

Equality, diversity, and inclusion annual report 2024 - 2025



Barnsley – the place
of possibilities.



BARNSLEY
Metropolitan Borough Council

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Foreword from Deputy Leader

Deputy Leader, Cllr Caroline Makinson

It is my privilege, as Deputy Leader and Members' equalities champion, to introduce Barnsley Council's annual equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) report for 2024–25. This report reflects our ongoing commitment to ensuring that Barnsley is a place where everyone feels valued, respected, and able to thrive.

Over the past year, we have continued to embed EDI at the heart of everything we do, both in our service delivery and within our organisation. Our work has been guided by the principles set out in our EDI action plan 2024–26, which provides a clear roadmap for advancing equality and tackling barriers faced by our residents, employees, and visitors.

We recognise that embracing diversity and championing inclusion is not only the right thing to do, but also essential for building a stronger, fairer, and more innovative Barnsley. By listening to the voices and experiences of our communities, we are shaping policies and practices that reflect the needs and aspirations of all.

I am proud of the progress we have made, but I am equally clear that our journey is ongoing.



The EDI action plan 2024–26 sets out ambitious actions and measurable outcomes, ensuring we remain accountable and transparent in our efforts. Together, with the dedication of our staff and the support of our partners, we will continue to drive positive change and make Barnsley a welcoming and inclusive borough for everyone.

Thank you to all who contribute to this vital work.

Foreword from Chief Executive

Chief Executive, Sarah Norman

As Chief Executive, I am delighted to present our annual equality, diversity, and inclusion report for 2024–25. This year, we have continued to make significant progress in embedding inclusivity into every aspect of our organisation, ensuring that inclusivity is not just a principle, but a lived experience for our employees, stakeholders, and the communities we serve.



Our commitment to creating a diverse workforce and an inclusive, welcoming environment for all employees remains at the heart of our work. We have

strengthened our staff networks, which now play an even greater role in shaping our policies, supporting colleagues, and celebrating the rich diversity within our council. The active involvement of these networks has been instrumental in marking key events such as Black History Month, Pride and many others, demonstrating our dedication to recognising and valuing the contributions of all.

This report highlights how we are pushing the boundaries of what good equality, diversity, and inclusion look like within a high-performing organisation. From our Pathways to Work Commission for residents to the ongoing development of our employee network groups, we are committed to improving access to services and opportunities for everyone.

I am excited to continue working closely with our staff networks and partners to ensure that Barnsley Council remains a place where everyone feels they belong, can be themselves, and can achieve their full potential. Our journey towards a more equitable future is fundamental to our 2030 vision of Barnsley as a Place of Possibilities.

Introduction

Barnsley Council remains steadfast in its commitment to promoting and enhancing EDI for all. We continue to put people at the heart of everything we do, striving to understand, support, and value individuals and communities by actively addressing inequalities and disadvantages across Barnsley.

The council plays a vital role in tackling inequalities, ensuring that our services reach those most in need. We are investing in our communities and incorporating their voices to drive continuous improvement. Equity is central to how we plan, finance, commission, deliver, and review our services.

This 2024/2025 annual EDI report highlights the key progress and initiatives undertaken to create a more inclusive and equitable environment for all residents and employees. The report demonstrates our compliance with the specific duty of the Equality Act 2010 to publish an annual report, and evidences how we have met the public sector equality duty in 2024/2025: eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act

2010 are: age, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, race, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, and sex. In addition to these, Barnsley Council recognises the experiences of care leavers as a protected characteristic within our borough, demonstrating our lifelong commitment to providing the highest quality support for children and young people in our care.

We have developed and will soon launch a new online sexual harassment course, available to all staff, to raise awareness, support compliance with the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) legislation, and reinforce our zero-tolerance approach to harassment in the workplace. Alongside this, we have updated our dignity at work policy to ensure all employees understand their responsibilities and feel empowered to uphold dignity and respect at work.

Through this report, we reaffirm our dedication to making Barnsley a place where everyone can succeed and live a fulfilling, healthy life, regardless of background or circumstance.

Highlights

We now have eight employee network groups.

Care leavers are recognised as a protected characteristic for the council.

Equality impact assessment template and guidance updated to strengthen inclusive decision-making.

Equality monitoring survey achieved 69.14% completion across the organisation.



Photo: Colleagues gathered at a Black History Month event hosted by the BME RISE network, wearing colourful and patterned cultural clothing for a fashion show.

Executive summary

This year's report showcases progress in embedding EDI principles across services and our workforce.

Key achievements

- Delivered the first year of the EDI action plan 2024–26, supporting the Council Plan and Barnsley 2030 vision.
- Recognised care leavers as a protected characteristic, introducing policies and a guaranteed interview scheme to improve employment opportunities.
- Expanded employee network groups, increasing engagement and visibility for underrepresented communities.
- Strengthened equality impact assessment (EIA) guidance, ensuring robust consideration of all protected characteristics in decision-making.
- Improved workforce diversity, with most areas meeting or exceeding key performance indicators, see appendix 1.
- Introduced a neurodiversity policy and practical training, promoting inclusive workplace adjustments and wellbeing.

Looking ahead

- Mandating unconscious bias training within the updated recruitment and selection policy.
- Launching a reciprocal mentoring programme developed with the BME RISE employee network.
- Improving communication through a bi-annual EDI newsletter.



**Equality,
diversity
and inclusion**

Demographics

Population demographics

This section provides a current snapshot of the Barnsley population based on the most recent census records available at the time of publication.

Barnsley has a population of 251,770 residents

**50.8% female
49.2% male**

25.7% identify as disabled under the Equality Act 2010

3.1% of residents identify as being from Black, Asian or other Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

55% Christian, 1% Muslim, each <1% Hindu, Sikh, Jewish, Buddhist

**27.1% economic inactivity
3.5% claimant count**

Workforce demographics

This section presents a current snapshot of workforce demographics as at the time of publication. The data is based on a 70% completion rate of our Equality Monitoring and Carer's Responsibility form, and therefore does not represent the entire workforce.

70% of our workforce identify as women, and 27.2% as men*

56% of employees report a faith or religion; of those, 46.3% identify as Christian

34.2% of employees have unpaid caring responsibilities

32.7% of employees reported a health condition, and 13.4% reported a disability

5% of employees identify as LGBTQ+

3% of colleagues identify as belonging to a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic group.

*This is based on the data for gender identity. The remaining 2.3% are options such as 'prefer not to say', 'non-binary', or self-described identities.

Our EDI action plan progress

In 2024/25, we embarked on the first year of our new EDI plan. The EDI action plan for 2024–26 underpins delivery of the Council Plan and supports Barnsley 2030’s vision of being *The Place of Possibilities for everyone*. It is closely aligned with our People Strategy, reflecting our commitment to building a workforce that is both inclusive and representative of the communities we serve.

We have made some great progress on our objectives, and some of our key achievements against our objectives are shared below. We also recognise that EDI is not a one-off initiative; progress must be sustained and embedded into everything we do.

Our objectives

Objective 1: Leadership (effective leadership, values and culture)

Workforce data

We collect information from colleagues through our Equality Monitoring and Carers’ Responsibility survey. The current completion rate is 70.51% which although is steadily improving, means there are still gaps in our data.

This helps us understand the make-up of our workforce and identify underrepresented groups so we can focus on attraction and recruitment.

We are performing well against our workforce diversity targets, with most areas either nearly meeting or exceeding our KPIs.

Objective 2: Maximising organisational capacity and capability (delivering inclusive services)

Equality impact assessments and Care leavers as a protected characteristic

The equality impact assessment template and guidance have been updated to include care leaver considerations in policies and cabinet reports, and equality monitoring guidance now reflects this change.

These improvements aim to make equality assessments and monitoring more robust, helping services identify and address potential impacts on underrepresented groups.

Care leaver considerations have been embedded into key processes and guidance. A guaranteed interview scheme is also in place for care leavers who meet the essential criteria.

Objective 3: Employee experience (diverse and representative workforce)

Neurodiversity policy

The neurodiversity policy sets out inclusive workplace measures, reasonable adjustments, and manager responsibilities. To support practical implementation, we have created *Neurodiversity inclusion in practice* training to provide managers and colleagues with guidance on supporting neurodivergent conditions in the workplace.

Wellbeing resources have been enhanced to include advice on maintaining employee health and wellbeing. We have an enhanced disability passport 'All About Me', which helps managers and employees agree necessary adjustments. Additionally, the Disability and Neurodiversity Networks continues to share good practice through the network chairs, Teams channel and forum, promoting collaboration and reinforcing Barnsley Council's commitment to being an inclusive employer.



Objective 4: Communication and engagement (proactively inform employees and residents of EDI approach)

EDI network inclusion calendar

In 2024/25, work began on developing a structured calendar of inclusion events. Awareness days were marked either by the EDI team or by the network representing the relevant protected characteristic, with promotion through *Let's Talk* newsletters and internal bulletins to raise awareness across the organisation.

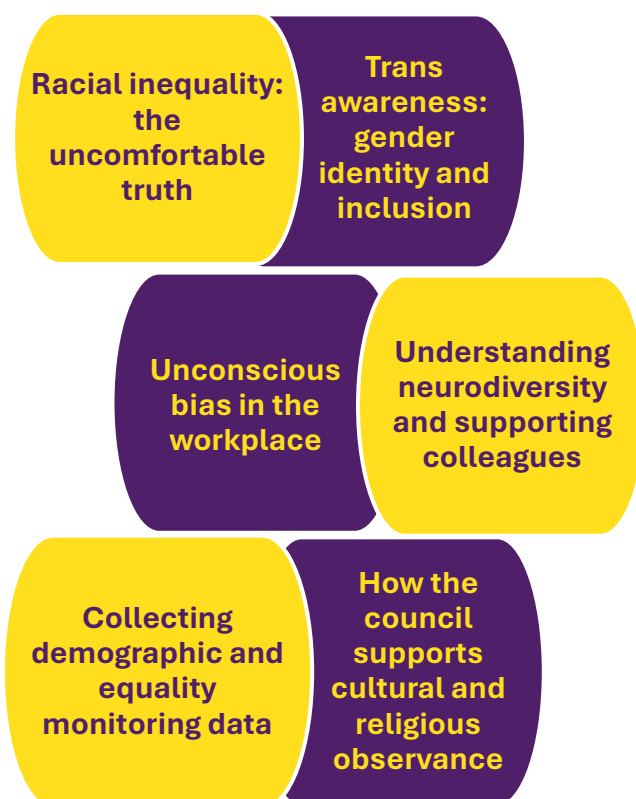
Highlights included a successful Black History Month celebration featuring cultural food and a fashion show, which brought colleagues together to learn and celebrate diversity.

Learning and development

Embedding EDI in our culture starts with knowledge and understanding. That’s why we provide mandatory training for all colleagues on the key topics: equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging, and bullying and harassment. These courses ensure everyone understands their responsibilities and feels confident to challenge discrimination and promote fairness.

Equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging e-course	82.7%
Bullying and harassment e-course	77.8%

The figures represent the latest council completion rates for mandatory courses. While progress has been made, we acknowledge there is more to do. Over the next year, we will be working to increase completion rates across the organisation, ensuring that all colleagues are equipped with the knowledge and skills to uphold our values.



Beyond mandatory training, we actively encourage colleagues to take advantage of a wide range of recommended e-learning modules and practical resources, designed to deepen understanding and build practical skills.

Together, these learning opportunities help create a workplace where inclusion is not just a policy but a lived experience for everyone.

Gender, ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting 2024/25

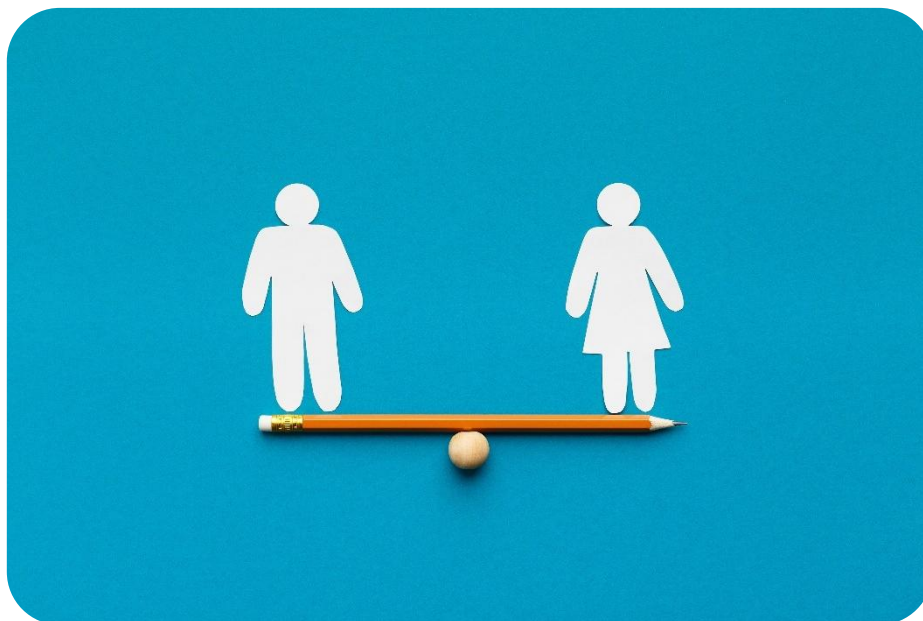
Barnsley Council is committed to transparency and fairness in pay. Each year we publish our *Gender, ethnicity and disability pay gap report* to show how we are performing and where we need to improve. The latest report demonstrates positive progress, with small gaps across all measures, and sets out clear actions to ensure equality remains at the heart of our workforce strategy.

The report shows a median gender pay gap of 4.1% in favour of women, an ethnicity pay gap of 11.4% in favour of ethnic minority staff, and a small disability pay gap of 0.6% to the disadvantage of disabled employees.

While these figures reflect positive progress, the report highlights low ethnic minority representation and commits to actions such as improving recruitment diversity, strengthening career pathways, and enhancing data quality to ensure fairness and inclusion across the workforce.

Overall, the findings demonstrate Barnsley Council's commitment to transparency and to building an inclusive workplace where everyone is valued and treated fairly.

To learn more, please visit: [BMBC – Gender Pay Gap 2024](#)



Strategic EDI initiatives

Barnsley Council’s commitment EDI is reflected not only in our EDI action plan but in practical, community-focused action. Our vision is to create a borough where everyone can thrive, regardless of background, identity, or circumstance. Flagship initiatives such as, Great Childhoods Ambition and Love Where You Live, illustrate how we embed EDI principles into everyday life, ensuring fairness, opportunity, and cohesion across Barnsley.

Pathways to work

The EDI action plan (2024–26) commits to creating fair and inclusive recruitment practices, including tailored interview preparation for underrepresented groups. While we are still working towards this action, other streams of work across Barnsley Council, such as the *Pathways to Work* programme, continue to support residents facing barriers to employment, aligning with our equality objectives and helping people move closer to the labour market.

Through targeted engagement, the programme supported 71 individuals who were long-term sick and economically inactive, as well as 48 individuals with caring responsibilities. Ethnic diversity support included 53 residents identifying as Black, Black British, Caribbean or African, and 29 residents identifying as Asian or Asian British.

To improve confidence and outcomes for priority cohorts, including care-experienced young people, individuals with EHCP/SEND, and those with Youth Justice Service experience, informal “meet the team” sessions were introduced, confidence-building activities, interview coaching, and practical guidance.

This work is integrated with Adult Skills and employability services, offering CV workshops, application support, and career development courses. Strong links have also been established with Barnsley Hospital, Compass courses, and St Giles Trust to enhance opportunities.



Great Childhoods Ambition

The Great Childhoods Ambition aims to give every child and young person the best possible start in life. Guided by five principles: belong, explore, dream, grow, and connect; the programme delivers practical support to reduce barriers and create opportunities.

Free under-18 bus travel and school uniform support have helped reduce financial pressures on families, ensuring equitable access to education and enrichment. Targeted resources for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those facing disadvantage have improved inclusion and attainment. Engagement through youth forums and funded projects has amplified young people's voices in shaping services.

The Great Childhoods Ambition continues to demonstrate how inclusive policies and practical support can transform outcomes for children and young people across Barnsley.

Love Where You Live

The Love Where You Live initiative celebrates local pride and invests in neighbourhood improvements to create cleaner and more vibrant communities. Funding has supported environmental maintenance, improved community safety, and enabled cultural events and volunteering opportunities.



Hundreds of residents took part in local clean-up events and cultural activities, strengthening community engagement. £3.5 million was allocated to improve public spaces and enhance wellbeing across neighbourhoods. Volunteering opportunities expanded, helping to build community connections and encourage civic pride.

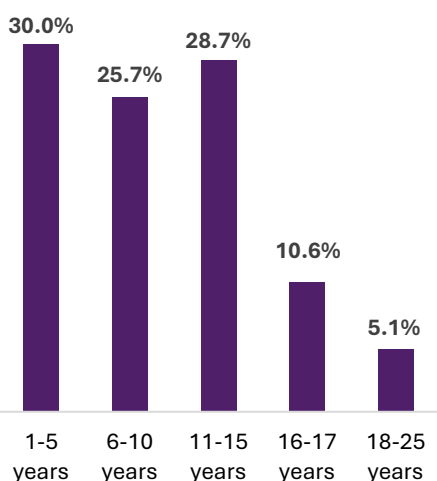
Service data

This section presents an analysis of data collected from Barnsley residents to understand how people access our services and how these experiences differ across groups.

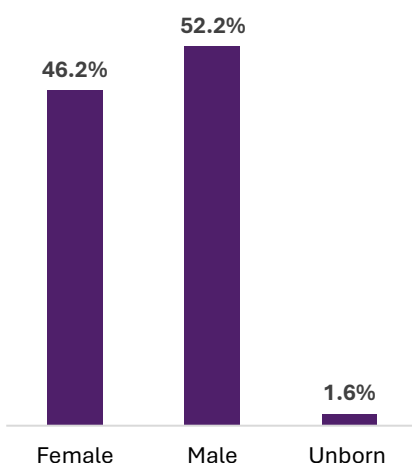
Children’s social care

This data relates to children and young people who had an allocated worker at any time between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025.

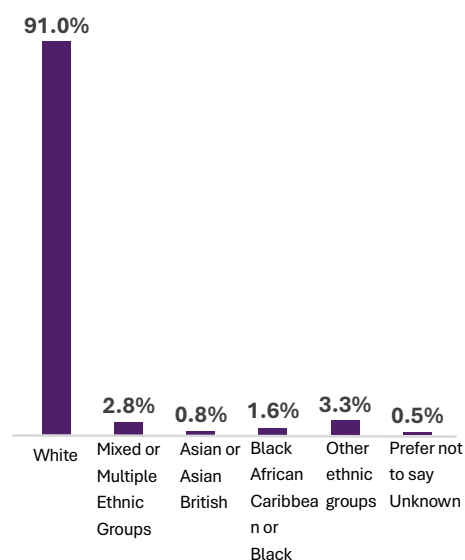
Children in receipt of children’s social care services by age



Children in receipt of children’s social care services by sex



Children in receipt of children's social care services by ethnicity



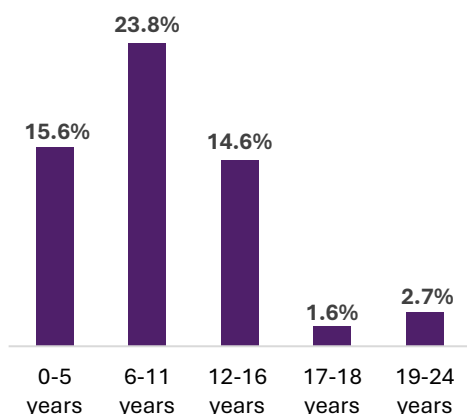
What does the data tell us?

- 46.2% are female and 52.2% are male showing no significant differences in sex, but the gap has closed since last year.
- 91.0% of children are White, the same as last year, and 8.5% are BME, an increase of 1.5% from the previous year.
- In terms of age, the breakdown is very similar to the previous year with no significant change. The graph also illustrates the proportion of young adults receiving care-leaving services up to their 25th birthday and shows a slight decrease since last year.

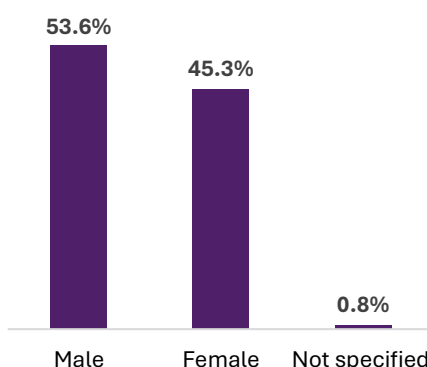
Early help

Early help is a multi-agency approach that provides timely support to children, young people and families to prevent issues from escalating and reduce the need for statutory intervention. This data relates to children and young people who received early help support at any point between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025.

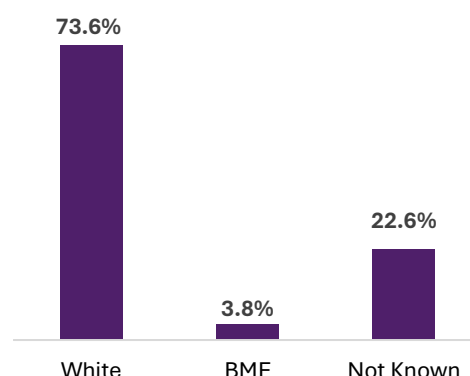
Children and young people with an early help assessment 24/25 by age



Children and young people with an early help assessment 24/25 by sex



Children and young people with an early help assessment 24/25 by ethnicity



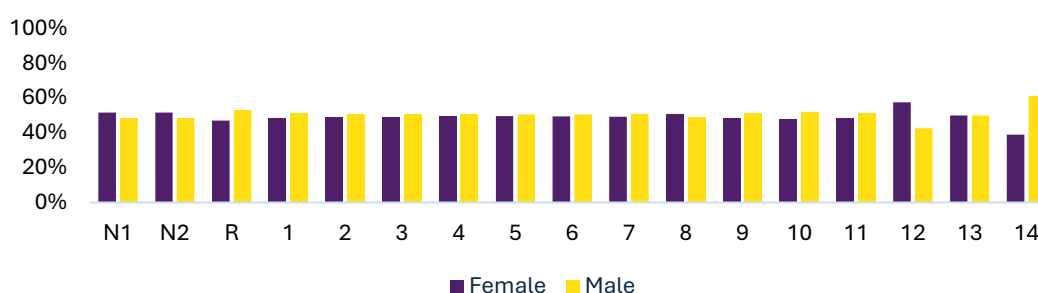
What does the data tell us?

- There has been a decrease overall across all age groups, in the number of children and young people with an early help assessment.
- There have been no significant changes in the number of males or females with an early help assessment but there has been a 0.4% increase in the 'not specified' category.
- There has been an increase in those whose ethnicity comes under BME by 2.2% and an increase in those in 'Not Known' by 3.7%.

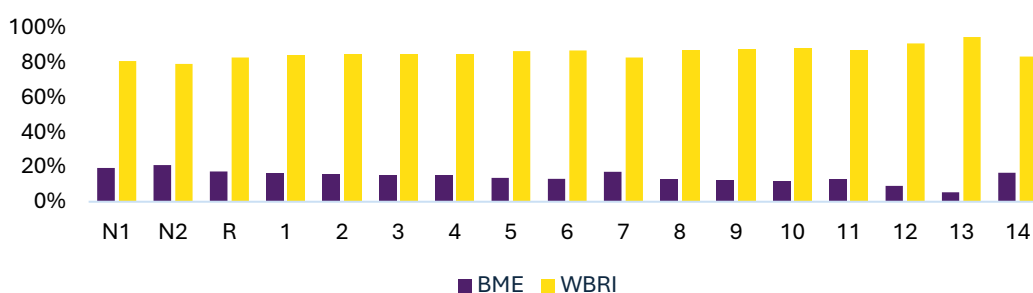
Education

Information about sex and ethnicity is collected in the school census each January. The schools equality monitoring data below reflects the latest figures from the January 2025 school census, when 35,215 students were on roll.

Pupils by year group and sex - January 2025 census



Pupils by year group and ethnicity - January 2025 census



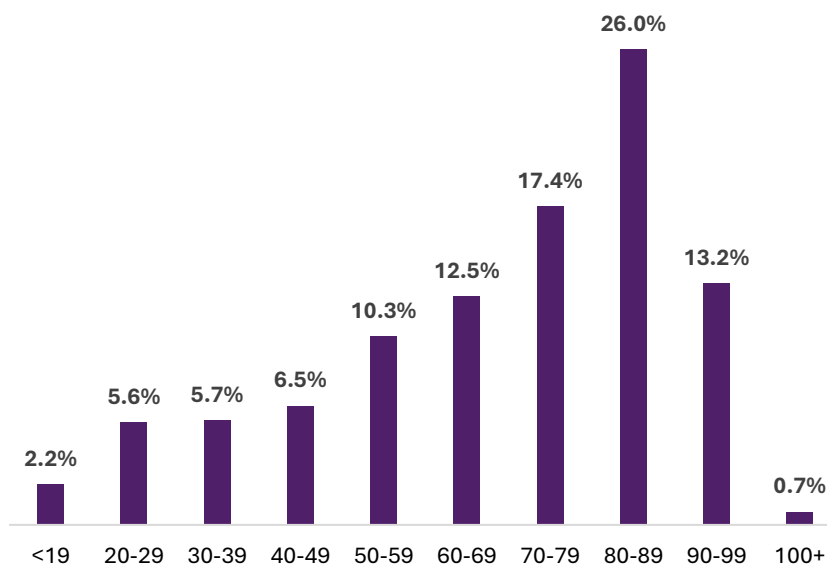
What does the data tell us?

- Year 5 had the highest percentage of pupils in the January 2025 census. This may have an impact on September 2026 secondary school intakes and class sizes.
- Pupil characteristics; 51% of pupils on roll were male and 49% were female.
- 14.7% of pupils have ethnicities other than White British. This is an increase on the 13.3% reported in January 2024.
- 18.1% of pupils were reported as having a special educational need, which is an increase of 1.2% since 2024. 1774 pupils were recorded as having an Education, Health and Care Plan, in the January 2025 census.
- 502 pupils were in a special or alternative school provision, consisting of 73% males and 27% females, and years 9 and 10 having the highest cohort numbers.

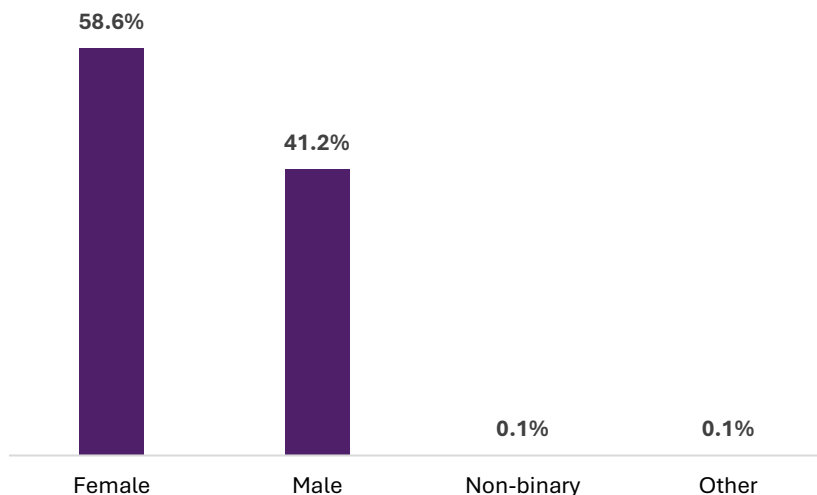
Adult social care

This data covers all referrals open between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. A referral is a period when a care package is active with adult social care, meaning the individual received support or services at some point during the year. Figures reflect the number of individuals supported, not the number of services provided.

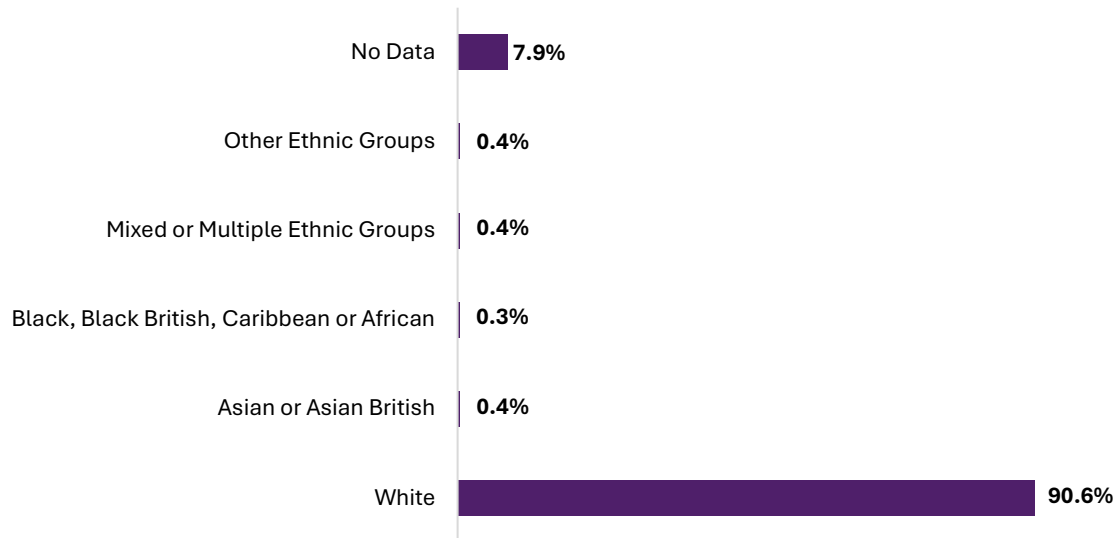
People in receipt of adult social care services by age between 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025



People in receipt of adult social care services by gender between 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025



People in receipt of adult social care services by ethnicity between 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025

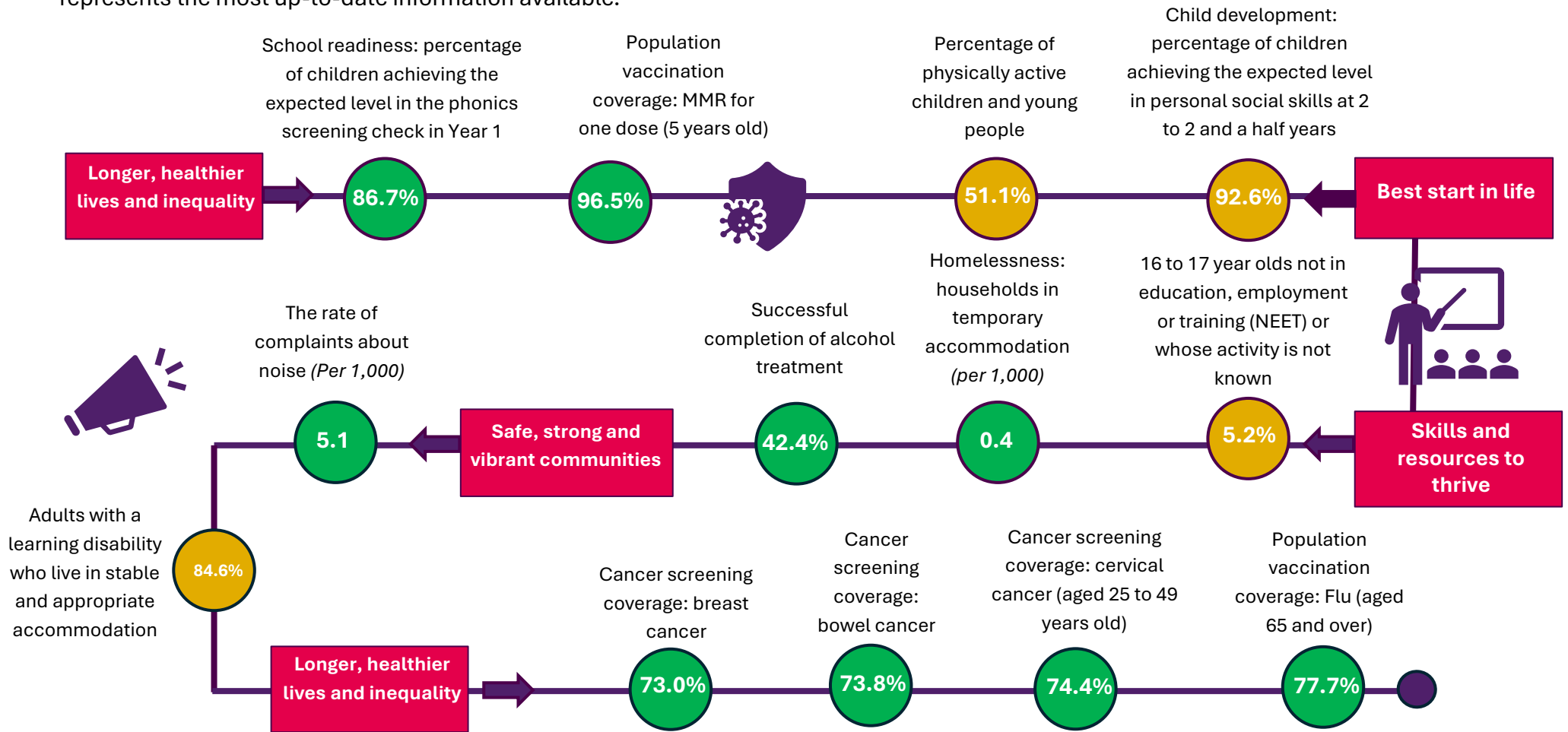


What does the data tell us?

- Overall support patterns remained consistent with 2023/24, but the total number of individuals receiving Adult Social Care increased in 2024/25.
- Largest cohorts: aged 80–89 (26%), female (58.6%), and white (90.6%).
- Gender gap narrowed from 20.5% to 17.4%, indicating more men accessing services; a new category “Other” was introduced for those not identifying as female, male or non-binary.
- 1.5% of service users were from BME communities, compared to 3.17% of Barnsley’s population (2021 Census), highlighting the need for continued outreach.
- 7.9% of service users had no ethnicity recorded, which should be addressed to improve data quality.

Health inequalities: Where are we performing well?

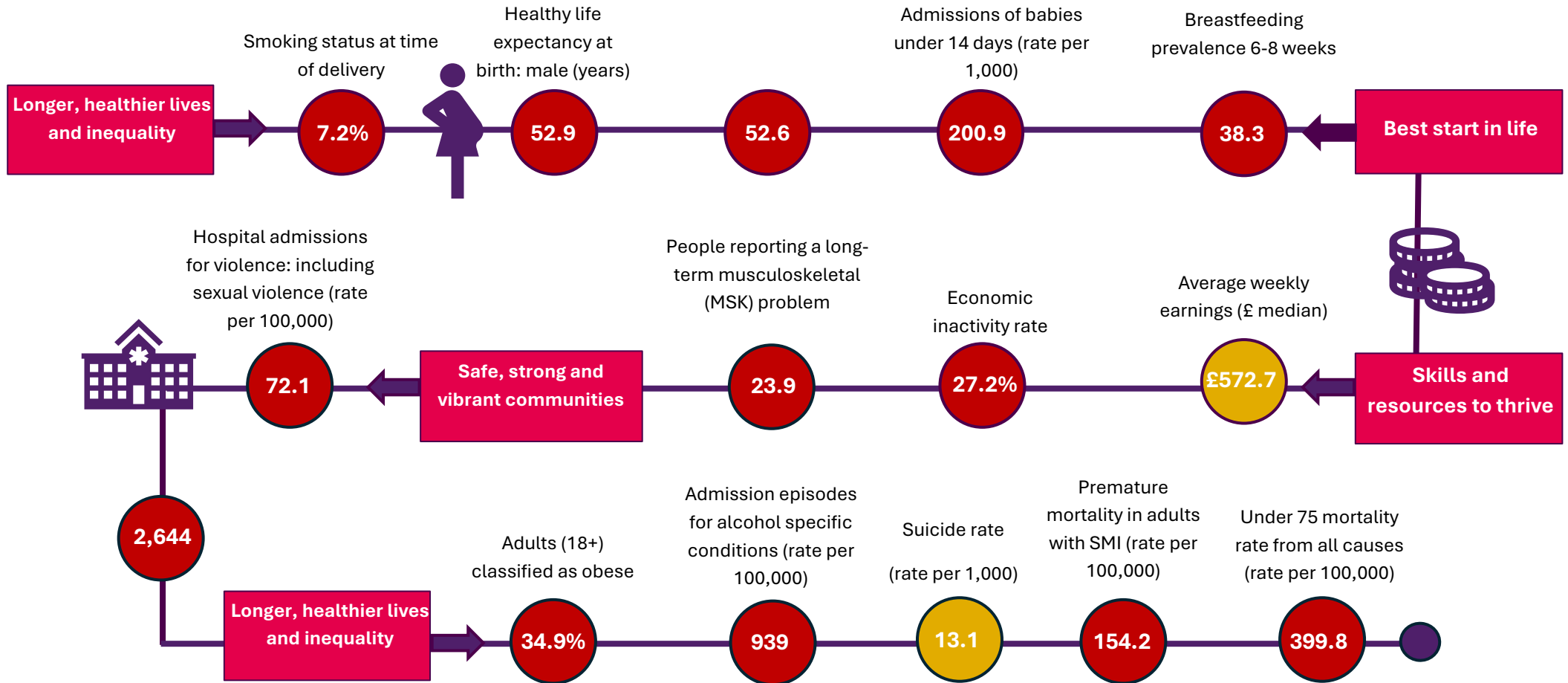
The following data shows progress and trends in health improvement initiatives. It draws on different reporting periods and sources, but represents the most up-to-date information available.*



Note: Indicators shaded green record a significantly better result than the national average. Amber shaded indicators represented a result that is still above the national average, but with a difference that is not statistically significant. *Fingertips: Department of Health and Social Care provides all health indicators, including detailed explanations of data sources and methods used for information collection.

Health inequalities: What needs improvement?

The following data shows progress and trends in health improvement initiatives. It draws on different reporting periods and sources, but represents the most up-to-date information available.*



Note: Indicators shaded green record a significantly better result than the national average. Amber shaded indicators represented a result that is still above the national average, but with a difference that is not statistically significant. *Fingertips: Department of Health and Social Care provides all health indicators, including detailed explanations of data sources and methods used for information collection.

Looking ahead 2025/26

Our internal focus will be on building on the progress made this year and taking a more structured, impactful approach to equality, diversity and inclusion. We aim to strengthen collaboration between our employee networks, embed inclusive practices across policies and processes, and deliver initiatives that create meaningful change. This includes improving support for under-represented groups, and ensuring our workforce feels valued and represented.

Key priorities

Equality impact assessment training

Deliver equality impact assessment training to heads of service and equality champions to support the new Enabling Barnsley Impact Assessment process, ensuring equality considerations of protected characteristics are consistently applied in decision-making.

Reciprocal mentoring programme

In 2024/25, initial discussions began for a reciprocal mentoring programme pairing members of the wider Barnsley leadership team with Black and Minority Ethnic colleagues. This initiative will provide opportunities to gain meaningful insight into the lived experiences and challenges of underrepresented groups, while supporting personal and professional development.

EDI newsletter

Introduce a bi-annual EDI newsletter to share organisational updates, highlight success stories, and provide practical resources, encouraging active participation in inclusion initiatives.

Inclusion events

For 2025/26, we plan to take a more structured and meaningful approach to our equality, diversity and inclusion network calendar, giving each network the opportunity to mark awareness days that matter most to them. This will help ensure networks' voices are heard, increase visibility and improve coordination and planning for inclusion events.

Unconscious bias training

Unconscious bias training will be a mandatory requirement under the recruitment and selection policy for all panel members. Employees must complete this e-learning module, along with the recruitment and selection e-training, before participating in any recruitment or selection activities.

Additionally, at least one panel member will be required to complete in-person recruitment and selection training prior to joining an interview panel.

Sexual harassment e-learning

We will be launching mandatory sexual harassment training for all employees. This training reinforces our zero-tolerance approach and ensures compliance with the new legal duty requiring employers to take “reasonable steps” to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. The e-learning module covers recognising harassment, understanding its impact, and knowing how to report incidents. It also highlights risk factors such as lone working and work-related social events. By embedding this training alongside our updated Dignity at Work Policy, we aim to create a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all staff.

Anti-racist charter

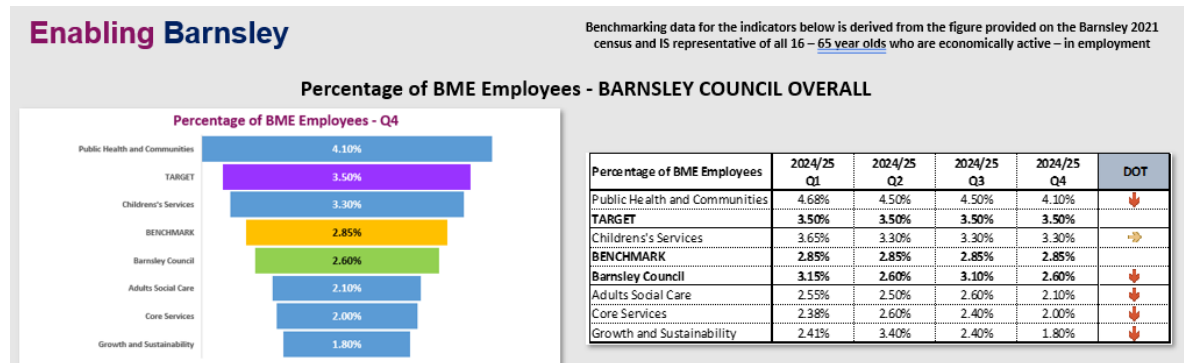
Barnsley Council is making strong progress in implementing the UNISON Anti-Racist Charter as part of its commitment to EDI. Work is continuing in recruitment, promotions, exit interviews and employee relations to address race disparities. Recruitment processes now include KPIs, diverse candidate pools and we will implement mandatory unconscious bias training for all panel members. Exit interview data will be analysed to inform retention strategies, while promotion outcomes and disciplinary cases are monitored by ethnicity to ensure fairness. The council remains committed to being proactively anti-racist in its activities.



Appendix

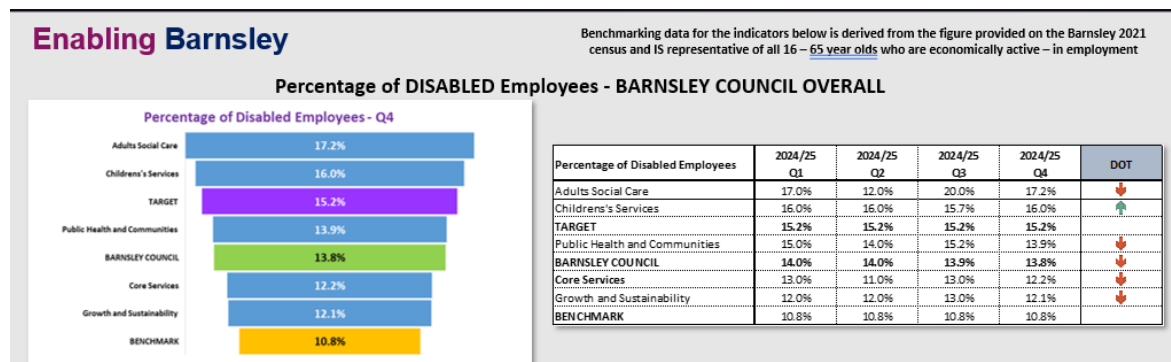
Appendix

The charts below show the overall annual figures for BME and disabled employees for 2024/25, including progress against key performance indicators.



Overall BME representation in Barnsley Council remains below both the corporate 3.5% target and the 2.85% borough benchmark, with performance varying across services.

While some services are performing strongly, the Council as a whole continues to face challenges in improving and sustaining BME workforce representation, with targeted improvement needed in lower-performing areas.



The percentage of disabled employees across Barnsley Council stands at 13.8%, which is above the benchmark of 10.8% but slightly below the 15.2% corporate target.

Overall, the Council performs well against the benchmark and demonstrates strong representation in key service areas. However, continued focus is needed to consistently meet the organisational target across all directorates.

Equality, diversity and inclusion annual report 2024/25



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