

# Public Document Pack



To: Councillor Copland, Convener; Councillor Al-Samarai, Vice Convener; Councillor David Cameron, the Lord Provost; Councillor Steve Delaney, the Depute Provost; and Councillors Boulton, Davidson, McLeod, Thomson and Tissera.

Trade Union Advisers: Doug Haywood and Jacqueline Munro (EIS); Kevin Masson and David Willis (GMB); Jason Currie and 1 vacancy (SSTA); Mark Musk and Alison Robertson (UNISON); Joe Craig and Mishelle Gray (UNITE); Fiona Sales (UCATT) and Rob Stephen and 1 vacancy (VOICE).

Town House,  
ABERDEEN, 15 August 2025

## **STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

The Members of the **STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** are requested to meet in **Committee Room 2 - Town House on MONDAY, 25 AUGUST 2025 at 10.00am**. This is a hybrid meeting and Members may also attend remotely.

The meeting will be webcast and a live stream can be viewed on the Council's website.  
<https://aberdeen.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

JENNI LAWSON  
CHIEF OFFICER – GOVERNANCE

## **B U S I N E S S**

### **NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS**

1.1 There are no items at this time

### **DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT BUSINESS**

2.1 There are no items of exempt business

### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS**

3.1 Members are requested to declare any interests

## **DEPUTATIONS**

4.1 None at this time

## **MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

5.1 Minute of Previous Meeting of 16 June 2025 (Pages 5 - 8)

## **COMMITTEE PLANNER**

6.1 Committee Business Planner (Pages 9 - 12)

## **NOTICES OF MOTION**

7.1 Councillor Macdonald

On 16 April 2025 the Supreme Court judgement in the For Women Scotland v The Scottish Ministers case was delivered. This gave an unequivocal ruling that women's rights are protected in law, as well as highlighting the continued protections for trans people under the Equality Act.

The Supreme Court unanimously agreed that the terms 'man', 'woman' and 'sex' in the Equality Act 2010 refer to biological sex. Holding a Gender Recognition Certificate does not change sex for the purposes of the 2010 Act.

The court ruling makes clear that the law protects women's rights to single-sex spaces and services.

As a consequence, the UK, Welsh and Scottish Governments, regulators and public bodies will now require to review and clarify their policies and guidance.

That Council agrees that in addition to reviewing all Council policies, procedures, guidance and training materials to ensure compliance with the Supreme Court ruling, the Chief Executive Officer should seek assurance from any services run or commissioned by the Council for compliance to the same end.

## 7.2 Councillor Kuznir

1. Notes the Supreme Court decision in *For Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers* [2025] UKSC 16, clarifying legal protections for single-sex spaces.
2. Notes the declarator by Lady Ross in a judicial review brought by parents against Scottish Borders Council, affirming the requirement to provide single-sex toilets in schools.
3. Acknowledges reports of increased incursions into women-only spaces by activists following the *For Women Scotland Ltd* decision, highlighting the need for clear Council guidance on separate or single-sex spaces.
4. Recognises the ongoing work of Officers to update guidance for staff and building managers to ensure compliance with the judgment in *For Women Scotland Ltd*.
5. Further recognises that the Council await updated statutory guidance from both The Equality and Human Rights Commission and The Scottish Government.
6. Instructs the Chief Officer - Corporate Landlord, in consultation with the Chief Officer - People and Citizen Services, to develop a separate or single-sex space policy or policies, in line with statutory guidance, for Aberdeen City Council to ensure the protection of such spaces in Council-owned and operated buildings.
7. Directs the Chief Officer - Corporate Landlord to present the proposed policy/ies to Council or the relevant committee for consideration and approval.
8. Recognises that a similar request was previously rejected by the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee before the aforementioned court decisions on 23 January 2024.
9. Affirms the necessity of this policy/ies, as the current delegation of decision-making on single-sex spaces to individual building managers lacks an overarching framework, potentially exposing the Council to legal risks due to inconsistent decisions across different buildings.

## **REFERRALS FROM COUNCIL, COMMITTEES AND SUB COMMITTEES**

### 8.1 None at this time

## **GENERAL BUSINESS**

- 9.1 Corporate Health & Safety Quarterly Report - April to June 2025 - CORS/25/195 (Pages 13 - 34)
- 9.2 Employee Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2025-2029 - CORS/25/109 (Pages 35 - 62)
- 9.3 Employee Experience Survey 2024/25 - CORS/25/148 (Pages 63 - 112)

9.4 Whistleblowing Policy Review - CORS/25/197 (Pages 113 - 158)

Integrated Impact Assessments related to reports on this agenda can be viewed [here](#)

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Website Address: [www.aberdeencity.gov.uk](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk)

Should you require any further information about this agenda, please contact  
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## STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN, 16 June 2025. Minute of Meeting of the STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor Copland, Convener; Councillor Al-Samarai, Vice-Convener; Councillor David Cameron, the Lord Provost; and Councillors Boulton, Clark, MacGregor (as substitute for Councillor Delaney), McLeod, Thomson and Tissera.

Trade Union Advisers:- Kevin Masson and Neil Watson, GMB; Jim Currie and Alison Robertson, UNISON; and Doug Haywood and Jacqueline Munro, EIS.

The agenda and reports associated with this minute can be located [here](#).

Please note that if any changes are made to this minute at the point of approval, these will be outlined in the subsequent minute and this document will not be retrospectively altered.

## DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS

1. Councillor Thomson made a general statement of transparency by virtue of her membership of UNISON Grampian Health Branch, but did not consider that this required a declaration of interest to be made in respect of any of the items of business.

## MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 21 APRIL 2025

2. The Committee had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 21 April 2025 for approval.

### **The Committee resolved:-**

to approve the minute as a correct record.

## COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLANNER

3. The Committee had before it the business planner as prepared by the Interim Chief Officer – Governance.

### **The Committee resolved:-**

- (i) in relation to item 11 (Staff Travel Plan and Policy), to note that the draft Council Travel Plan had not been considered at the June Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee and would now be presented to the September NZET meeting, and that there was an instruction within that report that the Staff Travel Policy be updated;

## **STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

16 June 2025

- (ii) to note the reasons for delay in relation to items 4 (Family Friendly Policies), 5 (Employee Experience Survey), 8 (2025 Update on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan) and 11 (Staff Travel Plan and Policy); and
- (iii) to otherwise note the planner.

### **CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY - JANUARY TO MARCH 2025 - CORS/25/146**

4. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Corporate Services which provided a summary of statistical health and safety performance information for the 3-month reporting period January to March 2025 to provide the opportunity to monitor compliance with health and safety legislation.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Committee note the report and provide comment on the health, safety policy, performance, trends, and improvements.

**The Committee resolved:-**

- (i) in relation to the charts showing health and safety incident causation, to note that officers would liaise with colleagues in Data Insights to review the colour-coding and the possible inclusion of a key to provide clarity to Members;
- (ii) to request that officers provide some narrative in future reports in relation to causations such as 'medication error' and 'unacceptable behaviour' to give additional clarity to Members; and
- (iii) to otherwise note the report.

### **CITIZEN INTERACTION POLICY - CORS/25/156**

5. With reference to article 6 of the minute of its meeting of 22 April 2024, the Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Corporate Services which sought approval for a new policy combining three closely linked policies, procedures and approaches relating to Zero Tolerance, Violence and Aggression, and Unacceptable Actions. The report advised that this excluded pupil behaviour in schools as this was governed by national policy and guidance.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Committee –

- (a) approve the implementation of the Citizen Interaction Policy and note the accompanying procedure, which together promoted positive citizen engagement, promoted employee and Elected Member safety, and provided clear guidelines for managing challenging citizen interactions;
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services to make the Citizen Interaction Policy and supporting Managing Citizen Interaction Procedures easily accessible to employees, managers and elected members; and

## **STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

16 June 2025

- (c) instruct the Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services to publish the Citizen Interaction Policy, Zero Tolerance Pledge and Managing Citizen Interaction Procedure externally on the Council's website.

**The Committee resolved:-**

- (i) to request that officers notify Members of any customer who had been given a single point of contact, including where to direct them should they then be contacted by that person; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendations.

### **EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH ACTION PLAN ANNUAL PROGRESS UPDATE - CORS/25/149**

6. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Corporate Services which presented an update to the Mental Health Action Plan for 2025, and set out progress and activity undertaken for the period January to December 2024.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Committee –

- (a) note the continuing progress made on the Mental Health Action Plan and the proactive actions taken to address and support positive employee mental health during the last 12 months; and
- (b) approve the updated Mental Health Action Plan for 2025.

**The Committee resolved:-**

- (i) to note that the Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services had undertaken for officers to investigate the peak in psychological issues between July and September 2023 and provide an update to Members outwith the meeting should any specific causation be found;
- (ii) in relation to the pie chart at page 67 of the report, to note that officers would review this for future reports to ascertain if any further detail could be identified in the 'other' section, noting the comments from Members that for example those with disabilities did not seem to be reflected in the chart; and
- (iii) to approve the recommendations.

### **CLUSTER RISK REGISTER AND ASSURANCE MAP - CORS/25/147**

7. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Corporate Services which presented the Assurance Map in accordance with Staff Governance Committee Terms of Reference to provide assurance that workforce related risks were being managed effectively within the People and Citizen Services Cluster.

**The report recommended:-**

**STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

16 June 2025

that the Committee note the assurance map set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

**The Committee resolved:-**

to note the report.

- **COUNCILLOR NEIL COPLAND, Convener**



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	<b>STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLANNER</b> The Business Planner details the reports which have been instructed by the Committee as well as reports which the Functions expect to be submitting for the calendar year.								
2	<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Minute Reference/Committee Decision or Purpose of Report</b>	<b>Update</b>	<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Chief Officer</b>	<b>Directorate</b>	<b>Terms of Reference</b>	<b>Delayed or Recommended for removal or transfer, enter either D, R, or T</b>	<b>Explanation if delayed, removed or transferred</b>
3	<b>25 August 2025</b>								
4	Mortuary Staff Move	To present an update to Committee following completion of the new mortuary at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary	Summer 2025	Lesley Strachan	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.2	D	The mortuary opening has been delayed and is now unlikely to open until end August/beginning of September. Officers consider that a report should wait until the mortuary has been completed and operational for a time, and therefore expect a report to either November 2025 SGC or the first meeting in 2026
5	2025 Update on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan	SGC 13/03/23 - to instruct the Chief Officer – People and Organisational Development to provide an update to Staff Governance Committee at a future meeting of the Committee on any impact this report has on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan as well as any changes, updates or new areas of focus based on the data and analysis  SGC 26/06/23 - to instruct the Chief Officer – People and Organisational Development to report to Staff Governance Committee on progress to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan on an annual basis which will either be as part of Mainstreaming or Progress Report updates or as an independent report in years where there is not a Mainstreaming or Progress Report		Baldeep McGarry	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.6		
6	Employee Experience Survey 2025	To present the results and findings from the survey		Isla Newcombe / Martin Murchie	People & Citizen Services / HDRC	Corporate Services	2.7		
7	Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure	The revised policy was approved at Committee in November 2023 - due for review November 2025	Moved up from November 2025 meeting	Sharon Robb	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	Report Title	Minute Reference/Committee Decision or Purpose of Report	Update	Report Author	Chief Officer	Directorate	Terms of Reference	Delayed or Recommended for removal or transfer, enter either D, R, or T	Explanation if delayed, removed or transferred
2	Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing Policy	To seek approval of the policy		Sharon Robb	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5	D	This report was put out for consultation, however due to the timing of the Committee it was not possible for teaching Unions to provide feedback during the consultation period. For this reason the report is moved by one cycle to allow time for proper input
8	Corporate Health & Safety Quarterly Update	To present the quarterly update		Colin Leaver	Governance	Corporate Services	3.2		
9									
10	3 November 2025								
11	Bairns Hoose	To present an update to Committee		Lesley Strachan	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.2		
12	Corporate Health & Safety Quarterly Update	To present the quarterly update		Colin Leaver	Governance	Corporate Services	3.2		
13	People Policy Data	SGC 26/06/23 - to instruct the Chief Officer - People and Organisational Development to report disciplinary, grievance and dignity and respect at work data to the Staff Governance Committee on an annual basis		Lesley Strachan	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5, 2.7		
14	Leadership and Management Development Update	SGC 03/10/22 - to agree that an annual update on the refreshed approach to leadership and management development be presented to Committee		Sandie Scott	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.4		
15	Managing Substance Misuse Policy	The revised policy was approved at Committee in November 2023 - to be reviewed annually	Report will not be required if there are no changes to be made	Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		
16	Corporate Health & Safety Policy	To present the revised Health & Safety Policy	Report will not be required if there are no changes to be made	Colin Leaver	Governance	Corporate Services	2.5		
17	2026								
18	Volunteers Policy	The revised policy was approved at Committee in January 2025 - due for annual review	Report will not be required if there are no changes to be made	Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		
19	Managing Performance Policy and Procedure	The revised policy was approved at Committee in January 2024 - due for review January 2026	Report will not be required if there are no changes to be made	Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		

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2									
20	Family Friendly Policies	SGC 24/06/24 - to instruct the Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services to report back to Staff Governance Committee in one year's time with updated policies and documentation for approval	Noted at June 2025 meeting that the substantive employee trade union engagement required had not yet completed due to current business demands. Report now expected at first meeting in 2026	Sharon Robb	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		
21	Corporate Health & Safety Quarterly Update	For period to 31 December 2025	April 2026	Colin Leaver	Governance	Corporate Services	3.2		
22	EAS Annual Progress Update Occupational Health and Absence Annual Update	To present an annual report for the EAS/OH & Sickness Absence figures	April 2026	Sharon Robb	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.7		
23	Cluster Risk Register	To present the risk register and assurance maps	June 2026	Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	GD 8.4		
24	Employee Mental Health Action Plan Annual Progress Update	To provide an update in relation to the employee mental health action plan	June 2026	Fiona Lindsay	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	3.2 iii		
25	<b>2027</b>								
26	Flexible Working Policy	The revised policy was approved at Committee in January 2025 - due for review February 2027	Scheduled for review February 2027	Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		
27	Fleet Driver Policy	To seek approval of the policy	Scheduled for review April 2027	Patric Bakhuizen	Operations	City Regeneration and Environment	2.5		
28	<b>REPORTING DATE TO BE CONFIRMED</b>								
29	Employee Code of Conduct	To present an update on the Employee Code of Conduct		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		

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	Report Title	Minute Reference/Committee Decision or Purpose of Report	Update	Report Author	Chief Officer	Directorate	Terms of Reference	Delayed or Recommended for removal or transfer, enter either D, R, or T	Explanation if delayed, removed or transferred
2	Staff Travel Plan & Policy	NZET 27/03/24 - The Committee resolved:- (i)to replace recommendation 2.1 with "instruct the Chief Officers – Strategic Place Planning and People and Citizen Services, in consultation with the Chief Officer-Finance, to set up an internal officer working group to review and refresh the Council's Staff Travel Policy with the emphasis on walking and cycling"; (ii) to instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to update the Council's Travel Plan to align with any proposed changes to the Staff Travel Policy resulting from (i); (iii) to instruct the Chief Officers – Strategic Place Planning and People and Citizen Services to thereafter undertake consultation with Council staff and trade unions on any proposed changes to the Staff Travel Policy and/or the Council Travel Plan; and (iv) to instruct the Chief Officers – Strategic Place Planning and People and Citizen Services, following analysis of the consultation and finalisation of the documents, to report both the updated Staff Travel Policy and Council Travel Plan back to this Committee and / or other relevant committees by Summer 2025 for approval.		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		The draft Council Travel Plan (2025) was due to be presented to Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee on 10 June 2025, and contained an instruction to the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning and Chief Officer - People and Citizen Services to update the Staff Travel Policy and report to the Staff Governance Committee within the next 12 months. Due to the large volume of business on the NZET agenda, this item was deferred to the September NZET meeting and therefore no date can be put against this report for SGC until it has been considered at NZET Committee in September
30									
31	People development policy / guidance	To seek approval of the policy		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Staff Governance Committee
<b>DATE</b>	25 August 2025
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Corporate Health and Safety – April to June 2025
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CORS/25/195
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Andy MacDonald
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Jenni Lawson
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Colin Leaver
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	3.2

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The appendix to this report summarises statistical health and safety performance information for the 3-month reporting period April to June 2025 to provide the Committee with the opportunity to monitor compliance with health and safety legislation.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Note the report and provide comment on the health, safety policy, performance, trends, and improvements.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The appendix to the report contains a dashboard of the statistical information in relation to health and safety activities for the three-month reporting period April to June 2025. The statistical information also contains an analysis of the key figures in each of the incident and near miss sections.

- 3.1.1 The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) places duties on employers, the self-employed and people in control of work premises (the Responsible Person) to report certain serious workplace accidents, occupational diseases and specified dangerous occurrences (near misses) to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). This reporting duty includes incidents which result in an employee being absent from work for 7 days or longer as a result of an injury, which have historically been the main reason for Aberdeen City Council's reports to HSE.

This report addresses the following matters:

- All incidents involving employees and members of the public (serious and minor)
- HSE Reportable Incidents

- Reportable Diseases
- Near Miss Information
- Enforcement Interventions
- Fire Risk Assessment
- Health and Safety Audits
- Compliance Monitoring
- Health and Safety Policies, Procedures and Guidance

### **3.2 Incidents (April to June 2025)**

All incident and near miss information in the appendix to this report has been provided to Cluster level in the appendix. However, within Education incidents have been reported to nursery, primary and secondary school level.

#### **Incident information**

- 3.3** The figures are reported to Cluster level for both employee and third-party incidents. Causation figures are also included within the appendix. There is also now a comparison for each of the three years prior to this reporting period so the Committee has sight of the reporting years through the Covid pandemic. The comparative figures for this year are in a separate chart due to the change of reporting system.
- 3.4** Pages 2 and 6 of the appendix now show the comparison figures for corresponding quarters for injury incidents and near misses.
- 3.5** When an incident is reported, the manager is required to complete an investigation report, and this should be shared with the employee and signed off by both. This investigation report highlights categories of criteria which require to be considered including root cause, actions identified and completion dates.
- 3.6** Page five of the appendix details the breakdown of incident causation within the Education Service, where the largest number of incidents occur. Figures have increased from the corresponding period last year to 363 from 305 the corresponding quarter the year before.
- 3.7** Whilst it is difficult to identify exact reasons for incident increase, it would be reasonable to conclude it is possibly due to an increase in reporting following encouragement from Senior Managers and Trade Unions, a possible increase in the level of incidents or more likely a mix of both.
- 3.8** The trend from the last quarter has again dropped similarly to previous years. This seems to happen every time it is a full quarter without any lengthy school holidays. Anecdotally this could be because the children are better settled and regulated for the 3 months in school.
- 3.9** On page 11 of the appendix, the charts represent incident figures in primary and secondary schools to show whether there was a reduction in reporting during school holiday periods. The charts show that in each of the last two years the incident reporting levels drop at the same time during the year and coincide

with the school holiday periods. This would be as expected as most incidents are pupil behaviour related.

- 3.10** The main categorisation of the incidents is either as 'physical injury and violence', unacceptable behaviour or 'externalising behaviour' and are mainly due to pupil behaviours. There are no differences in the consequences of these incidents to the staff involved in the different categorisations. The choice on where to report the incident should be done following a consultation between the line manager and the affected member of staff.
- 3.11** The support provided by the staff continues to play a vital role in helping children learn to regulate their emotions and behaviours, and to cope with the demands and expectations of the school environment. This consistent, positive, and supportive guidance can help the children understand the rules, boundaries, and consequences of their actions, and to develop skills such as self-control, problem-solving, and empathy. This can continue to lead to a medium to long term reduction in the level of incidents from an individual child, as they become more confident, cooperative, and resilient.

#### **HSE Reportable incidents (April to June 2025)**

- 3.12** The table in the Appendix also shows the number of RIDDOR reportable incidents. During the reporting period between April and June 2025 9 incidents involving an employee required to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive. The vast majority of these continue to be for over 7-day absences.
- 3.13** The corporate health and safety team contact the reporting manager when a RIDDOR incident is reported to HSE to get assurance that the correct causation and remedial actions have been identified and that any identified remedial actions have been implemented.

#### **Incident (reportable employee) frequency rates**

<b>Period – Quarterly</b>	<b>Reportable Incidence rate</b>	<b>Reporting period</b>
Apr - Jun 2025	1.1	2025/26

- 3.14** The above figures are calculated using the formula:

$$\text{Incidence rate} = \frac{\text{RIDDOR injuries per period} \times 1000}{\text{Number of employees}}$$

- 3.15** The figure for the corresponding period last year (Apr - Jun 2024) was 10 RIDDOR reportable incidents and a reportable incident rate of 1.29.

#### **Reportable Diseases**

- 3.16** There were no reportable diseases reported under RIDDOR; which was also the case in the corresponding reporting period last year.

### **Near Miss Information**

- 3.17** Near-miss incidents help to identify potential hazards and mitigation strategies before an injury occurs. Recognising and reporting near-miss incidents can significantly improve employee safety before an incident occurs.
- 3.18** Reporting managers are required to investigate the near miss to identify the root cause and implement any new identified controls, where possible, to reduce the likelihood of any reoccurrence or for any future incident to result in injury. These elements of a health and safety management system are now monitored daily when a manager reports an incident or near miss to ensure that reporting managers have both elements in place.
- 3.19** The figures have reduced slightly to last year's corresponding quarter from 207 to 205 for all areas and within Families and Communities from 195 to 192.
- 3.20** The appendix shows information on the number of near miss figures for this reporting period and again a comparison with the three previous reporting years.
- 3.21** Page eight of the appendix gives a breakdown of near misses within the Families and Community function. As with incidents, the majority are within the Education services. Like incident figures, these are mainly because of distressed behaviours evident in some children with additional support needs. Risk assessments are reviewed after every near miss to consider any actions which can be taken to prevent or reduce the risk of reoccurrence.

### **Administering of Medication**

- 3.22** Within Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership staff are required to administer medication to service users. On occasion errors are made and these are required to be reported both within the corporate incident reporting system and to the Care Inspectorate.
- 3.23** Depending on the type of medication error, staff may seek medical advice and guidance from either the GP or Out of hours services.
- 3.24** If any staff member makes further errors then they are removed from the rota until they have been retrained in the procedures. This includes a period of supervisory observation to ensure the retraining has been effective.
- 3.25** The Service and reps from the Corporate H&S Team will now be meeting on a monthly basis to look at incidents, accidents etc and will be recording/mapping any trends etc .A detailed meeting and action plan will be part of this regular meeting which will allow all relevant data to be captured to ensure the required actions are tracked and implemented.
- 3.26** In addition to this a new system Electronic Medication Administration Record (EMAR) was run as a pilot at Back Hilton Road and this reduced the amount of



medication errors at that location and the Service is now in the planning stages of implementing this system across all remaining in house service.

### **Regulator interventions (HSE / SFRS)**

- 3.27** There are occasions where HSE and Scottish Fire and Rescue Services (SFRS) contact Aberdeen City Council to request further information or ask for action to be taken regarding the way Aberdeen City Council undertake their legal duties.
- 3.28** HSE Chemical division conducted an inspection of Environmental Services depots on the transportation and use of pesticides. There were no issues identified except 2 missing warning signs on a locked door to a restricted access area.
- 3.29** SFRS carried out no audit visits of any ACC (Aberdeen City Council) owned or managed buildings during this reporting period which resulted in action being taken.

### **Fire risk assessments**

- 3.30** Fire risk assessments are completed on a rolling 5-year programme. A total of 27 fire risk assessments were completed during this reporting period. The issues identified are across the range of topics considered in the assessment process. These issues are given a priority level requiring an action by a specified date dependent on the resultant risk. No building is left at risk during this process.
- 3.31** There were 298 identified actions allocated to Managers, these are inserted into the fire risk actions database and monitored to a close. This database is available to all Chief Officers and Service Managers on the managers' portal, which shows live data on open, closed, and overdue actions. Should an action pass the compliance date a reminder is sent to the responsible manager and the Service Manager. They are also taken to the next relevant senior management team meeting to make everyone is aware of the need to close these off.

### **Health and Safety Audits**

- 3.32** Compliance visits have been undertaken on several topics / premises within the ACC estate; Line Managers Health & Safety Responsibilities; Risk assessment; Workplace Inspections; Lifting Operations & Lifting Equipment Operations.
- 3.33** There were 18 actions raised against Managers in this period, which are recorded in an action log. Managers who have had actions allocated to them are given access to the action log to record the action taken to remove the risk and to record the date completed. This action log is reviewed monthly and where they become overdue then the responsible manager is reminded of the action and the Service manager also made aware of the need to close it off.

- 3.34** Follow up visits are also carried out on several of the completed actions which have the potential to result in more serious consequences and to audit that controls continue to be suitable and sufficient and are being followed.

### **Health and safety policies, procedures, and guidance**

- 3.35** There were no corporate procedures reviewed this quarter.

## **4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1** There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

## **5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1** The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires that an organisation has a suitably robust safety management system to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of their employees. Where any incident is of sufficient seriousness there is a requirement to report these under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 which provides a potential for the Enforcing Authorities to become involved and carry out their own investigation into the circumstances of the incident. Any investigation could result in prosecution of the organisation and in some cases prosecution of managers and/or employee.

## **6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1** There are no direct environmental implications because of this report.

## **7 RISK**

### **Risk Appetite**

The assessment of risk contained within the table below is consistent with the Council's Risk Appetite Statement

### **Management Of Risk**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level</b>	<b>*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)</b> <small>*Considering controls/control actions</small>	<b>*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?</b>
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	N/A	N/A		
<b>Compliance</b>	There is the risk that any injury or	Corporate Procedures require all tasks to be risk assessed and the	L	Yes

	<p>serious health and safety incident could result in focus from the Health and Safety Executive which could result in enforcement action in the form of notices or prosecution.</p>	<p>controls implemented and supervised by line managers.</p> <p>All employees are trained to a level where they are competent to carry out the work.</p> <p>Analysis of the causes of the incidents, near misses and work-related absences and resultant improvements to prevent, where possible, reoccurrences, can reduce the financial exposure to the Council.</p> <p>This effective health and safety management system in which risks are identified and either eliminated or reduced will result in a reduction of costs to the organisation.</p>		
<b>Operational</b>	<p>The risk is that any health and safety incident can lead to an injury to an employee which could have the potential to temporarily or permanently affect either or both their employment and/or their life.</p>	<p>The task has been risk assessed; employees are trained, competent and supervised then there should be less likelihood of incidents.</p>	<b>L</b>	<b>Yes</b>

	The risk to our citizens is that we are unable to provide the same level of service delivery due to staff absences from illness and injury sustained during their work. Also, there is the possibility of a reduced budget due to the associated financial costs.			
<b>Financial</b>	The risk is that any incident has the potential to bring a reduction in the overall budget in place to provide service delivery.	As per compliance above	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Reputational</b>	Local and National press coverage of any incident can present reputational damage to the organisation.	Each Function should have a robust safety management system in place. There are many facets to this which are important starting from ensuring employees are trained and competent, every hazard is risk assessed, and employees are up to carrying out investigation of near misses to ensure controls are reviewed to	L	<b>Yes</b>

		consider whether remedial actions are required.		
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	

## 8 OUTCOMES

<u><a href="#">Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</a></u>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	A healthy and safe workplace assists the overarching principles of the stretch outcomes within the LOIP (Local Outcome Improvement Plan) by ensuring that resource is directed at the services required by the city. Removing the level of lost resource to the financial penalties incurred through the Civil and Criminal Courts and from the Regulators will allow the available resource to be best used to ensure funding of the growth sectors of the local economy.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The areas reported on within this report allow Clusters a further opportunity to recognise areas which when acted upon can assist with engagement of staff and service users to support the meaningful educational progress of children and young people.

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	No assessment required. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Vikki Cuthbert, acting Chief Officer Governance in March 2025.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required

## 9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 N/A

## 10 APPENDICES

10.1 Quarterly Staff Governance Health and safety dashboard April - June 2025

## 11 REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

<b>Name</b>	Colin Leaver
<b>Title</b>	Corporate Health and Safety Lead
<b>Email Address</b>	cleaver@aberdeencity.gov.uk

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# Staff Governance Health & Safety Report

## Quarter 1 2025/2026 (Apr 25 to Jun 25)

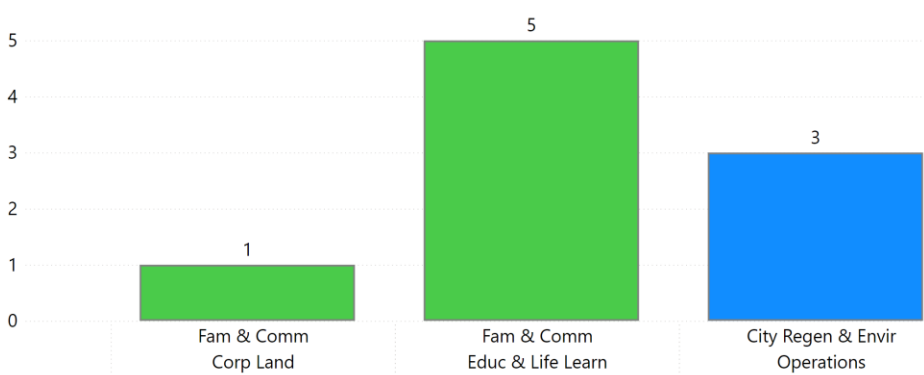
### DISCLAIMER

The content of this Staff Governance H&S Report is confidential and protected by copyright. The relevant Data Stewards supplied the data used in this report. The report shows the position as at the dates identified within the report. Data and/or visuals (charts) contained within this Staff Governance H&S Report must not be copied, shared electronically or in hard copy, published or reproduced without the prior written consent of the Analytics & Insight Team (contact Claudine Mackie at [claudinm@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:claudinm@aberdeencity.gov.uk)). If you find any errors or omissions please report this to the Analytics & Insight Team at the aforementioned email address.

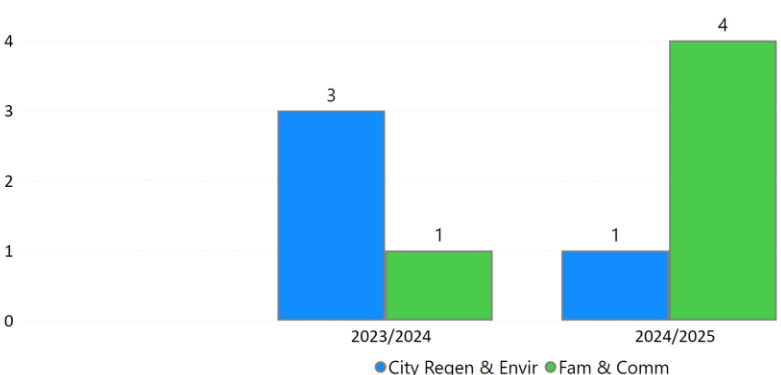
Reported H&S Incidents (Employee)  
Between Apr to Jun 2025

The following tables give breakdown of all employee incidents across all Functions and Clusters in Aberdeen City Council. The tables on the left initially show the number of incidents for each Cluster this reporting period with those tables on the right giving a quarter 1 comparison for each Function from 2023/24 to 2024/25 where applicable.

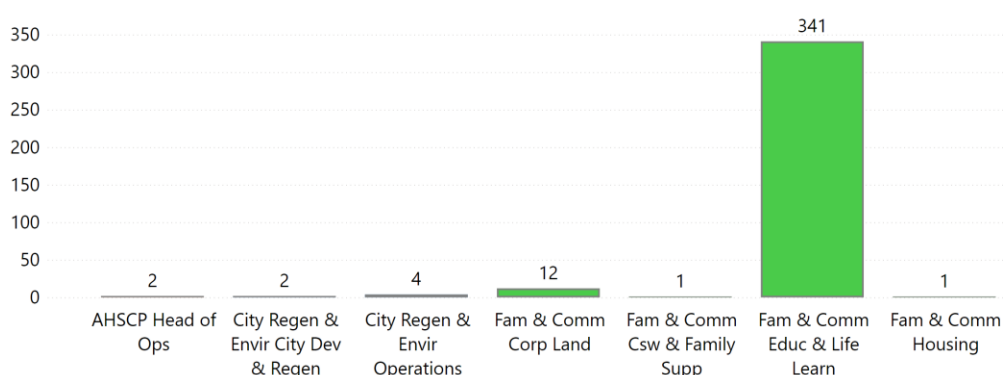
RIDDOR Reportable Employee



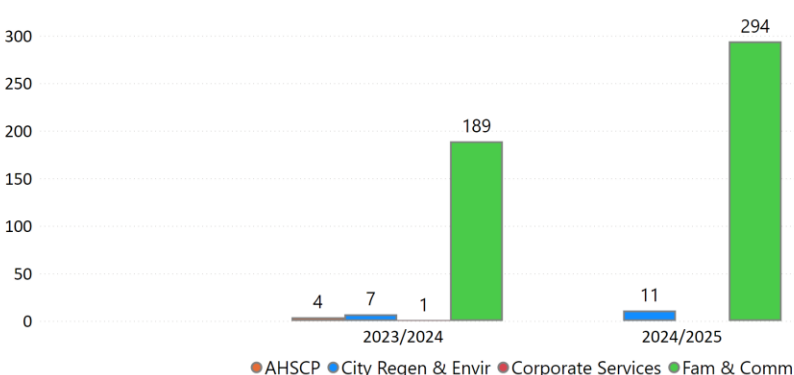
RIDDOR Reportable Employee 2023/24 & 2024/25 (Comparison)



Non RIDDOR Reportable Employee



Non RIDDOR Reportable Employee 2023/24 & 2024/25 (Comparison)



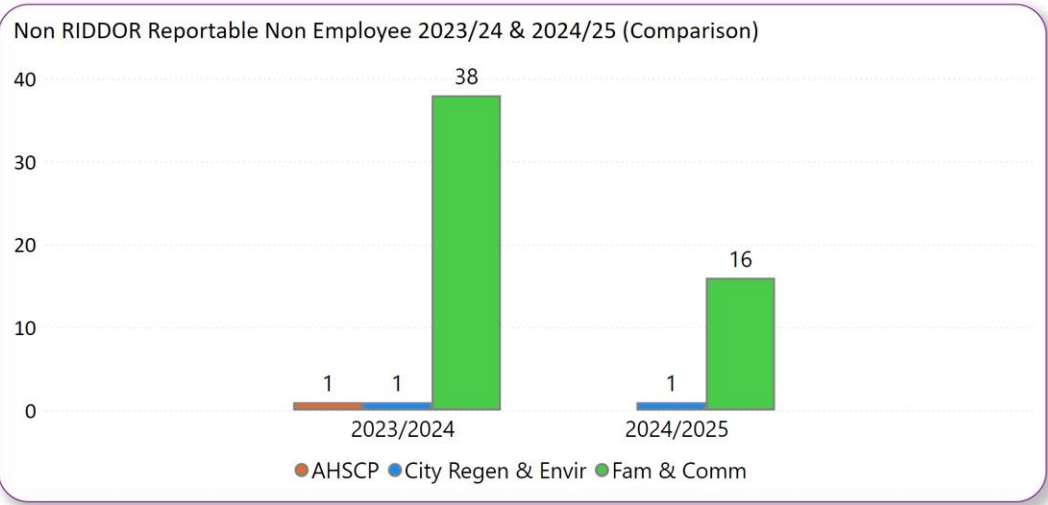
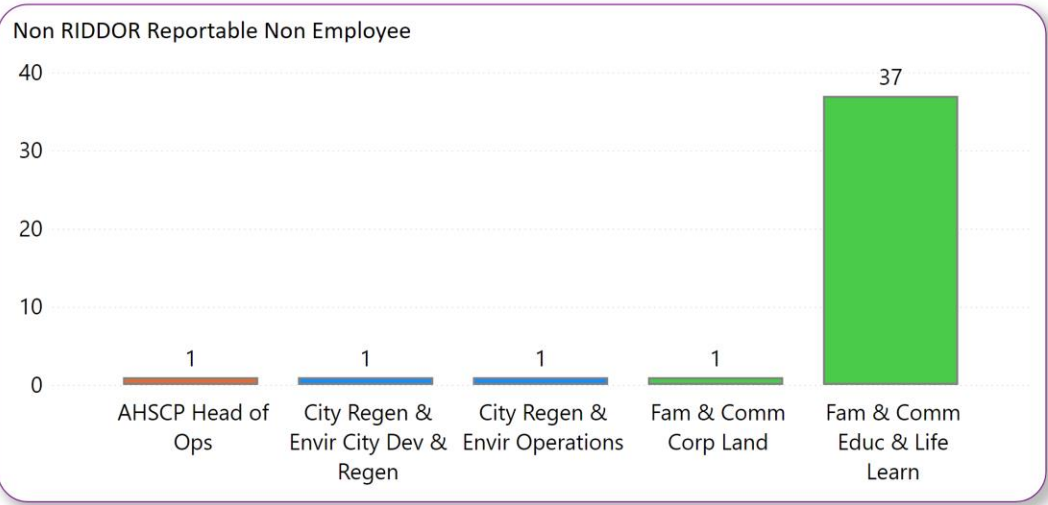
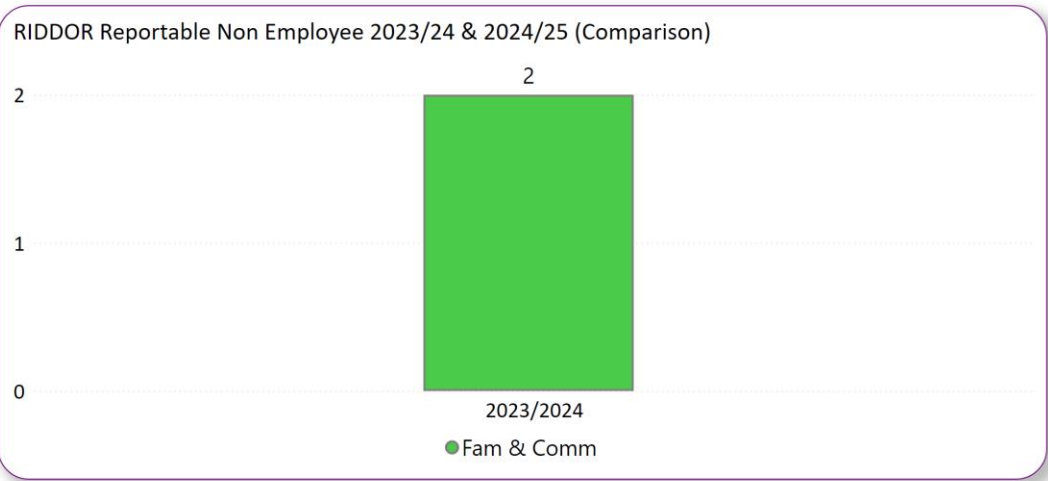
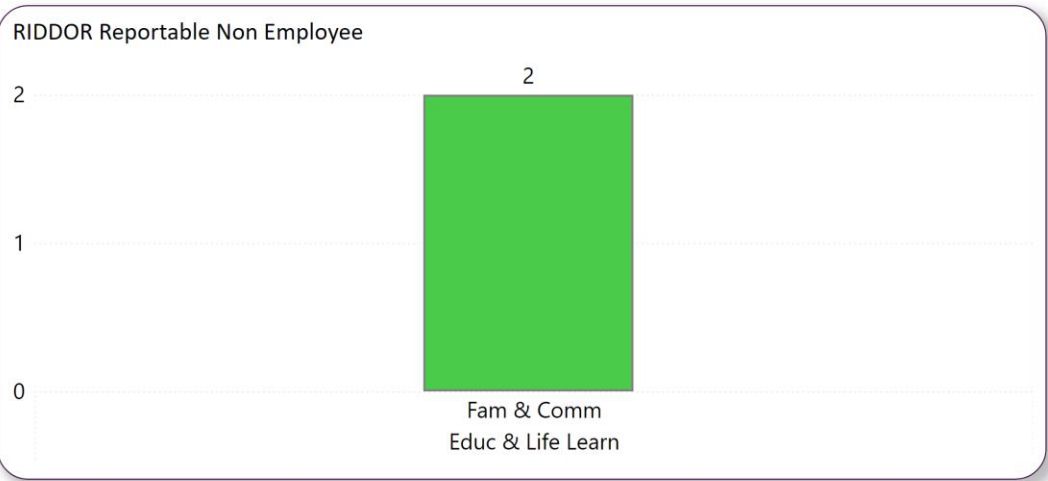
Employee Incident Information

The number of incidents in Education has increased from the previous years corresponding quarter with the main causes being physical injury and violence, externalising behaviour and unacceptable behaviour. These increases are potentially down to the work which continues to be done by senior management and Trade Unions to encourage reporting, an actual increase in the level of incidents or a mix of both reasons. On page 9 of the report a line graph is detailed to show the levels of reporting at points throughout the year for each Function. As previous years the figures drop in the 1st quarter of the year. The figures rise in quarter 4 due to return from Christmas break and as the children's regulation improves the figures drop. First quarter figures historically in the previous 2 years appear to be around 1/4 of the total for the year directly preceding. There is no obvious reason for this but there is a trend appearing.



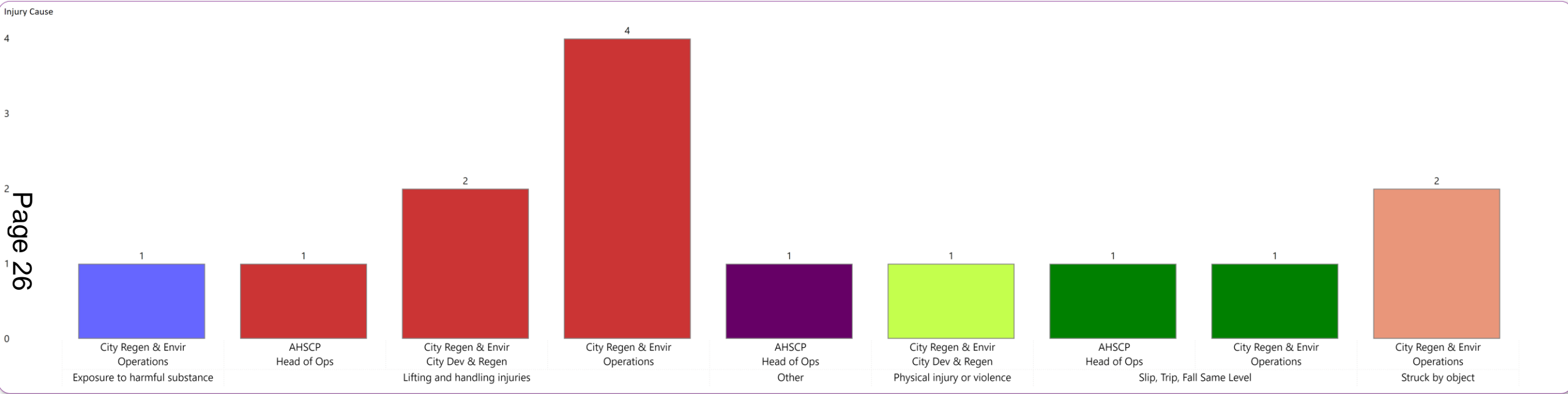
# Reported H&S Incidents (Third Party) Between Apr to Jun 2025

The tables below give information on those non-employee incidents which happened across all Functions and Clusters. Again the tables on the left show the current period for each Cluster, with those tables on the right giving a quarter 1 comparison for each function from 2023/24 to 2024/25 where applicable.



H&S Incident Causation  
Reported between Apr to Jun 2025

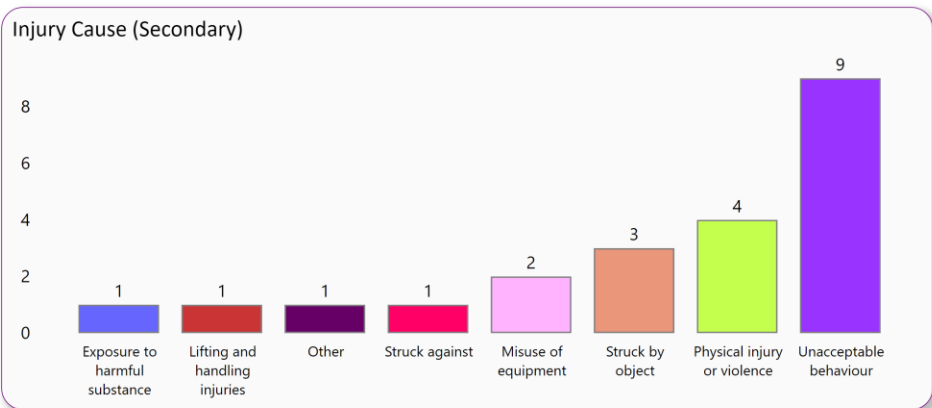
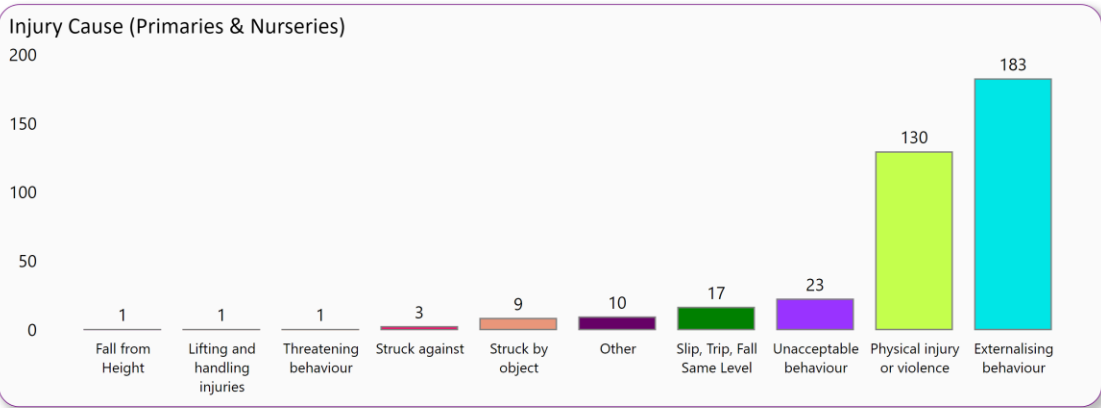
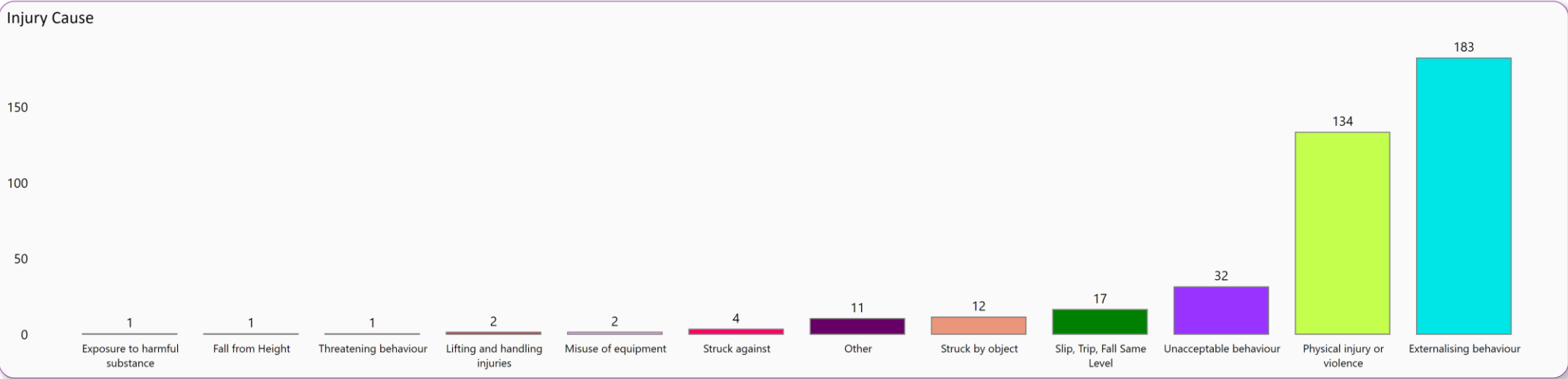
The table shows incident causation for each Cluster for this reporting period apart from Families & Communities, which is covered in the next page.



Injury Cause							
	Exposure to harmful substance	Lifting and handling injuries	Other	Physical injury or violence	Slip, Trip, Fall Same Level	Struck by object	Total
	1	7	1	1	2	2	14

Families & Communities reported H&S Incidents  
Between Apr to Jun 2025

The following tables give a breakdown of Families & Communities Incidents.



Injury Cause													
	Exposure to harmful substance	Fall from Height	Threatening behaviour	Lifting and handling injuries	Misuse of equipment	Struck against	Other	Struck by object	Slip, Trip, Fall Same Level	Unacceptable behaviour	Physical injury or violence	Externalising behaviour	Total
	1	1	1	2	2	4	11	12	17	32	134	183	400

Reported H&S Near Miss  
Between Apr to Jun 2025

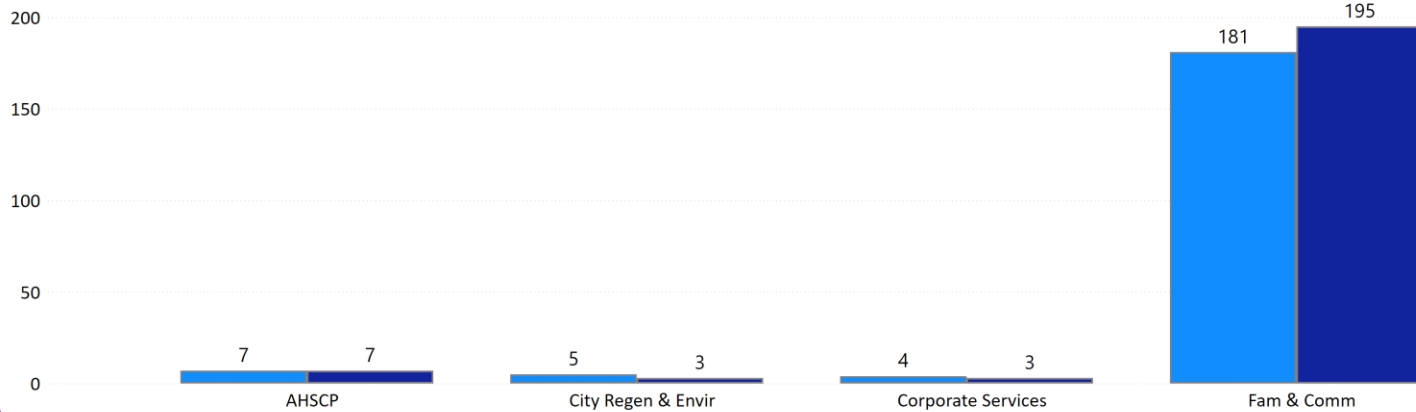
The tables below show information in relation to employee and non-employee Near Misses.  
Top table: Total Near Misses for this reporting period for each Cluster. Bottom tables: quarter 1 comparison of Near Misses for each Function from 2023/24 to 2024/25.

No. of Near Miss



No. of Near Miss 2023/24 & 2024/25 (Comparison)

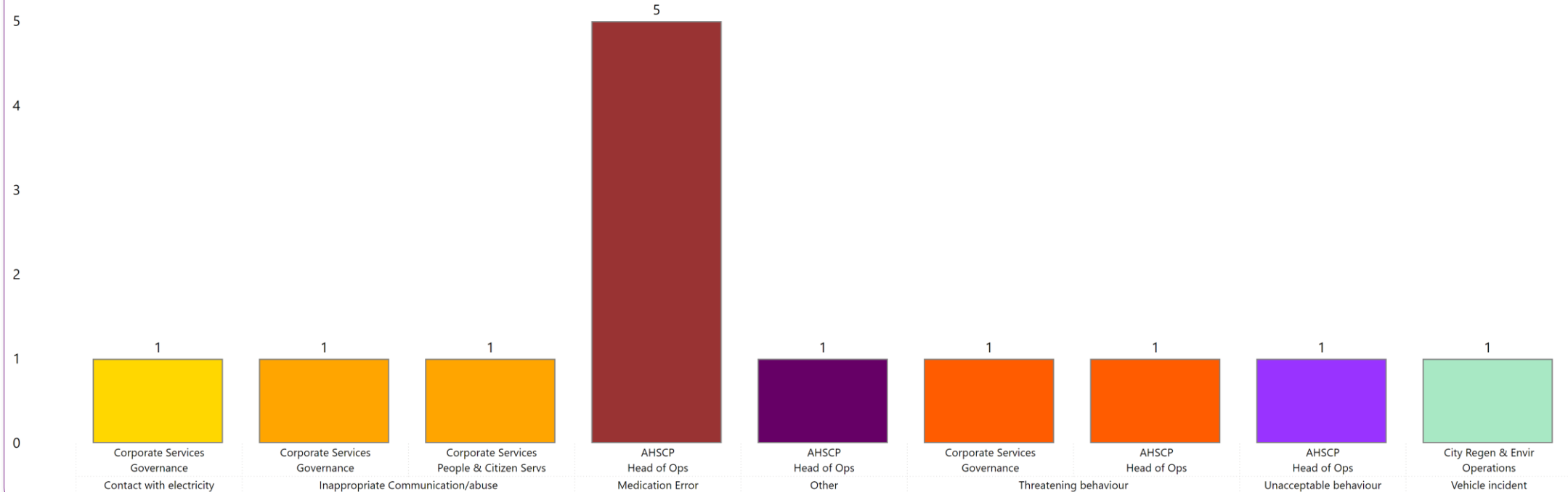
● 2023/2024 ● 2024/2025



## Reported H&S Near Miss (Causation) Between Apr to Jun 2025

The table below shows information to a Function and Cluster level for employee and non-employee Near Misses apart from Families & Communities, which is covered in the next page.

### Near Miss Causation



### Near Miss Cause

Contact with electricity	Inappropriate Communication/abuse	Medication Error	Other	Threatening behaviour	Unacceptable behaviour	Vehicle incident	Total
1	2	5	1	2	1	1	13

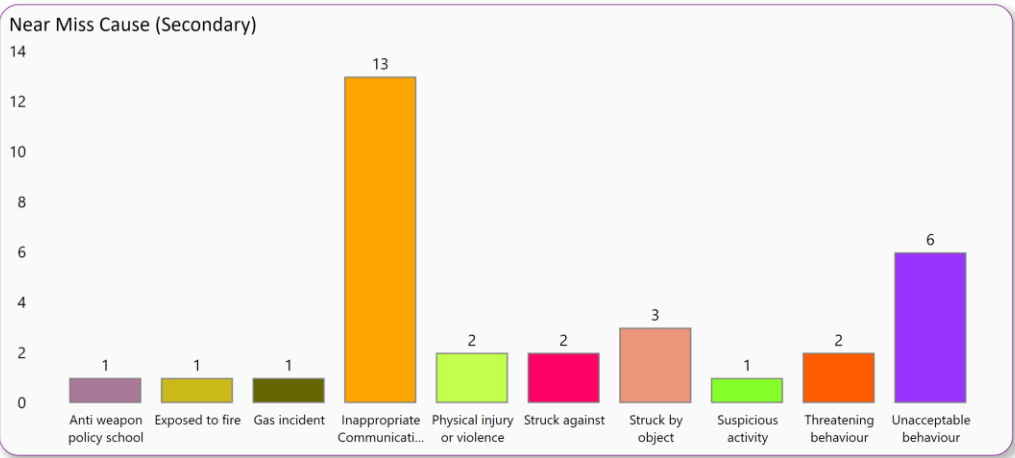
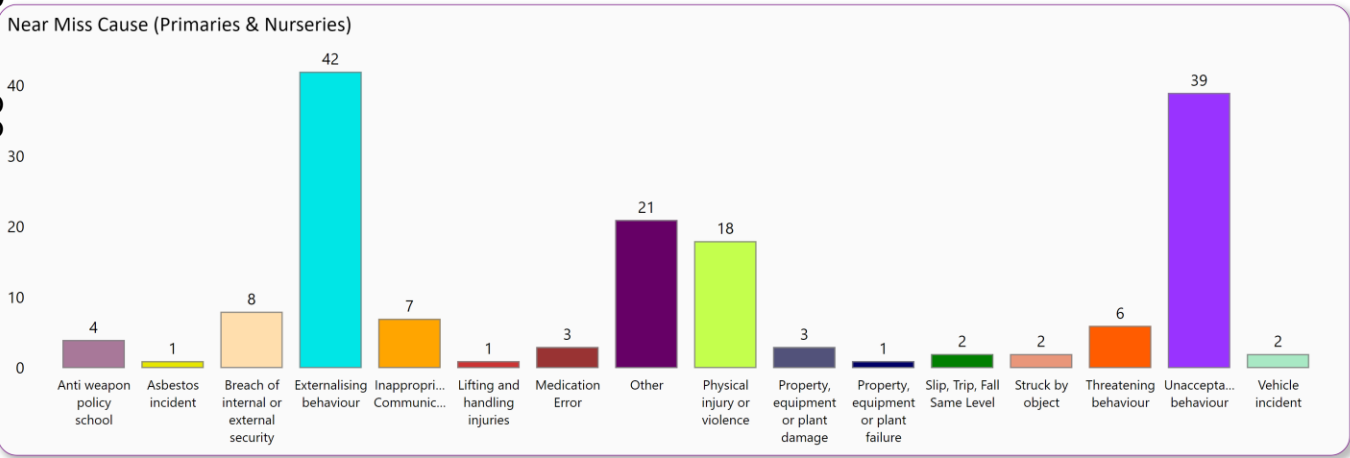
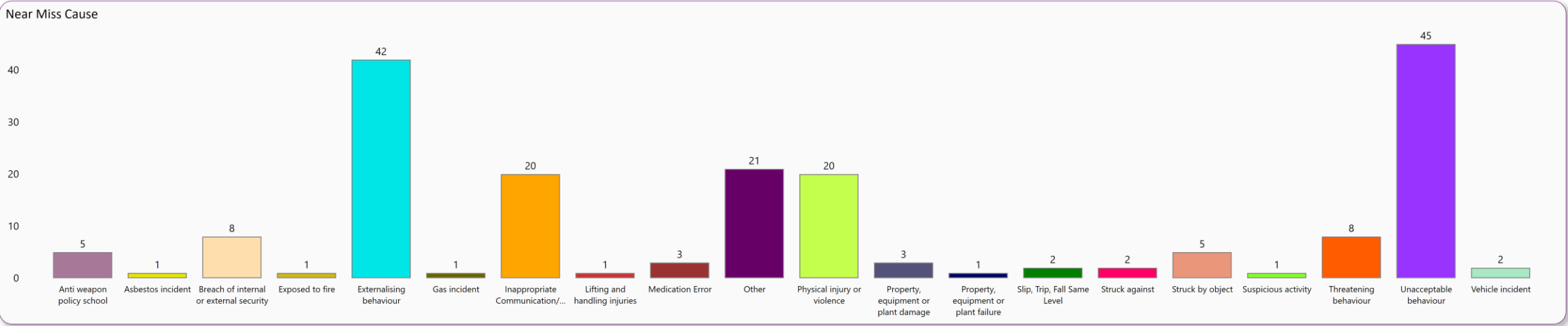
### Near Miss

Near miss figures in Education have actually reduced slightly from the same quarter last year. There is also the large reduction from the previous quarter which again may be down to the children being at school for the term between the two longest holiday periods and being more regulated due to the normal school routine.

Medication: there were 5 reports where a service user did not receive the correct medication. They all involved under provision. A fuller description of the process is given in the report

Families & Communities reported H&S Near Miss  
Between Apr to Jun 2025

The following tables give a breakdown of Families & Communities Near Miss.

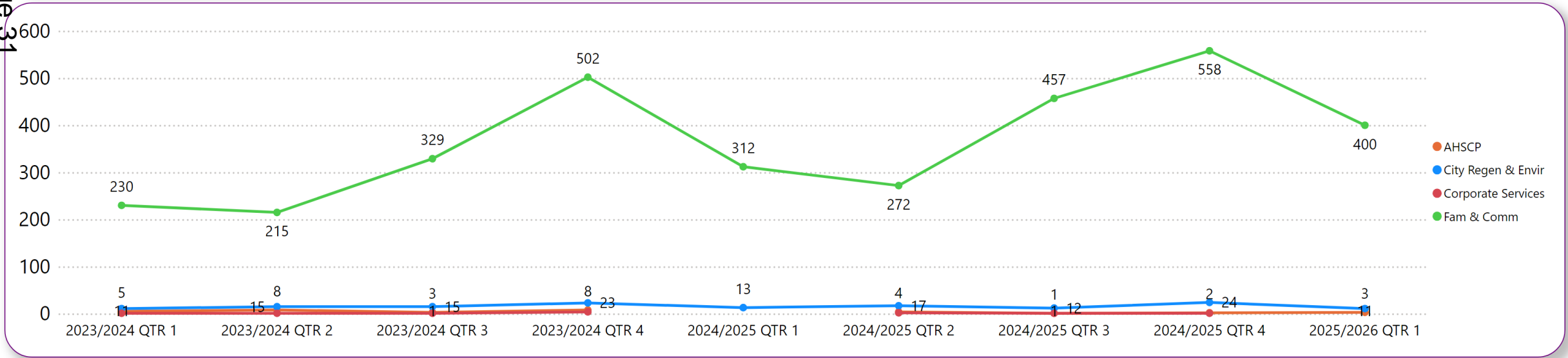
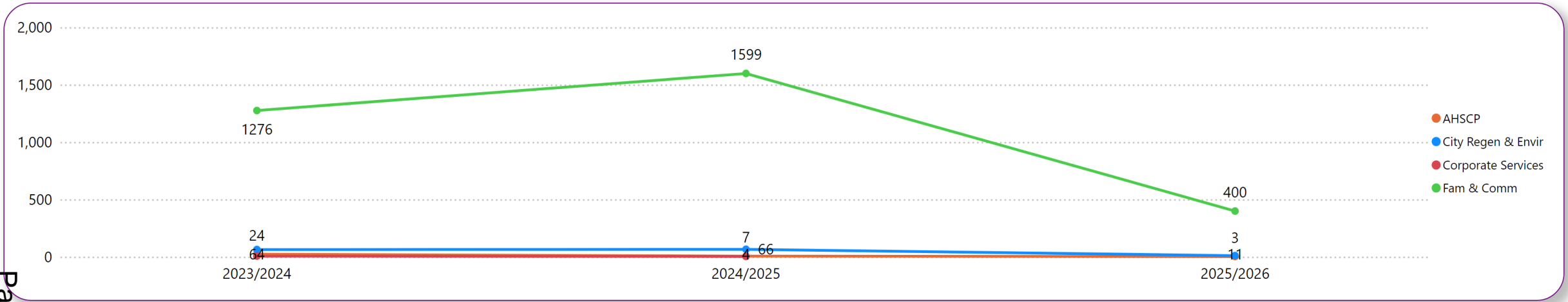


Near Miss Cause																				
anti weapon policy school	Asbestos incident	Breach of internal or external security	Exposed to fire	Externalising behaviour	Gas incident	Inappropriate Communication/abuse	Lifting and handling injuries	Medication Error	Other	Physical injury or violence	Property, equipment or plant damage	Property, equipment or plant failure	Slip, Trip, Fall Same Level	Struck against	Struck by object	Suspicious activity	Threatening behaviour	Unacceptable behaviour	Vehicle incident	Total
5	1	8	1	42	1	20	1	3	21	20	3	1	2	2	5	1	8	45	2	192

Reported Incidents  
From Q1 2023/24 to Q1 2025/26

The tables provides information on the **total number** of incidents from 2023/24 to 2025/26 to Function level.

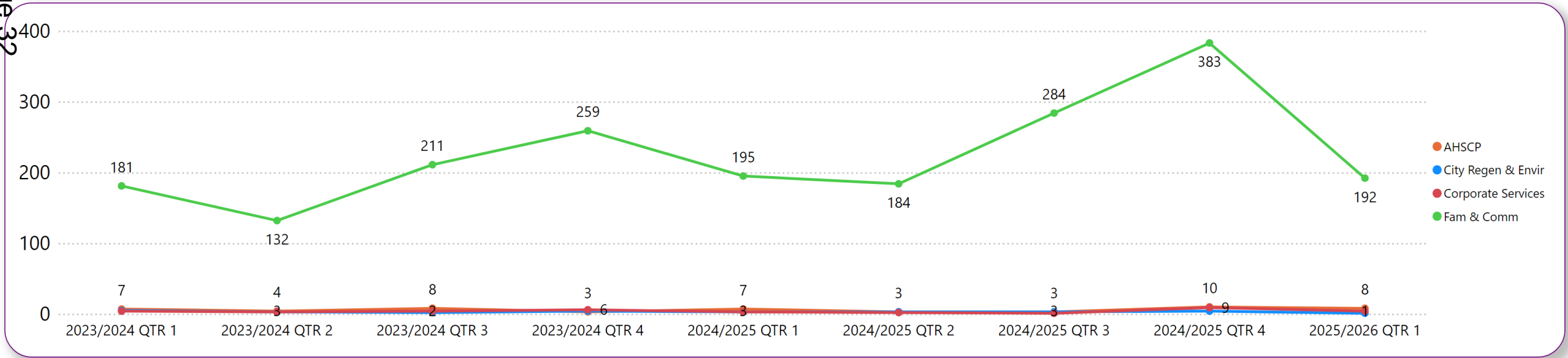
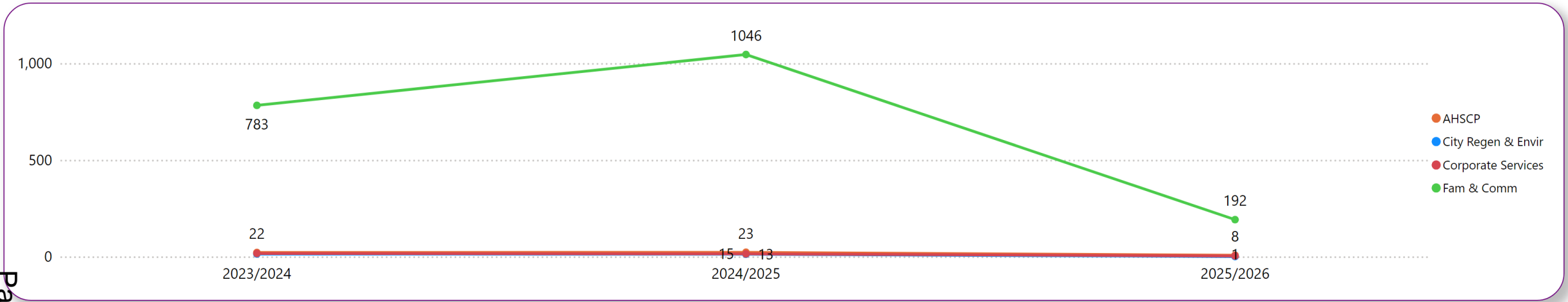
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Reported Near Miss  
From Q1 2023/24 to Q1 2025/26

The tables provides information on the **total number** of near misses from 2023/24 to 2025/26 to Function level.

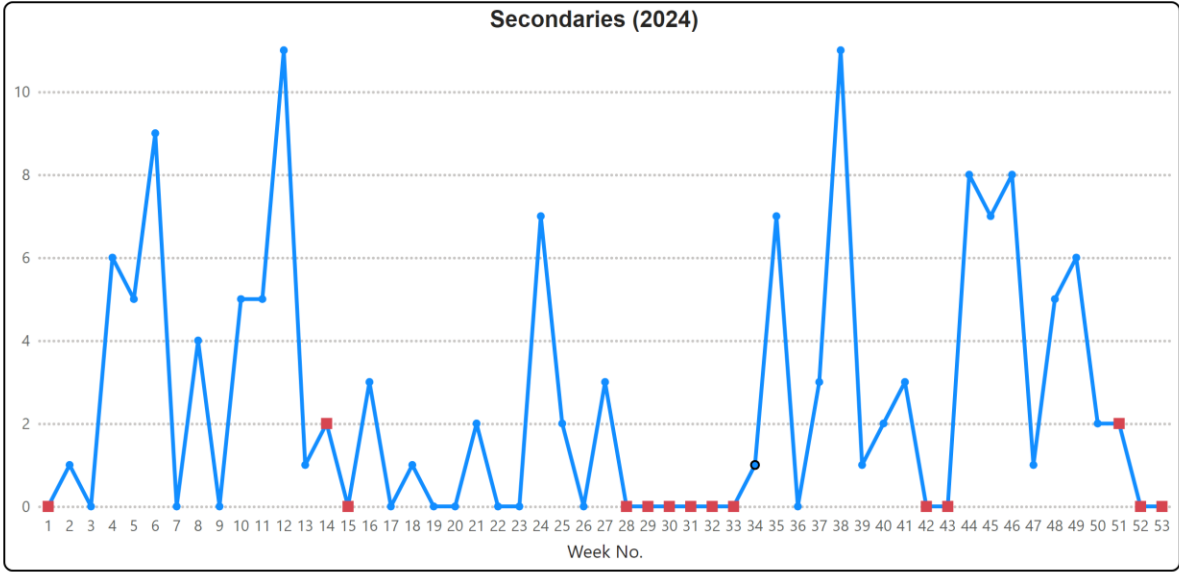
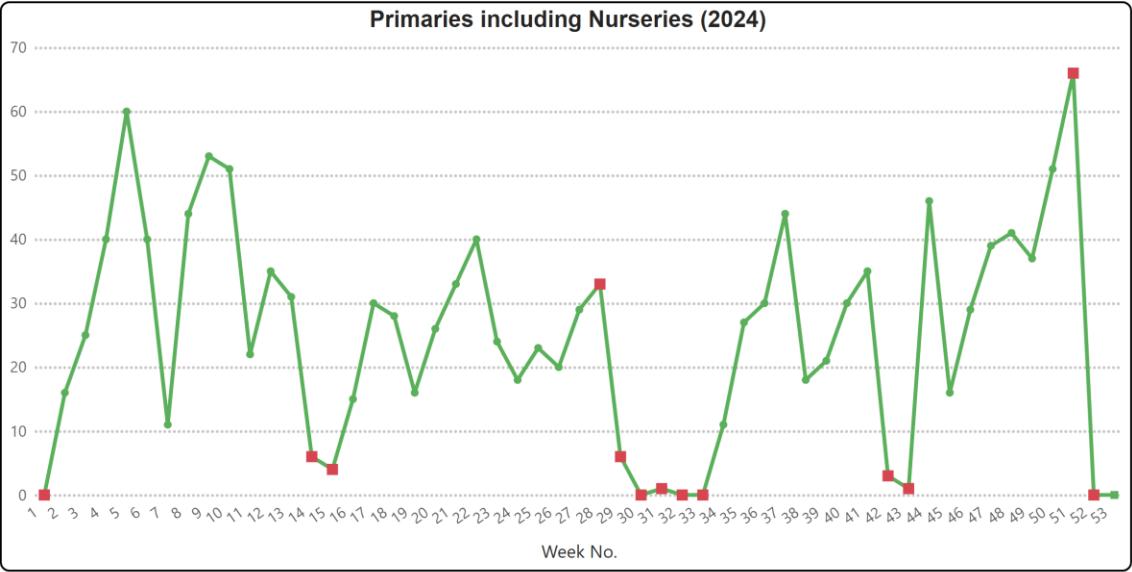
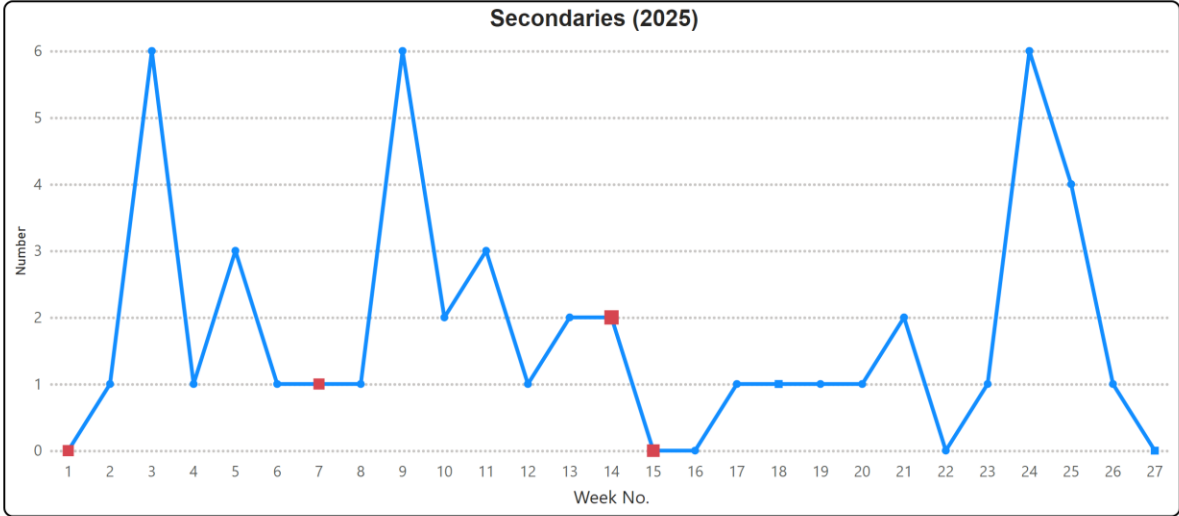
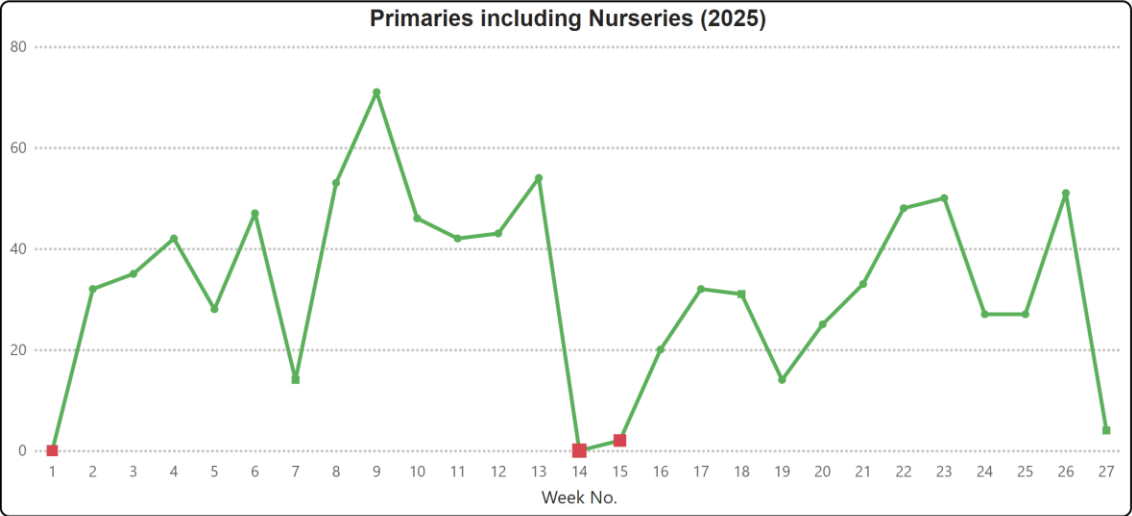
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Reported Incidents in Schools  
(2024 & 2025)

The tables below provide information on the number of reported incidents in Schools each week during 2024 and 2025. Those weeks with red markers represent incidents (if any), noted during the Easter, Summer, October and Christmas holidays.



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## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Staff Governance Committee
<b>DATE</b>	25 August 2025
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Employee Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2025-2029
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CORS/25/109
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Andy MacDonald
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Isla Newcombe
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Baldeep McGarry and Alison Paterson
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	2.6

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report presents Aberdeen City Council's Employee Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2025-2029.
- 1.2 The report sets out how the action plan has been developed to support the council's Equality Outcomes as an Employer.
- 1.3 The Equality Outcomes and action plan are key elements in delivering the council's strategic priorities by strengthening alignment with current and changing legislative duties under the Equality Act 2010.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Notes the approach to and implementation of the proposed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2025-2029;
- 2.2 Notes that officers will continue to engage with Employees and Trade Unions and incorporate changes to the action plan as required; and
- 2.3 Instructs the Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services to report to Anti-Poverty and Inequality committee on progress against the action plan, in line with relevant statutory deadlines and to present an update to the Staff Governance Committee regarding any impacts this report has on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, including any changes, updates, or new areas of focus identified through available data and analysis.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

#### 3.1 Public Sector Specific Duties

- 3.1.1 The [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) came into force across Great Britain on 5 April 2011. It means that public bodies have to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees.
- 3.1.2 The [Equality Act 2010 \(Specific Duties\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#) outline specific duties for public authorities in Scotland, including requirements for data gathering, producing mainstreaming reports, and publishing employee information in a manner that is accessible.
- 3.1.3 The council's previous set of outcomes for 2021-25 were approved on [11<sup>th</sup> March 2021](#) and a [progress report](#) was presented to the Staff Governance Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023 as per the requirement under Scottish Specific Duties.
- 3.1.4 The new set of proposed Equalities Outcomes were approved by the Council's Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee in March 2025 as part of the [Equalities Outcomes Mainstreaming Report](#) 2021-2025. These were presented alongside key and statutory data sets.

### **3.2 Employer Outcomes and the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Plan**

The new outcomes included two outcomes specific to Aberdeen City Council as an employer.

**Employer Outcome 1:** Our workforce is as diverse and representative as the city we serve, with a focus on sex, disability, race and sexual orientation.

Rationale: Along with the feedback from our employee equality groups and the employee experience survey, we considered census data, and our internal staffing reports. Our aim is to ensure our workforce is diverse and representative of all protected characteristics. This outcome and underpinning actions and activity in the plan will help us achieve a diverse workforce, improve representation and enhance productivity and skills.

**Employer Outcome 2:** People with protected characteristics feel their voice and experience is heard, valued and helps shape decisions that affect them.

Rationale: Our drive is to improve value and respect within our workforce and build on our existing positive culture. There is an increasing awareness of the need to engage those with lived experience and emphasise inclusive communication. Delivering this outcome will improve employee participation and informed decision making.

The Council already undertakes a range of diverse activity to support equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Much of this work will continue to support the achievement of the above refreshed outcomes.

- 3.2.1 To achieve the outcomes, the action plan has been developed to set out the Council's detailed approach to equality, diversity and inclusion as an employer. The Action Plan can be viewed in **Appendix 1** and details the activities, timelines and responsibility of actions.

### 3.3 Developing the Action Plan

The outcomes, underlying actions and indicators have been identified based on:

- 3.3.1 A review of the previous outcomes and action plan. The Council already undertakes a range of positive work to support equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Much of this work will continue to support the achievement of the above outcomes. Details of this work can be found in the [Report](#) presented to committee.
- 3.3.2 A series of online and in-person consultation and engagement sessions were held with the Equality Ambassadors Network and the Employee Equality working groups. Feedback has been used to shape the actions within the plan to ensure there is a staff-led and evidence-based approach throughout the duration of the plan.
- 3.3.3 Workforce diversity data was also reviewed to develop the focus of the Council's equality outcomes and action plan, specifically to identify areas of prioritised focus. The workforce data was presented as part of the progress report and can be accessed in the [Agenda Pack](#).
- 3.3.4 Results of the Employee Experience Survey, which had a specific section on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion were reviewed to understand where further focus is needed. The data was further analysed by protected characteristics to identify trends in responses and ensure outcomes and actions would benefit any such groups to improve representation, engagement and participation for an inclusive workplace culture.
- 3.3.5 The review of the feedback provided as part of a recent Employee Experience survey highlights that Aberdeen City Council demonstrates a commitment to promoting diversity, and focus must continue with efforts to improve awareness, engagement, and accessibility to ensure all employees can fully participate in and benefit from equality initiatives. These needs have been reflected in the outcomes and underpinning action plan.
- 3.3.6 Key highlights by protected characteristics in the survey responses included:
  - Overall, the results highlighted that the council has a positive approach to inclusion, with very low numbers of 4% or less of respondents, who expressed negative views about Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Council.
  - Employees from<sup>1</sup>Ethnic minority groups tend to have a more positive perception of the council's efforts in promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion compared to White employees.

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<sup>1</sup> We use 'ethnic minorities' to refer to all ethnic groups except the White British group. Ethnic minorities include White minorities. White ethnic minority groups included in this category are Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Scottish Gypsy / Traveller, and White people from any country outside the UK and Ireland, including European countries. Source: [Writing about ethnicity - GOV.UK](#)

- Due to lower completion rates on Religion and Race, results highlighted differences where some religious groups had a higher completion rate and favourable responses which have been treated with caution as they are not fully representative of the diverse workforce. The general perception of adequate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training for employees is highly positive by religious groups.
- Overall, females reported marginally higher agreement percentages than males, particularly with respect to equal opportunities and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training. Conversely, whilst both groups demonstrated lower levels of agreement on topics such as awareness of Equality Ambassadors and access to equalities activities, with males showing a slightly more positive response.
- Overall, the levels of agreement vary across age groups, with younger employees generally being more neutral or less in agreement, while middle-aged and older employees show higher levels of agreement on various topics related to equality, diversity, and inclusion.

- 3.3.7 Extensive consultation was undertaken through our employee groups and combined with insights from the recent Employee Experience Survey highlighted what we were doing well in creating an inclusive work environment and where we can do better.
- 3.3.8 Data on Aberdeen city's population listed by protected characteristics was used to compare against our current workforce demographics to identify gaps, trends and set baselines to meet our equality outcomes. Improvements have been identified around gathering quality data which will then better inform decisions we make and the activities we undertake in relation to our workforce.
- 3.3.9 Through the identification of underrepresented groups by demographical data, the initiatives in the plan aim to address these gaps through targeted recruitment, retention and development initiatives.
- 3.3.10 Focus groups were held to further explore trends in the responses to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion questions within the Employee Experience Survey with the aim to explore the reasons for a higher level of neutral response rates.
- 3.3.11 The focus group participants shared that neutrality (in survey responses) is not necessarily negative and that it may be due to a lower level of direct experience in initiatives.
- 3.3.12 Focus groups highlighted that while there is awareness of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives, it is higher among those involved in relevant groups and day to day visibility may be limited for others.
- 3.3.13 Comfort in discussing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion topics varies, and such discussions are not common in day-to-day team interactions unless directly relevant to the work highlighting the need to do more on how we communicate to improve awareness and participation.

- 3.3.14 Within these focus groups, employees have shared views, experiences and solutions which have been added to the action plan and will be continually reviewed.
- 3.3.15 A focused session with our diverse group of Aspiring Leaders also helped develop actions from the perspective of aspiring future senior leaders.
- 3.3.16 Through close collaboration with Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC), sessions were facilitated within communities to understand any barriers, identify actions and priorities to promote Aberdeen City Council as an attractive employer of choice, and offer further focussed training for the development of our existing employers.
- 3.3.17 Guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission on setting new outcomes and how to meet the Equality duty states that by focusing on outcomes rather than objectives, the duty aims to bring practical improvements in the life chances of those who experience discrimination and disadvantage. Feedback from the survey and focus groups has ensured that the voice and experience of our workforce is reflected in the plan.
- 3.3.18 Guidance from the Equally Safe at Work programme, which recommends six thematic standards that must be met to achieve and retain accreditation, has been included in the action plan as part of identified themes and areas to develop. These are:
- Leadership
  - Data
  - Flexible working
  - Occupational Segregation
  - Workplace culture
  - Violence Against Women (VAW)
- 3.3.19 Guidance from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), has also been considered which highlights a focus on leadership commitment, data driven approaches, inclusive recruitment and cultures, accountability, engagement and review.
- 3.3.20 Legislative requirements to meet the needs of the General Duty under the Equality Act 2010 have also been at the centre of the action plan, to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
  - Advance equality of opportunity
  - Foster good relations between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

Under the [Fairer Scotland Duty](#), public bodies must actively consider how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions.

- 3.3.21 Requirements of the council's strategic drivers, accreditations, duties and pledges have also been used to inform and develop activities within the action

plan to meet the requirements set out in the various plans with a focus on equality, diversity and inclusion.

3.3.22 Trade Union colleagues have been engaged with through the process of setting the new outcomes and developing the action plan. A positive outcome of this engagement has resulted in an invitation to the Equalities Team to provide regular equality, diversity and inclusion related updates at their group meetings.

3.3.23 The proposed actions in the plan were also developed with the advice and feedback from our partners at Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC).

3.4 From the analysis of the data sources listed above, common themes were identified that support both employee outcomes. These themes have been used as the structure for the action plan. The themes below closely align with the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) guidance on areas to focus on when aiming to improve representation and inclusion which include:

- Leadership and Management
- Data
- Learning and Development
- Policies and Practices
- Recruitment, Selection and Retention
- Consultation and Engagement
- Communication and awareness-raising

### **3.5 Other Council Plans**

3.5.1 The Employee Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action plan intersects other Council plans, principles and policies to provide a holistic approach to equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace: These include:

3.5.2 **Guiding Principles** - Our Guiding Principles were designed by our staff and strengthen our commitment to creating the kind of culture that our employees say they want, with associated capabilities to support our workforce with the right tools and support to carry out their roles which then supports their awareness of their responsibility and duty to deliver fair and equitable services to our citizens. These principles are rooted in a collective commitment to creating a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable workforce. Since 2023, we have had a capability framework for employees that is aligned to our Guiding Principles, and a specific core capability for employees that sets out the necessity duty for all employees to have awareness, skills and behaviours around equality, diversity and inclusion.





**3.5.2 Workforce Plan** - The plan sets out how we will ensure our current and future workforce has the capacity and capability to support our working culture. The Plan links to and supports our organisational capabilities and Guiding Principles. This includes setting out the wider actions and innovative practices being taken to address current challenges through attracting, recruiting and moving talent, developing future workforce capacity, and mitigating risks in relation to service delivery. The Workforce Plan will take account of the changing external and internal environment for example, in relation to equalities the Scottish Government Equality Framework and Action Plan and the Employer Equality Outcomes 2025 – 2029 as well as key government policy drivers and upcoming legislative changes.

**3.5.3 Council Delivery Plan** - The [delivery plan](#) sets out key legislation and frameworks that the council works to at national and local levels. As part of People and Citizen Services, the commitment is to implement a new flexible working policy which, alongside the statutory right to request flexible working, will provide greater flexibility for employees and bring benefits including improved work-life balance, increased morale and aid recruitment and retention.

**3.5.4 Accreditations and Pledges** - The Council is proud to have a number of accreditations and pledges in place. Many of these relate to one or more protected characteristic. These Accreditations and Pledges are promoted on the MyJobScotland website (where we advertise our vacancies), our website and part of the recruitment and selection training provided to recruiting managers. These include, Young Persons Guarantee Employer aimed at building a workforce for the future with the right people, skills and experience, Disability Confident Employer Living Wage Employer, Carers Positive, and Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award.

- The Council has recently achieved bronze level re-accreditation in the Equally Safe at Work programme which aims to support employers in reviewing workplace culture and ensuring that policies and practices are enhanced to address the barriers that women face at work. There are six thematic standards under the programme which have been listed in section 3.3.9 of this report. A range of activities to maintain and further progress on the accreditation have also been absorbed into the action plan.
- The Council has recently renewed its Disability Confident Employer (Level 2) accreditation. As part of this accreditation, the Council has a commitment to supporting people with disabilities in all of its employment-related activity. To achieve and maintain this

accreditation, the Council must demonstrate core and specific actions to maintain the accreditation. Actions to support the accreditation have also been included in the action plan.

- 3.6** The action plan will also be updated to reflect any legislative changes and requirements following formal guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission in relation to the Equality Act 2010.

### **3.7 Next Steps**

- 3.7.1 Following presentation to committee, the Action Plan will be officially launched via the internal Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Hub with a follow up launch on the Equality Ambassadors Network to promote awareness and increase the participation of our employees.
- 3.7.2 Data and analysis will be regularly carried out by the delivery leads identified in the Action Plan to determine priorities, areas of further action and map progress against actions which will be reported in the next statutory progress report in April 2027.
- 3.7.3 The Action Plan will remain a 'live' document and actions will be adjusted and adapted based on current needs, data and direct feedback from employees, Trade Unions and protected groups.
- 3.7.4 Any changes, updates or new areas of focus based on the data and analysis from the Equality Outcomes Mainstreaming Progress Report will be highlighted and shared through a future meeting of the Staff Governance Committee.
- 3.7.5 Following the approval of the last action plan, a number of working groups were established to progress the actions within the plan and were reported on in the [Equalities Outcomes Mainstreaming Report](#). The Equality Ambassadors Network and Employee Equality working groups will be refreshed to support the delivery of the new action plan.

## **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There will be anticipated costs around training and development which will be funded through the existing People and Citizen Services budget. Additional costs may also be incurred in producing accessible information and material to support Equality, Diversity and Inclusion campaigns to make reasonable adjustments.

## **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 This action plan will ensure the Council maintains compliance with its duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty (General Duty) contained within the Equality Act 2010 to pay due regard when exercising its functions to:
- eliminating discrimination, harassment, and victimisation,
  - advancing equality of opportunity,

- fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

## 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

## 7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	None	None	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Compliance</b>	As an employer, there could be a risk of not meeting statutory equality duties.	Development of a comprehensive equality, diversity and action plan co-developed with employees.	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Operational</b>	None	None	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Financial</b>	Some financial requirements to deliver on training and development and creation of inclusive campaigns.	This spending will be covered by the agreed corporate training budget held within People and Citizens.	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Reputational</b>	As an employer, there could be a perception that we are not an employer of choice or a fair and inclusive employer.	Development of a comprehensive equality, diversity and action plan co-developed with employees.		<b>Yes</b>
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	None	None	L	<b>Yes</b>

## 8. OUTCOMES

<b>Council Delivery Plan 2024</b>	
	<b>Impact of Report</b>
<b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b>  <a href="#"><u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u></a>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following aspect of the policy statement:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise that the Council depends upon its staff to deliver the services it provides and believe the Council must properly reward, train and support its staff.</li> <li>• Engage regularly with staff and trade union representatives.</li> </ul>
<b>Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026</b>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	<p>The proposals within this action plan support the delivery of Economy Stretch Outcomes:</p> <p>2. 74% employment rate for Aberdeen City by 2026</p> <p>2.1 Support 25 people from ethnic minorities into sustained, good quality employment by 2026.</p> <p>2.4 Support 100 people into sustained, good quality employment by 2026, with a particular focus on those from priority neighbourhoods and people over 50.</p> <p>2.6 Support 40 young parents into training and / or employability provision by 2026</p> <p>2.7 Upskill 50 individuals who are experiencing digital barriers to apply for employment opportunities by 2026.</p>
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	<p>6. 95% of all children living in our priority neighbourhoods (Quintiles 1 &amp; 2), will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving pathways to education, employment and training for all our children.</li> <li>• Increase the % of learners entering a positive and sustained destination to be ahead of the Virtual Comparator for all groups by 2025</li> </ul>
<b>Regional and City Strategies</b>	<p>Through the Regional Economic Strategy workforce strategies to improve support for young people, high attainment, meaningful progression and employment opportunities that, in turn, fulfil the economic needs of the region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Putting inclusive growth at the heart of public sector investment, maximise opportunities for targeted recruitment and</li> </ul>

	training activity for all potential procurement spend through community benefit clause The activities listed in this report also enhance the Regional, City and Council strategies through the completion of Integrated Impact Assessments and ensuring that considerations and mitigations are made for those with protected characteristics.
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## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	A DPIA is not required for the action plan but was completed for the employee experience survey.
<b>Other</b>	None

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 [Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2021-2025.pdf](#)
- 10.2 [CommitteeReport\\_EDIpolicy\\_SGC\\_April2024\\_FINALDEADLINE.pdf](#)
- 10.3 [Final Workforce Delivery Plan.pdf](#)
- 10.4 [Diversity+in+Recruitment+Update.pdf](#)
- 10.5 [Equality and Human Rights Public Sector Equality Duty](#)
- 10.6 [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace - CIPD](#)

## 11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1: Employee Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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# Employee Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2025-2029

August 2025





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# Introduction

Aberdeen City Council is committed to fostering an inclusive, diverse and equitable environment for our workforce, where employees are valued and respected. This action plan has been developed from the feedback provided by employees and citizens through the employee experience survey, equalities outcomes consultation, Equality Ambassadors Network and Employee Equality working groups, as well as feedback received from employees who proposed actions on how we can achieve improved equality outcomes.

The new set of Employee Equality Outcomes were approved on 25 March 2025 at the [Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee](#). This Action Plan sets out the steps we will take to deliver these agreed outcomes and the indicators that will be used to measure whether improvement has been achieved. We acknowledge that creating quantifiable measures for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives can be challenging because these efforts often involve complex, qualitative aspects of human behaviour, cultural change, and systemic transformation. While numerical data, such as representation statistics or survey results, can offer some insight, they may not fully capture the depth of impact EDI programs have on individuals' lived experiences, organizational culture, and social dynamics. Our aim is to address this through the use of focus groups to improve our understanding.

The Action Plan and improvement measures focus on the areas where improvement is needed most. Our proposed actions aim to:

- Foster a culture of respect, equity, and inclusion with consideration given to our workforce and their individual protected characteristics and experiences.
- Improve engagement with our workforce to ensure the diverse needs of employees are being considered into policy design, delivery and implementation.
- Equip all employees, managers and leaders through training, information and highlighting role models to build equality, diversity and inclusion into everything we do.
- Use data to track progress and ensure that Aberdeen City Council is making progressive steps in achieving Equality Diversity and Inclusion outcomes.
- Enhance recruitment and retention of a diverse employee workforce that will bring a range of perspectives that will add to existing capabilities and offer more innovative solutions and action.
- Raise awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives with the aim of involving all employees across different services.
- Ensure that there is compliance with the legislative requirements and ensuring that Aberdeen City Council works to enhance its reputation as an equitable employer
- Support the wider outcomes as listed in the [Council Delivery Plan 2025](#).

# Background

Our equality outcomes and action plan have been informed by comprehensive data and insight gathering through the feedback from our diverse workforce. To develop our outcomes as an employer, an internal Employee Experience Survey was carried out with 1,711 respondents. We have also considered feedback provided through focus groups with our Equality Ambassadors, Employee Equality Groups and Trade Unions and drawn from guidance and requirements from legislation and accreditations. The new action plan builds on the learning and experience from our previous equality, diversity and inclusion action plan.

The outcomes, underlying action and indicators have been identified based on:

- A review of previous equality outcomes and the supporting action plan
- Consultation, engagement and feedback from employee working groups
- Results of our Employee Experience Survey
- Guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Guidance from the Equally Safe and Work programme
- Legislation and changing requirements to meet the needs of the General Duty under the Equality Act 2010
- Research from Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and other organisations for best practice

## Guiding Principles

Our Guiding Principles were designed by our staff and strengthen our commitment to creating the kind of culture that our employees say they want, with associated capabilities to support our workforce with the right tools and support to carry out their roles which then supports their awareness of their responsibility and duty to deliver fair and equitable services to our citizens.



These principles are rooted in a collective commitment to creating a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable workforce. Since 2023, we have had a capability framework for employees that is aligned to our Guiding Principles, and a specific core capability for employees that sets out the necessity duty for all employees to have awareness, skills and behaviours around equality, diversity and inclusion.

# The Action Plan 2025 – 2029

The action plan has been structured by the following improvement themes to achieve the outcomes:



## Leadership and Management

Our goal is to have a workplace where leaders actively and visibly champion and model Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). This includes senior managers sponsoring events that celebrate cultural, social, and individual diversity. We are also committed to attracting new talent and improving representation by reviewing and refining our processes to ensure they foster an inclusive environment for everyone.



## Data

Our goal is to have data-informed practices that boost our understanding, track progress, and tackle underperformance and underrepresentation. This includes system changes to enhance workforce value and participation. We will achieve this by implementing a robust framework to collect, analyse, and report diversity and inclusion data. This includes monitoring workforce demographics, tracking recruitment and retention, and using surveys to gauge employee perceptions, all supported through the ethical use of technology.



## Learning and Development

Training and development are key to our success as a local authority. They equip our workforce with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in our roles and provide effective services to colleagues and the diverse citizens we serve. Our goal is to provide a variety of tailored new and existing learning and development programs and toolkits that will address role-specific needs, foster leadership development and improve cultural competency. We will use technology to support accessibility of programs we deliver.



## Policies and Practices

Our goal is to embed diversity and inclusion in every Council policy and practice. By prioritising these principles in our daily decision-making and actions, we aim to foster an equitable environment that values the unique contributions of each employee, boosts participation, representation, and impact across our operations. We will refine our recruitment practices to attract diverse talent, regularly assess progress through feedback and data, and recognise and reward employee contributions. Through ongoing workforce engagement, we will continue to build a more inclusive environment where everyone's contributions are valued.



## Recruitment, Selection and Retention

Our goal is to improve the diversity of our workforce to reflect that of our city's varied experiences and needs. We will enhance and regularly monitor recruitment practices by removing biases and barriers, ensuring diverse talent is attracted through inclusive recruitment packs, having diverse hiring panels, and broadening our recruitment channels to improve recruitment, development and retention.



## Consultation and Engagement

We will build a culture of consultation and meaningful engagement by actively seeking feedback from employees of diverse backgrounds through accessible platforms for open dialogue and collaboration. By valuing and integrating this feedback, we will refine our policies and practices, strengthen relationships with our workforce, and ensure our actions align with their needs.



## Communication and awareness-raising

We will promote diversity and inclusion through targeted communication and awareness campaigns across platforms like the Intranet, Viva Engage, webinars, workshops, social media, and newsletters. By educating our workforce, elected members and citizens about Equality Diversity and Inclusion, we will raise visibility of initiatives and achievements, creating an environment where all individuals feel represented, valued and supported.

All actions listed in the plan work to meet the general duty under the Public Sector Equality Duty where the outcomes and underpinning actions must relate to eliminating discrimination, promoting equal opportunities, and fostering good relations between people with and without protected characteristics.

**Protected Characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010 are:**



To achieve better outcomes, solutions need to be inclusive and consider how the intersection of all protected characteristics can affect experiences. The focus of the action plan has been grouped under the broader themes to inspire collaborative actions, broken down by equality group to identify specific needs, and used to set key measures for driving action planning on each theme.

Measuring success will be a multifaceted process and we anticipate topics and measures under the themes will evolve as actions and updated legislation will lead to desired outcomes. The action plan will respond to emerging needs, ensuring continuous improvement, and avoids complacency.

## Employer Outcomes 2025- 2029

**Equality Outcome 1:** Our workforce is as diverse and representative of the city we serve, with a focus on sex, disability, race and sexual orientation.



To achieve this, our focus is on enhancing recruitment and selection processes, collecting good quality equality data, improving retention rates, and therefore increasing workforce diversity. This includes increased representation of individuals with protected characteristics such as sex, disability, race, or sexual orientation.


**Equality Outcome 2:** Employees feel their voice and experience is heard, valued and helps shape decisions that affect them.


Success will be evaluated based on qualitative and quantitative data gathered from employee feedback and increased participation rates.




## Planning with purpose – our Goals, Measures and Actions

Improvement Theme	Improvement Measures	Improvement Actions	Timescale for Delivery	Delivery Lead
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>    <p>Our leaders and management are key to creating a culture that builds an inclusive workplace.</p>  <p>Our goal is to have a workplace where leaders actively and visibly champion and model Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI).</p>  <p>This includes senior managers sponsoring events that celebrate cultural, social, and individual diversity. We are also committed to attracting new talent and improving representation by reviewing and refining our processes to ensure they foster an inclusive environment for everyone.</p>	<p>% increase in employee perception of managers and leaders being trained and educated about Equality, Diversity and Inclusion standards.</p>	<p>Increase active engagement between decision makers and with employee equality groups to help shape system and policy changes.</p>	<p>Ongoing with a review every 6 months.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People Development</li> </ul>
	<p>% increase of managers have completed the mandatory Equality Diversity and Inclusion mandatory training.</p>	<p>Senior managers sponsoring events that recognise cultural, social, and individual diversity. Link to visible leadership activity.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equalities</li> <li>Internal Comms</li> </ul>
	<p>Number of senior managers sponsored Equality Diversity and Inclusion events, communications or initiatives</p>	<p>Scope and deliver a variety of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion development training for our leaders through the Leadership Forum.</p>	<p>Ongoing with an annual review.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equalities</li> <li>People Development</li> <li>Internal comms</li> </ul>
	<p>% increase in the value of Continuous Review and Development (CR&amp;D) meetings.</p>	<p>Review the CR&amp;D process to ensure it supports inclusive development and career progression.</p>	<p>Report on progress by April 2027</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People Development</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Current Baseline 24/25:</b> 41% of the workforce agreed as part of the employee experience survey that managers and leaders are well trained and educated about Equality Diversity and Inclusion standards and 48% remained neutral on this.</p>	<p>Deliver a leadership forum session on relevant and changing legislation including the Supreme Court's ruling on the definition of 'Sex' and the Scottish Government's guidance.</p>	<p>2025/2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legal</li> <li>Equalities</li> </ul>
	<p>42% of the workforce find CR&amp;D meetings useful.</p>	<p>Develop an inclusive leadership and management toolkit that provides key guidance and practical tips for day-to-day visible inclusive leadership that fosters a respectful and inclusive environment. Include links to frontline communication methods.</p>	<p>August 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talent</li> <li>People Development</li> </ul>
<b>DATA</b>  	<p>% increase recording of Equality Diversity and Inclusion data into CoreHR by employees.</p> <p><b>Current Baseline 2024/25:</b></p>	<p>Develop a framework to capture intersectional data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment</li> <li>Promoted posts</li> <li>Pay Gap (Gender, Disability and Ethnicity reporting)</li> </ul>	<p>Report on progress by April 2027</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talent</li> <li>People Development</li> </ul>


Improvement Theme	Improvement Measures	Improvement Actions	Timescale for Delivery	Delivery Lead
<p>Our goal is to have data-informed practices that increase our understanding, track progress, and tackle underperformance and underrepresentation. This includes enhance workforce value and participation in data capture.</p> <p>We will achieve this by implementing a robust framework to collect, analyse, and report diversity and inclusion data. This includes monitoring workforce demographics, tracking recruitment and retention, and using surveys to gauge employee perceptions, all supported through the ethical use of technology.</p>	<p>% of people who have answered each diversity question</p> <p>Sex – 100% completion Age – 100% completion Disability – 24% completion Ethnicity – 25% completion Gender identity – 24% completion Religion/ Belief – 24% completion Sexual orientation – 24% completion Marriage and civil partnership – 22% completion</p>	Review corporate employee and citizen forms to ensure data fields are in line with latest guidance, are consistent and flexible to allow individuals to add multiple disabilities.	Report on progress by April 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equalities</li> </ul>
		Develop targeted communication campaigns on why we collect Equality, Diversity and Inclusion data, what it is used for and how it is managed and stored. The aim being to raise awareness and provide assurances to employees on why this data is important and to increase the number of employees completing the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion questions on CoreHR.	Every 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equalities</li> <li>Internal Comms</li> </ul>
		Review of new start process to include improved guidance on equality data collection.	April 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talent</li> </ul>
		Review corporate data dashboards and explore the Employee Data Forum's abilities to disaggregate data across Equality Diversity and Inclusion to include intersectionality of data.	Report on progress by April 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equalities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Learning and Development</b></p>  <p>Training and development are key to our success as a local authority. They equip our workforce with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in our roles and provide effective services to colleagues and the diverse citizens we serve.</p> <p>Our goal is to provide a variety of tailored new and existing learning and development programs and</p>	<p>% increase in the completion of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion mandatory training by all employees.</p> <p><b>Current Baseline 24/25:</b> In 2024 there was a 72% mandatory training completion rate, showing significant improvement during the last Equality Diversity and Inclusion action plan cycle.</p> <p>Our aim is to achieve over 80% and 100% having completed as new starts</p>	Redevelop and relaunch of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion mandatory training for all staff on ACC learn.	April 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People Development</li> <li>Equalities</li> </ul>
		Develop tailored Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training for managers to equip them with tools to foster a respectful and inclusive environment.	April 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People Development</li> <li>Equalities</li> </ul>
		Frontline operational version to be developed and rolled out across frontline teams including the recording of completion.	August 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People Development</li> </ul>
		Review communication and promotion on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion development – mandatory and non-mandatory e.g. an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion week to showcase what is available for employees.	April 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People Development</li> <li>Internal Comms</li> </ul>


Improvement Theme	Improvement Measures	Improvement Actions	Timescale for Delivery	Delivery Lead
<p>toolkits that will address role-specific needs, foster leadership development and improve cultural competency. We will use technology to support accessibility of programs we deliver.</p>		<p>Expand current equality, diversity and inclusion training and development programmes to address gaps identified in our training needs, accounting for frontline operation teams, to ensure we maintain current knowledge and understanding of equality agendas and are aligned to current legislation.</p> <p>Additional focus areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inclusive language and terminology</li> <li>▪ Gypsy / Traveller awareness</li> <li>▪ Religion, Faith and Belief</li> <li>▪ Gendered budgeting</li> <li>▪ Violence Against Women</li> <li>▪ Social model of disability</li> <li>▪ Disability Awareness</li> <li>▪ Cultural awareness</li> <li>▪ Integrated Impact Assessments</li> <li>▪ Allyship</li> <li>▪ Incident reporting</li> <li>▪ UK Supreme Court Ruling</li> <li>▪ Fostering a respectful and inclusive environment</li> </ul>	Ongoing and reviewed every 6 months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People Development</li> <li>• Equalities</li> </ul>
		Develop refresher training modules for Recruitment and Selection training on ACC Learn.	August 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talent/People Development</li> </ul>
		Develop a guide on chairing inclusive meetings to ensure equitable participation and needs of participants are met in the meeting.	April 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equalities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policies and Practices</b></p>  <p>We use policies and guidelines to shape our practices including decision making, risk management, compliance and consistency.</p>	<p>Increase % of policies reviewed and developed to support an inclusive working environment.</p> <p><b>Current Baseline 24/25:</b></p> <p>The Policy Review group is responsible for supporting the</p>	As part of ongoing policy review develop or refresh policies to ensure equality impact is considered, supports inclusive working environment and reflects the needs of current and potential workforce.	Ongoing and reviewed every 2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Policy review owners</li> </ul>
		Respond to any updated legislative requirements relating to our Public Sector Equality Duty.	As per any formal guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equalities</li> </ul>
		Adopt and implement a social model of disability approach to identify physical, attitudinal, communication and systemic barriers for our workforce.	Report on progress by April 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equalities</li> </ul>

Improvement Theme	Improvement Measures	Improvement Actions	Timescale for Delivery	Delivery Lead
<p>Our goal is to embed diversity and inclusion in every Council policy and practice. By prioritising these principles in our daily decision-making and actions, we aim to foster an equitable environment that values the unique contributions of each employee, boosts participation, representation, and impact across our operations.</p> <p>We will refine our recruitment practices to attract diverse talent, regularly assess progress through feedback and data, and recognise and reward employee contributions. Through ongoing workforce engagement, we will continue to build a more inclusive environment where everyone's contributions are valued.</p>	<p>Council's policy review process which includes review and scrutiny of the policies to ensure that equality, accessibility and compliance with legislative requires and embedded with our / the Council's policies. 58 policies have been reviewed of which 15 are People related policies.</p> <p>10% of those who responded to the employee experience survey selected Training for managers and 4% selected improved policy and 4% guidance as actions that may support improvements.</p>	Explore the development and clarification of routes to raise concerns out with the normal line management structure to further enhance confidence in reporting issues of discrimination, harassment and victimisation as part of our dignity and respect at work policy.	December 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People Development</li> <li>Employee Relations</li> <li>Mental Health and Wellbeing</li> </ul>
		Develop an anti-racist strategy through co-production with key employees and partners tackle racial inequality	April 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equalities</li> </ul>
		Maintain accreditation of the Disability Confident Employer where the Council supports people with disabilities in employment.	Achieved and reviewed in 2028.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equalities</li> </ul>
		As our workforce is made up of 70% women with 37% over the age of 50, we will ensure adequate support is in place for women through the development of a menopause policy.	April 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mental Health and Wellbeing Advisor</li> </ul>
		Update and implement policy and guidance to align with any current legislative requirement.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy Group</li> </ul>
		Following the Supreme Court Ruling, there has been a confirmed position of 'Sex' under the Equality Act. Any formal guidance following this ruling will have implications on our policies and practices.	2025/2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People and Citizen Services</li> </ul>
		Review of policies, procedures, and guidance that mention gender recognition certificates, ensuring alignment with EHRC and Scottish Government guidance and inclusion of relevant definitions in training.		
<p><b>Recruitment, Selection and Retention</b></p> 	<p>% increase from underrepresented groups participating and completing management and leadership development programmes.</p>	Implementing trauma-informed practices in the workplace to ensure safety, trust, choice, collaboration, and empowerment.	April 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People Development</li> </ul>
		Continue to develop a pipeline of future leaders with a focus on underrepresented groups. This includes the Aspiring Leaders and the Accelerator Programme as well as a focus on career progression pathways and links to CR&D process for career development.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talent</li> <li>People Development</li> </ul>



Improvement Theme	Improvement Measures	Improvement Actions	Timescale for Delivery	Delivery Lead
<p>People make the organisation and Aberdeen City Council aspires to be a diverse and inclusive employer that reflects the communities we serve.</p> <p>Our goal is to improve the diversity of our workforce to reflect that of our city's varied experiences and needs. We will enhance and regularly monitor recruitment practices by removing biases and barriers, ensuring diverse talent is attracted through inclusive recruitment packs, having diverse hiring panels, and broadening our recruitment channels to improve recruitment, development and retention.</p>	% of applications received from those in under-represented groups	Regularly review our recruitment data and identify and update actions to address under-representation across all characteristics.	April 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talent</li> <li>Equalities</li> </ul>
	Increased diversity within our workforce including within management roles from targeted underrepresented groups	Promote ACC as an employer of choice to a diverse audience to attract new talent and engaging with the community. This includes targeted social media campaigns, linking with community / external groups and Third sector partners.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talent</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Current Baseline 24/25:</b></p> <p>A robust data collection is needed offer insights into the equality data in order to increase the proportion of staff from underrepresented groups who participate and successfully complete management and leadership development programs.</p> <p>As part of the Employee Experience Survey, 49% of respondents agreed that all employees have fair and equal access to promotion.</p> <p>Feedback through consultation highlighted a desire for increased emphasis on diversity in recruitment panels. Currently, all lead recruiting managers must complete the Recruitment and Selection training with a refresher every 3 years.</p>	Increase awareness of and support programmes and opportunities that support external applicants with applying for jobs.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talent</li> <li>ABZ Works</li> </ul>
		Promote internal CV workshops and Interview Skills training programmes for development of internal employees.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talent</li> <li>People Development</li> </ul>
		Continue to undertake targeted recruitment campaigns to promote vacancies to as diverse an audience as possible, using a wide range of recruitment channels and platforms. This includes inclusive recruitment job adverts, promoting the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Recruitment Pack and social media campaigns and promotion.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talent</li> </ul>
		Through the employee groups, explore what barriers are perceived to career progression and consider areas of improvement.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equalities</li> <li>Talent</li> </ul>
		Review employee turnover and exit reasons by protected characteristics.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talent</li> </ul>
		Continue to develop our Developing the Young Workforce initiatives including our Apprenticeship Programme, Career Ready Programme and ABZ Employability Pathways Programme, work experience and internships.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talent</li> </ul>
		Ongoing evaluation of our recruitment and selection process to ensure it continues to be current, accessible and inclusive and make any identified improvements. This includes the information on the ACC website, My Job Scotland website, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Recruitment Pack, the Guaranteed Interview Scheme, Recruitment and Selection Training and inclusive promotion of our vacancies.	April 2026 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talent</li> </ul>

Improvement Theme	Improvement Measures	Improvement Actions	Timescale for Delivery	Delivery Lead
<b>Consultation and Engagement</b>  <p>Listening and valuing the diverse employee voices creates the basis for change and through consensus there is collective ownership of changes that need to happen.</p> <p>We will build a culture of consultation and meaningful engagement by actively seeking feedback from employees of diverse backgrounds through accessible platforms for open dialogue and collaboration. By valuing and integrating this feedback, we will refine our policies and practices, strengthen relationships with our workforce, and ensure our actions align with their needs.</p>		Build partnerships with local groups that represent minority groups / underrepresented groups to collaborate on Equality Diversity and Inclusion and employment initiatives.	April 2026 with a review every 6 months.	• Talent
		Participate in targeted community events and job fairs to promote Aberdeen City Council as an attractive employer of choice.	Ongoing	• Talent
	% increase in employees reporting on feeling included at team meetings.  % increase in employee awareness of the Council's Equality Ambassadors Network and Employee Equality Groups.  % increase in membership in the Equality Ambassadors Network and Employee Equality Groups.  Increase in the number of targeted engagement activities the networks and actively involved in.  Increase in the number of our younger workforce engaged in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives.  <b>Current baseline 2024/25:</b> While 78% say team meetings happen, 61% feel included in decision making.  39% of respondents are not aware of the Council's Equality Ambassadors and Employee Equality Groups.	Promote inclusive team practices, such as equitable participation in meetings and decision-making.	Initially by April 2026	• People Development • Equalities
		Support team leaders to continue to build positive team relationships through effective team meetings that enable inclusion and to focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion positive awareness, through comms, training and toolkits	Ongoing with an annual review	• People Development • Equalities
		Refresh the terms of reference of employee groups to ensure groups can meet to connect and learn, have peer to peer support and deliver on actions in this action plan.	November 2025	• Equalities
		Raise awareness of the Equality Ambassadors Network and Employee Equality Groups and promote participation in the groups.	Ongoing	• Equalities
		Promote the Employee Equality Groups as a source of consultation across services and with decision makers to get a variety of feedback.		• Internal Comms
		Improve engagement with our younger workforce to explore and understand their needs around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.		•
		Monitor staff experience via employee experience surveys, leaver information, absences and employee relations cases and instigate remedial actions where required.	Ongoing	• Employee Relations • People Development
		Increase consultation with employees to inform Integrated Impact Assessments and while developing / refreshing policies and practices.	Ongoing	• Equalities
		Promote the use and adoption of the Community Planning Aberdeen Engagement toolkit to support effective engagement with workforce and citizens.	Ongoing	• Equalities

Improvement Theme	Improvement Measures	Improvement Actions	Timescale for Delivery	Delivery Lead
	<p>Currently there are 91 members in the Equality Ambassadors Network some of whom are members of the Employee Equality groups.</p> <p>Workforce aged Under 25 have a higher neutral or disagree response to awareness and participation in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives. 51% under the age of 25 are not aware of the Council's Equality Ambassadors and Employee Equality Groups.</p>			
<p><b>Communication and awareness-raising</b></p>  <p>We will promote diversity and inclusion through targeted communication and awareness campaigns across platforms like the Intranet, Viva Engage, webinars, workshops, social media, and newsletters.</p> <p>By educating our workforce, elected members and citizens about Equality Diversity and Inclusion, we will raise visibility</p>	<p>Increase % of employees that agree that we clearly communicate our commitment to equality diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>Increase % of employees that know how to access or participate in internal equalities activities</p> <p>Increase in number of visits to the Employee Diversity and Inclusion hub pages.</p> <p><b>Current baseline:</b></p> <p>As part of the Employee Experience Survey, 60% agree that Aberdeen City Council clearly communicates its commitment to equality, diversity,</p>	Include a quarterly internal newsletter on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Hub information on initiatives, events, training and other opportunities.	Start by September 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal Comms</li> <li>Equalities</li> </ul>
		Promote digital inclusion which supports accessibility, collaboration and supports inclusive communication through delivery of digital training on tools like Co-pilot and accessibility features on Microsoft.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People Development</li> </ul>
		Increase topics covered to promote and support council's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equalities</li> <li>Internal Comms</li> </ul>
		Regular update of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Hub to ensure employees are aware of any new changes in legislation, policy and guidance.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equalities</li> <li>Internal Comms</li> </ul>
		Utilisation of Toolbox Talks and Education specific communication channels to increase awareness amongst frontline staff.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People Development</li> <li>Internal Comms</li> </ul>

Improvement Theme	Improvement Measures	Improvement Actions	Timescale for Delivery	Delivery Lead
of initiatives and achievements, creating an environment where all individuals feel represented, valued and supported.	<p>and inclusion as an employer; and just over half at 52% agree that the council actively promotes workforce diversity through its internal communications.</p> <p>38% of respondents do not know how to access or participate in internal equalities activities and 36% had a neutral response.</p> <p>The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Hub was launched March 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 455 employees visited the page since development</li><li>• 2,231 total number of visits over the lifetime of the page</li></ul>	Ensure alongside all other actions that there is an element of awareness raising for lesser engaged employee groups.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Internal Comms</li></ul>

## Governance

To support and build on an inclusive workplace culture, it needs everyone in the organisation to work together. The intention to achieving our equality outcomes is underpinned by this action plan which will be reported to the Staff Governance Committee every 2 years for the duration of this plan. A progress report will also be presented to the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee by April 2027.

## Monitoring and Reporting Progress

It is essential that we evaluate our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion interventions to understand their effectiveness and determine whether they are achieving their intended outcomes. By reporting regularly and ensuring that we are compliant, we can understand what works and what does not. A statutory progress report will be next presented to Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee in 2027. Any changes, updates or new areas of focus based on the data and analysis from the Equality Outcomes Mainstreaming Progress Report will be highlighted and shared through a future meeting of the Staff Governance Committee.

The Action Plan will remain a 'live' document where actions and indicators will be revised based on reviews, achievements and current needs. Progress on activity will be gathered and reported through the Equality Working Groups and will be added to the progress report for 2027. Regular updates will also be provided to Equality Ambassadors Network, Equality Working Groups and Trade Unions.

## Managing Risks

As part of developing this action plan, the following risks and barriers were identified that could prevent or slow down progress in delivering on actions.

- Low uptake by employees on completing their equality data.
- Time and resource to deliver training.
- Poor attendance at training.

## Further Information

If you have any comments, suggestions and ideas or would like to be a part of the equality working groups, please contact:

[equality\\_and\\_diversity@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:equality_and_diversity@aberdeencity.gov.uk)

The full report and supporting documents are available on the website:

[Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report | Aberdeen City Council](#)

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## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Staff Governance Committee
<b>DATE</b>	25 August 2025
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Employee Experience Survey 2024/25
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CORS/25/148
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Andy MacDonald
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Isla Newcombe / Martin Murchie
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Isla Newcombe / Martin Murchie
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	2.6 and 2.7

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report presents the results of the Employee Experience Survey 2024, including analysis, commentary and further actions proposed to respond to issues which the survey has highlighted.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Note the results of the 2024 Employee Experience Survey and the action areas in Appendix 1 to this report.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The Employee Experience Survey was launched on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2024 and remained open until 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025. It sought to gather insights and feedback from employees into various aspects of the employee experience to inform future improvements. Whilst predominantly an online survey, paper copies were made available and support to complete the survey along with the availability of alternative formats. In total, 1,711 responses were received. This represents a return rate of almost 20%.

This response rate is consistent with previous Aberdeen City Council survey response rates including the Future of Work Survey (2020) - 20% and the survey related to the proposal to reduce the working week (2024) – 25%.

To compare survey response rates externally, analysis indicates that survey response rates depend on factors such as the survey type, target audience, and distribution channels. Generally, 20-25% is considered a reasonable response rate for online surveys. For internal surveys, a reasonable response rate is between 10% and 30%.



### 3.2 The survey focussed on the following areas:

#### Organisational Culture

Questions were based on the Council's Guiding Principles and, for each respondent, their Cluster; Job Family; Length of Service; Working Pattern; and Working Style were recorded.

#### Wellbeing

Questions were asked to build on previous feedback gathered from the 'Wellbeing Pulse Check' in winter 2023 and to provide insights into the mental health and wellbeing of our workforce, helping to identify any hot spots and trends across the organisation and to inform priority areas for the Mental Health Action Plan in the year ahead.

#### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Questions were asked to understand employee views on how well the Council performs in supporting EDI issues and initiatives as an employer. Of the 1,711 responses, 1,693 (99%) of respondents responded to one or more EDI question.

The questions were grouped in the following themes:

- Overall impressions about equality, diversity and inclusion and Aberdeen City Council
- Internal Communications and Employee Engagement
- Recruitment and Promotion
- Training, Development and Skills
- Leadership and Management of EDI

The responses from this section were used to inform the new set of Equality Outcomes as an employer for 2025-2029 and the supporting EDI Action Plan.

#### Safety and Inclusion

Questions were asked to assess our public sector equality duty to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act. This section also sought to understand barriers and causes of gender inequality in the workplace and to support the work being done as part of the Equally Safe at Work accreditation programme.

#### Other areas of the employee experience

Questions were asked about:

- Employee Induction
- Flexible Working



- Employee Satisfaction

- 3.3 Equality information was also collected as part of the survey, with respondents invited to give information relating to age, sex, sexual orientation, trans history, ethnicity, religion or belief, marital status, physical and mental health conditions, and caring responsibilities (pregnancy/maternity). These questions were optional.

#### Analysis

- 3.4 Survey questions required a response indicating:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

For these quantitative questions, dashboards have been developed allowing appropriate interactive interrogation and analysis corporately and by each Function and Cluster.

- 3.5 In some case, free text answers were sought. Summary comments have been included where they may help to offer further context.
- 3.6 Overarching themes and action areas are included within the report at Appendix 1.
- 3.7 A series of 12 focus groups across job families were conducted to delve deeper into the responses received. The focus groups were focussed around some of the key themes raised in the survey. Summary comments have been included where they may help to offer further context.

#### Next Steps

- 3.8 In addition to the overall proposed areas of improvement contained within the report, each Cluster Senior Management Team will review their results. Issues identified and priorities for improvement may need to be focussed and targeted to that area and by the local senior management team, drawing on support from People and Citizen Services.
- 3.9 The data collected as part of the EDI and Safety and Inclusion sections has been used to develop the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion action plan. This action plan is being developed to map out how we will meet the outcomes and address any issues identified. The plan will also be presented to committee for consideration.
- 3.10 A report will be presented to the Anti Poverty and Inequality committee by April 2027 mapping out progress made against the new equality outcomes and supporting action plan.

3.11 The data collected as part of the Wellbeing questions within the survey will be checked against the recently approved Mental Health Action Plan and to continue to help shape future developments and initiatives and will be included in the Mental Health Action Plan.

3.12 The workforce delivery plan was approved by committee in 2023 and covers a 3 to 5 year period. As part of the next review and update of this plan, the outcomes from the survey and the actions identified will be incorporated and reviewed alongside other key data sets.

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

#### 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

#### 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

#### 7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	None		L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Compliance</b>	Risk of non-compliance with ED&I regulations	Ongoing monitoring and implementation with our Corporate team as required for existing measures and updates in line with Government and H&S guidance.	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Operational</b>	Maintaining customer delivery and service provision through changing government requirements and adjusting	Clear guidance and principles for SMTs and employees as continue to adapt as a local authority. Through the workstreams, manage ways of working and digital solutions, use of buildings etc in line	L	<b>Yes</b>

	ways of working.	with service area needs.		
<b>Financial</b>	There could be required spend for training and promotional printed material for any staff communications going forward.	This training/promotional spending will be covered by the agreed corporate training budget held within People and Citizen Services.	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Reputational</b>	As an employer, there could be a perception that we are not an employer of choice or a fair and inclusive employer.	Further development of project plans around flexible working and family friendly policies which highlight the benefits of working for the organisation.	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	Potential reduction in staff commute and business travel. To be balanced with energy consumption.	Continue work with Environmental Policy team and Corporate Landlord team to assess this. Build on Green Champions network	L	<b>Yes</b>

## 8. OUTCOMES

<b>Council Delivery Plan 2024</b>	
<b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b> <a href="#"><u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u></a>	<b>Impact of Report</b>
	The Employee Experience and any resulting work feeds into our responsibilities under Workforce Delivery Plan and the vision of the 21st Century Public Servant.
<a href="#"><u>Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026</u></a>	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	<p>11. Healthy life expectancy (time lived in good health) is five years longer by 2026</p> <p>“support 100 people to feel confident to promote wellbeing and good health”</p> <p>Flexible working to improve work life balance. More time off for caring responsibilities (Family Friendly policies). Promotion of Wellbeing support and services.</p>

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	No assessment required. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Isla Newcombe, Chief Officer - People & Citizen Services on 21 May 2025.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	A DPIA is not required for this report, but one was carried out for the Employee Experience Survey.
<b>Other</b>	n/a

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 none

## 11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix 1- Aberdeen City Council Employee Experience Survey 2024 - Results

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

<b>Name</b>	Isla Newcombe / Martin Murchie
<b>Title</b>	CO People and Citizen Services / Data and Insights
<b>Email Address</b>	inewcombe@aberdeencity.gov.uk

# Employee Experience Survey – Summary of Results

## Executive Summary:

Aberdeen City Council undertook an employee experience survey between December 2024 and January 2025 which received a 20% response rate from approximately 8,500 employees, covering all of the Council's job families. The survey provides valuable insights into employee perspectives, identifying strengths and areas for further development across the Council.

Following initial analysis of the responses, a number of staff focus groups were held to further explore issues which had been highlighted through the survey.

### General Commentary

When asked 'would you recommend the Council as a good place to work?', of the 1,692 who responded to this question, 1,316 employees (78%) gave a score of between 6 and 10. Taking anything at 6 or above to be positive, most employees who responded would recommend the Council.

While there are areas that warrant further exploration and action, overall, the survey results indicate many positive aspects of the employee experience at Aberdeen City Council. By addressing the areas highlighted and drawing on the strengths demonstrated to do so, the Council can continue to support employees to be at their best at work and to deliver for the people and place of Aberdeen.

The results show that there is a tendency to answer more positively with regards to respondents' local line manager, local culture and ways of working and less positively when answering about the organisation as a whole. This is more pronounced in areas that are more remote from the corporate centre. This is often the case in employee opinion surveys as relates to the respondents' experiences day to day.

## Main Themes and Actions

### Key Positive Themes

1. **Training and Skills Development:** Positive feedback was received regarding access to training, with 71% of respondents agreeing that they have the development and training opportunities they need. Importantly, with increasing requirement to develop and deliver digital services and with a focus in recent years on digital skills development, 76% of respondents agreed that they are confident in using technology.

2. **Connection to Purpose:** Over half of the respondents felt positively connected to the Council's purpose, and more than three-quarters believed they have a role in meeting the organisation's challenges. This sense of purpose is crucial for fostering engagement and motivation.
3. **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI):** Employees have positive views on EDI, with 66% of respondents agreeing that increased diversity and inclusion positively impact culture and productivity. 69% feel respected and included. The majority of respondents also felt confident reporting issues of concern to management.
4. **Flexible Working:** The impact of Flexible Working has been perceived by staff to be positive. Of those indicating that their role supports flexible/hybrid working 92% enjoy the flexibility hybrid working allows them, 72% state that they feel flexibility supports EDI across the organisation and 85% of respondents agree that hybrid working helps their work/life balance.
5. **Trust:** 89% feel trusted to get on and do a good job. Trust is critical to employee engagement and innovation and avoiding a culture of micro-management.
6. **Management and Leadership:** A significant majority, 79% of respondents, agree that there is good communication with their line managers, 79% feel they can report an issue of concern to management, and 89% see their line managers regularly.
7. **Team:** 78% agreed that team meetings take place regularly and that the team work well together. 77% agreed that their team was encouraging and supportive. 60% of respondents confirmed that they feel included in the workplace activities and decision making.

## Section 1: Priorities for Action

1. **Training and Skills Development:** With positive views given on the current availability of training and development, skills development has been identified across many of the themes as critical to meeting the challenges facing services where fewer positive survey responses were given. Noting that 33% agreed that the Council delivers excellent customer services (43% neutral and 23% negative), further development for staff will be important to mitigate the potential impact on our interactions with citizens of reducing resources and lowering service standards in some areas in order to focus on areas of greater or more critical demand.
2. **Communication:** While communication with line managers is strong (80% of respondents agree that there is good communication between them and their line manager) and 62% feel that change is well communicated by their line manager, and 64% felt they could find information and guidance that they needed, 47% felt the Council has good ways of keeping them informed. This shows that whilst direct communication from line managers is perceived positively, and information is readily available to staff there is an opportunity to enhance communication methods to ensure all employees feel more informed about the organisation corporately.

3. **Innovation and Improvement:** While 62% are encouraged to suggest ways to improve services and 69% are confident to share opinions and ideas for improvement, only 30% of respondents replied positively that the Council effectively gathers staff ideas to support transformation (41% neutral). Building on the positive culture of improvement to connect employees to broader transformational changes, and supporting required skills development, will be important as well as recognising that this is more difficult in areas of the Council that are more removed from the corporate centre.
4. **Continuous Review & Development (CR&D) Meetings:** While 64% find 1:1s of value, and 74% say their manager is committed to CR&D only 42% of respondents found CR&D meetings to be of value to them, with 29% neutral and 30% disagreeing. This indicates a need for continuing to review and improve the CR&D process and ensuring that the rationale for undertaking structured conversations about performance and development is shared and managers are supported to effectively complete CR&Ds, to ensure it is felt to be of value individually.
5. **Employee Wellbeing:** Wellbeing indicators showed positive and improving trends, for example 66% feel their manager supports them to maintain positive wellbeing and 61% feel they can strike the right balance between home and work life. At the same time 45% agreed (with 39% neutral) that the Council is a caring employer, and similarly 41% agreed (with 35% neutral) employee wellbeing is seen as a priority. This indicates that while there is a foundation of positive sentiment, there is a need for the Council to enhance its efforts in demonstrating care and prioritising employee wellbeing. Noting this may be impacted by perceptions of difficult decisions and reducing resources due to budget pressures. The neutral responses highlight an opportunity to engage further with employees and convert these neutral perceptions into positive ones by addressing their concerns and improving communication and initiatives related to wellbeing.
6. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI):** Whilst there are positive views expressed, for example 63% say the Council takes EDI seriously (only 4% disagree) and 60% say that the Council communicates its commitment to EDI (again only 4% disagree) it is also evident, including from some questions having a higher than average neutral rating, that there may be a lack of awareness across all employees of the range of support and initiatives available.
7. **Management and Leadership:** Whilst 60% agreed that senior managers make themselves accessible and visible (with a further 19% neutral), 53% agreed that senior managers are responsive when asked questions (28% neutral) and 42% (32% neutral) that they have confidence in senior managers. Questions relating to senior management (chief officers and service managers) showed a trend of being split across c.40% positive, c.30% neutral and c.20% negative. The high proportion of neutral responses indicates that there may be a lack of visibility or connection in some areas to the decisions and actions of leaders, and this view was shared during the focus groups.

## Action Plan

The table below highlights the key initiatives and actions that relate to the themes identified and are drawn from the survey results and focus group input. This is in parallel to delivery of the workforce delivery plan and the results of the survey will further be utilised as part of the refresh of the plan so that any identified gaps are incorporated. All actions are intended to be delivered by the end of 2026 at the latest or in line with the detail within the noted parallel action plans.

Theme	Focus Derived from Survey Results	Actions
<b>Training and Skills Development</b>	<p>Build on the strengths around perception of training and development and digital technology and skills to enhance the opportunities presented by the use of new technologies and for the other action areas identified below.</p> <p>Build on pride felt by employees to continue to focus on improving Citizen Interaction Experiences and employee confidence across all areas of the organisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of the digital skills agenda as part of the workforce delivery plan refresh</li> <li>• Refresh the Citizen, Digital and Data enabling strategy and continue delivery of new technologies to support service delivery.</li> <li>• Align learning and development with technology opportunities to maximise the use of generative AI and agentic AI and support the workforce in focusing on high value human activity.</li> <li>• Review and relaunch of the customer services online learning portal, 'Citizen Learning Academy' and associated learning opportunities to drive a positive impact on service delivery across the Council and support citizen centricity. This includes embedding the Citizen Interaction Policy, including the We CARE Charter and its importance across the organisation as well as embedding a focus on inclusivity.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication / Innovation &amp; Improvement</b>	<p>Draw on positive relationships with managers and target corporate communications methods and ideas gathering based on job family / service area.</p> <p>Given that 89% feel trusted to get on a do a good job,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support line managers to share information across the organisation, via the leadership forum or through greater use of cascade methods.</li> <li>• Further tailor communications to job families where required.</li> </ul>



	build on this and the culture of improvement within services to harness local ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with job families to establish most effective communication and ideas gathering method for each.</li> <li>• Support senior leaders to undertake regular communications relevant to their area – both corporately and within clusters.</li> </ul>
<b>Continuous Review &amp; Development (CR&amp;D) Meetings</b>	Draw on the positive feedback about 1:1 meetings to enhance the value of CR&D (performance appraisal) meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manager training to ensure process and conversations around performance are felt as valuable.</li> <li>• Continue to work with frontline areas to ensure CR&amp;D process is most suitable for job types including streamlined end of year review.</li> <li>• Drawing on successful templates and training for 1:1s to review the same for CR&amp;D.</li> <li>• Enhance the focus within CR&amp;D to career development and progression with an emphasis on our development programmes including the Accelerator programme focussing additional support for those from underrepresented groups.</li> </ul>
<b>Employee Wellbeing</b>	Drawing on and building upon positive wellbeing trends and recent reductions in absence levels. Continue to promote awareness of positive wellbeing initiatives such as EAP, Mental Health First Aiders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of the updated Mental Health Action Plan</li> <li>• Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing policy review</li> <li>• Continuation of the Absence Improvement Project</li> <li>• Family Friendly policy review</li> <li>• Promotion of Reasonable Adjustment Passports</li> <li>• Continue to promote Disability Confident Employer in recruitment initiatives.</li> <li>• Review of Absence Data Dashboard</li> </ul>
<b>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)</b>	<p>Build on the positive scores relating to Team and feeling respected and included.</p> <p>Increase awareness of the relevance and prevalence of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement and continuously monitor the refreshed and co-created EDI action plan which focuses on improving key themes identified.</li> </ul>

	<p>EDI initiatives, recruitment and development opportunities and participation across the organisation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support team leaders to continue to build positive team relationships, effective team meetings that enable inclusion and to focus on EDI positive awareness</li> <li>• Tailor communication and training around EDI using the existing EDI hub as a central, accessible and updated source for EDI opportunities, policies and events.</li> <li>• Continue to develop and expand EDI hub.</li> <li>• Develop targeted outreach initiatives to communicate with underrepresented groups.</li> <li>• Support senior leaders to champion and visibly support EDI related activity.</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	<p>Build on visible leadership and connection to Council vision across a number of job families to those furthest from the corporate centre.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to deliver frontline manager training to provide managers with skills aligned to the People Manager Capability framework</li> <li>• Leadership Forum Engagement and Training Plan</li> <li>• Refresh Visible Leadership Programme to ensure contact with more remote employees to leadership decision making and corporate vision</li> <li>• Ensure leadership development opportunities seek diverse candidates from the full range of operational areas / Job families and reinforce the importance of visible leadership.</li> <li>• Investigate the potential use of 360 feedback mechanisms.</li> </ul>

## Section 2: Introduction

The Employee Experience Survey launched on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2024 and was open until 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025. The purpose of the survey was to gather insights and feedback from all employees into various aspects of the employee experience at Aberdeen City Council to inform future improvements. The online survey (using Microsoft Forms) was promoted internally on the Council's intranet, Viva Engage (formerly Yammer), all staff email, Microsoft Teams sites to our various employee networks, and via Chief Officers communications directly to their Cluster.

Paper copies were made available and, where requested, support to complete the survey was offered along with the availability of alternative formats. Paper copies and posters were distributed to sites across our services.

### Response Rates

In total, the survey received 1,711 responses. The Council's total headcount at the time of the survey was around 8500, representing an almost 20% return rate. The survey was structured into several sections as shown below:

- About You
- Protected Characteristics
- Induction
- Flexible Working
- Our Guiding Principles – which included questions on communications, team work, management and leadership and employee development.
- Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)
- Safety and Inclusion

For most questions, respondents were asked the extent that they:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- (were) Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

A range of information was collected from respondents including Cluster; Length of Service; Working Pattern; Working Style; and Job Family. The concept of job families groups similar roles together based on the nature of work and required competencies. The table below shows the proportion of responses from each job family. A total of 1699 respondents answered the question on Job Family:

- Social and Community Services had the highest response rate with 365 responses – (21% of responses and 15% of the job family total)
- Information Services with 289 responses – (17% of responses and 24% of job family total)
- Teachers had 287 responses – (17% of responses and 13% of job family total)
- Frontline Operational Services had 256 responses – (15% of responses and 14% of job family total)
- Frontline Customer Services had 214 responses – (13% of responses and 70% of job family total)
- People Managers had 193 responses – (11% of responses and 39% of job family total)
- Chief officers had 12 responses – (7% of responses and 71% of job family total)
- Councillors had 2 responses – (1 % of responses)
- 81 didn't know their job family at the time of the survey. This equates to 5% of respondents. Whilst this is a reasonable response given that job families are a new approach within the organisation this could indicate a need for further engagement.

Job Family	Responses	Total Employees	%
Chief Officer	12	17	70.6%
Frontline Customer Services	214	304	70.4%
Frontline Operational Services	256	1769	14.5%
Information Services	289	1220	23.7%
People Manager	193	500	38.6%
Social & Community Services	365	2390	15.3%
Teacher (SNCT)	287	2214	13.0%

Equality information was also collected as part of the survey and included questions on age, sex, sexual orientation, trans history, ethnicity, religion or belief, marital status, disability, dependant children, parental leave and caring responsibilities.

## Results in more detail

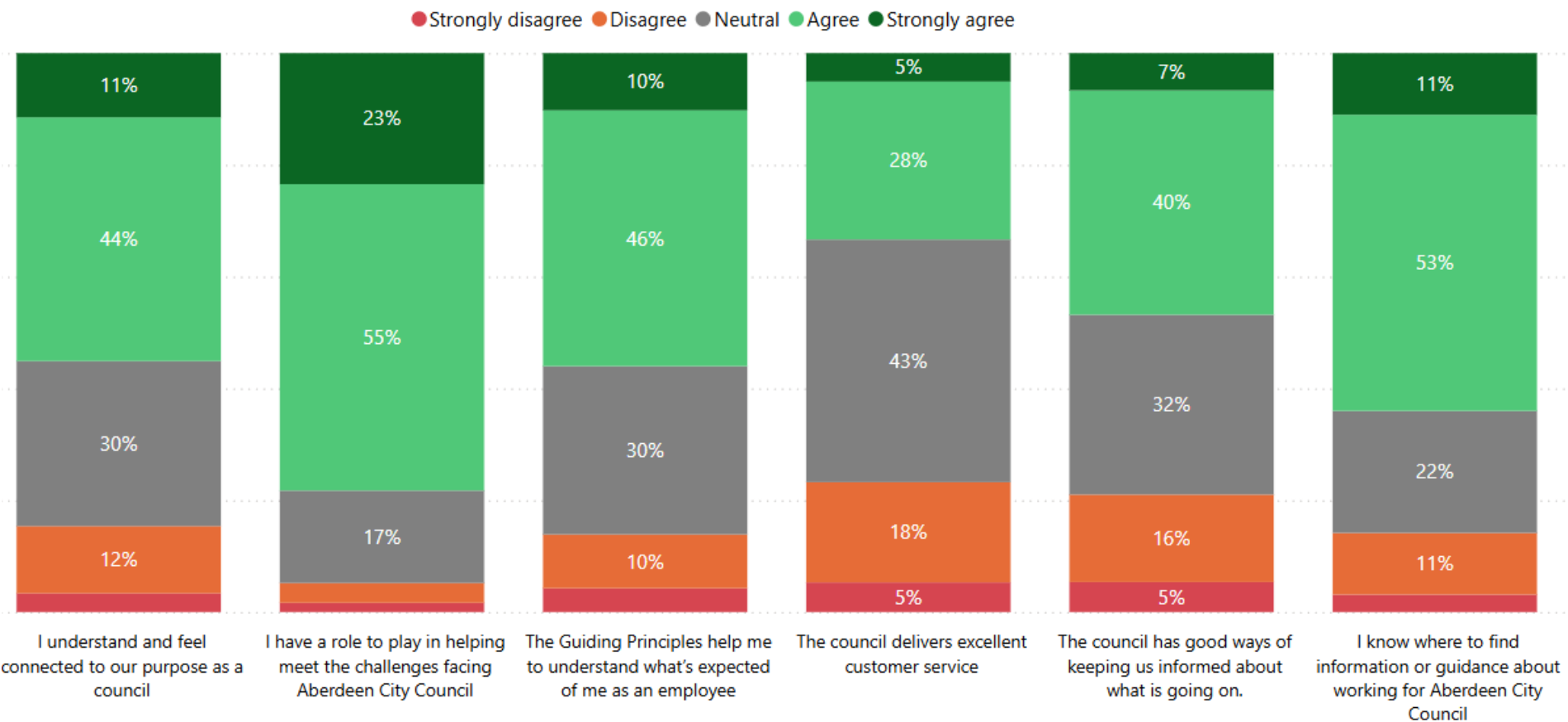
### Section 3: Organisational Culture: Our Guiding Principles

The Council's culture is shaped by five guiding principles, created by and for the people of Aberdeen City Council, to guide the way we work, the way we behave with each other and make sure we all have the same understanding of what it means to work here.

These principles guide the behaviours, relationships, and decision-making processes within the organisation; accordingly, employee experience survey questions were based on the principles:

- Purpose
- Pride
- Team
- Trust
- Value

### 3.1 Purpose: aligning work with the Council’s mission and goals, fostering a sense of direction and meaning.



#### Highlights and Analysis

It is important that employees understand and connect with the organisation's purpose. An awareness of how contributions support a shared mission can increase a sense of meaning and fulfilment. 78% (one of the highest results across the survey) stated that they have a role to play in helping meet the challenges the organisation faces, and more than half feel connected to our purpose as a Council. Relatively low numbers

(5% and 15% respectively) disagreed with these statements. Looking at these responses, it is clear that there are some differences across “job families” or role types.

The job family which showed the highest negative responses in terms of their understanding and connection to the purpose of the Council are “Teachers” (30% disagreeing and 36% agreeing), whilst noting that a higher percentage answered positively than negatively. This was explained in more detail during the Education focus group. Participants stated that, for teachers, the primary emphasis is placed on the school itself, considering its context and the shared values within the school community. Developing a distinct school identity is central to this approach. This collective focus is viewed positively. Positive initiatives to strengthen teachers connection within the wider Council were referred to, such as a video message from a Chief Officer or Chief Executive and information about relevant policies and procedures, however, they advised their principal attention remains on supporting their schools.

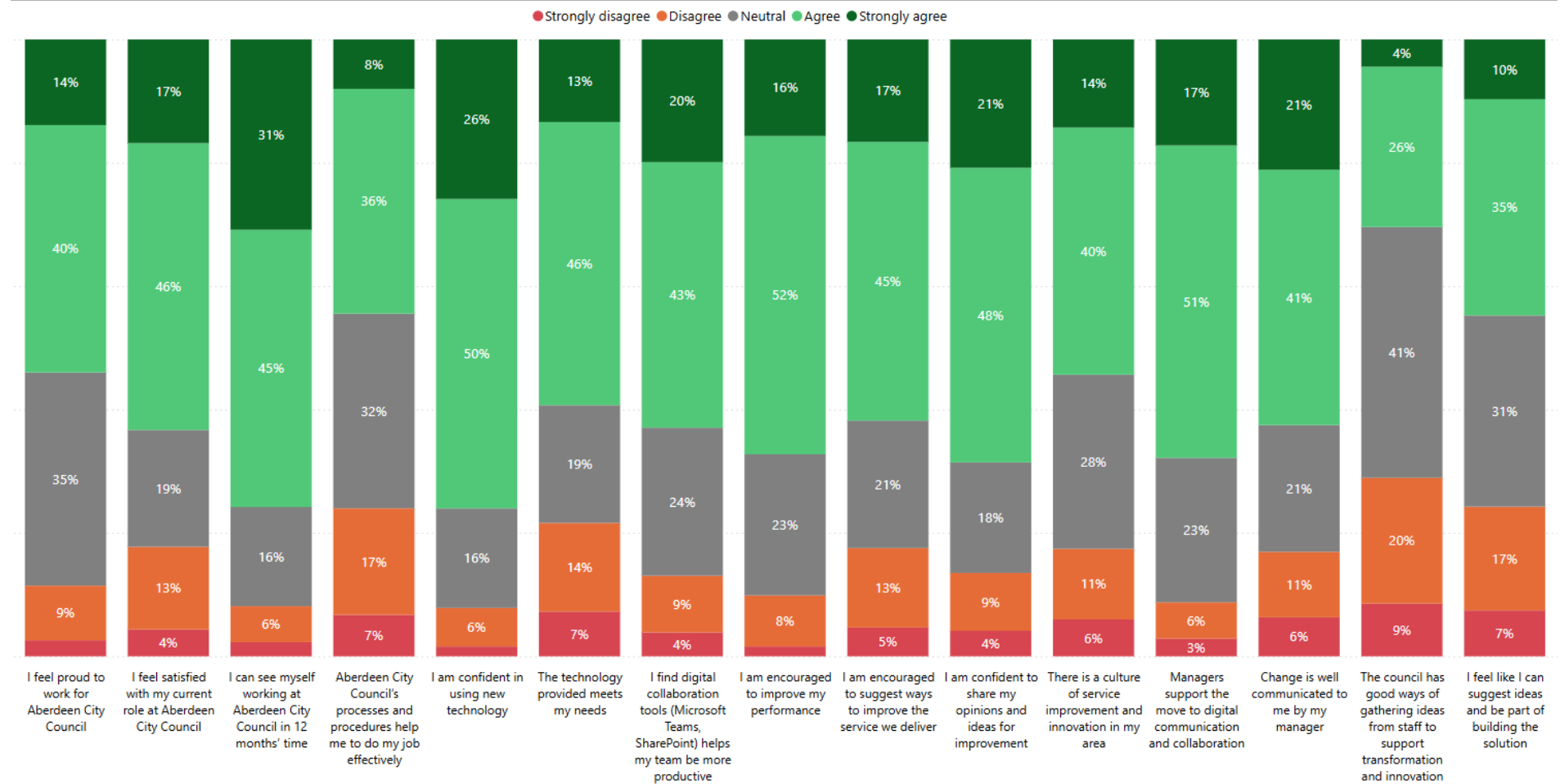
33% of respondents indicate that they agree that the Council delivers excellent services with 43% neutral responses. The neutral responses may, when considered together with more positive responses about their own teams, suggest that employees are not fully aware of the services delivered by the organisation as a whole / or of their quality. In addition, the financial challenges faced by all Councils over a number of years has put pressure on services. The Council’s service standards are reviewed regularly to ensure they remain deliverable within the councils funding envelope. It can feel challenging for staff to deliver to reduced service standards which are necessary to maintain financial sustainability or to increase services in another area of higher need.

47% of responses agree that the Council has good ways of keeping staff informed about what is going on, with 32% of neutral responses. This was further discussed in focus groups and whilst there are some differences between teams on the whole communication was seen as good, it was also noted that in some instances there was a need for more timely communication especially from senior managers.

One participant in follow up focus groups stated that the Chief Executive blogs provided: *Pretty good comms in terms of generalised information and it's at the level that she should be providing*

This is corroborated by statistics from our staff intranet which shows that these are amongst the most frequently read posts on the intranet, along with other senior leader blogs or updates, and further show that communication from senior leaders is highly valued and a need to continue to build on and expand upon this.

### 3.2 Pride: We take pride in what we do and work to make things better





## Highlights and Analysis

Having a sense of pride contributes to a positive and supportive work culture. Feeling proud of the team and the organisation can increase motivation, support effective collaboration and enhance overall morale. More than half of respondents said they feel proud to work for the Council (only 11% negative), with 63% satisfied with their current role. **76% said they can see themselves working at the Council in 12 months' time.**

One participant in a focus group commented:

“Working in public service. I do think we do quite an important job and so I you know, when I go to sleep at night, I do think well, I have actually played a very small part in providing incredibly important services to all the people around me, including the most vulnerable”

A sense of pride can have a positive impact on performance and improvement. 68% agree that they are encouraged to improve performance with only 9% disagreeing and 62% agree that they are encouraged to suggest ways to improve performance. **In addition, 69% of respondents are confident to share opinions and ideas for improvement with only 13% disagreeing.**

56% agree that there is a culture of innovation and improvement in their area, with only 17% disagreeing. 45% of respondents indicated that they feel empowered to suggest ideas and contribute to developing solutions. However, when asked specifically about gathering ideas to support transformation and innovation, only 30% agreed, with a higher than average 41% providing neutral responses. This may suggest that whilst locally there is a sense of encouragement to seek ways to continually improve, there is less awareness of or a feeling of value in corporate or organisational wide ideas gathering initiatives. This is especially true for those job families that are more remote from the corporate centre. Whilst there is a supportive environment for individual initiative and idea-sharing there is also an opportunity to establish more inclusive and robust mechanisms for collecting input related to transformation.

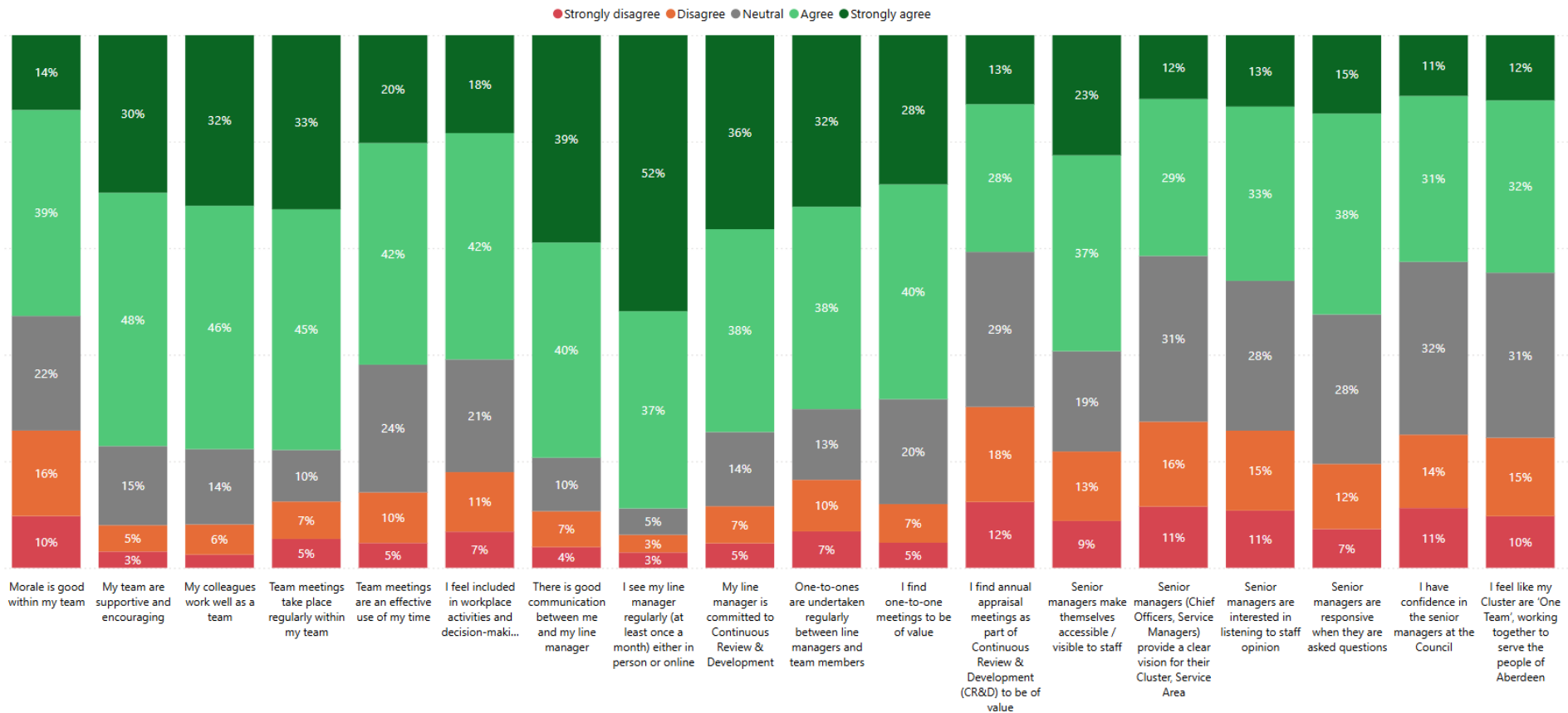
It's worth noting also that the question focuses on transformation, which is about fundamental reform at a strategic level, and therefore responses may reflect this in terms of difficulty to translate improvement ideas to broader transformation.

Within the focus groups we delved deeper into innovation asking whether ideas were valued, encouraged and how as an organisation we could gather ideas around improvements and innovation. One participant said that they found it easy to communicate their ideas to line managers and that some of their ideas had already led to direct change. Ideas are generally valued, but implementation is often limited by resources and funding. There was a perception within one focus group that mechanisms for gathering ideas (e.g., Bright Sparks) focus more on cost-cutting than on innovation or investment.

Responses on the use of technology are positive, with 76% of respondents confident in using new technology (8% disagreeing). 63% agree that digital collaboration tools help them be more productive (13% disagreeing) and 68% of respondents agree that managers support the move to digital communication and collaboration. 59% agree that technology provided meets their needs with 23% disagreeing.

A lower number of positive responses can be seen when asking about processes and procedures. 44% indicated they agreed the processes and procedures help them to do their job effectively , although only 24% disagreed. Qualitative responses suggested that sometimes processes become over complicated due to the nature of working with a wide range and high number of stakeholders and need to therefore be reviewed regularly. It should be noted that our policies, processes and procedures are critical for ensuring statutory compliance, mitigate risks and reduce harm.

### 3.3 Team: One Team, One Council, One City



#### Highlights and Analysis

Feeling and acting as a member of a team, with regular interaction and open communication can foster a sense of belonging and trust, which are essential for a positive work environment. Working together with others can significantly increase motivation, leading to greater perseverance and higher levels of performance. Employees who feel they are an integral part of the team are more likely to be productive, loyal, and passionate about their work.

### *Team*

**More than three quarters (78%) agreed that their team is supportive and that their colleagues work well as a team.** More than twice as many people agree morale is good compared to those who don't.

High numbers of respondents (61%) confirmed that they feel included in workplace activities and decision making. Very high numbers also agree that team meetings regularly take place (78%) with only a small percentage (14%) not agreeing that these are an effective use of their time.

### *Management and Leadership*

Responses were generally very positive when asked about line management, **with 79% agreeing that there is good communication with their line managers and 89% that they see their line managers regularly.** 70% agreed that one-to-ones happen on a regular basis and 68% find them to be of value. Similarly high numbers (72%) agree that managers are committed to the Council's scheme of Continuous Review & Development (CR&D), however, only 42% find CR&D meetings to be of value (29% were neutral). Employees who have worked for the Council for a short period are significantly more likely to find CR&D meetings useful than those with longer length of service.

Feedback from focus groups backed up data seen in the survey. Feedback suggested that CR&D objectives are felt to be generic and not tailored to specific roles, making them less relevant especially in larger services. Some agreed that one-on-ones are more useful than CR&D due to their specificity and regularity, with it being suggested that issues to be discussed in CR&D had already been covered in 1-to-1s (which is as it should be). They highlighted the importance of 1-to-1 sessions in maintaining a good relationship with team leaders and keeping on top of work. The ability to discuss training and development within CR&Ds was seen as a positive, **but that there needed to be more follow up on development plans.** Suggestions were made on ways to improve both CR&Ds from participants. These will be utilised as part of the regular CR&D process review.

Responses on the role of senior managers (defined as Chief Officers, Service Managers) was mixed, with relatively high numbers of neutral responses. This could suggest that sections of the workforce are not familiar with, or are more removed from, the Council's senior management or that they feel that access to senior management does not impact on their day-to-day roles. 60% agreed that senior managers make themselves visible/accessible and 53% that senior managers were responsive to questions. 41% agreed that that senior managers provide a clear vision, with 31% neutral and 27% disagreeing. 42% indicated that they did have confidence in senior managers , with 32% neutral and 25% disagreeing.

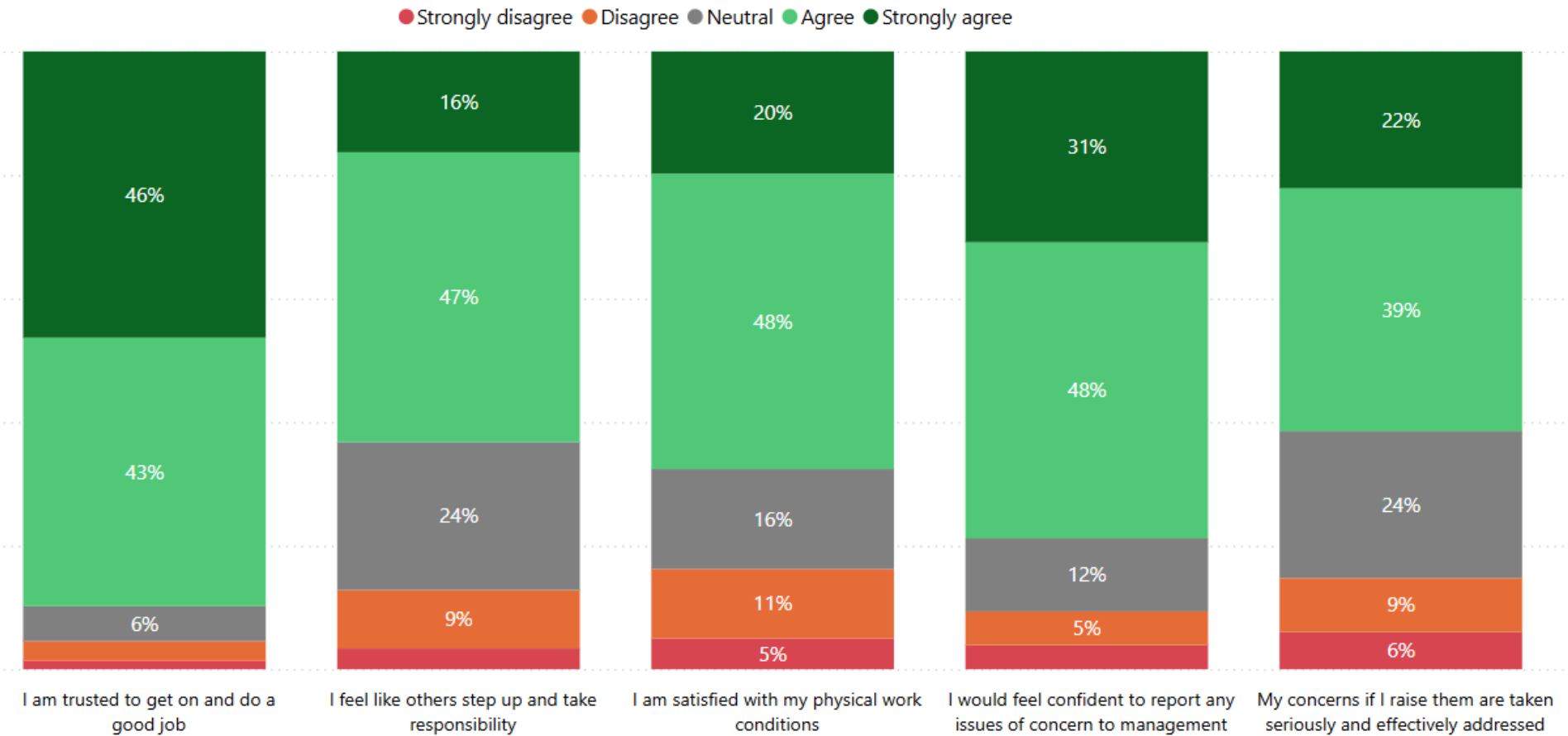
Further qualitative data from the focus groups regarding interaction and visibility of senior managers, was in line with the above analysis.

They suggested that direct contact with senior management varies dependent on service area and how much your role requires engagement with service managers or Chief Officers, with more frontline areas feeling more removed. Positive feedback suggests that, on the whole, where managers and senior leaders are visible working relationships are good, communication to teams is regular and senior managers are approachable. Participants highlighted that managers are approachable and supportive making it easy to discuss work-related (and in some instances personal) issues.

Where less positive feedback was received this was around a lack of clear articulation of a Council vision, or lack of interaction with senior managers and therefore wide circulation of this vision to more remote colleagues.

While the survey questions specified Chief Officers and Service Managers, there was some evidence from qualitative comments and focus groups that some responses may have reflected a wider span, including operational (local) leads, Directors, Chief Executive and elected members.

### 3.4 Trust: We trust each other and take responsibility



## Highlights and Analysis

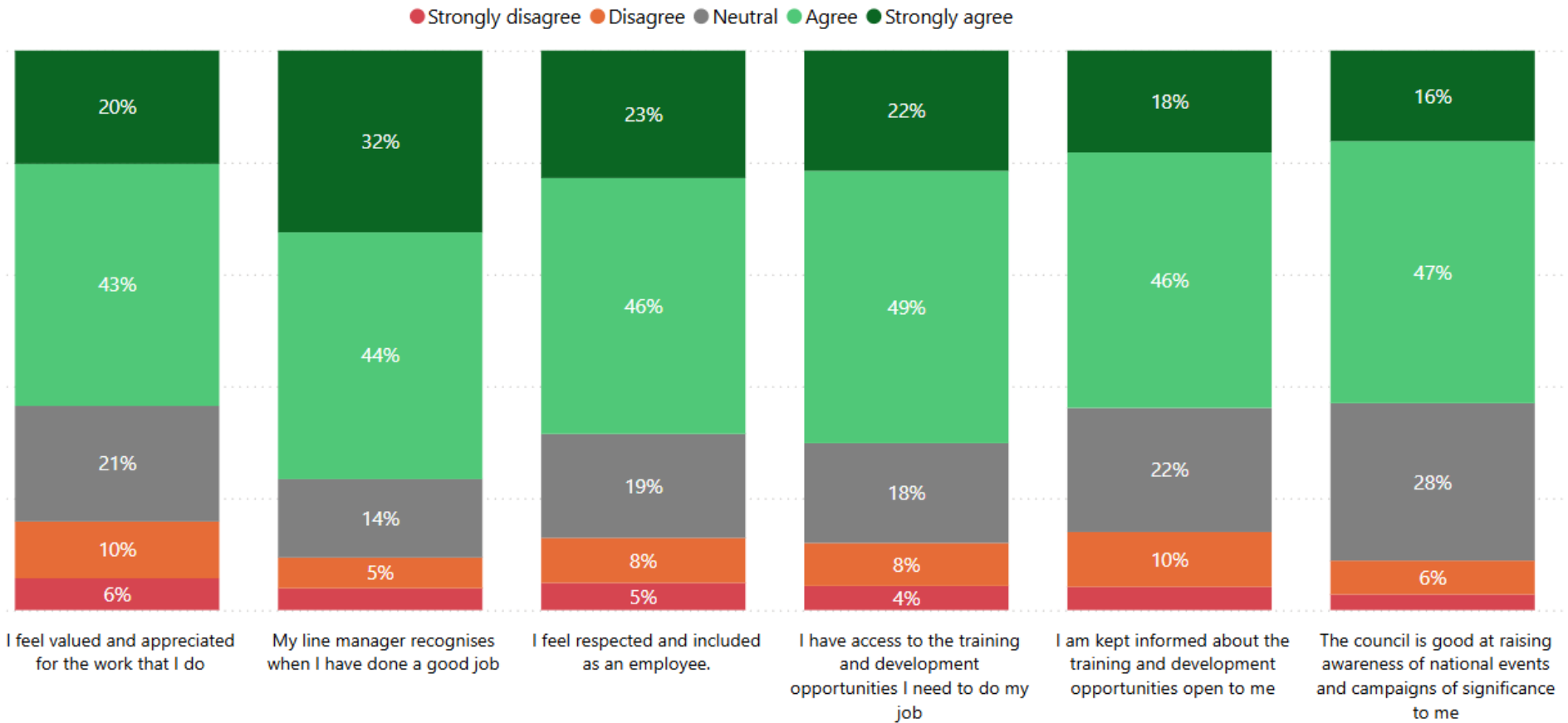
Trust is crucial in a work environment for multiple reasons. Where there is a high level of trust employees are more likely to feel confident in their roles, be willing to share ideas and collaborate and take the initiative. A trusting environment can also engender feelings of security and support, whilst at the same time building accountability.

Overall, the responses to the questions in the “Trust” section were very positive. **89% of respondents agreed that they feel trusted to get on and do a good job with only 5% disagreeing**, among the most positive returns for any question in the survey. Although lower (63%) feel others step up and take responsibility. There is often a difference in responses based on own actions versus those of others.

**In addition, 79% advised they would feel confident reporting issues of concern to management.** 61% agreed that concerns are addressed seriously and effectively, with only 15% disagreeing.

68% of respondents indicated they were happy with physical conditions at work. Satisfaction was still high for the job families of “Social & Community Services” (65%) and “Frontline Operations” (65%). “Teachers” (50%), were the lowest.

### 3. 5 Value: We value each other and recognise a job well done



### Highlights and Analysis

Valuing each other and recognising achievements helps build strong, positive relationships among colleagues and this can lead to higher job satisfaction and a more motivated workforce. Recognising and appreciating teams and individuals can engender feelings of connection to work and the organisation.



Responses within this section are largely positive. **63% of respondents feel valued and appreciated at work, 69% that they are respected and included as an employee (just 13% disagreed) and 76% that they are recognised by managers when they do a good job.** Those job families who reported feeling least valued and appreciated were “Frontline Customer” (28%) and “Teachers” (23%). There is also an indication that young and older employees may feel less valued and appreciated than others.

In terms of training and development, **71% of respondents agree that they have access to development and training opportunities they need** and 64% agree that they are kept informed of training and development opportunities.

Qualitative responses from the survey and the focus groups show that there is an appetite for training and development across the Council. Whilst the ability to discuss training requirement was seen as the main positive of CR&D, training should be available when required. There is a desire for opportunities to attend training courses alongside additional relevant mandatory training e.g digital security, equalities and people skills for managers. Responses also show an opportunity to improve communication of available development opportunities.

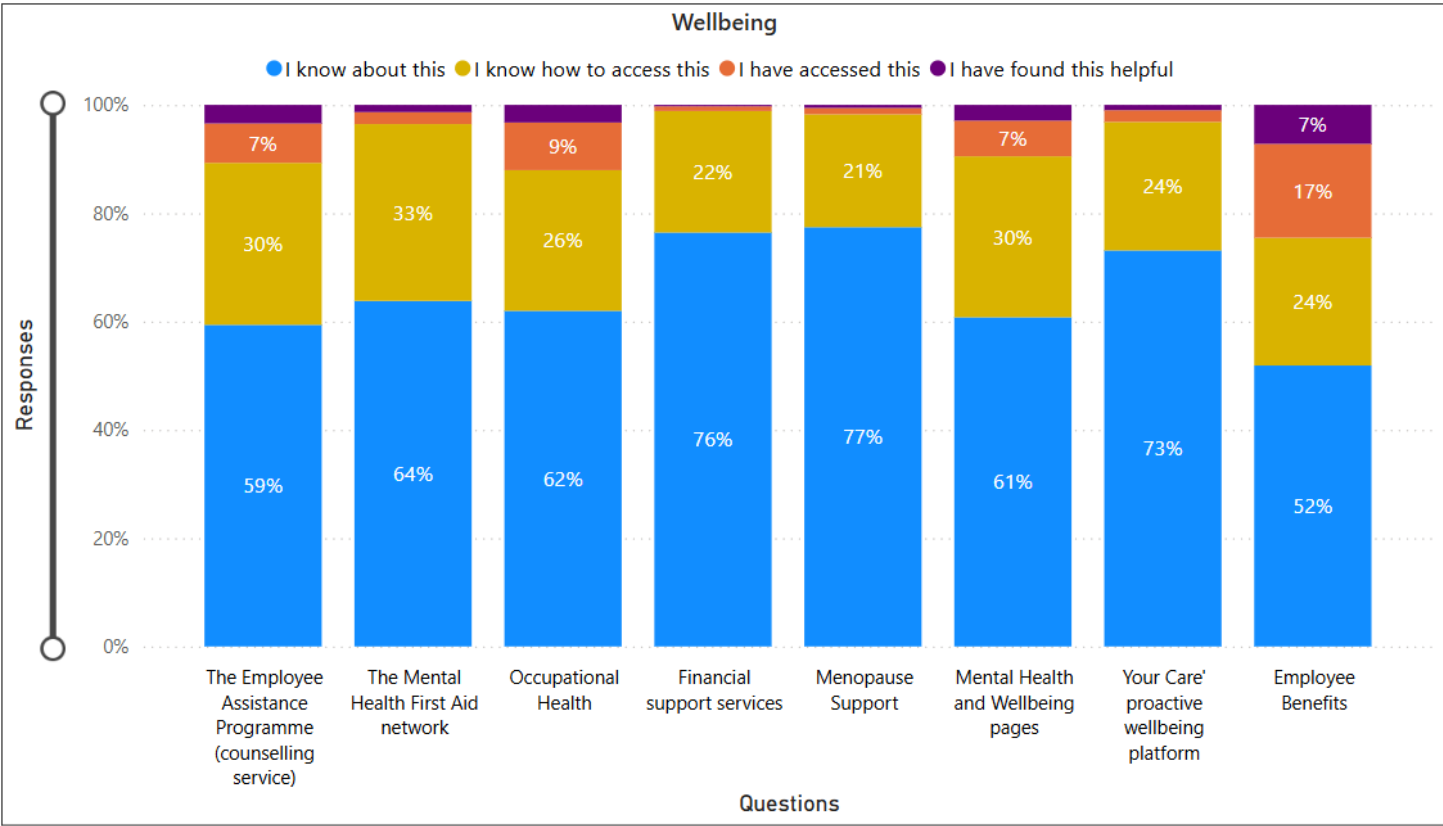
63% of respondents agree that the Council is good at raising awareness of national events and campaigns with only 8% disagreeing.

## Section 4: Wellbeing

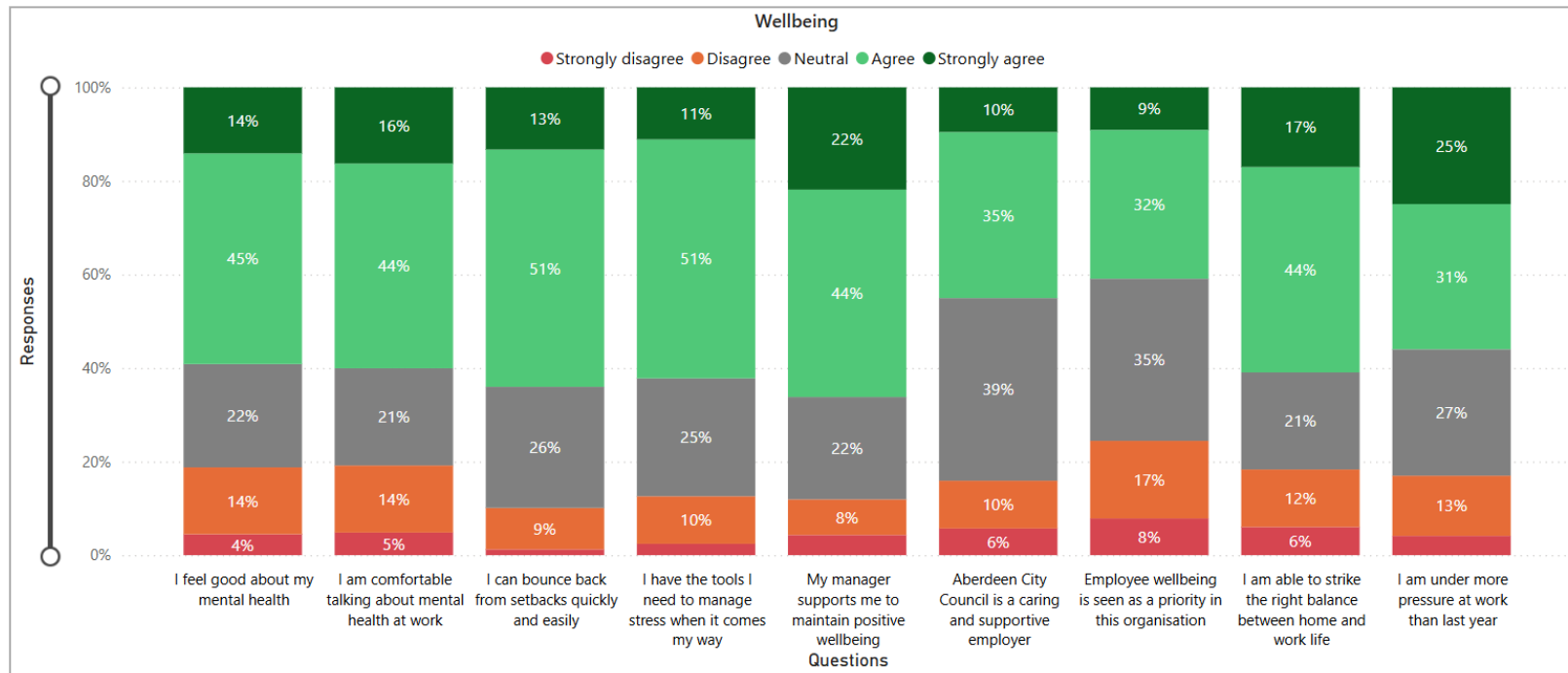
This section of the Employee Experience Survey was to build on previous feedback gathered from the ‘Wellbeing Pulse Check’ in winter 2023 and to provide insights into the mental health and wellbeing of our workforce, assist us to identify any hot spots and trends across the organisation and to inform priority areas for the Mental Health Action Plan in the year ahead. Key findings, with comparisons to the same questions in the Wellbeing Pulse Check Survey 2023 survey, are as follows.

- **60%** of respondents who answered this question recorded feeling **comfortable talking about mental health at work** which is a slight increase from 52.5% in the wellbeing pulse check;
- **66%** of respondents answered this question recorded **feeling that their manager supports them to maintain positive wellbeing**. Another increase from 63% in the wellbeing pulse check;
- **59%** of respondents answered this question said they are **aware of the Employee Assistance Programme** and a further 30% of respondents who answered this question knew how to access the Employee Assistance Programme. 66% responded to knowing about the Employee Assistance Programme and how to access this on the wellbeing pulse check;
- **64%** of respondents answered this question were **aware of the Mental Health First Aid network**. A further 33% of respondents who answered this question knew how to access the Mental Health First Aid network. 58% were aware of the Mental Health First Aiders network in the wellbeing pulse check.
- **73%** of respondents answered this question said that they were aware of the ‘Your Care’ proactive wellbeing. 38% of respondents in the 2023 wellbeing pulse check being aware of the ‘Your Care’ proactive wellbeing platform and not knowing how to access it.

The graph below displays the responses to other questions asked as part of the Employee Experience Survey:

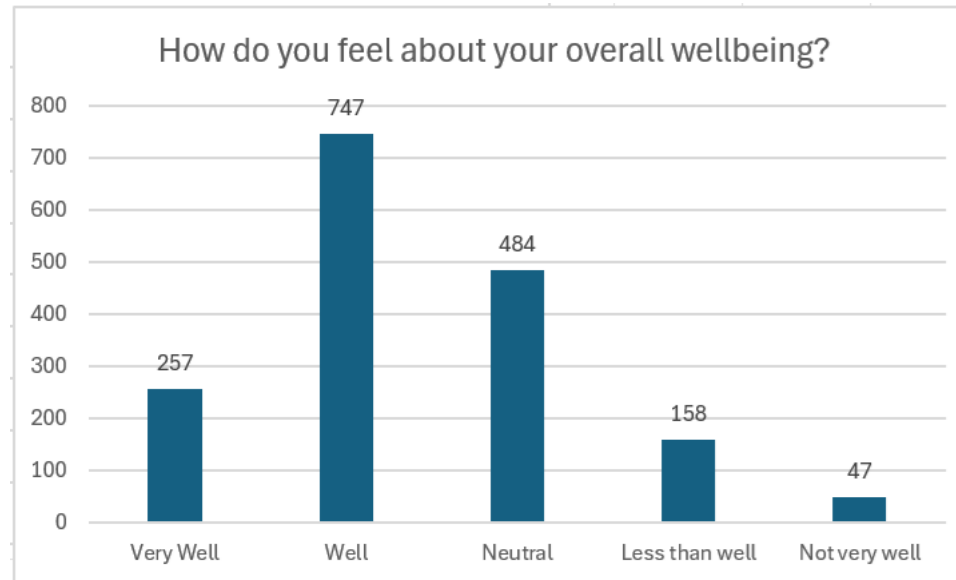


The results from the graph below show that the overall wellbeing of respondents who answered this question is perceived to be positive with 59% of respondents agreeing that they felt good about their mental health at work. 60% of respondents who answered this question were comfortable to talk about mental health at work. 66% of respondents who answered this question felt that their manager supported them to maintain positive wellbeing. The statement, Aberdeen City Council is a caring and supportive employer, returned a lower positive rating, with 45% of respondents agreeing with this statement, however, this question also had a higher than average neutral response at 39%. Employee Wellbeing is seen as a priority in this organisation returned similar results 41% positive and 35% neutral. Whilst employees feel supported by their line manager, are aware of initiatives and are managing their wellbeing, this is translating less to a connection to the employer. This trend is seen throughout the results and may be impacted by budgetary pressures, reducing resources and therefore difficult decisions.



The wellbeing section asked employees to rate their overall wellbeing and the results provided a 3.60 average rating out of 5. A breakdown of the responses to the rating above are as follows:

- 1,488 employees returned a wellbeing rating of level 3 (neutral) or better (well and very well)
- 205 employees expressed that there is room for improvement in their overall wellbeing rating



The findings of the Employee Experience Survey will be used to help shape future developments and initiatives that can be included in the Mental Health Action Plan.

## Section 5: Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

A series of 22 questions were asked to understand employee views on how well Aberdeen City Council are performing in supporting EDI issues and initiatives as an employer, grouped in the following themes:

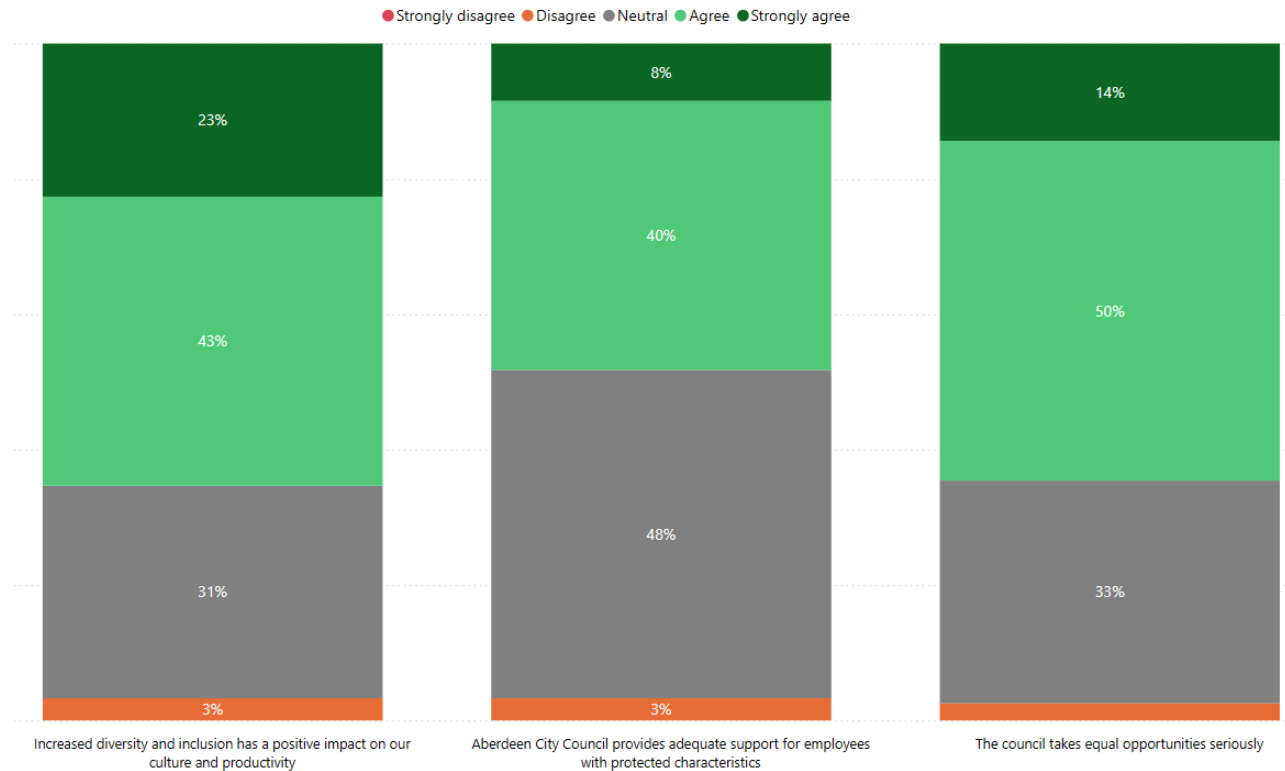
- Overall impressions about equality, diversity and inclusion and Aberdeen City Council
- Internal Communications and Employee Engagement
- Recruitment and Promotion
- Training, Development and Skills
- Leadership and Management of EDI

Of the 1,711 responses, 1,693 (99%) of respondents responded to one or more EDI questions. However, there is a high prevalence of neutral responses to questions in this section. Focus groups were held to further explore trends in the responses to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion questions within the Employee Experience Survey and to understand the causes and reasons for high neutral responses.

The sessions highlighted that neutrality (in survey responses) is not necessarily negative and that it may be due to a lower level of direct experience in equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives and tends to be higher among those involved in relevant groups hence, day to day visibility may be limited for others. Discussions within the groups also suggested that comfort in discussing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion topics varies, and such discussions are not common in day-to-day team interactions unless directly relevant to the work or personal experience, highlighting the need to do more on how we communicate to improve awareness and participation. The sessions highlighted a common view reflected 'Lack of awareness, understanding, experience. A neutral response is the "safe" option.'

Aberdeen City Council demonstrates a commitment to promoting diversity, however, these findings suggest that continued efforts to improve awareness, engagement, and accessibility would help to embed this more consistently across all service areas to ensure all employees can fully participate in and benefit from the equality initiatives. A range of actions to this end are contained within the EDI action plan.

## 5.1 Overall impressions about EDI at Aberdeen City Council

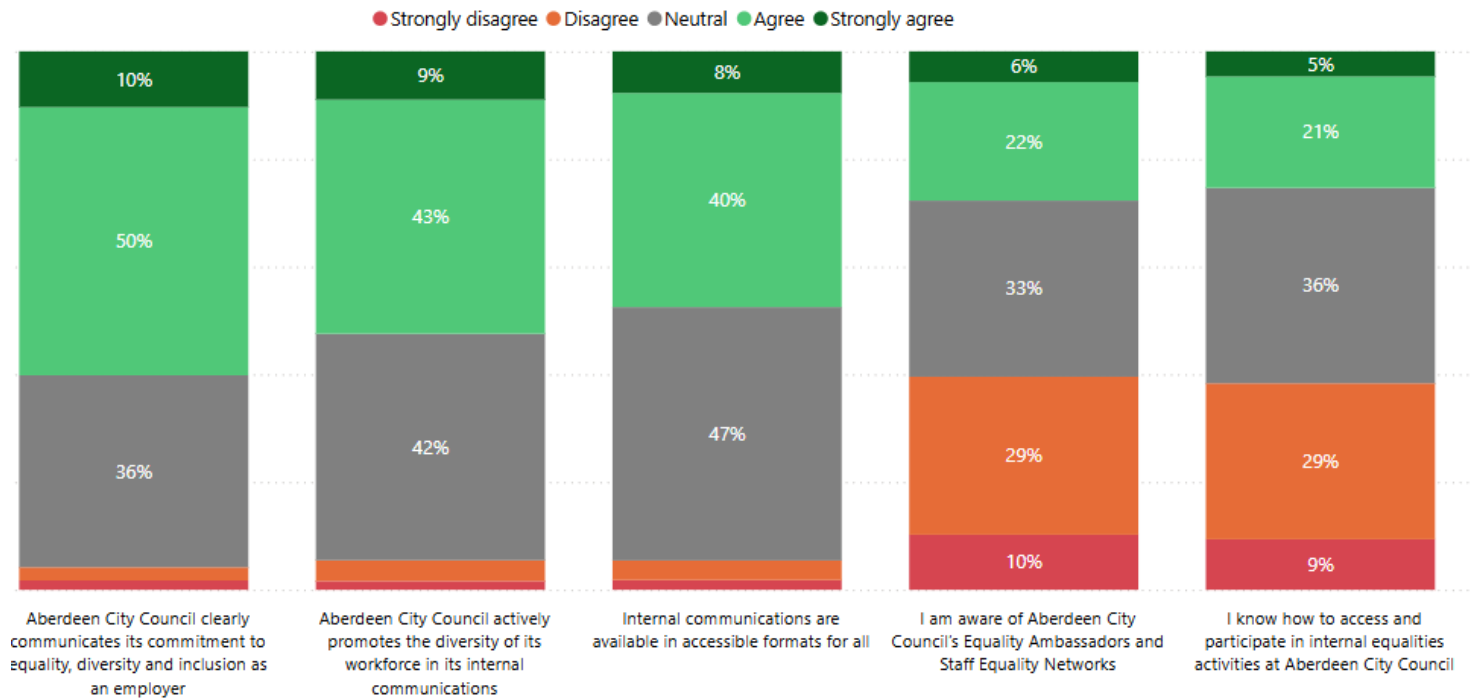


Very low numbers, 3% or less, expressed negative views about EDI in the Council overall. **66% of respondents agreed that increased diversity and inclusion has a positive impact on our culture and productivity and 64% of respondents agreed that the Council takes equal opportunities seriously.**

Whilst just less than half (48%) agreed that Aberdeen City Council provides adequate support for employees with protected characteristics, the same percentage gave a neutral response, meaning that of those who expressed a positive or negative view, 94% were positive. The high number of neutral responses may reflect a range of factors as highlighted above.

Insights from the focus groups on these questions may indicate a need for more effective communications that ensure that all employees are well-informed and feel confident in expressing their opinions

5.2 EDI: Internal Communications and Employee Engagement



The majority of respondents (60%) agree that Aberdeen City Council clearly communicates its commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion as an employer and just over half (52%) agree that the Council actively promotes workforce diversity through its internal communications. Whilst 48% of respondents agree that internal communications are available in accessible formats for all, 47% of respondents remain neutral on this aspect.

Notably, 39% of respondents were not aware of the Council's Equality Ambassadors and Staff Equality Networks specifically and 38% do not know how to access or participate in internal equalities activities, highlighting a need for enhanced visibility and accessibility of these

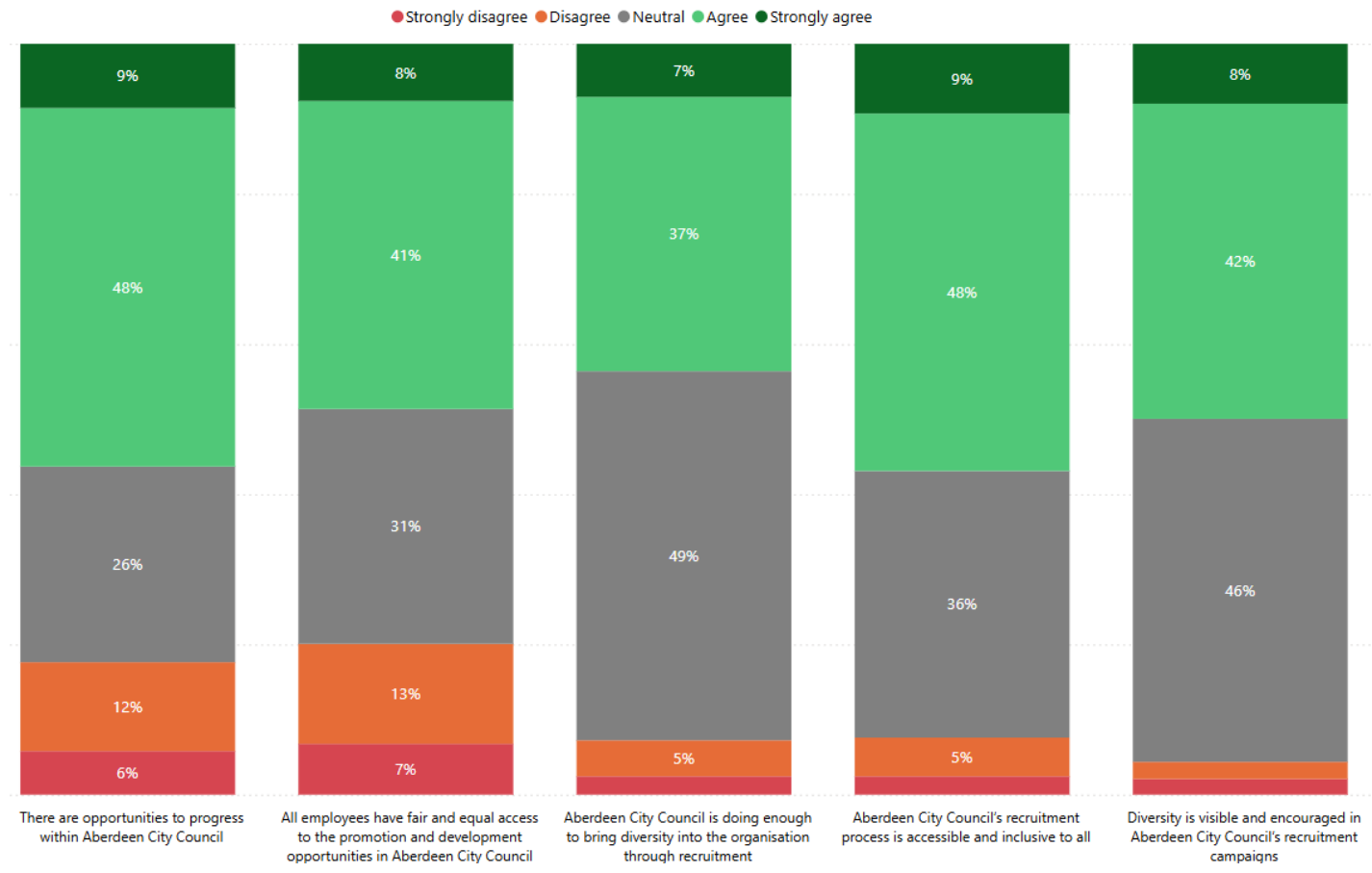


initiatives. A new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion hub has been launched recently and may help to address this whilst other proactive measures will be included in the EDI action plan to strengthen opportunities for awareness and participation across the Council.

The focus groups linked the high number of neutral responses regarding internal communications to unclear definitions of accessible formats in this question. Feedback also suggested that content and language of communications and methods of engagement may need to be adapted to meet the needs of some age groups especially younger workforce.

Highlighted within the focus groups was that within schools, EDI is part of everyday and at the forefront of every school's curriculum. Education Services have their own EDI strategies which closely mirror those of the Council as a whole.

5.3 EDI: Recruitment and Promotion



54% of respondents agree there are opportunities for progression within Aberdeen City Council, indicating a positive outlook on career development within the Council, whilst 18% (297 people) of respondents disagreed. Neutral responses may indicate more work could be done to improve communication and clarity regarding progression paths and career development initiatives, or that individuals have not felt able to comment due to a lack of experience.

49% of respondents agreed that all employees have fair and equal access to promotion and development opportunities within Aberdeen City Council (with a further 31% neutral responses), reflecting a moderately positive sentiment towards inclusivity in career advancement. 20% of employees expressed disagreement, which indicates there is room for continued improvement in ensuring equitable access for all.

Within the focus groups, views were shared that fair access to promotion may have had neutral or negative responses perhaps due to a need for a stronger focus on training for recruiting managers / review of the training content provided to focus on the benefits of diverse recruitment and awareness of unconscious bias.

Focus will be given to develop enhanced communication avenues to ensure development opportunities like the **Aspiring Leaders and the Accelerator Scheme which has been purposefully designed to foster leadership potential while actively addressing diversity gaps, are promoted effectively.** Through the Accelerator Scheme, the programme offers targeted support (guaranteed interviews, targeted mentoring, adjustments and additional support) to individuals from underrepresented groups—specifically those under 30, those who consider themselves to have a disability, those from minority ethnic backgrounds, and women.

With the lower perception of the value of CR&D meetings and the linking these to the perception on progression opportunities, there are opportunities to review the CR&D process to ensure it supports inclusive development and career progression.

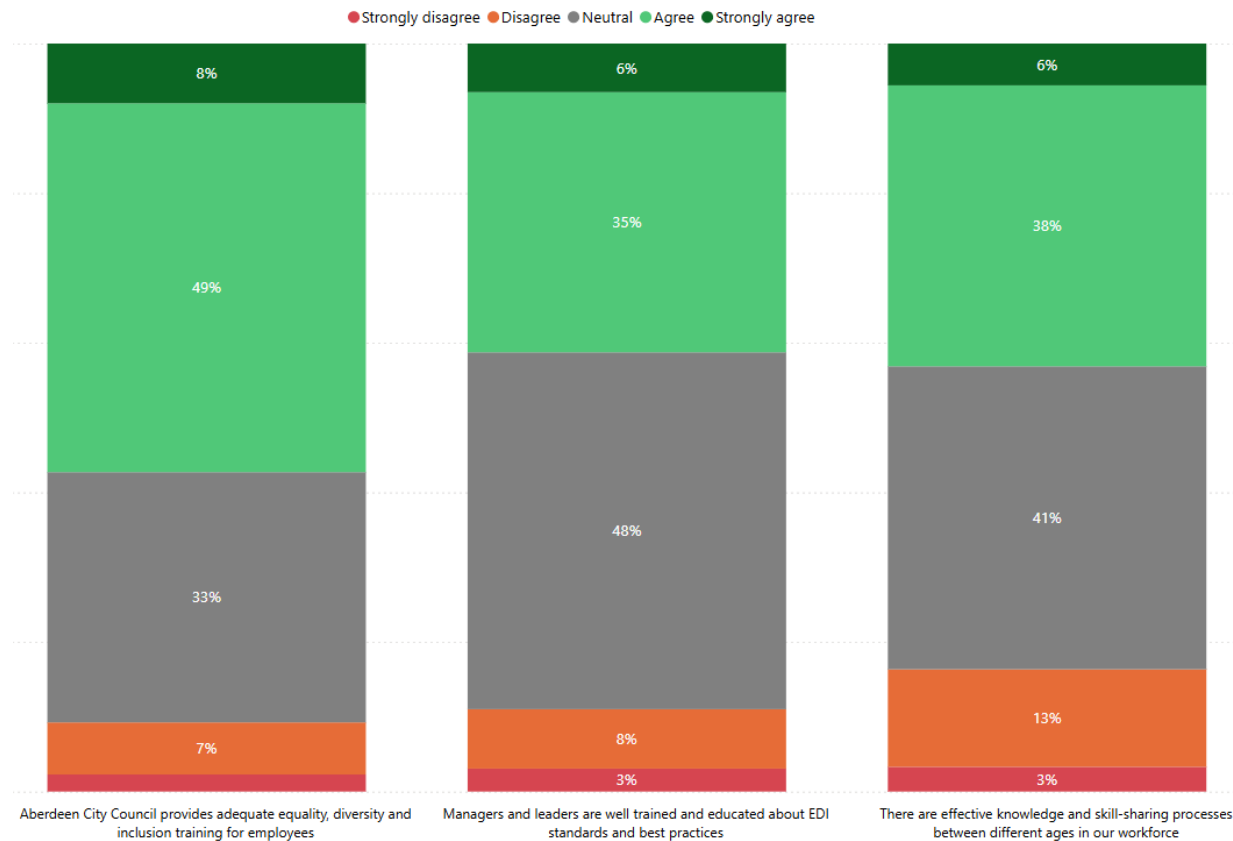
While 44% of respondents agree that Aberdeen City Council is doing enough to recruit a diverse workforce, 49% remained neutral on this question, suggesting a lack of strong opinions or awareness about the Council's diversity recruitment strategies. **It is important to note that only 7% of employees disagreed.** When explored within the focus groups, respondents relayed that internal recruitment can at times limit opportunities for increasing diversity, and there is difficulty encouraging applicants from varied backgrounds to apply. Suggestions from the group included broader advertising of vacancies, diversity training for interviewers, and developing partnerships to reach diverse communities.

**Aberdeen City Council's recruitment process is perceived as accessible and inclusive to all by 57% of respondents, with a further 36% neutral.** However, the Council continues to recognise the need for ongoing evaluation and improvement to ensure that this accessibility and inclusivity are maintained and enhanced, and this forms a central part of the EDI action plan.

Half of respondents, 50%, feel that diversity is visible and encouraged in Aberdeen City Council's recruitment campaigns and only 4% disagreed.

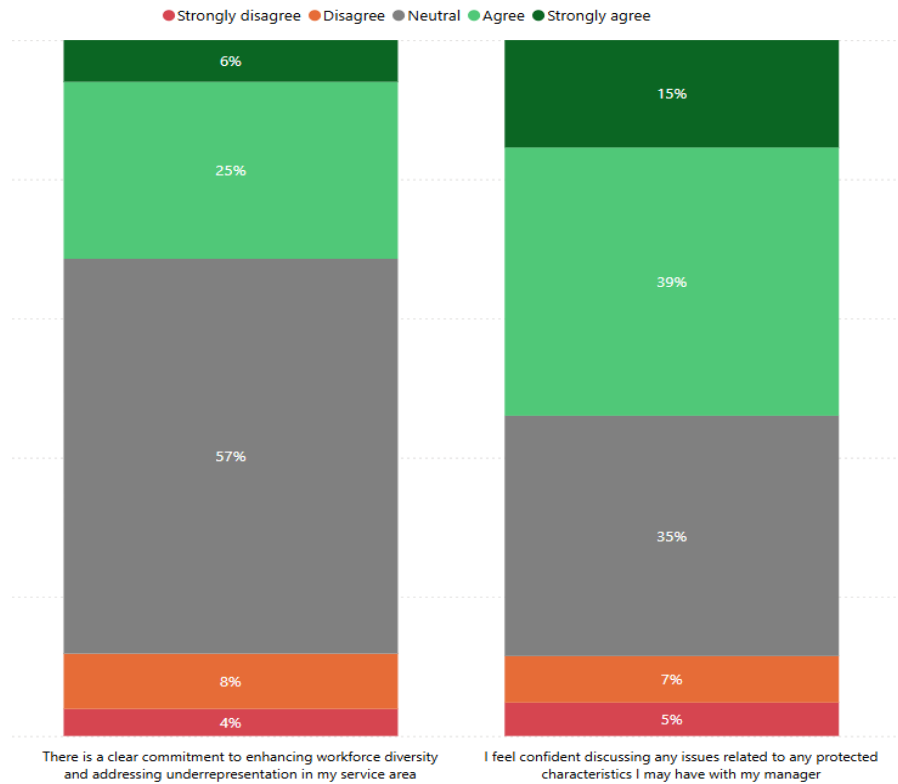
While positive actions exist, such as the Accelerator Scheme which is promoted to attract individuals with specified protected characteristics and address underrepresentation, this may not necessarily result in a perception of fairness and equity in access where such measures offer targeted support or enhanced promotion of opportunities to certain groups of staff.

## 5.4 EDI: Training, Development and Skills



57% of respondents agree that the Council provides adequate EDI training for employees. Only 9% disagreed. 41% of respondents positively agreed that managers and leaders are well trained and educated about EDI standards and best practice, with almost half (48%) neutral and only 11% disagreement. 44% of respondents positively agreed that there is effective knowledge and skill-sharing processes between different ages within the workforce – with 16% disagreement. Focus group responses suggested that lack of opportunity to engage with or visibly see leaders involved in EDI initiatives yielded neutral and disagreement to the question.

### 5.5 EDI: Leadership and Management of EDI

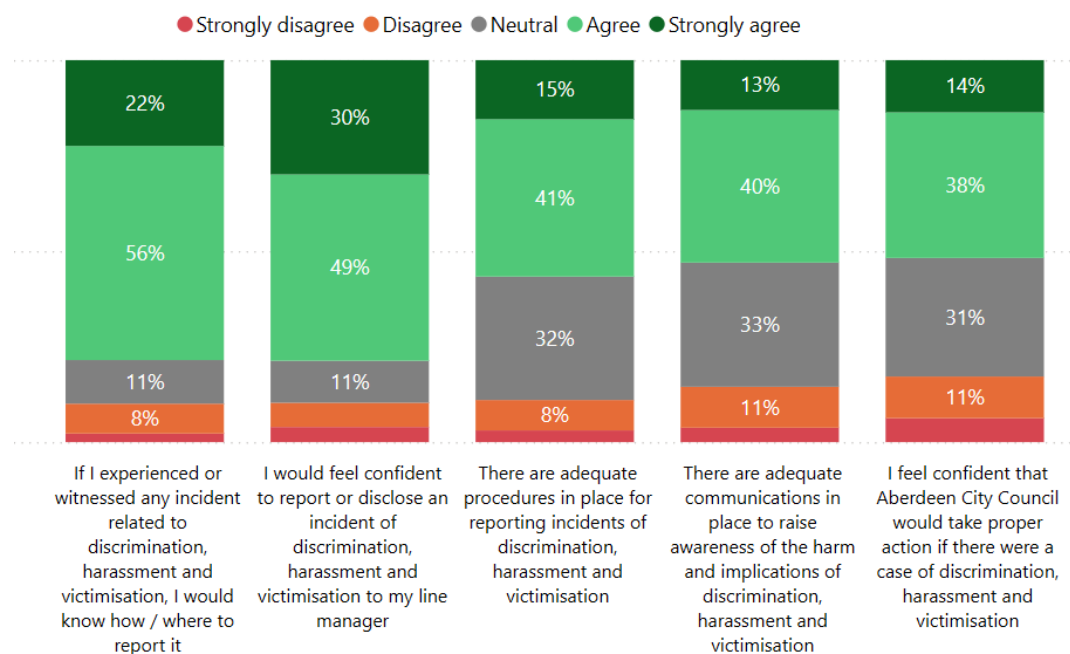


A majority (57%) had a neutral response to the statement that there is a clear commitment to enhancing workforce diversity and addressing underrepresentation in their service area. Feedback regarding employees' confidence in discussing issues related to any protected characteristics with their manager reveals that 54% agree, 35% remain neutral, and 12% disagree.

## Section 6: Safety and Inclusion

The survey offers insights into employees' experience of safety and inclusion in the Council. We use safety and inclusion data to understand our public sector equality duty to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by, or under, the Equality Act.

The survey reminded employees that we all have a duty to report incidents and to support our colleagues – and sought to understand whether employees were aware of and understood reporting mechanisms.

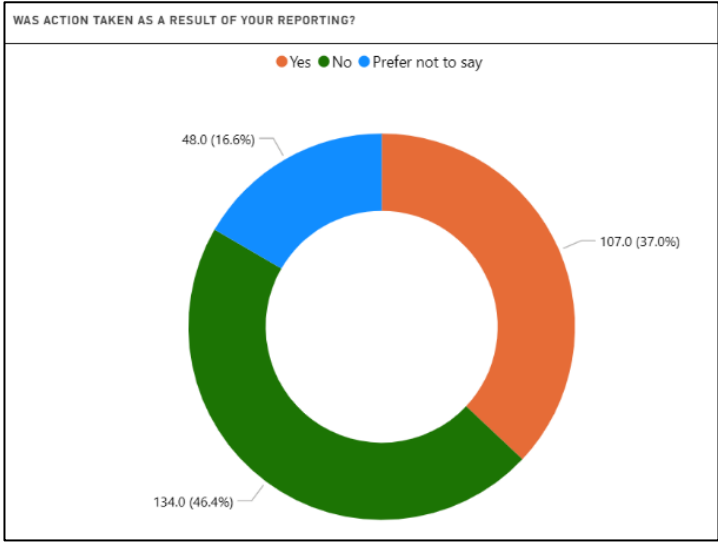
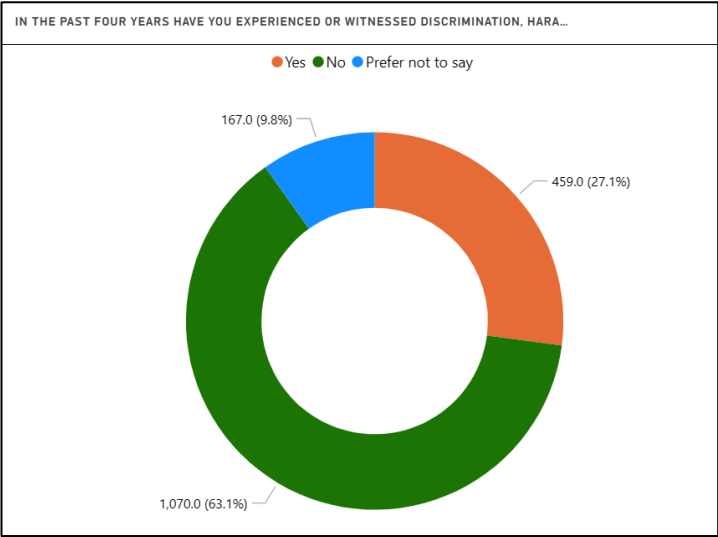


It is positive that 78% of respondents are aware of how to report incidents of discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. This indicates the presence of effective communication and training around the reporting mechanisms. Confidence in reporting incidents to managers is high, with 79% of employees feeling confident in disclosing such incidents. While 56% feel that the procedures are adequate, a third remained neutral and 11% disagreed.

Whilst overall this employee feedback is positive, there are opportunities to continue to review existing procedures, improve training and awareness to further increase confidence in reporting and identify areas of improvement in procedures.

Just over half (52%) of respondents said they were confident that proper action would be taken if an incident related to discrimination, harassment, and victimisation occurs, with 31% neutral and 17% disagreement.

The survey asked if employees had experienced or witnessed discrimination, harassment, victimisation and/or bullying in the workplace in the past four years.



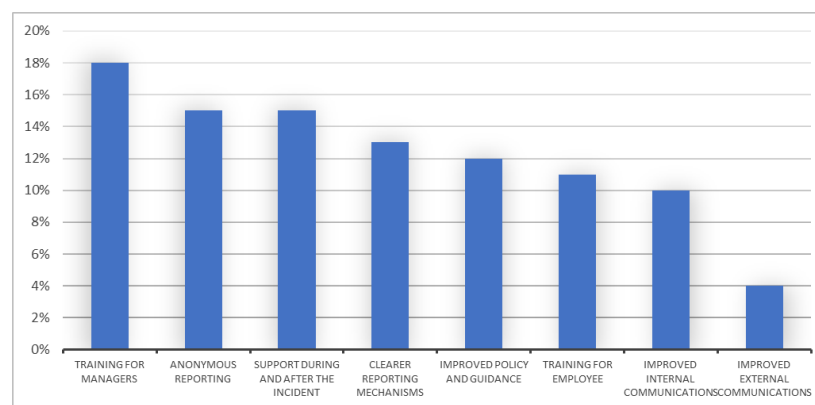
Of those that had, further questions were asked to find out whether action was taken as a result of reporting and whether they were satisfied with how these incidents were handled. 27% of respondents stated they had witnessed or experienced such an incident of discrimination, harassment, or victimisation. As societal awareness of discrimination and related issues grows, more individuals may recognise and report incidents that they might have previously overlooked. Whilst this is positive, it can lead to an increase in reported incidents being witnessed or experienced, even if the actual number of incidents has not changed significantly. The survey did not ask respondents to specify the source, seriousness or nature of any incident.

It is also possible, indeed likely, that more than one respondent referred to the same incident in answering this question. Where an incident had been reported, 37% confirmed that action was taken, 46% that no action was taken and 16.6% preferring not to say. On a scale of 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), respondents reported an average satisfaction rating of 2.29 with how their report was handled.

A review of formal casework data shows that formal Dignity & Respect at Work investigations has remained low and typically accounts for between 5 and 9% of all formal cases, with higher levels due to increased reporting around a singular cause/individual. When this data is considered in combination with the data shown above, i.e. higher levels of awareness of incidents, higher levels in confidence in reporting to managers, but lower levels in formal cases and of confidence in action being taken, this may indicate that where incidents are reported, they are being dealt with locally and informally, which may be considered a positive method of resolving complaints (where these are less serious in nature), and which is in line with our policies. It's important to note that the need for confidentiality may also impact respondents views on action being taken as it wouldn't be the case in all scenarios that a complainant would know if and what specific action had been taken, nor might they agree that the action is appropriate. The understanding of terms like discrimination, harassment, and victimisation can also vary widely among individuals. Some people might interpret these terms more broadly or narrowly than others, leading to inconsistencies in reporting and perception of the appropriateness of any actions taken.

Focus group participants suggested improvements including having clarity on opportunities to report incidents outside the line management structure for bullying and harassment incidents might make it easier for employees to report incidents and feel confident that they are dealt with appropriately. Routes to address this are currently being considered.

When asked what could be improved to prevent future incidents, the following preventative measures were identified:



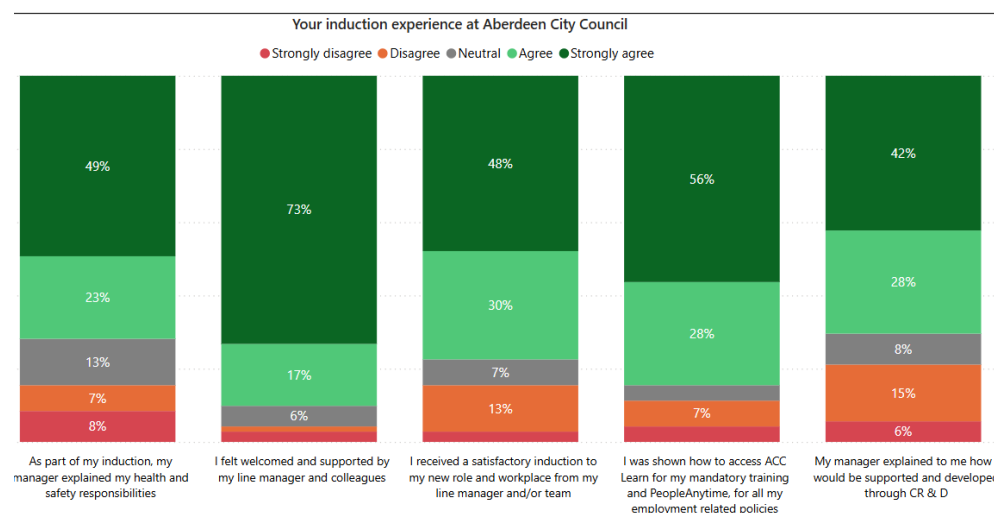


A further suggestion from the focus group session in line with the graph above, is that people managers could benefit from additional training to equip them with the tools to foster a respectful and inclusive environment, recognise inappropriate behaviours early on, and address concerns promptly and effectively. There was also the suggestion that a two-way feedback mechanism, similar to 360-degree feedback, could help staff give feedback to managers.

## Section 7: Other areas of the employee experience explored

### 7.1 Induction

Induction is important to the employee experience as it serves as an official welcome for new employees, helping them feel valued and supported from the beginning. Corporate Induction events have been run since the end of summer last year 2024 (August, November, January, March and June was the latest). With a total of 123 attendees. Responses were given by 72 respondents who reported having worked less than 12 months at the Council:



It is very positive that 90% of new employees felt welcomed and supported with only 4% in disagreement. 78% felt they received a satisfactory induction, 72% that their induction explained health and safety responsibilities, and 84% that they were shown how to access ACC Learn and PeopleAnytime. The highest level of disagreement (21%) was in response to whether Continuous Review and Development had been explained. More guidance may be required for managers on this point.

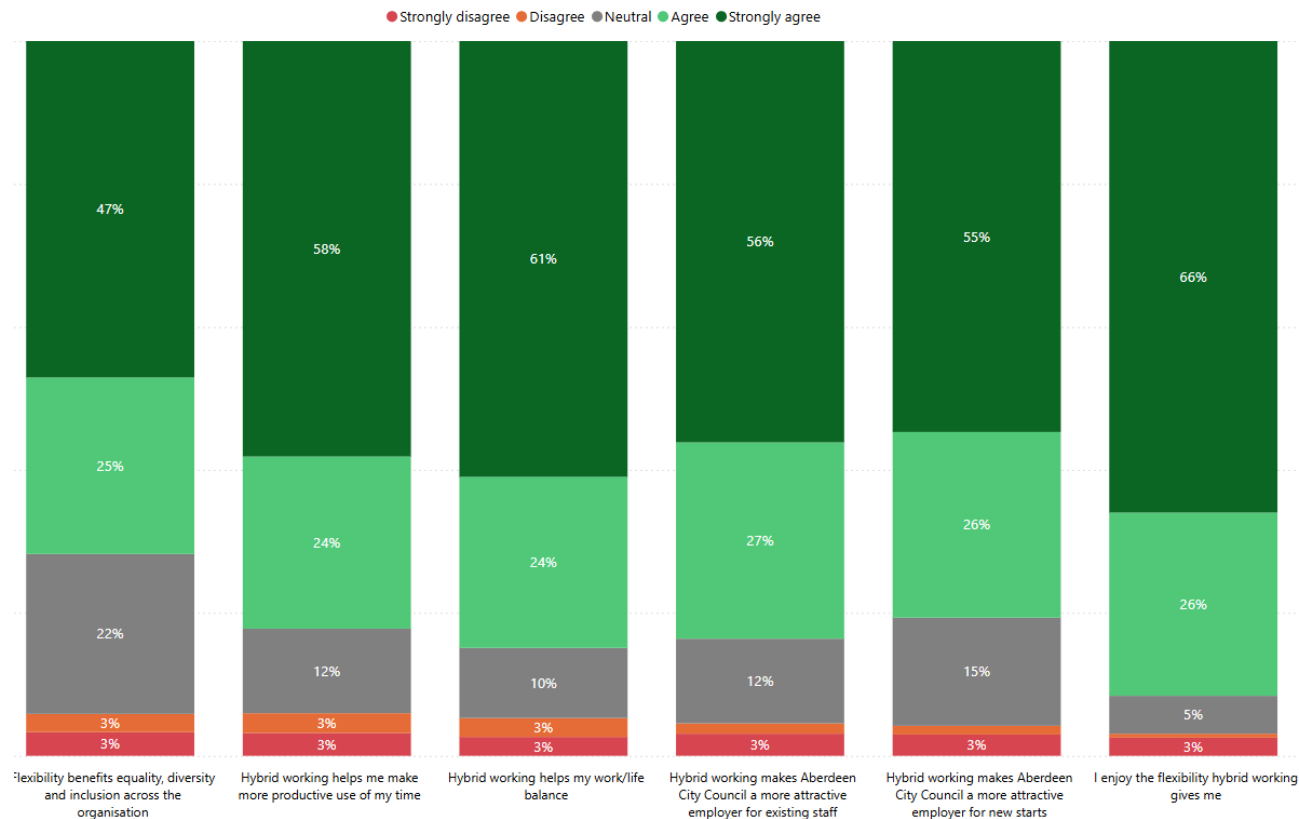
Further data taken from the induction feedback itself shows nearly three-quarters of respondents giving the highest score and the vast majority rating all aspects as 'Good' or 'Excellent'. Where suggestions were made, they focused on more group activities, making the event mandatory for new staff, and minor adjustments to session structure or content timing.

## 7.2 Flexible Working

Flexible Working gives us the opportunity to create more inclusive workspaces, that take account of individual needs and support good work/life balance. These questions were used to understand impact of flexible working. Those answering this question had indicated that they are within a role that allows for flexible or hybrid working.

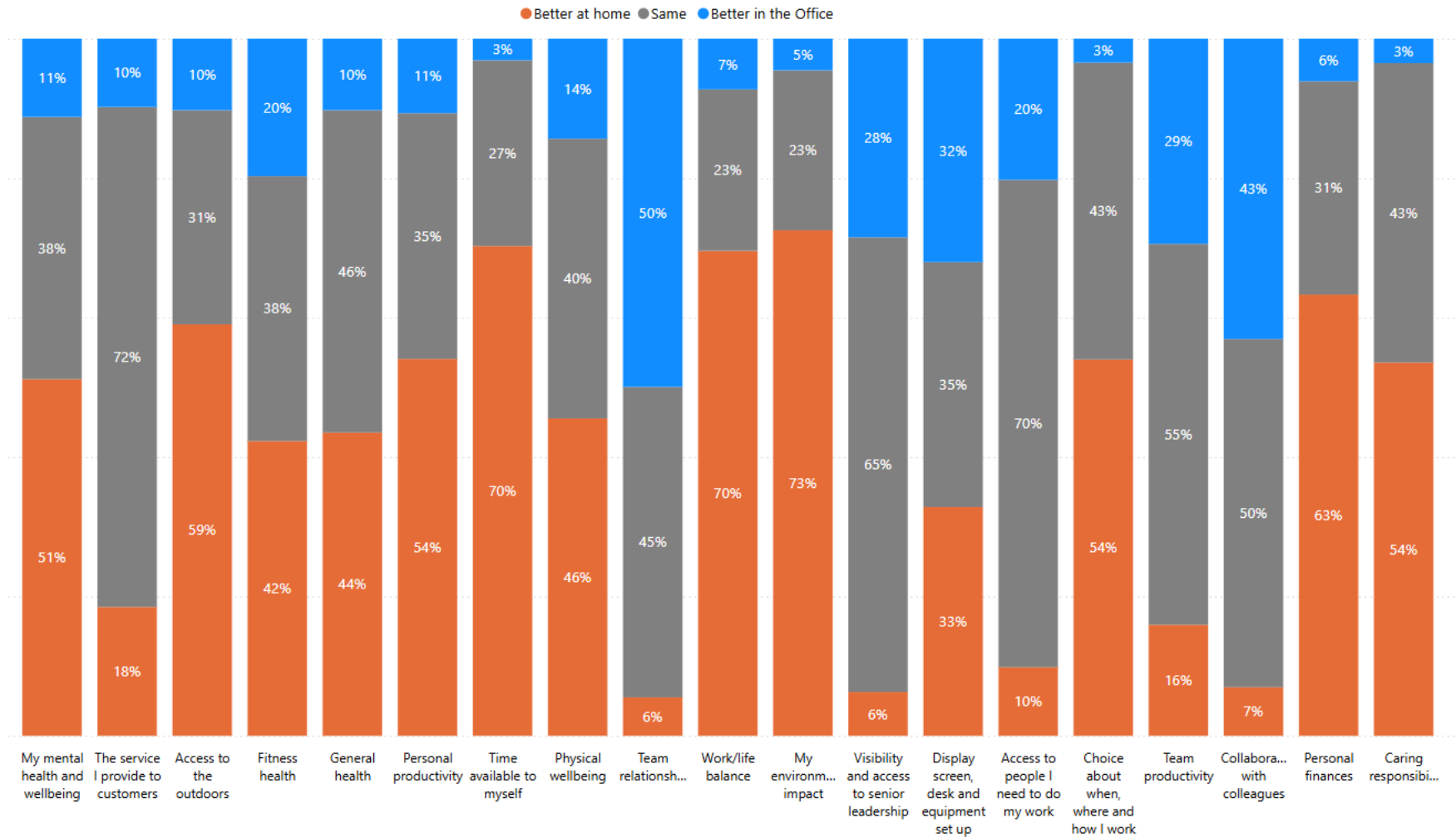
Aberdeen City Council introduced the concept of Job Families in 2022, as part of a broader transformation initiative aimed at improving workforce communication, engagement, and development. Each Job Family is associated with a worker style, roles aligned to Information Services, Social and Community Services, People Managers and Chief Officers may lend themselves more to hybrid working approaches. Roles in Frontline Operational Services, Frontline Customer and Teachers are more likely to be fixed location based. The two worker styles available are fixed location and hybrid where hybrid involves around 2-3 days per week in an office or other workplace location.

It's worth noting that of our total workforce around more than 50% are in roles which don't have the potential to be able to support hybrid working, these fixed location include roles such as teachers (26% of the workforce, 2200 people) and frontline operations (21%, 1700 people)



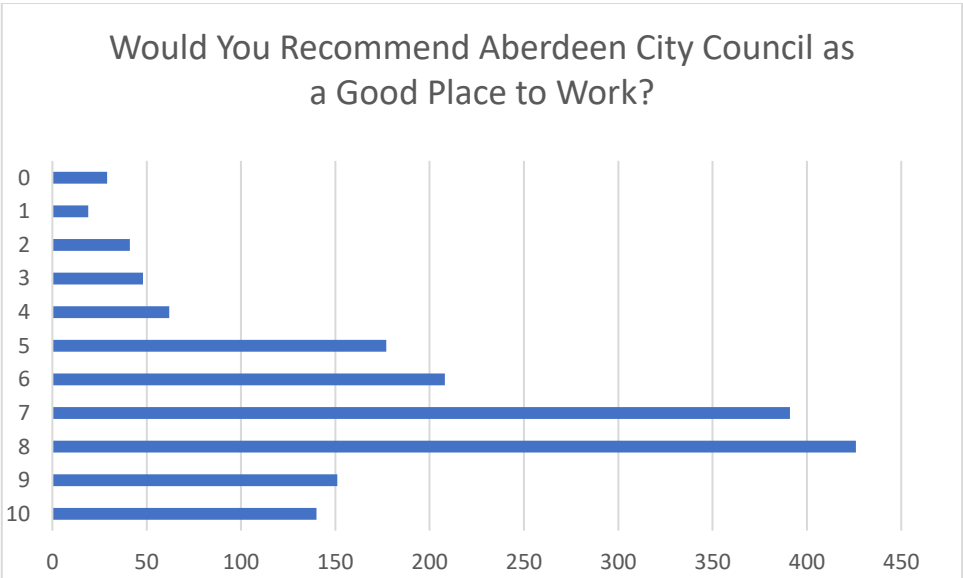
The results show that overall hybrid working and increased flexibility is seen as highly positive for employees and the organisation, where roles allow for it. **72% of respondents agreed that flexibility benefits equality and inclusion across the organisation.** 82% of respondents agreed that hybrid working helped them be more productive with only 6% disagreeing. 83% of respondents agreed that hybrid working made the Council a more attractive employer. 85% of respondents agreed that hybrid working helps their work/life balance and 92% enjoy the flexibility hybrid working allows them. Hybrid workers are generally much more content with their physical work conditions than those that are fixed location.

The figures below shows employee views on whether each shown factor was “Better at Home” or “Better in the Office”.



### 7.3 Employee Satisfaction

This question asked whether individuals would recommend the Council as a good place to work, with the following results.



Of the 1,692 who responded to this question, 1,316 employees (78%) gave a score between 6 and 10, meaning most employees who responded would recommend the Council.

The survey also asked what makes the Council a great place to work?



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## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Staff Governance
<b>DATE</b>	25 August 2025
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Whistleblowing Policy Review
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CORS/25/198
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Andy MacDonald
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Isla Newcombe
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Sharon Robb – Employee Relations Casework Lead
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	2.5

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This purpose of this report is to share the reviewed Whistleblowing Policy.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Committee

- 2.1 Notes the undertaking of the review of the Whistleblowing policy and the minor amendments as a result;
- 2.2 Notes the updates to guidance (outlined at section 3.9 of this report), in line with the recommendations of the Accounts Commission Section 102 Report on Aberdeen City Council , as reported to Council on 17 February 2025, and wider process review; and
- 2.3 Instructs the Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services to widely communicate the Policy and Guidance as outlined within the report at section 3.18.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

#### Background

- 3.1 The Council's current Whistleblowing Policy was approved at [Staff Governance Committee in November 2023](#) and the scheduled biennial review of the Policy was planned for November 2025.
- 3.2 The Employment Rights Act 1996 as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 gives legal protection to individuals against being dismissed or penalised by their employers as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns.
- 3.3 Aberdeen City Council (ACC) has a Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure in place to set out how these protections will be applied within the Council and the process that should be followed to raise any such concerns. The revised 2023

policy incorporated the findings from an independent inquiry and cultural review, commissioned by the City of Edinburgh Council in 2020, the recommendations of which included improvements to the way in which whistleblowing cases were handled by the Council. The ACC policy also took into consideration learning from a criminal trial which highlighted issues regarding whistleblowing procedures within NHS Scotland and led to the establishment of NHS Scotland's National Whistleblowing Standards.

- 3.4 A report to Council on 17 February 2025 in relation to a major fraud case, highlighted the following statement from the Accounts Commission.

*"The member of staff who identified this fraud should be commended, for having the confidence to initially raise the issue and to then escalate it when they remained concerned by the response received. The Commission wishes to stress the importance of the council keeping its policies, training, and procedures in relation to counter-fraud and whistleblowing up to date and communicated to all staff. This will ensure that staff continue to have the confidence to raise concerns if they suspect something fraudulent may be happening."*

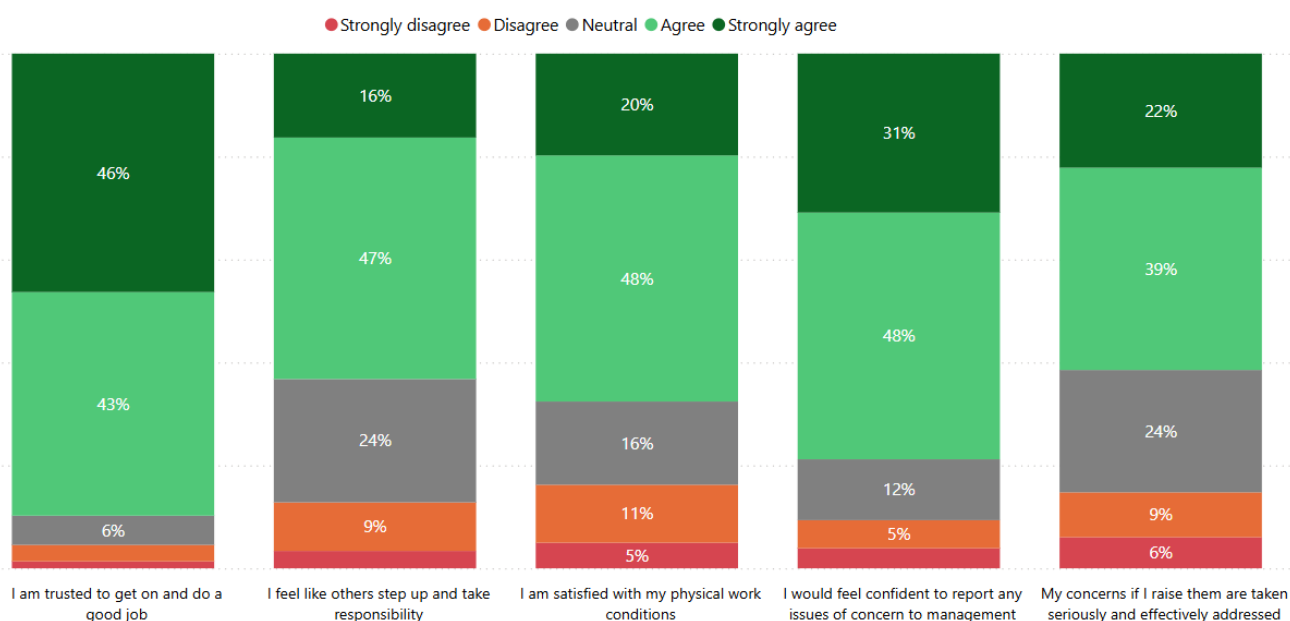
- 3.5 As a result of the above statement from the Accounts Commission, the scheduled review has been brought forward to build on the learning from this case and its positive statement around confidence to report and escalate concerns, ensure any necessary changes could be implemented quickly, and also to align this with the Fraud Action plan, which is anticipated to be presented to Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee on 11 September 2025.
- 3.6 Whilst a standard review of a policy would not normally be presented back to committee unless major changes were made, given the significance of the above Accounts Commission report, it was agreed that the reviewed Whistleblowing Policy would return to Staff Governance Committee for assurance, in recognition of its importance in safeguarding the Council, and to give the committee assurance that relevant actions were being undertaken to meet our statutory duties.
- 3.7 Normal governance procedures as outlined by the Council's Policy Group were followed throughout the review.
- 3.8 The Policy was jointly reviewed by People and Citizen Services, Legal Services and the Monitoring Officer, with input from the Deputy Chief Finance Officer to ensure alignment with the Fraud Action Plan. The review also took into consideration key findings from the recent Employee Engagement Survey, as shown in the data section below, and also from recent cases where Whistleblowing had been considered (even where these had not been progressed through the formal policy).
- 3.9 The review determined that the policy remains effective with only minor organisational amendments required (highlighted on the policy). However, it also determined that some improvements to the associated guidance may support clarity and understanding of the procedure itself, should an individual

need or wish to disclose any potential wrongdoing. A summary of the main changes made to guidance are as follows:

- Clarifying that individuals can raise concerns directly with the Monitoring Officer, should they not feel able to raise these through normal management channels.
- Ensuring that a documented outcome (with reasons) is recorded and provided to the potential whistleblower for any complaint raised under the policy, regardless of the determination by the Monitoring Officer as to whether it is to be treated as whistleblowing or not.
- Ensuring there is a structured feedback loop incorporated within the guidance so individuals raising complaints receive timely updates on progress.
- Clearer signposting to the support options available for individuals raising concerns
- A simpler reporting form so it is clear and straightforward to use
- A standard report template for any whistleblowing investigation to aid consistency and transparency of the formal process
- A clearer flowchart of the Whistleblowing process to allow individuals to understand the process at a glance.

### **Employee Experience Survey**

- 3.10 The Employee Experience Survey launched on 13th December 2024 and was open until 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025. The purpose of the survey was to gather insights and feedback from all employees into various aspects of the employee experience at Aberdeen City Council to inform future improvements. In total, the survey received 1,711 responses. The Council's total headcount is around 8500, representing an almost 20% return rate.
- 3.11 Whilst the employee experience survey did not directly ask employees about Whistleblowing, some key highlights around the questions related to trust, and reporting issues or concerns highlighted the following:
- 3.12 79% advised they would feel confident reporting issues of concern to management. 61% agreed that concerns are addressed seriously and effectively, with 15% disagreeing. Further analysis suggests that there is an indication that younger employees (under 35) are more likely to feel concerns are not addressed, and this highlights a potential area for the organisation to engage further, ensuring support, communication, and confidence in formal processes for employees at all stages, but particularly at the beginning of their careers.



## Learning from relevant cases

3.13 In recent years, a limited number of complaints have been formally progressed under the Whistleblowing Policy and have instead progressed through other routes. This is reflective of a culture where individuals feel able to share concerns directly with their manager without delay. An example of this can be seen in the major fraud case, where direct reporting through management was used, with swift actions taken. Notwithstanding this, there are lessons which can be learned from this case, and also other cases where whistleblowing was not deemed to be applicable, but where procedural improvements surrounding reporting of issues have been highlighted. Some of these lessons identified by reviewing such cases were:

- Ensuring that the appropriate route for raising a complaint is made clear if it is not felt that this can be done through the line manager (or another manager in the reporting line)
- Identification of whether a complaint is to be progressed through the Whistleblowing Policy or via the grievance, disciplinary or dignity and respect at work policies and clear communication and documentation of this being maintained.
- Ensuring that adequate and independent support is in place for individuals raising whistleblowing complaints.
- Reviewing other guidance documents, such as Handling Allegations against School Staff and Investigations Procedure, to ensure these align with the Whistleblowing Policy, as they do with other policies, such as the Managing Discipline and Managing Grievances Policies.
- Increasing awareness of the Whistleblowing Policy, and the alternative routes, should whistleblowing not be deemed applicable.
- Importance and value of early intervention and swift actions when complaints are raised.

## **Further Actions and Next Steps**

- 3.14 The revised Whistleblowing Policy, following its approval in 2023, had been well publicised, including through the Chief Executive's blog ([Chief Exec Blog – Whistleblowing and Aberdeen City Council's Fraud Response](#)). However, it is important that this Policy continues to be communicated widely to ensure all employees and managers are aware of this, should they have any concerns that should be addressed. It is intended that further communications be issued on the reviewed policy and updated guidance.
- 3.15 Taking account of feedback received as part of the policy review, employee experience survey outcomes and through consultation, a number of other actions have also been identified, as well as next steps. These are as follows:.

<b>Improvement Theme</b>	<b>Next Steps</b>	<b>Expected Timescales</b>
Communications	A further Chief Executive Blog Post	October 2025
	A dedicated Whistleblowing page on People Anytime, which includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links to the Policy and guidance, with easy access to associated documents</li> <li>• Case studies of typical whistleblowing scenarios</li> <li>• Links to the 2 Chief Executive blog posts to highlight the importance of the policy.</li> <li>• A feedback mechanism for suggesting any improvements to the policy and guidance.</li> </ul>	October 2025
	Leadership forum posts about the policy	October 2025 (but also on a regular basis)
	Highlighting the policy to the Young Employee Network to ensure knowledge at the earliest stage of young people's careers.	October 2025 (but also on a regular basis)
	Printed copies of the policy/ guidance to be available for frontline staff with limited digital access.	October 2025 (but also on a regular basis)
	Cascading communication of the policy and guidance through line management to ensure wider knowledge, particularly for frontline operational staff and those working in schools.	November 2025 (but also on a regular basis)

Reviews of other guidance	A review of Handling Allegations Against School Staff guidance is already underway and will be undertaken with engagement and feedback from Education Trade Unions as part of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers (LNCT).	February 2026
	A review of the Investigations Procedure is about to commence. This review will be undertaken with engagement and feedback from Trade Unions.	February 2026
Training	Inclusion of the policy within employee Corporate Induction to ensure awareness at the earliest stage.	October 2025
	Development of an ACC Learn module on Whistleblowing	July 2026
Monitoring	Future monitoring of the effectiveness of the policy will include analysis of whistleblowing trends, and feedback from employee surveys and training to inform future improvements to the policy, guidance and communication around whistleblowing.	August 2027
	The policy will continue to mitigate against practices which could put the organisation at risk, in accordance with our risk management framework outlined below in section 7.	Ongoing

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no direct costs associated with the review of the current policy.
- 4.2 The Audit Commission's statement notes that a review of the policy "*will ensure that staff continue to have the confidence to raise concerns if they suspect something fraudulent may be happening*", as such, the application of the policy could lead to financial malpractice or practices which are wasteful of Council resources being identified and addressed, thus protecting finite resources.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The policy provides assurance that the Council is meeting its obligations under the Employment Rights Act 1996 as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013.
- 5.2 The policy further provides a route through which illegal practices may be identified and addressed.

## 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The policy provides a route through which any issues relating to damage to the environment may be identified and addressed, thus helping to ensure that Council activities are carried out in a way that ensures environmental protection.

## 7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Compliance</b>	Risk of legislative non compliance	The policy allows for the identification of any malpractice or wrongdoing, including illegal activity, and ensures that workers are protected against any detriment for raising legitimate concerns, thus ensuring that the Council is compliant with the relevant legislation.	L	Yes
<b>Operational</b>	Workers do not feel empowered and supported to raise legitimate concerns they may have.	The Whistleblowing Policy provides a mechanism for legitimate concerns to be raised without fear of reprisal	L	Yes
<b>Financial</b>	There is a risk of malpractice or wrongdoing giving rise to claims against the Council or resulting in financial loss to the Council	The policy allows for such risks to be mitigated through the identification of legitimate concerns which may lead to the Council incurring financial costs	L	Yes

<b>Reputational</b>	There is a risk of reputational damage to the Council as a result of malpractice or wrongdoing	The policy allows for concerns to be identified and addressed timeously thus reducing the risk of reputational damage to the Council. Additionally, taking a supportive approach to workers who raise legitimate concerns should help to enhance the Council's reputation as a good employer.	L	Yes
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## 8. OUTCOMES

<b><u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u></b>	
	<b>Impact of Report</b>
<b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b>  <a href="#"><u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u></a>	The provisions within this report support the delivery of the Policy Statement through ensuring that sufficient resources are available to deliver the Council services which will achieve the policy priorities.
<a href="#"><u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26</u></a>	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The Prosperous People theme in the LOIP indicates that all people in the City are entitled to live within our community in a manner in which they feel empowered, resilient and safe, which would include employees of the Council. Adopting the approach outlined in the report will support the workforce.
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	The Prosperous Economy theme in the LOIP recognises the link between a healthy economy and a healthy population and aims for everyone in Aberdeen to benefit from a healthy economy and to have equal opportunities to be economically active. This would include the Council. Ensuring that people policies are in place and applied appropriately and consistently should assist with employee relations in the organisation and with the retention of trained and valued employees. This would mean that they can continue in post and contribute to delivering effective services to citizens and businesses, indirectly contributing to the City's economy.
<b>Regional and City Strategies</b>	This report links directly with the Council's <a href="#"><u>Workforce Delivery Plan</u></a> - setting up our council in a way that supports our aspirations



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy review principles are in place that embed early intervention and prevention</li> <li>• Governance systems are in place that mean people are not impeded by hierarchy and are empowered within our structures to take decisions at the lowest appropriate level</li> </ul>
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## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	An integrated impact assessment has been completed for this policy
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not Required.
<b>Other</b>	Not required

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 [Report to Staff Governance Committee 13 November 2023 – Whistleblowing Policy](#)

10.2 [Report to Full Council 5 February 2025 \(17 February 2025\) – Accounts Commission Findings](#)

## 11. APPENDICES

11.1 Whistleblowing Policy

11.2 Whistleblowing Procedure and Guidance

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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# Whistleblowing Policy

Approved by Committee on date TBC  
with an implementation date of TBC

## Document Control

<b>Approval Date</b>	TBC
<b>Implementation Date</b>	TBC
<b>Policy Number</b>	POL-C-0014
<b>Policy Author and Owner</b>	Sharon Robb – Employee Relations Casework Lead Isla Newcombe, Chief Officer – People & Citizen Services
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Staff Governance Committee
<b>Scheduled Review</b>	Biennial
<b>Date and Changes:</b>  November 2023: This is a replacement for the existing policy  August 2025: Policy reviewed, updates to service areas/job titles, links updated	

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# 1 Why does the Council need this Policy?

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide workers who have serious concerns about malpractice or wrongdoing in the Council with a route to raise such issues within the organisation at an early stage and in an appropriate way, rather than overlooking them or raising them with an outside body. Making such a disclosure is commonly known as 'whistleblowing'. For the definition of "worker" in this context please see paragraph 2.1 below.

1.2 The Council is committed to applying high standards of integrity, openness and accountability and seeks to conduct its activities and functions in a responsible manner. In support of that commitment, the Council encourages workers to come forward and voice their concerns where they become aware of a whistleblowing issue, raising it in accordance with this policy and accompanying procedure.

1.3 The policy allows for the information to be disclosed without fear of reprisal and independent of line management, where appropriate.

1.4 The policy ensures that the Council is compliant with the 'The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (as amended by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013)'. This provides legal protection for workers against being penalised or dismissed by their employer because of raising certain serious concerns, known as 'qualifying disclosures', details of which are shown under 13.3 and appendix 1 below.

1.5 Whilst there is no specific legal requirement for an organisation to have a specific Whistleblowing Policy, it is best practice for a policy to be in place.

1.6 This policy and accompanying procedure will help ensure that the Council is legally compliant in respect of whistleblowing and will mitigate the risk of any legislative breach. It should also reassure workers that it is safe and acceptable to speak up, enabling concerns to be raised at an early stage.

1.7 It is anticipated that any 'qualifying disclosure' will be made directly to the Council in the first instance. However, if an individual feels unable to use the Council's policy and accompanying procedure, the disclosure can be made to a relevant outside body. A list of prescribed outside bodies can be found on the Gov.uk website under the link

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2/whistleblowing-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies>

## 2 Application and Scope Statement

- 2.1 This policy applies to workers of Aberdeen City Council. For the purposes of this policy, a “worker” is defined as individuals who have entered into or works under (or, where the employment has ceased, worked under)
- a. a contract of employment; or
  - b. any other contract, whether express or implied and (if it is express) whether oral or in writing, whereby the individual undertakes to do or perform personally any work or services for another party to the contract whose status is not by virtue of the contract that of a client or customer of any profession or business undertaking carried on by the individual; and
  - c. agency workers and individuals supplied via an intermediary.
- 2.2 It provides workers with a mechanism for raising their concerns in relation to information they believe shows malpractice or wrongdoing in the Council, allowing for this to be disclosed internally without fear of reprisal and independently of their line manager, if appropriate.
- 2.3 It aligns with the Council’s Guiding Principle of ‘valuing each other’, confirming a commitment to ensuring everyone is treated with dignity and respect and supported by the organisation.
- 2.4 The policy does not apply to workers who wish to raise concerns about a service they have received from the Council. Such concerns should be raised via the corporate Complaints Handling Procedure [Complaints handling procedure | Aberdeen City Council](#)
- 2.5 In addition, the policy does not apply to those who wish to raise concerns relating to their own employment. Such concerns should be raised under the Managing Grievances policy and accompanying procedure [PeopleAnytime - Managing-Grievances.pdf - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#) and/or the Dignity and Respect at Work policy and accompanying procedure [Dignity-and-Respect-at-Work-Policy.pdf \(sharepoint.com\)](#).
- 2.6 Job applicants, and workers who carry out work or services for another party who is their customer or client are excluded from the legal protections for whistleblowers.
- 2.7 It should be noted that Settlement Agreements between the Council and a worker cannot be used to prevent a worker from making a Whistleblowing disclosure.

## 3 Responsibilities

- 3.1 Chief Officers are responsible for the application of the policy and accompanying procedure within their service delivery remit, ensuring that a supportive culture exists in

which whistleblowing concerns can be raised without fear of reprisal.

3.2 The Chief Officer **People & Citizen Services** is responsible for ensuring that appropriate training is in place.

3.3 The Council's Monitoring Officer is responsible for:

- Deciding if a disclosure is 'qualifying' in accordance with the legislation and whether it can be considered under the policy and accompanying procedure and notifying the complainant
- Identifying an officer to investigate the issue(s)
- Discussing and agreeing the scope of an investigation with the investigating officer and ensuring that a thorough investigation is undertaken
- Meeting with the complainant to explain the outcome of an investigation, following its completion
- Communicating any action points arising from the whistleblowing concern to the relevant Chief Officer for implementation
- Reporting to committee, as appropriate, on the number and type of whistleblowing cases
- Signposting a complainant to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman in the event the decision is not 'qualifying' or to the grievance policy
- Where it is more appropriate for a complaint to be handled under a different policy or process, for example Complaint Handling Protocol or Managing Grievances, the matter will be referred to the appropriate Service of the Council

3.4 Line managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that workers are aware of this policy and accompanying procedure
- Ensuring that whistleblowing concerns raised with them are channelled through the accompanying procedure
- Ensuring that workers are appropriately supported following their raising a whistleblowing concern
- Ensuring that no worker is subjected to victimization or any unfair treatment because of raising a whistleblowing concern.

3.5 Employees and workers are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves with the content of this policy and accompanying procedure
- Being vigilant in respect of illegal or unethical conduct in the organisation and to immediately report issues of that nature that they become aware of
- Submitting any 'qualifying disclosures' in accordance with this policy and accompanying procedure



- Co-operating with management during any investigation and throughout the whistleblowing process
- Not victimising or mistreating colleagues who submit a whistleblowing concern.

3.6 A breach or misuse of this policy may result in the potential use of other corporate procedures e.g. disciplinary procedure.

3.7 Non-compliance with the policy should be reported to the employee's line manager.

3.8 Any feedback on the policy or suggestions for improvement can be communicated to the **Chief Officer – People & Citizen Services** and this will be taken into account as part of the regular review of this policy.

## 4 Supporting Procedures & Documentation

4.1 An accompanying Whistleblowing procedure and guidance has been put in place to support adherence to this policy which can be found on the intranet.

4.2 The policy also links to:

- The Council's Guiding Principles
- The Managing Discipline policy and accompanying procedure and guidance
- Managing Grievances policy and accompanying procedure and guidance
- Dignity and Respect at Work policy and accompanying procedure and guidance
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Council's Financial Regulations
- Fraud, Bribery and Corruption policy
- Health and Safety policy
- Corporate Complaints procedure

## 5 About this Policy

5.1 The policy is not creating any specific regulations or requirements other than what is stated under Core Principles below.

### Policy Core Principles

5.2 Only a 'qualifying disclosure' in accordance with the legislative provisions will be considered under the policy and accompanying procedure, with the person raising the issue(s) requiring to believe it to be in the public interest (see appendix 1 below).

- 5.3 Disclosures regarded as ‘non-qualifying’, such as where the law is broken when making a disclosure, or where the information is protected under legal professional privilege, are not protected by the legislation and will not be covered by the policy and accompanying procedure.
- 5.4 The Council’s Monitoring Officer will make the determination on whether the disclosure is ‘qualifying’ in accordance with the legislation and hence whether it can be considered under the policy and accompanying procedure.
- 5.5 Employees and workers are encouraged to raise any concerns about malpractice or wrongdoing, regardless of the level of seniority of a person(s) who may have been involved in the alleged act(s).
- 5.6 All concerns raised under the policy and accompanying procedure will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal an individual’s identity if they so wish. However, an employee or worker may need to be identified and/or called as a witness in connection with an investigation at a later point. On these occasions prior consent will be sought, and further support and assistance given to the individual concerned.
- 5.7 Victimisation or any unfair treatment of a worker for raising a ‘qualifying disclosure’ will be regarded as a disciplinary issue.
- 5.8 Any matters raised under the policy will be investigated thoroughly and as promptly as possible and the outcome reported back to the individual who raised the issue.
- 5.9 The policy and accompanying procedure will not be used to reconsider matters which have already been addressed through other policies and procedures.
- 5.10 Concerns expressed anonymously will be considered at the discretion of the Council. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be considered would include the seriousness of the issue(s) raised; the credibility of the concerns; and the likelihood of confirming the allegations from alternative sources. Due to the anonymity of these type of concerns, whistleblowers in these instances will not ordinarily be able to receive feedback and that any action taken to look into a disclosure could be limited. Feedback to anonymous whistleblowers may be provided via a scheduled telephone appointment or to an anonymized email address.
- 5.11 If an individual makes a ‘qualifying disclosure’ in the public interest but it is not confirmed by an investigation, no action will be taken against the employee or worker who raised the matter **in good faith**.

5.12 Where following investigation an allegation(s) raised is found to be false or malicious the Council will seek to take disciplinary action against the individual(s) concerned and will aim to minimise any potential negative impact the false or malicious allegation(s) may have had.

5.13 Disclosure to the media or social media is not permitted before, during and after the completion of a whistleblowing investigation either conducted internally or via a regulatory body. An individual making a disclosure to the media in these circumstances may face disciplinary action.

## 6 Risk

6.1 The following identified risks will be mitigated against through having this policy in place.

- Compliance - having a whistleblowing policy and supporting guidance in place will reduce the risk of legislative non-compliance with the purpose of the policy being to identify and address any malpractice or wrongdoing, including illegal activity, and ensuring that workers are protected against any detriment for raising legitimate concerns.
- Operational – The biggest operational risk is that workers do not feel empowered and protected to “whistleblow” where they see potential cases of serious malpractice or wrong doing. Having this policy in place will give workers the confidence to raise such issues, thus enabling the organisation to address matters appropriately and contain any potential negative impacts that could affect business efficiency.
- Financial – these risks will be mitigated by the policy as it should contribute to avoiding claims against the Council relating to malpractice or wrongdoing. Such claims, as well as any losses incurred, could otherwise be very costly.
- Reputational - the policy should also contribute towards reducing reputational risk, as if any malpractice or wrongdoing is identified and addressed timeously this will help to avoid adverse publicity and demonstrate that the Council has in place robust processes for dealing with such events. In addition, being supportive towards employees and workers who raise whistleblowing issues should help to enhance the Council’s reputation as a good employer.

6.2 There have been no unintended effects and consequences identified resulting from the introduction of the policy.

6.3 The risks identified will be managed and mitigated through application of the policy across

the Council. This will be undertaken by ensuring the policy and accompanying procedure are readily available to all and that support is provided from **People and Citizen Services**, and Governance in the interpretation of the policy, where required.

6.4 Monitoring will be undertaken of any feedback from stakeholders or others in relation to the identified risks and appropriate action taken if any concerns arise.

6.5 The policy should support the organisation's 'PREVENT' obligations as part of the 'CONTEST' framework by helping to ensure that workers' concerns about any malpractice or wrongdoing in the organisation are listened to and addressed as appropriate, with them being afforded the protection against any detriment for raising a legitimate issue as well as support from management. This should help to maintain employees' and workers' health and wellbeing, reduce their vulnerability and in turn make them less susceptible to radicalisation and being drawn into terrorist organisations. Further information on this subject is available **via [Prevent Awareness](#)**.

## 7 Environmental Considerations

7.1 Whistleblowing can cover a variety of disclosures, including where a worker reasonably believes that damage to the environment is occurring, has taken place, or is likely to happen in future. Having this policy in place will provide employees and workers with a means to raise such issues, helping to ensure environmental protection in relation to Council activities; with the legal safeguards also available to workers against any disadvantage through raising legitimate concerns.

## 8 Policy Performance

8.1 The main factors determining the effectiveness of the policy and whether it adds the value intended is the usage of the policy by employees and workers who wish to raise concerns about any malpractice or wrongdoing in the Council and the consistency in its application by managers and the Monitoring Officer. It is not expected that it will be used extensively, with malpractice or wrongdoing likely to be issues that arise only occasionally, but it is important that the Council has in place a robust policy and accompanying procedure which is available for **use** when the need arises.

8.2 The effectiveness of the policy will be measured through gathering data on the number and type of whistleblowing cases being raised through the policy and accompanying procedure, making annual comparisons, and through collecting any feedback from users of the policy and accompanying procedure, including in relation to organisational culture around encouragement to raise concerns.

8.3 The Council's Monitoring Officer will report to committee, as appropriate, on the number

and type of whistleblowing cases, ensuring that confidentiality is maintained.

## 9 Design and Delivery

- 9.1 The policy links to the 'Workforce' strategic outcome of the Target Operating Model 1.2 (TOM 1.2) in that it is concerned with organisational culture. The Council aims to apply high standards of integrity, openness and accountability and seeks to conduct its activities and functions in a responsible manner. Having a whistleblowing policy and accompanying procedure in place where employees and workers are encouraged to come forward and raise their concerns if they become aware of issues relating to malpractice or wrongdoing, and supported in doing so, will contribute to a positive culture in the organisation. It also accords with the Council's Guiding Principles, particularly in relation to the commitment to valuing and supporting staff.
- 9.2 The policy also links to the 'Prosperous Place' theme in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) which indicates that all people in the City are entitled to live in a manner in which they feel safe and protected from harm and supported where necessary. All citizens are equally entitled to enjoy these aspirations, including service users and Council employees and workers. Having a whistleblowing policy and accompanying procedure in place which can help to identify and address any malpractice or wrongdoing in the organisation, including illegal practices, will help ensure citizens, service users, employees and workers are all protected from the effects of any such activity.

## 10 Housekeeping and Maintenance

- 10.1 The Policy replaces the existing Whistleblowing policy and will be reviewed biennially with any necessary updates made to it and the accompanying procedural document.

## 11 Communication and Distribution

- 11.1 This policy and accompanying procedure will be shared directly with the Extended Corporate Management Team to enable their communication and distribution in accordance with responsibilities set out in section 3.
- 11.2 The policy and accompanying procedure will be available to view on the organisation's shared areas on the intranet.

## 12 Information Management

- 12.1 Information generated by the application of this policy and accompanying procedure will be managed in accordance with the Council's Corporate Information Policy and Supporting Procedures.

## 13 Definitions and Understanding this Policy

- 13.1 Whistleblowing – is making a disclosure in the public interest. It means that if an

individual believes there is malpractice or wrongdoing in the organisation this can be reported by following the correct process, and by doing this the legal protections will apply to the whistleblower from suffering detriment as result of raising such concerns.

13.2 Public interest – a disclosure in the public interest is one about malpractice or wrongdoing in the public sector that serves the public interest. For an allegation to be considered a public interest disclosure under the legislation it must be made to the employer as a whistleblowing concern (or to a proper authority – see 1.6 above for list of prescribed authorities for making complaints to).

13.3 Qualifying disclosure - are disclosures of information where the employee or worker reasonably believes (and it is in the public interest) that one or more of the following matters is either happening, has taken place, or is likely to happen in the future.

- A criminal offence
- The breach of a legal obligation
- A miscarriage of justice
- A danger to the health and safety of any individual
- Damage to the environment
- Deliberate attempt to conceal any of the above.

13.4 Worker – the definition of worker for whistleblowing purposes includes

1. individuals who have entered into or works under (or, where the employment has ceased, worked under)
  - a) a contract of employment; or
  - b) any other contract, whether express or implied and (if it is express) whether oral or in writing, whereby the individual undertakes to do or perform personally any work or services for another party to the contract whose status is not by virtue of the contract that of a client or customer of any profession or business undertaking carried on by the individual; and
2. agency workers and individuals supplied via an intermediary.

## 14 External Sources of Guidance

The following are external sources of Whistleblowing guidance

- UK Government - [Whistleblowing: Guidance for Employers and Code of Practice \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- ACAS - [The law on whistleblowing at work: Whistleblowing at work - Acas](https://www.acas.org.uk)
- Protect - [Protect - Speak up stop harm - Protect - Speak up stop harm \(protect-advice.org.uk\)](https://protect-advice.org.uk)

## Appendix 1

### Summary of Legislative Provisions

- The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (as amended by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013) gives legal protection to workers against being penalised or dismissed by their employer because of raising certain serious concerns, known as 'qualifying disclosures'.
- A 'qualifying disclosure' is any disclosure of information that in the reasonable belief of the individual, is made in the public interest.
- The list of 'qualifying disclosures' in the legislation is where one or more of the following has been, is being, or is likely to be committed: - A criminal offence; a failure or likely failure to comply with any legal obligation; a miscarriage of justice; putting health and safety of any individual in danger; damage to the environment; deliberate concealment relating to any of the foregoing.
- It is not necessary for the individual to have proof of the above, a reasonable belief is sufficient.
- The legislative provisions ensure that no one is disadvantaged in raising legitimate concerns.
- The legislation protects a 'worker' who makes a whistleblowing complaint from suffering detriment as result of raising concerns. The term 'worker' is given a wide definition in the legislation covering those mentioned in 2.1 above.
- It should be noted that whistleblowers are protected whilst they are in employment and after employment has ended.
- If an employee is dismissed because they were a whistleblower, the dismissal will be automatically unfair. An employee will also be unfairly dismissed if they are selected for redundancy because they were a whistleblower.
- Some disclosures are regarded as 'non-qualifying disclosures', such as where the law is broken when making a disclosure, or where the information is protected under legal professional privilege. The worker is not protected by the legislation for whistleblowing in respect of a 'non-qualifying disclosure'.





# Whistleblowing Procedure and Guidance

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## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

This procedure and guidance should be read in conjunction with the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and details the sequence of steps to be followed to implement the policy.

The Council's Whistleblowing Policy and procedure should be used to assist individuals who have serious concerns or believe they have discovered malpractice or wrongdoing in the organisation. It is intended to encourage and enable individuals to raise such concerns within the Council rather than overlooking them or raising them outside the organisation. It allows for this information to be disclosed without fear of reprisal and independently of their normal line management channels if the individual feels this is necessary.

### **What is whistleblowing?**

Whistleblowing is where an individual within an organisation voices their concern in relation to potential malpractice or wrongdoing in the organisation.

### **Relevant Legislation**

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (as amended by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013) protects individuals against being dismissed or penalised by their employers as a result of disclosing certain serious concerns. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 added to the protections contained in the Employment Rights Act 1996 by incorporating protections for whistleblowers. These provisions ensure that no-one should be disadvantaged in raising legitimate concerns.

The legislation protects a worker who makes a whistleblowing complaint from suffering detriment as a result of raising concerns. The term "worker" is given a wide definition in the legislation and covers the types of individuals noted in the "who the procedure applies to?" section below.

### **Why should an individual whistleblow?**

If an individual becomes aware of a whistleblowing issue, they should be encouraged to 'blow the whistle', as:

- if they do not do so an opportunity could be missed to deal with a problem before it becomes a major issue;
- the individual raising the concern could qualify for protection under the Public Interest Disclosure Act and should not fear raising concerns in case they are subjected to disadvantage;
- an individual who conceals malpractice could become questionable themselves; and
- the organisation's reputation could be damaged if the concern comes to light by other means.

## **Legal Protection**

The law seeks to encourage individuals to raise concerns by whistleblowing and protects them from potential negative consequences which could arise from being a whistleblower. Whistleblowers have the right not to be subject to detriment because they have blown the whistle. Whistleblowers are protected whilst they are in employment and after employment has ended (an example of post-employment detriment would be refusal to give a reference for a former employee who was a whistleblower). If an employee is dismissed because they were a whistleblower the dismissal will be automatically unfair. An employee will also be unfairly dismissed if they are selected for redundancy because they were a whistleblower.

## **Scope of the Policy and Procedure**

The Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure applies to all employees and workers, including agency workers, workers who are self-employed, sub-contractors and workers employed by an outsourced contractor providing Council services. A concern can be raised by a junior employee/worker against a more senior individual or against an employee/worker at the same or similar level in the organisation as the person who raised the matter. In this procedure a person raising a concern by whistleblowing is referred to as a whistleblower.

Job applicants and persons who carry out work or services for another party who is their customer or client are excluded from the legal protections for whistleblowers.

## **Situations where the Policy and Procedure does not apply**

The Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure will not apply to reconsider matters which have already been addressed through other people policies and procedures, for example Dignity and Respect at Work, Managing Discipline or Managing Grievances.

Individuals who are unsure about the application of the Policy and Procedure can raise queries in confidence by e-mailing [AskHR@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:AskHR@aberdeencity.gov.uk).

## **Qualifying disclosures**

To be protected as a whistleblower the person raising the concern needs to make what is called a 'qualifying disclosure' about malpractice where one or more of the following has been, is being or is likely to be committed:

- a criminal offence;
- a failure or likely failure to comply with any legal obligation;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- putting health and safety of any individual in danger;
- damage to the environment; or
- deliberate concealment relating to any of the above.

The Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure is intended to cover concerns which are in the public interest. Examples of Whistleblowing complaints are shown in Appendix 1.

## **Non-qualifying disclosures**

There are some disclosures that are not regarded as 'qualifying disclosures'. The individual will not be protected for whistleblowing if:

- The law is broken when making a disclosure (e.g. if the Official Secrets Act is breached)
- The information is protected under legal professional privilege (e.g. if the information was disclosed for the purpose of obtaining legal advice).

## **Conditions for an individual making a disclosure**

To be protected as a whistleblower the disclosure must be made –

- With a reasonable belief it is in the public interest;
- With a reasonable belief that the act has taken place and it is disclosed to an appropriate person;
- With compliance to the provisions of this procedure.

## **Confidentiality**

All whistleblowing complaints will be treated in confidence; however, please note that individuals may be called as a witness at a later stage, should an investigation under the procedure be required.

## **SECTION 2: THE PROCEDURE**

The Council's Whistleblowing Procedure comprises four steps:

### **Step 1: Reporting a Concern**

Initially concerns should be reported through the relevant line manager or, in the case of a self-employed individual or contractors, the appropriate officer managing the contractual arrangements. If this is not appropriate or would be difficult then the individual should seek to contact a more senior manager or their Chief Officer. If this is not appropriate the formal part of the procedure can be invoked and the whistleblower may contact the Monitoring Officer (currently the Chief Officer - Governance) using the form at Appendix 3. Advice and support may be sought from a trade union or work colleague.

Once the initial concern has been lodged and it has been confirmed by the Monitoring Officer that it will be dealt with under this procedure, all appropriate protection will apply from this point.

Wherever possible, a whistleblower should raise concerns in writing identifying the nature of the concern and the grounds on which these are based. Information on the background, history, names, dates, and places should be provided if possible. If a whistleblower does not feel able to raise concerns in writing, they may contact the appropriate Senior Manager, Chief Officer, or the Monitoring Officer by telephone or arrange to meet them face to face.

## **Step 2: Determining how the Concern will be dealt with**

When a concern is received by a manager, they should first consider whether the matter could be dealt with informally, if it is a minor issue, or whether an alternative policy or procedure is more applicable, before deciding whether to refer the matter to the Monitoring Officer as a whistleblowing complaint. Advice should be sought from People Services if this is not clear.

### **Links to other Policies and Procedures**

The Whistleblowing procedure is intended to cover major concerns that fall outwith the scope of other procedures and is intended to have a wider application covering other forms of malpractice. As malpractice is not easily defined, the following is a list of examples – although this list is not exhaustive.

- Fraud
- Financial irregularities
- Corruption
- Bribery
- Dishonesty
- Acting contrary to code of ethics
- Criminal activities
- Creating or ignoring a serious health and safety risk or risk to the environment.

It should be noted that whistleblowing disclosures are protected where they concern –

- An action or omission that took place in the past;
- Improper conduct occurring in the present; or
- The prospect or likelihood of an action or omission occurring in the future.

### **Difference between a Grievance and Whistleblowing complaint**

It should be recognised that there is a difference between a grievance and a whistleblowing complaint.

A whistleblowing concern relates to conduct in the workplace which the complainant genuinely believes falls within the whistleblowing criteria and where a concern is raised in relation to danger or illegality which affects others e.g. customers, the public or an employee. Usually, the individual raising the concern is not directly affected by the danger or illegality and they would rarely have personal interest in the outcome. They are merely trying to alert others and act as a messenger so that the matter can be addressed. The individual raising the concern must have the reasonable belief that it is in the public interest to make a disclosure under the whistleblowing rules. They are not required to prove the malpractice but must have a genuine belief that it is taking place and raise the concern in accordance with this procedure.

A grievance concerns an individual personally, being poorly treated or possibly involving a breach of their individual employment rights and where they would seek redress or justice for themselves. They would therefore have a vested interest in the outcome. The following are examples of grievances –

- Issues regarding pay or hours of work;
- The allocation of work or workload;
- Working environment or working conditions;
- Issues relating to relationships with colleagues;
- Complaints about type of work or duties an individual is asked to carry out e.g. something outwith their contract of employment;
- Complaints about insufficient training.

### **Existing Policies and Procedures**

The Council has other existing policies and procedures in place to assist employees to raise concerns regarding the following types of issues which should be considered prior to the Whistleblowing procedure:

- concerns that they or are being bullied or harassed, this should be reported through the Dignity and Respect at Work Policy.
- Issues relating to Child Protection should be referred to the Protecting Children in Aberdeen City Policy.
- Financial irregularities should be dealt with through referring to the Council's Financial Regulations.



The Whistleblowing procedure does not apply to complaints made by citizens. Any complaints from our citizens should be dealt with through the External Corporate Complaints procedure which can be found on the Council's website.

This is not an exhaustive list. It is the final determination of the Monitoring Officer to decide whether a complaint falls under the Whistleblowing procedure and whether protection under it applies.

Once the manager has confirmed that they believe the complaint is a whistleblowing complaint, they should inform the Council's Monitoring Officer by completing the form at Appendix 2. It is recommended this should take no longer than 5 working days from the date the concern was lodged. It should be noted that the Monitoring Officer has the final determination on whether the concern will be considered as a whistleblowing complaint.

The manager should also write to the individual to acknowledge receipt of their concern and inform on how it will be dealt with (see Appendix 3 for model letter). Where the manager feels that the matter should be dealt with under another policy or procedure, the appropriate route should be progressed to take the matter forward and clear reasons given for the decision to progress matters under an alternative route.

Where complaints have been received directly by the Monitoring Officer, they will make a determination on whether the complaint is a whistleblowing complaint and write to the individual directly, again with clear reasons given if their decision is that an alternative route should be used. The Monitoring Officer will also outline any next steps or recommendations. A copy of this letter will be sent to People Services for recording and monitoring purposes.

### **Step 3: The Formal Investigation**

The Monitoring Officer will appoint a suitable Investigating Officer who has the necessary skills and knowledge to investigate the reported concern and to determine whether it is appropriate to be investigated within or outwith the Cluster involved.

Where the concern relates to an issue of financial irregularity, the matter will be dealt with in accordance with the Financial Regulations. However, in these circumstances, communication should be maintained with the Monitoring Officer to allow a response to be made to the individual raising the concern, in accordance with this procedure.

It will be necessary for the Investigating Officer to source and scrutinise all available facts in order to report to the Monitoring Officer. This may include interviewing others who may, or may not, be employees of the Council. It is recommended that the investigation is completed within the target date of 20 working days or to an agreed timescale.

The Investigating Officer should maintain contact with the individual who has raised the concern to update them on progress of the investigation. As a minimum, the investigating

officer should contact the individual raising a complaint at the commencement and conclusion of their investigation. Where the investigation extends beyond the target date of 20 days, regular updates should be provided either weekly or as otherwise agreed with the individual.

The Investigating Officer is responsible for compiling a written report for the Monitoring Officer (a template report is provided at appendix 4). The report should comment on the validity of the concern and recommend any action the Council should take to make good any identified failings. However, the final decision as to the scope of the investigation and the outcome of the concern rests with the Monitoring Officer.

### **Reporting to external bodies**

If there is evidence of criminal activity, the Investigating Officer, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, should notify Police Scotland. Any internal investigation should not interfere with any police investigation.

## **Step 4: Outcome of the Complaint**

Once the Monitoring Officer is in receipt of the Investigating Officer's report, a meeting will be called with the individual who raised the concern. At the meeting the Monitoring Officer will explain the outcome and reasons for the decision. This decision will be confirmed in writing within 5 working days from the date of the meeting.

In most circumstances, the Monitoring Officer should release the full report to the individual who has raised the concern. However, where there are issues that are confidential, which contain personal information about individuals or, for any other justifiable reason, only the parts of the report which exclude the sensitive information will be released.

At the meeting the individual may be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union representative.

Following the outcome, the Monitoring Officer will write to the relevant Chief Officer to communicate any action points arising from the whistleblowing concern. These must be implemented within the timescales set by the Monitoring Officer.

Any non-compliance with the requirements of the Monitoring Officer will be reported to the Chief Executive, with the Monitoring Officer reserving the right to report the matter to the relevant committee.

Should the individual who raised the concern be dissatisfied with the determination of the Monitoring Officer in the conclusions and action to be taken, they should contact '[Protect](#)' (Advice line: 020 3117 2520, or by using their webform), an independent external organisation that can advise on progressing whistleblowing issues.

### **Where the employee is dissatisfied following the outcome**

Where an individual is not satisfied that this procedure has been applied properly or appropriately, they may raise the matter directly with an Executive Director. This should be done within 10 working days of receipt of the outcome letter.

## **SECTION 3: KEY ISSUES TO CONSIDER**

### **Victimisation**

The Council will protect any individual who makes a disclosure in accordance with this procedure from any form of victimisation and reprisal. Any form of bullying, harassment or victimisation against an individual as a result of them raising a whistleblowing concern will be managed under the Managing Discipline Policy.

There may be some circumstances where an outcome is reached by the relevant manager(s) that it is appropriate to transfer an employee to another service or location. This would be done in consultation with the employee concerned.

### **Anonymous Allegations**

The Whistleblowing Policy Procedure encourages individuals who raise concerns not to remain anonymous by ensuring they will be protected from victimisation. However, where an individual wishes to remain anonymous, the Council will make every attempt to protect their identity. This may not always be possible as individuals who report concerns may be required to give evidence as a witness during any investigation into a Whistleblowing complaint. The Council will use its discretion in maintaining the anonymity of the individual concerned. The following factors would need to be considered:

- the seriousness of the issue(s) raised;
- the likelihood of obtaining information from alternative sources which would evidence the individual's concerns.

### **False Allegations**

The Council will protect individuals from false and malicious allegations. Allegations will be investigated before determining what action, if any, should be taken. Where it is established that an employee makes an allegation which is known to be false or malicious, this will be managed under the Managing Discipline Policy.

### **Employee Wellbeing**

Understandably, the whistleblowing process can be a difficult period for all involved. The health and wellbeing of all employees should be a priority at each stage.

There is a range of support and advice available as follows:.

- Your line manager (where appropriate)
- [Trade Unions](#)
- Citizens Advice Bureau - [www.cas.org.uk](http://www.cas.org.uk)
- ACAS Point - [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)
- [Employee Relations and Wellbeing Team](#) for procedural advice
- [Mental Health and Wellbeing Pages](#): these are available on People Anytime and provide a variety of support resources, skills/training information and details about the Councils Mental Health First Aiders Network.
- Employee Assistance Programme (EAP): The Council provides a free, confidential 24-hour EAP (counselling) service. The service offers a helpline for general advice and guidance, psychological guidance and emotional support and/or individual counselling either face to face or over the phone and has no role in the consideration of any complaints by Council officers/management. Further details can be accessed on [People Anytime](#) or you can access the service by telephone on 0800 023 9324.

In addition to the telephone service there is a wide offering of resources available which includes downloadable self-help workbooks, debt advice, a mental health app and more. You can sign in to the full site here [https://accmybenefits.vivup.co.uk/users/sign\\_in..](https://accmybenefits.vivup.co.uk/users/sign_in..)

## SECTION 4: APPENDICES

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>Appendix 1.</b> | Examples of Whistleblowing                                      |
| <b>Appendix 2.</b> | Pro-forma to Monitoring Officer                                 |
| <b>Appendix 3.</b> | Model Letter to Individual from Manager receiving the Complaint |
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| <b>Appendix 6.</b> | Flow-chart  |

## Appendix 1: Examples of Whistleblowing

Below are example scenarios of the types of issues that may be covered under the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure.

### Example 1

An individual reports that health and safety rules are being breached by others in order to cut down on time spent at jobs. The manager rejects the allegation and subsequently reprimands the individual.

### Example 2

An individual raises a concern because Council Officials are receiving gifts and hospitality from another individual in exchange for their issue being given priority over others.

### Example 3

An individual discloses that a manager is putting pressure on their team by instructing them to continually work 60 hours per week to cover for shortfalls in staff. In doing so they are in breach of the Working Time Regulations.

### Example 4

An individual has raised a concern because a manager employs a group of staff to cover busy periods. This group of staff does not have the legal right to work in the UK and no recruitment checks have been carried out.

### Example 5

An individual has raised a concern because an employee has been disposing of toxic chemicals inappropriately causing potential contamination to the public water supply.

### Example 6

An individual has raised a concern that a manager has been hiring an external trainer who is a friend of theirs, instead of using the internal training team to deliver in-house training, which is on suspicious terms. The manager has been booking more courses than are required and paying the trainer full fees for courses which are subsequently cancelled.

### Example 7

An individual has raised a concern regarding the inappropriate storage of meat potentially causing cross contamination. Meat deliveries are constantly left unrefrigerated on the floor and frozen produce left to defrost before being returned to the freezer.

### Example 8

An individual is aware that clients' personal files and data have been disposed of inappropriately and in breach of data protection legislation.

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL WHISTLEBLOWING PROCEDURE

### COMPLAINT FORM TO MONITORING OFFICER

The following complaint has been received from an individual who wishes / I wish\* to report a concern which may invoke protection under the Whistleblowing procedure. The details below outline the complaint and await your determination.

#### Section 1

Name	Job Title
Cluster/Organisation	Work Location

#### Section 2

Please provide a brief outline of the complaint:

(Where possible please provide names, dates, history and background details of the complaint)

--

Has the concern been considered under an alternative policy / procedure? Please provide details:

--

**Section 3**

Has the complaint been investigated previously?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, who was the manager who undertook the investigation?

Please provide brief details of the outcome of any previous investigation below:

Please attach any correspondence relating to the complaint, along with this form, to the Monitoring Officer, Chief Officer - Governance, Aberdeen City Council, Marischal College, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor South, Business Hub 6, Broad Street, Aberdeen, AB10 1AB.

### Appendix 3: Model Letter to Individual from Manager Receiving the Complaint

Date:

PERSONAL

Dear

#### REPORTING OF CONCERN UNDER THE WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

If written concern from worker:

I write to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated xx/xx/xx in accordance with the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure and advise that the concern as outlined by yourself has been formally registered.

***Or if verbal concern from worker:***

I refer to our meeting of xx/xx/xx where you outlined a concern in accordance with the above procedure and write to advise you that the concern has been formally registered.

Option 1 Initial determination by manager - possible Whistleblowing

I have passed the concern to the Monitoring Officer (or appointed representative) who will determine whether the concern qualifies for protection under the Whistleblowing procedure. They will then write to you confirming whether your concern qualifies or not.

You will then be further notified of the Monitoring Officer's determination of your concern and how the matter will be progressed, or otherwise.

Option 2 Initial determination not Whistleblowing

I have decided after careful consideration, and following consultation with the Monitoring Officer, that your concern does not fall within the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure and instead should be managed through an alternative policy, the ***(Managing Discipline Policy / Managing Grievances Policy / Dignity and Respect at Work Policy) delete as appropriate.***

As such you will be contacted shortly so that your concern can be taken forward.

Yours sincerely

Name of manager receiving complaint



**WHISTLEBLOWING INVESTIGATION REPORT****EMPLOYEE DETAILS**

Name		Employee Number	
Job Title			
Employing Team and Cluster			

**SUMMARY OF COMPLAINT(S)**

Set out the complaint(s) and attach the form submitted by the employee or their line manager, as applicable.

**INVESTIGATION TIMELINE**

Investigation allocated	Insert dates	Draft report sent to People Services (if applicable)	
Employee response received		Report completed	
People & OD Advisor Consulted (if applicable)	Insert name		

**PROVISION OF STATEMENTS**

	Name	Job title	Date of Statement
Statement 1	Employee		
Statement 2	Witness		

Under this heading, list who provided statements. Statements must be given a statement number and this number should be referred to in the main body of the report and included as an appendix at the end of the report.

### OTHER DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

	Description
Appendix 1	
Appendix 2	

Under this heading, specify any other documentary evidence that you referred to (e.g. timesheets, claim forms, audit records, codes of practice, terms and conditions etc)

E.g, Appendix 2, Time sheets for period 1 January to 31 March

### FURTHER INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE EMPLOYEE

Where a face to face meeting was carried out, you should attach a detailed summary of the meeting. Where a statement was provided, you should attach the employee's written statement as Statement 1.

This section should clearly summarise the employee's complaint and any other details they put forward in support of their complaint.

### SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE AND OUTCOME OF INVESTIGATION

There should be a summary of all findings from the investigation taking into consideration the employee's response to the questions asked compared with witness statements (considering their credibility) and any other evidence presented e.g. facts, figures, documentation considered.

Give clear reasons for arriving at the conclusions, taking each complaint in turn (where more than one was lodged), detailing the evidence that both supports/does not support the complaint(s). Remain factual and objective.

## Appendix 4: Template Investigation Report

Conclude the outcome of the investigation, based on all the evidence gathered i.e. whether you consider that there is sufficient evidence in support, or otherwise, of the complaint(s) and your rationale for reaching this conclusion.

Note: it will ultimately be the decision of the Monitoring Officer whether the complaint is upheld.

### INVESTIGATING OFFICER'S DETAILS

Name		Job title	
Cluster			
Tel		Email	

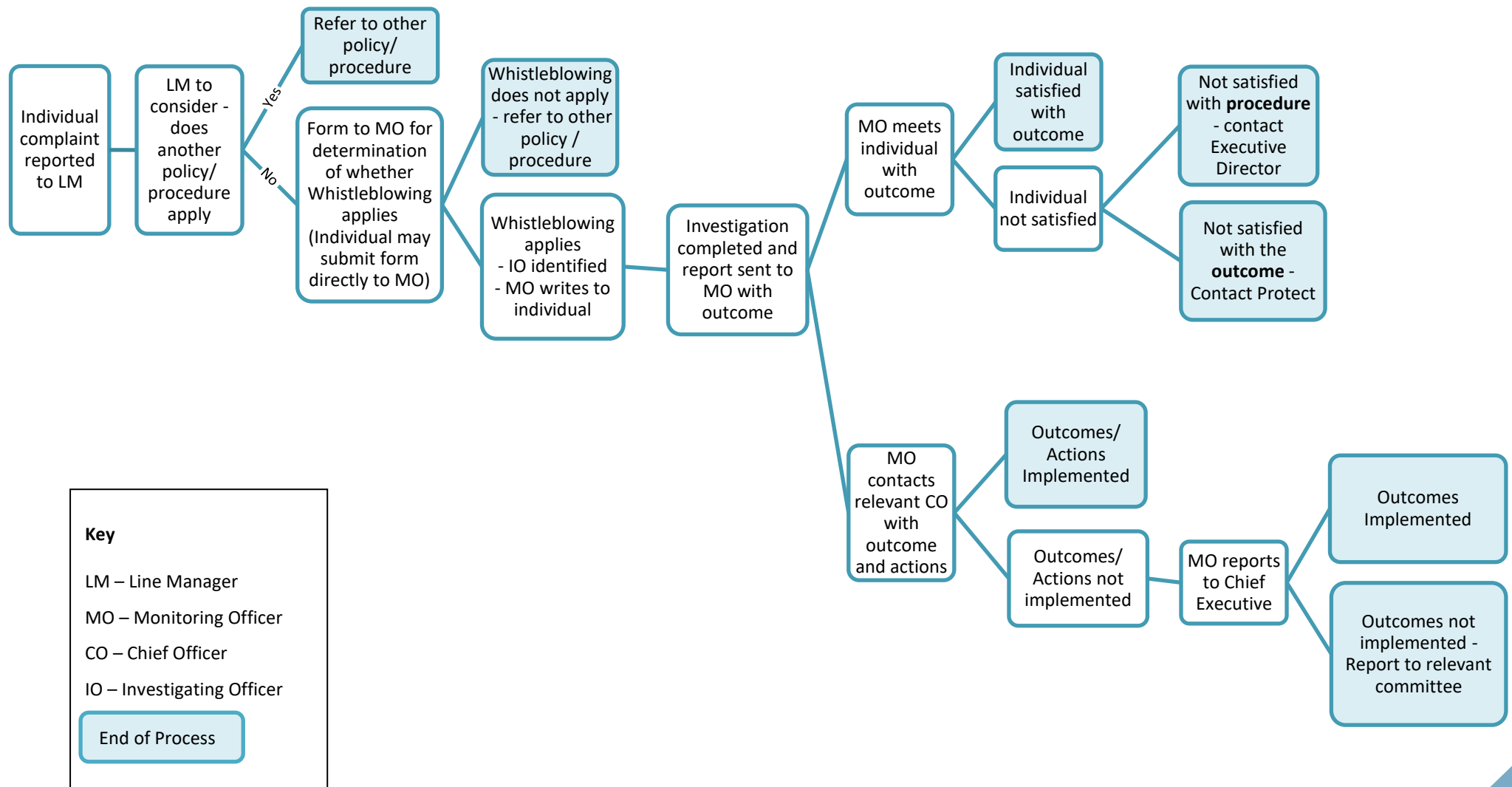
### MONITORING OFFICER'S DETAILS

Name		Job title	
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Whilst it is hoped the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure will empower employees to raise concerns internally, by law, individuals can also raise a concern to an appropriate external organisation (known as a Prescribed Person or Prescribed Body). Below is a non exhaustive list of regulators or independent supervisory bodies which may be relevant:

1. Health & Safety risks: HSE, Food Standards Agency
2. Environmental issues: Scottish Environment Protection Agency
3. Utilities: OFCOM, WICS, OFGEM.
4. Financial Services & the City: Financial Services Authority (and pending its full operation, its predecessor bodies); HM Treasury.
5. Fraud & fiscal irregularities: Serious Fraud Office, Inland Revenue & Customs.
6. Public sector finance: Audit Commission, Audit Scotland, Accounts Commission for Scotland.
7. Company Law: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.
8. Competition and consumer law: Office of Fair Trading, Local Authority
9. Others: Certification Officer (Trade Unions), Information Commissioner's office, Charity Commission, Criminal Cases Review Commission, Data Protection Registrar, The Pensions Regulator, Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland (Councillors/Members of a devolved public body)

Further information can be obtained via the following weblink:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2/whistleblowing-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies>



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