Fairness, Inclusion and Equality

About our Employees
March 2026 Report

Contents

Page

Fairness, Inclusion and Equality

About our Employees – March 2026 Report

Introduction

We are pleased to present Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council's (SMBC) Public Sector Equality Duty Report 2026 relating to our role as an employer. The Council is a large organisation in the borough and had **2587** employees as at 31 March 2025.

We remain fully committed to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) to deliver equity for everyone who lives, works, studies in or visits Solihull. As our communities evolve, so too does the opportunity to attract and develop talent from a wide range of backgrounds enabling us to create a workforce that reflects our population and enhances how we design and deliver services.

Councillor
Karen Grinsell,
Leader of the Council

Paul Johnson,
Chief Executive

As an employer, we are small enough to care about our employees individually, yet large enough to offer meaningful opportunities and make a real difference. Fairness and inclusion shape how we work and how we treat each other. Our values - ambitious, adaptable, respectful and trustworthy - guide our behaviour every day.

Our ambition is to make Solihull Council a great place to work as an inclusive and welcoming employer. We want our staff to feel valued, motivated and able to grow.

Executive Summary

As a public authority, Solihull Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The law requires us to have 'due regard' to the three aims of the Act when making decisions about our workforce and ways of working to:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination
2. Advance equality of opportunity
3. Foster good relations between people from different groups

The Act also requires public bodies to publish relevant equality information by 30 March each year. This demonstrates how we are meeting our obligations across the protected characteristics set out in the legislation.

This report sets out our progress during 2024/25 in meeting our equality duties as an employer, including information about the make-up of our workforce. Separate annual reports are published on the Gender Pay Gap and how the services we provide advance equality.

Across the year, Solihull Council has taken clear and practical actions to meet the three aims of the Equality Act 2010. These actions support our ambition to remain a fair, inclusive and welcoming employer where all employees can thrive. The points below highlight how we have delivered against each PSED aim.

1. Eliminating Unlawful Discrimination

We strengthened our approach to preventing discrimination, bullying and harassment. Key improvements included a new Anti-Harassment and Anti-Bullying Policy, an updated Resolution Policy supported by trained Resolution Contacts, and enhanced reasonable adjustment processes co-designed with the Disability Network. The Diverse Minority Ethnic (DME) Network has been particularly active this year, raising important issues around career progression, safety, and feeling valued in the workplace.

2. Advancing Equality of Opportunity

We expanded access to employment, development and progression through a diverse apprenticeship programme, leadership development pathways, and supported employment opportunities. HR policies were reviewed through an EDI lens to ensure fairness and accessibility, and workforce data continues to be used to identify and address gaps and trends.

3. Fostering Good Relations

We strengthened inclusion and belonging with active contributions from the EDI Employee Networks. The networks collectively led or supported a wide range of cultural, religious and inclusion events—including South Asian Heritage Month, Pride, Ramadan and Eid, Black History Month and Disability Pride Month—helping to build awareness, understanding and positive relationships across the workforce.

Fairness, Inclusion and Equality

About our Employees – March 2026 Report

Solihull Council Plan

The [Council Plan 2025-2030 | Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council](#) was developed following public consultation. It sets out the overall strategic direction of the Council and our delivery aspirations for the next five years and beyond. It provides our vision for Solihull, the objectives we seek to achieve and the principles that guide the way we work and make decisions. The Plan provides background information about the borough, geography, the diversity of our residents, our delivery plan and our strategic plans, priorities and deliverables.

Our work is informed by Solihull's increasingly diverse population. We welcome people from all backgrounds and cultures. We fully appreciate that diversity boosts innovation and fosters creativity. Fairness and inclusion contribute to enhanced decision making, meeting diverse needs, promoting community engagement and fostering healthy workplaces.

Having a diverse workforce Strengthens how we operate by shaping our strategies policies and operational practices while deepening our understanding of the communities we serve particularly as we respond to increasing demand and financial pressures.

The Council's overall Annual Report sets out / achievements and case studies to demonstrate what we achieved from April 2024 to March 2025. It is the final annual review for the previous Council Plan 2020-2025.   [Solihull Council Plan Annual Report 2024/2025](#)

Equality objectives 2024-2027

Solihull Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy, EDI roadmap and Council Plan support us to deliver on the Council's published equality objectives to:

- Protect fairness, dignity and respect of individuals.

- Promote Solihull as a sustainable and an inclusive place to live, work, study and visit.

- Be a diverse and inclusive employer.

The expectations from the EDI Strategy are for Solihull to:

- Be recognised as a forward-thinking Council that values an inclusive culture of fairness and where diversity is valued.

- Enjoy a strong reputation as an inclusive place in which to live, work, study and visit.

- Demonstrate that local residents and visitors are satisfied with services and their experiences.

- Ensure that senior leaders feel more equipped to lead and drive an impactful and ambitious EDI agenda.

- Make the best use of talent and views of staff and external partners to deliver the equality, diversity and inclusion agenda.

More information about our EDI Strategy and associated documents can be found at [Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) | Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council](#)

Fairness, Inclusion and Equality
About our Employees – March 2026 Report

SMBC People Strategy

Our ethos is to embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) into everything we do. As part of this commitment, we have strengthened the way our workforce-related equality activity is integrated and governed. Rather than maintaining separate, overlapping plans, the activities previously set out in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Workforce Plan 2023–2026 have now been incorporated into the SMBC People Strategy 2024 - 2029. This brings our people priorities together into one clear framework and supports more aligned, consistent and impactful outcomes for our employees.

Our People Strategy is central to our role as an employer. It was co-created with employees through conversations, workshops, drop-in sessions, Time to Talk events and insights from the 2024 Employee Survey. This engagement, alongside external research and benchmarking with other organisations, shaped the strategy and its priorities. EDI is woven throughout the strategy rather than treated as a standalone set of actions, ensuring that fairness, inclusion and belonging underpin everything we do. The Strategy is built around five themes: creating a culture where employees feel they belong and are valued; positioning Solihull as an employer of choice; developing confident and compassionate leadership; supporting employee wellbeing; and ensuring our workforce has the skills, capability and confidence to meet current and future service demands.

Employee diversity

We are proud of our Borough becoming increasingly diverse and welcome new communities who have made Solihull their home, such as the Hong Kong British National Oversees group and more recent asylum seekers from different parts of the world. This growing diversity strengthens our community and better reflects the residents we serve, bringing broader perspectives, skills and lived experience into the Council.

To ensure that we are progressing towards a workforce that is representative and inclusive, staff are encouraged to keep their personal information updated, enabling us to monitor trends, assess alignment with borough data and implement targeted actions where disparities are identified.

A summary of the Council's core workforce is compared below to the representation of people across the protected characteristics in the borough taken from Census 2021 data.

Please note that there are slight variances in the total number of employees covered in this report when compared to the total number of employees stated in the Council's Gender Pay Gap Report published at the end of March 2026. This is due to the statutory criteria used to calculate the gender pay gap which only includes employees in receipt of pay on the snapshot date.

Summary of the Council's workforce compared to the representation of the population in the borough:

| SMBC Employees at year ending 31 March 2025 based on headcount with a total of 2587 Employees			
Protected Characteristic (Equality Group)	Number of employees*	% of Employees	Solihull Borough %**
Age			
16-24	78	3.0	9.2
25-34	387	15.0	11.6
35-44	586	22.7	~
45-54	737	28.5	~
55-64	679	26.2	~
65+	120	4.6	21
Disability			
Yes	179	6.9	16.8
No	2084	80.6	83.9
Race/Ethnicity			
All Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) of which:	503	19.4	17.8
- Asian	266	10.3	11.0
- Black	139	5.4	1.8
- Chinese or other ethnicity	28	1.1	1.5
- Mixed	70	2.7	3.5
White	1976	76.4	82.2
Religion or Belief			
Christianity	909	35.1	50.7
Muslim	110	4.3	5.3
Sikh	46	1.8	2.3
Hindu	43	1.7	2.8
Sex			
Female	1878	72.6	51
Male	709	27.4	49
Sexual Orientation			
Heterosexual/ Straight	1795	69.4	91.9
LGBTQ+	73	2.8	2.1
*Where information has been left blank, the data totals for equality groups may not always add up to 100%. ** Where there are matching data groupings available from the Census.			

A more detailed insight into the make-up of employees as at 31 March 2025, across a number of protected characteristics is provided in the following pages. Throughout the report '**DNWTS'** means '**Do Not Wish to Specify'**.
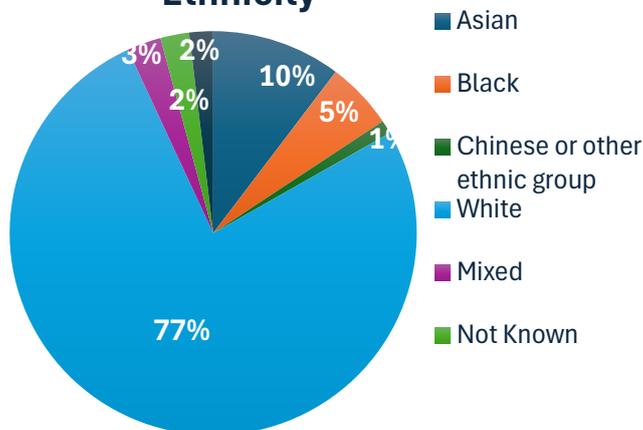
Fairness, Inclusion and Equality
About our Employees – March 2026 Report

AGE
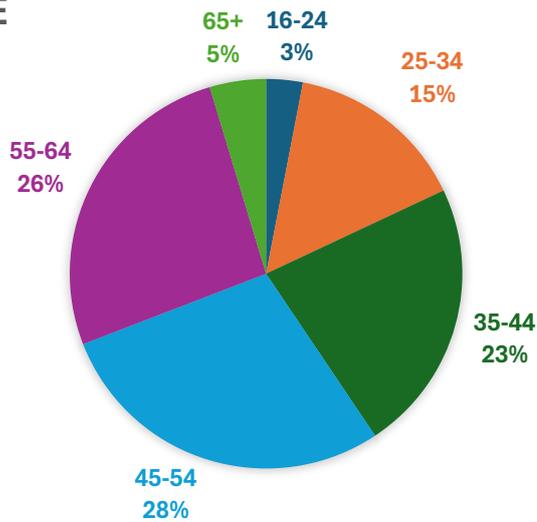
Age	Number of Employees	%
16-24	78	3.0
25-34	387	15.0
35-44	586	22.7
45-54	737	28.5
55-64	679	26.2
65+	120	4.6
Total	2587	100

Disability
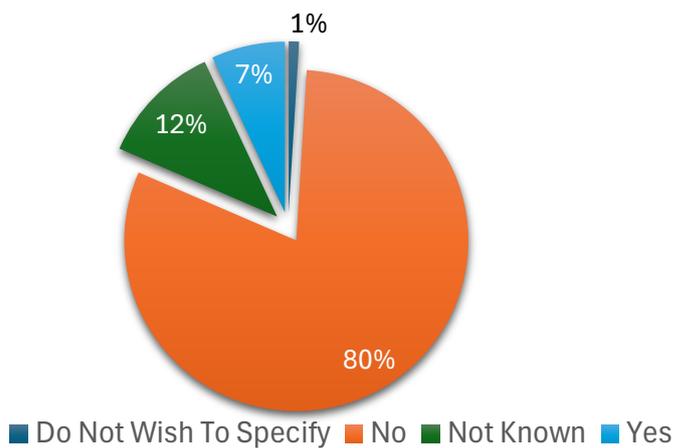
Disability	Number of Employees	%
DNWTS	25	1.0
No	2084	80.6
Not Known	299	11.6
Yes	179	6.9
Total	2587	100

Ethnicity

Ethnicity group	Number of employees	%
Asian	266	10.3
Black	139	5.4
Chinese or other ethnicity	28	1.1
White	1976	76.4
Mixed	70	2.7
Not Known	59	2.3
DNWTS	49	1.9
Total	2587	100

Fairness, Inclusion and Equality

About our Employees – March 2026 Report

Sex
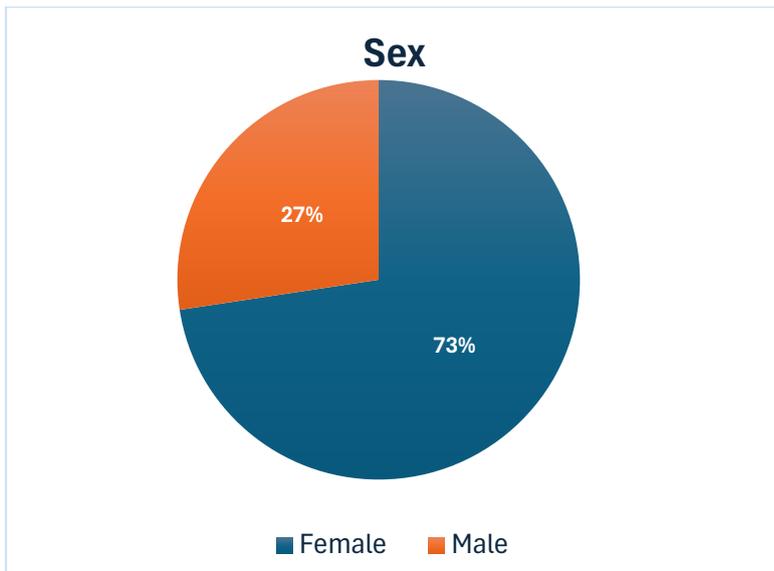
Sex	Number of Employees	%
Female	1878	72.6
Male	709	27.4
Total	2587	100
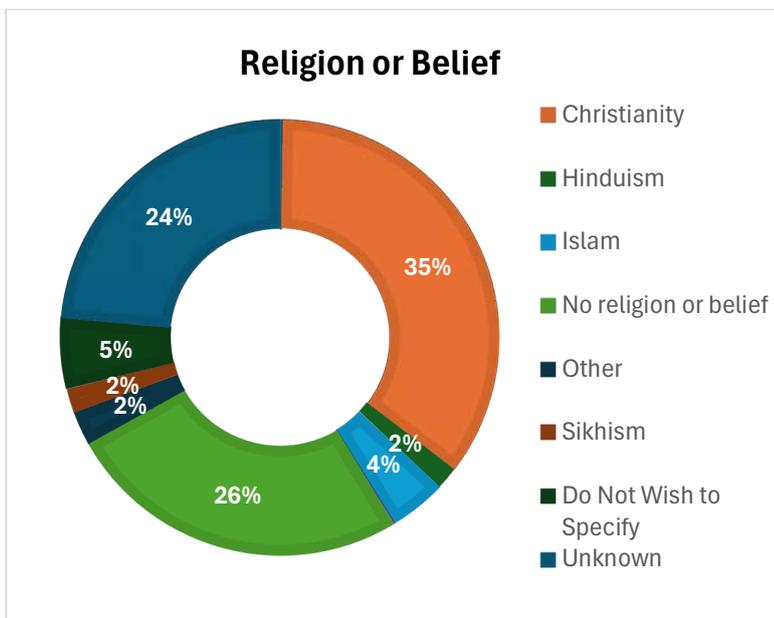
Religion or Belief

Religion or Belief	Number of Employees	%
Buddhism	6	0.2
Christianity	909	35.1
Hinduism	43	1.7
Islam	110	4.3
Judaism	2	0.1
No religion or belief	661	25.6
Other	65	2.5
Sikhism	46	1.8
DNWTS	136	5.3
Unknown	609	23.5
Total	2587	100

Sexual Orientation
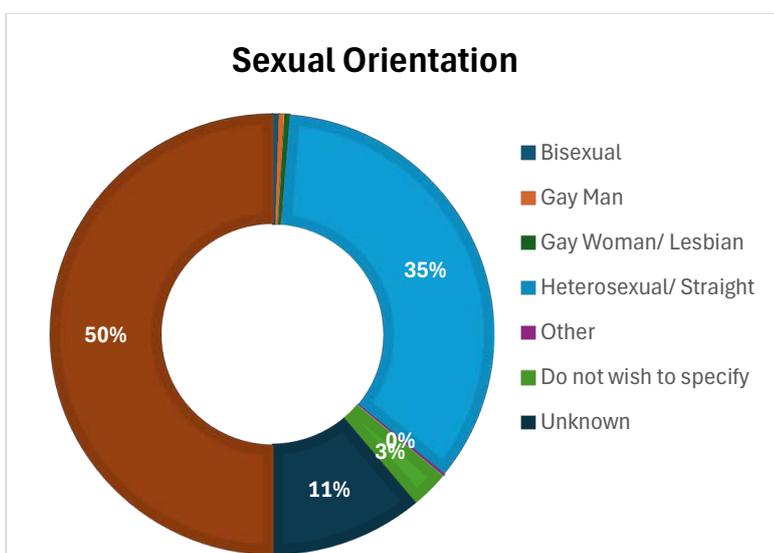
Sexual Orientation	Number of Employees	%
Bisexual	24	0.9
Gay Man	20	0.8
Gay Woman/ Lesbian	20	0.8
Heterosexual/ Straight	1795	69.4
Other	9	0.3
DNWTS	143	5.5
Unknown	576	22.3
Total	2587	100

Fairness, Inclusion and Equality

About our Employees – March 2026 Report

New Council Employees for the period of 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025:

New Starters- Age

Age	Number of new employees	%
Age 16 to 24	27	8.9
Age 25 to 34	73	24.1
Age 35 to 44	88	29.0
Age 45 to 54	67	22.1
Age 55 to 64	44	14.5
Age 65+	4	1.3
Total	303	100

New Starters_Disability
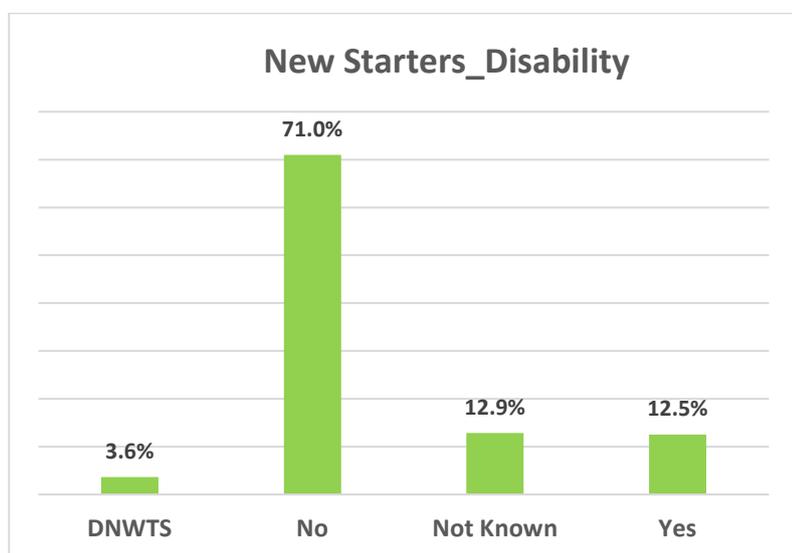
Disability	Number of new employees	%
DNWTS	11	3.6
No	215	71.0
Not Known	39	12.9
Yes	38	12.5
Total	303	100

New Starters_Ethnicity
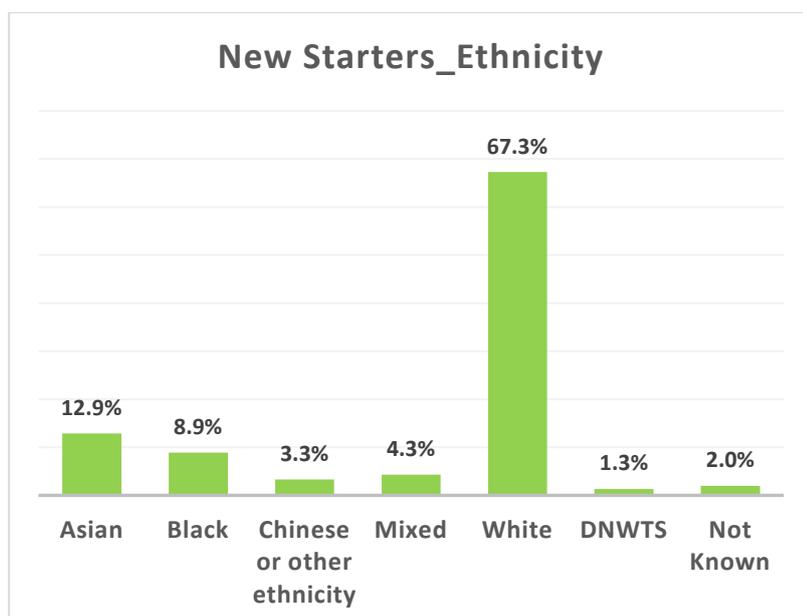
Ethnicity	Number of new employees	%
Asian	39	12.9
Black	27	8.9
Chinese or other ethnicity	10	3.3
Mixed	13	4.3
White	204	67.3
DNWTS	4	1.3
Not Known	6	2.0
Total	303	100

Fairness, Inclusion and Equality
About our Employees – March 2026 Report

New Starters _ Sex
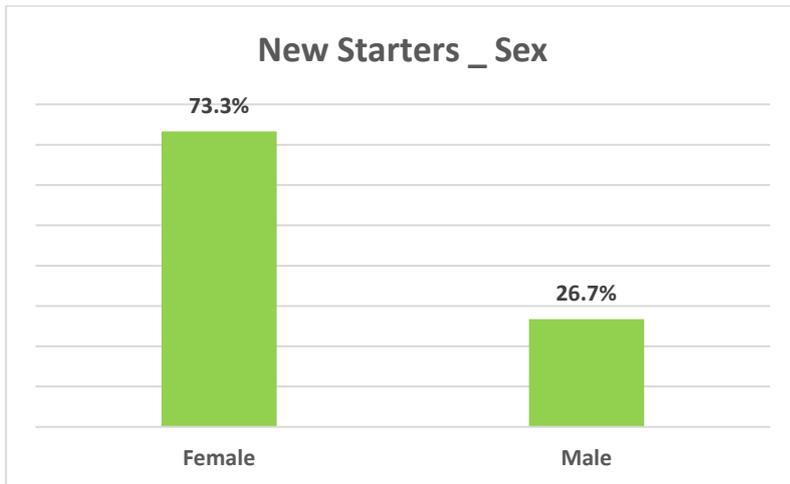
Sex	Number of new employees	%
Female	222	73.3
Male	81	26.7
Total	303	100

New Starters_Sexual Orientation
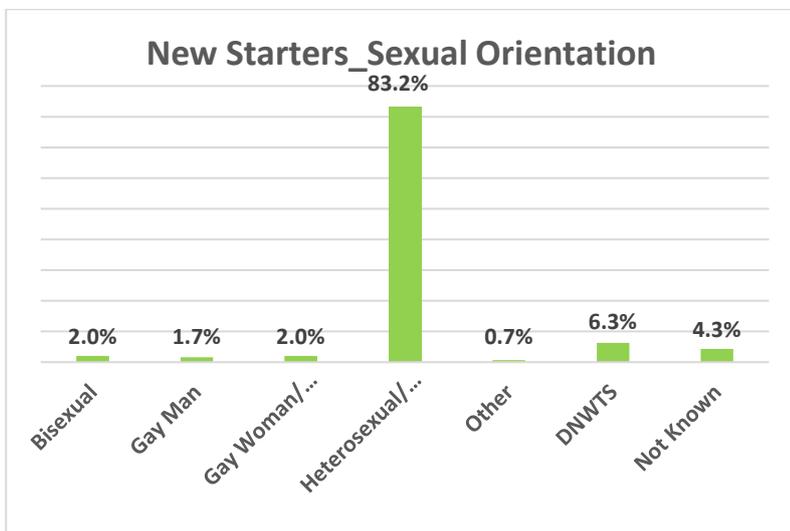
Sexual Orientation	Number of new employees	%
Bisexual	6	2.0
Gay Man	5	1.7
Gay Woman/ Lesbian	6	2.0
Heterosexual /Straight	252	83.2
Other	2	0.7
DNWTS	19	6.3
Not Known	13	4.3
Total	303	100

New Starters_Religion and Belief
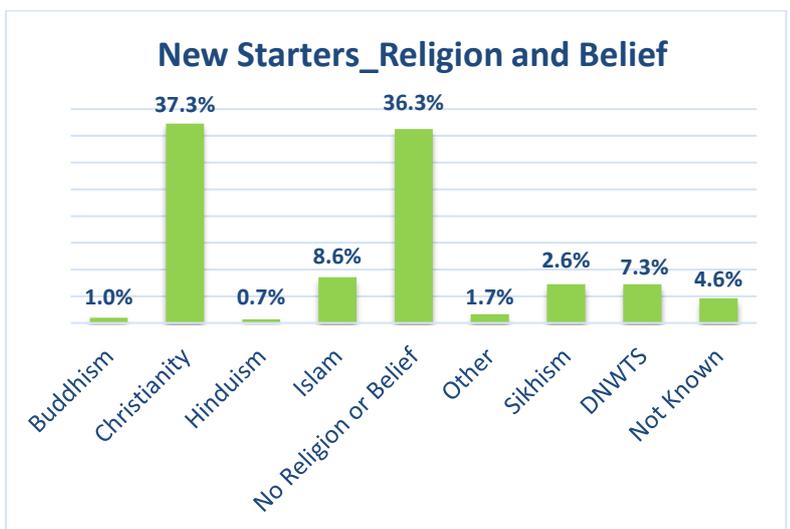
Religion and Belief	Number of new employees	%
Buddhism	3	1.0
Christianity	113	37.3
Hinduism	2	0.7
Islam	26	8.6
No Religion or Belief	110	36.3
Other	5	1.7
Sikhism	8	2.6
DNWTS	22	7.3
Not Known	14	4.6
Total	303	100

Fairness, Inclusion and Equality

About our Employees – March 2026 Report

Employees who have left the organisation for the period of 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025:

Leavers_Age
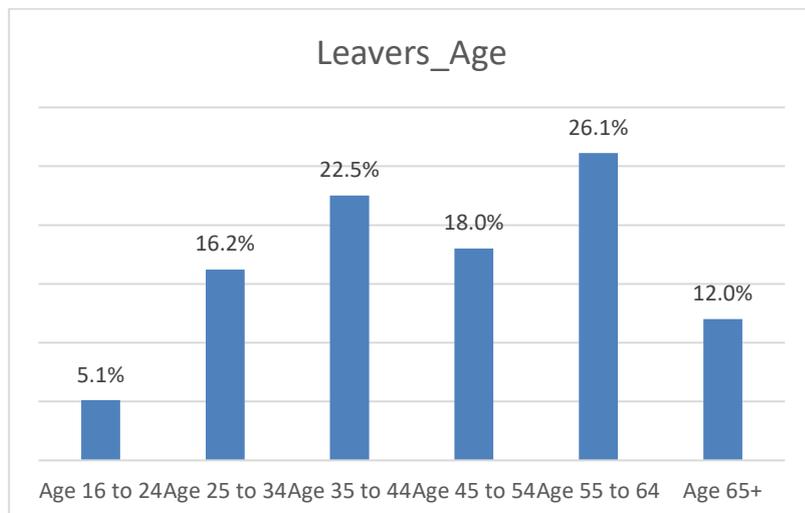
Age Band	Number of Employees	%
Age 16 to 24	17	5.1
Age 25 to 34	54	16.2
Age 35 to 44	75	22.5
Age 45 to 54	60	18.0
Age 55 to 64	87	26.1
Age 65+	40	12.0
Total	333	100.0

Leavers_Disability
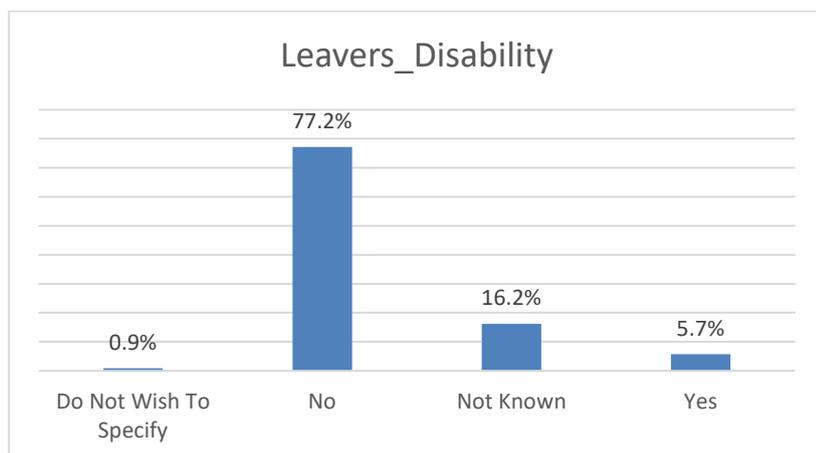
Disability	Number of Employees	%
DNWTS	3	0.9
No	257	77.2
Not Known	54	16.2
Yes	19	5.7
Total	333	100
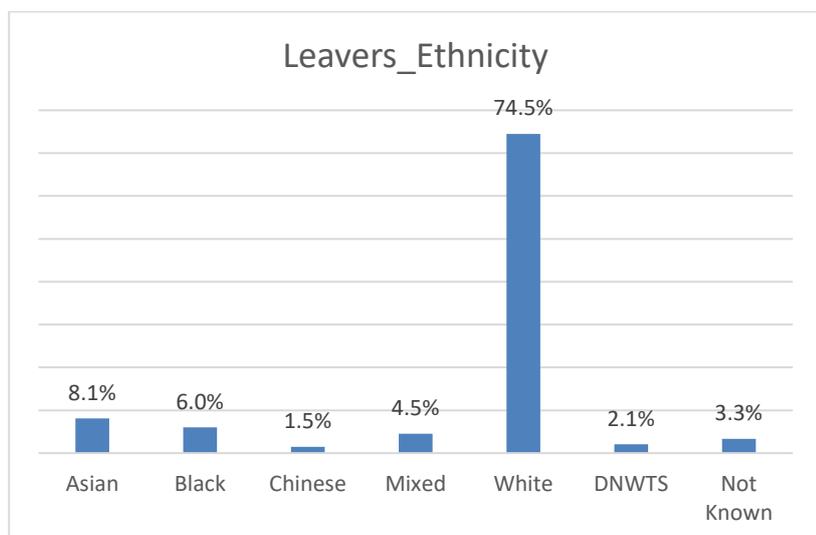
Leavers_Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number of Employees	%
Asian	27	8.1
Black	20	6.0
Chinese	5	1.5
Mixed	15	4.5
White	248	74.5
DNWTS	7	2.1
Not Known	11	3.3
Total	333	100

Fairness, Inclusion and Equality

About our Employees – March 2026 Report

Leavers _Religion and Belief
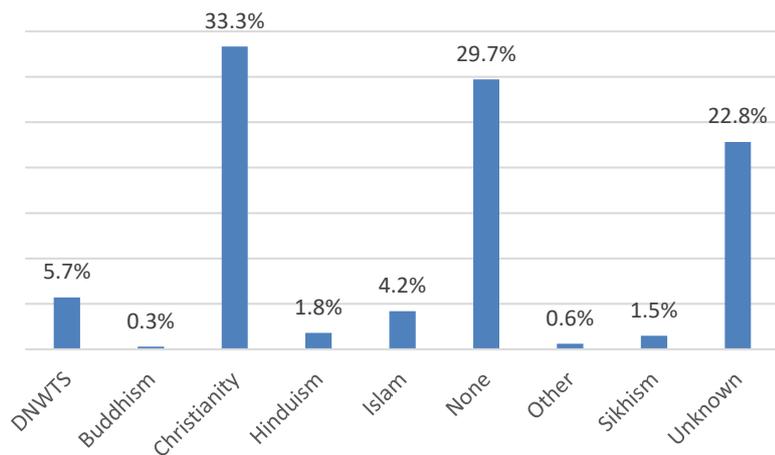
Religion Or Belief	Number of Employees	%
DNWTS	19	5.7
Buddhism	1	0.3
Christianity	111	33.3
Hinduism	6	1.8
Islam	14	4.2
None	99	29.7
Other	2	0.6
Sikhism	5	1.5
Unknown	76	22.8
Total	333	100

Chart values: DNWTS 5.7%, Buddhism 0.3%, Christianity 33.3%, Hinduism 1.8%, Islam 4.2%, None 29.7%, Other 0.6%, Sikhism 1.5%, Unknown 22.8%
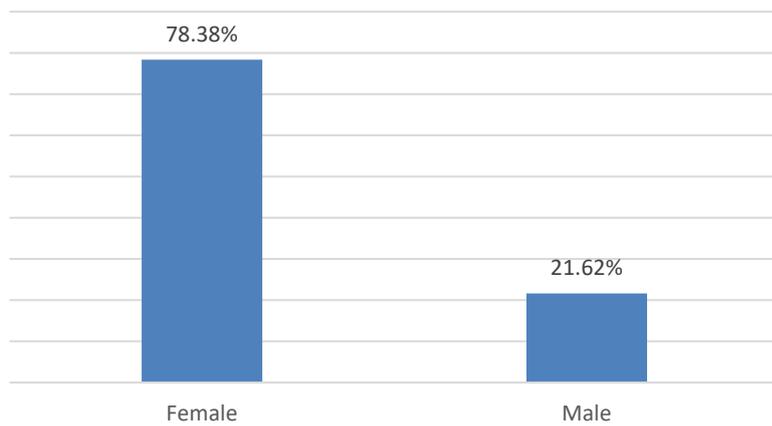
Leavers_Sex

Sex	Number of Employees	%
Female	261	78.4
Male	72	21.6
Total	333	100

Chart values: Female 78.38%, Male 21.62%

Leavers_Sexual Orientation
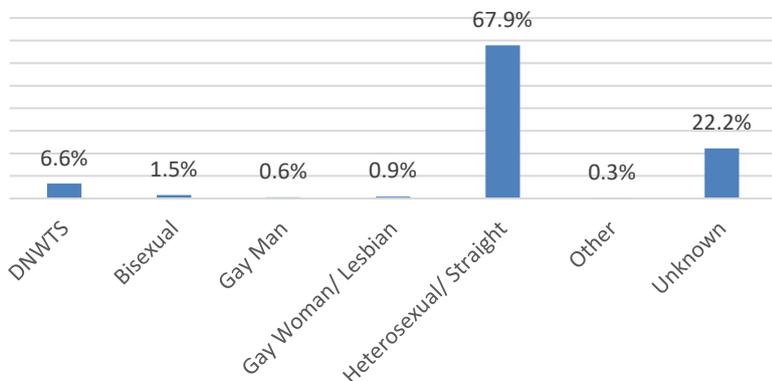
Sexual Orientation	Number of Employees	%
DNWTS	22	6.6
Bisexual	5	1.5
Gay Man	2	0.6
Gay Woman/ Lesbian	3	0.9
Heterosexual/ Straight	226	67.9
Other	1	0.3
Unknown	74	22.2
Total	333	100

Chart values: DNWTS 6.6%, Bisexual 1.5%, Gay Man 0.6%, Gay Woman/ Lesbian 0.9%, Heterosexual/ Straight 67.9%, Other 0.3%, Unknown 22.2%

Sense of belonging

Arrangements giving employees a greater sense of belonging have been in place for several years. Alongside the sense of belonging, we aim to reduce employee isolation and encourage positive, healthy and appropriate challenges. Partnership work with employees continues through a series of employee networks which are open to all staff.

EDI Employee Networks

Three EDI focused groups are place:

a. **Disability Employee Network** that helps us to:

   ✓ Improve the quality and accessibility of information for employees and prospective applicants with disabilities.

   ✓ Share our knowledge and experience to promote equality and inclusion and employee well-being.

   ✓ Support improvements to the working environment and the lived experience of employees with disabilities.

   ✓ Use our collective and influential voice to advocate for employee rights and needs and to influence SMBC's policies, processes and working practices to support employees with disabilities.

b. **Diverse Minority Ethnic (DME) Network** whose role is to:

   ✓ Highlight areas for improvement raised by employees in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

   ✓ Help to promote, develop and improve the experience and interests of minority ethnic employees at SMBC.

   ✓ Support and champion diversity and inclusion for SMBC employees and consider initiatives to introduce positive practice.

   ✓ Contribute to policy reviews and help embed good practice in diversity and inclusion issues.

   ✓ Help to celebrate diversity and inclusion.

c. **Rainbow (LGBTQ**+) Network which helps members to:

   ✓ Feel and have a safe space for discussing diversity issues relating to work.

   ✓ Raise issues in a confidential and supportive environment.

   ✓ Contribute to policy development and implementation.

   ✓ Support and arrange events to raise awareness and celebrate inclusivity.

Each EDI Network works independently where members agree agendas and arrange meetings and venues that suit the majority. The Equalities Team supports with administration and provides advice on request.

Network members report that they value safe spaces where they can share experiences and raise concerns. They expressed that their sense of belonging in the workplace of feeling included has improved.

Other Employee Networks and Links

Other dedicated networks and support links are:

a. **The Carers Network** which offers support, help and guidance to employees who have caring responsibilities.

   As a 'Carer Friendly' employer we recognise the valuable role carers provide in supporting their family, friends and the community. SMBC has signed up to the West Midlands Association of Directors of Adults Social Services (WM- ADASS) Carer Pledge. This supports us to be Carer Aware and Carer Friendly.

   A Carer's Agreement supports employees and managers to achieve a balance between the demands of their jobs and personal caring responsibilities. The document is confidential and ensures that employees are informed about support available from within the Council and external partners such as those who provide independent advice.

b. **Local Wellbeing Leads** who provide free, confidential help and support. Their details are published on the intranet for individual support and to request group discussions about wellbeing topics.

   Employees can get independent and confidential advice from qualified counsellors and advisors through the Council's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) partner which is a 24/7 service. This 'Wisdom' App available from our partner provides staff with exclusive access to track their wellness, improvement mental health and stay resilient during tough times.

c. **The Menopause Support Network** meets every three months to provide a safe space for those experiencing menopause to come together informally to share concerns and coping strategies around menopause. They are also able to find out more about useful resources and the support available.

   Support for individual employees is recorded on a confidential Menopause Agreement that captures reasonable adjustments.

d. **Resolution Contacts** offer confidential and impartial advice to those experiencing conflict in the workplace. Their activities are summarised as:

   ✓ An advocate of resolution approaches and behaviours, encouraging a culture of prevention and early intervention.

   ✓ Coach and mentor employees, equipping them to have constructive conversations with their line manager or colleagues.

   ✓ Familiar with appropriate procedures and enable employees to access information available to them on the options that are available.

✓ Listen and provide confidential support to employees that assists them to think through their options for resolution of the issues and make a decision on how they want to handle their concern.

✓ Signpost to wider sources of support available for example the Employee Assistance Programme.

✓ Actively participate in Resolution Contact development and supervision activity and attend network meetings.

✓ Identify allegations which may be beyond the remit of the role and refer / signpost these as appropriate.

Colleagues can get further help from external organisations such as the Solihull Bereavement Counselling Service and the Domestic abuse and relationships support.

Strengthening bonds

Raising the awareness of national and international EDI events and religious observances is an excellent way of understanding the diversity of our workforce, valuing people and enhancing their sense of belonging.

Staff can access a calendar of key religious, cultural and commemorative events that assist to plan events and raise staff awareness of diverse cultures and practices. Below are examples of events that we marked in 2025 to raise awareness, support learning and enable diverse needs to be considered for employees. Information was communicated to employees and managers through our intranet, staff briefings, internal magazines and, where appropriate, via dedicated events, reading materials and exhibitions.

Africa Day	Mid-Autum Festival
Alcohol Awareness	National Adults Safeguarding Week
Armed Forces Week	Neurodiversity Celebration Week
Anti-social Behaviour Week	International Women's Day
Armistice Day	LGBTQ+ History Month
Black History Month	Lunar New Year
Carers Week	Pride Month
Care Leavers Week	Purple Day (Epilepsy Awareness)
Chinese New Year	Ramadan Awareness
Dementia Action Week	Refugee Week
Disability Pride Month	Remembrance Day
Diwali	Solihull Pride event
Easter	South Asian Heritage Month

Eid-al-Udha	Windrush Day
Health Awareness Week	World Elder Abuse Day
Holocaust Memorial Day	World Hijab Day
Hong Kong Mid-Autum Festival	Vaisakhi
International Day for Persons with Disabilities	Youth Work Week

The DME held special celebrations for members to mark Ramadan and Eid, South Asian Heritage Month and Black History Month.

Members of the Rainbow Network participated in the first ever Solihull Pride event that was officially opened by the Leader of the Council.

Valuing employee voices

Other examples that demonstrate ways in how the Council values employee voices:

The Disability Network

The Disability Employee Network has had a considerable influence on supporting staff who are disabled. Members have supported the HR Team to develop our employee related Disability Reasonable Adjustment Guidance, form and process. Members input has resulted in ensuring that our HR information system update enables employees to directly upload their disability profile so that their manager receives a notification to support reasonable adjustments.

Arrangements for reasonable adjustments continue to be complemented by the Council's Smarter Ways of Working principles which include the facilitation of specialist equipment to support employee's personal requirements they essentially need to carry out their role.

Individual members have supported staff with disabilities to ensure that their needs are met by the Council. More recently, the Network has discussed the effectiveness of the Reasonable Adjustments Policy. Their suggestions are being considered by the HR Team.

The DME Network

Concerns were raised through the DME Network about staff safety during recent national and local community tensions. These concerns were taken seriously, and the Council acted quickly to reassure colleagues.

Staff were reminded how to report any incidents that may affect their safety and wellbeing and were guided through the appropriate reporting system by a member of the Health and Safety Team, ensuring that issues are properly recorded and followed up. Staff were also encouraged to raise any personal concerns with their line manager. These steps reassured colleagues that clear processes, support, and safety measures are in place, and that the Council remains committed to keeping everyone safe at work. Ongoing dialogue with staff ensures the Council stays aware of any emerging issues.

Professional conduct

Equality compliance

Everyone at the Council, regardless of their position as elected members, staff, contractors and visitors, are required to follow our EDI principles of non-discrimination and positively embracing EDI when fulfilling their roles and working with internal and external stakeholders. They must act professionally, treat others with respect and dignity, and act professionally at all times. Employees are expected to report EDI breaches to their manager or another senior staff member.

All employees are expected to abide by all other SMBC policies and procedures and implement them appropriately. The documents for Council-wide policies such as safeguarding, grievance, disciplinary and employee codes are easily accessible from our intranet. Each Directorate has a suite of operating policies relating to their functions.

Prevention of sexual harassment

A new Anti-Harassment & Anti-Bullying policy has been created which underpins the Council's commitment to fostering a safe, respectful and inclusive workplace for all our employees.

Key features of the new policy include highlighting our zero-tolerance approach to bullying, harassment and sexual harassment including verbal, physical or online. It encourages employees to report any concerns and offers a range of confidential channels for reporting any instances.

The new policy complements the existing Resolution policy which has also been updated to reflect the changes. If an employee wishes to raise a concern about abuse, bullying, harassment, sexual harassment or victimisation they should refer to the new Anti-Harassment and Anti-Bullying policy.

Learning and development

As part of the People Strategy priorities, the Onboarding and Induction process and Mandatory Development offer have been thoroughly reviewed and recommendations have begun to be implemented, to ensure that new starters to the Organisation have all they need from both a practical sense, but also to create a sense of belonging and an opportunity to understand their role in the Organisation achieving their vision. Recommendations include fine tuning the offer to ensure it is accessible to all.

The Mandatory Development Programme ensures that employees complete all regulatory and organisationally mandatory elements within their first 3 months of employment. Refresher training is prompted to employees at the appropriate timing. Managers also have a suite of Mandatory Development which is role specific, this must be completed within their first 6 months in post and equip them with the essential knowledge and skills to support management of their team.

Continuous Professional Development Opportunities

Employees have access to a variety of different opportunities to best support their personal professional development journeys. This includes access to:

- Lunch & Learn events
- Self-directed e-learning modules
- Blended development workshops
- In-person workshops and programmes
- Executive Coaching and Mentoring

Leadership Development is offered to support leaders at various stages in their career:

- Mandatory Management Development
- Step Up Programme – for new and aspiring leaders. Supporting their transition into a leadership role, utilising a series of workshops and action learning with a cohort of their peers.
- Apex Leadership & Management Programme - endorsed by the Institute of Leadership. This programme comprises development workshops, action learning, peer coaching and diagnostic tools (Insights Discovery Profile and 360 Review)
- Access to the Public Sector Coaching and Mentoring Pool – for executive coaching and mentoring from a pool of experienced and qualified coach/mentor professionals.

Data for personal and career development take up between 2017 and 2024 was analysed. It demonstrated that participants were broadly in line with employee diversity although people from LGBTQ+ and those with disabilities were underrepresented.

Leadership & Management EDI Data 2017-2024

Apex Leadership & Management

BAME	16%	21
white	81%	104
No Response	3%	4
	100%	129

Step Up To Management

BAME	12%	15
white	83%	104
No Response	5%	6
	100%	125

L2 Team Leader Award

BAME	17%	23
white	78%	105
No Response	5%	6
	100%	134

Workforce Profile

	WF Profile
BAME	17%
white	79%
No Response	5%
	101%

Fairness Inclusion and Equality Report March 2024

People and Organisational Development

Employer of choice

A key aspect of an employer of choice is about creating a workplace where people actively want to join and stay. Examples of activities for staff retention and attracting new talent include the following:

EDI lens in policies

A main priority for the Council is to reduce inequalities in employee experiences and meet the needs of a diverse workforce. Our aim is for staff to feel valued and respected regardless of who they are and what background they come from.

Key HR policies are routinely reviewed to ensure they meet changes in legislation, national guidance and reflect good practice. Reviews are 'equality checked' and, where appropriate, we conduct more detailed Fair Treatment Assessments (FTAs). Our FTA principles are to 'go beyond the law' so that the assessment process covers the impact on people who share protected characteristics but also other factors such as employees who have caring and family responsibilities and their health and wellbeing.

Our human resources policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect legal changes and best practice. Examples of policies reviewed during 2025 include:

- Adoption leave
- Anti-Harassment & Anti-Bullying
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Maternity leave
- Neonatal leave
- Paternity leave
- Sickness absence management

Armed forces personnel

Our Armed Forces Community Covenant | Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council promises to do all we can to assist those who serve the nation and keep us safe. We offer support to injured service members and bereaved families with extra help when appropriate. Our Silver Award from the Ministry of Defence recognises our commitment and work to deliver the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

Staff training about Armed Forces includes 4 E-learning modules covering an introduction to the Covenant and dedicated courses for staff working in or responsible for health and safety, housing and those who are customer facing.

Employee wellbeing

The Council's offer for employee wellbeing is extensive and is publicised through the intranet and in team briefs.

Virtual Lunch and Learn and other training events are arranged to encourage greater attendance and participation. Examples of fairness and inclusion related events include:

- ✓ **Wellbeing Action Plans –** which identifying support needs and getting help.
- ✓ **January Get Moving campaign** - Promoting physical activity options for people who live or work in Solihull for proven benefits, including better sleep, more energy and reduced risks.

of developing certain conditions.

- ✓ **Resources for managers** - Stress and Risk management approaches and resources to support managers in providing support in areas such as Mental Health.

- ✓ **Musculoskeletal (MSK) problems** - Help and support with low back pain and other MSK issues.

- ✓ **Wellbeing and lifestyle resources** - Sleep, Healthy eating, Staying active; Men's health and financial wellbeing.

All employees can access the Employee Assistance Programme, delivered via an independent service commissioned by the Council. The programme covers information, counselling and emotional support as well as podcasts, videos and support on a range of topics, all tailored to support the wellbeing of our employees. The service is free to all SMBC staff.

## Engagement with staff and trade unions

The Council values the role that unions play in looking after the interests and safeguarding of their members employment rights, pay and reward, wellbeing and safe working conditions. The Council meets regularly with trade unions through several groups that include the Corporate Consultation and Negotiating Committee (CCNC) and Directorate Consultation and Negotiating Committees (DCNCs). Membership of the groups includes trade union representatives, HR representatives and senior managers. As well as consultation, unions are also involved in sickness absence management; mental health and wellbeing in the workplace; and equality issues.

We recognise that conflict in the workplace may occur between people. When it does, we support colleagues and managers to work together to resolve any disagreements and conflicts constructively and speedily and where appropriate through our Resolution Policy. This approach is supported through a volunteer network of Resolution Contacts, made up of employees from across different grades and diversity of the workforce. The network complements the support available through a line manager, HR and the trade unions. Data is gathered regarding formal issues on disciplinaries, grievances, etc. Where complaints of harassment or bullying are made, the Council take these very seriously and investigates.
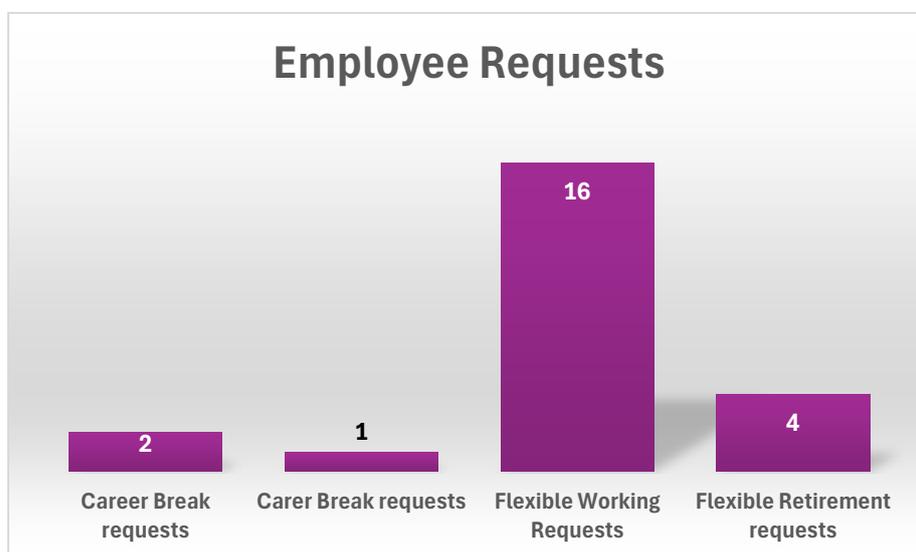
Employee Relations Data

We look at several types of employment policy cases—such as disciplinaries, flexible working requests, maternity leave and carers' leave—to understand how staff are using these policies, which groups are raising issues more often, and whether any behaviours or concerns are showing up more in some parts of the organisation.

For the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, the employee data system recorded the following number of employee related cases:
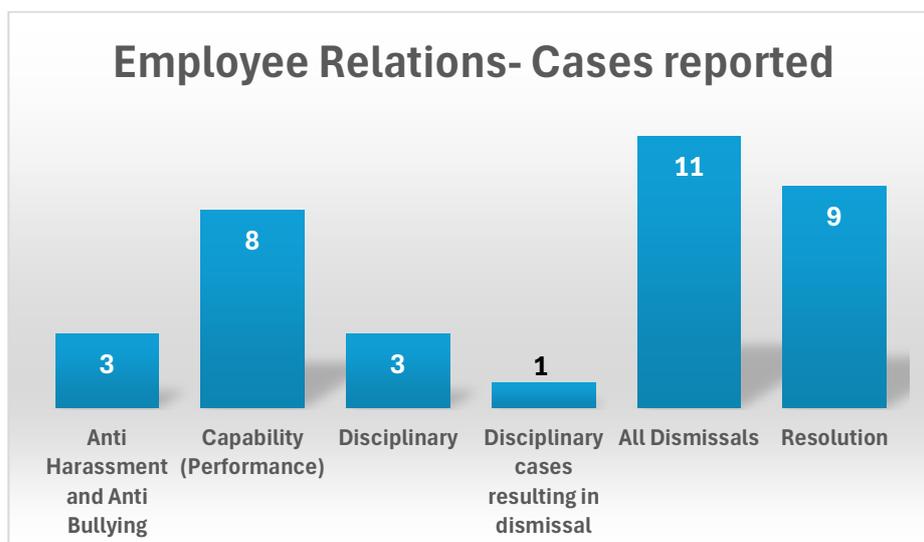
Whilst the number of cases in each category is very small, we continue to:

- Review this information on a regular basis.
- Compare the data across different time periods.
- Monitor for any emerging trends.
- Investigate any issues that may require attention.

The data for 2024/2025 shows that:

- most employee relations cases broadly reflect the wider workforce.
- disciplinary cases mainly involve women, which is expected as 73% of the workforce are women. This representation is the same level as 2023/2024 data.
- flexible working requests are most often made by White women aged 45–64. There was an equal number of women from age bracket 45-54 years (31%).

- Resolution cases were represented highest among White women (89%) compared with the wider workforce of 73%. 67% of the cases were women between the ages of 25-44 years.

Attracting and retaining diverse talent

Disability Confident Employer

Under the Disability Confident Scheme we are accredited as a [Disability Confident Employer](#). The accreditation process considered policies, procedures and operational practices for the way we recruit, retain and support people with disabilities. We aspire to move towards the Disability Confident Leader [Level 3: Disability Confident Leader - GOV.UK](#).

Apprenticeships

In December 2025 we had 122 employees undertaking Apprentices. The profile of our apprentices in December 2025 shows a diverse cohort:

- The highest proportion of apprentices were aged **25–34**, representing around **28%**, while representation was lower among those aged **55–64**.
- **70%** of apprentices were **female**.
- **11%** declared a **disability**, which is nearly double the proportion of the wider Council workforce.
- **22%** were from **ethnic minority groups**.
- **5%** identified as **LGBTQ+**, a higher proportion than within the overall workforce.
- Among those who stated a religion, the majority were **Christian**, with **15%** identifying with other religions including **Islam** and **Sikhism**.
- **71%** were employed on a **full-time** basis and **8%** part-timers worked 18.5 hours or less.

Supported Employment Scheme

The Council's commitment to disability employment is a key priority in our role as a large employer. The Supported Employment scheme to promote people with learning disabilities into work is still going strong. The dedicated Supported Employment Adviser in the HR division,

provides wrap around support for potential recruiting managers and applicants in offering more sustainable supported employment opportunities to local people.

When a team expresses an interest in offering a role, we work with partners to identify a

potential candidate that would be a good match based on their interests, education, experience, skills and abilities. We also work with managers and teams to develop an awareness and understanding of the candidate's needs and how to support them appropriately day to day in the workplace; this will include any recommendations for adjustments that address an employee's needs. This scheme is also supported by the Council's Employment and Skills Team by funding the roles and overseeing recruitment and partnerships. Together, they liaise with external partners to help teams identify local candidates who are work ready. It is a concerted effort to support this scheme. It leads to workplace inclusion, which is a key priority within our inclusive growth aim in the Council Plan.

Supported Internship Programme

The Supported Internship Programme offers structured learning for young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) to build their employability skills. Supported internships give participants the opportunity to experience working in an area of interest alongside a work coach who offers support and instruction to gain the necessary skills to carry out the role unsupervised. The aim of these internships is to provide a foundation to clear progression routes into paid employment.

English fluency statement

We want to ensure that the quality of public services in the borough is accessible and delivered to the highest standards possible. Part 7 of the Immigration Act 2016 requires public authorities to meet their obligations for all employees working in public facing roles to communicate in English fluently to help ensure the safe and high-quality delivery of public services. The Council ensures that all public facing staff meet this fluency duty including when we are recruiting new employees. Where the need is required, we signpost staff to training or retraining to help them meet the requirements of the fluency duty.

Modern slavery statement

The Council is committed to preventing and taking action against slavery and human trafficking in its corporate activities, supply chains and the wider community. To understand and address all potential modern slavery risks related to our business, the Council conducts the steps established in previous years from our modern slavery statement to embrace our responsibility on tackling modern slavery.

Actions include:

- robust procedures for vetting new employees so that they can confirm their identities and qualifications and are paid directly into an appropriate personal bank account.

- the application of our Safeguarding Policy to safeguard the welfare of vulnerable adults and children.

The Council recognises that we are on a journey to further advance equality, diversity and inclusion in the organisation so welcome any feedback on this information.

For contact, please email: **equalities@solihull.gov.uk**