

Somerset County Council Workforce Equalities Report 2018



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Introduction

“The County Council promises not to discriminate against anyone because of race, colour, ethnic or national origins, nationality, religion, disability, age, sex, marital status, caring responsibilities, sexual orientation, political or trade union activity”

Equality is a core value of the Authority and underpins the way in which we deliver services. We are working to embed equalities into all of our services and employment practices so that we can meet the aims of the Authority’s Equalities Promise Statement and the Equal Opportunities Policy.

The County Council has made an additional commitment to ensuring equality in four other areas outside of the protected characteristics. These are rurality in recognition of the rural nature of Somerset and the impact that has on the Council’s ability to provide services to all; military service in recognition of the fact that Somerset is home to Service Personnel and their families and a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant; low income in recognition of the fact that Somerset has more limited opportunities for high incomes than some of the more urban counties and the deprivation indices show that Somerset has some significant challenges; and Carers, who often need additional support when you consider this role is often combined with another factor such as rurality or low income.

This report forms part of the overall reporting requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The PSED places a specific duty on the Council to publish information about its employees (where the organisation exceeds 150 staff) and service users broken down by relevant protected characteristic to show how the Council is:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advancing equality of opportunity
- Fostering good relations between people

This report provides both, an overview of the Council’s performance in terms of Equalities in relation to employment as well as an outline of the work, projects and initiatives around equalities within the Council.

Our work in 2018 included the introduction of Our People Strategy using the three key themes; ambitious, confident & improving from the county vision. Our People Strategy sets out how we will support our workforce to achieve our vision for themselves and the people of Somerset. This strategy came about through extensive consultation with over 700 employees looking at areas such as our culture and vision for the future. Equality sits at the heart of this work.

Sex

County Profile – not collated within census (Sex and Sexual Orientation are the two areas that are not collected under the Census).

SCC Profile

The Council's workforce is 72.01% female and 27.99% male (compared to 73.1% female and 26.9% male in 2017). The gender profile of the top 5% earners is 54.04% female and 45.96% male (compared to 53.26% female and 46.74% male in 2017).

The data shows females continue to make up almost three quarters of the workforce. There has been a small increase in the number of women in the top 5% of earners.

The reason for the higher level of female employees in the organisation is a higher proportion of female workers within social care and caring roles. This reflects the national picture in local government employment.

Recruitment (see appendix 1 for full data)

As in previous years, the majority of applicants are female.

The recruitment statistics show an improved balance between the shortlisting and appointments of male and female applicants when compared to 2016/17. However, the % of shortlisted and appointed candidates for those not declaring their sex is significantly lower than those who do. This may require further investigation to understand whether this can be attributed to any particular cause.

Training

Of those who attended training 26% were male and 74% were female. These figures mirror the workforce profile in terms of sex.

Gender pay gap

The Council is working hard to publish our Gender Pay for the financial year 2017/18. As soon as the data is available the Council will publish the full information and it will be added to this report. The data will be added to this report by the end of March 2019.

Supportive Policies

Somerset County Council is committed to supporting parents before, during and after they return from Shared Parental Leave (SPL). SPL enables eligible mothers, fathers, partners and adopters to choose how to share time off work after their child is born or placed. It also applies to surrogacy where there is a Parental Order. It is designed to give parents flexibility in how to share the care of their child in the first year following birth or adoption. The regulations came into force on 1 December 2014 and applied to eligible parents, where a child was born or placed for adoption on or after 5 April 2015.

Age

County Profile

- At the time of the 2011 Census 61.1% of the County's population were of working age, 16-64.
- The relative size of the working age population is below the national average in all Somerset districts.
- The highest concentrations are in major towns and in areas housing military personnel (40 Commando, Norton Fitzwarren, and RNAS Yeovilton).
- In some areas of Burnham-on-Sea, Minehead and Frome less than half the population are of working age.

Between 1984 and 2014 those aged 85+ increased by 170%. The number of 85+ is projected to double in the next 2 decades. With this increase in those aged 85 and above we can confidently assume we will see an increase in those providing non-paid caring support. This has the potential to change the profile of employees working within the organisation and an increase in those requiring to work flexibly or/and part time.

SCC Profile (see appendix 2 for full data)

The data shows that the age profile of the Council is broadly the same when compared to that of 2017 with around 74% of the workforce being above the age of 36.

Those aged 16-25 account for 4.89% of the Council's employees, a slight decrease when compared to 2017. The hope is that continued work through the apprenticeship scheme, pathways to employment and graduate programmes we will see this figure rise. The County's lack of a university continues to reduce our ability to retain young people coming to study in the area. This is then also true for those young people that go and study outside of the County and remain in their area of study.

This age breakdown is similar to other authorities with a similar geographical makeup.

Recruitment Data

The recruitment data indicates that the number of applications from 16-24 year olds is similar to the previous year although there has been a significant increase in the percentage of 16-24 year olds being both shortlisted and appointed.

Whilst the data indicates that candidates aged 65 and over are the most successful at being appointed the number of applicants is too small for this to be a meaningful finding.

Training

The age profile of those attending corporate training was broadly in line with the workforce age profile showing no bias in training.

Recent Successes

Apprenticeship Scheme

Since May 2017 the Council has been required to pay the equivalent of 0.5% of its salary bill into a levy which can only be utilised on apprenticeship qualifications. As at April 2018 the Council had 153 apprentices employed.

There are no age barriers to completing an apprenticeship and one of the advantages of the levy is that it can be utilised on existing members of staff that 'up skill' via an apprentice qualification. So far 32 employees have taken up this opportunity. These existing members of staff represent a range of pay grades and include former apprentices moving immediately onto a higher level course, to staff returning to training after decades on the job.

The Director of HR and OD has set an ongoing target of 150 apprentices to be employed by Somerset County Council at any one time. This ambitious target was met in the first quarter of 2018. The real challenge will be maintaining this number when the current crop of apprentices begin to qualify.

Pathways to Employment Scheme

The Council continues to run the Pathway to Employment Scheme. Now in its third year, the Council has a specific budget to help support those young people from vulnerable backgrounds; such as those with a disability or those that have left care. To date around 120 young people have benefitted from the scheme in some way. Upon reviewing the scheme last year HR and OD service proposed a change in the way the budget is used to increase the number of young people that can be supported. Instead of solely using the budget to finance the salary of those young people offered fixed term contracts and apprenticeships, some bespoke programmes for those deemed not yet 'work ready' have been included. An example of one of these programmes was a week-long residential activity and employability weeks held at the Pinkery Resource Centre on Exmoor. 13 care leavers took part and completed a number of challenges whilst also learning new skills and meeting employers. All 13 were more 'work ready' upon completion of the week long trip. In time, a number of other programmes are planned such as a trade 'taster' week whereby the young people are given day-long opportunities to experience mechanics, painting and decoration, carpentry, plumbing and electronics to spark an interest before being signposted to relevant future opportunities.

Case Studies – Below are some comments from an apprentice and a manager about supporting young people into work:

“I have thoroughly enjoyed learning on the job here at Somerset County Council. The training and support I have received has been above and beyond anything I could’ve wished for when starting this apprenticeship. My team has all voluntarily offered to help me with tasks and challenges over the duration of my apprenticeship.

I feel I have hugely benefitted from my Business Administration apprenticeship, as I know that everything I have learnt over the past 12 months and continue to learn, I will use on a frequent basis in my business career. I would highly recommend this path to others as I know the opportunities that will come from this are endless”

“The Steps to Success programme worked with young people through the leaving care service who might be feeling stuck, down or worried about work and learning.

The programme used some introduction group work sessions and activity to highlight the benefits of taking part, the group attending the first session recognised that all would benefit from gaining personal confidence; that this could be achieved by the challenge of taking part and trying activities that pushed their limits of experience and basking in the glory of doing so.

Initial sessions focussed on preparation and goal setting sessions with team building activity at Bridgwater YMCA

Then meeting up for 5 days away in Exmoor National Park at Pinkery Activity Centre.

Whilst there we made use of the outdoor environment to ‘get away’ from electronic distractions (there was no internet or phone signal at the base) so young people could focus on the local environment, including visit to the Exmoor National Park workshop, walks taking in eth flora and fauna. Wild cooking and local craft sessions, completing some needle felting. The group also challenged themselves with activities such as low ropes team challenge, mountain biking and the ancient skill of archery.

Many of the young people have come back with a focus on future goals, including seeking employment, but also of better management of their emotional health and well-being”

Disability

County Profile - Data from the census 2011 tells us that 18.8% of the population of Somerset said they had a long-term condition or disability.

Almost 12.7% of them were aged 16-64. The proportion is on a par with both regional and national averages.

SCC Profile

- The percentage of top 5% earners declaring a disability was 3.37% compared with 3.78% in 2017.
- The percentage of employees declaring a disability remains the same with 7.58% declaring a disability.

In 2016 we introduced an annual prompt for staff to update the data we hold on them in order to capture more accurate information. This year's figures continue to indicate that this has improved the accuracy of our data and our expectation that this figure will increase year on year as people become more comfortable with recording their information. It should be noted that this declaration is not mandatory and where a member of staff does not require additional support they may not feel the need to declare.

Recruitment (see appendix 3 for full data)

Applicants who declined to declare whether they identified as having a disability or not has doubled when compared to 2016/17. This could indicate that candidates feel less comfortable declaring a disability when applying for jobs with the Council than they had previously. This may have been influenced by reports of the Council's current financial position and the change from the Two Tick Scheme to the Disability Confident Scheme. This will require further investigation and will form an action of this report.

Applicants who declared a disability were again more successful in being short listed, in line with expectations under the Disability Confident Scheme.

The percentage of applicants with a disability who were then appointed is broadly in line with all other applicants appointed.

Training

The number of employees attending training mirrors that of the workforce at large. All training is run in accessible venues and we ask applicants when booking on training if they need adjustments to assist them.

Reasonable Adjustments

As an employer we actively seek to provide reasonable adjustments for employees with disabilities in order to enable them to carry out their role. Such adjustments are identified through a range of mechanisms including the government's Access to Work Scheme, Occupational Health and Health and Safety assessments. Each case is individual and the types of adjustments the Council puts in place vary significantly according to need.

Case Study:

As a Team Manager at SCC I have seen and experienced first-hand the impact Mental Health has on individuals and those around them, as well as coming to terms with my own limitations and learning how to better manage my own mental health. This is why any investment in mental health by employers is vital to help promote a healthy workforce.

Over the last 18 months I have been supporting a number of my team as they have been dealing with various mental health issues. For a small team we have had an unprecedented number of staff that have required support, from myself and health professionals. I have given up a lot of my time and energy to these individuals, as well as encouraging them to seek the help they require from people more equipped to deal with their situations. As a manager I have seen the impact mental health has on individuals and those around them who are often forgotten. The time it takes to support individuals can sometimes be overwhelming and all consuming, leaving little time for anyone else. My own personal mental health has without a doubt suffered, resulting in a long absence from work.

I have learnt a lot about myself and how I need to become more resilient, more self-aware and most importantly how maintaining good mental health is important for everyone, including employers. The resources that SCC are investing in Mental Health are so valuable, however I believe that Managers need to be more aware of these resources and how they can spot the early signs of someone struggling.

I personally felt a huge responsibility for my team and helping them to get better, this was wrong I should have asked for more support and when I finally did it was too late. I have been lucky as I have a good relationship with HR, who have helped me to see I needed help and were very supportive and informative when I needed it most.

I am now healthier than I have been for a long time, by putting myself first I am actually better able to help my team. I am signposting people to some of the resources we have at SCC, such as Care First and the Mental Health Ambassadors. I will be taking part in and promoting on my floor the upcoming Time to Talk day on 7th February, as I know first-hand how important it is to highlight the importance of Good Mental Health.

Advanced DSE Assessments – to support employees with medical conditions.

We have a number of individuals fully trained to carry out advanced DSE assessments which continues to improve financial efficiencies as well as improving timescales in offering employees this support. In 2017/18 we have completed over 50 assessments which has saved the Council over £12000.

Mental Health Awareness Sessions

We continue to offer specific workshops covering reasonable adjustments in addition to a Mental Health Awareness course which is open to all staff and delivered on demand. The Council involves both, internal and external equality and diversity specialists in key projects relating to office space, work premises and their use to ensure accessibility for all

Reuse of Equipment

The provision of reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 often involves the need to procure specialist equipment such as ergonomic chairs, keyboards and specialist software. Whilst the Council receives part funding for some items through the government's Access to Work Scheme it is still responsible for a significant financial contribution. In order to maximize efficiencies and significantly reduce cost, whilst ensuring the need of employees with disabilities requiring equipment is met, the Council continues to ensure equipment is stored centrally and reused wherever possible. The Council is currently considering ways of furthering efficiencies in this area by working in partnership with our District Councils and others organisations to ensure equipment is reused wherever appropriate and possible.

Donation of Equipment

There are occasions when we are unable to reuse certain pieces of equipment or furniture. When this is the case we donate the equipment to the voluntary sector ensuring it can benefit somebody else.



Disability Confident

<https://www.gov.uk/recruitment-disabled-people/encouraging-applications>

The Council became a Disability Confident level two employer in September 2016.

The Disability Confident Scheme was introduced by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and replaces the Two Tick scheme which the Council had been awarded for many years. The Council is continuing to look at working towards and achieving a level three under the scheme in 2019/20. The Council is linking with both DWP and other Disability Confident employers within the County to support this.

Case Study –

“Looking after accessibility requirements and matching these with technology and our work environment requires my staff to look at each case on an individual basis and assess as such. We recognise the importance of making sure all solutions are fit for purpose and when installing software and working with the individuals, we ensure they are looked after and feel empowered to do their jobs for SCC.

Meeting many members of the service and working under pressure all Managers in my department are encouraged to support Mental Health with a few having qualified as Mental Health First Aiders. Those that have not qualified use the Mental Health Ambassadors working within our department to support and help them with the many varied conversations they may need to have with staff. Staff have demonstrated they are able to talk if they have issues, not only within their teams but also with myself whenever needed. Looking after the staff is vital at a time of need and the loyalty and service they provide in return has been well worth the time invested in them”



Mindful Employer

The Council has recently signed up to the Mindful Employer Charter as we are committed to further improving our support for mental health within the workplace. Details of the full charter can be found here:

<http://www.mindfulemployer.net/charter/>

Race

County Profile

- At the time of the 2011 Census there were 28,414 Somerset residents whose ethnicity was not White British, equating to 5.4% of the County's overall population
- 'White Other' relates to people who are White and not 'British', 'Irish' or 'Gypsy or Irish Traveller' and is the second largest ethnic group in Somerset, after 'White British' representing 2.8% of the population.
- Polish is the most common 'non-UK' ethnicity in all Somerset's districts, and Polish-born residents now account for 1% of Somerset's overall population. There are significant pockets of residents in parts of Shepton Mallet, Yeovil, Minehead, Taunton and Bridgwater.
- The size of the Portuguese population in Somerset has also increased markedly in the last ten years. There are now notable groupings of Portuguese residents in areas of Chard and Shepton Mallet.

The information on the Polish and Portuguese communities in Somerset mirrors trends with the rest of the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities in Somerset. Whilst the numbers of residents are quite low they are clustered together, predominately in the large towns.

SCC Profile (see Appendix 4 for full data)

- The percentage of employees from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities including White Other is 5.82%, an increase on 2017 which was 5.5%.
- The percentage of employees from BME communities excluding White Other is 2.14%, a slight decrease on 2017 which was 2.2%
- The percentage of top 5% earners who identify as BME is 0.51%, an increase compared to 0% in 2017.

Whilst the data shows that BME representation in the workforce as a whole has slightly increased the overall BME numbers are still relatively small therefore a slight change can have a disproportionate impact on the statistics.

Due to the low numbers of figures there is little additional information that can be gleaned from them. However, the current increasing BME employee figures are more reflective of the current ethnic profile of Somerset.

Recruitment

The BME sample size is small and therefore it is difficult to draw any significant conclusions. However, the following can be said:

- Candidates who described themselves as White Other or Black were the most successful in terms of being shortlisted and appointed within the recruitment process.
- Candidates who described themselves as Mixed and Asian were the least successful in terms of being appointed within the recruitment process.

Training

The information available for those taking up training mirrors that of the workforce.

Sexual Orientation

Community Profile

Sexual orientation, along with sex, is not currently measured by the census and there is therefore very little data available regarding the size and profile of the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) population. Some data is however available from national surveys.

One such survey was the Integrated Household Survey conducted by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) in 2014. 1.6% of those surveyed described their sexual identity as gay, lesbian or bisexual. It is however widely accepted that this figure is very likely to be an underestimation due to respondents not feeling able to or choosing not to disclose their sexuality.

SCC Profile

Asking questions about sexual orientation is part of our workforce self-reporting. The current data remains too small to report or draw any meaningful conclusions from.

For the purposes of assessing the impact of the Civil Partnership Act 2004 the Department for Trade and Industry made an assumption that 5% of the adult British population was lesbian, gay, or bisexual. If applied to the Somerset population, this would equate to around 22,000 adults in Somerset and 5% of the Council's workforce.

Recruitment (see appendix 5 for full data)

- The percentage of applicants who described themselves as LGB increased to 2.4% compared with 1.85% in 2017.
- The percentage of applicants who described themselves as heterosexual increased to 69% compared with 56.25% in 2017.
- The percentage of applicants whom did not declare their sexual orientation significantly decreased to 24.8% compared with 41.9% in 2017.

Training

We do not currently collate this information for training purposes.

Gender Reassignment

Community Profile

Whilst it is widely acknowledged that people going through the gender reassignment process is increasing, there is little statistical data to support this.

SCC Profile

Our data follows that of the national picture in that whilst the organisation is aware that we have employees either going through or having gone through the gender reassignment process, this is not evidenced in the data recorded on our employees.

Our employee data continues to be too small to draw any significant conclusion from.

Recruitment

The information that we have in this section is too small to report or draw any meaningful conclusion from.

Training

We do not currently ask members of staff specifically if they have been or are going through the gender reassignment process when they book on a training course.

Recent Successes

Unisex Toilet

The Council continues to work through a programme of rationalising the properties it holds. This is in partnership with other public bodies in Somerset. Where buildings are being remodelled to make these spaces modern and usable unisex toilets have also been introduced. This has been done to reduce the instances where people have to declare their gender and the possibility for challenge. So far this has worked very successfully.

Manager Support

Support and guidance is actively given to any employee identifying themselves as transgender. This support ranges from practical support such as how and where personal details need to be changed as well as emotional support. Each case and support provided is dealt with individually and with guidance from the employee involved.

Pregnancy and Maternity

SCC Staff Benefits

Wyvern Nurseries Ltd has been commissioned to offer workplace nursery provision to employees. Wyvern Nursery Ltd at Bishops Hull (Taunton), Wellsprings (Taunton), The Hollies Children's Centre (Taunton), Frome Community College, Victoria Park Children's Centre (Bridgwater) and, The Levels Children's Centre (Langport), provide care for children aged between 3 months and school age for all Council employees, subject to availability. Places are available for the over 2's at Littleoaks Nursery.

The salary sacrifice child care voucher scheme will close to new entrants in the Autumn of 2018. Details of the Government's replacement scheme, Tax Free Childcare can be found [HERE](#).

The Council has a staff benefits scheme 'My Staff Shop' which provides discounts at many high street names, local offers, reduced price cinema tickets and days out, financial products, access to the Council's cycle to work scheme, other salary sacrifice benefits and other benefits that could save employees money.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Somerset County Council does not currently collate data from employees or external applicants regarding marriage and civil partnership.

The Council is not currently looking to change this as it is felt that no value would be gained in doing so. The Council will review this annually when producing this report, and, if and when it becomes necessary will look to collate this data. If relevant it will also review policy decisions and staff benefits to meet identified need.

Religion and Belief

Community Profile

- In line with the national trend, the proportion of Somerset people saying they were Christian has dropped sharply since 2001, from 76.7% to 64.0%. This is still one of the highest figures in the South West region.
- The proportion claiming no religious affiliation rose from 14.9% to 26.6%. Figures were particularly high in parts of Frome, Taunton and Bridgwater.
- Although overall numbers were relatively small, there were substantial increases in the number of Buddhist, Muslim and Hindu people in Somerset in the last decade.
- Based on 'write-in' responses, there are 1,147 followers of Paganism, more than the combined total of those of Hindu, Sikh and Jewish faith.
- Mendip had the fourth highest proportion of the population affiliated to one of the other religions of any Local Authority in England and Wales. It was number one for Paganism (0.4% of the population) as well as Mixed Religion, Shamanism and the Druid religion.

SCC Profile

Asking questions about religion and belief is now part of our workforce self-reporting. The current data is very small, and no meaningful conclusions can be drawn. Employees are now encouraged to review and update their equalities information on an annual basis, so it is hoped that this will result in more meaningful data that we will be able to report on in the future.

Recruitment (see appendix 6 for full data)

- 31.44% declared not having a religion or belief
- 37.65% declared themselves as Christian.
- Applicants declaring a religion or belief other than Christian make up 2.91%

Training

We do not currently ask employees specifically about Religion and Belief when they book on a training course. With the introduction of an online training tool we can now connect this information with their employee profile. This will mean we can collate this information without having to ask for it again.

Recent Successes

Chaplaincy Service

The County Hall Chaplain is available to all employees to offer support in dealing with personal and social needs while at work. The service is free, confidential, impartial and non-judgemental.

The Quiet Room

The Quiet Room is a space designated for prayer, relaxation and reflection for all employees. Without advocating or endorsing any particular religion or belief system, the Quiet Room provides a dedicated, comfortable space to enable employees to do this during the workday. The Council encourages managers to support reasonable

use of the Quiet Room subject to business needs. The room will need to be relocated in 2018 as part of maintenance work.

Religious Observance

The Council has a policy that supports members of staff to observe key religious events. This is done through agreement with their Manager on a case by case basis and dependent on business need.

Rurality

Somerset is a predominantly rural county with around 48% of the population classified as 'rural' and 52% as 'urban'. Rural Somerset has an older population demographic, particularly in respect of people aged 45 and over. Linked to this, a higher proportion of rural residents provide unpaid care to friends or relatives.

The Council is involved and leads on a number of initiatives around rural economic regeneration and rural transport links. The Council operates a car share scheme. Further information can be found here:

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/policies-and-plans/strategies/rural-economic-regeneration/>

<http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/profile-of-rural-somerset-from-the-2011-census.html>

The Council does not collate specific data regarding employees and reality.

Carers

The Council does not collate specific data regarding employees with caring responsibilities. The Council does however recognise that it has a number of employees who are also carers and has a number of supportive policies in order to meet the needs of these employees.

The Council also recognises that carers of dependants with a disability are fully covered by the Equality Act 2010 under disability.

Military Status

Somerset has a sizeable population of military personnel with a number of units based in the County and is signed up to the Somerset Armed Forces Covenant (SAFC). Further detail can be found here:

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/policies-and-plans/schemes-and-initiatives/somerset-armed-forces-community-covenant/>

The Council does not collate data regarding employees who are ex-military.

Low Income

Whilst Somerset has a higher employment rate than the UK overall (78.5% compared to 72.6%) and higher levels of self-employment than the UK (17.5% compared to 14.7%) average earnings in Somerset are consistently lower than the overall UK level.

The Council's lowest pay rate equates to £8.50 which is 67p above the national living wage.

National requirements for apprentices are that they are paid a minimum of £3.70 per hour.

The Council pays national minimum wage for age which is higher than the national requirement for apprentices. The lowest national minimum wage (under 18 rate) is £4.20 for apprentices at level 2 and 3. Higher level apprentices are paid more.

Redundancies

In 2017/18 there were a total of 75 redundancies (see appendix 7 for full data).

Summary of Redundancy Data

- The percentage of men that have been made/taken redundancy is in line with the percentage of men in the overall workforce profile.
- The data showed no equality concerns.

Monitoring of Internal Procedures 2017/2018

This year we have continued to monitor cases supported by HR on an informal basis (for example where a complaint was made but informal action e.g. mediation or resetting of expectations was taken to resolve the issue) as well as formal ones where warnings may have been an outcome.

Please note all data excludes schools.

Dismissals

There were 6 dismissals during 2017/18. Due to this relatively small number further data will not be published in order to protect the individuals' identity.

Grievance Procedures

There were 2 formal grievances during 2017/18. Due to this small number further data will not be published in order to protect the individuals' identity.

Disciplinary/Performance

The data shows there were 11 formal cases in 2017/18.

All equality data has been thoroughly examined to ensure there was no bias in relation to matters of equality. No bias was found.

Sickness Absence

The data shows there were 3 formal cases on 2017/18.

All equality data has been thoroughly examined to ensure there was no bias in relation to matters of equality. No bias was found.

Internal Procedures Summary

- There was no evidence of disciplinary or dismissal cases being linked to Disability, Race or Age. No cases linked to fraud and corruption. One case was linked to sex discrimination. Four cases were linked to fraud.
- For Disciplinary/Individual Performance/Fairness and Dignity/Sickness Absence and Dismissal cases there was no other evidence/trends found that highlighted equalities concerns.

Supportive Policies and Practice

The Council continues to carry out Equality Impact Assessments for all new employment policies or where a significant change is being made.

Redeployment

One of the aims of the redeployment policy is to support and identify new roles for employees who are no longer able to carry on in their current role because of disability.

This year we have developed a redeployment opportunities site. All employees can see the jobs available, but only those who are eligible can access the roles that are included on it. The changes have meant that employees can instantly see whether a role is something that interests them and that they have the appropriate skills for. This means that there is greater transparency and more opportunity for self-selection. We have successfully redeployed a number of employees with disabilities in the past year under this policy.

The Council has a number of supportive policies, guidance and schemes particularly in relation to the following areas:

Attendance and Leave

Family

Leavers

Ways of Working

Equalities

Health, Safety and Wellbeing

Starters and Movers

Consultation

Equality Network

The Council is currently in the process of working with Mendip District Council to set up a joint Employee Equality Network. Should this be successful the plan will be to open this up to other local businesses, both in the public and private sector. It is hoped that this will lead to similar joint Employee Equality Network groups being set up in other district areas. The Council is also looking to relaunch a number of specific employee equality groups using an online platform. This is an equality objective that all local authorities in Somerset have signed up to.

Trade Union Consultation

The Council works closely with and consults regularly with recognised trade unions on employment policies, practice and equalities.

Staff Survey

The Council carries out three short surveys annually all of which include questions around equality and diversity. All responses are confidential and collated as a whole and by service area. Feedback from the equality based questions is reviewed by internal equality specialists to identify any trends and inform any necessary actions.

Projects and Initiatives

The Council actively embeds equalities within the work we do including all project work. Wherever appropriate the Council ensures that Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are carried out and that these remain working documents for the duration of the project. Below are some examples of projects that the HR and OD teams have been involved in from an equality perspective over the past year.

Working Well Programme



WORKINGWELL

Working Well is a programme to support the health and wellbeing of Somerset County Council employees. Through Working Well, we want to make sure employees are aware of the help that is available to support their wellbeing at work.

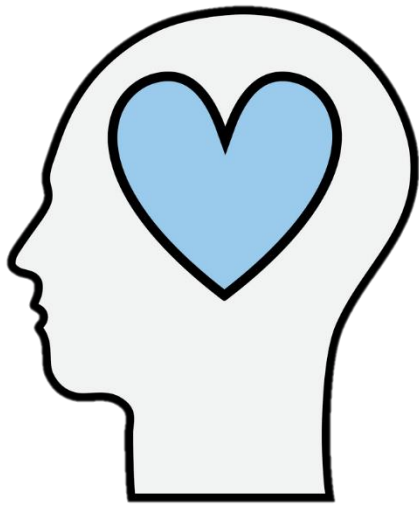
The programme was set up because we all know that when you're feeling well, you're working well, so it's something that's good for individuals, the Council as a whole and Somerset.

During the past year the Working Well network groups, Working Well Champions and the Mental Wellbeing Ambassadors, have in addition to their main job role, promoted wellbeing within the Council.

The Champions have led the way promoting healthy lifestyle choices and the 5 ways of wellbeing, raising awareness through a number of events including the fifth Annual Rounders Competition.

During National Stroke Awareness month, the Champions arranged for the Stroke Association to offer free blood pressure tests for staff across the County.

Following the opening of a Wellbeing Zone in Taunton Library, employees were invited to learn more about wellbeing by visiting the library with Working Well Champions on hand to answer questions.



May 2017 saw the launch of our Mental Health Ambassador Initiative. The subject of good mental health, and removing the stigma associated with poor mental health, has been receiving a lot of media attention recently. But it is always a high priority for the Council.

Supporting good mental health in the workplace is essential because we know that anxiety and stress is one of the primary reasons for sickness among employees. The Mental Health Ambassador initiative is being launched to:

- support those experiencing mental health distress;
- encourage self and /or professional help as appropriate;
- work to remove the reluctance of discussing mental health issues; and eliminate the stigma associated with mental health as this may deter people from seeking help.

The Council have trained 23 Ambassadors who are able to undertake:



- Signposting for people needing support – plus for their managers, friends and family.
- Promoting the importance of good relationships and mental health as part of a whole-workplace approach to mental health.
- Provide knowledge about different types of mental health problems and support services available.
- Provide an initial response to someone experiencing a mental health problem.
- Active, non-judgmental listening and supportive conversations; making time to ask others how they are.

For Time to Talk Day on 1 February 2018, Working Well organised a drop-in session, an informal event designed to give staff a chance to meet some Working Well Champions and Mental Health Ambassadors and for all of us to be more open about mental health. Staff were also encouraged to take part in a quiz - How much do you know about mental health? Take the Time for Change quiz here: <https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/mental-health-quiz>

The Mental Wellbeing Ambassadors have remained steady network group with 21 members, who although primarily based at County Hall work across County. They continue to have an important role promoting positive mental wellbeing by challenging the stigma associated with mental ill health and offering a 'listening ear' to staff.

Yammer too has been a useful communication method for Working Well with almost 240 members and over 1,200 non-members accessing the Working Well site.

It also enabled a poll to be undertaken in respect of installing new workplace showers to encourage staff who want to exercise before or after work or during their lunch breaks.

Comments from Champions and Ambassadors:

“I would like to formally record my appreciation for the enthusiastic and effective support provided by the Mental Health Ambassadors. The feedback has been very positive and staff are genuinely supportive of a more open acceptance of mental health issues, and how they can obtain help to address them without incurring either stigma or embarrassment”

“A manager asked to see an ambassador because they couldn’t work out why they were struggling to concentrate at work and feeling down.

By using the feelings wheel and working back through the negative words that emerged they explored the change options available to the person and this helped them feel in control and come up with a plan. After 3 sessions the individual felt in control and was working more productively as they had taken control of their private life”

“An individual asked to talk to an ambassador because they were struggling to concentrate at work. The individual tearfully revealed they had a child at university who was struggling and had made comments as to whether they could continue with life. The concern was the child might take their own life.

The ambassador supported the individual with tissues and provided booklets from MIND about male mental health together with a list of helplines and websites for information. Together they put together an action plan of how the individual might approach and support their child in seeking professional help. Having a plan, the individual felt far more in control and was able to continue working that day.

The individual later contacted the ambassador saying they were reading the booklets and how helpful the conversation had been. We agreed to catch up again when they were able to share how things were going”

“A young employee was struggling at work, often arriving late, experiencing some performance issues and generally not meeting the expectations of the manager.

An ambassador & the employee discussed how things were going at work and home and how work life balance can sometimes affect the individual’s ability to cope.

It was also apparent that friends were not a positive influence, and this too was having a detrimental effect at work.

They talked about having choices and how these choices can lead us down a good path or a bad path. The young person became very tearful and explained what was happening at home. They discussed how things could be changed slowly to get things in a better place and made an action plan.

The young person felt more in control of the situation which has had a major impact on their work and wellbeing. The ambassador explained to the young person they could have a coffee and a chat if things started to deteriorate again”

“Mental Well-being Ambassadors can provide a reassuring ‘listening ear’ to individuals as well as sign posting to the relevant area of expertise depending on their needs. I/we take great pride in the work that we do and I myself am extremely passionate about helping and supporting others through difficult and challenging times, where even a small change in the way you think or feel can have a huge impact on your mental well-being. My personal experience of 1-2-1 support has been really rewarding and I would highly recommend it to anyone who is thinking of either becoming an ambassador or requires the support from one of our friendly and approachable team members”

“I have been employed by Somerset County Council for 15 years and have had a diagnosis of Clinical Depression and Anxiety for all of this time. I have always been open on applications and at interviews about my mental health, and although this has always made me nervous disclosing it, it has never been a problem with those interviewing me; I have always been given the opportunity just to settle myself in and take a break if necessary. The support from the managers I have worked for has been good, and in some cases exceptional, but this has only been made possible because of my openness about my mental health. Somerset County Council are working very hard at breaking the stigma attached to mental health and I have had the privilege to share my personal story with staff on two occasions over the past year. It was challenging doing this but I know that I have been able to encourage staff to be more open if their mental wellbeing is low and they are struggling. “

Matt Jackson.

Partnership Working

The Council works in partnership with a number of organisations in relation to matters of equality and diversity and employment. We work with public, private and voluntary sectors to raise expectations and to improve the lives of our staff and our residents. We can secure better outcomes through working together with individuals, communities and partner organisations.

Comments from a Supported Employment Coordinator from Discovery, an organisation providing support to people with Learning Disabilities:

In the role as Supported Employment Coordinators we are involved and committed to working with many organisations and employers across Somerset, one of which is SCC. In order to support people with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism it is vital to have partners willing to work together to ensure that we achieve the best possible outcomes for the people we support.

I am currently supporting a young gentleman at SCC who is nearing completion of his apprenticeship in the Transport Department and is now seeking paid employment. We have updated his CV and are now applying for employment opportunities in a variety of roles which, without the support and communication from his colleagues in the transport department of SCC, allowing both him and me the time necessary to work on finding and securing his next employment opportunity this would be much more difficult.

Comments from Michael Munt, Employment Service Manager, Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust:

In 2006 Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust's Employment Support Service was commissioned to provide Job Search and Job Retention Services to those using specialist mental health services and their carers across the county.

Historically people referred into mental health services lost their employment at an alarming rate and when they expressed a desire to find paid work they were frequently directed towards voluntary work and training, missing out on all the health and social benefits of high quality paid employment. The impact on employment for those with caring responsibilities was also long recognised but under addressed.

With a focus exclusively on paid work the service was one of the first to employ the Individual Placement and Support Model (IPS), an evidence based approach to finding paid work with individuals with severe and enduring mental health needs. We became a founder member of The Centre for Mental Health's Centres of Excellence programme. More recently additional funding has become available for IPS services to double their reach and Somerset Partnership was successful in bidding to fund a further six workers across the county to provide these services.

Our job retention services are able to become involved with anyone using Somerset Partnership's services who feels their employment maybe becoming at risk due to their health condition. Working with employers, Occupational Health Advisors, Trades Unions and others we are able to advise and guide these individuals through very difficult periods in their lives including by helping them understand the processes they are involved in, providing liaison directly between their health care providers and employers and formulating supportive, sustainable return to work plans as well as triggering increased psychological support when needed.

Our carer's support service provides both Job Retention and Job Search services and is jointly commissioned with Somerset County Council.

As a major employer and partner in delivering services we have always enjoyed a very strong relationship with Somerset County Council, working alongside management and Human Resources to support dozens of individuals to retain their employment. We have also always valued the support available through Somerset County Council in enabling individuals with disabilities to obtain paid work within the organisation. We were very pleased when Somerset County Council were able to play a key role in supporting our recent successful bid to expand our service.

If you would like further information on our services or feel they would be of help to you or someone you know, please contact the Employment Support Service manager, Michael Munt at michael.munt@sompar.nhs.uk

New way to engage with the voluntary sector

A new website has been launched to improve engagement and develop better working partnerships between the voluntary and public sectors. The site offers opportunities for improved communication, collaborative working and will support the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE) to share news stories, case studies and good practice with other key county-wide public and private sector agencies.

If you have information that you think would be useful to include on this website, for example, consultations and engagement exercises or commissioning intentions, email communities@somerset.gov.uk. Or, for more information, visit www.somersetvcse.org.uk or follow them on twitter: @SomersetVCSE

Training

The Learning Centre

The Learning Centre is an e-learning platform introduced into the Council in 2014. The site currently hosts four generic Equality and Diversity modules that are accessible to all SCC employees. In addition, there are a number of other modules that are more specific according to the diverse needs of employees, for example, on Mental Health Awareness, Learning Disability Awareness, A Guide to Reasonable Adjustments, Communicating with Deaf Customers, and Autism and Dementia Awareness. New courses introduced in 2018 included Trans Awareness and Modern Slavery. These all contribute to extending the knowledge of staff employees around equality and diversity. The Council's new starter induction includes a mandatory module on the Learning Centre which includes equality and diversity information and signposts for further learning as outlined above. This learning platform has allowed us to be more flexible in the training we offer and enables broader access than when we only hosted one day face to face course. The Council still offers face to face courses and briefings where appropriate.

Equality and Diversity Training

As part of the Council's statutory duty to make sure all our employees understand their requirements under the Equality Act 2010 we provide mandatory face to face training. We deliver the training at venues throughout the County to ensure all employees are able to attend. The training provides employees with a basic understanding of equality legislation and what it could mean in their job. The sessions are interactive and provide opportunities to ask questions and understand the legislation.

Sex Data

Recruitment Data

2017/18 Application by Sex	Number of Applicants	% Shortlisted	% Appointed from shortlisted	% Appointed from applicants
Female	1330	58.8%	37.5%	22%
Male	589	50.8%	37.8%	19.2%
Not stated	536	34.3%	12.5%	9.1%
Total	2455	51.5%	36%	18.5%

2016/17 Application by Sex	Number of Applicants	% Shortlisted	% Appointed from shortlisted	% Appointed from applicants
Female	1558	75.8%	47.9%	18.3%
Male	702	86.5%	39.2%	5.72%
Not stated	238	54.2%	38.8%	21%
Total	2498	57.9%	44.9%	26%

Age Data

Age	No. of Employees March 2017	No. of Employees March 2018
16-25	6.57%	4.89%
26-35	16.77%	18.56%
36-45	22.48%	22.83%
46-55	29.44%	29.63%
56-65	22.25%	21.60%
65+	2.49%	2.49%

Recruitment Data

2017/18 Application by Age	Number of Applicants	% Shortlisted	% Appointed from shortlisted	% Appointed from applicants
16-24	199	55.8%	38.7%	21.6%
25-35	473	59.8%	45.9%	27.5%
36-45	419	55.6%	34.3%	19%
46-55	525	56.9%	32.7%	18.7%
56-65	215	49.8%	29%	14.4%
Over 65	14	57.1%	25%	14.3%
Declined to Specify	610	38.7%	25.4%	9.8%
Grand Total	2455	51.5%	36%	18.5%

Appendix 2

2016/17 Application by Age	Number of Applicants	% Shortlisted	% Appointed from shortlisted	% Appointed from applicants
16-24	284	63.7%	13.3%	8.5%
25-35	604	56.8%	45.2%	25.7%
36-45	493	59.4%	46.4%	27.6%
46-55	561	55.4%	37%	20.5%
56-65	273	58.2%	22.5%	25.6%
Over 65	19	52.6%	60%	31.6%
Declined to Specify	282	59.6%	37.5%	22.3%
Grand Total	2498	57.9%	44.9%	26%

Training

Age	% attended training
16-24	7%
25-35	19%
36-45	26%
46-55	29%
56=65	18%
66+	1%

Disability Data Recruitment Data

2017/18 Application by Disability	Number of Applicants	% Shortlisted	% Appointed from shortlisted	% Appointed from applicants
Yes	156	69.9%	26.6%	18.6%
No	1723	55.1%	37.7%	20.7%
Declined etc.	576	35.9%	28%	10.1%
Grand Total	2455	51.5%	36%	18.5%

2016/17 Application by Disability	Number of Applicants	% Shortlisted	% Appointed from shortlisted	% Appointed from applicants
Yes	183	61.7%	37.1%	22.9%
No	2046	58.3%	45.9%	26.8%
Declined etc.	260	50.8%	45.5%	23%
Grand Total	2498	57.9%	44.9%	26%

Appendix 4

Race Data

Ethnic Groups	2017	2018
White	87.8%	88.85%
Asian	0.55%	0.53%
Black	0.73%	0.59%
Mixed	0.8%	0.96%
Other	0.11%	0.06%
White other	3.7%	3.68%
Not assigned	2.2%	0.44%
Prefer not to say	4.11%	4.89%

Recruitment Data

2017/18 Application by Race	Number of Applicants	% Shortlisted	% Appointed from shortlisted	% Appointed from applicants
White	1749	57%	36.8%	21%
Asian	29	51.7%	20%	10.3%
Black	25	56%	28.6%	16%
Mixed	18	50%	22.2%	11.1%
White other	68	48.5%	45.5%	22%
Other	3	0%	0%	0%
Unspecified etc.	563	35%	26.9%	9.4%
Total	2455	51.5%	36%	18.5%

Appendix 4

2016/17 Application by Race	Number of Applicants	% Shortlisted	% Appointed from shortlisted	% Appointed from applicants
White British	2035	59%	45.7%	26.9%
Asian	23	47.8%	63.6%	30.4%
Black	21	66.7%	21.4%	14.3%
Mixed	29	48.3%	42.9%	20.7%
White other	113	50.4%	43.9%	22.1%
Other	9	44.4%	75%	33.3%
Unspecified etc.	268	59.7%	35%	20.9%
Total	2498	57.9%	44.9%	26%

Sexual Orientation Recruitment Data

Application by Sexual Orientation 2017/2018	Number of Applicants	% Shortlisted	% Appointed from Shortlisted	% Appointed from applicants
Bisexual	22	54.5%	8.3%	4.5%
Gay/Lesbian	36	33.3%	100%	33.3%
Heterosexual	1694	56.8%	37.6%	21.4%
Declined etc.	609	36.9%	29.8%	11%
Grand Total	2455	51.5%	36%	18.5%

Application by Sexual Orientation 2016/2017	No Applicants	% Shortlisted	% Appointed from Shortlisted	% Appointed from applicants
Bisexual	50	56%	42.9%	24%
Gay/Lesbian	44	54.5%	40%	22.7%
Heterosexual	1981	57.8%	41.7%	26.2%
Declined etc.	423	58.9%	43.8%	25.8%
Grand Total	2498	57.9%	44.9%	26%

Religion and Belief Recruitment Data

Religion/Belief	% of applicants 2017/18
Buddhist	0.38%
Christian	37.65%
Hindu	0.03%
Jewish	0.15%
Muslim	0.15%
Sikh	0.06%
Any Other Religion	2.11%
Shi'a Muslim	0.03%
No Religion	31.44%
Declined etc.	28.01%

Redundancy Data

In 2017/18 there were a total of 75 redundancies.

	Profile of redundancies made (compulsory & voluntary)							
Gender	Female		Male		Not Declared			TOTAL %
2017/18	72%		28%		0			100%
Ethnic Group	White British		BME		Not Declared			
2017/18	88%		2.67%		9.3%			100%
Disability	No		Yes		Not Declared			
2017/18	74.7%		79.3%		16%			100%
Age	Aged 16-25	Aged 26-35	Aged 36-45	Aged 46-55	Aged 56-65	Aged 65+	Not Found	
2017/18	0	4%	8%	29.3%	54.7%		0	100%

	Profile of redundancies made (compulsory & voluntary)							
Gender	Female		Male		Not Declared			TOTAL %
2016/17	72.4%		27.6%		0%			100%
Ethnic Group	White British		BME		Not Declared			
2016/17	91.4%		3.7%		4.9%			100%
Disability	No		Yes		Not Declared			
2016/17	54%		4.3%		41.7%			100%
Age	Aged 16-25	Aged 26-35	Aged 36-45	Aged 46-55	Aged 56-65	Aged 65+	Not Found	
2016/17	0%	3.1%	9.8%	33.3%	47.4%	6.3%		100%