

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) Annual Report 2025

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is enshrined in our vision and through our values of care, respect and responsibility that underpin the day-to-day activities and diverse communities of the Trust. We are committed to being a more inclusive organisation, ensuring equal opportunity and celebrating diversity. Encouraging and supporting the workforce we employ to reach their potential. This will support our goal to be a brilliant place to work and thrive.

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Introduction

Our aim is to create a culture of inclusion where everyone feels valued and respected for who they are and what they bring to our organisation. Our equality, diversity and inclusion activity is linked to the NHS People Plan, the Trust's Dudley People Plan and our strategic objectives.

At The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, we are proud to place equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of everything we do. As a public sector organisation, we are fully committed to upholding the principles of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which requires all public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

To meet these duties, we have taken proactive steps to ensure that our services are accessible, our workforce is representative of the communities we serve, and our organisational culture promotes dignity, fairness and respect. Through regular Equality Impact Assessments, comprehensive staff training, and the publication of detailed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion reports, we monitor our progress and hold ourselves accountable.

The Dudley Group has also championed initiatives such as our staff networks including groups supporting LGBTQ+ colleagues, ethnic minority staff, female staff and those with disabilities, which provide vital platforms for voice and advocacy. We continuously analyse workforce data to identify and address disparities and we actively engage with service users and the local community to ensure their perspectives shape the care we deliver.

We are committed to creating an inclusive culture where people feel that they belong. We are passionate about this, because it benefits our staff, patients, visitors, service users and the community that we serve. Developing an inclusive environment supports us to comply with our legal and statutory obligations, for example, through the workforce race equality standard (WRES), workforce disability equality standard (WDES), Equality Delivery System (EDS) and the pay gap reporting.

The purpose of this annual Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) report is to provide an overview with progress towards creating an inclusive workplace where all employees are treated fairly and with respect. This report serves as a tool for transparency and accountability.

Our Duties and Responsibilities under The Public Sector Equality Duty

At The Dudley Group, our vision is *Excellent healthcare, improved health for all*. We are committed to being a values driven organisation that strives for excellence and champions inclusivity in all that we do.

As part of our legal and moral responsibility under the Equality Act 2010, Public Sector Equality Duty we are required to give due regard to the following principles in all areas of our work:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity between individuals who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people from different backgrounds and protected groups.

The Protected Characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010 are:



In support of the effective delivery of the equality duties there are other mandatory requirements for the Trust as an NHS organisation. These include:

- NHS Standard Contract (SC13 Equity of Access, Equality and Non-Discrimination) compliance of which is regulated and monitored by the Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES)
- Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES)
- Gender Pay Gap (GPG) reporting.
- Equality Delivery System (EDS)
- NHS England EDI Improvement Plan 23/24 (High Impact actions).
- Accessible Information Standard (AIS)
- Sexual Orientation Monitoring Standard (SOMS)

The Dudley People Plan

The Dudley People Plan covers a three-year period from 2023-2025. The Dudley People Plan summarises the work that our people can expect embedded in our 5 People Journey:

1. Equality, Inclusion and Diversity
2. Organisational Development
3. Wellbeing
4. Recruitment and Retention
5. Continuous Improvement

People Journeys				
Equality, Diversity & Inclusions	Organisational Development	Wellbeing	Recruit & <u>Retain</u>	Continuous Improvement
We will create an inclusive organisation that ensures equal opportunity and celebrates diversity	We offer support and growth for you to develop your potential. There are opportunities for everyone	We support staff to be safe and healthy and have access to professional support when needed	Dudley is the place people want to work. We make it easy to work at Dudley	We engage, empower, and enable everyone to continuously improve their work
Measures of Success				
1. Sustain an expand membership of indiviual diversity networks. 2. Improve reported position on WRES and WDES metrics around progression, development, and leadership representation.	1. 100% of managers have completed Managers Essentials 2. 95% compliance for Annual Reviews to be achieved from 2023 onwards, with quality audits demonstrating reviews meets standards.	1. Wellbeing Staff Survey scores improve annually with the goal of achieving the top quartile by 2025. 2. Fully embed Wellbeing Champions with a gaol of one active champion for each team/service.	1. Vacancy rate below 7% 2. Turnover Rate below 8%	1. The proportion of employees engaged in improvement activity is above 50%. 2. DGFT's culture of continuous improvement as measured by a subset of staff survey questions is in the top quartile of Acute and Community trusts.
Enablers				
Digital We use digital tools to deliver our plans	Communication We listen and learn from our people to inform what we do		Engagement We involve our people in our work	
Organisational Culture				

In developing each of our employee journeys, The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust has placed strong emphasis on understanding the employee lifecycle, a model that identifies and describes the various stages an employee experiences with their employer. This begins from the pre-employment stage, where an individual becomes aware of the organisation, through to the post-employment stage, which includes ongoing engagement after leaving the Trust.

A positive employee experience sits at the heart of our Dudley People Plan. By aligning our initiatives with the employee lifecycle model, we ensure that every interaction between staff and the organisation is meaningful, inclusive and supportive. This approach brings several key benefits:

- *Engaging with employees at every stage:*
We are able to engage with staff throughout their journey with the Trust. Focusing on improving the experience at each stage helps to deepen engagement, enhance wellbeing and increase overall productivity through a more motivated and connected workforce.

- *Optimising the employee experience:*
This enables us to continually enhance the employee experience, supporting the creation of happier, stronger and more cohesive teams who feel valued and empowered to deliver high quality care.
- *Reducing turnover and improving retention:*
When employees feel recognised and supported throughout their time with the Trust, they are more likely to remain with us. This not only contributes to a more stable and experienced workforce, it also supports cost effectiveness by reducing the need for frequent recruitment.

Trust Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Governance

The Trust has a robust governance framework to ensure accountability and oversight of all Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) activities. This framework comprises the following committees and groups:

People Committee

The People Committee is a sub-committee of the Trust board of directors which oversees workforce and has an overview of equality, diversity and inclusion work plans and receives updates from the EDI Steering Group.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Steering Group

The group provides strategic leadership, oversight and assurance on all matters relating to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), ensuring that these principles are embedded across all aspects of the Trust's work.

The steering group upward reports into the People Committee and to the Trust board. Membership of the steering group includes key representatives from across the Trust, i.e. clinical and non-clinical services, staff networks, Human Resources, Patient Experience and Trade Unions.

Staff Network Groups

The Trust has six staff network groups, which are pivotal to our success in promoting equality, celebrating diversity and achieving inclusion across our organisation. The staff network leads are members of the EDI Steering Group, Trust Management Group and the People Committee.

The Trust's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) strategic Journey



The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategic Journey 2023–2025 sets out a clear vision to create a truly inclusive organisation where every patient, carer and colleague feels valued, respected and supported.

The EDI journey is guided by national frameworks such as the NHS People Promise, Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) and Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES), while also addressing local priorities identified through engagement with staff networks, community partners and service users.

Building on the Trust's previous progress, this strategy outlines a commitment to embedding EDI principles across all aspects of care delivery, workforce culture and community engagement. It reflects the Trust's belief that promoting equality and embracing diversity are fundamental to delivering outstanding, person-centred care and improving health outcomes for all.

This strategic journey is not only about compliance but about transformation, ensuring that inclusion is at the heart of everything the Trust does. It reaffirms the Dudley Group's ongoing dedication to equality, diversity and inclusion as essential drivers of excellence, compassion and continuous improvement in patient care and staff wellbeing.

To view our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Journey, please visit our website: [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust](https://www.dudleygroupnhs.uk/equality-diversity-and-inclusion)

Progress with EDI Objectives and Key Achievements

Over the past year, significant progress has been made in advancing our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) agenda across the Trust.

Through targeted education, inclusive recruitment practices, leadership accountability and enhanced wellbeing initiatives, we continue to build a workforce that reflects the diverse communities we serve.

The following highlights demonstrate our ongoing commitment to embedding inclusion into every aspect of our organisation:

Building an Inclusive Culture

- Delivered Trust-wide EDI education, including anti-racism, allyship, cultural competence and inclusive leadership.
- Strengthened equality networks' visibility through campaigns such as Race Equality Week, LGBTQ+ History Month, PRIDE, South Asian Heritage month, Disability History Month and International Women's Day.

Recruitment, Retention and Representation

- Promoted inclusive recruitment practices with new guidelines and bias-awareness training.
- Improved retention through revamped exit interviews, "Itchy Feet" conversations and flexible working options.
- Continued engagement with schools, colleges and community partners to attract diverse talent into NHS careers.

Inclusive Leadership and Accountability

- Embedded leadership responsibility for EDI through WRES, WDES, EDS, and Gender Pay Gap monitoring.
- Board members actively engaged in walkabouts and lived experience sessions to address workplace inequalities.

Education, Development and Wellbeing

- Updated the EDI Training Matrix to support staff development and appraisal discussions.
- Enhanced wellbeing support, including tailored interventions for staff affected by sexual safety concerns.

Key Equality and Diversity Achievements 2025

- Retained Disability Confident Leader (Level 3) status, reaffirming our commitment to supporting colleagues with disabilities and long-term conditions.

- Increased representation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) staff across the Trust, reflecting progress towards a workforce that mirrors our local communities.
- Re-launch of Anti-Discrimination & Anti-Bullying Harassment policy and launched Sexual Misconduct Policy, supported by comprehensive manager toolkits and training.
- Expansion of six active Staff Networks (EmbRACE, LGBTQ+, Disability & Long-Term Conditions, Women's, Armed Forces, and Carers), enhancing staff voice and engagement.
- Implementation of the Reasonable Adjustment Project, improving access to workplace support, equipment and adaptations for staff with additional needs.
- Launch of the Neurodiversity Toolkit and manager training, helping teams create inclusive environments for neurodivergent colleagues.
- Enhanced flexible working policy and digital request system, supporting work-life balance and improving retention, particularly for carers.
- Ongoing progress with the RACE Code Kitemark, reinforcing the Trust's commitment to tackling race inequality.
- Positive trends in WRES data, including a reduction in staff reporting bullying, harassment or discrimination from colleagues.
- Increased confidence in Freedom to Speak Up reporting, indicating improved organisational culture and psychological safety.

Implementation of the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES)

The Workforce Race Equality Standards (WRES) launched with the aim of improving the workplace and career experiences of our ethnically diverse staff. It has a set of nine specific measures which enable NHS organisations to compare the experiences of different staff groups. The WRES compares the experience of ethnically diverse staff with that of white staff.

WRES 2025 Key Highlights:

- **Workforce Representation:** Staff from ethnically diverse backgrounds now comprise 29% of our workforce, with undeclared ethnicity reducing from 9% to 7%.
- **Disciplinary:** Staff from ethnically diverse backgrounds are 1.51 times more likely to enter formal disciplinary processes than white colleagues.
- **Internal Bullying:** Reports declined for both groups, with a 2.7% drop among staff from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

- **Discrimination:** Reports of discrimination from managers or colleagues slightly declined but remain significantly higher for staff from ethnically diverse background (18.3% vs. 5.7%).
- **Recruitment:** Applicants who are white remain 1.55 times more likely to be appointed from shortlisting than applicants from ethnically diverse backgrounds (19% vs.12%).
- **Development Access:** Staff from a white background are 1.28 times more likely to access non-mandatory training and CPD.
- **Harassment from the Public:** Reports increased among staff from ethnically diverse backgrounds (27%) and decreased among staff from a white background (21.67%).
- **Career Progression:** Perceptions of equal opportunity remain unchanged at 51.8% for staff from ethnically diverse backgrounds, with a 10.3% gap compared to staff from a white background.
- **Board Representation:** Ethnic diversity at Board level fell to 9.5%, well below the 29% workforce benchmark.

The full WRES report can be accessed via the Trust website: [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Publications - The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust](#)

Implementation of the Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES)

The Workforce Disability Equality Standards (WDES) was launched with the aim of improving the workplace and career experiences of our ethnically diverse staff and staff with a disability in the NHS. The WDES has a set of specific measures which enable NHS organisations to compare the experiences of different staff groups. The WDES compares the experience of staff with and without a disability.

WDES 2025 Key Highlights:

- **Workforce Representation:** 6.4% of staff have declared a disability on the Electronic Staff Record (ESR), up from 6.1% in 2024. However, 25.9% of staff have not disclosed their status, indicating a need for continued awareness and trust-building.
- **Recruitment:** The relative likelihood of appointment for applicants with a disability improved slightly to 1.14, though a gap remains (14% appointment rate for applicants with a disability vs.16% without).
- **Capability Process:** In 2024, a small number of staff entered the formal capability process, which skewed this metric to the following: Staff with disabilities are 10.63 times more likely to enter the capability process. In context, this only represents 0.12% of staff with disabilities and 0.01% of staff without.
- **Harassment and Bullying:** Staff with long-term conditions continue to report higher rates of bullying and abuse, particularly from patients and colleagues, compared to those without. However, reporting rates have improved.

- **Career Progression:** 56.1% of staff with a long-term condition believe they have equal opportunities for progression, narrowing the gap between them and staff without to 4.4%.
- **Presenteeism:** Fewer staff with a long-term condition reported feeling pressured to work while unwell (28.5%, down from 32%), suggesting progress in wellbeing support.
- **Feeling Valued:** Only 33.2% of staff with a long-term condition feel valued by the organisation, compared to 43.2% of non-disabled staff, a gap that remains a key concern.
- **Reasonable Adjustments:** 72.4% of staff with a long-term condition reported receiving reasonable adjustments, maintaining the improvement seen in 2023.
- **Board Representation:** 9.5% of board members declared a disability in 2025, up from 6% in 2024, reflecting progress in leadership diversity.

The full WDES report can be accessed via the Trust website: [Publications - The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust \(dgft.nhs.uk\)](https://publications-the-dudley-group-nhs-foundation-trust.dgft.nhs.uk)

Implementation of the Equality Delivery System (EDS)

The Equality Delivery System (EDS) is a national framework designed to help NHS organisations assess, improve, and evidence their progress on equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). It supports compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and forms part of the NHS Standard Contract.

A renewed version of the EDS was introduced in August 2022, requiring all NHS organisations to complete and publish an annual assessment. This is The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust's second annual EDS report.

The framework is structured around three key domains:

- **Domain 1 – Commissioned or Provided Services:** Focuses on equitable patient access, experience, and health outcomes.
- **Domain 2 – Workforce Health and Wellbeing:** Ensures that all staff are supported in relation to their health, wellbeing, and inclusion.
- **Domain 3 – Inclusive Leadership:** Evaluates how leadership demonstrates commitment to equality and addresses EDI priorities.

Each domain includes a set of measurable outcomes assessed against evidence, stakeholder feedback and engagement insights.

In the 2024 / 25 assessment, the Trust achieved an overall score of **22.5**, earning a grading of “**Achieving**” a significant improvement from previous score of **17 “Developing”**. This reflects meaningful progress in embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion across the organisation. Many of the improvements achieved are the direct result of targeted interventions implemented by the Trust over the past twelve months, reflecting clear progress against our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Journey objectives.

The full EDS evaluation report can be accessed via the Trust website: [Publications - The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust \(dgft.nhs.uk\)](https://publications-the-dudley-group-nhs-foundation-trust.dgft.nhs.uk)

Implementation of Pay Gaps

DGFT is committed to reducing structural inequalities and advancing pay equity through robust data analysis, inclusive leadership practices and transparent annual reporting.

The Gender Pay Gap (GPG)

This measures the percentage difference in pay between male and female workers. As of March 2024, the mean gender pay gap at DGFT is 33.2%, a reduction from 39.5% last reporting year. This progress reflects targeted actions throughout 2024 and ongoing initiatives for 2025.

Analysis shows that male staff are overrepresented in higher-paid roles, with 45% of the highest earners being male compared to 18% female, despite males comprising 20% of the overall workforce. In the medical and dental workforce, 72% of consultants are male, while most clinical bands 2–5 are predominantly female. Excluding medical and dental roles significantly narrows the overall pay gap, highlighting structural causes and the importance of targeted interventions.

Sector specific factors contribute to the gap, including historical gendered roles in healthcare, NHS pay structures, and contracted services (e.g., MSc staff in lower bands are predominantly male). Addressing the GPG requires focusing on medical, dental, and corporate staff and promoting gender diverse career progression.

Key actions to reduce the GPG include:

- Promoting flexible working to support staff disproportionately impacted by caregiving responsibilities.
- Encouraging more female staff into senior leadership roles.
- Enhancing workplace culture to increase retention and progression through initiatives such as the Women's Network.
- Developing compassionate leadership and line manager capability via Trust programmes (Manager Essentials, Developing Leaders, Flexible Working, Candidate Journey).
- Continuing to measure, discuss, and raise awareness of the GPG through lived experience stories and leadership engagement.

These measures aim to continue narrowing the gender pay gap while acknowledging that broader sectoral change is required for full equity. Progress will be monitored through the Brilliant Place to Work and Thrive Group.

Ethnicity Pay Gap.

The Ethnicity Pay Gap (EPG) measures differences in average pay between ethnically diverse and White staff. As of March 2024, the mean EPG is 23.9%, improving by 8.7% from 2023 (32.6%), and the median EPG is 9.4%, a small change from 9.1%. These figures reflect a pay gap in favour of ethnically diverse staff, largely driven by higher representation in senior medical and dental roles. Excluding these roles, pay rates between ethnically diverse and White staff are more balanced.

Overall workforce composition is 30% ethnically diverse and 70% White. In the highest-paid quartile, ethnically diverse staff represent 40% (up 2% from 2023), while in the lowest-paid quartile they represent 15% (down 1%). There is no bonus ethnicity pay gap as Clinical Excellence Awards are equally distributed among eligible consultants.

Addressing the EPG focuses on ensuring equitable representation and progression across all staff groups. Key actions include:

- Annual analysis of pay gap data to monitor trends and identify drivers.
- Targeted initiatives, such as career fairs and talent management programmes, to support underrepresented groups.
- Promotion of flexible working, shared parental leave and hybrid/remote work.
- Staff engagement to understand lived experience and inform inclusive policies.
- Development of line manager capability through Trust leadership programmes (Manager Essentials, Developing Leaders, The Candidate Journey).

These initiatives aim to sustain progress in narrowing the ethnicity pay gap, improve representation in senior roles and create an inclusive workplace where all staff can thrive.

Disability Pay Gap

As of March 2025, the Trust published its first disability pay gap report.

The Disability Pay Gap analysis helps the Trust to:

- Identify trends and disparities in pay between disabled and non-disabled staff groups.
- Inform targeted action plans to address any inequalities in recruitment, progression and retention.
- Promote transparency and accountability in supporting an inclusive and equitable workplace.

The analysis shows a disability pay gap of 4.9% (mean) and 1% (median). Based on the available data, disabled colleagues earn, on average, £1.07 less per hour (mean) and £0.19 less per hour (median) compared to non-disabled colleagues. In hourly terms, employees with a disability earn a median rate of £18.91 and a mean rate of £20.73, compared with £19.09 (median) and £21.79 (mean) for employees without a disability.

Findings from the analysis are being used to shape ongoing equality objectives, influence workforce policies, and ensure that disabled colleagues are represented fairly at all levels of the organisation. The introduction of this reporting reflects the Trust's commitment to continuous improvement and to ensuring that all staff can thrive and progress on an equal footing.

Further information and data sets can be viewed here: [Publications - The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust](#)

Delivering the Trust Anti-Racism Commitment and Race Equality Priorities



In 2023, the Trust launched its Anti-Racism Statement, publicly affirming a zero-tolerance approach to racism and setting out clear expectations for behaviours, leadership accountability and organisational action.

Since the publication of the statement, the Trust has taken a structured and proactive approach to embedding anti-racism across all areas of its operations. A dedicated programme of work has been established to turn commitment into measurable change, aligning with the Trust's wider Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategic Journey and the RACE Equality Code framework.

Key areas of progress include:

- **Leadership Commitment:** Senior leaders and Board members have taken an active role in championing anti-racism.

- **Education and Awareness:** Comprehensive Anti-Racism Training and Allyship Development sessions have been introduced for all staff, supported by five anti-racism e-learning modules. These programmes are designed to build understanding, challenge bias and promote inclusive behaviours.
- **Policy and Practice:** Anti-racism principles have been integrated into the Trust's policies and procedures, including recruitment, disciplinary processes, and incident management frameworks.
- **Data, Reporting and Accountability:** The Trust continues to analyse workforce and staff experience data through mechanisms such as WRES, EDS, and TIDE, enabling targeted interventions and transparent progress reporting.
- **Staff Network Collaboration:** The EmbRACE Staff Network has played a vital role in supporting this work, offering lived-experience insights, co-designing initiatives, and promoting dialogue across all staff groups.

The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust continues to make significant progress in advancing race equality through the implementation of the RACE Equality Code (REC). The Code provides a comprehensive framework for best practice in governance, transparency and accountability, ensuring that the Trust operates in line with the expectations of our regulators, sector partners and stakeholders. The Trust has built on this achievement through a structured programme of improvement across the Code's four core themes: **Reporting, Action, Composition, and Education**.

Rainbow badge scheme

The Trust has successfully implemented the NHS Rainbow Badge Scheme, reaffirming our commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive environment for LGBTQ+ patients, service users and staff. Following the achievements of Phase One, which focused on raising visibility and awareness of LGBTQ+ inclusion across the organisation, we have now progressed to Phase Two of the scheme.

Phase Two places greater emphasis on meaningful action and accountability. The Trust has developed a robust action plan to ensure sustained impact, addressing key areas such as staff training, inclusive communication, and the review of policies and patient pathways to remove barriers to equitable care. Engagement with the LGBTQ+ Staff Network and community partners continues to guide this work, ensuring that lived experience informs all decisions and improvements.

By embedding the principles of the Rainbow Badge Scheme into everyday practice, the Trust aims to strengthen confidence among LGBTQ+ individuals in accessing our services, enhance staff understanding of inclusive care and foster a culture where everyone feels safe, respected and valued.

Sexual Safety

The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust is fully committed to creating a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for all colleagues, patients and visitors. In 2024, the Trust formally signed up to the NHS England Sexual Safety Charter, reinforcing our zero tolerance approach to sexual misconduct and our duty to protect and support all individuals who work within or access our services.

The Charter sets out clear commitments for NHS organisations to take proactive steps to prevent sexual harassment and misconduct, respond effectively to concerns, and foster a culture of openness and respect. The Trust has taken a structured and compassionate approach to implementing the Charter, co-designing actions with staff networks, colleagues with lived experience and key stakeholders including HR, the EDI Team, and Freedom to Speak Up Guardians.

Key Achievements and Actions:

- **Sexual Safety Statement:** A Trust-wide Sexual Safety Statement was developed and launched, co-produced with staff who have lived experience. This statement clearly communicates our zero-tolerance stance and outlines the support available to anyone affected by sexual misconduct.
- **Support and Reporting Mechanisms:** Dedicated Sexual Safety Guardians were appointed, and a confidential reporting mailbox was established to ensure accessible and safe routes for disclosure. Multiple reporting options, including DATIX, Freedom to Speak Up, HR and EDI channels have been promoted to encourage timely and transparent reporting.
- **Policy Alignment:** Key HR policies, including Bullying & Harassment, Grievance, and Management of Allegations, have been reviewed and aligned to embed sexual safety principles and strengthen protection for staff.
- **Training and Awareness:** Sexual safety awareness has been incorporated into the EDI mandatory training, Manager Essentials, Leadership, Induction, and Preceptorship programmes. The Trust has also introduced in-house sexual safety training and continues to promote NHS England's Sexual Misconduct Training.
- **Behavioural Framework:** The rollout of the Trust's Behavioural Framework reinforces expectations for respect, professionalism and psychological safety, ensuring that staff feel empowered to challenge inappropriate behaviours.
- **Monitoring and Oversight:** Incident reporting and data collection have been refined to capture sexual safety concerns more effectively, with trends monitored through the EDI Dashboard to ensure accountability and oversight at Board level.
- **Engagement and Communication:** A targeted communications plan, supported by staff networks, has raised awareness of the Charter across the

Trust through internal channels, briefings and posters. The Safeguarding Newsletter also featured a focus on sexual safety and professional conduct.

Implementation of the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion (enei) TIDE Mark and Maintenance of Gold Award

The TIDE (Talent, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity) framework provides a structured approach to embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) across the organisation. Using the eight areas of the framework, such as strategy, leadership, recruitment, learning, communication and measurement, the Trust carried out a comprehensive self-assessment during 2025, engaging staff networks, leadership teams, and stakeholders across all departments.

The Trust has achieved and maintained Gold standard recognition. This award reflects the Trust's dedication to continuous improvement rather than one off achievement.

Key actions included:

- Embedding EDI into governance and leadership to ensure accountability and visibility from Board to ward.
- Developing inclusive recruitment practices that reduce bias and promote diverse representation at all levels.
- Strengthening staff networks and providing leadership development opportunities for underrepresented groups.
- Using data-driven insights to monitor progress and inform targeted interventions.

Staff Equality Networks

It is recognised that staff equality networks are an excellent mechanism through which the general duties of the Equality Act 2010 can be supported in relation to staff from the protected groups and other groups at potential risk of inequality.

The Trust now has six staff networks, namely EmbRACE, LGBTQ+, Disability & Long-term Conditions, Women's, Armed Forces and Carers networks. The networks have continued to focus on growing their membership over the past year to strengthen the voices of colleagues. They work closely together, supporting each other with their priorities and driving improvements alongside the Equalities and Wellbeing Team.



Over the past 12 months, we have made significant strides in increasing the visibility of our Disability & Long-term Conditions Staff Network. The Network has been

dedicated to raising awareness about disabilities and long-term conditions, highlighting available support and encouraging staff to share their experiences. By doing so, we aim to implement meaningful actions that enhance their working lives and help us achieve our strategic goal of being a brilliant place to work and thrive.

We have continued with our 'This is Who I Am' initiative, collaborating with the Electronic Staff Record (ESR) team to encourage staff with disabilities and long-term conditions to share or update their equality status. As a result, we have seen progress, with the disclosure rate now at 6.4% and a reduction in our nondisclosure rate to 25%.



Over the past year, the EmbRACE Staff Network has continued to play a vital role in promoting inclusion, raising awareness and driving progress towards race equality across the Trust.

Membership of the network has grown, with regular listening sessions and peer support forums established to create safe spaces for open discussion and mutual support. The Network has also enhanced its visibility through internal communications, staff stories and Trust-wide campaigns, helping to embed anti-racism as a shared organisational responsibility across all levels of the Trust.

The Network continues to champion anti-racism learning and staff well-being by promoting relevant e-learning modules and expanding allyship training both within the Trust and across the wider system.

The Network has actively celebrated key national events such as Black History Month, South Asian Heritage Month and Race Equality Week. In addition, the Network has supported progress on improving patient pathways, particularly in relation to sickle cell care to enhance outcomes and patient experience. The Network also continues to engage with internationally trained colleagues to better understand their experiences, tackle discrimination and promote well-being and retention across the workforce.



Demonstrating its commitment to inclusion, the Network has rolled out LGBTQ+ Awareness Training across departments. Staff who complete the training receive a rainbow pin badge, serving as a visible symbol of allyship for both colleagues and patients. This initiative is equipping teams across the organisation with the knowledge and confidence to deliver inclusive care and foster inclusive workplace practices.

The Network has actively celebrated LGBT+ History Month and participated in Birmingham Pride in partnership with Dudley Council, a collaboration that continues to strengthen our engagement with the local community. Additionally, the Network has partnered with other staff networks to mark events such as Neurodiversity Celebration Week, Bi-Visibility Day, and World AIDS Day, highlighting the importance of intersectionality and shared learning across the organisation.



The Women's Network continues to make impactful strides in improving wellbeing and inclusion across the Trust. Building on its ongoing agenda, the Network is actively addressing period poverty, with plans to expand this initiative over the coming year. This includes ensuring accessible menstrual products in our facilities and fostering an inclusive culture where menstrual health is seamlessly integrated into wellbeing conversations.

The Network is leading the development of a Menstrual and Menopause Wellbeing Policy, designed to support staff through perimenopause, menopause, and menstruation, helping ensure they thrive at work throughout all stages of their health journey.

The Network has celebrated Women's History Month, including International Women's Day, with sessions covering pregnancy loss, fertility awareness, menstrual health, and menopause, featuring insights from external guest speakers. The Network also highlighted gynaecological health awareness, raising understanding and support across the organisation.

On national Staff Network Day (14th May 2025). The Network collaborated with Dudley Council. This event featured guest speakers sharing evolving EDI work across the organisation and Council, celebrating successes in inclusion and workforce wellbeing.



The Armed Forces Staff Network brings together colleagues who are veterans, reservists, cadet force adult volunteers, family members of service personnel and those with an interest in supporting the Armed Forces Community. The Network aims to raise awareness, foster inclusion and ensure the Trust provides a supportive environment for those with a connection to the Armed Forces.

Over the past year, the Network has been actively engaged in a range of initiatives designed to strengthen the Trust's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and its Veteran Aware accreditation. Key achievements and activities include:

- Supporting the Trust's successful year two Veterans Aware accreditation, demonstrating continued commitment to improving services and workplace support for the Armed Forces Community.
- Hosting awareness events and information sessions during key national observances such as Armed Forces Day, Reserves Day and Remembrance Day, recognising the contribution of service personnel and veterans.
- Collaborating with local Armed Forces organisations and charities to share best practice and signpost staff to specialist support.
- Promoting the Armed Forces Covenant and raising the profile of the community through internal communications, newsletters and staff engagement campaigns.
- Providing a safe and supportive space for staff to connect, share experiences, and access information about available resources.
- Influencing policy development to ensure that the needs of veterans, reservists and their families are considered in workforce planning and wellbeing initiatives.



The Carers Network provides a supportive forum for staff who have caring responsibilities outside of work, including those who care for relatives, friends, or dependants with physical or mental health conditions, disabilities, or age-related needs. The Network aims to raise awareness of the challenges faced by working carers and to promote a compassionate, flexible and inclusive working culture across the Trust.

During the year, the Carers Network has focused on engagement, awareness and support. Key activities have included:

- Continued to grow in membership and visibility, helping to ensure that the voices of carers are heard and represented in decision-making across the Trust.
- Hosting Carers Week events to highlight the experiences of working carers and to promote the support available within the Trust and through local community partners.
- Developing and sharing carer specific resources, including guidance on flexible working, wellbeing support and signposting to external organisations such as Carers UK.
- Working collaboratively with HR and Wellbeing Teams to review policies and ensure carers' needs are reflected in workforce planning and wellbeing initiatives.

- Providing a safe space for peer support, enabling staff to share experiences and advice in a confidential and understanding environment.
- Contributing to internal communications and campaigns to raise visibility of unpaid carers and encourage open conversations about balancing work and caring responsibilities.
- Continued to support the RRH Carers Hub offering a welcoming space for staff, patients and visitors to access information, advice and signposting.

Accessible Information Standard

The Trust continues to make steady progress in implementing the NHS England Accessible Information Standard (AIS), ensuring that patients, service users, carers, and staff with communication or information needs related to a disability, impairment, or sensory loss are appropriately identified, recorded and supported.

To build on this work, a dedicated Accessible Information Working Group has been established, bringing together representatives from clinical services, digital teams, patient experience and equality, diversity & inclusion (EDI) team. The group is currently in the process of completing a self-assessment against the National standard.

The Working group will be responsible for coordinating improvements, monitoring compliance and sharing best practice across the Trust. Early priorities include:

- Developing a Trust-wide implementation plan with measurable objectives.
- Strengthening patient communication pathways, including the availability of information in alternative formats (e.g., Easy Read, large print, BSL, audio).
- Improving feedback and engagement with service users who have accessibility needs, to inform ongoing service development.

The Trust recognises that full compliance with the AIS is a continuous journey and remains committed to ensuring equitable access to information and communication for all service users.

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA's) and Health Equality Assessments (HEAT)

The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust continues to embed Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) and the Health Equity Assessment Tool (HEAT) into its governance, policy development and service improvement processes to ensure decisions are fair, inclusive and reduce health inequalities.

All Trust policies and service changes are required to undergo an Equality Impact Assessment, supporting compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. Over the past year, the Trust has refreshed and strengthened its EIA and HEAT processes to improve quality, consistency and accountability.

Key developments include:

- Integration of the HEAT framework alongside EIAs to ensure that health equity considerations are embedded into service design, commissioning, and delivery.
- Enhanced training and awareness: Staff have access to dedicated EDI, human rights, EIA and HEAT training modules, alongside targeted drop-in sessions and coaching support from the EDI Team to help policy authors and managers complete robust assessments.
- Improved governance and compliance: The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team now monitor completion rates and action plans, ensuring that assessment outcomes inform service planning and workforce decisions.
- Growing engagement and capability: Increased participation in EIA and HEAT processes has led to a measurable improvement in compliance, quality of analysis and staff confidence in applying equality and equity principles.

The implementation of EIAs and HEAT demonstrates the Trust's proactive approach to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion across all aspects of its work, ensuring that decisions are informed by evidence, reduce disparities and contribute to delivering equitable, person-centred care for the diverse populations we serve.

Addressing Health Inequalities

The Trust has made meaningful progress in tackling health inequalities by embedding equity in service planning, strengthening governance structures, raising awareness through education and training, and promoting inclusive practices across the organisation.

Key highlights include:

- **Governance and Data Quality:** Membership of the Health Inequalities Core Group has expanded to reflect diverse stakeholder input, enhancing its capacity to address disparities. Ethnicity coding completeness remains stable at 87%, with action plans underway to improve data quality and consistency across datasets.
- **Education, Awareness, and Training:** A Health Inequalities Fact Sheet and associated training have been rolled out Trust-wide, with strong staff engagement. The Trust continues to promote ICB Health Equity and Core20PLUS5 training, with future plans for bespoke health inequalities training.
- **Accessible Information:** Compliance with the Accessible Information Standard has been prioritised through accessible web tools and translation services. Staff have been trained to support accessibility, with oversight from the Communications team.
- **LGBTQ+ Inclusion – Rainbow Badge Accreditation:** The Trust completed both phases of NHS Rainbow Badge accreditation, with a focus on inclusive practices for trans and non-binary patients. Service improvements and clinician guidance are being actioned.

- **Reasonable Adjustments:** Work is ongoing to improve the recording and implementation of reasonable adjustments, particularly in maternity services. An audit identified gaps in documentation and staff engagement, leading to new recommendations for standardised processes and staff training.
- **Martha's Rule Pilot:** As one of 143 national pilot sites, the Trust is implementing Martha's Rule with a focus on communication, escalation procedures, and equity. The Health Inequalities Core Group is supporting implementation through community engagement and staff training.
- **Health Equity Assessment Tool (HEAT):** HEAT continues to be used for service planning, with a recent assessment supporting the development of new maternity clinics at Merry Hill.
- **Patient Safety Healthcare Inequalities Framework:** The NHS framework launched in May 2025 and has been reviewed by the Health Inequalities Core Group. A gap analysis is underway to align Trust practices with national principles aimed at reducing healthcare disparities.

Widening participation

ICAN Dudley is a partnership approach with Dudley Council to reduce barriers into employment for local people, upskill the local population and reduce healthcare inequalities. ICAN has been operational since December 2023. Funded for the first year by Commonwealth Games Legacy Fund, the end of programme outcomes include:

- 100 participants completed Into Employment 4-week programme
- 24 participants completed 13-week Care Support Worker novice programme
- 30 participants completed a 6 month paid work experience programme.

The employment outcomes following these interventions is 70 people substantively employed. The initiative has been hugely successful in targeting those in highest need. Eighty percent of ICan participants were claiming benefits at the start of the programme. Approximately 50% of participants lived in the 20% most deprived areas of Dudley. Nine participants were care-experienced and forty percent of paid work placement participants declared a disability.

The qualitative feedback from participants indicates that beyond the economic benefits of the programme, participants gained confidence, a sense of belonging, improved mental health and wellbeing and became positive role models in their communities.

ICan Dudley has won two awards: the West Midlands Combined Authority Inclusive and Innovative Recruitment and Career Champion 2025, and the Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust's Committed to Excellence Award for Team Excellence 2025.

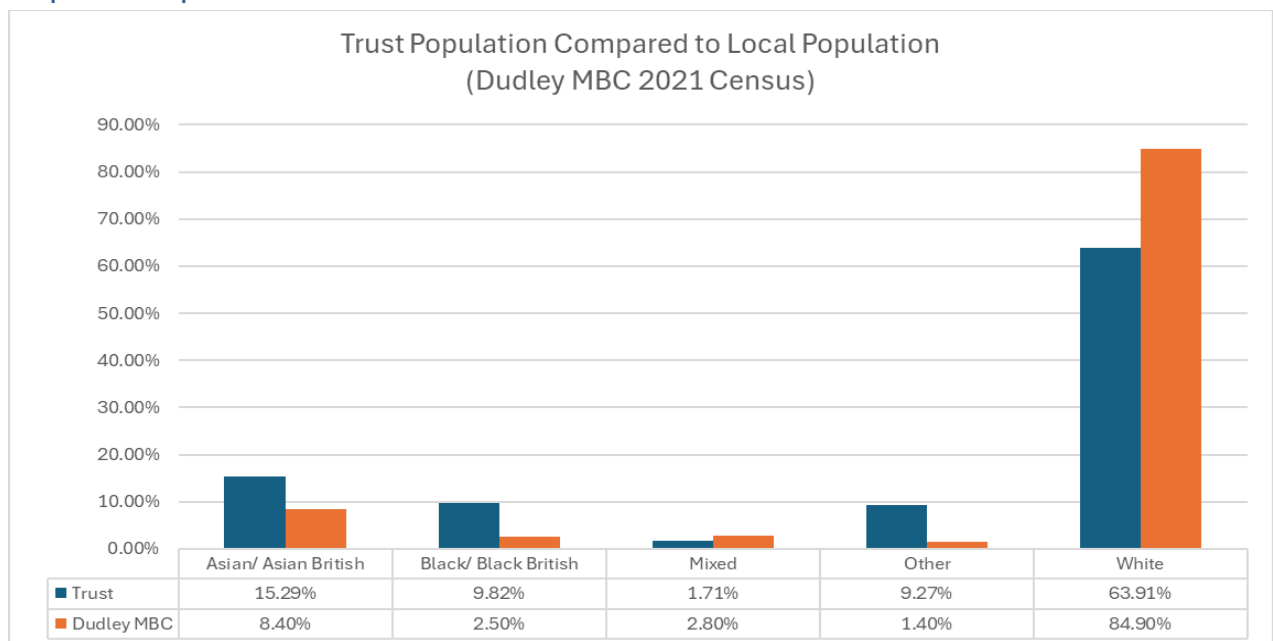
ICan Dudley has been awarded funding to continue the initiative in the current financial year, but this year it is targeted more towards younger adults and continues

to support people with care experience, disabilities and other socio-economic barriers into work.

Beyond ICan Dudley, we continue to develop our work experience and schools' engagement programme, by targeting interventions to schools and young people that need it the most. We launched the first in-person work experience programme for school age children in partnership with Dudley College that supported 20 year 10 students from Dudley Academies Trust. We will be rerunning the programme this year.

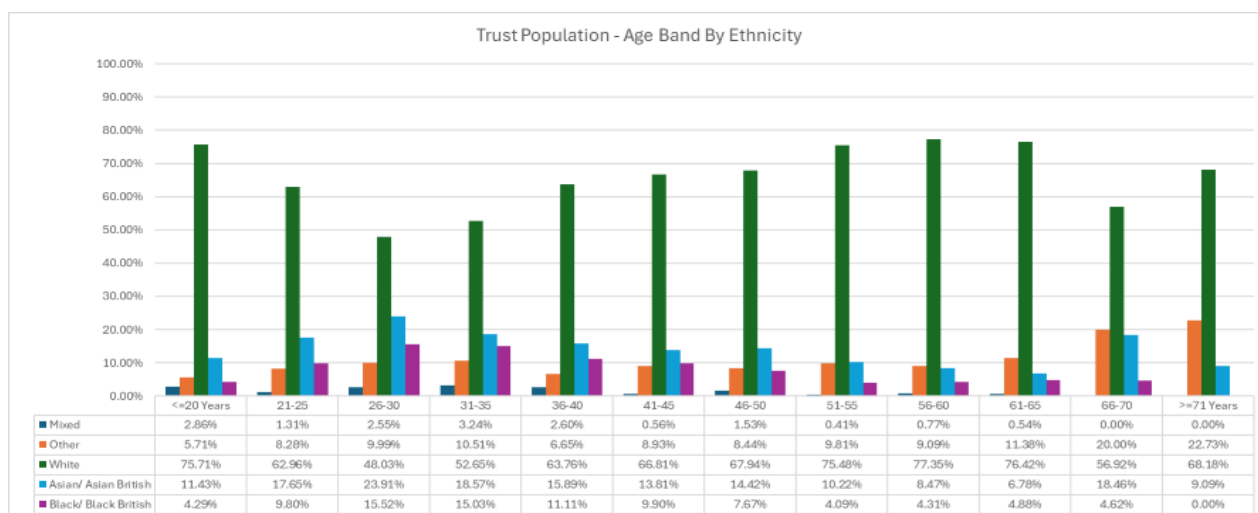
Population and Workforce Profiles

Population profiles:



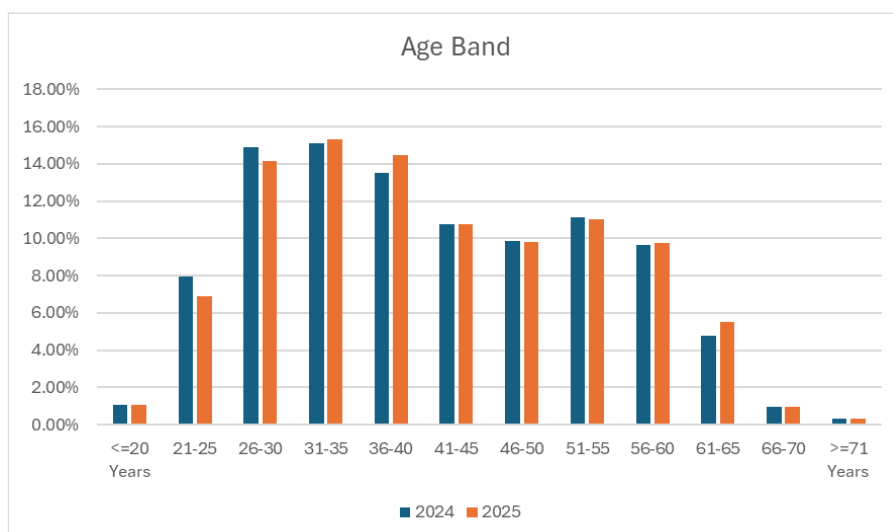
The population chart shows that the Trust's workforce is more ethnically diverse than the surrounding Dudley population, with higher proportions of Asian/Asian British, Black/Black British, and Other ethnic groups than the local census data.

Representation of mixed ethnicity staff is broadly in line with the area, while White staff are proportionally lower than the local population. Overall, the data demonstrate that the Trust attracts a more diverse workforce than the Dudley demographic profile, providing helpful insight for ongoing equality monitoring and future workforce planning.

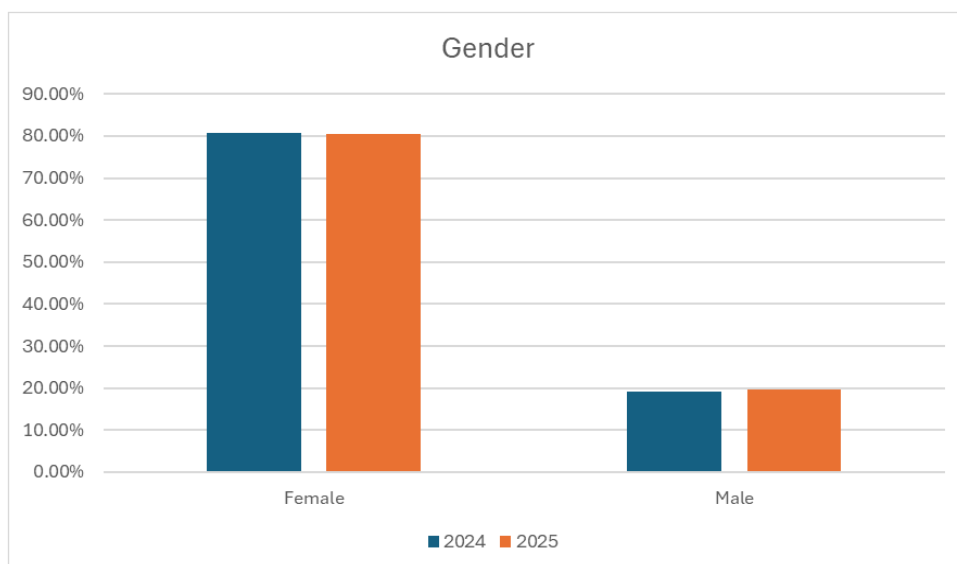


This age and ethnicity chart provides an overview of how different ethnic groups are distributed across age bands within the Trust. It shows that White staff form the majority across all age groups, with particularly strong representation in the older age brackets. Minority ethnic groups, Asian/Asian British, Black/Black British, Mixed, and Other, are more visible in the younger and mid-career age ranges, though their proportions remain lower than White colleagues throughout. The pattern suggests that the Trust's ethnic diversity is more concentrated among younger staff, indicating potential long-term shifts in workforce composition and offering valuable insight for succession planning, targeted development, and equality initiatives.

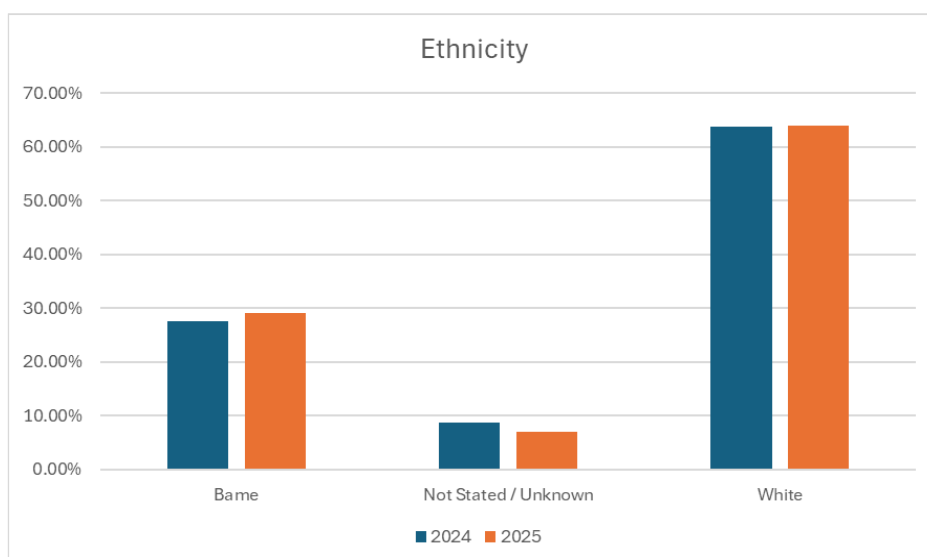
Workforce Profiles:



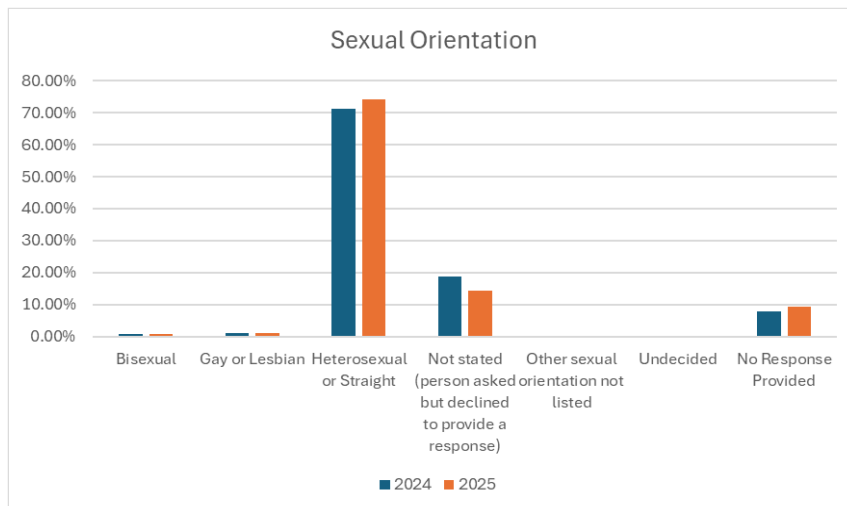
This age chart illustrates how the Trust's age profile has shifted between 2024 and 2025. The overall pattern remains broadly stable, with the largest proportions of staff consistently falling within the 26–40 age range. There is a slight increase in representation across several mid-career bands in 2025, particularly 26–30, 31–35 and 36–40, suggesting modest growth in early-to-mid career recruitment or retention. The older age bands show minimal change, and the proportions of staff aged under 20 or over 70 remain very small. Overall, the data indicates a steady and balanced workforce age distribution with minor year-on-year variations.



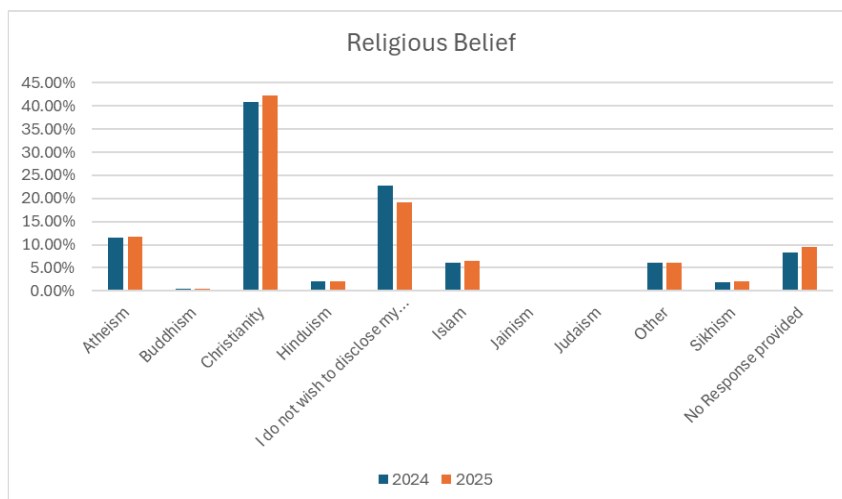
The gender profile of the Trust has remained stable between 2024 and 2025, with women consistently representing around 80% of the workforce and men around 20%. This steady distribution reflects a largely unchanged gender balance year-on-year, indicating that recruitment and retention patterns have maintained the existing profile. The stability supports longer-term workforce planning and provides a clear baseline for monitoring progress on gender-related equality actions.



The Trust's ethnic profile shows a slight shift over the past year, with BME representation increasing from 27% to 29%. The proportion of staff recorded as "unknown" has reduced from 9% to 7%, indicating improved data quality and disclosure. The remaining workforce continues to be predominantly White, with only minimal change in this group's overall proportion. Overall, the data reflects gradual growth in ethnic diversity alongside better completeness of workforce records.



Sexual orientation data shows that the majority of staff continue to identify as heterosexual in 2025, representing more than 70% of the workforce. The proportion of employees who chose not to disclose their sexual orientation has decreased compared with 2024, falling to around 15%. This reduction suggests improving disclosure rates and greater confidence in sharing personal information, while the overall profile remains consistent with previous years.



The religion and belief profile remains broadly unchanged from the previous year. The largest group continues to be Christian, representing just over 40% of the workforce. This is followed by those who prefer not to disclose their religion or belief, accounting for just under 20%. The overall distribution across all faith and non-faith categories is stable year-on-year, indicating a consistent pattern in the workforce's religious and belief makeup.

Conclusion

The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust remains fully committed to fulfilling its Public Sector Equality Duty by promoting equality, eliminating discrimination and fostering inclusion across our workforce and services. Over the past year, we have strengthened our approach through data-driven action, collaboration and continued accountability to national equality frameworks.

Significant progress has been achieved through the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES), Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES), Gender Pay Gap reporting, and the Equality Delivery System (EDS). Together, these measures provide valuable insights that guide our actions, enabling us to identify disparities, monitor improvement, and hold ourselves to account. Targeted interventions, leadership engagement and the voices of our staff networks have helped to turn data into meaningful change.

Initiatives such as the RACE Equality Code, Rainbow Badge Scheme, Anti-Racism and Sexual Safety programmes and the continued development of inclusive training have further strengthened our culture of respect and belonging. These programmes, alongside flexible working, wellbeing support and inclusive recruitment, continue to make the Trust a more equitable and compassionate place to work and receive care.

As we move forward into 2026, we remain focused on sustaining progress, embedding inclusion into every aspect of our organisation and ensuring that equality is not only measured but meaningfully lived across The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust.