian or bisexual
2020 - 77% heterosexual, 1% gay, lesbian or bisexual
2019 - 79% heterosexual, 1% gay, lesbian or bisexual
2018 - 76% heterosexual, 2% gay, lesbian or bisexual
2017 - 77% heterosexual, 1% gay, lesbian or bisexual
2016 - 76% heterosexual, 1% gay, lesbian or bisexual
2015 - 74% heterosexual, 1% gay, lesbian or bisexual

Full-time/Part-time

2021 - 63% full time, 37% part time
2020 - 63% full time, 37% part time
2019 - 70% full time, 30% part time
2018 - 67% full time, 33% part time
2017 - 65% full time, 35% part time
2016 - 67% full time, 33% part time
2015 - 65% full time, 35% part time

Appointments 2015 - 2021**Age**

2021 - 7% under 21, 27% aged 21-25, 14% aged 26-34, 24% aged 35-44, 18% aged 45-54, 8% aged 55-64, 1% aged 65 and over
2020 - 8% under 21, 22% aged 21-25, 22% aged 26-34, 11% aged 35-44, 28% aged 45-54, 8% aged 55-64, 0% aged 65 and over
2019 - 10% under 21, 20% aged 21-25, 17% aged 26-34, 19% aged 35-44, 21% aged 45-54, 12% aged 55-64, 1% aged 65 and over
2018 - 8% under 21, 14% aged 21-25, 25% aged 26-34, 20% aged 35-44, 22% aged 45-54, 8% aged 55-64, 0% aged 65 and over
2017 - 5% under 21, 14% aged 21-25, 27% aged 26-34, 24% aged 35-44, 30% aged 45-54, 0% aged 55-64, 0% aged 65 and over
2016 - 10% under 21, 21% aged 21-25, 21% aged 26-34, 17% aged 35-44, 24% aged 45-54, 5% aged 55-64, 2% aged 65 and over
2015 - 20% aged 16-20, 28% aged 21-30, 34% aged 31-40, 7% aged 41-50, 10% aged 51-60

Disability

2021 - 96% not disabled, 1% disabled
2020 - 100% not disabled, 0% disabled
2019 - 99% not disabled, 1% disabled
2018 - 93% not disabled, 5% disabled
2017 - 97% not disabled, 0% disabled
2016 - 86% not disabled, 12% disabled
2015 - 93% not disabled, 5% disabled

Ethnic Origin

2021 - 77% White, 18% other ethnic origin
2020 - 78% White, 20% other ethnic origin
2019 - 86% White, 8% other ethnic origin
2018 - 82% White, 6% other ethnic origin
2017 - 86% White, 7% other ethnic origin
2016 - 88% White, 7% other ethnic origin
2015 - 88% White, 7% other ethnic origin

Gender

2021 - 52% female, 48% male
2020 - 58% female, 42% male
2019 - 72% female, 28% male
2018 - 61% female, 39% male
2017 - 50% female, 50% male
2016 - 64% female, 36% male
2015 - 60% female, 40% male

Religion

2021 - 30% Christian, 13% other religions, 48% no religion
2020 - 31% Christian, 6% other religions, 44% no religion
2019 - 42% Christian, 4% other religions, 47% no religion
2018 - 37% Christian, 5% other religions
2017 - 41% Christian, 3% other religions
2016 - 45% Christian, 4% other religions
2015 - 47% Christian, 22% other religions

Sexual Orientation

2021 - 89% heterosexual, 4% gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual
2020 - 81% heterosexual, 6% gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual
2019 - 91% heterosexual, 9% gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual
2018 - 89% heterosexual, 3% gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual
2017 - 84% heterosexual, 3% gay, lesbian or bisexual
2016 - 90% heterosexual, 2% gay, lesbian or bisexual
2015 - 82% heterosexual, 5% gay, lesbian or bisexual

Leavers 2015-2021

Age

2021 - 9% under 21, 25% aged 21-25, 10% aged 26-34, 17% aged 35-44, 17% aged 45-54, 16% aged 55-64, 6% aged 65 and over
2020 - 4% under 21, 9% aged 21-25, 22% aged 26-34, 20% aged 35-44, 17% aged 45-54, 22% aged 55-64, 7% aged 65 and over
2019 - 8% under 21, 12% aged 21-25, 14% aged 26-34, 16% aged 35-44, 16% aged 45-54, 26% aged 55-64, 8% aged 65 and over
2018 - 7% under 21, 12% aged 21-25, 16% aged 26-34, 22% aged 35-44, 14% aged 45-54, 19% aged 55-64, 10% aged 65 and over
2017 - 11% under 21, 7% aged 21-25, 17% aged 26-34, 20% aged 35-44, 28% aged 45-54, 13% aged 55-64, 4% aged 65 and over
2016 - 2% under 21, 13% aged 21-25, 8% aged 26-34, 25% aged 35-44, 17% aged 45-54, 23% aged 55-64, 12% aged 65 and over
2015 - 11% under 21, 16% aged 21-25, 14% aged 26-34, 19% aged 35-44, 14% aged 45-54, 23% aged 55-64, 4% aged 65 and over

Disability

2021 - 64% not disabled, 3% disabled
2020 - 78% not disabled, 2% disabled
2019 - 82% not disabled, 4% disabled
2018 - 84% not disabled, 7% disabled
2017 - 85% not disabled, 7% disabled
2016 - 82% not disabled, 8% disabled
2015 - 73% not disabled, 3% disabled

Ethnic Origin

2021 - 68% White, 6% other ethnic origin
2020 - 80% White, 13% other ethnic origin
2019 - 86% White, 6% other ethnic origin
2018 - 79% White, 10% other ethnic origin
2017 - 83% White, 15% other ethnic origin
2016 - 87% White, 7% other ethnic origin
2015 - 80% White, 7% other ethnic origin

Gender

2021 - 67% female, 33% male
2020 - 65% female, 35% male
2019 - 64% female, 36% male
2018 - 66% female, 34% male
2017 - 59% female, 41% male
2016 - 62% female, 38% male
2015 - 64% female, 36% male

Marital Status

2021 - 25% married, 36% single, 4% divorced, 3% widowed, 3% co-habiting, 1% separated
2020 - 54% married, 28% single, 7% divorced
2019 - 48% married, 42% single, 6% divorced
2018 - 33% married, 29% single, 2% divorced
2017 - 33% married, 54% single, 7% divorced
2016 - 52% married, 33% single, 7% divorced
2015 - 36% married, 41% single, 1% divorced, 1% widowed

Religion

2021 - 25% Christian, 38% no religion, 1% other religions
2020 - 50% Christian, 26% no religion, 2% other religions
2019 - 46% Christian, 34% no religion, 2% other religions
2018 - 53% Christian, 28% no religion, 7% other religions
2017 - 37% Christian, 35% no religion, 10% other religions
2016 - 48% Christian, 28% no religion, 4% other religions
2015 - 51% Christian, 19% no religion, 2% other religions

Sexual Orientation

2021 - 59% heterosexual, 3% gay, lesbian or bisexual
2020 - 76% heterosexual, 2% gay, lesbian or bisexual
2019 - 90% heterosexual, 2% gay, lesbian or bisexual
2018 - 85% heterosexual, 3% gay, lesbian or bisexual
2017 - 80% heterosexual, 4% gay, lesbian or bisexual
2016 - 85% heterosexual, 3% gay, lesbian or bisexual
2015 - 68% heterosexual, 8% gay, lesbian or bisexual

Reasons for Leaving

2021 - 70% resigned, 14% retired, 9% came to the end of a fixed term contract, 6% other reason, 1% died in service
2020 - 65% resigned, 9% retired, 15% came to the end of a fixed term contract, 4% were made redundant, 4% were dismissed and 2% died in service
2019 - 66% resigned, 18% retired, 2% came to the end of a fixed term contract, 12% were made redundant and 2% were dismissed
2018 - 57% resigned, 14% retired, 12% came to the end of a fixed term contract, 7% were made redundant, 3% were dismissed and 2% died in service
2017 - 61% resigned, 22% came to the end of a fixed term contract, 7% retired, 2% were given early severance, 2% died in service and 7% were dismissed
2016 - 52% resigned, 13% came to the end of a fixed term contract, 7% were made redundant, 12% retired, 5% transferred under the TUPE regulations and 5% were dismissed
2015 - 53% resigned, 31% came to the end of a fixed term contract, 7% were made redundant, 3% transferred under the TUPE regulations, 3% retired and 1% died in service

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The employer's role in keeping staff healthy requesting a focus on mental health with the backdrop of the pandemic being considered.

Introduction

NHC have always been conscious of its responsibility to support the wellbeing of its employees. This is set out in Health and Safety Law as:

It is an employer's duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees and other people who may be affected by their business. Employers must do whatever is practical to achieve this.

NHC has gone beyond this general requirement, and since the pandemic the Council has responded to the emerging wellbeing and mental health challenges with a wide range of additional direct support and helpful resources. We recognise that it is not just about our duty of care and the legal and moral obligations to our employees, it also reflects that the right support contributes to creating an effective and efficient organisation. Placing importance on employee wellbeing helps us to create greater loyalty with our staff, contributes to better recruitment and retention and better staff engagement and productivity. This focus on wellbeing is in keeping with our values, in particular *"we work together and support each other to deliver the best we can"*.

Prior to the pandemic

For many years NHC has taken a pro-active approach to supporting the wellbeing of staff. This has included:

- Annual flu vaccination vouchers
- Confidential employee advice service (EAP)
- Discounted leisure services
- In-house coaching
- Training to support wellbeing
- Training to prepare for retirement
- Home working and flexibility with working hours
- An occupational health service

During and Post Pandemic

At the start of the pandemic and the first lockdown, it was recognised that there was a potential for the new ways of working, in addition to the global health crisis, to create anxiety and mental health issues. The organisation has played an important role in supporting our people through this difficult period and beyond. The initial response was to ensure that within the first couple of months of lockdown everybody received a welfare call from HR to check in with them and ask about their wellbeing.

For many employees this check-in call provided reassurance and some contact from outside of their own team. These calls also helped to identify specific issues as well as offering or directing individuals to more support that may have been required. HR also created a 'lockdown tool kit' of resources and guidance that staff could tap in to and support their own health and wellbeing and that of their family.

Following on from the HR check-in calls, there have been several further check-in emails sent individually to all employees, signposting to new resources, reminders for existing resources and encouraging staff to get in touch if they need further support. These have been well received.

Other health and well-being resources and support that have been introduced include:

- **The GP Helpline** provides access to GP appointments 24/7 by phone or video call. This has been of particular benefit since the NHS surgeries have come under extreme pressure.
- Our **Mental Health First Aiders** held a 3-month trial of monthly staff drop-ins via Zoom, these have now been reduced to quarterly due to low attendance
- A dedicated **coronavirus support page** on the intranet for staff and managers with links to a wide range of internal and external resources to support health and wellbeing
- **Consultation with staff** regarding returning to the office or moving to a hybrid approach which has included staff surveys and discussion at the regular staff briefings
- **Workshops** held virtually covering wellbeing and productivity
- Our **Virtual Kitchen** get-togethers have given staff working remotely the opportunity to catch-up informally with colleagues from across the council
- We have been able to offer all staff unlimited access to a range of online **health and wellbeing classes** (available online) from our employee assistance provider.
- In mid-January we launched the **Headspace** wellbeing app, supported by Public Health England funding for staff resilience. This has been welcomed by many staff with 78 signing up for the app in the first month.

Finding the balance

Whilst the rationale for 'keeping staff healthy' is clear, there is also a balance to be struck. NHC remains the employer and as such the relationship with staff is contractual, based on consideration by both parties, i.e. work to an acceptable performance and payment for that work.

Ultimately NHC are not the primary health care provider, social care or responsible for issues in an employee's life. The responsibility to fulfil the contract and to look after their health lies with the individual. However, for the reasons set out above we can, and should, provide support, flexibility, practical tools, signposts to the appropriate support and agencies and if nothing else a listening ear.

There is a need to ensure we do not give employees the impression that we are there to 'solve' their problems or to pile pressure on managers to resolve every wellbeing issue.

The organisation can provide some direct support, but it ultimately acts as a conduit to the support available.