



Forestry and
Land Scotland
Coilltearachd agus
Fearann Alba

Forestry and Land Scotland Equality Mainstreaming Report 2023-2025



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

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Executive Summary

This is Forestry and Land Scotland's third Mainstreaming Report since we were established in 2019. It includes a description of the organisation and a summary of relevant legislation.

The body of the report is an assessment of progress against our four equality outcomes for 2023-25. These outcomes will continue until 2027, when we must present refreshed outcomes for 2027-31.

Narrative case studies illustrating our inclusion initiatives, and the commitment of our staff, are included throughout.

Outcome One is 'Our workforce increases in diversity to reflect the communities we serve and the general population of Scotland.' Here we present current workforce diversity data and recruitment data for the past two years.

Outcome Two is 'Staff from and across all protected characteristics feel increasingly safe and included'. We assessed progress through considering relevant question responses in by our annual People Survey.

Outcome Three is 'Our policies, processes and practises continue to have a positive impact on equality and people from and across protected characteristics'. We outline our work on integrating equality impact assessments across the organisation.

Outcome Four is 'Our sites and services are increasingly accessible and inclusive. The removal of barriers is continued to ensure people from all backgrounds and communities can enjoy Scotland's national forests and land.' We review our important work on visitor services, community asset transfers, and other areas.



Foreword

This is Forestry and Land Scotland's third mainstreaming report since we were established 2019, and my first since joining as Chief Executive in April 2024.

As Chief Executive, my role is to ensure FLS generates sufficient commercial income to secure delivery of vital environmental, social and economic benefits for Scotland. As part of the Scottish Government's public sector reform agenda, we are making ourselves "fit for the future" by building long-term financial sustainability.

Building a diverse workforce and an inclusive culture are critical to this. Staff who feel safe and included are more likely to stay, to progress and to contribute their best. Workforce and leadership diversity are also measures of organisational health. We set four Equality Outcomes for 2023-27:

1. 'Our workforce increases in diversity to reflect the communities we serve and the general population of Scotland.' We are pleased to see that percentages of LGBT staff, disabled staff and ethnic minority staff have all increased since our 2023 report. However, we note a decrease in the percentage of women in senior positions which we need to address. Looking ahead, we will introduce workforce planning and refreshed recruitment and CPD strategies to attract more diverse talent, particularly women and other under-represented groups.

2. 'Staff from and across all protected characteristics feel increasingly safe and included.' We assess progress through the annual Civil Service People Survey. Significantly more staff completed the Survey in 2024 than in 2023. This is positive as it demonstrates that our staff care about the future of FLS and want to be heard.

However, I am concerned to see a slight increase in reports of bullying and harassment. In 2024, we started a significant investment in upskilling managers and leaders through mandatory development programmes.

Additionally, 70% of staff have completed Engage the Bystander training – we aim for 100% completion within the next year. We hope to see positive impact of these interventions in future surveys.

3. 'Our policies, processes and practises continue to have a positive impact on equality and people from and across protected characteristics.' We have made strong progress on embedding equality impact assessments into our policy and programme management and will continue to expand this.

4. 'Our sites and services are increasingly accessible and inclusive. The removal of barriers is continued to ensure people from all backgrounds and communities can enjoy Scotland's national forests and land.' Increasing our accessible trails for visitors is a key future focus for this Outcome.

I look forward to reporting on further progress in 2027.

Kevin Quinlan,
Chief Executive, Forestry and Land Scotland



Overview from the Chief Forester of Scotland

The Chief Forester is a Non-Regulated Ministerial appointment, and not an employee of Forestry and Land Scotland. I am therefore in the unique position of being able to provide unbiased professional support and advice to the Chief Executives of both Forestry and Land Scotland, and our sister agency Scottish Forestry. My advice and insight help the Chief Executives reach effective, well-informed decisions, including in equality, diversity and inclusion.

I support the approach taken in this mainstreaming report to understand diversity within FLS' workforce. By comparing our current position with two previous FLS data sets, and with the general population and the Scottish Government workforce, we get a more meaningful picture of progress and remaining challenges.

When experience is at a premium, it is understandable that applicants in their forties were the most successful age-group. However, this perhaps contributes to the underrepresentation of staff under 30. FLS is to be commended for encouraging apprentices and students and retaining them while continuing their education. The very small increase in the proportion of women in the workforce is countered by a decrease in the proportion of women in the most senior roles. I strongly support the observation that FLS needs to improve retention and career development of female staff. Although other protected characteristics are still underrepresented, it is positive to see the trends are moving in the right direction.

Significant efforts have been made for the Equality Outcomes, and it is encouraging that this was reflected in the 2024 People Survey. The introduction of reverse mentoring seems to have been particularly helpful. Quite rightly, there is concern that FLS' proportion of respondents saying that they have experienced bullying or harassment is slightly above the civil service average. The investment in leadership and management training will help to address this.

As always, there is room for improvement. Continued work from now to 2027 on our Equality Outcomes will keep us reflecting on progress and striving for better.

Dr Helen McKay OBE FICF,
Chief Forester for Scotland

About Forestry and Land Scotland

Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) is a Scottish Government executive agency established in 2019.

Our mission is:

“Looking after Scotland’s forests and land, for the benefit of all, now and for the future.”

Our work includes:

- production of sustainable timber;
- forest planning;

- conservation and biodiversity;
- tourism and public access to nature;
- renewable energy;
- work with communities.

Our work contributes £1 million to the Scottish economy each day, supports 11,000 jobs and soaks up over 3 million tonnes of carbon each year.

Legal context for our equality diversity and inclusion work

As an executive agency of the Scottish Government, we are civil servants and follow the Civil Service Code. We also support the Scottish Government's diversity and inclusion strategy.

We are accountable to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands.

As a government agency, the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty applies to us.

This means we have a legal responsibility to actively consider how we can:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other unlawful conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share and people who do not share a relevant protected characteristic.
- foster good relations between people who share and people who do not share a relevant protected characteristic.

Protected characteristics in the Equality Act are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity

- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

To support us in meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty, we produce Equality Impact Assessments on policies and services that affect the public or our staff. The Equality Act also requires that we publish annual Gender Pay Gap reports.

The Fairer Scotland Duty 2018 (an amendment to the Equality Act) also applies. We have a legal responsibility to actively consider how we can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage when making decisions.

The Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018 sets a 'gender representation objective' for listed public authorities that 50% of their non-executive board members are women. As an executive agency, we are not a separate legal entity to the Scottish Government. This means we do not have a formal board and are not a listed authority under the Act. We do however have a Strategic Advisory Board, comprising our Executive Leadership Team and five external Non-Executive Advisors. Three of our five Non-Executive Advisors are women (March 2025).

Our equality outcomes 2023-27

Our current four Equality Outcomes were set in 2023 and will be updated in 2027. Here we report against these Outcomes, referencing data from our [2019-21](#) and [2021-23](#) mainstreaming reports.

This mainstreaming report for 2023-25 coincides with the end of our [Corporate Plan 2022-25](#). Our next Corporate Plan is in development and will address these equality outcomes. Our [annual](#)

[business plan](#) and directorate business plans include key and operational performance indicators. Some relate to equality diversity and inclusion, and we report against them here.

This report was written by Alison Forbes, Equality Diversity and Inclusion Lead in spring 2025 with input from FLS colleagues providing their case studies, insights and data preparation.

Equality Outcome One

Our workforce increases in diversity to reflect the communities we serve and the general population of Scotland.

Here we present data on our workforce from March 2025. We compare the current position to data from our two previous mainstreaming reports, and to the general population and the Scottish Government workforce for context.

Where presented, long-term data (for example recruitment trends) covers April 2023 to March 2025. The full data is available in the appendix.

Summary

Although there are some areas of progress, our workforce remains un-representative of the Scottish working age population, and we are less diverse than the Scottish Government Core workforce.

Our two immediate workforce diversity priorities are to:

- Recruit, retain and progress more women, particularly into senior roles.
- Recruit, retain and progress more people under 30.

However, our low workforce diversity must be considered in context. The wider agriculture, forestry and fishing sector has historically been male dominated, with low ethnic diversity, and with challenges in attracting younger workers. This problem is widely recognised and is not unique to Scotland.

There is limited recent evidence on diversity in the land sector, but it has been consistently raised as a concern by public bodies:

- The Scottish Government produced a [Women in Agriculture Taskforce report in 2017](#), and ran an initiative in 2015 to encourage young women to consider forestry as career.
- Our sister agency, Scottish Forestry, currently offers [funding for training for women in forestry](#) as a positive action intervention.
- CONFOR published a report on [gender and diversity in forestry in Scotland in 2017](#).
- [Forest Research](#) produced a report on lack of ethnic diversity in forestry in 2009.
- The [Forestry Stewardship Council](#) launched two online courses about diversity in forestry in 2024.

FLS' geographical spread also brings specific challenges: our recruitment is closely linked to Scotland's rural economy. Many key FLS roles are in remote, rural areas of Scotland, far from the central belt. These areas are noted for low population density and diversity, an ageing population, limited public transport and a lack of affordable housing. This can make it challenging to us to recruit for our 'place-based' roles such as foresters, peatland restoration staff and wildlife rangers.

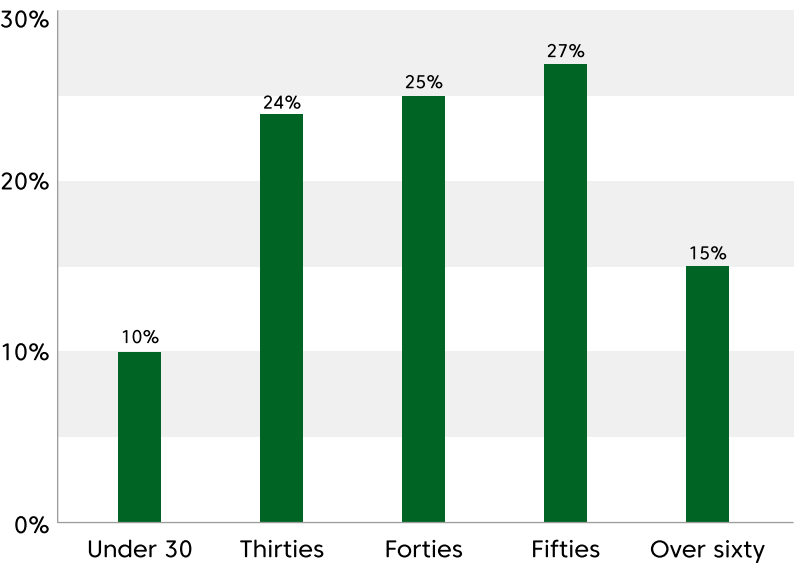
Age

- We have an older workforce: 66% of staff are over forty. We estimate a third could retire in the next 10 years.
- In March 2025, 10% of our staff were under 30, compared to 15% of Scottish Government Core workforce (2022), and 27% of Scottish working age population (2022).
- We set an operational performance indicator in 2023-24 for 5% of staff to be under 25. In March 2025, we were short of this target at just under 4%.

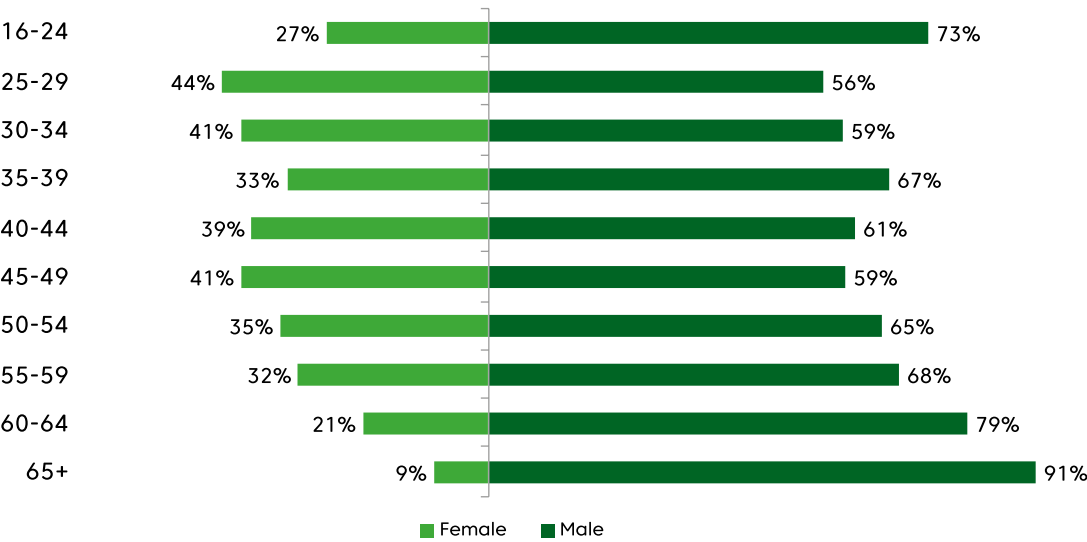
Recruitment trends by age groups April 2023 – March 2025

- Applicants in their forties were the most successful age group: 18% of applicants, but 30% of final appointments.
- Applicants under 30 were least successful: 37% of applicants but 25% of final appointments.
- For candidates in their thirties, fifties and over 60, there were only small variations between proportion of applications and of final appointments.

FLS staff by age group, March 2025



Age Breakdown By Sex



Case study: Apprenticeships growing future talent

We are currently hosting 21 Modern Apprentices, 5 Graduate Apprentices and 2 Foundation Apprentices (2.5% of our total workforce) in partnership with organisations across Scotland. Our apprentices range from school leavers with no prior experience in forestry, to older career changers.

We marked Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2023 on our website by interviewing apprentices Zainab Omar (Procurement Modern Apprentice), David Bowman (Civil Engineering Graduate Apprentice) and Kyle Cartmell (Apprentice Mobile Mechanic.)

Zainab: “FLS staff, particularly my previous line manager, have been extremely helpful in my transition into the organisation. I’ve been taken through all aspects of the role at a very steady pace whilst also being involved in enough tasks without feeling excluded or too overwhelmed.”

David: “Being able to achieve a degree and work in the sector at the same time is very helpful when trying to imagine how everything works. Just this week for example we were able to watch a bridge installation which was very hard to comprehend just written on paper.”

Kyle: “Everyone is very helpful, learnt a lot on the job as come across a fair few new problems I haven’t encountered before especially in add blue/emissions side of vehicles. Knowing what repairs have been carried out in the past has been very helpful as a lot of the time I am able to have a good idea of what the problem is before I have looked at it.”

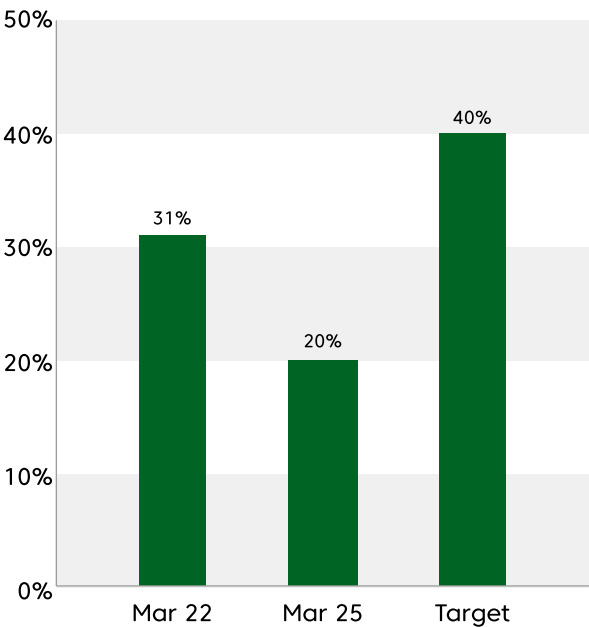
Gender

A note on data: our HR System currently records data on gender, giving the options Female, Male, Non-Binary, Other, and Prefer not to respond. We do not currently collect data on sex. Our HR system also allows staff to share optional data on gender reassignment separately, giving the options No, Yes and Prefer not to respond.

Gender in leadership

- We set a Key Performance Indicator in our Annual Business Plan 2021-22 for 40% of senior roles¹ to be held by female staff. We have retained this KPI in all Business Plans since 2022. Disappointingly, we have reversed on female staff in leadership from 31% in March 2022 to 20% in March 2025.
- In comparison, in the Forestry Commission (comprising Forestry England, Forest Services, Forest Research and Commissioners’ Office), senior management is 41% female (2024).

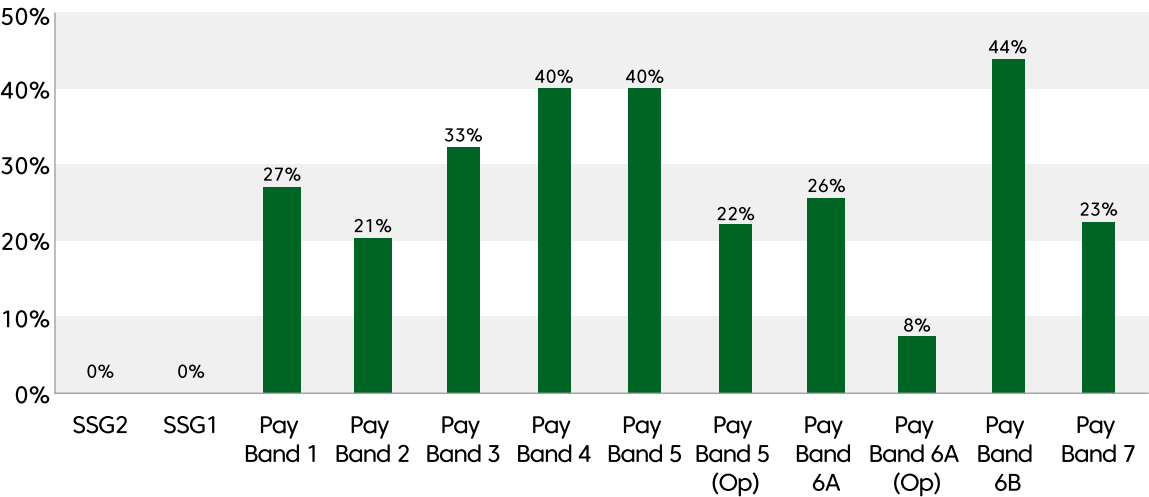
% Female staff in FLS leadership



¹ Senior roles defined as Pay Bands 1 and 2, Senior Civil Servants (Directors and Chief Executive).

- Our Percentage of female staff varies by pay band (see chart). Note that Pay Bands 3, 4 and 6B meet or exceed our 40% target. There are female staff in the pipeline who could potentially progress to Pay Band 2 and above.
- Our Executive Leadership Team (five senior civil servants) is 100% male. In comparison, the Scottish Government Core workforce is 49% female at Senior Civil Servant level (2022).

% Female staff in FLS pay bands, March 2025



Case study: Women’s leadership development

Two FLS staff attended EQUATE Scotland’s Career Enhancement Programme for women in science technology engineering and maths (STEM) in 2024.

Eve Smillie, HR Systems Manager

“The career enhancement programme helped me recognise my strengths, internal saboteur and provided tools to change (negative) patterns of thinking. I’ve applied to do further education to support my own personal and professional development as a result.”

Lena Boukelia, Climate Change Officer

“Working through the Equate program challenged our perceptions and reactions to real work scenarios and understand techniques to manage or work alongside different personality types. It gave me confidence in myself; to identify and present the many desirable skills I have through practical sessions of team and lone assignments. I would recommend the program.”

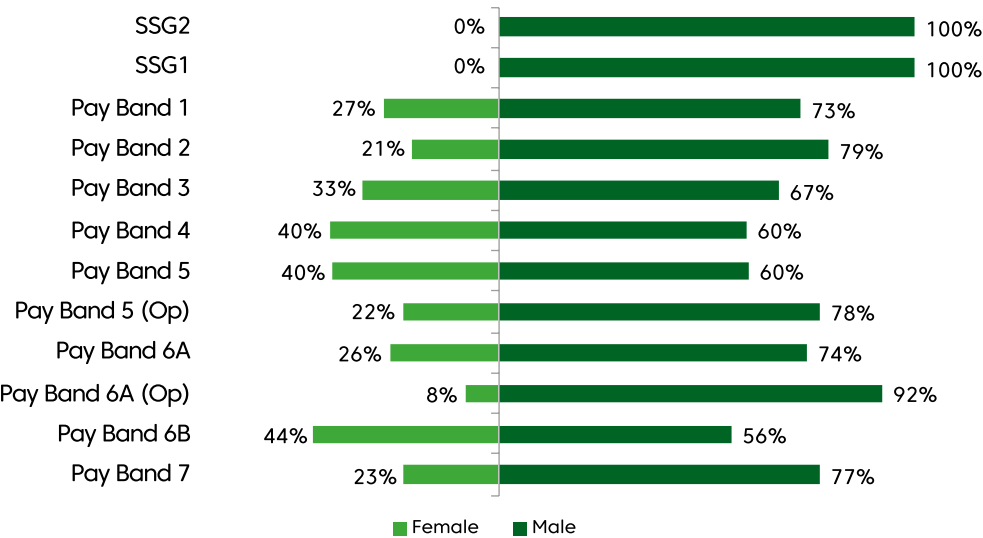
Bryony Hewetson Ward, Business Change Manager joined FLS in 2021 from the retail sector. She successfully applied for the Institute of Chartered Foresters’ competitive social leadership programme in 2024-25, and has been nominated for a CONFOR Future Leaders award.

“As a career changer into Forestry, I have been struck by the lack of diversity in the sector. Those who have advantages—whether through gender, ethnicity, ability, or other factors—have a responsibility to champion and support the progression of others. Underrepresented groups, including women, bring valuable perspectives, and creating space for those perspectives benefits everyone. We all, regardless of background, have a significant role to play in improving representation by actively being allies and supporting an inclusive culture. We should consider it a priority to build a sector that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve.”

Gender in whole workforce

- We need to improve gender balance across the whole workforce, not just in leadership. Female staff in the whole workforce increased from 33% in March 2021 to 34% in March 2025; an increase of 1% in four years. As this pace, it would take eighteen years to reach a 40% female workforce.
- Comparisons:
 - Scottish working age population is 51% female (2022).
 - Scottish Government Core workforce is 56.50% female (2022).
 - NatureScot’s workforce is 58.90% female (2023).
 - Forestry Commission whole workforce is 47% female (2024).

Grade Breakdown By Sex



Case study: Recruiting women in traditionally male dominated fields



Fenna Whittaker – Wildlife Ranger Modern Apprentice
“I came into this role with some previous practical conservation/deer stalking experience and a desire to work outdoors, so when I saw the Wildlife Ranger Modern Apprenticeship, I thought it would be a good fit for me. It’s been incredibly rewarding to learn from the wealth of experience of other rangers at FLS and no two days are the same.

As a Wildlife Ranger with Forestry and Land Scotland, every day starts early, and with plenty of walking. A key part of my role is wildlife management, which involves carrying out an annual cull to protect the environment from the negative impacts of deer.

A typical day might include locating deer without being seen (or smelt), shooting deer as part of the cull, followed by gralloching (removing internal organs) the carcass in the field. I then carry out the extraction process which can be a tricky and lengthy process and involves a lot of dragging, often over uneven, steep ground—it’s no easy task! The carcass is then transported to the larder where it is processed before collection by game dealers.

In addition to stalking, I work with staff from other teams such as environment, planning and stewardship to organise the cutting of deer glades and tracks and ensuring ATV access is possible to aid with extraction.”

Gender in recruitment April 2023 – March 2025

- 31% of all applicants in this period were female, a reduction from 2019-21, when they were 39%. We need to review and refresh our recruitment materials and attraction methods to attract more female applicants.
- However, female applicants were proportionately as likely to be appointed as male applicants. This is positive and may indicate relatively low gender bias in our selection processes. Our primary challenge is in the attraction stage.
- Female staff were 40% of new starters in the period.
- Female staff were 43% of leavers in the period: they are leaving at a higher rate compared to their proportion of the whole workforce (34%). We need to get better at retaining and progressing our female staff.

Gender pay gap

- We publish [our gender pay gap annually](#).
- Interestingly, although FLS workforce and leadership are male dominated, our [April 2024 report](#) shows a negative gender pay gap. Female staff are paid slightly more than male staff for both mean hourly wage (4%) and median hourly wage (3%).
- Female staff are more represented in national roles (which tend to be at higher pay bands) than in our land management teams (which have a large male workforce mostly at lower pay bands.)
- In comparison, the Scottish Government had a mean pay gap of 2.83% and a median of 0.82% in favour of male staff. (December 2023).

Case study: Outreach to stimulate interest in forestry careers

We marked the [International Day of Women and Girls in Science](#) in February 2025 interviewing three FLS women in diverse roles.

North Region hosted [Golspie High School pupils in Dalchork Forest in May 2023](#), exploring the science of peatland restoration, and promoting it as a rural career option: "I really enjoyed being outside and learning about land management in the real environment, not in the classroom. One day I would like a career in this area so it was great to see what a day as a forestry worker might look like."

FLS staff visited University of Strathclyde in March 2023 to promote our careers to civil engineering students. Our civil engineer and Strathclyde alumni, Rhona Munro shared her experiences: "a career in forestry was not on my radar as an option when I was at university, but I've been with FLS for almost three years now and really enjoy my work. I love that this job gives me the opportunity to go outdoors and into forests – something that isn't possible in a lot of civil engineering roles, which are often more urban-based."

University of Strathclyde's Senior Teaching Fellow Dr Mike Murray: "The resounding feedback from my students was that they would now consider a career with a forestry employer, having found the construction of roads, bridges, paths and car parks in a forestry environment really interesting as a possible civil engineering pathway."

Disability

- 5% of our workforce are disabled: an increase from 4% in 2021.
- 7% of staff preferred not to share disability status. This has increased from 4% in 2021 and could indicate concerns about sharing information.
- Comparisons:
 - 22% Scottish working age population disabled (2022).
 - 14% Scottish Government Core workforce disabled (2022).
 - 7% Forestry Commission whole workforce disabled (2024).
- In recruitment, disabled candidates were slightly more likely to be appointed: they were 6% of all applicants, but 9% of final appointments.
- This could be a positive indicator of the impact of our Disability Confident Level 1 accreditation, through which we guarantee interviews to disabled applicants who meet all essential criteria.

Ethnicity

- 1.44% of our workforce stated that they are of minority ethnicity: a slight increase from 0.81% in 2019. 5% of staff withheld this information.
- Comparisons:
 - 8% Scottish working age population are of minority ethnicity (2022).
 - 4% Scottish Government Core workforce are of ethnic minority (2022).
 - 7% of Forestry Commission workforce are of minority ethnicity (2024). We note that this includes Forestry England's workforce, and that England is more ethnically diverse than Scotland.
- March 2023-April 24 recruitment data by ethnicity shows that:
 - Ethnic minorities made 18% of all applications but were only 4% of final appointments.
 - Black ethnicity applicants were least successful of all groups, making 7% of applications but only 1% of final appointments.
 - White applicants were disproportionately successful: they made 79% of applications and were 94% of final appointments.

Sexual orientation and gender reassignment (LGB+)

- Just over 3% of our workforce have shared that they are lesbian, gay or bisexual (a significant increase from 2021, when numbers were too small to allow for confidential reporting).
- 4% of staff choose 'prefer not to say', 40% have blank records, and the remaining 56% are heterosexual. This may indicate that staff have concerns about sharing personal information, or are not aware that they can share their information.
- Gender reassignment and transgender and other gender diverse identities are different to sexual orientation. This data is captured separately. Numbers of transgender staff are too small to report.
- Comparisons:
 - 5% Scottish working age population are LGB+ (2022).
 - 9% Scottish Government Core workforce are LGB+ (2022).
- In recruitment, LGB+ candidates were slightly less likely to be appointed: they were 9% of all applicants, but 7% of final appointments.

Religion

- 44% of staff have given no information or preferred not to share (the highest data gap of all recorded diversity characteristics).
- 40% have no religion, are atheist or agnostic.
- 7% are Church of Scotland, 2.5% are Roman Catholic, and 5% are of other Christian denominations.
- 2% are of other world religions (Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Taoist and others).

Socio-economic background

Socio-economic background (SEB) is not a protected characteristic in the Equality Act. We do not currently collect this workforce data – although some public sector organisations do. The Fairer Scotland Duty applies to us and is related to SEB.

The Civil Service People Survey includes questions about socio-economic background. 70% of staff completed the 2024 survey. Of these respondents:

- 18% self-described as being from a lower socioeconomic background.
- 12% said their parents had no professional qualifications.
- 34% said at least one of their parents had a university degree.
- 47% said their parents came from high occupational backgrounds ('professional or managerial') based on National Statistics Socio-economic classification.
- Secondary school type attended:
 - 63% non-selective state school
 - 13% selective state school
 - 7% private/independent school
 - 4% attended school outside the UK
 - 13% gave no data.

Case study: Welcoming career changers with no forestry background



Dan Needham – Craftsperson Modern Apprentice

"My previous experience was in finance, but it quickly became apparent that this was not the right calling for me! A 'quarter life crises' of sorts led me to ride a bicycle across Europe and Asia, ending up in New Zealand. I realised I loved working outdoors, learning new skills and spending time in wild and natural places but had no previous work or academic background in this. When I returned to the UK in my thirties I tried to settle into office life again but found that I couldn't.

I saw the Modern Craftsperson Apprenticeship with FLS and realised what a great opportunity it would be. I love that I get to spend every day in the most beautiful part of this country, even if the rain does it's best to dampen that!

I'm learning new skills from people with a lot of experience and see the results of our work firsthand. It's motivating to think that getting muddy and midge bitten contributes in a small way to the growth of Scotland's forestry industry and woodland regeneration, for the benefit of everyone - not just padding the pockets of shareholders!"

Equality Outcome Two

Staff from and across all protected characteristics feel increasingly safe and included.

We measure our culture through the annual Civil Service People Survey, benchmarking against the Civil Service average. We conduct exit interviews, and review HR data for diversity and inclusion themes.

Our October 2024 People Survey

71% of FLS staff completed the survey in 2024. This is a significant jump from 63% in 2023, and above the civil service average of 70%. The increase in staff wishing to share their views is very positive.

We set a Key Performance Indicator in our April 2024 Annual Report for 70% of survey respondents to recommend FLS as 'a great place to work'. 63% of October 2024 survey respondents agreed with this – so we want to improve this.

We are concerned that 10% of respondents said they had experienced bullying or harassment, above the civil service average of 7%.

We are working hard to build a more inclusive culture:

- We introduced Engage the Bystander training in 2020. By December 2024, 68% of staff had completed it. We aim for 95%+ completion by 2027.
- We made significant financial investment in two mandatory development programmes for all 360 staff who manage direct reports (from Pay Band 1 to Pay Band 5):
 - Eleven-day Leadership programme with group action learning sets;
 - HR for Managers programme covering:
 - effective communication,
 - performance and development,
 - fair unbiased recruitment,
 - investigations, disciplinary and grievance,
 - absence management.
- All 360 managers will have completed both programmes by 2027.
- We continue to support our 91 trained Mental Health First Aiders, marking annual events such as 'Time to Talk' day in February 2025. We estimate more than 150 informal support conversations are happening annually, making a huge difference to the staff experience.

Supporting colleagues through our Mental Health First Aiders programme

Anonymous Mental Health First Aider

"Mostly I am a friendly face for our team of wildlife rangers and would like to think if those who needed to talk would feel comfortable to approach me.

Wildlife is a niche department especially with the use of firearms and many feel scared to talk as they are frightened that their firearms will be revoked.

It is common knowledge that the hours we work are very antisocial impacting greatly on our personal lives which affects our mental health."

Kate Clark – Health Safety and Wellbeing Coordinator supporting the Mental Health First Aiders programme

"I'd like to celebrate the important work of our Mental Health First Aiders: often 'under the radar' - quiet conversations, over a cup of tea that support people at work. Knowing that there is someone who can listen may mean that just coming into work feels more achievable that day.

Mental health challenges are a part of life. We've been sold this idea that it is a minority experience, so it is stigmatised. This is simply not true. Statistics show us that many people in Scotland are affected by anxiety, depression, PTSD, suicidal thoughts – and this is reflected in the workplace.

People want to do well at work, despite other challenges they are facing. It is good for our mental health to be working and contributing to something bigger than ourselves. It is the responsibility of organisations to cultivate an environment that acknowledges the realities that people are facing.

I am proud of this network for demonstrating compassionate leadership in what can be a very challenging environment. Our MHFAs are passionate about reducing stigma and ensuring that their colleagues can find support."

- Our 14 Menopause Champions facilitate discussion cafes six times a year. 16% of October 2024 survey respondents were experiencing menopause, a substantial proportion of the workforce. Notably, staff in menopause showed higher wellbeing survey scores compared to the all-staff average. This could be a positive indicator of our work to raise awareness and reduce stigma.
- We piloted reverse mentoring in 2023-24. This pairs mentors with from under-represented demographics with mentees from senior leadership positions, to enrich the senior leaders understanding of staff experiences. We are recruiting a new cohort in early 2025, with our leadership team committing to be mentored.

Case study: Being a reverse mentor



Ruaridh Maxwell – Environment Forester

"Since joining FLS I had noticed very rare occasions where derogatory remarks had gone unchallenged. I had participated in reverse mentoring at my previous employer and knew first-hand the impact it could have.

The relationship with my mentee was excellent. I was taken aback by how keen there were to hear and understand my experience. We then looked at the practical steps they could take as a leader to make FLS a more welcoming environment for all staff.

I'm hopeful that by rolling out this programme our senior leaders can feel more confident in challenging unacceptable behaviour and empowering staff to speak up when things don't look right."

Case study: Valuing diversity as a senior leader



Doug Knox – Head of Technical Services Group

"As a senior leader I often think about the long-term sustainability and success of the organisation. A key part of that is creating a workforce that reflects the diversity of the people of Scotland for whom we manage the nations forests.

Greater diversity is crucial for fostering innovation, problem solving, improving decision-making and strengthening our organisational resilience. I've seen first-hand how creating a more diverse team brings a range of perspectives and experiences, leading to more creative and effective solutions in our work. Striving to be an inclusive team helps attract good people and increases job satisfaction.

Something that I found incredibly helpful recently was taking part in a reverse mentoring relationship. I got to learn from the 'lived experience' of a relatively new member of staff with a protected characteristics who had joined FLS. It really made me appreciate the journey still ahead of us, and how important inclusion is to the future success of FLS as an organisation."

Equality Outcome Three

Our policies, processes and practises continue to have a positive impact on equality and people from and across protected characteristics.

We write equality impact assessments (EQIAs) for any policies and projects that will affect our staff or the public. Thirteen were published in 2023-25, improving our operational decisions.

For example, a consultation on a proposal to introduce car parking charges at our visitor sites ensured that we retained multiple payment options (not just contactless card payments), improving access for older and disabled people.

We opted to introduce the employee passport policy recommended by the Scottish Government in June 2024. This is an accessible way for staff to discuss workplace adjustments (for example for disabilities or caring responsibilities) with their manager.

During 2025 we will refresh equality impact training and materials and will continue to better embed EQIAs into programme and project management.

Equality Outcome Four

Our sites and services are increasingly accessible and inclusive. The removal of barriers is continued to ensure people from all backgrounds and communities can enjoy Scotland's national forests and land.

We want to ensure there is an accessible trail network to showcase the best of Scotland for everyone. Currently we have 17 trails (totally 27 kilometres) that are designated as 'easy' and accessible. We will review our large trail and forest road network (totalling 10,000km) and will promote a wider network of accessible routes suitable for everyone.

In June 2023, we contributed to the Outdoor Recreation Network's conference Action for Inclusive Access, delivering a 'walk-shop' to 20 delegates showcasing access improvements at our visitor sites.

Through 2023-24 our Visitor Services, and Health Safety and Wellbeing teams delivered workshops across Scotland to mark 20 years of the [Land Reform Act \(Scotland\) 2003](#), reflecting on how reasonable adjustments for disabled visitors have increased access.

We collaborated with [Paths for All](#) and NatureScot to review the 'Path Manager's Guide to Grading' guidance. Launched in 2015, this is a popular guide helping trail managers grade trails to a national standard. The revised guide includes specifications for 'Easy Most Accessible' trails, developed with user groups. When the new guidance is published in 2025, we will audit our own trails.

Many FLS forests are listed on [Euan's Guide](#) ('Tripadvisor for disabled people'). Reviews are user-generated, providing insight into visitors' experience of our sites, and helping us reach wider audiences.

In November 2023 we completed a [Community Asset Transfer with Slattadale Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation](#). Slattadale SCIO purchased 0.58 hectares from FLS to develop a sustainable off-campus outdoor education facility. It will benefit the Gairloch High School Associated School Group's 3-18 pupils, from Shildaig in the South to Laide and Dundonnell in the North.

Through 2024, we continued foundational work on our [Gaelic Language Plan](#). We conducted a Gaelic capacity audit, starting development of a Gaelic awareness staff course, increased our intranet resources, and established partnership working with [NatureScot](#), [Historic Environment Scotland](#) and [Scottish Forestry](#). [Bòrd na Gàidhlig](#) reviewed our bi-lingual signage policy. We published '[Gaelic forest names and what they mean](#)' on our website in February 2025.

We are currently undertaking a comprehensive redesign of our website. The new site will be user-centred, developed in line with accessibility standards set out in the Digital Scotland Service Standard, and will be completed in early 2026.

Case study: Forest therapy for young people with Glasgow Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

Amanda - Community Ranger

In late 2024, Amanda and the community rangers hosted the NHS Regional South Glasgow CAMHS Team Day at [Cuningar Loop](#), demonstrating activities that help young people with mental health challenges connect with nature.

"It's probably not something you'd usually associate with forestry, but supporting young people with their mental health is a big part of my role. As community rangers, we work closely with NHS teams to support young people and show them the value of greenspaces for their mental health and wellbeing. I absolutely love the work and knowing the direct impact we're having is really rewarding."

Appendix: Workforce Statistics 1 March 2025

Note: “*” in a table means that the figure is less than 10 and so has been suppressed to protect anonymity.

Workforce subcategories by characteristics of gender reassignment, religion and marital status return many figures below 10. Therefore, these categories have been left out beyond the initial whole workforce reporting.

Bisexual, Gay Man and Gay Woman/Lesbian are aggregated into one ‘LGB’ category for reporting to protect anonymity.

Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Taoist are aggregated into ‘Other Major World Religion’ category for reporting to protect anonymity.

1. Whole workforce data March 2025

Gender		
Female	Male	Total
377	732	1,109

Disability				
No	Not Known	Yes	Blank	Total
975	52	58	24	1,109

Ethnicity				
BAME	Not Stated	Unknown	White	Total
16	42	22	1,029	1,109

Age										
16-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65+	Total
41	70	129	134	130	145	150	145	121	44	1,109

Sexual Orientation					
LGB	Heterosexual/ Straight	Not Specified	Prefer not to respond	Blank	Total
35	631	350	47	46	1,109

Gender Reassignment					
Declined to specify	No	Not Specified	Yes	Blank	Total
*	758	298	*	45	1,109

Religion						
Agnostic	Atheist	Other Major World Religion	Christian – Orthodox	Christian – Other	Christian – Roman Catholic	Christian – Church of Scotland
42	98	*	*	52	30	74

Religion (continued)					
None	Not Specified	Other religion or belief	Prefer not to respond	Blank	Total
308	399	16	32	46	1,109

Marital Status									
Civil Partnership	Divorced	Married	Not Specified	Partner	Separated	Single	Widowed	Blank	Total
14	47	514	14	150	21	326	12	11	1,109

2. Workforce by hours March 2025

	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Full Time	310	661	971
Part Time	67	71	138

	Disability				
	No	Not Known	Yes	Blank	Total
Full Time	852	49	47	23	971
Part Time	123	*	11	*	138

	Ethnicity				
	BAME	Not Stated	Unknown	White	Total
Full Time	15	40	21	895	971
Part Time	*	*	*	134	138

	Age										
	16-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65+	Total
Full Time	40	69	120	122	114	132	137	133	84	20	971
Part Time	*	*	*	12	16	13	13	12	37	24	138

	Sexual Orientation					Total
	LGB	Heterosexual/ Straight	Not Specified	Prefer not to respond	Blank	
Full Time	34	568	285	40	44	971
Part Time	*	63	65	*	*	138

3. Workforce by contract type March 2025

	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Full Time			
Fixed Term	17	32	49
Permanent	289	627	916
Short term temporary appointment	*	*	*
Part Time			
Fixed Term	*	*	*
Permanent	64	68	132
Short term temporary appointment	*		*

	Disability				
	No	Not Known	Yes	Blank	Total
Full Time					
Fixed Term	40	*	*	*	49
Permanent	810	43	44	19	916
Short term temporary appointment	*	*		*	*
Part Time					
Fixed Term	*				5
Permanent	118	*	11		132
Short term temporary appointment				*	*

	Ethnicity				
	BAME	Not Stated	Unknown	White	Total
Full Time					
Fixed Term	*		*	44	49
Permanent	11	40	17	848	916
Short term temporary appointment			*	*	*
Part Time					
Fixed Term				*	*
Permanent	*	*		129	132
Short term temporary appointment			*		*

	Age										
	16-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65+	Total
Full Time											
Fixed Term	14	12	*	*	*	*	*	*			49
Permanent	23	57	113	119	107	130	136	127	84	20	916
Short term temporary appointment	*				*			*			6
Part Time											
Fixed Term					*				*	*	5
Permanent	*	*	*	12	14	12	13	12	35	23	132
Short term temporary appointment						*					1

	Sexual Orientation					
	LGB	Heterosexual/ Straight	Not Specified	Prefer not to respond	Blank	Total
Full Time						
Fixed Term	*	*	*	*	*	49
Permanent	29	528	283	38	38	916
Short term temporary appointment		*			*	6
Part Time						
Fixed Term		*		*		5
Permanent	*	59	65	*	*	132
Short term temporary appointment					*	*

4. Workforce by pay bands March 2025

	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
SSG1		*	3
SSG2		*	1
Pay Band 1	*	*	11
Pay Band 2	*	23	29
Pay Band 3	28	58	86
Pay Band 4	67	100	167
Pay Band 5	106	162	268
Pay Band 5 (Op)	11	38	49
Pay Band 6A	61	176	237
Pay Band 6A (Op)	3	36	39
Pay Band 6B	87	110	197
Pay Band 7	*	17	22

	Disability				
	No	Not Known	Yes	Blank	Total
SSG1	*				3
SSG2				*	1
Pay Band 1	*	*		*	11
Pay Band 2	28	*			29
Pay Band 3	80	*	*		86
Pay Band 4	146	*	*	*	167
Pay Band 5	227	12	22	*	268
Pay Band 5 (Op)	48		*		49
Pay Band 6A	215	*	14	*	237
Pay Band 6A (Op)	38	*			39
Pay Band 6B	165	17	*	*	197
Pay Band 7	16	*	*	*	22

	Ethnicity				
	BAME	Not Stated	Unknown	White	Total
SSG1				*	3
SSG2			*		1
Pay Band 1			*	10	11
Pay Band 2	*	*		27	29
Pay Band 3		*		84	86
Pay Band 4	*	*	*	156	167
Pay Band 5	*	*	*	250	268
Pay Band 5 (Op)		*		48	49
Pay Band 6A	*	12	*	217	237
Pay Band 6A (Op)		*		37	39
Pay Band 6B	*	12	*	177	197
Pay Band 7	*		*	20	22

	Age										
	16-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65+	Total
SSG1							*	*	*		3
SSG2								*			1
Pay Band 1					*	*	*		*		11
Pay Band 2			*	*	*	*	*	*	*		29
Pay Band 3			*	*	14	10	20	13	10	*	86
Pay Band 4		*	18	18	19	35	33	18	15	*	167
Pay Band 5		25	40	48	44	31	30	27	17	*	268
Pay Band 5 (Op)			*	*	*	*	*	15	11	*	49
Pay Band 6A	10	17	29	33	19	31	29	32	23	14	237
Pay Band 6A (Op)			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	39
Pay Band 6B	22	12	28	20	20	21	17	22	27	*	197
Pay Band 7	*	*	*								22

	Sexual Orientation					Total
	LGB	Heterosexual/ Straight	Not Specified	Prefer not to respond	Blank	
SSG1		*	*			3
SSG2					*	1
Pay Band 1		*	*		*	11
Pay Band 2	*	17	*	*	*	29
Pay Band 3		51	30	*	*	86
Pay Band 4	*	109	44	*	*	167
Pay Band 5	24	170	55	18	11	268
Pay Band 5 (Op)	*	19	28	*		49
Pay Band 6A	*	117	95	*	*	237
Pay Band 6A (Op)			33	*		39
Pay Band 6B	*	115	54	*	12	197
Pay Band 7	*	18	*	*	*	22

5. Learning & Development – Training Course Attendance April 2023-March 2025

	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Training Courses attended	6183	13131	19314

	Disability				Total
	No	Not Known	Yes	Blank	
Training Courses attended	16,787	1,166	927	434	19,314

	Ethnicity				Total
	BAME	Not Stated	Blank	White	
Training Courses attended	355	604	387	17,968	19,314

	Age										Total
	16-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65+	
Training Courses attended	1,003	1,821	2,525	2,554	2,360	2,323	2,327	2,113	1,665	623	19,314

6. New Starts and Leavers April 2023-March 2025

	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Starters	103	152	255
Leavers	108	146	254

	Disability				
	No	Yes	Not Known	Blank	Total
Starters	201	12	16	26	255
Leavers	201	15	14	24	254

	Ethnicity				
	BAME	Not Stated	Blank	White	Total
Starters	*	*	24	218	255
Leavers	*	15	23	207	254

	Age										Total
	16-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65+	
Starters	33	44	36	24	32	33	21	20	*	*	255
Leavers	21	34	33	23	23	15	20	24	31	30	254

7. Maternity leave April 2023-March 2025

32 staff took maternity leave in this period (just under 3% of all staff).

8. Grievance & disciplinary

	Gender	
	Female	Male
Grievance %	47.1%	52.9%
Disciplinary %	5.9%	94.1%

	Disability			
	No	Not Known	Yes	Blank
Grievance %	94.1%	0.0%	5.9%	
Disciplinary %	82.4%	17.6%	0.0%	

	Ethnicity			
	BAME	Not Stated	Blank	White
Grievance %	5.9%	11.8%		82.4%
Disciplinary %	0.0%	23.5%		76.5%

	Age									
	16-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65+
Grievance %		5.9%	17.6%	17.6%	5.9%	17.6%	5.9%	0.0%	29.4%	
Disciplinary %		5.9%	5.9%	5.9%	11.8%	23.5%	11.8%	23.5%	11.8%	

9. Recruitment outcomes April 2023-March 2025

	Gender			
	Male	Female	Prefer to Self-describe	No Data
Applicants	65%	31%	1%	3%
Passed Sift	66%	30%	1%	3%
Passed Interview	63%	32%	1%	3%
Posted	66%	31%	2%	1%

	Disability		
	Yes	No	No Data
Applicants	6%	88%	6%
Passed Sift	7%	84%	9%
Passed Interview	7%	81%	11%
Posted	9%	82%	9%

	Sexual Orientation				
	Heterosexual/ Straight	Bisexual	Gay Man	Gay Woman/ Lesbian	No Data
Applicants	83%	6%	2%	1%	8%
Passed Sift	83%	5%	1%	1%	11%
Passed Interview	79%	4%	2%	1%	14%
Posted	82%	6%	1%	0%	11%

	Ethnicity					
	Asian/ Asian British	Black/African/ Black British	Mixed	Other Ethnic Groups	White	Prefer Not Discl
Applicants	8%	7%	2%	1%	79%	3%
Passed Sift	1%	2%	1%	1%	92%	3%
Passed Interview	1%	2%	1%	0%	93%	3%
Posted	2%	1%	1%	0%	94%	1%

	Age									
	16-24	25-29	30-35	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65+
Applicants	13%	24%	19%	13%	11%	7%	6%	5%	2%	0%
Passed Sift	8%	16%	18%	14%	14%	10%	8%	8%	3%	0%
Passed Interview	8%	17%	17%	15%	15%	13%	7%	6%	3%	1%
Posted	9%	17%	18%	12%	18%	12%	7%	4%	2%	1%

10. Gender Pay Gap reporting March 2025

	Gender Pay Gap reporting			
	Female	Male	All Staff	Gender pay gap
Mean Hourly Wage	19.51	19.63	19.59	0.60%
Median Hourly Wage	18.19	17.52	18.03	-3.82%

	Percentage of Headcount in each Pay Quartile	
	Female	Male
Lower	39%	61%
Lower Middle	26%	74%
Upper Middle	41%	59%
Upper	34%	66%

11. Equal Pay reporting March 2025

	Gender	
	Female	Male
Mean Pay by pay band	£	£
SSG2		117,329.00
SSG1		92,544.67
Pay Band 1	82,542.00	81,214.63
Pay Band 2	66,420.17	66,132.61
Pay Band 3	53,302.86	53,290.41
Pay Band 4	44,792.01	44,811.80
Pay Band 5	36,113.46	35,977.89
Pay Band 5 (Op)	42,116.00	42,116.00
Pay Band 6A	32,802.34	32,961.56
Pay Band 6A (Op)	37,733.00	37,733.00
Pay Band 6B	29,286.98	29,402.25
Pay Band 7	25,535.00	25,535.00

	Disability			
	No	Not Known	Yes	Blank
Mean Pay by pay band	£	£	£	£
SSG2				117,329.00
SSG1	92,544.67			
Pay Band 1	82,247.11	82,542.00		74,577.00
Pay Band 2	66,341.43	62,011.00		
Pay Band 3	53,321.54	52,194.25	54,412.00	
Pay Band 4	44,849.00	43,798.33	44,887.78	45,372.00
Pay Band 5	36,009.35	35,988.58	36,345.09	35,838.14
Pay Band 5 (Op)	42,116.00		42,116.00	
Pay Band 6A	32,934.87	32,368.00	33,016.86	32,368.00
Pay Band 6A (Op)	37,733.00	37,733.00		
Pay Band 6B	29,351.07	29,402.94	29,556.00	28,998.43
Pay Band 7	25,535.00	25,535.00	25,535.00	25,535.00

	Ethnicity				
	BAME	Not Stated	Blank	White	All Staff
Mean Pay by pay band	£	£	£	£	£
SSG2			117,329.00		117,329.00
SSG1				92,544.67	92,544.67
Pay Band 1			74,577.00	82,276.60	81,576.64
Pay Band 2	65,869.00	62,011.00		66,420.17	66,192.10
Pay Band 3	52,933.00		52,195.00	53,335.00	53,294.47
Pay Band 4	44,706.28	44,101.00	45,553.50	44,794.39	44,803.86
Pay Band 5	35,719.14	36,658.00	35,927.55	36,098.78	36,031.51
Pay Band 5 (Op)	42,116.00	42,116.00		42,116.00	42,116.00
Pay Band 6A	32,721.27	33,125.00	32,670.80	32,958.54	32,920.58
Pay Band 6A (Op)			37,733.00	37,733.00	37,733.00
Pay Band 6B	29,331.69	29,556.00	29,326.41	29,355.26	29,351.34
Pay Band 7	25,535.00		25,535.00	25,535.00	25,535.00

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