

Shropshire Council

Annual Workforce Diversity Report

1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024



Annual Workforce Diversity Report

2023/24

At Shropshire Council we are committed to developing an inclusive and diverse workforce that reflects the communities we serve. Our aim is to create an environment where every individual feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute to their fullest potential.

This report highlights our ongoing efforts to promote equality and diversity within our organisation and provides an overview of our current workforce demographics and our policies and initiatives to support diversity and inclusion. We know that by embracing the different perspectives and experiences of our employees we are not only enriching our workplace culture but also enhancing our ability to effectively serve the diverse needs of the Shropshire community.

We recognise that this is an ongoing journey, and we remain committed to improving our practices to ensure that Shropshire Council is a place where all employees can thrive.

(The workforce data used in this report is based on employee headcount as of 31 March 2024. Figures for the local population are taken from the 2021 Census).

A snapshot of our workforce on 31 March 2024

5,734 employees (4,339.19 full-time equivalent)	2,481 full-time	3,253 part-time
	4,630 females	1,104 males
	2,101 school-based employees	3,633 corporate employees

Gender

Our current workforce

Our local population

All

Female - 81%

Male - 19%

Age 16-64

Female – 81%

Male – 19%

All

Female – 51%

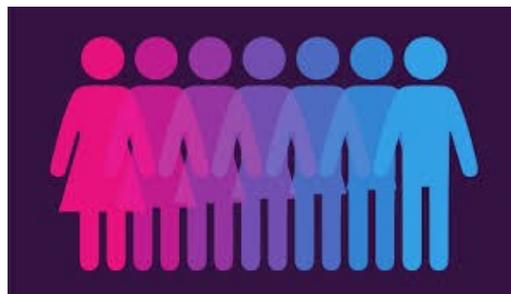
Male – 49%

Age 16-64

Female – 50%

Male – 50%

We have in place a range of initiatives to promote a gender diverse workplace – unbiased recruitment processes to attract a broad range of candidates, flexible working practices to support the work-life balance of both men and women, a job evaluation scheme to ensure equal pay for equivalent roles, and family friendly policies to promote employee wellbeing and flexibility.



When analysing the relationships with our workforce the gender split of employees who have been through a disciplinary process is female (65%), male (35%).

This was the same for employees who raised a formal grievance – female (65%), male (35%).

Shropshire Council has always employed a high proportion of female staff. This is attributed to the positions in our structure – cleaning/catering staff, care workers and teaching assistants, as well as a large proportion of part time roles all of which are predominantly undertaken by women.

67% of our most senior earners are female. This is an increase from the previous year and continues to indicate we are making significant progress toward gender equality.

6,299 job applications were received in 2023/24, of which 68% were female. 83% of the successful candidates were female, a similar figure to previous years and proportionate to the gender composition of our current workforce.

In June, the Council promoted Men’s Health Week. The theme for the year was ‘Men’s Health and the Internet’ which emphasised the impact of technology and social media on mental health.

Other news...

Shropshire Council continues to move in the right direction with regards to the Gender Pay Gap, with our mean average shrinking by a further 1.06% from last year making an overall reduction of over 9% since we first started reporting in 2018. See the full report here (Equality, diversity and social inclusion | Shropshire Council).

Disability

Our current workforce

Our local population

All
2.4%

Age 16-64
2.4%

All
18.5%

Age 16-64
15.4%

We now hold disability data for 20.4% of our workforce, which is an increase from 11.3% in 2022/23 and a move in the right direction.

However, there is still huge room for improvement, and we are aware that a lack of data in this area greatly affects our ability to make informed decisions and implement targeted initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion.



We continue to take positive action to improve our data in this area to reduce the amount of missing information by encouraging staff to record their disability status, along with other diversity details and emergency contact information.

Relationships with our employees – figures for 2023/24 highlight that 15% of formal grievances were raised by employees who have a disability. While this may be a relatively low number (3 people), it could suggest that individuals with disabilities may be facing unique challenges in the workplace. Action may be needed to ensure more support for employees who have disabilities, such as reviewing workplace policies and fostering a more inclusive environment. We are mindful that this includes people who may have hidden disabilities, including neurodiverse conditions, Crohn’s disease etc.

7.1% of our recruitment applicants declared they have a disability, an increase compared to 6.6% the previous year.

Other news...

Shropshire Council continues to be a ‘Disability Confident’ organisation. Being a member of the scheme helps us to recruit and retain great people, challenges attitudes and increases understanding of disability. [Click here for more information about what it means to be a Disability Confident employer – Disability Confident – Are you disability confident? \(campaign.gov.uk\)](#)

Ethnicity

	<u>Our Current Workforce</u>		<u>Our Local Population</u>	
	All	Age 16-64	All	Age 16-64
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	1.2%	1.2%	1.3%	1.7%
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	0.7%	0.7%	0.3%	0.5%
Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups	0.5%	0.5%	1.2%	1.1%
Not Specified	16.8%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Ethnic Group	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.6%
Prefer not to say	0.7%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%
White	80.1%	80.2%	96.7%	96.2%

The number of employees for whom we do not hold any ethnicity details has reduced slightly from 18.3% in 2022/23 to 16.8% in 2023/24 - a step in the right direction.

Of the total number of disciplinary cases dealt with in 2023/24, 75.0% of employees were white, 20.0% not specified and 5.0% from ethnic minority groups (representing 1 employee). Formal grievances were raised by 80.0% white, 10.0% not specified and 10.0% from ethnic minority groups (representing 2 employees).

Employees who left Shropshire Council during 2023/24:

Ethnic groups (excluding white) - 1.9%
 White - 60.1%
 Not known – 38.0%

During 2023/24, 13.1% of our recruitment applicants were from other ethnic groups (excluding white). This is an increase compared to the year before, which was 8.9%. Our successful candidates from other ethnic groups (excluding white) have once again seen a small increase from 3.4% to 3.6%. However, there are gaps in the data for 19.0% of our new employees, making it difficult to fully analyse the figures in this area. It can be noted however that last year 36.8% of successful candidates were of unspecified ethnicity, so although this year the numbers are still high at 19.0%, there has been a significant improvement.



Other news...

Race Equality Week was highlighted in February 2024 with the theme #ListenActChange. Shropshire Council ran regular news pieces each day on the intranet, raised the profile of the Shropshire Council Anti Racism Forum (SCARF) and invited the workforce to join an online chat with Andy Begley (Chief Executive) and Mark Barrow (Director) to reflect upon Benjamin Zephaniah and the power of his poetry and prose to bring about positive change.

Show Racism the Red Card Day was also promoted, during October, with lockscreens of staff and councillors demonstrating visible support to efforts to tackle racism.

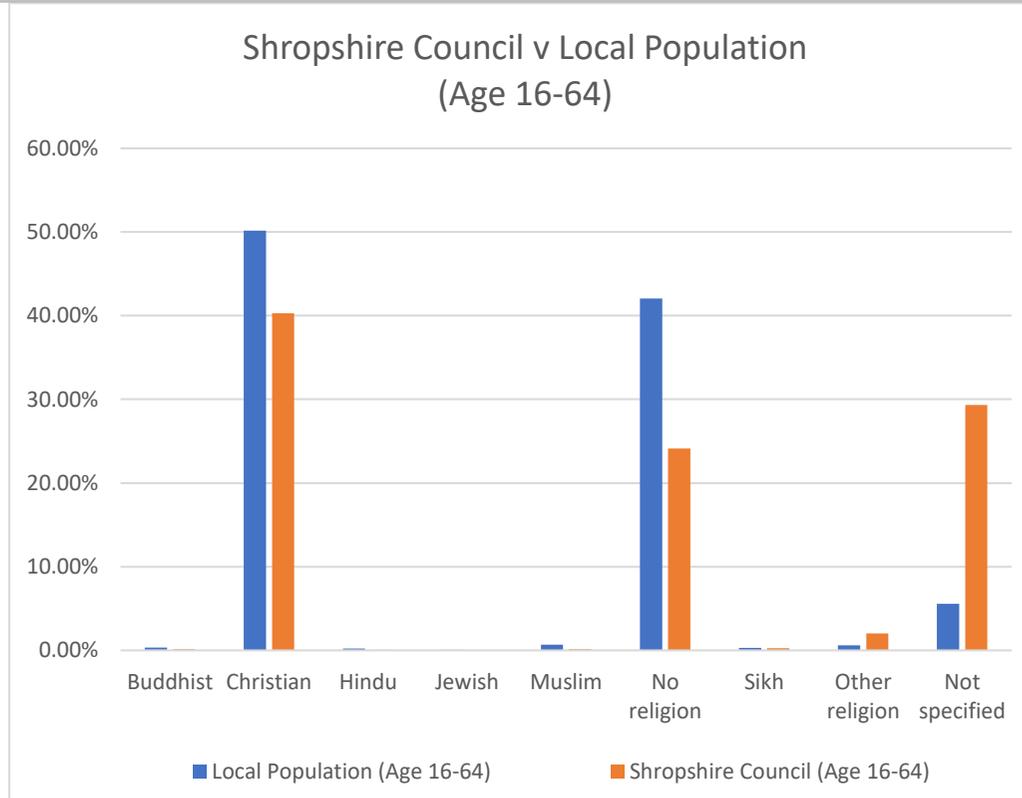
Religion

	<u>Our Current Workforce</u>		<u>Our Local Population</u>	
	All	Age 16-64	All	Age 16-64
Buddhist	0.14%	0.14%	0.28%	0.35%
Christian	42.13%	40.29%	55.47%	50.17%
Hindu	0.07%	0.07%	0.17%	0.22%
Jewish	0.02%	0.02%	0.06%	0.06%
Muslim	0.14%	0.14%	0.53%	0.67%
No religion	24.47%	24.12%	36.95%	42.06%
Sikh	0.26%	0.26%	0.24%	0.30%
Other religion	2.06%	2.02%	0.46%	0.61%
Not specified	30.71%	29.33%	5.85%	5.56%

Other news...

Shropshire Council has continued to highlight a variety of different religious events celebrated throughout the year, providing information to all employees about the diverse religious festivals and observations that take place.

This included Bodhi Day for Buddhists; Diwali, a five day festival of lights celebrated by Sikhs and Hindus; Hanukkah, in Judaism; and Vaisakhi, one of the most important dates in the Sikh calendar. Additionally, information was shared around Muslim and Christian observations including the holy month of Ramadhan, and the period of Lent into Easter.



When comparing the working age population of Shropshire to the Shropshire Council workforce, the religious make-up is very similar, with the majority of workers sharing the same religious beliefs as the people who live in the surrounding area.

The number of new starters for whom we hold no religious details has reduced from 37.1% in 2022/23 to 21.46% in 2023/24. A huge improvement, but still more work to do to capture this information for our new employees.

Age

15 years and under	0.0%
16 to 24 years	3.5%
25 to 34 years	14.6%
35 to 44 years	24.1%
45 to 54 years	29.9%
55 to 64 years	24.5%
65 years and over	3.3%

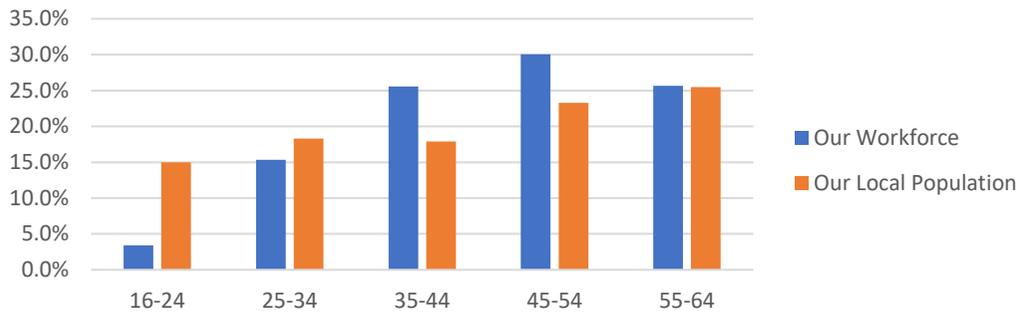
Our current workforce

All	Age 16-64
0.0%	n/a
3.5%	3.7%
14.6%	15.1%
24.1%	24.9%
29.9%	30.9%
24.5%	25.4%
3.3%	n/a

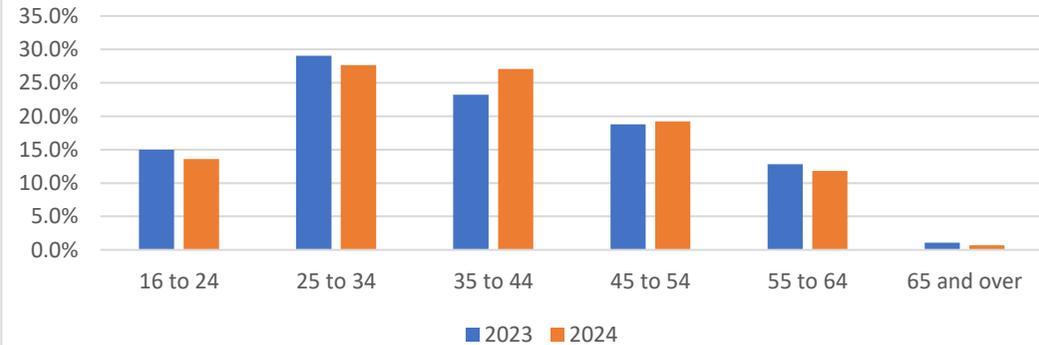
Our local population

All	Age 16-64
15.9%	n/a
8.8%	15.0%
10.8%	18.3%
10.5%	17.9%
13.7%	23.3%
15.0%	25.5%
25.4%	n/a

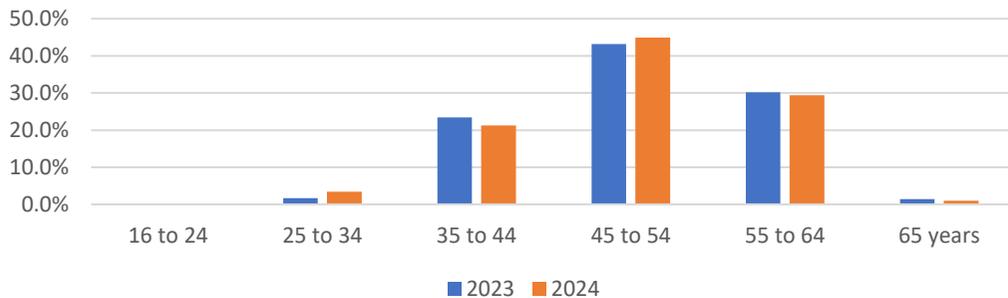
Age profile of our workforce and local population (Age 16 - 64)



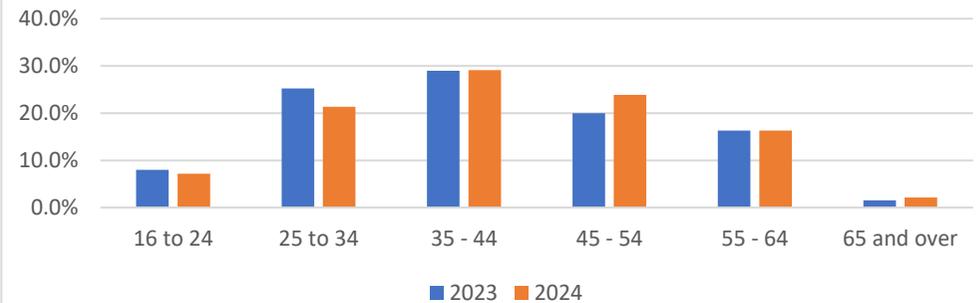
Age profile of our recruitment applicants



Age profile of our senior earners



Age profile of our new starters

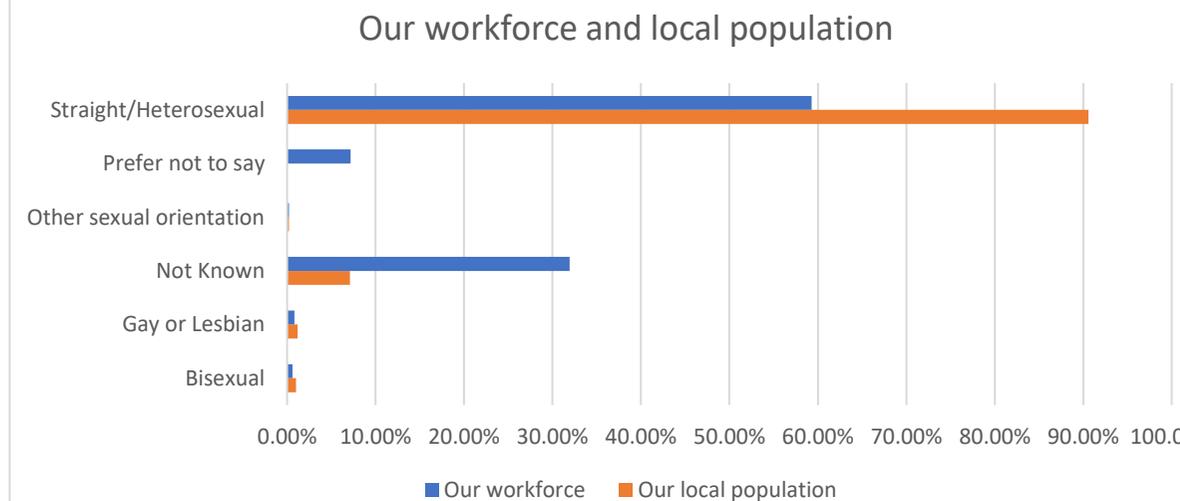


Sexual Orientation

	<u>Our current workforce</u>	<u>Our local population</u>
	<u>Age 16 and over</u>	<u>Age 16 and over</u>
Bisexual	0.6%	1.0%
Gay or Lesbian	0.8%	1.2%
Not specified	31.9%	7.1%
Other	0.2%	0.2%
Prefer not to say	7.2%	n/a
Straight/Heterosexual	59.3%	90.6%

1.7% of our senior earners identify as bisexual, gay, lesbian or other sexuality. A slight increase compared to the previous year and comparable to the current workforce.

The number of senior earners for whom we hold no sexual orientation data continues to reduce and is moving in the right direction at 36.8%.



The sexual orientation of our workforce continues to move towards being more representative of our local population, with 1.6% of our employees identifying as bisexual, gay, lesbian, or other sexuality compared to 2.4% of the Shropshire community.

Other news...

- In February, employees were invited to celebrate LGBT+ History month. The theme celebrated LGBT+ people's contribution to the field of medicine and healthcare both historically and today with the aim of showcasing the amazing work of LGBT+ staff across the NHS and in other healthcare settings.
- For Pride Month in June, Shropshire Council displayed the Rainbow Flag, promoted and highlighted community initiatives across the county, and shared quizzes for staff to try out during this month-long global celebration.

The Equality Duty

In November 2023, Cabinet agreed to the publication of Shropshire Council's Equality Objectives Action Plan for 2024 to 2028 to meet our specific public sector equality duties, ensuring we make informed and fair decisions that benefit all members of society. These objectives help us focus on the most pressing equality issues and assist in creating a more inclusive and equitable environment that respects and values diversity, both internally and externally. Further information can be found here - [Equality objectives | Shropshire Council](#)

Employee Engagement

Throughout the year the Chief Executive has continued to keep staff informed via his weekly e-mail. From important updates to awards and applause, this communication is also a tool for keeping the workforce updated on any policy changes, equality matters and training and development opportunities.

HR Policies and Guidance

A suite of information is available on the staff intranet, providing guidance on a range of employment matters for employees and managers. We strive to ensure that all our policies are inclusive and are regularly reviewed to ensure they are up to date with any changes in legislation and are relevant to the organisation.

Workforce Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

In November we launched our new Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Policy which replaces the former Equality Policy. This policy sets out Shropshire Council's commitment to creating a workplace that values difference, background, and circumstance. We aim to eliminate discrimination and promote an inclusive environment where everyone can develop their skills and talents.

Workforce Data

As part of this commitment, it is important that we understand our current workforce demographics and needs. Once again, we asked employees to review and update their personal information in the ERP to support this commitment and the Healthy Organisation objective within the Shropshire Plan – ‘We'll enable a skilled, happy, healthy, diverse, inclusive, empowered, and proud workforce that influences and leads change, addressing any inequalities’. A particular focus has been with our harder to reach teams, cleaning, catering and schools, where targeted support and communications have taken place throughout the year to gather equality data and direct employees to the ERP to review and update their employee details.

Employee Development

Through its online learning management, Shropshire Council has continued to promote opportunities for staff to continue self-development alongside essential and mandatory training for all staff, such as on Modern Slavery. The aim through this focus upon online resources is to make learning accessible and flexible to all, wherever they may be located in our rural county. This is then complemented by offers including face to face sessions and online seminars. Whether the training and development is through face-to-face, virtual and online delivery it is around and ensuring that the content of the learning has an ED&I thread to it.

The Council has included specific actions around training and development within the Strategic Equality Objectives Action Plan 2024-2028, as follows:

Identify and implement good practice in training and guidance on developing and maintaining good relations with groupings in the community, as part of Shropshire Council guidance, training programmes and briefings for staff and elected Members.

The aim is to increase understanding amongst officers and elected Members about the challenges faced by people with Protected Characteristics and people at risk of social exclusion.

This is in order to help in collective progress, for the workforce and for members, towards the three national equality aims - eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity; fostering good relations.

We have and will continue to work with our colleagues in the NHS to progress relevant training and other actions to tackle issues such as ageism and misogyny sexism, and discrimination on grounds of religion and belief, as well as experiences of racism amongst the workforce, including racism directed towards employees from those who use our services.

Further support is needed to build on awareness raising for managers as well as for staff, to equip them in their leadership roles with the confidence and competencies to recognise and tackle racism wherever encountered. This has also been highlighted by SCARF, whose members include colleagues working with refugees, and by the Workforce EDI group of the ICS, both of which have raised concerns about racism towards health and social care staff. A training proposal has been recast from face-to-face workshops to a broader online offer to save on finance whilst still leading to projected positive outcomes. This includes actions to tackle sexism and misogyny, as well as support neurodiversity awareness. Financial constraints have prevented its procurement and delivery to date in that format. This training need will be taken forward as an action in liaison with the ICS.

Working with Wolverhampton and Telford & Wrekin Councils, there continues to be sharing on online seminars and development sessions on a range of topics, which in the last year has included Black History Month, Islamophobia, LGBTQ+ activism, and Windrush commemorations. The Council has similarly shared awareness raising pieces with neighbouring and regional local authorities, and with NHS organisations through the ICS, on a range of commemorations, celebrations and events. Significant success was achieved in providing education around Black History Month and on the safeguarding of black children.

The Council's Mastering Leadership Matrix supports career development by offering the opportunity to gain new skills, knowledge and experience, with equality and diversity recognised within the programme's modules.

Supported Employment

Enable, our supported employment service, continues to help people into employment, training, and education. Providing support to overcome barriers when entering or returning to employment and assisting job seekers in their efforts to achieve sustainable employment and find a suitable career path.

Early Careers, Apprenticeships and Access to Vacancies

Shropshire Council continues to work with both national and local Apprenticeship Training Providers to offer a wide range of apprenticeships including Higher, Advanced and Degree level qualifications. We work closely with training providers to ensure they are able to offer flexible training to meet the needs of the organisation as our services follow a remote first policy. Shropshire Council continues to work with these providers to develop apprenticeships for the future, providing greater flexibility to all employees in accessing apprenticeships.

Shropshire Council has championed an Apprenticeship First approach, ensuring that apprenticeship training is considered for all training needs in the first instance for both professional development and new recruits. Enabling an increase in recruited apprenticeships will endeavour to increase social mobility and diversity of the workforce, creating opportunities and entry-level access to roles within the organisation and allowing new recruits to develop and enhance their skills and knowledge whilst in paid employment.

In addition, Shropshire Council are looking at new options to support Care Leavers, Children Looked After (CLA) and those who are undertaking Supported Employment. We need to adapt our existing offer to ensure that we are able to support young people effectively in a hybrid working environment and offering our young people the opportunity to meet their aspirations whilst gaining skills and confidence within the workplace and demonstrating our continued commitment to our corporate parenting role.

Shropshire Council have updated information around work experience opportunities, making placements easier to access and the opportunity open to more applicants. We work closely with the local Department for Work and Pensions and College colleagues, supporting and attending jobs fairs and offering training sessions which enable job seekers and Young People to understand how they can enhance their CVs, job applications and interview techniques when applying for roles at Shropshire Council.

The Council continues to follow the developments of the new Growth and Skills Levy and over the next 12 months will consider the opportunities and how these can be integrated into existing practice. Shropshire Council will continue to support staff who require Functional Skills as fundamental tools and skills to enable them best access to development opportunities and career progression.

Shropshire Council are part of an Apprenticeship Trailblazer group looking at the creation of a Level 2 Business Administration apprenticeship route which has now been approved; the level 2 apprenticeship will enable a large number of apprentices who require an “inclusive apprenticeship” to participate in an apprenticeship. If the Institute of Apprenticeships agree to the creation of this standard, it would create an opportunity for young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), Special Educational or Additional Needs to access employment through an apprenticeship opportunity.

Over the coming 12 months, Shropshire Council will continue to review its approach to Early Careers and Apprenticeships to tackle issues in regard to an ageing workforce and meeting future workforce needs and priorities. Shropshire Council will engage with internal and external stakeholders to generate an aligned action plan, alongside the wider Workforce Strategy refresh (2026-2029).

Summary and Next Steps

Our commitment to workforce equality and diversity is reflected in our ongoing efforts to create an environment where every employee feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and talents.

This report has provided a comprehensive overview of our current workforce demographics and initiatives we have implemented, and whilst we acknowledge the progress we have made we also recognise that the journey is continuous and requires ongoing dedication and effort.

Moving forward, we remain committed to improving our practices and ensuring that our workplace is a place where all employees can thrive. By embracing diversity and promoting an inclusive culture, we are not only enhancing our organisational performance but also fulfilling our responsibility to the communities we serve.