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
Training and Skills Development	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. Build on pride felt by employees to continue to focus on improving Citizen Interaction Experiences and employee confidence across all areas of the organisation	• Delivery of the digital skills agenda as part of the workforce delivery plan refresh • Refresh the Citizen, Digital and Data enabling strategy and continue delivery of new technologies to support service delivery. • 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. • 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.
Communication / Innovation & Improvement	Draw on positive relationships with managers and target corporate communications methods and ideas gathering based on job family / service area. Given that 89% feel trusted to get on a do a good job,	• Support line managers to share information across the organisation, via the leadership forum or through greater use of cascade methods. • Further tailor communications to job families where required.

	build on this and the culture of improvement within services to harness local ideas.	• Work with job families to establish most effective communication and ideas gathering method for each. • Support senior leaders to undertake regular communications relevant to their area – both corporately and within clusters.
Continuous Review & Development (CR&D) Meetings	Draw on the positive feedback about 1:1 meetings to enhance the value of CR&D (performance appraisal) meetings.	• Manager training to ensure process and conversations around performance are felt as valuable. • Continue to work with frontline areas to ensure CR&D process is most suitable for job types including streamlined end of year review. • Drawing on successful templates and training for 1:1s to review the same for CR&D. • Enhance the focus within CR&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.
Employee Wellbeing	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.	• Delivery of the updated Mental Health Action Plan • Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing policy review • Continuation of the Absence Improvement Project • Family Friendly policy review • Promotion of Reasonable Adjustment Passports • Continue to promote Disability Confident Employer in recruitment initiatives. • Review of Absence Data Dashboard
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)	Build on the positive scores relating to Team and feeling respected and included. Increase awareness of the relevance and prevalence of	• Implement and continuously monitor the refreshed and co-created EDI action plan which focuses on improving key themes identified.

	EDI initiatives, recruitment and development opportunities and participation across the organisation.	• Support team leaders to continue to build positive team relationships, effective team meetings that enable inclusion and to focus on EDI positive awareness • Tailor communication and training around EDI using the existing EDI hub as a central, accessible and updated source for EDI opportunities, policies and events. • Continue to develop and expand EDI hub. • Develop targeted outreach initiatives to communicate with underrepresented groups. • Support senior leaders to champion and visibly support EDI related activity.
Leadership and Management	Build on visible leadership and connection to Council vision across a number of job families to those furthest from the corporate centre.	• Continue to deliver frontline manager training to provide managers with skills aligned to the People Manager Capability framework • Leadership Forum Engagement and Training Plan • Refresh Visible Leadership Programme to ensure contact with more remote employees to leadership decision making and corporate vision • Ensure leadership development opportunities seek diverse candidates from the full range of operational areas / Job families and reinforce the importance of visible leadership. • Investigate the potential use of 360 feedback mechanisms.

Section 2: Introduction

The Employee Experience Survey launched on 13th December 2024 and was open until 14th 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.

Legend: ● Strongly disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Agree ● Strongly agree

Response	I understand and feel connected to our purpose as a council	I have a role to play in helping meet the challenges facing Aberdeen City Council	The Guiding Principles help me to understand what's expected of me as an employee	The council delivers excellent customer service	The council has good ways of keeping us informed about what is going on.	I know where to find information or guidance about working for Aberdeen City Council
Strongly agree	11%	23%	10%	5%	7%	11%
Agree	44%	55%	46%	28%	40%	53%
Neutral	30%	17%	30%	43%	32%	22%
Disagree	12%		10%	18%	16%	11%
Strongly disagree				5%	5%	

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

Legend: ● Strongly disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Agree ● Strongly agree

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel proud to work for Aberdeen City Council		9%	35%	40%	14%
I feel satisfied with my current role at Aberdeen City Council	4%	13%	19%	46%	17%
I can see myself working at Aberdeen City Council in 12 months' time	6%		16%	45%	31%
Aberdeen City Council's processes and procedures help me to do my job effectively	7%	17%	32%	36%	8%
I am confident in using new technology	6%		16%	50%	26%
The technology provided meets my needs	7%	14%	19%	46%	13%
I find digital collaboration tools (Microsoft Teams, SharePoint) helps my team be more productive	4%	9%	24%	43%	20%
I am encouraged to improve my performance		8%	23%	52%	16%
I am encouraged to suggest ways to improve the service we deliver	5%	13%	21%	45%	17%
I am confident to share my opinions and ideas for improvement	4%	9%	18%	48%	21%
There is a culture of service improvement and innovation in my area	6%	11%	28%	40%	14%
Managers support the move to digital communication and collaboration	3%	6%	23%	51%	17%
Change is well communicated to me by my manager	6%	11%	21%	41%	21%
The council has good ways of gathering ideas from staff to support transformation and innovation	9%	20%	41%	26%	4%
I feel like I can suggest ideas and be part of building the solution	7%	17%	31%	35%	10%

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

Legend: ● Strongly disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Agree ● Strongly agree

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Morale is good within my team	10%	16%	22%	39%	14%
My team are supportive and encouraging	3%	5%	15%	48%	30%
My colleagues work well as a team	3%	6%	14%	46%	32%
Team meetings take place regularly within my team	5%	7%	10%	45%	33%
Team meetings are an effective use of my time	5%	10%	24%	42%	20%
I feel included in workplace activities and decision-maki...	7%	11%	21%	42%	18%
There is good communication between me and my line manager	4%	7%	10%	40%	39%
I see my line manager regularly (at least once a month) either in person or online	3%	3%	5%	37%	52%
My line manager is committed to Continuous Review & Development	5%	7%	14%	38%	36%
One-to-ones are undertaken regularly between line managers and team members	7%	10%	13%	38%	32%
I find one-to-one meetings to be of value	5%	7%	20%	40%	28%
I find annual appraisal meetings as part of Continuous Review & Development (CR&D) to be of value	12%	18%	29%	28%	13%
Senior managers make themselves accessible / visible to staff	9%	13%	19%	37%	23%
Senior managers (Chief Officers, Service Managers) provide a clear vision for their Cluster, Service Area	11%	16%	31%	29%	12%
Senior managers are interested in listening to staff opinion	11%	15%	28%	33%	13%
Senior managers are responsive when they are asked questions	7%	12%	28%	38%	15%
I have confidence in the senior managers at the Council	11%	14%	32%	31%	11%
I feel like my Cluster are 'One Team', working together to serve the people of Aberdeen	10%	15%	31%	32%	12%

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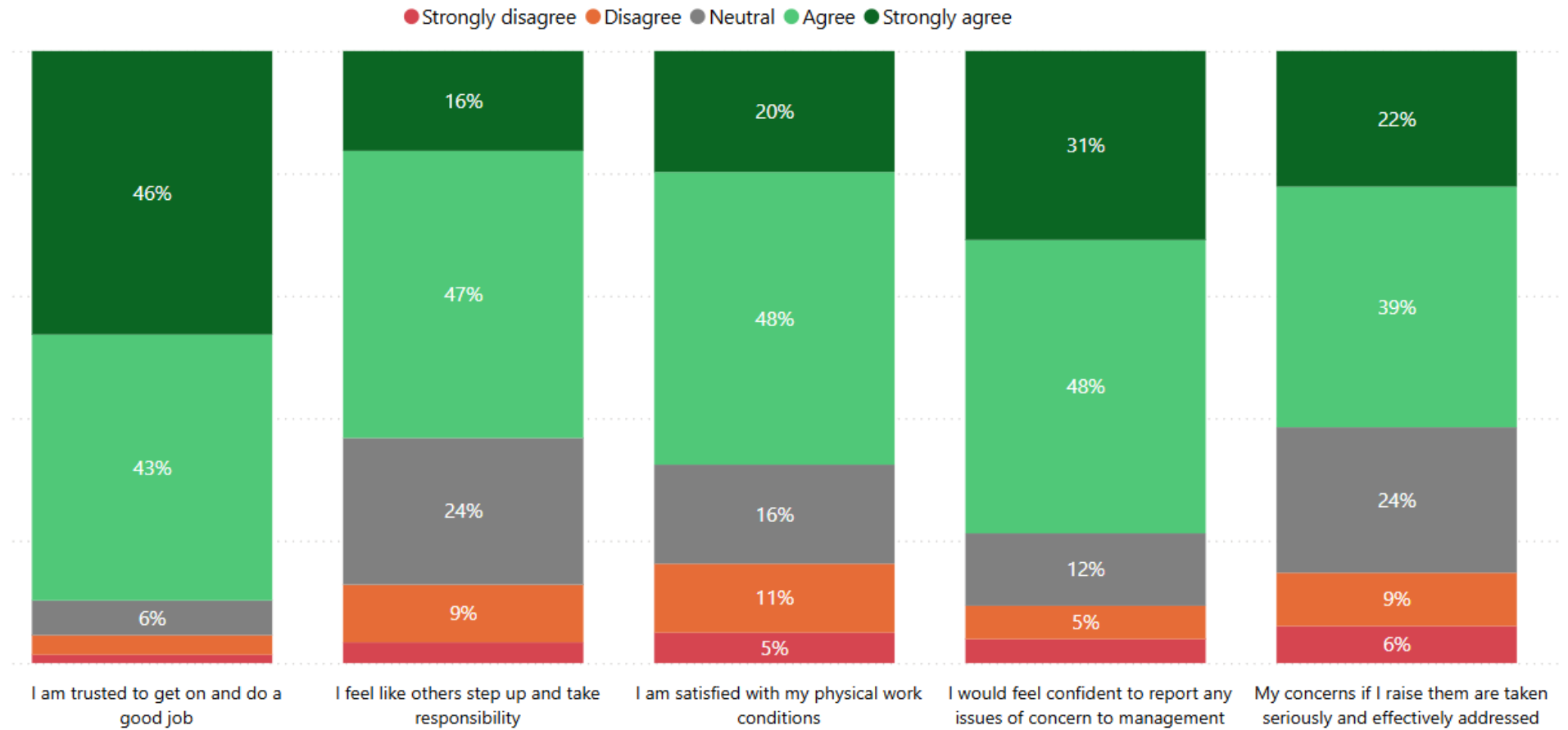
Further qualitative data from the focus groups regarding interaction and visibility of senior managers, was in line with the above analysis.

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

● Strongly disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Agree ● Strongly agree

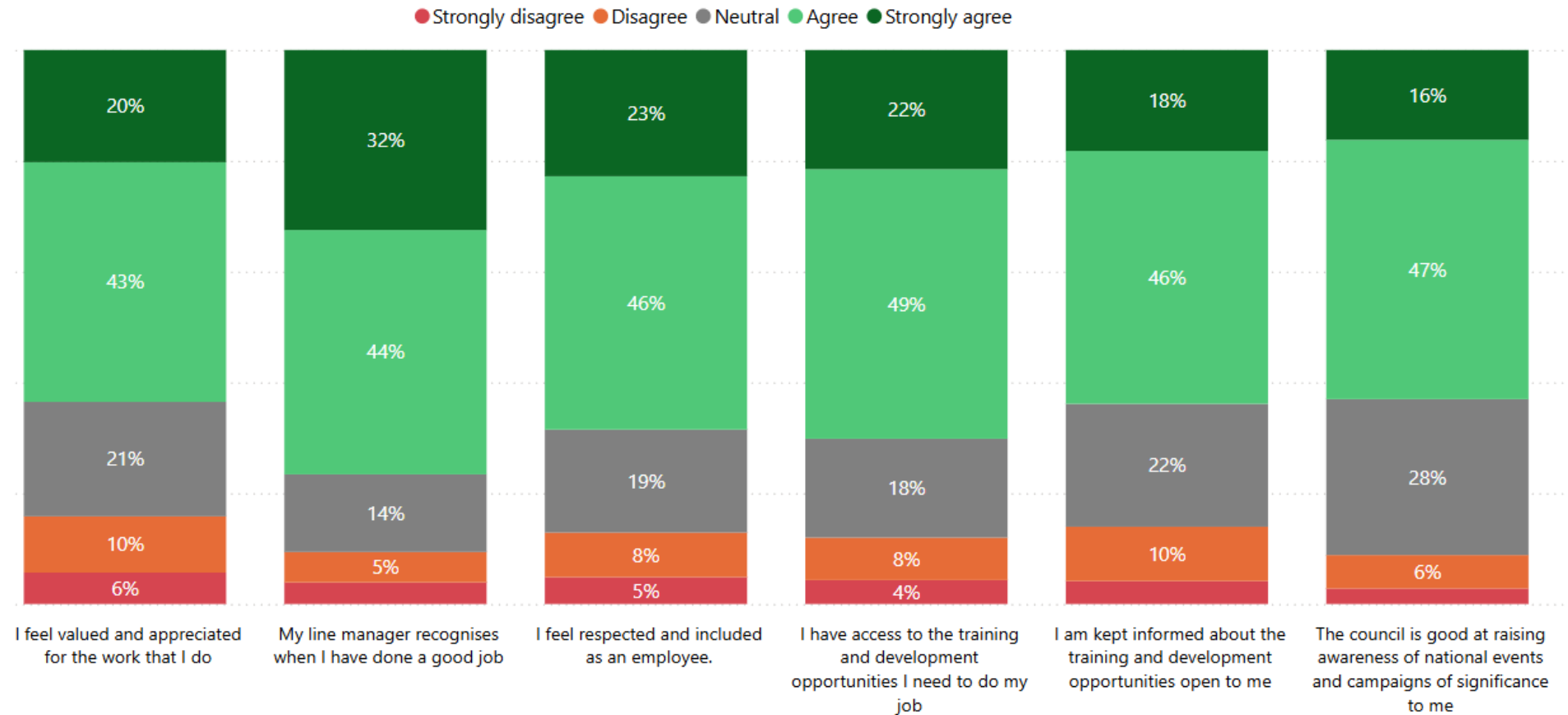|	I am trusted to get on and do a good job	I feel like others step up and take responsibility	I am satisfied with my physical work conditions	I would feel confident to report any issues of concern to management	My concerns if I raise them are taken seriously and effectively addressed
Strongly agree	46%	16%	20%	31%	22%
Agree	43%	47%	48%	48%	39%
Neutral	6%	24%	16%	12%	24%
Disagree		9%	11%	5%	9%
Strongly disagree			5%		6%

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

Legend: ● Strongly disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Agree ● Strongly agree

	I feel valued and appreciated for the work that I do	My line manager recognises when I have done a good job	I feel respected and included as an employee.	I have access to the training and development opportunities I need to do my job	I am kept informed about the training and development opportunities open to me	The council is good at raising awareness of national events and campaigns of significance to me
Strongly agree	20%	32%	23%	22%	18%	16%
Agree	43%	44%	46%	49%	46%	47%
Neutral	21%	14%	19%	18%	22%	28%
Disagree	10%	5%	8%	8%	10%	6%
Strongly disagree	6%		5%	4%		

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.
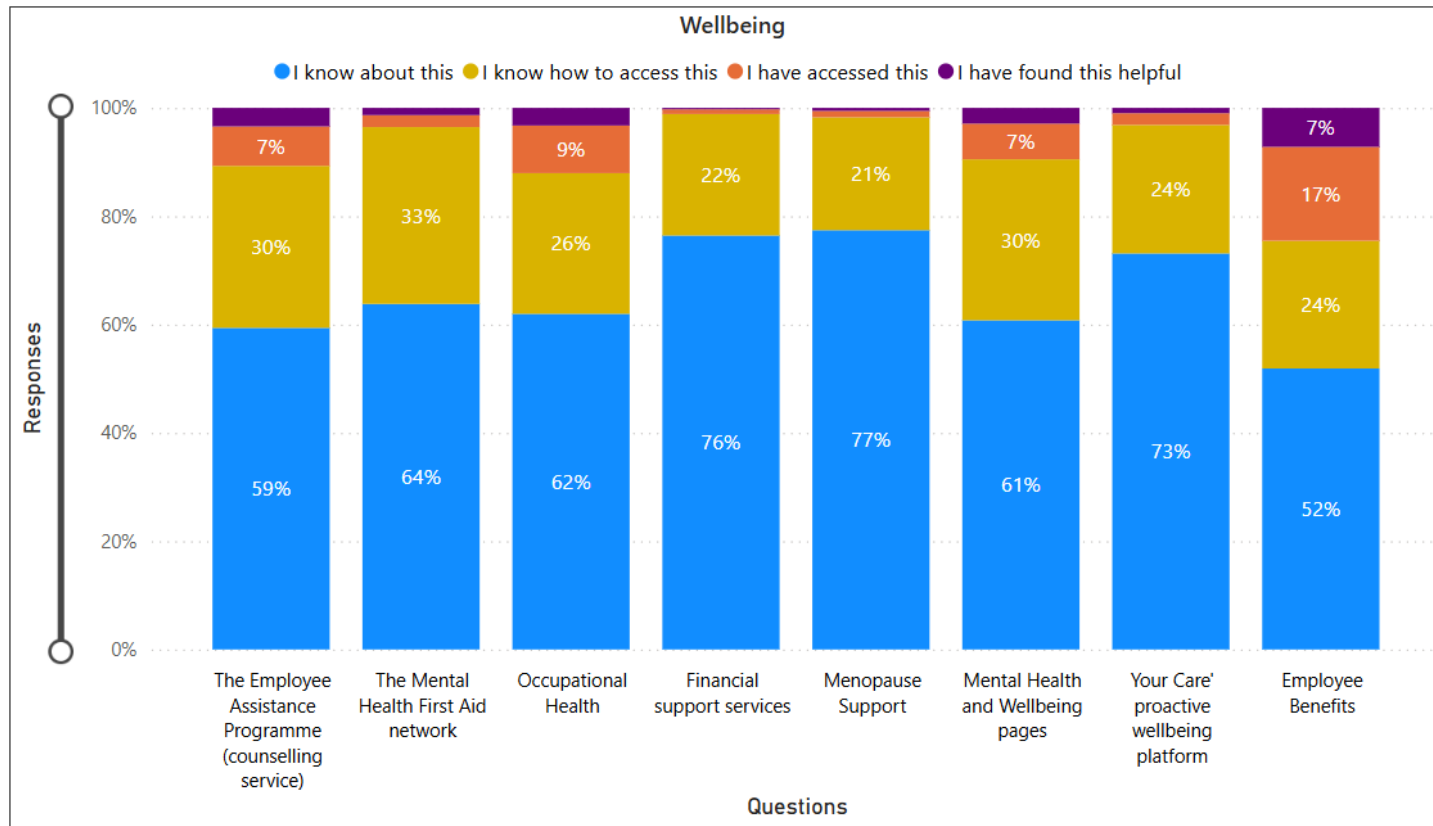
63% of respondents agree that the Council is good at raising awareness of national events and campaigns with only 8% disagreeing.
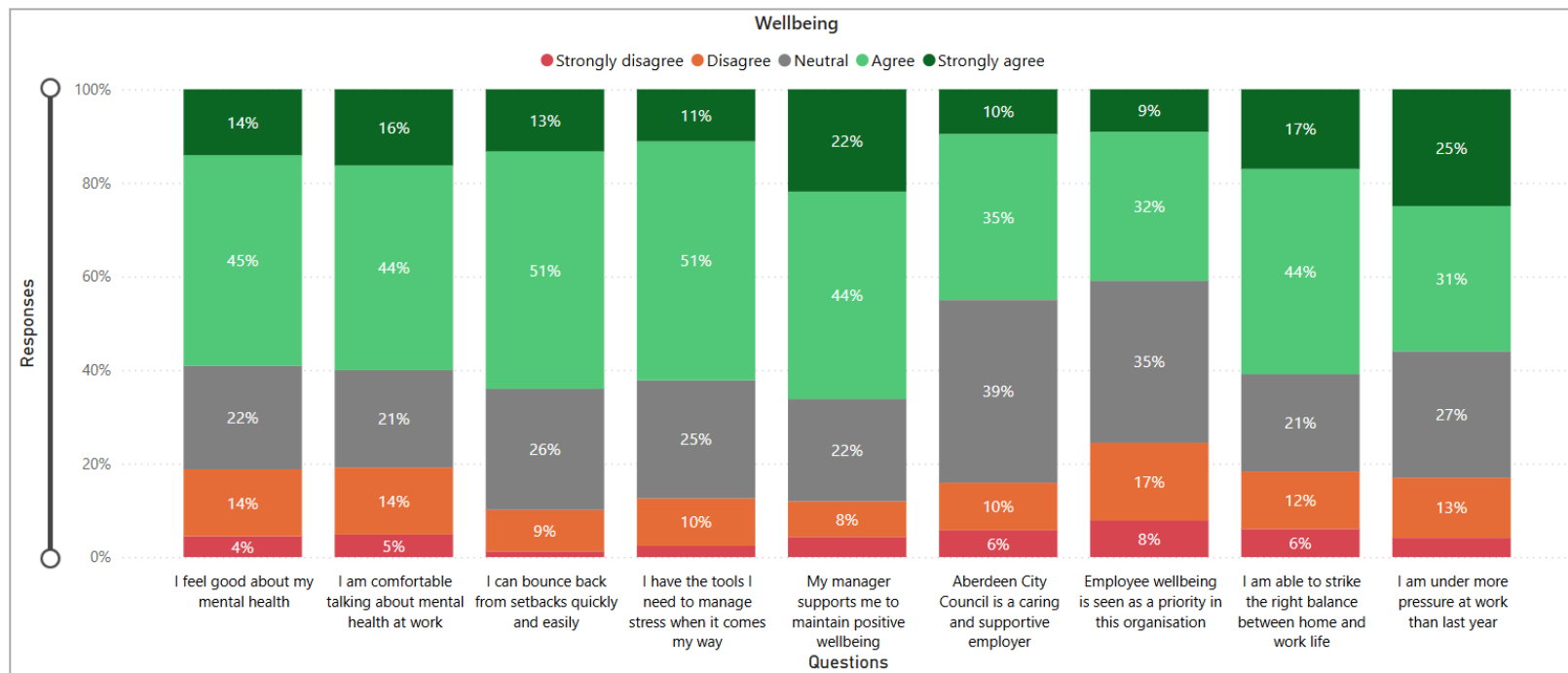
Section 4: Wellbeing

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:

Wellbeing

Legend: ● I know about this ● I know how to access this ● I have accessed this ● I have found this helpful

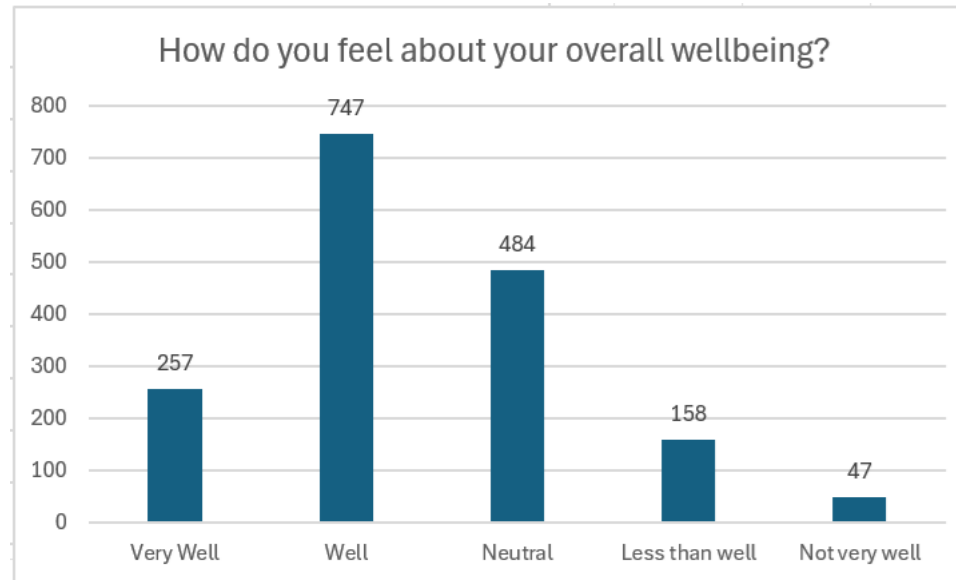| Questions	I know about this	I know how to access this	I have accessed this	I have found this helpful
The Employee Assistance Programme (counselling service)	59%	30%	7%	
The Mental Health First Aid network	64%	33%		
Occupational Health	62%	26%	9%	
Financial support services	76%	22%		
Menopause Support	77%	21%		
Mental Health and Wellbeing pages	61%	30%	7%	
Your Care' proactive wellbeing platform	73%	24%		
Employee Benefits	52%	24%	17%	7%

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

How do you feel about your overall wellbeing?

Category	Count
Very Well	257
Well	747
Neutral	484
Less than well	158
Not very well	47

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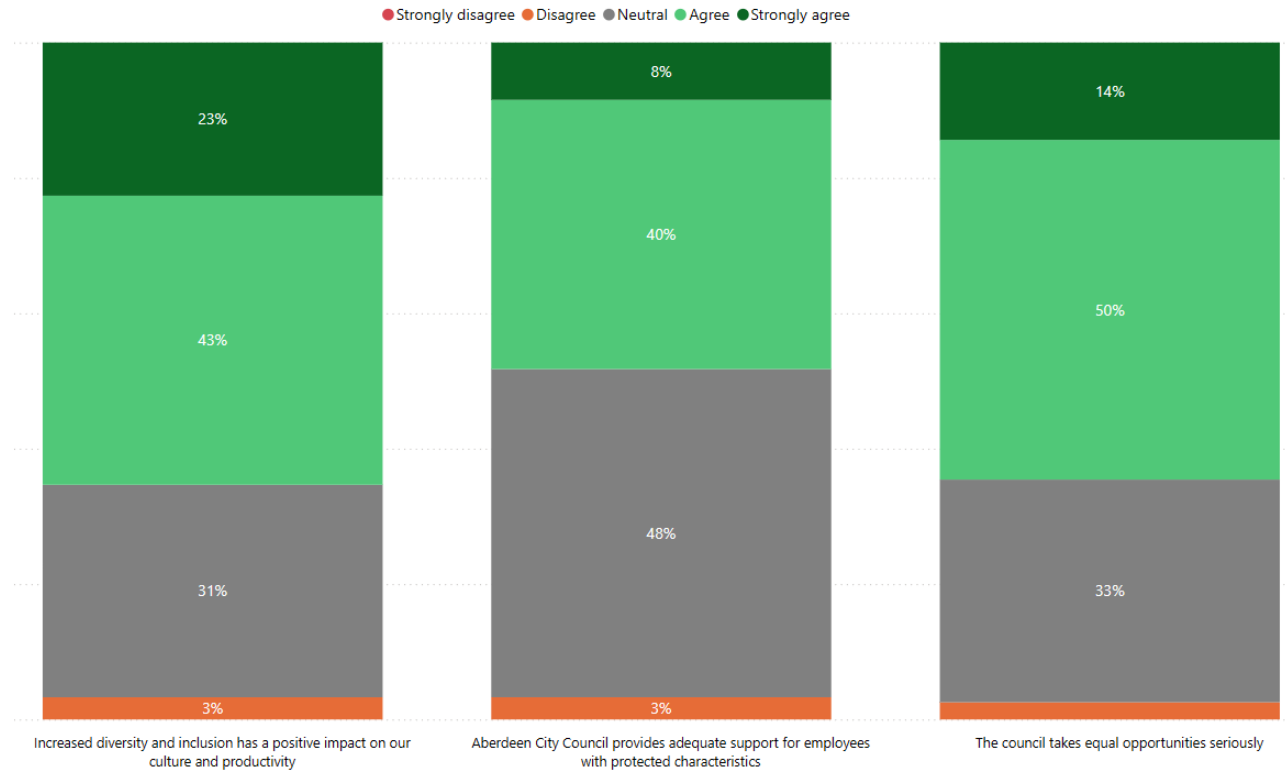
- Overall impressions about equality, diversity and inclusion and Aberdeen City Council
- Internal Communications and Employee Engagement
- Recruitment and Promotion
- Training, Development and Skills
- Leadership and Management of EDI

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

Legend: ● Strongly disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Agree ● Strongly agree

Increased diversity and inclusion has a positive impact on our culture and productivity: 3% / 31% / 43% / 23%

Aberdeen City Council provides adequate support for employees with protected characteristics: 3% / 48% / 40% / 8%

The council takes equal opportunities seriously: 33% / 50% / 14%
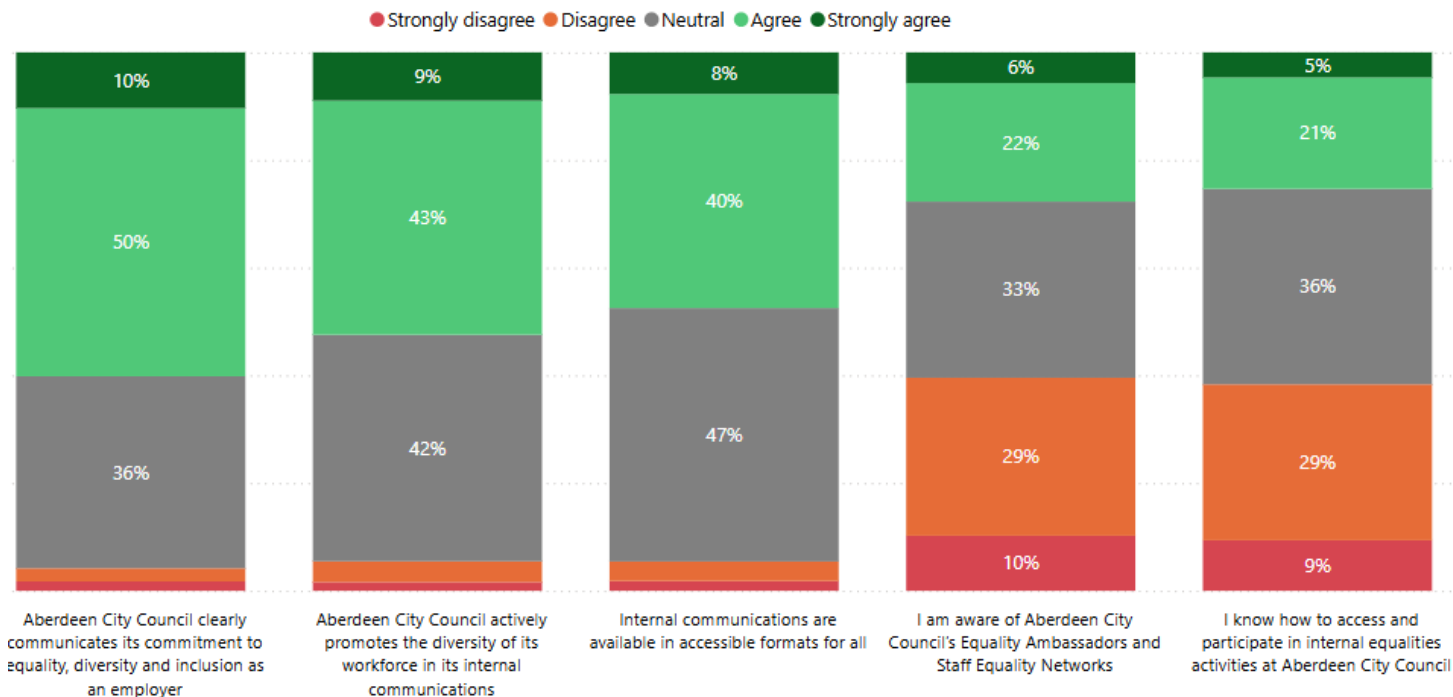
Very low numbers, 3% or less, expressed negative views about EDI in the Council overall. **66% of respondents agreed that increased diversity and inclusion has a positive impact on our culture and productivity and 64% of respondents agreed that the Council takes equal opportunities seriously.**

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

● Strongly disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Agree ● Strongly agree

	Aberdeen City Council clearly communicates its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion as an employer	Aberdeen City Council actively promotes the diversity of its workforce in its internal communications	Internal communications are available in accessible formats for all	I am aware of Aberdeen City Council's Equality Ambassadors and Staff Equality Networks	I know how to access and participate in internal equalities activities at Aberdeen City Council
Strongly agree	10%	9%	8%	6%	5%
Agree	50%	43%	40%	22%	21%
Neutral	36%	42%	47%	33%	36%
Disagree				29%	29%
Strongly disagree				10%	9%

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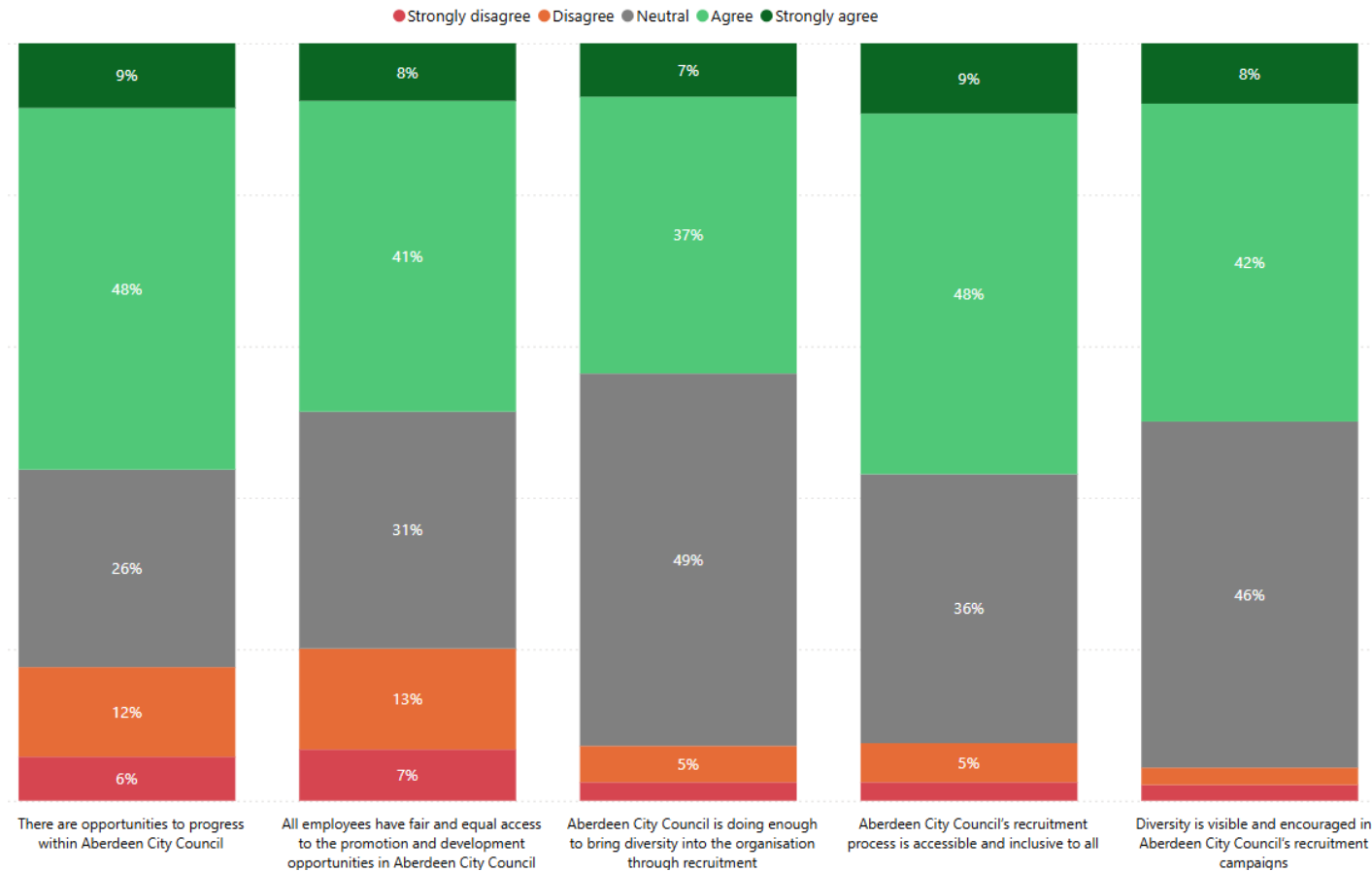
Notably, 39% of respondents were not aware of the Council's Equality Ambassadors and Staff Equality Networks specifically and 38% do not know how to access or participate in internal equalities activities, highlighting a need for enhanced visibility and accessibility of these

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

● Strongly disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Agree ● Strongly agree

	There are opportunities to progress within Aberdeen City Council	All employees have fair and equal access to the promotion and development opportunities in Aberdeen City Council	Aberdeen City Council is doing enough to bring diversity into the organisation through recruitment	Aberdeen City Council's recruitment process is accessible and inclusive to all	Diversity is visible and encouraged in Aberdeen City Council's recruitment campaigns
Strongly agree	9%	8%	7%	9%	8%
Agree	48%	41%	37%	48%	42%
Neutral	26%	31%	49%	36%	46%
Disagree	12%	13%	5%	5%	
Strongly disagree	6%	7%			

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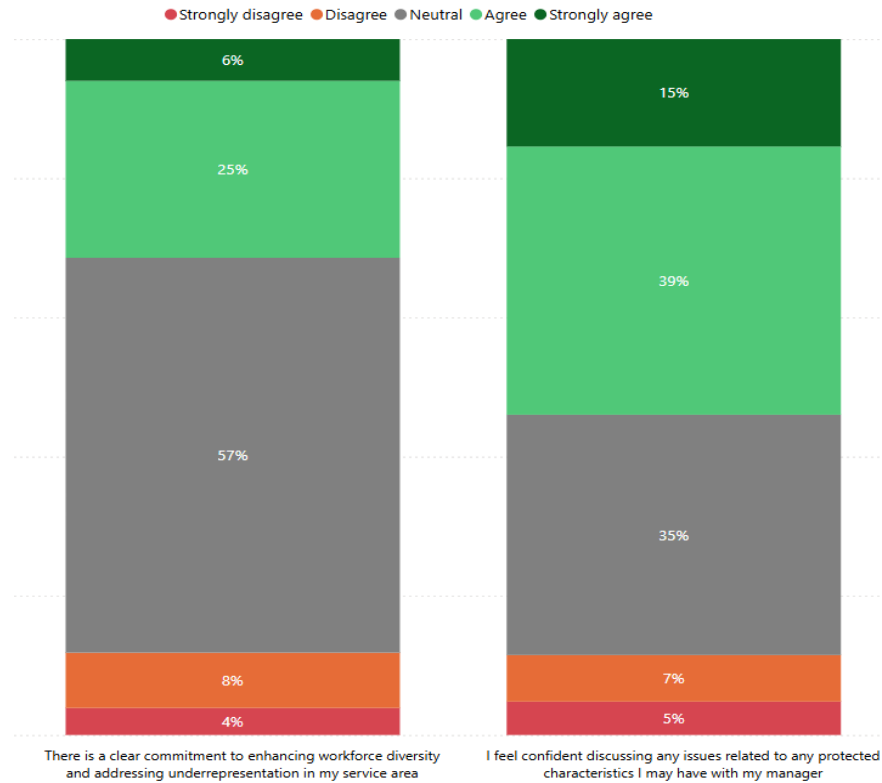
While positive actions exist, such as the Accelerator Scheme which is promoted to attract individuals with specified protected characteristics and address underrepresentation, this may not necessarily result in a perception of fairness and equity in access where such measures offer targeted support or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

5.4 EDI: Training, Development and Skills
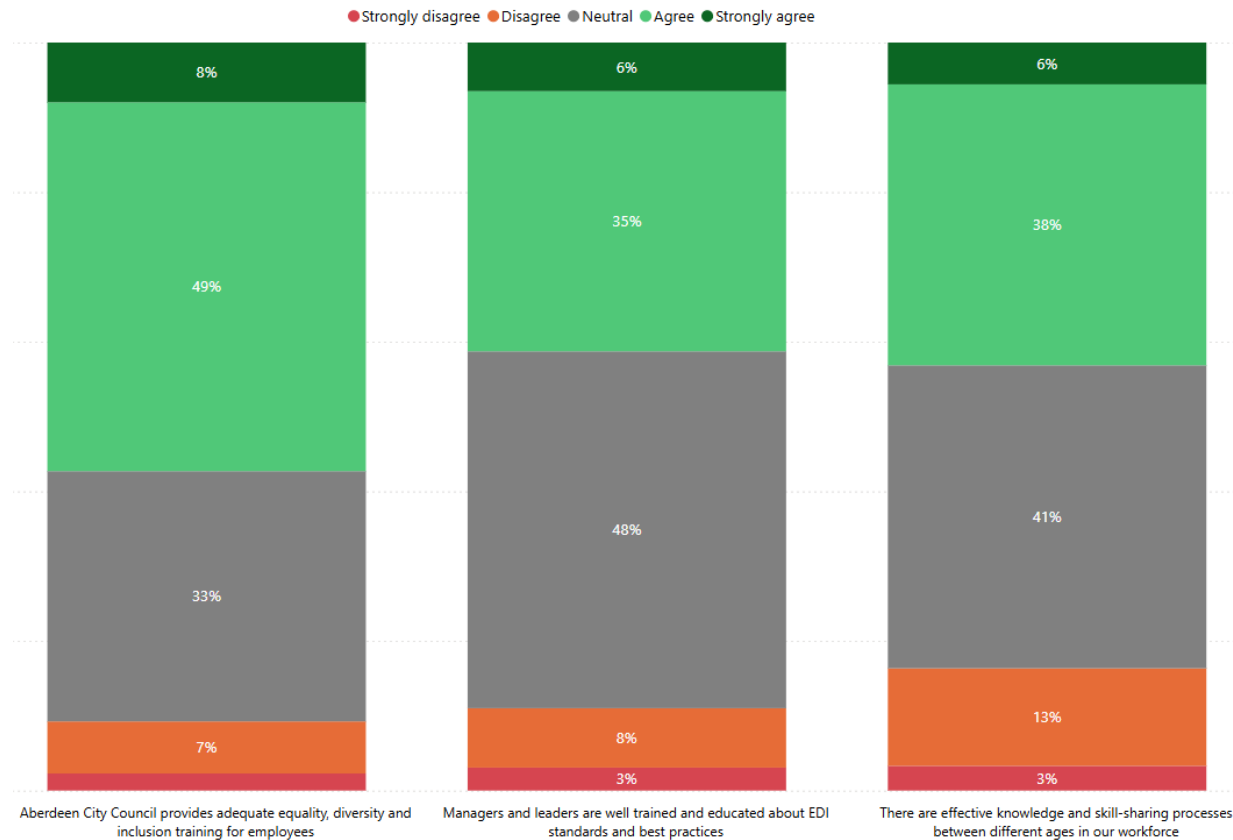
57% of respondents agree that the Council provides adequate EDI training for employees. Only 9% disagreed. 41% of respondents positively agreed that managers and leaders are well trained and educated about EDI standards and best practice, with almost half (48%) neutral and only 11% disagreement. 44% 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

● Strongly disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Agree ● Strongly agree

There is a clear commitment to enhancing workforce diversity and addressing underrepresentation in my service area
- 6%
- 25%
- 57%
- 8%
- 4%

I feel confident discussing any issues related to any protected characteristics I may have with my manager
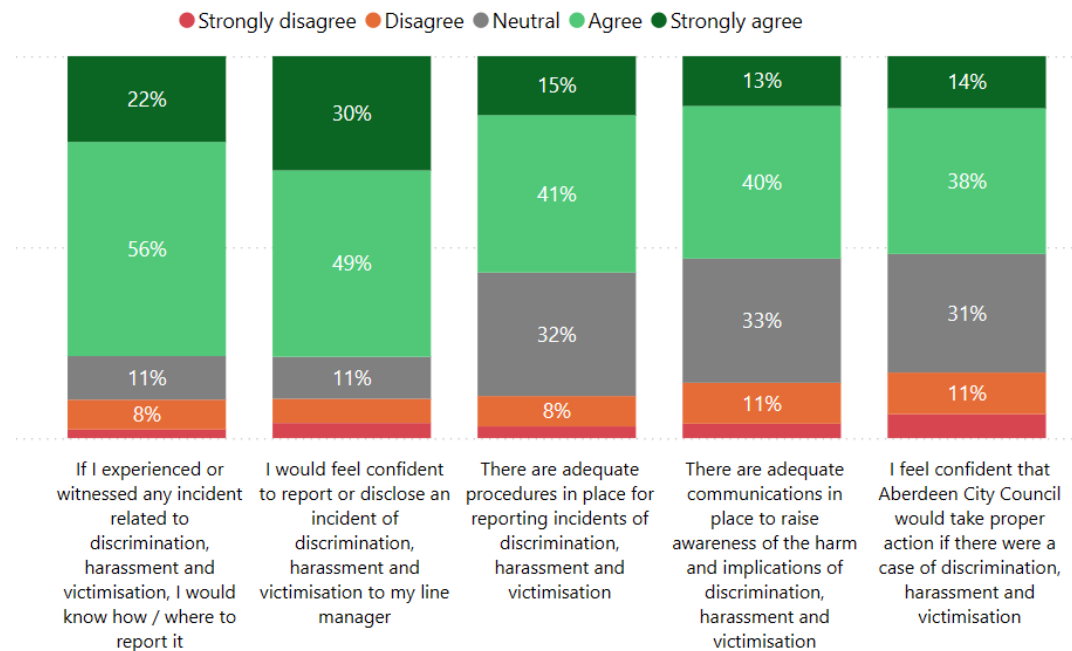- 15%
- 39%
- 35%
- 7%
- 5%

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.

Legend: ● Strongly disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Agree ● Strongly agree

| Response	If I experienced or witnessed any incident related to discrimination, harassment and victimisation, I would know how / where to report it	I would feel confident to report or disclose an incident of discrimination, harassment and victimisation to my line manager	There are adequate procedures in place for reporting incidents of discrimination, harassment and victimisation	There are adequate communications in place to raise awareness of the harm and implications of discrimination, harassment and victimisation	I feel confident that Aberdeen City Council would take proper action if there were a case of discrimination, harassment and victimisation
Strongly agree	22%	30%	15%	13%	14%
Agree	56%	49%	41%	40%	38%
Neutral	11%	11%	32%	33%	31%
Disagree	8%		8%	11%	11%

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.
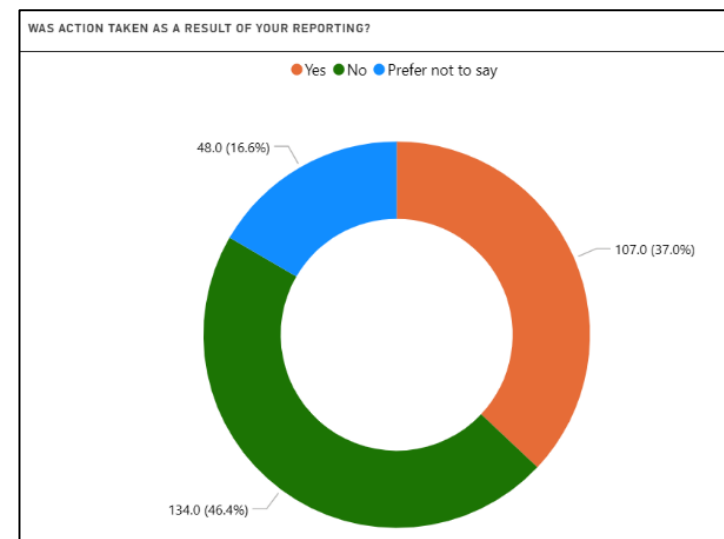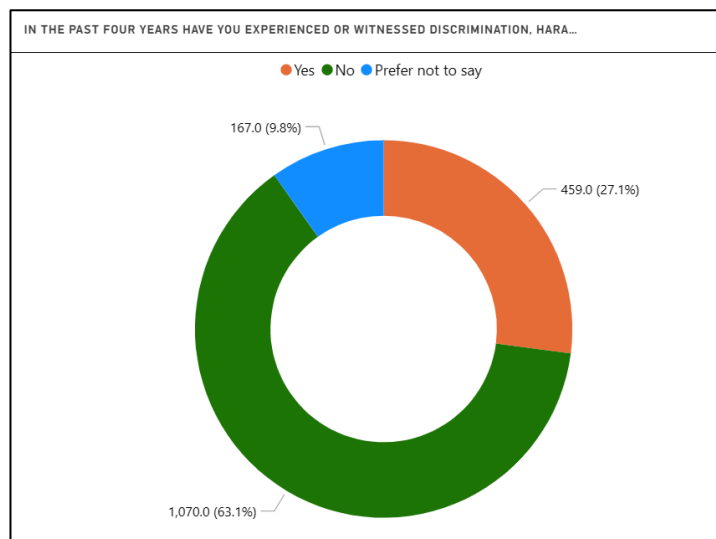

Of those that had, further questions were asked to find out whether action was taken as a result of reporting and whether they were satisfied with how these incidents were handled. 27% of respondents stated they had witnessed or experienced such an incident of discrimination, harassment, or victimisation. 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:
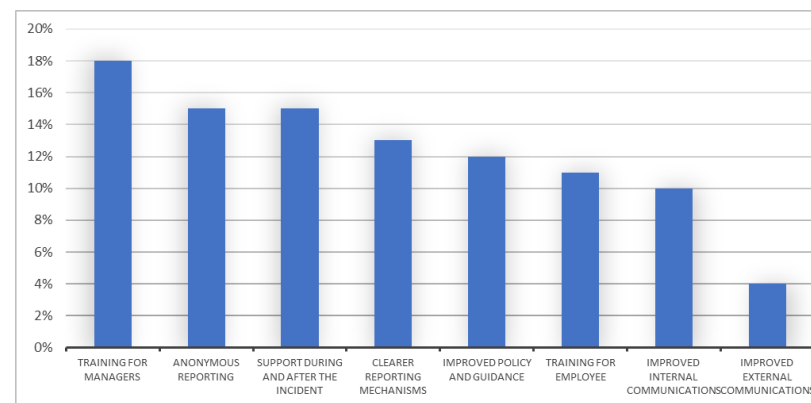
A further suggestion from the focus group session in line with the graph above, is that people managers could benefit from additional training to equip them with the tools to foster a respectful and inclusive environment, recognise inappropriate behaviours early on, and address concerns promptly and 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:

Your induction experience at Aberdeen City Council
● Strongly disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Agree ● Strongly agree
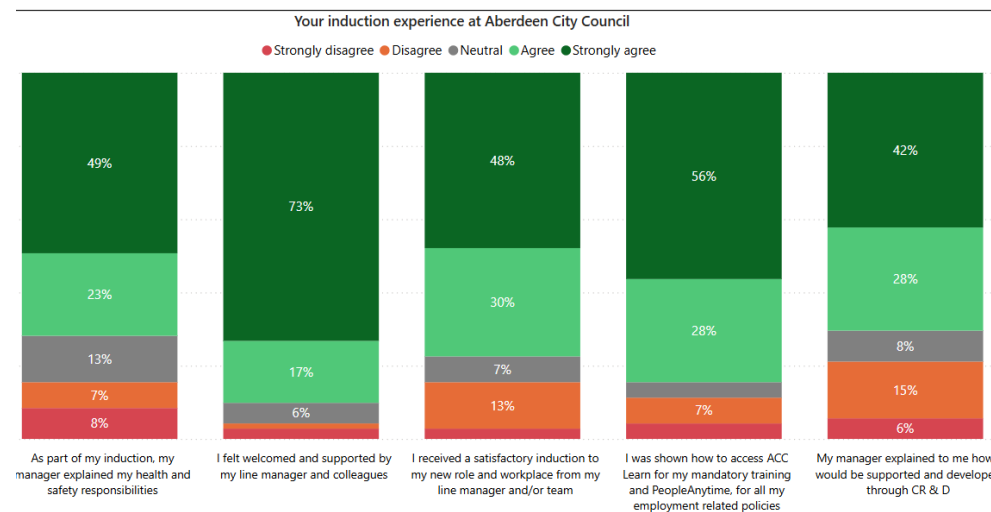
It is very positive that 90% of new employees felt welcomed and supported with only 4% in disagreement. 78% felt they received a satisfactory induction, 72% that their induction explained health and safety responsibilities, and 84% that they were shown how to access ACC Learn and PeopleAnytime. The highest 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)
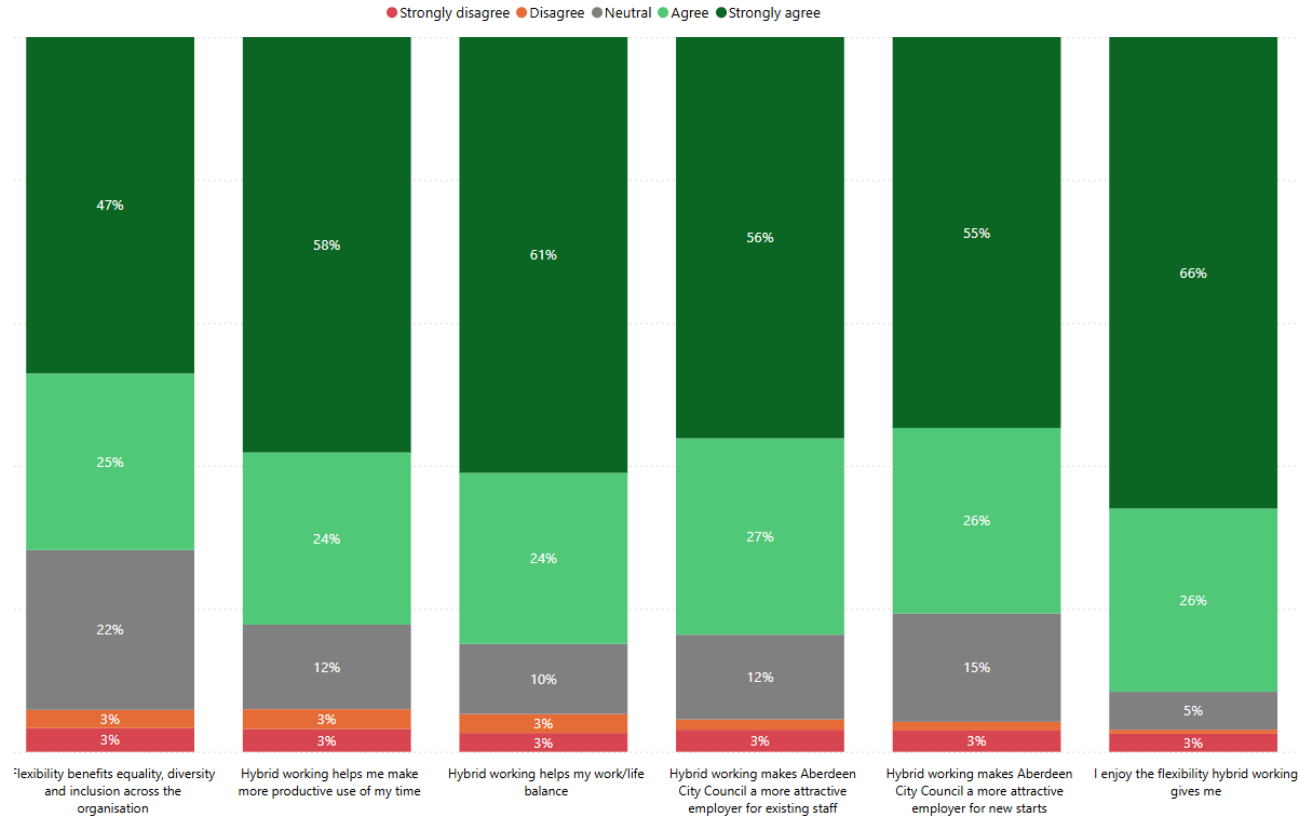
The results show that overall hybrid working and increased flexibility is seen as highly positive for employees and the organisation, where roles allow for it. **72% of respondents agreed that flexibility benefits equality and inclusion across the organisation.** 82% of respondents agreed that hybrid 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.

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

Legend: ● Better at home ● Same ● Better in the Office

Factor	Better at home	Same	Better in the Office
My mental health and wellbeing	51%	38%	11%
The service I provide to customers	18%	72%	10%
Access to the outdoors	59%	31%	10%
Fitness health	42%	38%	20%
General health	44%	46%	10%
Personal productivity	54%	35%	11%
Time available to myself	70%	27%	3%
Physical wellbeing	46%	40%	14%
Team relationsh...	6%	45%	50%
Work/life balance	70%	23%	7%
My environm... impact	73%	23%	5%
Visibility and access to senior leadership	6%	65%	28%
Display screen, desk and equipment set up	33%	35%	32%
Access to people I need to do my work	10%	70%	20%
Choice about when, where and how I work	54%	43%	3%
Team productivity	16%	55%	29%
Collabora... with colleagues	7%	50%	43%
Personal finances	63%	31%	6%
Caring responsibi...	54%	43%	3%

7.3 Employee Satisfaction

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

Would You Recommend Aberdeen City Council as a Good Place to Work?
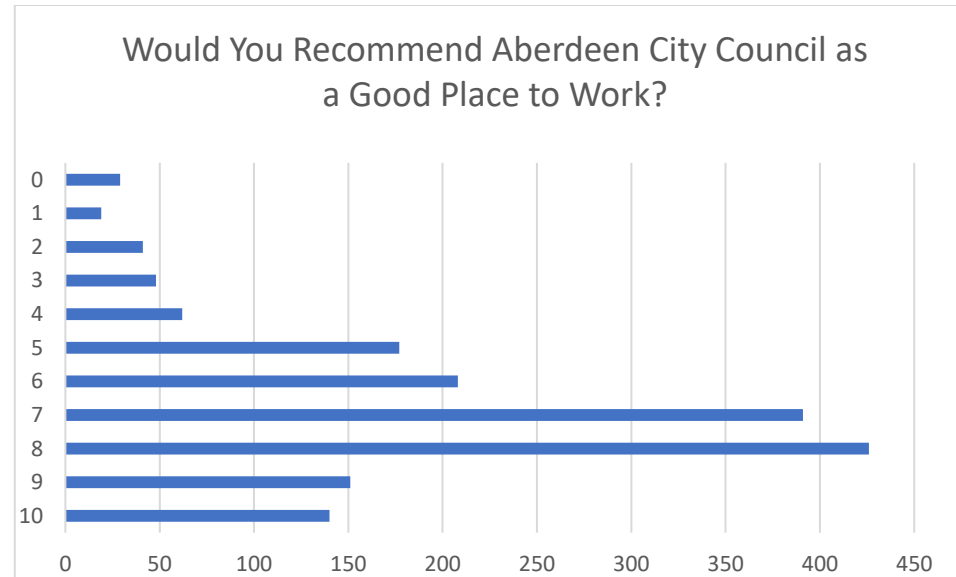
Of the 1,692 who responded to this question, 1,316 employees (78%) gave a score between 6 and 10, meaning most employees who responded would recommend the Council.

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

Category	Value
The colleagues	1075
Terms & Conditions (working hours, flexibility, pay etc)	981
Good team work (including with other departments)	687
Good working environment	604
The job (including job satisfaction, workload, variety)	777
Training programmes (development, leadership)	346
Managers/team leaders are approachable/supportive	676
Job security	1092
Providing a good service / making a difference	820
Vision of Aberdeen City Council	193
Being valued	468
Feeling trusted to do my job	1004
Meeting/helping citizens	556
Location	691
Good employer / company brand	400
Being treated fairly / equally	620
Being listened to / having a say	374
Other	43