



**Sight  
Scotland**



**Sight Scotland  
Veterans**

## **Equality Status Report**

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## **Introduction**

Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans promote the inclusion and empowerment of people with visual impairment, and as such regard inclusion, diversity and equality in all its respects as something that should be inherent in our service delivery, our staffing and our management and governance.

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a public sector equality duty in order to ensure that public authorities and those carrying out a public function consider how they can positively contribute to a more equal society through advancing equality and good relations in their day-to-day business.

The establishment of Specific Duties under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations in relation to the Board's role as the manager of the Royal Blind School, a grant aided school, provides a framework for the setting and monitoring of formal aspirations for the continual improvement of our performance in attaining equality in all our functions and our employment practice.

These reports are written so as to transparently fulfil our obligations under the Regulations. They also serve the function of monitoring, managing and improving our equalities performance across our whole organisation.

This report is divided into three sections:

- Mainstreaming the equality duty – this section outlines how we make the equality duty integral to the exercise of our functions. It covers what we do and how we integrate equality into our employment practice and our service provision.
- Employee information – this section includes details of:
  - the composition of our employees broken down by protected characteristic
  - recruitment, development and retention of employees broken down by protected characteristic
  - information on progress made in gathering and using employee information to better meet the equality duty
  - gender pay gap information for the Royal Blind School.
- Progress towards achieving our equality outcomes. This includes information on our Board diversity.

## **MAINSTREAMING THE EQUALITY DUTY**

This section of the report provides information on how we make the equality duty integral to the exercise of our functions. It covers what we do and how we integrate equality into our employment practice and our service provision.

## **What we do**

Our purpose is to be there for people with sight loss in Scotland because we believe that everyone with sight loss deserves the opportunity to lead a fulfilling life.

At the Royal Blind School we provide specialist education to blind pupils and residential care.

## **How we integrate equality into the exercise of our functions**

We are determined that no-one should face sight loss alone. Our mission is to reach everyone in Scotland with sight loss – where and when they need us.

Inclusion, equality and diversity is at the heart of everything we do. It is inherent to our vision, mission, our governance and management as well as our day-to-day work.

Our Board and Committees include 3 members (23.07%) with visual impairment and ensure appropriate representation of our service users' interests in all our governance decisions. Across our organisation (Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans) we employ 10 people with a declared visual impairment (2.49%). At Royal Blind School we currently employ 1 person (1.23%) with a declared visual impairment. All new employees to Royal Blind School and the wider organisation receive Visual Impairment Awareness Training, with more in-depth specialised training provided regularly within the relevant services, such as training towards Braille qualifications for some teaching roles within the school.

Inclusion, equality and diversity is part of our organisational culture. Throughout all our activities we aim to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited practices
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

## **How we integrate equality into our employment practice**

We are committed to the principle of equal opportunities in employment and are opposed to any form of less favourable treatment through direct or indirect discrimination accorded to employees or job applicants, on the grounds of sex, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, age or disability (the 'protected characteristics').

We strive to create a productive working environment which is representative of and responsive to different cultures and groups, and where everyone has an equal chance to succeed.

We are committed to embracing and supporting equality and diversity and challenging behaviour and attitudes that prevent this achievement. Using fair and objective employment practices, our aim is to ensure that all employees and potential employees are treated fairly and with respect at all stages of their employment.

- **Our policies and procedures**

Our policies and practices are reviewed regularly, and their impact on equalities is assessed at all stages of the review process. Our Equal Opportunities Policy is a comprehensive and regularly reviewed document which reflects our current practice around equal opportunities.

The policy applies to all aspects of our relationship with staff and to relations between colleagues at all levels. This includes job advertisements, recruitment and selection, opportunities for promotion, learning and development, terms and conditions of work, performance management, pay and benefits, termination of employment, any references issued and to every other aspect of employment. We are committed to taking appropriate steps to accommodate the requirements of different religions, cultures, and domestic responsibilities.

To raise colleague awareness around what constitutes discrimination, the policy also includes definitions of the different forms of discrimination, including direct, indirect, associative and perceptive discrimination, harassment and third-party harassment and victimisation. We also have a separate Dignity at Work Policy which covers harassment, victimisation and bullying in more detail. Any allegations of potential breaches of our equal opportunities policy are treated very seriously and dealt with under our relevant grievance or disciplinary procedures. We run in-house Dignity at Work training, which is mandatory for all staff.

- **Recruitment and selection**

We aim to ensure that no job applicant is subject to discrimination because of any of the protected characteristics. Our recruitment procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities.

Job advertisements avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage groups with a particular protected characteristic from applying. We advertise all our external vacancies to a diverse labour market; we anonymise job applications at shortlisting stage and ensure that shortlisting of applicants is done by more than one person to avoid unconscious bias.

We provide managers with training on each stage of the recruitment process, which includes an exploration of how biases, whether conscious or unconscious, can affect decision making during recruitment leading to direct or indirect discrimination. The training helps our managers develop self-awareness and recognise unconscious bias in recruitment.

All recruitment campaigns are run with support from our People Team to remove any risks of inequality of opportunity, direct or indirect discrimination. We have recently relaunched our Recruitment and Resourcing policy which underpins all recruitment processes to ensure fairness and transparency.

- **Training, promotion and conditions of work**

Our central Learning and Development function leads the development and delivery of quality learning and organisational development opportunities, ensuring best practice and consistency across Royal Blind School and the wider organisation.

Individual staff training needs are identified through regular Professional Review and Development meetings under the GTCS framework. All staff are given appropriate access to training (through our Learning Management System) to enable them to progress within the organisation and all promotion decisions are made on the basis of merit and suitability for the promoted role.

Our People Development Steering Group, established in 2019, helps ensure fairness in our approach to learning and development. The remit of this steering group is to:

- act as a strategic advisory group to L&D on ensuring that staff and volunteers have appropriate skills and knowledge to be effective in their roles
- help map mandatory training at organisational as well as service and role specific levels to ensure compliance and help drive and sustain excellence in key areas across services
- help analyse training needs across the organisation, identifying existing gaps and prioritising effectively to inform the annual training calendar (including e-learning courses) and long-term L&D priorities to ensure that they support the strategic priorities

- work across the organisation to support the transition from a localised L&D approach to an organisation-wide one, ensuring that learning and best practice are shared and that charity resources are utilised effectively.

We operate a pay scale system which ensures that the salary and conditions of each job relate to the title and description of that job and not to any characteristic of the person carrying it out. Our conditions of work, benefits and facilities are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are available to all staff who should have access to them and that there are no unlawful obstacles to accessing them.

- **Termination of employment**

We ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory. We also ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.

- **Disability**

We encourage our staff to talk to us about their disability so that we can support them as appropriate. This often involves making reasonable adjustments to accommodate the specific needs of the employee and is normally supported by occupational health recommendations. We engage with Access to Work for additional support as and when required.

We monitor the physical features of our premises to consider whether they place disabled workers, job applicants or service users at a substantial disadvantage compared to other people. Wherever possible, we take steps to improve access for disabled staff and service users.

- **Part-time and fixed-term employees**

We monitor the terms and conditions of work of fixed-term and part-time employees, to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training and promotion. We ensure that all requests to alter working hours are dealt with appropriately. Where relevant, we also monitor the progress of fixed-term employees to ensure that they are accessing permanent vacancies.

## **How we integrate equality into our service provision**

### **Research and Policy**

As an organisation we take forward research through working with blind and partially sighted people to understand what issues matter most to them. This

enables us to understand what needs to change so that we improve support and achieve a more inclusive society for visually impaired people and make the case for that change. We involve people living with sight loss in our research, and work with them to be their own champions for change through political engagements, contributions at policy conferences and appearances in the media.

We campaign on specific policy areas where visually impaired people experience inequality, including educational attainment and employment opportunities, and work for positive change in these areas through specialist education support, the provision of supported employment, and promoting greater awareness of visual impairment amongst employers and in public services. We seek to empower blind and partially sighted people through the provision of information and advice, and through campaigning for the provision of inclusive communication.

Our specialist habilitation staff at the school work with pupils so independence is increased with the use of adaptive aids and equipment. This helps ensure they can participate as fully as possible in learning and social activities. Within the Royal Blind School and its residential services we provide person-centred care and support for visually impaired young people with complex needs.

As an organisation we also support pioneering medical research to improve diagnosis and treatment of eye conditions so that fewer people are affected by sight loss in the future. From innovative use of artificial intelligence to the ground-breaking development of gene therapies, each year we provide crucial funding to support clinical research.

### **The Royal Blind School**

Sight Scotland is a specialist provider of learning and education opportunities for children and young people who are blind or partially sighted. We believe every child and young person should be supported to learn in the setting that is most appropriate to them.

Children and young people are at the centre of our approach. We customise learning to adapt to the unique abilities of every pupil. We want children and young people to discover and develop their abilities in preparation for their fullest possible life.

Our personalised approach to learning, care and education supports children and young people to maximise their potential and reach their goals. We enable children and young people to thrive and develop skills for life. Our team works with each pupil to develop an individual programme to grow their confidence and independence.

We adapt a range of print materials to alternative and accessible formats including braille, audio, large print and tactile diagrams. We provide formal mobility, orientation and life skills sessions which facilitate independence. Our buildings have



been designed purposefully to be an accessible environment for children and young people with sensory impairment and complex needs. As such, our building designs include wide corridors, colour contrasts, handrails to facilitate independent navigation, and fully equipped accessible bathrooms. Our facilities include a hydrotherapy pool, multi-sensory lights room, soft play area, enclosed multi-use games area, sensory gardens, log cabin and fire pit.

We ensure that pupils have a broad range of opportunities and experiences to enable them to become successful learners, responsible citizens, confident individuals and effective contributors to society.

Through our **outreach work**, we provide support for pupils in education across Scotland. We empower educators and families by sharing our knowledge and experience of specialist education.

We currently support pupils in East Lothian, Orkney Islands and Midlothian. This service has recently been extended to West Lothian.

Through our support, our partners in education are equipped with the strategies, tools and understanding of visual impairment to enable blind and partially sighted pupils in all settings to access the curriculum.

Our approach extends to life outside the classroom. We focus on equipping parents, teachers and pupils with strategies and instil confidence by incorporating skills for life, like mobility and independent living, into the school day and life at home and beyond.

Through this work we promote equality on a national scale and contribute to meeting all the needs of the equality duty: eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

### **Residential Care Services**

We are committed to providing extraordinary specialist care, every day, to enable young people to live fulfilling lives and live in warm, safe surroundings. We provide support in our homes so that people can gain skills, make their own choices and build connections.

We offer residential care at the Royal Blind School for children and young people with complex needs who need this specialist support and stability. Each of our small homes provides the opportunity to realise positive outcomes for all.

We are dedicated to delivering a full offering to our children, enabling them to develop socially and build resilience ready for adulthood.

Our 24-hour curriculum ensures that learning takes place in the wide range of situations and activities experienced during a typical day. We offer a broad array of after-school groups. Scouts, karate and choir are just a few of the many options open to our children. There is a range of adventures and activities on offer such as concerts, horse riding and skiing. We engage and challenge our children and enable them to thrive.

## **EMPLOYEE INFORMATION**

### **Introduction**

This section of the report contains details of:

- the composition of our employees broken down by protected characteristic
- recruitment, development and retention of employees broken down by protected characteristic
- information on progress made in gathering and using employee information to better meet the equality duty
- gender pay gap information.

### **Gathering and using employee information**

We have established procedures which ensure that the equal opportunities data we hold about our employees and job applicants is representative. This helps us ensure that our equal opportunities approach and practices are effective and allows us to identify groups that may be underrepresented or might be at risk of being disadvantaged in our organisation.

All job applicants are asked to provide equal opportunities information when they apply for a position with us. The information is held away from applicant information on our recruitment system it is not visible to the shortlisting/interview panel, nor the People Team except in an anonymised format and is kept solely for the purpose of equal opportunities monitoring. Provision of this information is voluntary, and it does not adversely affect an individual's chances of appointment or any other decision related to their employment.

New employees are asked to update their diversity and inclusion data during their induction period. All staff can view and easily update their personal information that we keep through self-service functionality of our HR system. We work to ensure that our staff are aware why we gather and keep this information.

We also ensure that employee information in relation to disability is updated if new information comes to light during the course of a staff member's employment, for

example through our procedures for managing sickness absence, rather than only being updated at the time the employee joins the organisation.

We consistently gather equal opportunities data relating to recruitment, retention and development.

Analysing this data helps us take appropriate steps to avoid discrimination and improve equality and diversity across all our employment practices.

### **The composition of our employees at the Royal Blind School**

As of 31 March 2023, at the Royal Blind School including residential services, we employed 81 staff, out of whom 41 (50.62%) worked full time and 40 (49.38%) worked part time. These proportions are similar to 2021 when we employed 95 staff, although there has been a slight increase in the proportion of full time staff. In 2021 44 (46.32%) worked full time and 51 (53.68%) worked part time

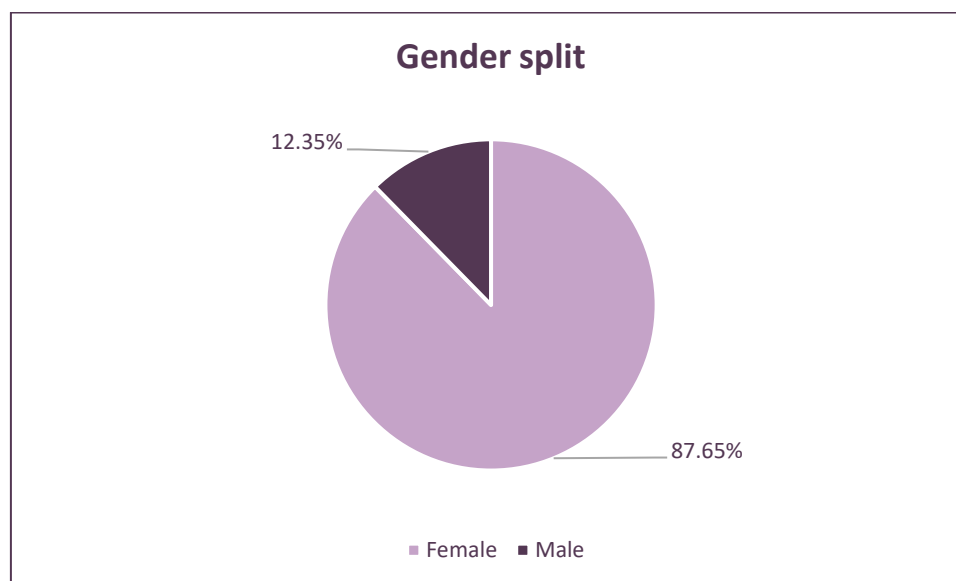
Sections below outline employee information under the following protected characteristics: gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, religion and belief, marriage/civil partnership.

The employment information presented in this report covers the last 12 months since our last Employee Information Report was published in April 2022. Under each protected characteristic, we have provided the following information:

- the overall composition of our employees as of 31 March 2023
- comparison with the 2022 and 2021 reports, where information relating to the particular characteristic was included in the previous report
- new employees appointed between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023
- job applicants between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023
- leavers between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023
- employees promoted internally between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023

## Gender

### The Royal Blind School and residential services as of 31 March 2023:



Gender	2023 report	2022 report	2021 report
Female	87.65%	88.66%	89.47%
Male	12.35%	11.34%	10.53%

In the following tables the figures in bracket are from the previous year reported (2021 – 2022).

### Recruitment

**New employees** appointed between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

Gender	The Royal Blind School
Female	<b>81.82%</b> (100.00%)
Male	<b>18.18%</b> (0.00%)
Other	<b>0%</b> (0%)
Prefer not to say	<b>0%</b> (0%)

**Job applicants** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

Gender	The Royal Blind School
Female	<b>76.42%</b> (78.67%)

Male	<b>21.95%</b> (20.67%)
Prefer not to say / No response	<b>1.63%</b> (0.67%)

**Leavers** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Gender</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
Female	<b>81.48%</b> (100%)
Male	<b>18.52%</b> (0%)

**Employees promoted internally** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Gender</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
Female	<b>100.00%</b> (33.33%)
Male	<b>0.00%</b> (66.67%)

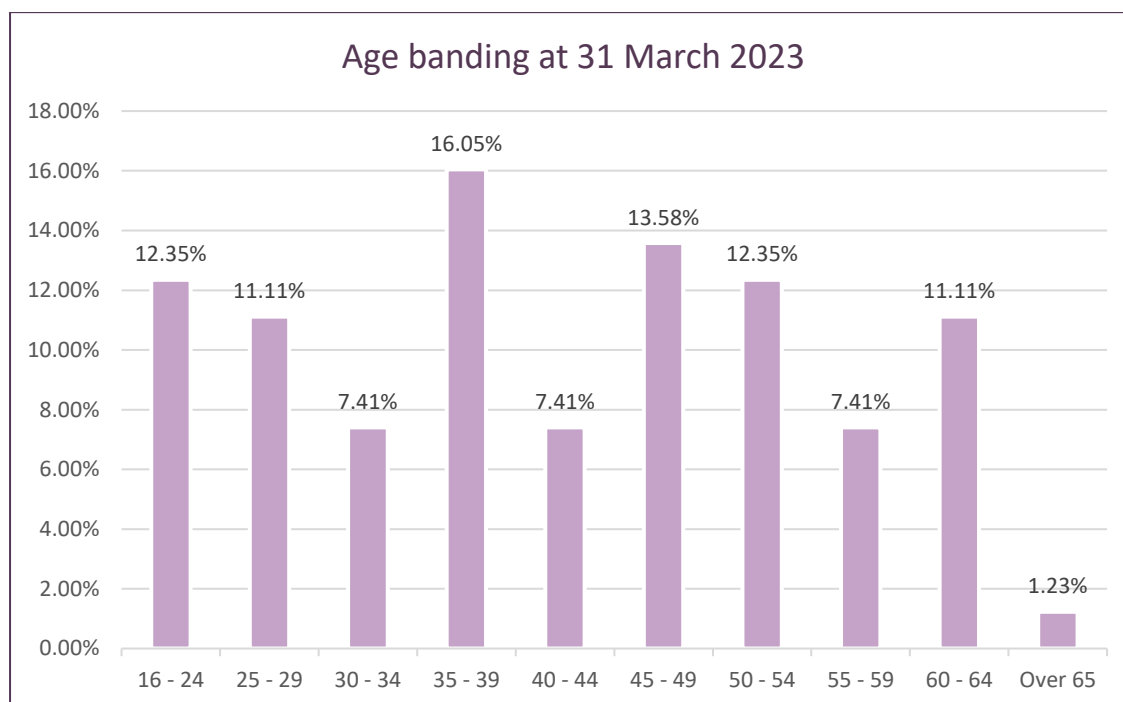
A vast majority of our employees in the Royal Blind School are female. This reflects the typical gender mix in the education and care sector. The overall gender split in the care sector, as reported by SSSC, was 85% female and 15% male in 2021.

In terms of the school specifically, the proportion of male employees compared to female staff increased lightly from 11.34% in 2022 to 12.35% in 2023. There were only two internal promotions in the Royal Blind School this year and both were female.

We believe that the recruitment, retention and development data outlined above is consistent with a fair and equal approach to our employment practices.

## Age

### The Royal Blind School as of 31 March 2023:



Age	2023 report	2022 report	2021 report
16-24	12.35%	8.33%	2.11%
25-29	11.11%	8.33%	10.53%
30-34	7.41%	9.38%	8.42%
35-39	16.05%	12.50%	14.74%
40-44	7.41%	7.29%	8.42%
45-49	13.58%	19.79%	20.00%
50-54	12.35%	10.41%	12.63%
55-59	7.41%	8.33%	9.47%
60-64	11.11%	13.54%	11.58%
65+	1.23%	2.08%	2.11%

## Age at recruitment

**New employees** appointed between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Age</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
16-24	<b>22.73%</b> (45.45%)
25-29	<b>18.18%</b> (9.09%)
30-34	<b>9.09%</b> (0.00%)
35-39	<b>22.73%</b> (18.18%)
40-44	<b>9.09%</b> (9.09%)
45-49	<b>4.55%</b> (18.18%)
50-54	<b>4.55%</b> (0.00%)
55-59	<b>4.55%</b> (0.00%)
60-64	<b>4.55%</b> (0.00%)
65+	<b>0.00%</b> (0.00%)

**Job applicants** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Age</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
16-24	<b>12.20%</b> (14.67%)
25-29	<b>20.33%</b> (20.67%)
30-34	<b>16.26%</b> (22.00%)
35-39	<b>14.63%</b> (10.67%)
40-44	<b>12.20%</b> (12.00%)
45-49	<b>8.13%</b> (6.00%)
50-54	<b>8.13%</b> (6.00%)
55-59	<b>3.25%</b> (5.33%)
60-64	<b>4.07%</b> (1.33%)
65+	<b>0.81%</b> (0.00%)
Prefer not to say	<b>0.00%</b> (1.33%)

**Leavers** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Age</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
16-24	<b>7.41%</b> (0.00%)
25-29	<b>7.41%</b> (10.00%)
30-34	<b>11.11%</b> (10.00%)

35-39	<b>11.11%</b> (30.00%)
40-44	<b>11.11%</b> (10.00%)
45-49	<b>22.22%</b> (10.00%)
50-54	<b>3.70%</b> (20.00%)
55-59	<b>14.81</b> (10.00%)
60-64	<b>7.41%</b> (0.00%)
65+	<b>3.70%</b> (0.00%)

**Employees promoted internally** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Age</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
16-24	<b>0.00%</b> (0.00%)
25-29	<b>0.00%</b> (33.33%)
30-34	<b>0.00%</b> (66.67%)
35-39	<b>0.00%</b> (0.00%)
40-44	<b>50.00%</b> (0.00%)
45-49	<b>50.00%</b> (0.00%)
50-54	<b>0.00%</b> (0.00%)
55-59	<b>0.00%</b> (33.33%)
60-64	<b>0.00%</b> (66.67%)
65+	<b>0.00%</b> (0.00%)

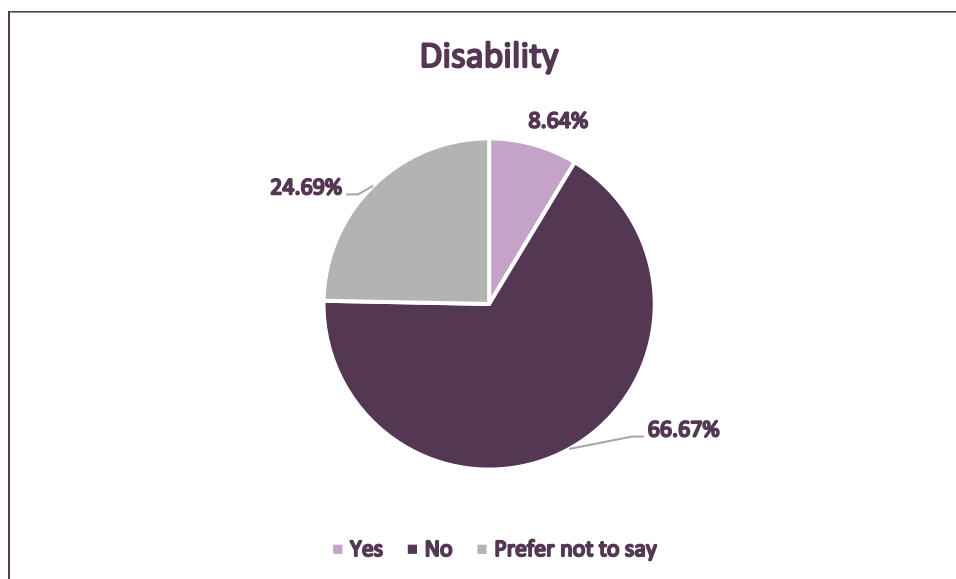
We have a balance of employees of different ages across the Royal Blind School. The increase in the number of new employees appointed in the 16-24 age group age group compared to last two years is worth noting.

The age bracket for 35 to 39 has the highest proportion of staff in both the whole organisation and the school. This is a change from the previous two years when the 45 - 49 category had the highest number of people. The two lowest age bands have also seen increases. The main reason for this is the large amount of recruitment for nursing and residential care staff who fall mainly in these age groups.

The figures for job applicants and new starters are fairly well balanced, suggesting we are attracting applicants in a wide range of ages at the Royal Blind School. This in turn shows the fairness of our current recruitment processes.



## Disability



### The Royal Blind School as of 31 March 2023:

Disability status	2023 report	2022 report	2021 report
Disabled	8.64%	7.29%	6.32%
Not disabled	66.67%	67.21%	80.00%
Prefer not to say / no information recorded	24.69%	25.00%	13.68%

In the following tables figures in brackets represent 2021 /2022 statistics.

- **Recruitment**

**New employees** appointed between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023

Disability status	The Royal Blind School
Disabled	<b>10.53%</b> (0.00%)
Not disabled	<b>57.89%</b> (91.09%)
Prefer not to say	<b>31.58%</b> (9.01%)

**Job applicants** appointed between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Disability status</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
Disabled	<b>7.32%</b> (6.67%)
Not Disabled	<b>87.80%</b> (91.33%)
Prefer not to say	<b>4.88%</b> (2.00%)

**Leavers** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Disability status</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
Disabled	<b>11.11%</b> (0.00%)
Not disabled	<b>59.26%</b> (90.00%)
Prefer not to say	<b>29.63%</b> (10%)

**Employees promoted internally** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

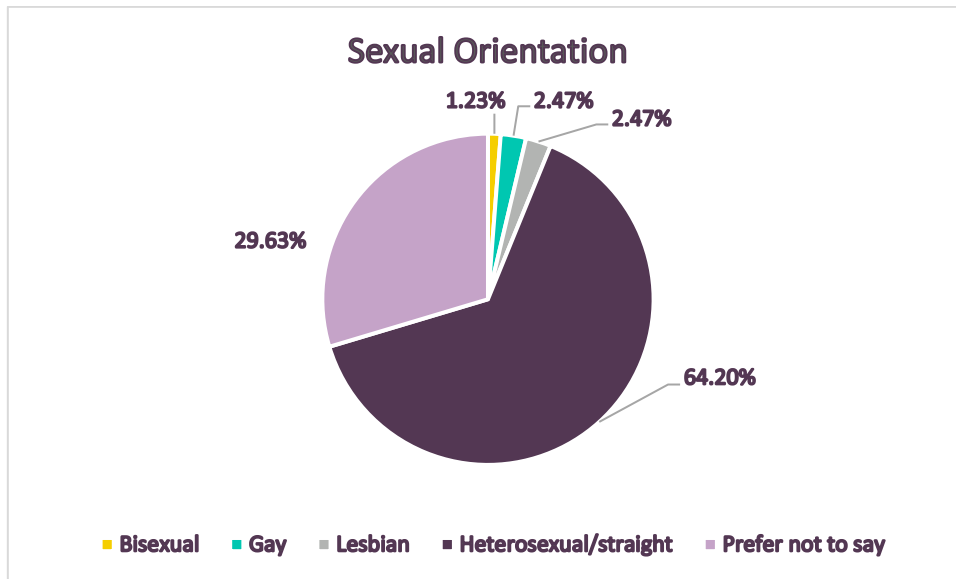
<b>Disability status</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
Disabled	<b>0%</b> (0.00%)
Not disabled	<b>100.00%</b> (100.00%)
Prefer not to say	<b>0%</b> (0.00%)

The proportion of disabled staff has remained similar to 2021, however there has been an increase in the number of staff who have either selected the Prefer not to Say or chose not to answer this question. The proportion of disabled staff within the Royal Blind School has increased slightly year on year from 7.29% in 2022 and 6.32% in 2021.

It is encouraging to note an increase in proportion of new starts and job applicants who have responded that they have a disability.

## Sexual Orientation

### The Royal Blind School as of 31 March 2023:



Sexual orientation	2023 report	2022 report	2021 report
Bisexual	1.23%	2.26%	1.54%
Gay	2.47%	0.50%	0.77%
Lesbian	2.47%	3.02%	3.34%
Heterosexual/straight	64.20%	71.86%	75.84%
Prefer not to say	29.63%	22.36%	18.51%

In the following tables figures in brackets represent the 2021 / 2022 statistics.

## Recruitment

**New employees** appointed between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2031:

Sexual orientation	The Royal Blind School
Bisexual	<b>0.00%</b> (0.00%)
Gay	<b>9.09%</b> (0.00%)
Lesbian	<b>0.00%</b> (0.00%)
Heterosexual/straight	<b>59.09%</b> (72.73%)
Prefer not to say	<b>31.82%</b> (27.27%)

**Job applicants** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
Bisexual	<b>1.63%</b> (5.33%)
Gay	<b>2.44%</b> (3.33%)
Lesbian	<b>0.81%</b> (3.33%)
Heterosexual/straight	<b>85.37%</b> (81.33%)
Prefer not to say	<b>9.76%</b> (6.00%)

**Leavers** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
Bisexual	<b>0.00%</b> (0.00%)
Gay	<b>0.00%</b> (0.00%)
Lesbian	<b>0.00%</b> (20.00%)
Heterosexual/straight	<b>74.07%</b> (60.00%)
Prefer not to say	<b>25.93%</b> (20.00%)

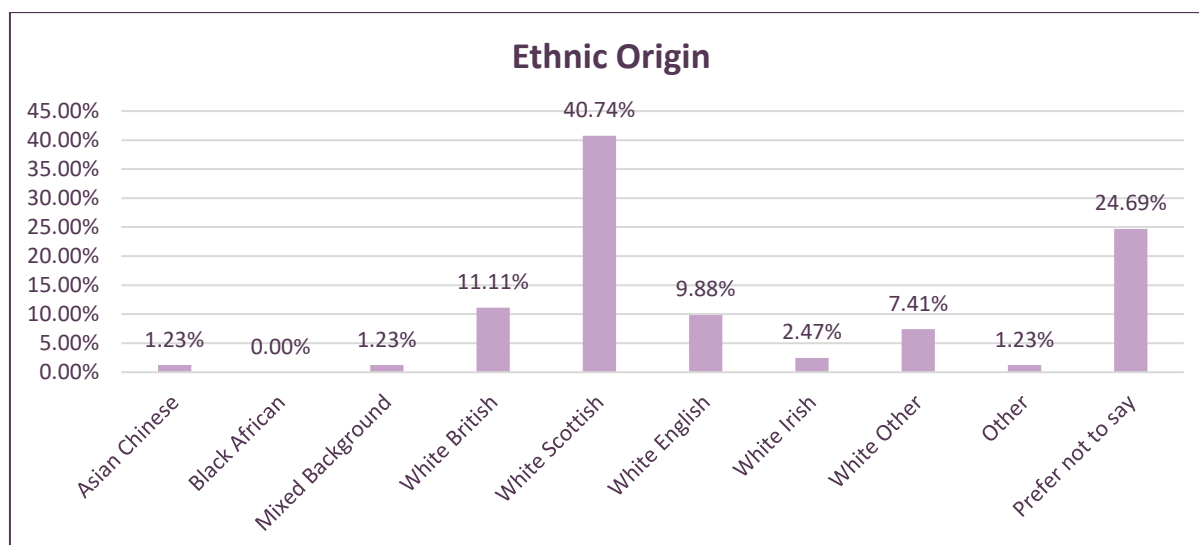
**Employees promoted internally** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
Lesbian	<b>0.00%</b> (0.00%)
Heterosexual/straight	<b>50.00%</b> (66.67%)
Prefer not to say	<b>50.00%</b> (33.33%)

There is still a relatively high proportion of staff who prefer not to declare their sexual orientation, the proportion has increase year on year from 18.51% in 2021, 22.36% in 2022 and 29.63% in 2023. There has also been a slight increase in the proportion of new employees who prefer not to disclose their sexual orientation from 27.27% in 2022 to 31.82% this year.

## Ethnic Origin

### The Royal Blind School as of 31 March 2023:



Ethnic origin	2023 report	2022 report	2021 report
Asian Chinese	1.23%	1.04%	1.05%
Black African	0.00%	2.08%	2.11%
Mixed Background	1.23%	1.04%	1.05%
White British	11.11%	13.54%	12.63%
White Scottish	40.74%	39.58%	48.42%
White English	9.88%	9.38%	9.47%
White Irish	2.47%	4.17%	4.21%
White Other	7.41%	3.13%	4.21%
Other	1.23%	2.08%	4.21%
Prefer not to say	24.69%	23.96%	12.63%

In the following tables figures in brackets represent the 2021 / 2022 statistics.

- **Recruitment:**

**New employees** appointed between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

Ethnic origin	The Royal Blind School
White British	9.09% (0.00%)

White Scottish	50.00% (0.00%)
White English	0.00% (0.00%)
White Other	22.73% (0.00%)
Prefer not to say	18.18% (100.00%)

**Job applicants** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Ethnic origin</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
Asian	<b>1.63%</b> (33.33%)
Asian Indian	<b>1.63%</b> (2.67%)
Asian Pakistani	<b>1.63%</b> (0.67%)
Any other Asian background	<b>0.81%</b> (0.67%)
Black African	<b>17.89%</b> (6.67%)
Black Caribbean	<b>0.00%</b> (0.30%)
Mixed Background	<b>1.63%</b> (3.33%)
Scottish	<b>26.83%</b> (0.00%)
White British	<b>13.82%</b> (12.67%)
White Irish	<b>2.44%</b> (2.00%)
White Scottish	<b>13.82%</b> (50.00%)
Any other White background	<b>16.26%</b> (9.33%)
Prefer not to say	<b>1.63%</b> (3.33%)
Other	<b>0.00%</b> (2.00%)

**Leavers** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Ethnic origin</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
Black African	<b>3.70%</b> (0.00%)
Scottish	<b>3.70%</b> (0.00%)
White British	<b>18.52%</b> (0.00%)
White Scottish	<b>44.44%</b> (50.00%)

White Irish	<b>3.70%</b> (0.00%)
White Other	<b>7.41%</b> (10.00%)
Other	<b>0.00%</b> (20.00%)
Prefer not to say	<b>18.52%</b> (10.00%)

**Employees promoted internally** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

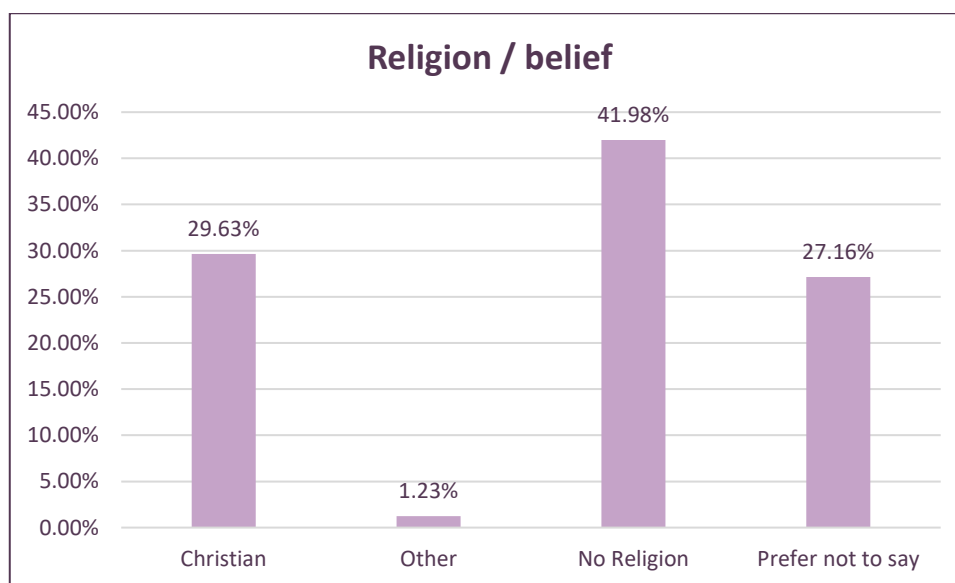
<b>Ethnic origin</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
White British	<b>50.00%</b> (33.33%)
White Scottish	<b>0.00%</b> (33.33%)
Prefer not to say	<b>50.00%</b> (33.33%)

A vast majority of our employees are “White Scottish”, “White British” and “White English” categories, which reflects our location. There is a similar proportion of employees from ethnic minority groups that we employ compared to the 2020 report.

The ethnicity mix within recruitment, retention and development practices closely reflects the overall make-up of our staffing, which is consistent with a fair and equal approach to our employment practices.

**Religion and Belief**

**The Royal Blind School as of 31 March 2023:**



<b>Religion/belief</b>	<b>2023 report</b>	<b>2022 report</b>	<b>2021 report</b>
Christian	29.63%	36.46%	41.05%
Other religion	1.23%	1.04%	2.11%
No religion	41.98%	31.25%	34.74%
Prefer not to say	27.16%	31.25%	22.11%

In the following tables figures in brackets represent the 2022 - 2023 statistics.

### **Recruitment:**

**New employees** appointed between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Religion/belief</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
Christian	<b>9.09%</b> (0.00%)
Other religion	<b>0.00%</b> (0.00%)
No religion	<b>63.64%</b> (27.27%)
Prefer not to say	<b>27.27%</b> (72.73%)

**Job applicants** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Religion/belief</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
Buddhist	<b>1.63%</b> (0.67%)
Christian	<b>43.09%</b> (32.67%)
Muslim	<b>3.25%</b> (0.67%)
Sikh	<b>0.81%</b> (0.67%)
Other religion	<b>0.81%</b> (8.00%)
Atheist	<b>6.50%</b> (0.00%)
No religion	<b>37.40%</b> (49.33%)
Prefer not to say	<b>6.50%</b> (8.00%)

**Leavers** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Religion/belief</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
Christian	<b>29.63%</b> (20.00%)
Other religion	<b>0.00%</b> (10.00%)
No religion	<b>44.44%</b> (60.00%)
Prefer not to say	<b>25.93%</b> (10.00%)



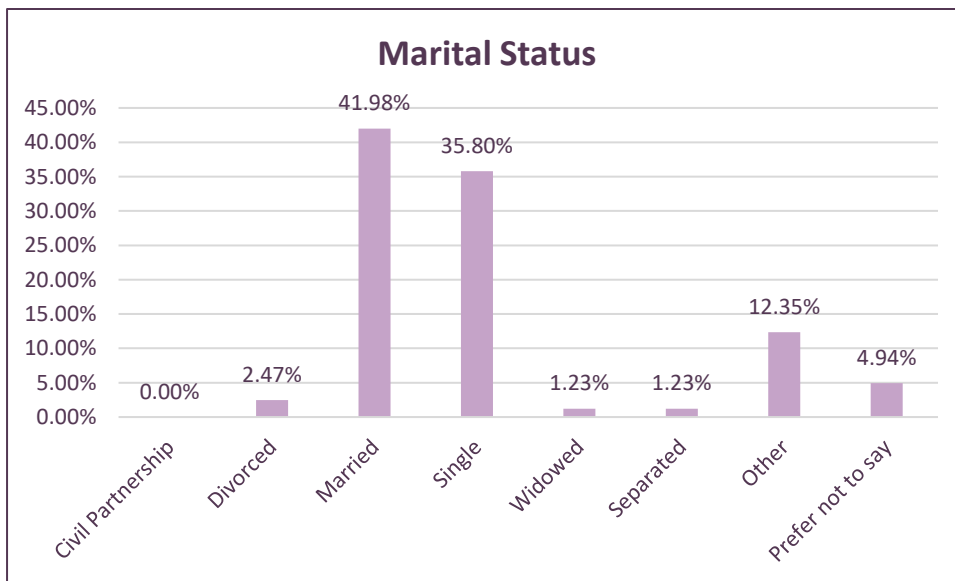
**Employees promoted internally** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Religion/belief</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
Christian	<b>0.00%</b> (0.00%)
No religion	<b>50.00%</b> (66.67%)
Prefer not to say	<b>50.00%</b> (33.33%)

The make-up of our staffing is dominated by 'Christian' and 'No religion', and this spread is similar across all our employment practices. These proportions are similar to the figures presented in our 2021 report. It is also noteworthy that apart from job applicants across all other categories a significant proportion of people prefer not to say.

**Marriage/Civil Partnership Status**

**The Royal Blind School as of 31 March 2023:**



<b>Status</b>	<b>2023 report</b>	<b>2022 report</b>	<b>2021 report</b>
Civil Partnership	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Divorced	2.47%	2.08%	3.16%
Married	41.98%	44.79%	46.32%
Single	35.80%	42.71%	43.16%
Widowed	1.23%	1.04%	1.05%
Separated	1.23%	2.08%	1.05%

Other	12.35%	2.08%	2.11%
Prefer not to say	4.94%	5.21%	3.16%

In the following tables figures in brackets represent the 2022-2023 statistics.

- **Recruitment**

**New employees** appointed between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Marriage/civil partnership status</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
Divorced	<b>0.00%</b> (0.00%)
Married	<b>27.27%</b> (18.18%)
Single	<b>9.09%</b> (54.55%)
Separated	<b>0.00%</b> (9.09%)
Other	<b>50.00%</b> (0.00%)
Prefer not to say	<b>13.64%</b> (18.18%)

**Job applicants** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Marriage/civil partnership status</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
Civil Partnership	<b>7.32%</b> (6.00%)
Divorced	<b>3.25%</b> (6.00%)
Married	<b>26.02%</b> (30.67%)
Separated	<b>8.13%</b> (2.00%)
Single	<b>44.72%</b> (51.33%)
Widowed	<b>1.63%</b> (0.00%)
Prefer not to say	<b>8.94%</b> (4.00%)

**Leavers** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Marriage/civil partnership status</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
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Civil Partnership	<b>0.00%</b> (0.00%)
Divorced	<b>0.00%</b> (10.00%)
Married	<b>40.74%</b> (20.00%)
Single	<b>25.93%</b> (60.00%)
Widowed	<b>0.00%</b> (0.00%)
Separated	<b>3.70%</b> (0.00%)
Other	<b>14.81%</b> (0.00%)
Prefer not to say	<b>14.81%</b> (10.00%)

- **Employees promoted internally** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

<b>Marriage/civil partnership status</b>	<b>The Royal Blind School</b>
Married	<b>50.00%</b> (33.33%)
Single	<b>0.00%</b> (33.33%)
Widowed	<b>50.00%</b> (0.00%)
Prefer not to say	<b>0.00%</b> (33.33%)

A vast majority of our staff are either 'Married' or 'Single'. These proportions are similar to the figures presented in our 2022 and 2021 reports. It is notable that a significant percentage of employees have selected 'Other' to describe their status compared with previous years.

We believe that the data above relating to recruitment, retention and development of our employees corresponds with fair and equal employment practices in relation to the marriage and civil partnership status.

## **GENDER PAY GAP INFORMATION**

Gender Pay Gap Information provided in this report relates to the Royal Blind School including residential services.

The gender pay gap is the difference in average hourly earnings between men and women.

Gender pay gap information below is presented using two measures, mean and median. The mean average is calculated by adding all individual employees' hourly

rate of pay and dividing by the total number of employees. The median average is calculated by listing all employees' hourly rate of pay and finding the midpoint.

### Mean Gender Pay Gap: -4.52%

- Overall mean hourly rate: £18.15 per hour.
- Mean hourly rate of female employees: £18.25 per hour
- Mean hourly rate of male employees: £17.46 per hour

### Median Gender Pay Gap: -2.46%

- Overall median hourly rate: £15.03 per hour
- Median hourly rate of female employees: £15.40 per hour
- Median hourly rate of male employees: £15.03 per hour

The table below shows a split across different staff categories of our female and male employees within the school. The figures in brackets show 2021 figures.

	<b>Average hourly rate</b>	<b>Female employees</b>	<b>Male employees</b>
Domestic/Kitchen Staff	£9.90	<b>1.41%</b> (15.29%)	<b>0.00%</b> (0.00%)
General Staff	£14.71	<b>4.23%</b> (7.05%)	<b>30.00%</b> (20.00%)
Learning Support Assistants	£13.76	<b>19.72%</b> (12.94%)	<b>0.00%</b> (0.00%)
Nurses	£15.57	<b>11.27%</b> (5.88%)	<b>0.00%</b> (20.00%)
Residential Care Staff	£15.81	<b>40.85%</b> (37.65%)	<b>50.00%</b> (40.00%)
Teachers	£26.75	<b>16.90%</b> (16.47%)	<b>40.00%</b> (20.00%)
Senior Management	£35.66	5.63% (4.70%)	<b>0.00%</b> (0.00%)

Although only 5.63% of all female school staff work in Senior Management roles, that group consists solely of female employees. Teachers are the next highest paid staff group within the school, with average pay at £26.75 (mean average) significantly above the average hourly rate for the school. The reverse gender pay gap is attributable to the majority of teacher roles and all senior management roles being held by female staff.

90% of all male employees in the school are employed in teaching or residential care roles.

Domestic/Kitchen Staff are the lowest paid group within the school, paid significantly below the average hourly rate. Due to the outsourcing of the majority of kitchen and domestic roles, on 1.41% of all school female employees are employed in these roles, this is one employee, there are no male staff employed within these roles.

This explains the gap in the mean hourly rates of pay between male and female employees.

Our figures compare favourably to the ONS statistics, which show a national gender pay gap for Scotland (2022) at 11% (mean) and 12.2% (median). We are confident that our employees are paid fairly and equally for the same or similar roles. We have a very low proportion of male employees within the school (12.35%, which corresponds to 10 employees). This means even small fluctuations can make a significant difference to our gender pay gap.

## **EQUALITY OUTCOMES**

### **Progress towards achieving Equality Outcomes set in 2017**

Since we published our equality status report in April 2017, we have been continually working towards six main outcomes we would like to achieve. This section of the report outlines the progress we made towards achieving each of our aspirations.

- 1. We will work towards our vision to make a significant contribution to building a community in which blind and partially sighted people, including those who also have other disabilities, are fully included and lead fulfilling lives.**

We are determined that no-one should face sight loss alone. That is why at Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans our mission is to reach everyone in Scotland with sight loss – where and when they need us. Our commitment to this, and to supporting people of all ages with sight loss in our own facilities and beyond is what drives us. This is our charitable purpose. It is why we exist, and something we live and breathe every day.

To help us in our ambition, we redefined our mission and changed our names in 2020 - our new names represent and embrace a new period of change and growth, focusing us on the issue which matters most: tackling the impact of vision loss together.

Specific details of how we currently achieve this are outlined under 'Mainstreaming equality duty' section of this report.

## **2. We would like to be more diverse than we are at present, particularly in terms of ethnicity.**

Our employee information highlights a lack of ethnic diversity in the Royal Blind School both in existing staff and those recruited in the 12 month period to 31 March 2023. Work in this area will continue with monitoring of our advertising locations and recruitment practices to ensure we are fully inclusive.

We will continue to ensure we have robust and fair recruitment practices. All our managers have access to Recruitment training which covers conscious and unconscious bias. We also deliver Dignity at Work training and “Equality, Diversity and Inclusion” e-learning for all staff. Our recruitment platform helps us to reach a wide audience.

It is also important to note the significant proportion of employees who have not provided information on Ethnic background or have chosen the ‘Prefer not to say’ option. Also, that whilst we do not have a large proportion of employees from ethnic minorities, our proportions broadly fall in line with local census figures for people from ethnic minorities living within the City of Edinburgh area.

## **3. We aim to move gradually towards having a more ethnically diverse Board with a more even gender balance.**

We currently have 4 male and 7 female Board members, which means 36.36% of our Board are male and 63.64% are female. This has reversed the gender split of our Board when compared to data at our last report (7 male and 5 female Board members, 58% male and 42% female, 2021). We also have 2 co-opted Committee Members, of whom 1 is female and 1 is male. Whilst we have made progress in terms of gender balance in terms of ethnicity our Board is not diverse, with all members falling into either ‘White British’, ‘White Irish’ or ‘White Other’

We expect to be recruiting new Board members within the next 12 months. This will give us an opportunity to review our recruitment arrangements again to ensure we are appealing to a diverse an audience as possible. All our Board vacancies are advertised externally, and we follow an open and transparent recruitment process for all positions. Our role descriptions for Board members reference the latest Guidance and Good Practice for Charity Trustees. We use structured interviews to ensure consistent assessment throughout our recruitment process.

Board appointments are made on the basis of skills, experience and knowledge needed to complement the existing Board membership and ensure that the Board is well equipped to discharge its charitable duties. We aim to ensure that the Board is strong in business experience, that it has expertise in the required principal professions of education, social care and nursing and that it includes members with experience and expertise in sight loss.

We will review the most appropriate ways of collating equal opportunities data for our existing and any future Board members to ensure completeness of information and to help us assess where we stand in relation to other protected characteristics, including ethnicity.

**4. We have rolled out Dignity at Work staff training for all departments. The training includes a specific session on creating a culture of equality and acceptance of difference in the workplace.**

We are now able to offer this either face to face or virtually for all employees. Having these options means our employees can access this training more easily.

The course ensures that our staff are equipped to:

- apply the Dignity at Work Policy in their daily work
- define bullying, harassment and victimisation
- recognise and distinguish acceptable and unacceptable attitudes and behaviours in the workplace
- identify the 9 Protected Characteristics in relation to example situations of discrimination
- know how to raise, report and resolve an issue involving Dignity at Work in line with Sight Scotland's and Sight Scotland Veterans' informal and formal procedures
- recognise the dangers of stereotyping and unconscious bias
- be aware of the positive outcomes achieved by a work culture that is accepting of difference and diversity.

We have introduced an additional "Equality, diversity and inclusion" e-learning which is mandatory for all staff. We also have 'Unconscious Bias for Managers' e-learning module which is mandatory for managers.

**5. We will maintain our Disability Confident Symbol (formerly Positive about Disabled People Two Ticks Symbol) to recognise our commitment to good practice in employing and retaining disabled people. We will investigate the feasibility of "upgrading" our membership to the Level 2 or Level 3 status. This will involve increasing the commitment we have to employing, developing and retaining disabled staff.**

We have maintained our Disability Confident Employer (level 2) accreditation.

Through this process we were able to evidence that we carry out all the relevant actions and activities for this accreditation level. These are grouped under two key themes as outlined below:

Theme 1: Getting the right people for your business

Core actions:

- Actively looking to attract and recruit disabled people
- Providing a fully inclusive and accessible recruitment process
- Offering an interview to disabled people who meet the minimum criteria for the job
- Flexibility when assessing people so disabled job applicants have the best opportunity to demonstrate that they can do the job
- Proactively offering and making reasonable adjustments as required
- Encouraging our suppliers and partner firms to be Disability Confident
- Ensuring employees have appropriate disability equality awareness

Theme 2: Keeping and developing your people

Core actions:

- Promoting a culture of being Disability Confident
- Supporting employees to manage their disabilities or health conditions
- Ensuring there are no barriers to the development and progression of disabled staff
- Ensuring managers are aware of how they can support staff who are sick or absent from work
- Valuing and listening to feedback from disabled staff
- Reviewing the Disability Confident Employer self-assessment regularly

We have put processes in place to ensure that our Disability Confident commitments are met on an ongoing basis and that they are embedded on our normal processes and day-to-day operations.

Our Diversity and Inclusion Forum has considered whether we should try to move to accreditation at level 3 but assessed that at that point in time we were not ready for it. The Forum felt that there were a number of initiatives the organisation would like to undertake before taking that route – the progress towards these will depend on the resources available, our work around this has been delayed during the pandemic. The Forum is planning to revisit this in the future.

**6. We would like to increase the number of visually impaired staff we employ. This will include revising the documentation and processes we use to recruit staff by making these more “friendly” for visually impaired applicants.**

We currently employ 1 member of staff (1.23%) with declared visual impairment at the Royal Blind School, this number is unchanged since our last report in 2021. In the next 12 months we will commit to reviewing our recruitment and selection processes to ensure they are fully accessible and inclusive.

Our internal VI (Vision Impairment) Advisory Group, which comprises of staff with professional VI expertise as well as staff who experienced sight loss, help us improve how we attract, support, develop and retain employees and volunteers with



visual impairment. This may be at recruitment planning stage (e.g. to ensure our application process is accessible), or at any point during employment/volunteering (e.g. to ensure materials we produce are accessible).

## **Equality Outcomes for the period 2021 - 2025**

We are committed to continuously improving our performance in attaining equality in our service provision and employment practice. We have taken steps to raise staff awareness around equal opportunities and gather staff feedback on what we can do to continuously progress in this area.

Within the next 12 months we intend to undertake a Colleague survey which will help us to better understand the needs of our workforce and any areas where work may be required to ensure we are promoting and supporting the diversity of our workforce.

We operate a Diversity and Inclusion Forum with representatives from various minority backgrounds, from the different services we operate. The aim of this forum is to act as a reference panel to assess our policies, progress against our aims and to bring forward ideas which will help us improve equality in our service provision and employment practice. Our Forum meetings have recommenced since the pandemic and work support ongoing monitoring of our progress towards meeting our new Equality Outcomes:

1. We will reach more people with sight loss in Scotland, where and when they need us, to ensure they are fully included and can lead a fulfilling life.
2. We will influence positive change in government policy areas where visually impaired people experience inequality and promote greater awareness of visual impairment in public services and wider Scottish society.
3. We will ensure that all our services are fully inclusive and reach people from diverse backgrounds.
4. Within the Royal Blind School, we will ensure that inclusion and equality lead to improved outcomes for all learners, that all learners are included, engaged and involved in the life of the school and that all pupils feel very well supported to do their best.
5. We will work to ensure that our employees reflect the diversity of the communities we support.

6. We will collate and analyse diversity and inclusion data relating to our volunteers, and work to ensure that our volunteers reflect the diversity of the local community.
7. We will ensure all staff and volunteers complete our upcoming "Equality, diversity and inclusion" e-learning annually. This is in addition to and will form a pre-requisite for our more in-depth Dignity at Work training (also mandatory for all staff) and our Recruitment training for line managers.

### **Further implementation and monitoring**

We will continue to:

- apply the principles of equality to all our activity including our service delivery, our staffing and our management and governance
- monitor and use employee information to ensure improved equality and diversity across the organisation
- work towards achieving our key equality outcomes over the next two years with the continued support of the diversity and inclusion forum.

The next full Equality Status Report will be published in April 2025. The report will include the following elements:

- Mainstreaming the equality duty
- Employee information
- Gender pay gap information
- Equal Pay Statement
- Progress towards achieving our equality outcomes and a new set of outcomes.