

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Six Month Update

### Report of the Director Legal and Democratic Services

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Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

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## 1) Recommendation

That the Committee be asked to:

- (a) Acknowledge the wide range of positive work taking place across the authority to reduce inequalities and foster good relations.

## 2) Introduction

This report describes our work on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). It sets out our progress in meeting objectives over the past six months and work that is in progress.

Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee receive progress reports on a six-monthly basis. Links to previous reports are published [here](#). Our last report was presented to the committee on 27 June 2024.

## 3) Progress - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

Following approval at Senior Leadership Team on 12<sup>th</sup> June, we published a new EDI Action Plan. In developing this action plan, we:

- Reviewed our data and risks, and asked staff diversity networks and voluntary and community sector representatives about our opportunities, challenges and priorities for equality, diversity and inclusion. This is published on our website at [Challenges, Opportunities and Priorities 2023 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(devon.gov.uk\)](#).
- Integrated remaining actions in our Race Equality Action Plan published in 2021 (marked with an [R]).
- Aligned to the People First workforce strategy.
- Considered our available resources and capacity, and what we could realistically achieve.

For further information, please see EDI Action Plan (PDF) which can be viewed at <https://www.devon.gov.uk/equality/our-commitment/objectives-and-action-plan>.

a) Summary of progress

<b>Actions - status</b>	At time of publication (June 2024)	October 2024
Complete	12	20
In place (ongoing)	10	19
In progress	42	41
Not started	36	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

b) Actions that are now complete or in place (and ongoing):

1. Violence, aggression and abuse towards staff from service users and members of the public remains a concern. There have been six reported incidents of racial abuse since April. Under our objective to address unacceptable customer behaviour, service needs for lone working apps and devices have now been identified and been procured by the Health & Safety team. We continue to raise awareness of our reporting systems and Customer Notice, which we also intend to review, and are developing further resources for managers to protect and support their staff and deal with abusive customers (objective 1a).

A key aspect of this work is to ensure that people are able to access consistent levels of support following instances of violence and aggression, regardless of where they work within the authority. An appraisal of support currently in place by Directorate is underway, with a view to understanding these provisions and whether they can be extended to cover more areas, or if additional services are required to cover gaps.

2. To improve access for disabled staff, training on neurodiversity was provided to the Coaching Network in July 2024 (1g).
3. Actions to attract a diverse candidate population included a brand audit. Research conducted by Penna for our Employer Value Proposition found that DCC comes out on top in one of the top line trends, excelling in EDI, culture and balance compared to the five organisations benchmarked, followed closely by Exeter University (3b).
4. As part of our commitment to treat Care Experienced People as a protected characteristic, apprenticeships and career opportunities are being ringfenced for care leavers (7a). In addition, PACE, an employer scheme which creates opportunities for Care Experienced People to get into work and stay in work is in place.
5. The Economy Team have a number of activities taking place to narrow gaps in skills and employment for young and disabled people (7c), these include:

A campaign (via LinkedIn) on how to be an inclusive employer and development of an 'inclusive employers toolkit' as part of the Careers Hub [Employer Inclusion Guidance by the Devon, Plymouth & Torbay Careers Hub](#).

Launch events in North Devon (13 September) and East Devon (6 November) for local Employment and Youth Hubs. The aim is to assist young people looking for work by regularly promoting the Youth Hubs and grow the service further through co-working with partners [Employment hubs - Economy, enterprise and skills](#).

Expansion of the Youth Hub (from one to four) has resulted in an increase in the number of referrals from 60 to 245, with an increase from 25 to 55 young people into education, employment or training.

Through the Training Provider Network, we ran a work experience programme to support young people who have been in alternative education or have special educational needs and disabilities to gain work experience. The programme ran from October 2023 to July 2024. 1,046 student opportunities were created, and 518 were taken up. All opportunities were ringfenced for disadvantaged young people or for those not securing work experience placements due to lack of parental support or social networks.

6. Under plans to deliver the Careers Hub Work Experience programme (7d), six schools have engaged in focus groups. This work will be ongoing over the next year and beyond with the introduction of Equalex, the Careers and Enterprise Company. A new model was devised through the support of training providers, employers (mainly SMEs and those that ordinarily would not be able to provide work experience due to a lack of resource). This model encourages groups of students to visit a provider to experience a range of sectors and job roles, utilising the excellent facilities providers have. Employers and apprentices were brought in throughout the week to bring the programme to life and engage via interactive activity. A group model via providers removes barriers for disadvantaged young people and addresses social mobility. It allows for SME involvement and removes anxiety for young people. A full evaluation of the programme is currently in draft but will be available by the end of November 2024.
7. In measuring compliance with Public Sector (Website and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018 WCAG2.2, performance of our public facing website (devon.gov.uk) at September 2024 was 97% accessible (up 2%). (Objective 9c).
8. Policy review by Plymouth and Devon Race Equality Council (race equality) and Devon Communities Together (rural isolated communities). No significant concerns raised regarding the policy, some minor clarifications have followed, some concerns were raised regarding consistency of practice (9d).

#### c) Actions in progress:

1. We have been consulting staff networks on a new Framework and Terms of Reference to help clarify policy and strengthen support for staff engagement. We have extended the deadline of December to allow for further exploration of network needs that are coming to light to understand the best way to support this (2a).
2. Work has started to ensure recruitment and selection processes are fair and equitable (3a) alongside further work to attract a diverse candidate population (3b) including increasing reviewing selection processes and candidate journeys, information for disabled candidates, reducing barriers for disabled candidates and care experienced people, and guidance on writing inclusive job descriptions and adverts. We are also reviewing employment policy and guidance around reasonable adjustments and introducing a 'reasonable adjustment passport' for disabled staff which can follow staff

who change roles and line managers (1g). DCC was last assessed and confirmed as a Disability Confident Employer in September.

3. An offer for staff with an ethnically diverse background to be allocated a senior mentor will be taken forward within Integrated Adults and Social Care from November 2024 as part of our focused approach to leadership and succession planning (4f).
4. Action Learning Sets to support women into senior roles to be carried out in Spring 2025 (5a).
5. To ensure the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (health and wellbeing profile for Devon) includes population data and short summaries on inequalities for protected characteristic groups (where data is available), we are currently researching health and wellbeing needs of children in care and care experienced young people (6a).
6. Work has begun scoping requirements for interpreting, translation and communication support services so that people whose first language isn't English or require alternative formats are able to communicate with us and understand our information easily (9b).
7. Work has started to identify health and wellbeing inequalities and risks for people with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment following the closure and reorganisation of Gender Identity Development Services and waiting lists in excess of five years (children) and eight years (adults).
8. As part of our work to address Interpersonal and Gender Based Violence (IGBVA) (8c), we have just completed the recommissioning of a new Domestic Abuse integrated service. This process has impacted partnership working, essential for the development of a strategy. We are also refreshing last year's Needs Assessment. Once this is completed we will start the strategy development work with a view to complete in 2025. We are continuing to strengthen our evidence base around protected characteristics and intersectionality for serious violence and related areas, this includes: completion of 2024 Community Safety Strategic Assessment, including focus on hate crime (as a form of serious violence) and lived experiences of people with protected characteristics; Information sharing agreements with Youth Justice and Probation to collect data on personal characteristics and needs of young people and adults working with these services, including protected characteristics (for example, disabilities); Forthcoming national changes to how police record sex and gender data will allow for more accurate recording of a person's identity in relation to serious violent crimes and help to safeguard/protect/reduce crime.

<https://saferdevon.co.uk/interpersonal-gender-based-violence-abuse>

[Devon Preventing Serious Violence Strategy 2024-29 - Safer Devon](#)

9. A Directory for Ethnically Diverse Communities has been produced by the Migration and Resettlement Team (MRT) and is shared across DCC, and with partners in all sectors, to support engagement and dispel the 'hard-to-reach myth'. Ongoing networking with communities regularly identifies new community organisations and the directory is updated every six months. The MRT also provide a quarterly newsletter, highlighting work of VCSE partners working with ethnically diverse communities. MRT continues to support and engage with community events across Devon including Hongkonger Lunar Year, Kurdish Newroz celebrations, Mixed Families Together social events. We are signposting social workers and organisations working to prevent violence against women and girls to No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) training currently being

provided by the Olive Tree Project. Drawing on models of good practice from other local authorities and consultation with partners, the MRT are developing a set of NRPF protocols to provide guidance for front-line workers from services including social care and housing. Demand for ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) across the county is currently (autumn term 2024) at one of the highest levels since the A8 Accession Agreements in 2005 resulted in the arrival of large numbers of Eastern European migrants. A recent snapshot survey of providers shows that more than 1,500 learners are currently attending ESOL classes in Devon. The MRT's ESOL and Engagement Team continue to liaise with 20+ ESOL providers from all sectors, collaborating to develop new initiatives in response to gaps in ESOL provision. Examples include: Setting up online ESOL classes taught by Ukrainian speaking teachers to meet the needs of Ukrainian refugees living in isolated rural areas; Creating dual language ESOL and Food Hygiene and ESOL and Construction materials to support refugees seeking employment (9e, 9f, 9g).

#### d) Learning and Development

53% of the workforce has completed the EDI Essentials mandatory e-learning (data as at 28 October 2024). All new staff are required to complete the training within one month of joining, as part of their induction. Existing staff refresh their training every two years with the current programme to be completed by March 2025.

The course content was revised in September following feedback. We have also added audio descriptions of the videos for blind and partially sighted staff. Course content covers: DCC's commitment and policy, Equality Act 2010, intersectionality and unconscious bias (this section is optional), dignity and respect at work (inclusion, bullying and harassment, banter and sexual harassment). Total course length is now 2 hours and 15 minutes, or 1 hour and 45 minutes (without the optional section).

Feedback for the course shows: 89% of people rate the course as good or excellent, 89% rate the variety and interactive elements of the course as good or excellent, 68% rate the navigation and accessibility of the course as good or excellent. 52% say the course is 'too long' and 48% say the course is 'about right' (75% completed the optional part of the course on unconscious bias and intersectionality), 94% said the level of challenge and learning was 'about right', 83% said they learnt something new, and 98% said they would be able to apply what they have learnt in their work.

We had a few technical issues in relaunching the course which may have impacted the ratings around navigation and completion time. One of the problems included a section not marking progress as complete and people having to repeat their learning. Many participants said they found the course informative, thought-provoking, and relevant. They appreciated the videos and interactive aspects, which made the content engaging and easier to understand. A few people said they preferred in-person training and we are considering how to provide more of this, alongside the e-learning offer.

To complement e-learning, we carry out awareness raising activities and occasional in-person training opportunities.

Throughout October and November, the EDI team delivered workshops at the Integrated Adult Social Care Learning Together sessions. These events took place both online and in person. The sessions explore how to have open and honest conversations when completing an assessment, supporting staff to look through an intersectional lens and promoting the delivery of authentically person-centred assessments. Approximately 160 people attended the 40 minute sessions. Additionally the EDI team delivered one hour workshops during the IASC Directorate Day conference on exploring identity and ensuring equality in practice, taking staff through interactive activities and case studies. Approximately 80 people attended the two in-person sessions. We received positive feedback for these sessions.

We have also raised awareness of, or participated in, the following events:

- Following on from the Pride celebrations in Exeter in May, the Pride flag remained at County Hall for the duration of Pride Month. The LGBT staff network was revived with a new chair, deputy and membership across the organisation. Throughout the summer we promoted and endorsed Pride events across the county to our workforce.
- To celebrate Windrush Day, we raised the Devon Windrush flag at County Hall on the 21<sup>st</sup> June, attended by Devon Windrush Group, elected members, staff and senior leadership.
- The Migration and Resettlement Team organised the DCC stall at Exeter Respect Festival 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> June. Colleagues from the EDI Team, Communities Team, Learn Devon and Public Health joined the stall.
- 18th July to 17th August marked South Asian Heritage Month. The theme for 2024 was ‘free to be me’. Events were held across community groups which were promoted across internal staff communications.
- For Black History Month (October) we showcased local events and initiatives.
- 18<sup>th</sup> October marked World Menopause Day in which we signposted staff to the support available to them.

## e) Workforce data

So that we can publish accurate workforce data, we have a target of 85 per cent of staff to complete ‘sensitive information’ fields for ethnicity and disability on iTrent HR system, with a long-term aim of 95 per cent (for data accuracy).

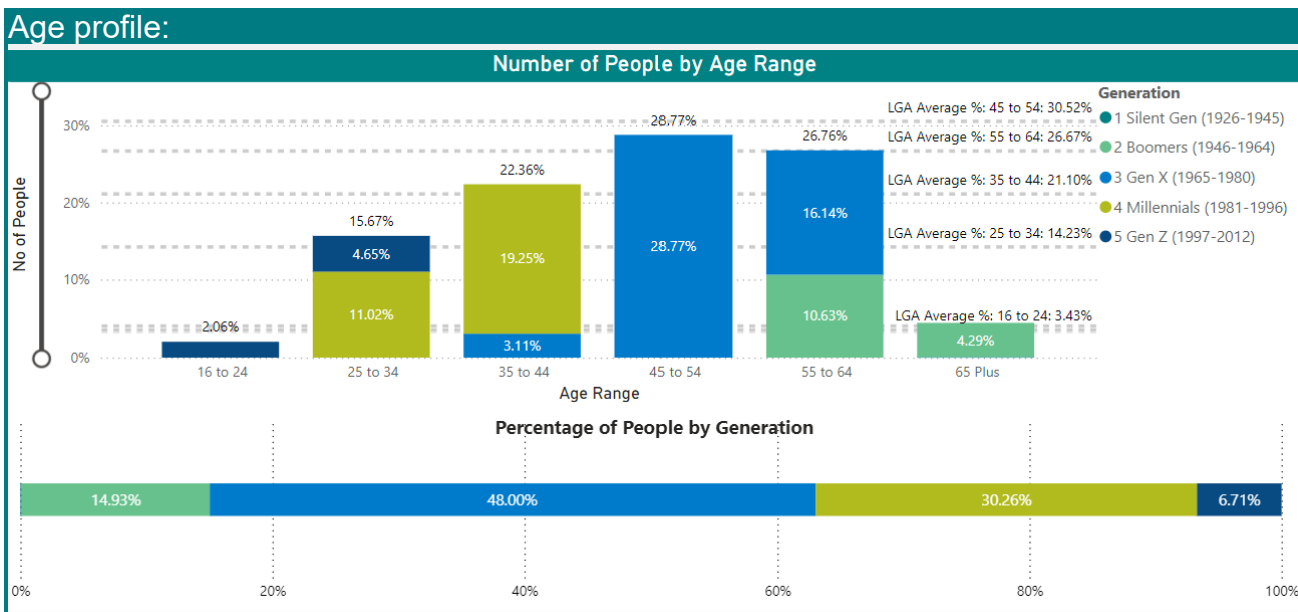
### Percentage of workforce who have provided data:

	May 2024	October 2024	Change
Age		97%	
Disability	42%	44%	Up 2%
Ethnicity	67%	68%	Up 1%
Nationality	67%	68%	Up 1%
Religion/belief	49%	50%	Up 1%
Sexual orientation	47%	48%	Up 1%

## Workforce profiles are currently as follows:

The Equality Act 2010 requires organisations with a workforce of 150 or more employees to publish data about its workforce. A recruitment and leavers profile will be published in 2025.

(data below is based upon completed entries only)



16 to 24: 2.06% - slightly lower than the LGA (local government) average 3.43%

25 to 34: 15.67% - slightly higher than the LGA average 14.23%

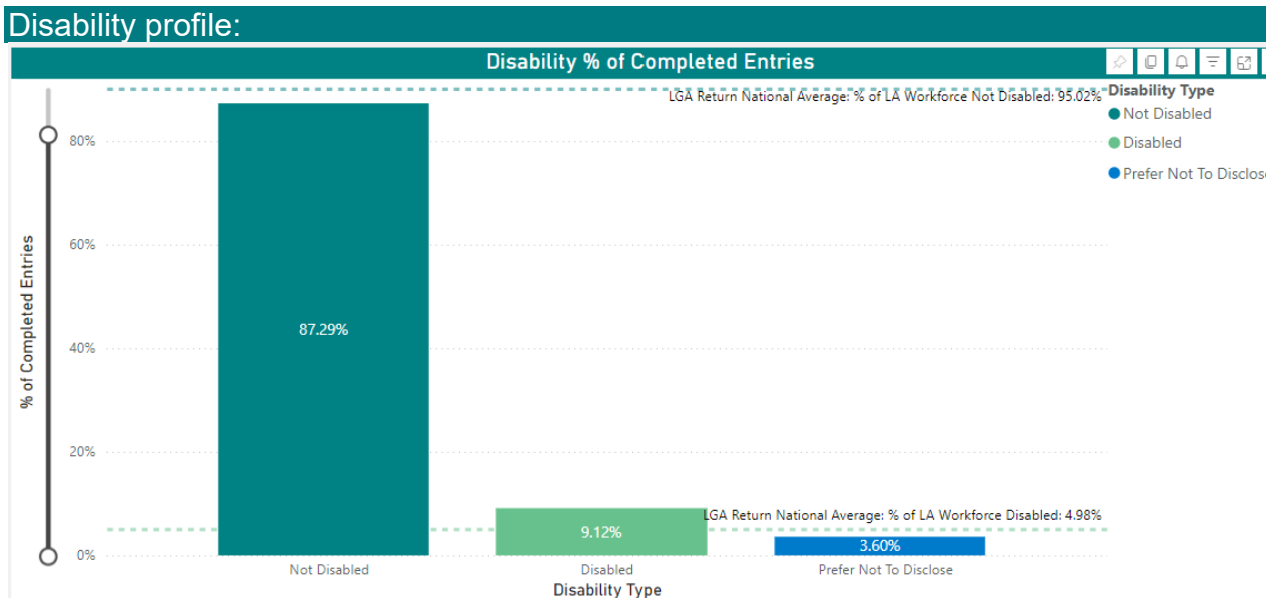
35 to 44: 22.36% - slightly higher than the LGA average 21.10%

45 to 54: 28.77% - slightly lower than the LGA average 30.52%

55 to 64: 26.76% - about the same as the LGA average 26.67%

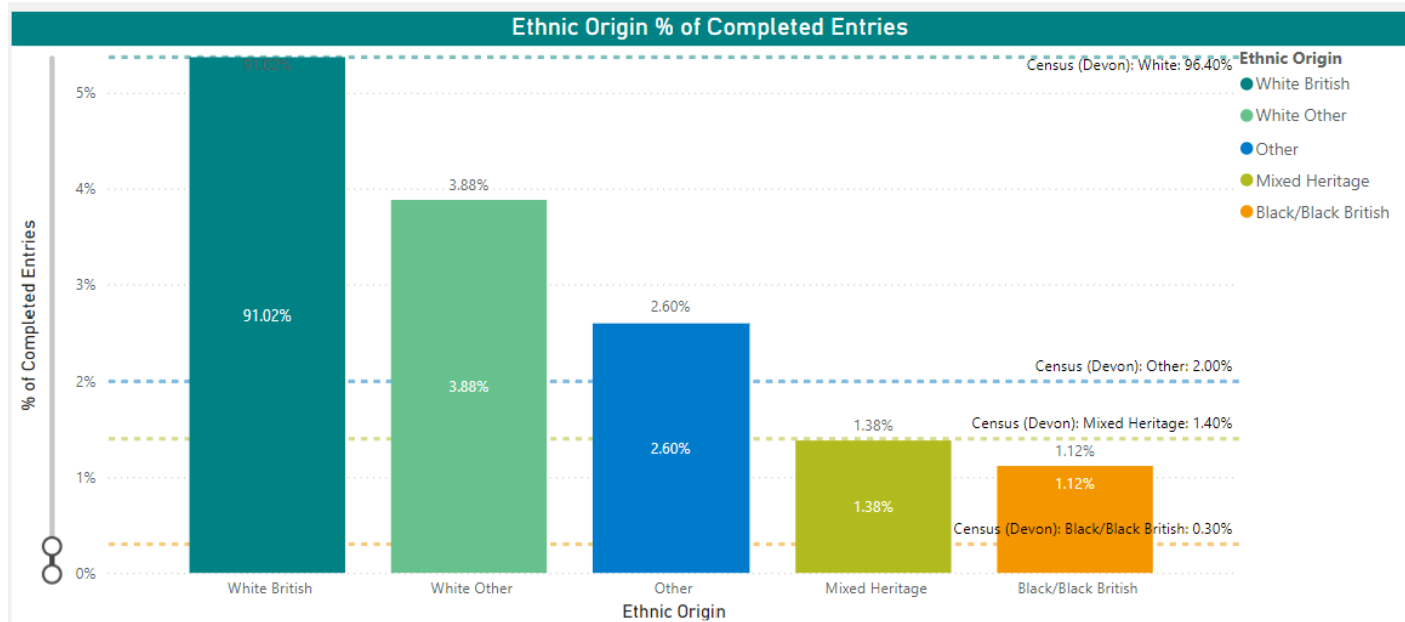
65 plus: 4.19% - slightly higher than the LGA average: 3.97%

The largest generation cohort is 'Generation X' – those born between 1965 and 1980.



Not disabled: 87.29% - lower than the LGA average 95.02%  
 Disabled: 9.12% - higher than the LGA average 4.98% (Devon population for disability is 19.5%, of which 11.8% with 'day to day activities limited a little')  
 Prefer not to disclose: 3.60%

### Ethnicity profile:

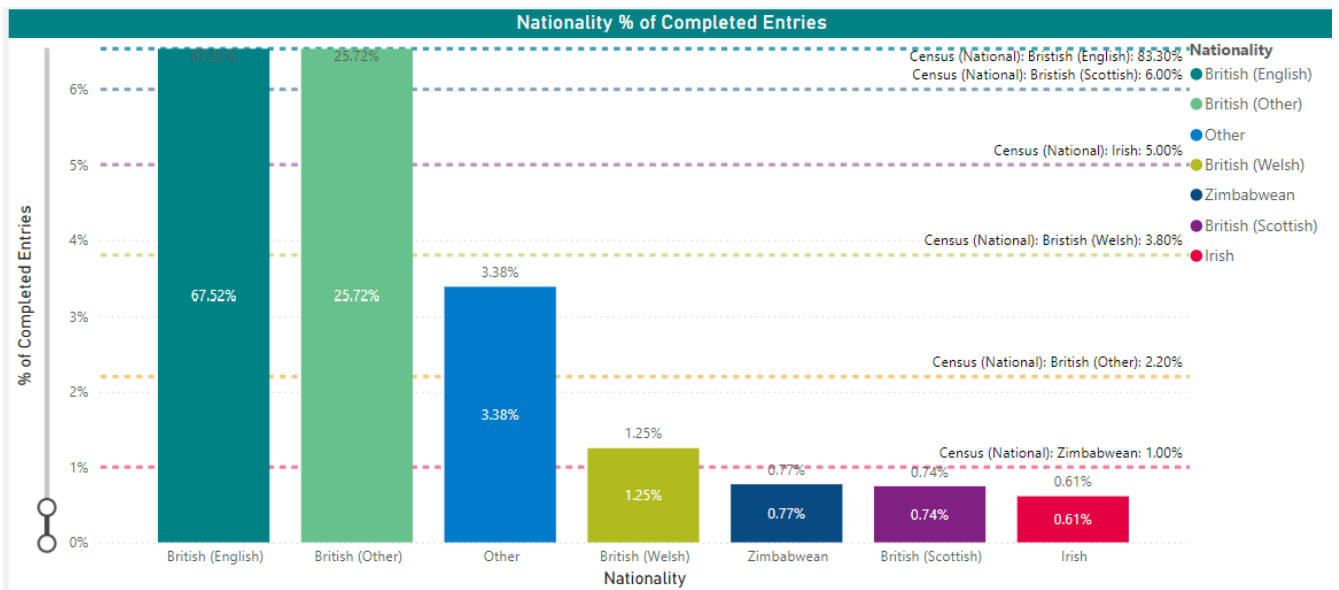


Black/Black British: 1.12% - higher than the Devon population (ONS Census 2021) 0.30%  
 Mixed Heritage: 1.38% - about the same as the Devon population 1.40%  
 Other ethnicity: 2.60% - higher than the Devon population 0.63% (plus Asian / British Asian is 1.46%)  
 White British: 91.02% - slightly lower than the Devon population 92.63%  
 White Other: 3.88% - about the same as the Devon population 3.62%

Asian, Black, Mixed or 'other ethnicity' total for Devon is 3.75%, for the DCC workforce it is slightly higher at 5.1%.

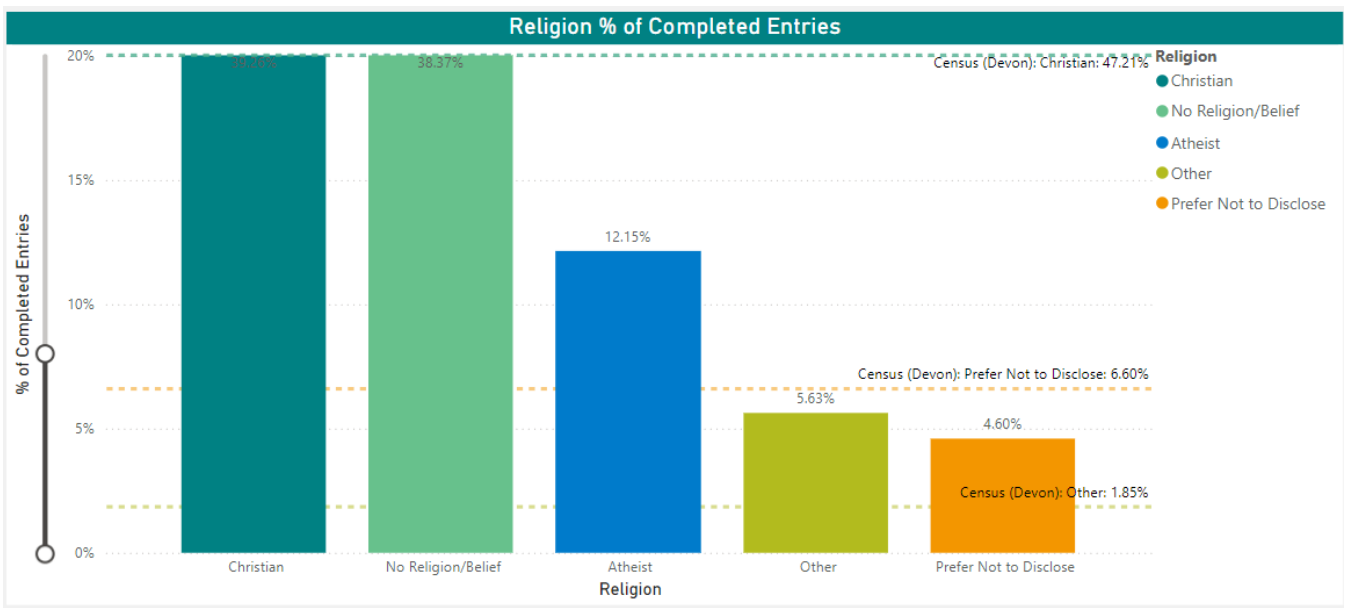


## Nationality profile:



British (English): 67.53% - lower than the national population 83.30%  
 British (Other): 25.72% - significantly higher than the national population 2.20%  
 British (Welsh): 1.25% - lower than the national population 3.80%  
 British (Scottish): 0.74% - lower than the national population 6.00%  
 (Total British: 95.24%, slightly higher than the Devon population 92.87%)  
 Irish: 0.61% - lower than the national population 5.00%  
 Zimbabwean: 0.77% - slightly lower than the national population 1.00%  
 Other: 3.38% - lower than the national population 9.10%

## Religion and belief profile:



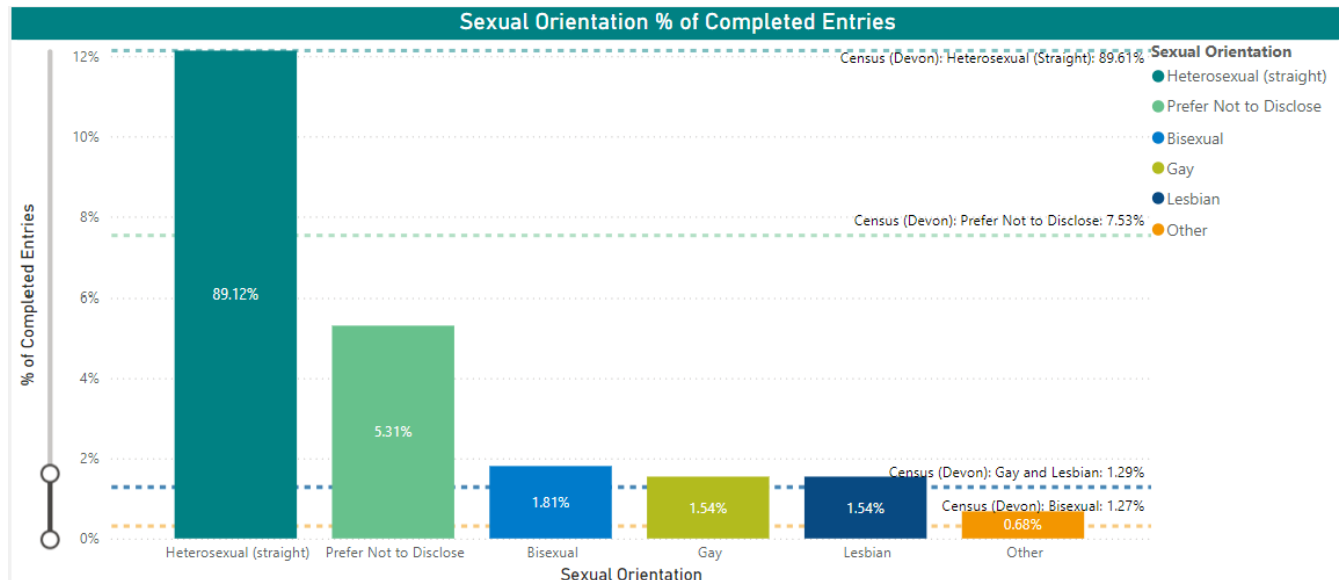
Christian: 39.62% - lower than the Devon population 47.21%  
 No religion/belief: 38.73% - lower than the Devon population 44.29%

Atheist: 12.15%

Other: 5.53% - higher than the Devon population 1.85%

Prefer not to disclose: 4.60% - lower than the Devon population 6.60%

## Sexual orientation profile:



Heterosexual (straight): 89.12% - about the same as Devon population 89.61%

Bisexual: 1.81% - about the same as Devon population 1.27%

Gay: 1.54%, Lesbian: 1.54% - about the same as Devon population: 1.29%

Other: 0.68%

Prefer not to disclose: 5.31% - slightly lower than the Devon population 7.53%.

Devon population data: [Diversity Profile \(Census\) - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#)

## Gender Pay Gap:

In our last report published January 2024 (data to March 2023), the Gender Pay Gap is as follows:

- Mean hourly earnings gap: 8.6% (difference £1.63) up 0.3%.
- Median hourly earnings gap: 13.9% (difference £2.50) down 1.3% (ONS benchmark estimate 14.3%).
- Median hourly earnings (full time only) gap: 9.9% (difference £1.78) down 1.1% (ONS benchmark estimate 7.7%).

## Staff survey results (EDI questions):

51% of the workforce (2,674 people) took part in the 2024 survey. 66% agreed and 7% disagreed that DCC provides a safe and inclusive working environment and equal opportunities for its diverse staff. 7% said they experienced bullying, discrimination or harassment at work in the past year. 15% did not raise the issue with anyone. About half of those who raised their concerns were dissatisfied with the way it was resolved, and only 17% were satisfied (of those who raised their concerns). The top three concerns are: Nothing happening after raising a concern, or things taking too long to resolve; Not

receiving feedback or updates, and therefore never having 'closure'; Poor accessibility and a lack of understanding and timely and appropriate reasonable adjustments for disabled staff, including for those with neurodivergence. Further equality analysis of the other questions is being carried out.

## **4) Strategic Plan**

Our work aligns with the vision and priorities in the Council's Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025 - <https://www.devon.gov.uk/strategic-plan>

- Tackle poverty and inequality (address poverty, health and other inequalities)

## **5) Financial Considerations**

All activities are being delivered within available resources, including across service areas.

## **6) Legal Considerations**

There are no specific legal considerations other than those relating to equality, detailed in Section 8.

## **7) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change, Sustainability and Socio-economic)**

Our work on EDI will not negatively affect environmental issues. There is potential for positive outcomes through improving access to environmentally sustainable alternatives.

## **8) Equality Considerations**

The Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision makers to give due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding

in relation to the protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership (for employment), pregnancy and maternity, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation). This Council also treats care experience as if it were a protected characteristic.

A decision maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation or socio-economic disadvantage.

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011, public authorities are required to:

- Publish information relating to protected characteristics of employees and people affected by its policies and practices at least annually.
- Publish one or more specific and measurable objective on how it will meet the General Duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations. Objectives must be updated at least once every four years.
- Ensure information is published in a manner that is accessible to the public.

This report intends to fulfil these duties.

## **9) Risk Management Considerations**

Risks related to EDI are monitored via our Risk Management System (SPOC 15 Failure to prevent discriminatory practice/adhere to the Equality Act 2010). Our assessed score and status on 6 June 2024 was: 12 – Medium.

Our new EDI action plan aims to reduce the risks of discrimination, and associated complaints, and ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has legal powers to enforce compliance with the Act (including the Public Sector Equality Duties) and investigate organisations that fail to do so.

## **10) Conclusions**

We continue to move forwards through a range of activities and are pleased to demonstrate a shift from 22% to 39% of actions in our plan now complete or in place, and 41% of actions in progress. A significant number of these actions are through our workforce strategy – People First and aim to make us an ‘employer of choice’ – recruiting and retaining a diverse and skilled workforce, committed to delivering services and improved outcomes to all Devon residents.

### **Maria Price**

Director of Legal and Democratic Services

### **Electoral Divisions: All**

Cabinet Member for equality: Councillor Roger Croad.

## **Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers**

Nil

### **Contact for enquiries:**

EDI team

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