



Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (BEDI) Impact Report 2024/25

RNCM
ROYAL NORTHERN
COLLEGE of MUSIC

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Contents

Executive Summary

Overview from the chair, including reflections on 2024/2025, of progress in Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (BEDI) at the RNCM, including the BEDI Project Funding.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at the RNCM.
- 1.2 Strategically Led Approach to BEDI – Summary of Progress in accordance with the 3 Supporting Strategies, HR and Development/ Fundraising:
 - 1.2.1 Education Supporting Strategy
 - 1.2.2 Artistic Supporting Strategy
 - 1.2.3 Research Supporting Strategy
 - 1.2.4 HR
 - 1.2.5 Development/ Fundraising

2. Embedding Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in the RNCM Community

- 2.1 Legislative framework
- 2.2 Gender Pay Gap

3. Staff

- 3.1 Access to Work Scheme (ATW) and Care First (EAP)
- 3.2 Health and Wellbeing
- 3.3 Disability Confident Employer
- 3.4 Reward and Recognition monitoring

4. Students

- 4.1 Supporting Student Success
- 4.2 Wellbeing Hub
- 4.3 Support for students with disabilities and specific learning needs.

5. Reporting for 2025/26

Appendix 1

Workforce equality statistics

Current staff analysis: 2022/2023, 2023/2024 and 2024/2025

Appendix 2

Student equality statistics

Applicant analysis: 2021-2024 entry

Executive Summary

Welcome to the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) annual Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (BEDI) Impact Report.

The report includes equality-related data we have gathered over the last year and demonstrates our compliance with the requirement to publish relevant equality information. We have pulled together highlights from the year under the headings of our three Supporting Strategies (Artistic, Education and Research), as well as progressing our staff objectives, led by Human Resources. The report also includes a summary of our Equity Fundraising activities.

The report provides a holistic overview of our progress in meeting our BEDI Objectives and enables us to consider what further steps are might be necessary. We are particularly pleased to highlight the significant increase in the diversity of our promoted programme of events (p.5) and our holistic approach to RNCM Disability Week (p.6), which brought many areas of the College together, resulting in research, performance and workshop events to raise awareness in a collaborative and engaging manner. The Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (BEDI) Project Fund, available again in 24/25. Two projects were funded: Underrepresented Competition 2025, celebrating music composed by Underrepresented Composers and 'Neurodiversity boxes', which will provide items for audience attendees, such as ear defenders, ear plugs and a variety of fidget toys. The Underrepresented Competition and Prize will now become a permanently funded event in future academic years.

The BEDI Forum will continue to monitor the RNCM Gender pay gap (p.13), which has increased for the first time after a downward trend and it was also noted that RNCM staff report disability less frequently than the sector as a whole and the general working population. The BEDI Forum will consider how we can support and encourage reporting and further investigate pay gap data.

The Report also contains a reminder of the College's legal obligations as part of its Public Sector Equality Duty, which requires equality considerations to be reflected in the design of internal policies and the delivery of services, and for progress to be monitored.

The remainder of the report will summarise the activity in each strategic area, against the objectives, as set out in the three supporting strategies, overseen by the BEDI Forum. Overall, I am pleased to report that we continue to make positive progress as we enter the 2025/2026 academic year.

Focus for 25/26

Sexual Misconduct Education Programme for Staff and Students

Focussing on prevention and education in 2024/25, this work will be built upon as the appropriate handling of sexual misconduct became a condition of registration with the OFS from 1st August 2025. Interactive workshops on Consent were conducted in Welcome Week 2025, delivered by an external supplier and we will continue to support reporting via the promotion of RNCM RAISE IT, which has already enabled our community to raise issues, which may have previously gone unreported. The transparent reporting, together with a focus on training and awareness raising on

sexual harassment and abuses of power, will ensure a respectful working environment for staff, students and visitors. In parallel, HR are implementing the requirements of the Workers Protection Act which requires the prevention, education and support of staff with regards to harassment and sexual misconduct. 25/26 will also be the year we roll out our 'in house' developed, online refresher course on consent for returning students and returning students in Sept 2026 will receive Bystander Training.

Gender Identity

The Supreme Court ruling on the definition of sex in the Equality Act has had a significant impact on our staff and student population. Advice has been mixed and inconsistent but the RNCM will continue to operate our non-discriminatory policies and procedures, offering flexibility and a variety of facilities, so everyone can choose spaces which feel the safest for them. We will commit to listening to our staff and students and working with the Staff Wellbeing Group, as well as the Student Union President, as we continue to monitor the advice and guidance provided to the sector.

Finally, this will be my final report as chair to the BEDI Forum. I have enjoyed educating myself on the important challenges Higher Education faces to improve inclusive practice and learning about allyship, whilst leading the discussion and championing BEDI at the RNCM.

Professor Wiebke Thormahlen, Director of Research will take over as chair of the forum in 2025/26.



Emma Hilton Wood

Academic Registrar and Chair of the Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Forum

1. Introduction

1.1 Strategic Led Approach to Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at the RNCM

The Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Forum (BEDIF) is the College's principal vehicle for driving innovation and consulting on equity and diversity matters, including responsibility for developing equitable and diversity-related policies, procedures and guidance. The monitoring by BEDIF is strategically led, by a member of the Executive Committee and will ensure that the College continues to meet the legislative requirements and foster a tolerant, inclusive working and learning environment.

The Executive Summary to this report sets out the strategic approach which has been taken for the oversight of the three supporting strategies and HR progress against its BEDI objectives. The following sections provide an overview of the strategic activity in 24/25, provided by the Deputy Principal (Performance and Programmes) for the Artistic Supporting Strategy, Director of Programmes for the Education Supporting Strategy, Director of Research for the Research Supporting Strategy, Director of Development for Development and Equity Fundraising Activity and Head of Human Resources outlining progress on the HR Objectives.

1.2 Strategically Led Approach to BEDI

1.2.1 Artistic Supporting Strategy

Across the 2024/ 25 academic year, we continued to develop the five main pillars of the public performance programme – student voice, diverse collaboration, lab, community engagement and professionalism - which link closely with the BEDI agenda. The student-led Spotlights programme, in particular, continued to showcase the breadth and diversity of student ideas throughout the year.



RNCM Promoted programme:

Gender Representation

- Female artists made up 44% of guest artists and tutors – an increase from 40% in 2023–24.
- Female-led performances and conducting appearances were more visible, including:
 - Ellie Storch, Agata Zając, Kate Pearson, Carol Jarvis, Madeleine Bell, and Nobuko Imai.
 - One of the composer focuses was around the music of Roxanna Panufnik, who also worked alongside RNCM musicians

Global majority representation

- 21% of guest artists/tutors were from global majority and ethnically diverse backgrounds, up from 9% in 2023–24.
- Notable contributors include:
 - Jasdeep Singh Degun, Kaviraj Singh, Yazz Ahmed, Nobuyuki Tsujii, Victoria Oruwari, and Zubin Kanga.

Disabled Artists and Inclusive Practice

While we, as yet, don't have reportable statistics around the representation of disabled artists across the programme, this year saw an increase in the number of guest disabled artists with whom we collaborated, in many different ways:

- The internationally-recognised Japanese blind pianist Nobuyuki Tsujii performed a recital within the *Inspirational Artists Series*
- Ethan David Loch, a pianist who is also blind, featured in *Identity: Who Do You Think You Are?* with Manchester Camerata and students from RNCM.
- The Paraorchestra were invited to present *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*, featuring the blind soloist Victoria Oruwari

RNCM Disability Week (27 – 31 January)

This took place between 27 and 31 January 2025. It included:

- Relaxed performances, inclusive programming, and student-led works exploring neurodivergence and physical disability.
- Events such as *Music for Parkinson's* and *Identity: Who Do You Think You Are?* were explicitly designed to engage disabled artists and audiences.

Hires Programme (External Promoters)

RNCM has less control over the artist selection for these events, but the Events Manager actively considers diversity when making bookings. This includes aiming for a broad and inclusive mix of artists. The Hires programme contributes strongly to the diversity and reach of RNCM's season – particularly in relation to global majority & ethnically diverse representation. Notable artists and ensembles featured in Hires events across 2024/25 included:

- Rokia Koné (Salaam Festival): Malian singer bringing West African heritage to RNCM audiences.
- Nerina Pallot (Live Nation): British singer-songwriter with South Asian heritage.
- Arnab Chakraborty & Shahbaz Hussain (Aymen Arts): South Asian classical artists.
- Tony Ann (Serious): Canadian-Chinese pianist and composer.
- Chand Ali Khan & Leo Twins (Qawwali World): Pakistani artists performing devotional music.
- Nai Barghouti (Marsm): Palestinian singer, musician and songwriter, who combines traditional and classical Arabic and Palestinian music with Western classical music and jazz.
- Hamdel Ensemble with Seyed Ali Jaberi (5th Colour London Ltd): contemporary Persian Sufi music

1.2.2 Education Supporting Strategy

BEDI is embedded within the Education Strategy in three different ways: through the curriculum, through our pedagogy, and through our strategic approach.

Curriculum:

Within the MMus/MPerf/MEd programmes, the module Under-represented continues to be a popular choice amongst students. During 2024/25, the module was opened to Master of Education students. Student feedback demonstrates how valuable having different students in the module has been, particularly bringing in a perspective from education.

Within the BMus/GRNCM programmes, other modules contain BEDI related content, such as within many of the elective modules (accessed by GRNCM in year 4), Music in Context 2, Artist Development 3 – Placement, and many students focus their Creative Projects on BEDI issues.



The Master of Education curriculum is centred on the study of inclusive pedagogy. The module Music Education: Philosophy, Theory and Practice introduces students to inclusive pedagogical concepts and these form the foundation for interrogating educational practice within other modules, including students' own practice. Dissertation topics focus on issues of belonging, equity, diversity and inclusion, and the impact of this on the students' educational practice has been evident.

A suite of alternative assessments was approved by Education and Quality Committee. These serve to provide Programme Leaders with a suite of pre-approved alternatives that can be offered in exceptional circumstances and for students with disabilities who need to access assessments in a different way.

A student awards scheme has been piloted during 2024/25 to mirror the teaching awards scheme where students might request funding for a project that enhances their learning and teaching. Awards were given to seven students. One postgraduate was funded to attend the OHMI conference 'Music and Physical Disability' and reported back to the Learning and Teaching Conference. One postgraduate and five undergraduates were funded to attend the OHMI training 'an introduction to music education for children with physical disabilities'.

Pedagogy:

Work continues to develop the VLE so that it offers a way to engage with learning where there are challenges with in-person attendance. These challenges might relate to a variety of equality, diversity and inclusion issues such as disability, socio-economic through to caring commitments. A road map has been devised to put in place the mechanisms and infrastructure to design wholly online modules, planned for the 2026 revalidation of the undergraduate programmes. The benefit of planning new modules rather than retro-fitting existing modules to online learning is that they can take account of the latest understandings of inclusive practices and universal design for learning.

Education strategy:

Day to day progress against the Education Strategy is captured within Student Experience Enhancement Records (SEERs) at Undergraduate Degrees Committees (UDC). A reflection on the previous year is given at the Autumn Education and Quality Committee (EQC) and key strategic items are reported through to EQC during Spring and Summer.

The highlights for BEDI within the SEERs during 2024/25 were:

Undergraduate:

- **Equity and Access:** UDC regularly emphasised the importance of enhancing equity within the student experience, across issues ranging from the formation of ensemble pairings to diversifying recital programmes. ASIMUT room booking protocols were identified as important to ensuring equitable access to practice spaces, allowing all students to maximize their learning opportunities. UDC also documented a strong commitment to increasing the representation of underrepresented composers in RNCM recital programmes, and to an inclusive and diverse curriculum.

Postgraduate Taught:

- **Widen Participation:** MEd suite of programmes enables students to apply for non principal-study-based degrees, encouraging applications from students who may otherwise have felt a conservatoire education was not appropriate for them. It also has potential (e.g. for community-based conductors) to build skills allowing progression (through application) to highly competitive programmes (e.g. MMus in Conducting.) Increasing the diversity of the PGT student body promotes inclusive approaches to teaching and learning and offers a richer experience to all students. Introduction of a new module featuring underrepresented music and musicians from 2024-25 allows students to build on their own interests in promoting music involving underrepresented groups of musicians, encouraging a variety of assessment options, including performance. Promoting more music by underrepresented composers in students' recitals etc. has involved ongoing discussion with students and Heads of School in particular, and Postgraduate Taught Degrees Committee (PTDC) monitors repertoire from year to year. The discussion of repertoire performed by students can raise awareness among staff and students alike. In 23-24 Final Recitals 25%.

As we move to develop our new Strategic Plan, EQC will be asked to reflect on ways that we can take our BEDI work in the three areas above (curriculum, pedagogy, strategy) forward.



1.2.3 Research and Knowledge Exchange Supporting Strategy

Belonging, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (BEDI) is embedded into the framework of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy 2021-2026, reflecting the institution's broader commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive environment. During 24/25, we consolidated the policy reviews of the previous year and implemented key changes.

Promoting Diversity in Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE)

The RKE Strategy highlights the importance of promoting diversity in opinions and voices and seeks to engage diverse communities through knowledge exchange activities. Staff and student involvement in curating research training and research events is encouraged through committees and structures.

To foster our inclusive Research Environment:

- We trialled more discussion and interactive spaces to provide peer support and to address a number of current topics in research in an inclusive and safe environment. Topics included under-representation and neurodiversity. These sessions were well received and will continue in 25/26.
- We assembled a REF working group to work on our Code of Practice to ensure all voices are represented, regardless of career stage, research experience or other
- We increased the accessibility of our research through the implementation of a new Research Management system. This makes our research and KE easily findable and widely accessible.
- We commenced a review of our Research Centres so as to ensure that equal opportunities are given to different research fields through showcases, online and in person visibility and funding while aligning with the RNCM's overall priorities. This review will continue in autumn 2025 and will involve consultation with a wide and diverse number of researchers.
- In 24/25, we reviewed, consulted on and implemented changes to our PGR training to make this more accessible. While the RNCM does not offer a remote PhD programme, these adjustments to training acknowledge access needs for those with caring responsibilities etc.
- We invited a guest speaker and trainer for sessions on neurodiversity in particular in the PhD journey. Training was accessed by a large number of supervisors and take-aways have started to be implemented. During 25/26, under the leadership of the incoming Head of Doctoral Programmes, we will work towards new systems of establishing PGR supervision patterns that are fully inclusive while aligned with the vita framework for researcher development.

Research activity encompasses projects driven by a diverse pool of partitioners far beyond staff with 'significant responsibility for research' (to use the Research Excellence Framework terminology) so as to foster an inclusive research environment and diverse outputs.

Examples include:

- Work with our Museum and Archive collections including the successful application for a Collaborative Doctoral Award that looks into the under-represented stories of the collections, address its collection history (particularly the difficult histories of collecting and curating non-western instruments), and conceive of inclusive ways of sharing the collection's stories widely. This project will run for 3 years alongside the wider collection work.
- Community engagement around music for persons living with Parkinsons that brought together patients, their relatives, researchers, composers and performers.
- Expanding the pool of under-represented researchers at PGR level in line with North West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership (NWCDTP) policies (which

we actively contributed to shaping); continuous monitoring of PGR feedback with particular attention to that from global majority or neurodiverse applicants and students.

- Supporting the continued research that underpins RNCM's initiatives to engage young people and under-served communities such as the Engage programme through research time, financial support for conferences and other sharing platform, and publication subvention as applicable.
- Encouraging projects on under-represented composers and performers and providing ongoing support for researchers working in these areas to develop their efforts along multiple public outputs across performances, digital platform materials, and articles to monographs.

Supporting Access to Research and Knowledge Exchange activity through policies and processes

In 2023-2024, we reviewed a number of policies and processes including the Research Leave Policy; the Research Activity Reviews; application and decision-making processes for the Internal Research Fund and for RKE activity organisation and support. Work on these was driven by the over-riding goal to ensure equitable access to college resources through improved access and transparency so as to attract a broader pool of applications for a wider range of projects. During 2024-25, we embedded and consolidated the use of these policies. In addition, we reviewed the Professorial Title Policy (ongoing) to ensure that this offers progression routes for a variety of researchers.

1.2.4 Human Resources BEDI Objectives (including Staff Survey overview)

The Human Resources team delivered and was responsible for equality interventions during 2024/25 academic year. These were delivered in response to identified need and in support of the College's strategic aims.

2025 Staff Survey

During February and March 2025, the College in conjunction with People Insight, conducted its second staff engagement survey and achieved a 69% (356) response rate. The results, as they were in the previous 2023 survey were very strong, achieving an excellent 88% engagement score, qualifying the RNCM for People Insight's Higher Education Outstanding Workplace award for the second consecutive time (HEI benchmark 73%).

A report on equality related themes was presented and discussed with members of the BEDI Forum in October 2025.

There were five equality related questions as part of the staff engagement survey and the overall results were that 73% responded favourably, a 2% increase from the 2023 survey. (19% neutral and 8% not favourably). Four of the five questions resulted in an increase from our 2023 results, with one question, 'I can be my true self at work' showing a 3% reduction (78% favourable). The lower score was a reflection of professional services staff responses. Further analysis and discussion will be carried out with BEDI Forum members with a view to identifying and agreeing any College-wide actions necessary.



Following the publication of the results, line managers in consultation with their staff will develop and implement action plans to address equality related themes within their areas of responsibility.

Staff training

Training undertaken which supports the BEDI principles during 2024/25 includes:

- Road to resilience and Coping with Change
- Gender identity awareness
- Lunch & Learn - Menopause awareness
- Racial bias awareness
- Recruitment and selection (including equality considerations)
- Domestic violence awareness
- Unconscious bias and Managing reasonable adjustments (for chairs of recruitment panels)
- New starters receive training on Tackling sexual harassment in the workplace, Safer universities, and Introduction to UK equality legislation as part of their induction
- Tackling sexual harassment in the workplace

Online training continues to be available for staff on a self-enrolment basis:

- Active bystander
- Resilience
- Spotting mental health red flags
- Neurodiversity - an introduction for staff

Review of the Disability Confident Commitments and Health Adjustment Passports

The RNCM is signed up to the Disability Confident Scheme and our commitments as scheme members are reviewed on an annual basis. As part of the most recent review we updated guidance to the job application page regarding Health Adjustment Passports (a document that job seekers can use to record details of their disability and adjustments that may help with interviews) and how they can be submitted alongside job applications.

Access to Work support

The HR team continued to investigate and facilitate support for a number of existing staff with a disability and several other staff continued to receive ongoing support during 2024/25. This included specialist equipment, staff training and the engagement of support workers.

Whilst 2023/24 saw a significant increase in support being facilitated through Access to Work, 2024/25 has been more about the upkeep and administration of the process. There are 2 support workers already in place that have continued to support employees during the academic year.

In 2024/25 we have had 2 staff members successfully apply for support workers and 1 staff member successfully apply for specialist equipment and staff training. We have also had 1 staff member re-apply for funding and are currently awaiting the outcome.

We also received government guidance on how Access to Work may change in the coming years, and this is something we are making support users aware of should any discussions of re-application arise. We will continue to monitor this situation especially as the proposals being considered by Government included was shifting costs for equipment to employers, hard caps on support worker rates, and tightening rules for support.

1.2.5 Development and Equity Fundraising Activity

The Development Team have worked to secure two endowed BEDI awards to be given to students in perpetuity:

The **Lucy Hale Award**, established in 2023, specifically supports disabled and neurodiverse students with an annual £5,000 distribution to support their music making. In January '25, the second annual **Lucy Hale Award** was given to two second year Master's students, Ilana Tapper (viola) and Noa Nishizawa (baritone horn). Ilana Tapper has hypermobility in her fingers and hands, requiring splints, so the award enabled her to purchase much-needed silver ring splints which allow her to play and practice more comfortably and effectively. Noa suffers from hearing loss in both ears, and having purchased her hearing aids at great expense, she was unable to buy her principal instrument, but the award has enabled her to do that.

'The one thing I've always wanted to do is to play viola, but my disabilities like to make it tricky. I'm excited to see where I can take my playing with the new splints and I'm really grateful for the support.' Ilana Tapper

Noa was also separately awarded £2,000 through the **RNCM Creative Innovators**

Award for *See the Sound, Play the Music!*, a project she designed to make musical experiences more accessible for people with hearing loss through visual elements, providing new ways to engage with rhythm, pitch, and dynamics.

£30,285 was raised this year for the **Williams-Howard Prize** which celebrates the study and performance of art songs by composers of the African diaspora. With total funds raised for the Prize surpassing the critical £50,000 milestone (£60,750 to date), it has been endowed to continue in perpetuity, supporting emerging young artists and championing underrepresented voices in classical music for generations to come. This achievement is particularly poignant this year as it came soon after the passing of the prize's founder, the much-loved Michael Harper, who worked tirelessly to establish and promote the prize and its values. Alongside monetary prizes for six students, winners received bespoke coaching and performed at Buxton International Festival.

'I'm so grateful to be studying at an institution that celebrates the exquisite but often rarely heard music by composers of African heritage.' Esther Shea, winner of the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor First Prize at the Williams-Howard Prize 2025

Scholarships and Bursaries

This year, a number of continuing and new scholarships and bursaries supporting BEDI at the RNCM were distributed.

We established a full-fee scholarship to support female talent in partnership with creative technologist Manon Dave and championed by world-renowned global music artist, will.i.am. The Maia Dave Scholarship provides £10,000 per year to support to a first-year **female undergraduate student or person who identifies as female** entering the RNCM's Popular Music school with fees and study costs. The first recipient is multi-instrumentalist Lucy McKenzie.

We maintained **student support for specific international regions** with two postgraduate students from India, supported through the British Council GREAT Scholarships.

Distributed through the RNCM Student Awards fund, the **RNCM Humanitarian Support Fund** (formerly the RNCM Ukrainian Musicians Fund) provided essential support to eight undergraduate and postgraduate students across the Schools of Keyboard Studies, Strings, Vocal Studies and Opera, and Wind, Brass, and Percussion.

Our work with young people through RNCM Engage

Sony Music UK's Social Justice Fund (established to support projects which address injustice and racism) funded the third year of **RNCM Young Artists**, ensuring the project extended RNCM's reach to new young participants - 38% Global Majority Ethnicity and 55% IMD Quintiles 1 and 2, encouraging young people from non-traditional backgrounds to enter higher education. Additionally, 81% of parents/carers agreed or strongly agreed that RNCM Young Artists programme had decreased isolation and improved wellbeing of their Young Artists participant.



'XX used to be quite shy and anxious and hide her talent from others. Now she sees like-minded people and is coming out of her shell, both musically and socially.'

Owing to their funding guidelines, this marked the final year of support for this project from Sony Music UK's Social Justice Fund. To ensure the continued sustainability of the project, support has been successfully secured from The Leverhulme Trust, Richer Sounds Foundation, and The Karlsson Játiva Charitable Foundation. Following the project's third year, three young people successfully gained places on RNCM's highly competitive BMus Popular Music undergraduate degree course.

Appeals and Collective Giving

The **RNCM Annual Appeal**, which this year focussed on strengthening student support through our *Access to Learning Fund*, raised over £40,000, with £15,000 allocated to establishing a new 'opportunity fund' and 'virtual food larder'. These new initiatives each remove financial barriers so that students can take part in invaluable artistic enrichment projects with their peers – from masterclasses with visiting artists to side-by-side orchestral projects with professional ensembles.

'The Access to Learning Fund is a lifeline to students. We want to access absolutely everything the RNCM has to offer, and this fund has never been more essential.'
Sophie Iliaifar, RNCM Students' Union President 2024-25

The RNCM Principal's Circle group of donors provided £3,000 to fund the second and final year of sitarist **Jasdeep Singh Degun's residency** as RNCM Innovate Fellow, working with students to enhance their understanding of musical cultures outside the Western tradition, teaching them new ways of working through workshops and collaborative projects.

2. Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Framework

2.1 The Legislative Framework

The Equality Act 2010 introduced legislation which seeks to end discrimination. The College complies with the specific duties of the Equality Act, which are:

- Publish information to demonstrate its compliance with the general equality duty. This must include information relating to people who share a protected characteristic who are its employees or people affected by its policies and practices.
- Prepare and publish one or more objectives that it thinks it needs to achieve to further any of the aims of the general equality duty.
- The objectives must be specific and measurable.

The College is fully committed to meeting its duties under the Equality Act, which will be monitored by the BEDI Forum, whilst also identifying good practice and championing innovation.

2.2 Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023

The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 introduced a new legal duty on employers to proactively prevent sexual harassment in the workplace by taking "reasonable steps" to do so. The Act, which came into force on 26 October 2024. This means all employers are now required to take proactive steps to prevent sexual harassment.

In response an action plan has been created by the College that mirrors the Equality and Human Rights Commission's (EHRC) 8-step guide for employers on sexual harassment in the workplace. These guides help employers to understand their legal responsibilities in relation to:

- harassment, victimisation and the preventative duty
- the steps they should take to prevent harassment and victimisation at work
- what they should do if harassment or victimisation occurs.

An agile internal audit was carried out in August 2025 by the College's appointed auditors who will prepare a report for the College's Audit Committee in the autumn term.

Existing arrangements, along with the additional actions identified in response to this legislation aim to ensure we eliminate any unlawful or unfair discrimination and promote belonging in a diverse and inclusive community.

2.3 Gender Pay Gap

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, employers with 250 or more employees must publish gender pay gap information every year. [Royal Northern College of Music gender pay gap data for 2023-24 reporting year - GOV.UK - GOV.UK \(gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/royal-northern-college-of-music-gender-pay-gap-data-for-2023-24-reporting-year)

Gender Pay Gap calculations are based on RNCM payroll data from a specific date each

year, known as the **'snapshot date'**. Data is published every year within 12 months of the snapshot date. The gender pay gap measures the difference between average **(median)** hourly earnings of men and women, usually shown by the percentage men earn more than women.

The workforce at the 'snapshot date' of **31 March 2024** was 518 full-pay relevant employees, which is made up by 274 (53%) men and 244 (47%) women.



Analysis

- The RNCM's median gender pay gap had been 0% since the introduction of the reporting requirement in 2017 but **has increased to 12% in 2024**.
- The RNCM's **mean (10.6%) gender pay gap has increased for the first time** – between the introduction of reporting in 2017 and 2023 there had been a continuous downward trend.
- ONS reports that the gender pay gap decreased to 13.1% in April 2024, down from 14.2% in April 2023. This means that **the RNCM pay gap is still lower than the UK average**.
- As a small institution, relatively small changes in the data can impact the % pay gap data.
- The **enhanced part-time hourly rate means that there is a large span of rates of pay**, in the reporting period these ranged from £11.18 to £37.73 for salaried staff and up to £68.90 for part-time hourly paid staff. There are a small number of staff on personal rates of pay that do not sit within the grading structure.

- The changes in the data this year which have contributed to the overall RNCM gender pay gap are:
 - High volume of female staff newly appointed in Professional Services roles which sit at the lower end of the grading structure (therefore shifting the overall female median rate downwards).
 - A small number of Academic PTHP staff moving to fractional contracts, therefore the hourly rate is the salaried rate and not the enhanced PTHP rate.

- The **median gender pay gap for Professional Services staff remains 0%**, the HERA job evaluation process in place for Professional Services roles supports the achievement of this – the grade is based on the duties required in the role and not the individual undertaking the role which supports equal pay.

- **The median gender pay gap for Academic staff is 8.13%, an increase from 1.78%** in the previous reporting period.
 - Of the 164 members of staff whose rate is at the male median rate of £44.30, 101 are male and 63 are female.
 - The Academic Grading Review process requires staff to submit an application to provide evidence that demonstrates their skills and experience which is considered by a panel which includes external representation. While the process is robust and compares applications against the agreed grading profiles, research indicates that women are less likely to put themselves forward for promotion. In the application round affecting the reporting period, 3 of the 8 applications were from female staff.
 - While the median gender pay gaps of individual schools are often in favour of the female rate, the higher proportion of male staff over all within the schools will have an impact on the spread of rates of pay.

Recommendations

- Discussions with Heads of Schools ahead of the next Academic Grading Review window to encourage applications from suitable female staff whose skills and expertise suggest they should be considered for promotion.
- Positive action measures will be considered and used where appropriate during recruitment and selection campaigns to encourage applications from more female academic staff.
- Continuation of Recruitment and Selection training, and specific Unconscious Bias training for recruitment panel Chairs.
- As this is the first year in which a gap has emerged, and that given our size small changes can have an impact on the data, the findings of the snapshot data for 31st March 2025 should be compared with 2024 and further actions explored if appropriate.

3. Staff

3.1 Access to Work Scheme (ATW) and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

As in previous years during the 2024/25 academic year the College has continued to support staff through funding available via Access to Work, a publicly funded employment support programme that aims to help more disabled people start or stay in work. It aims to provide practical and financial support for employees if they have a disability or long term physical or mental health condition. The College contributes towards the total cost of approved support with ATW making up the difference. Over the past twelve-month period the College the financial support received has contributed towards the following support;

- new support workers onboarded and in place for the 24/25 academic year
- £344 for specialised IT hardware and equipment for academic and professional services support users
- £244 for specialised IT software for academic and professional services support users to access and utilise
- £1,977 for training on aforementioned specialised IT software and training sessions for academic and professional services support users.

The support available for staff through ATW continues to be promoted to all staff.

3.2 Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

Health Assured EAP is a free confidential employee benefit designed to help staff deal with personal and professional problems that could be affecting their home life or work life, health, and general wellbeing.

The EAP service provides a complete support network that offers expert advice and compassionate guidance 24/7, covering a wide range of issues. We provide an EAP service that offers not only reactive support when someone needs it but also proactive and preventative support to deliver the best possible outcomes.

The service also includes access to the 'Wisdom' app which provides live chat functionality, four week plans, mini health checks and a mood tracker.

Practical information and emotional support that is available

- **Life support:** Access to counselling for emotional problems and a pathway to structured therapy sessions (employees only) at your convenience.
- **Legal information:** For issues that cause anxiety or distress including debt management, consumer, property or neighbour disputes (employees only).
- **Bereavement support:** Health Assured offers qualified and experienced counsellors who can help with grief plus legal advisors to help with related legal matters.
- **Medical information:** Qualified nurses are on hand to offer support on a range of medical or health-related issues offering practical information and advice.
- **Online CBT:** We recognise the value of self-help tools in dealing with a range of issues, which is why we have a range of CBT self-help modules, informative fact sheets and invaluable advice videos from leading qualified counsellors.

3.3 Staff Health and Staff Wellbeing Hub

The staff wellbeing group continued to champion wellbeing in the workplace, highlights in the academic year 24/25 include:

- Introduction of the Staff Wellbeing Framework
- Staff wellbeing week with activities and awareness raising throughout the week of 17-21 February 2025
- Continuation of the Gratitude is an Attitude thank you scheme
- Tea & talk for World Mental Health Day
- Financial wellbeing online sessions
- Celebration of International Men's Day and International Women's Day, including opportunities to share stories about inspirational colleagues
- Tours of the roof garden by members of the gardening group

3.4 Reward and Recognition / Academic Promotions - Monitoring

Professional services staff applications - equality analysis

There were 6 nominations put forward during 2024/25 through the College's Reward and Recognition procedure. 2 nominations were received for the same employee, 1 was approved and 1 rejected.

There was a gender split of 80% Male and 20% Female (2023/24 57% Female and 42% Male), whilst the spread across age groups was fairly even. Numbers are low and fluctuate year on year which makes it difficult to provide statistical insight. No nominated staff had declared a disability.

Academic Staff Grading Review - equality analysis

There were 4 applications during 2024/25 all of which were approved. Numbers were too low to provide any statistical insight, but none of the applicants declared a disability.



4. Students

4.1 Supporting Student Success

Having achieved 'Substantial Assurance' from UNIAC as a result of a recent audit, the Student Health and Wellbeing Hub continues to provide and develop a holistic approach to Wellbeing Services and embedding Wellbeing education in the curriculum. A particular strength of our student support model is the collaboration with Academic Services, the Programmes and Schools, and the Students' Union, enabling a proactive approach to monitoring student engagement and identifying students at risk of disengagement via the Student Engagement Monitoring Group. This continues to be a team effort, requiring staff from across the College to collaborate on referring issues, sign-posting students, providing information, support and interventions to ensure students' are successful.

4.2 Student Health and Wellbeing Hub

The Student Health and Wellbeing Hub supported students via its whole-person and whole-institution approach. This included specialist in-house services, referrals to external services and cross-College collaboration with academic and professional services staff and the Students' Union. In each case, the aim was to support student flourishing regardless of circumstances or background. Pilot interventions included a series of wellbeing workshops for PGR students that will be offered again in 2025-26.

Regarding communications and policy work, the Hub launched a termly bulletin for staff and presented to Extended Executive on the implications of the University of Bristol vs Abrahart ruling. The Hub team drafted the Student Health and Wellbeing Policy and the Health and Wellbeing Hub Support Overview (approved July 2025) and now sends its annual report directly to EQC.

In terms of partnership working, a network of heads of wellbeing services of CUK partners met at the College in July and established a set of principles for continued collaboration. Hub staff represented the College at the Greater Manchester Universities Student Mental Health Service and the University of Manchester Multi-Faith Chaplaincy Network, and at the launch of new guidance on restricting access to means. They also attended events organised by Universities UK, RLPO's Musicians Performance and Wellbeing Network and the HE Mental Health Implementation Taskforce.

Resource uplift has permanently increased the Counselling Service hours from 36 to 48 hours per week for 40 weeks a year, and the Health and Wellbeing Fund has increased. Finally, staff training has helped to solidify the support on offer: two personal tutors (BMus and BMus Popular Music) and two Orchestras and Ensembles staff undertook Mental Health First Aid training.

4.3 Support for students with disabilities and long term conditions

Profile of students using the Disability and Wellbeing Service: Any student who has declared a disability/condition that may affect their studies is offered the opportunity to set up a Personal Learning Plan (PLP). A PLP details their condition and the effect it has across all areas of their learning, both performance and academic. It also incorporates any reasonable adjustments that the College is required to make in order to support them, such as extra time in examinations.

Academic Year	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Total PLP's issued	137	105	112	121	136	145

The breakdown according to sector-standard disability categories was as follows:

Disability Type	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Specific learning difficulty SpLDs	66	67	74	90	98	116
Mental health condition	80	68	49	59	71	86
Longstanding illness/health condition	26	27	21	22	27	37
Sensory impairment	4	3	5	5	5	5
Social/communication conditions E.G autistic spectrum condition/ADHD	12	8	15	21	32	41
Physical and/or mobility impairment	3	8	6	2	7	9

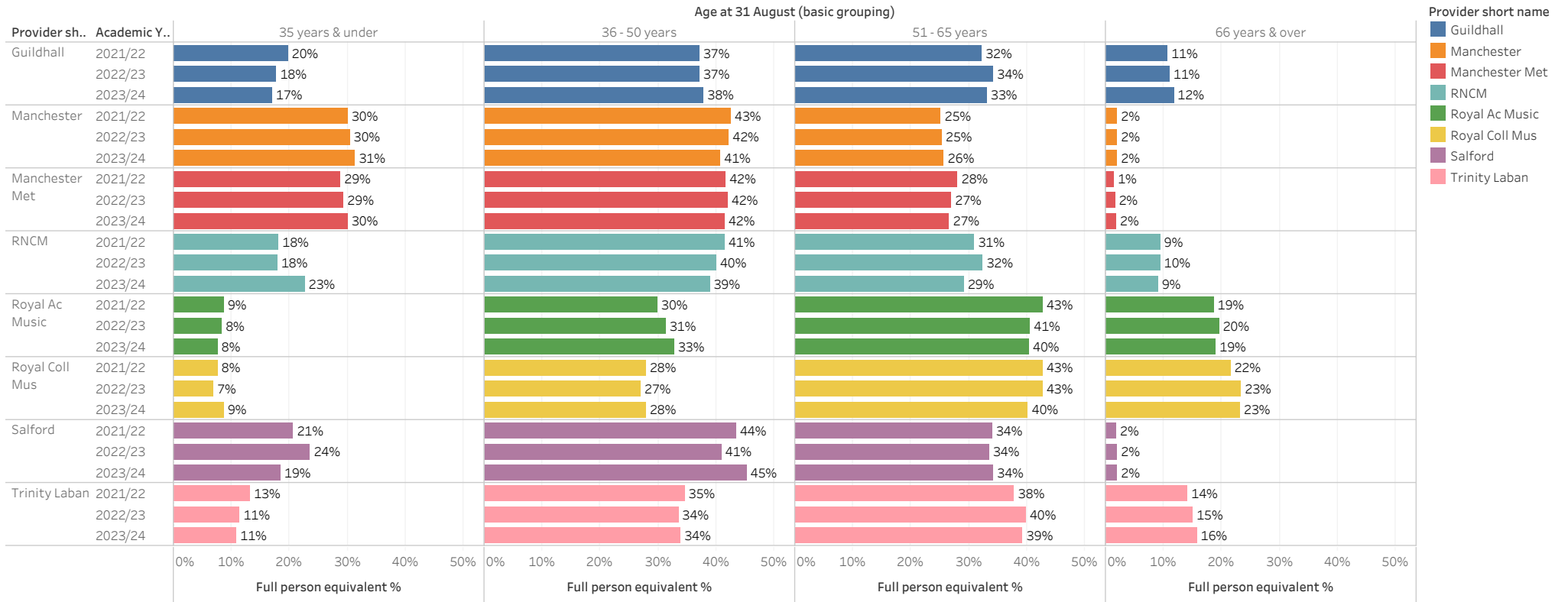
The number of students reporting neurodivergent and mental health difficulties continues to rise. We hope that the recent increase in counselling provision will help to reduce waiting times. The team also continues to offer guidance to students who suspect they may be neurodivergent, particularly for ADHD and Autism assessments, acknowledging the long waiting times for formal NHS diagnoses. This reflects ongoing challenges across both the higher education sector and wider society.

5. Reporting Progress in 2025/2026

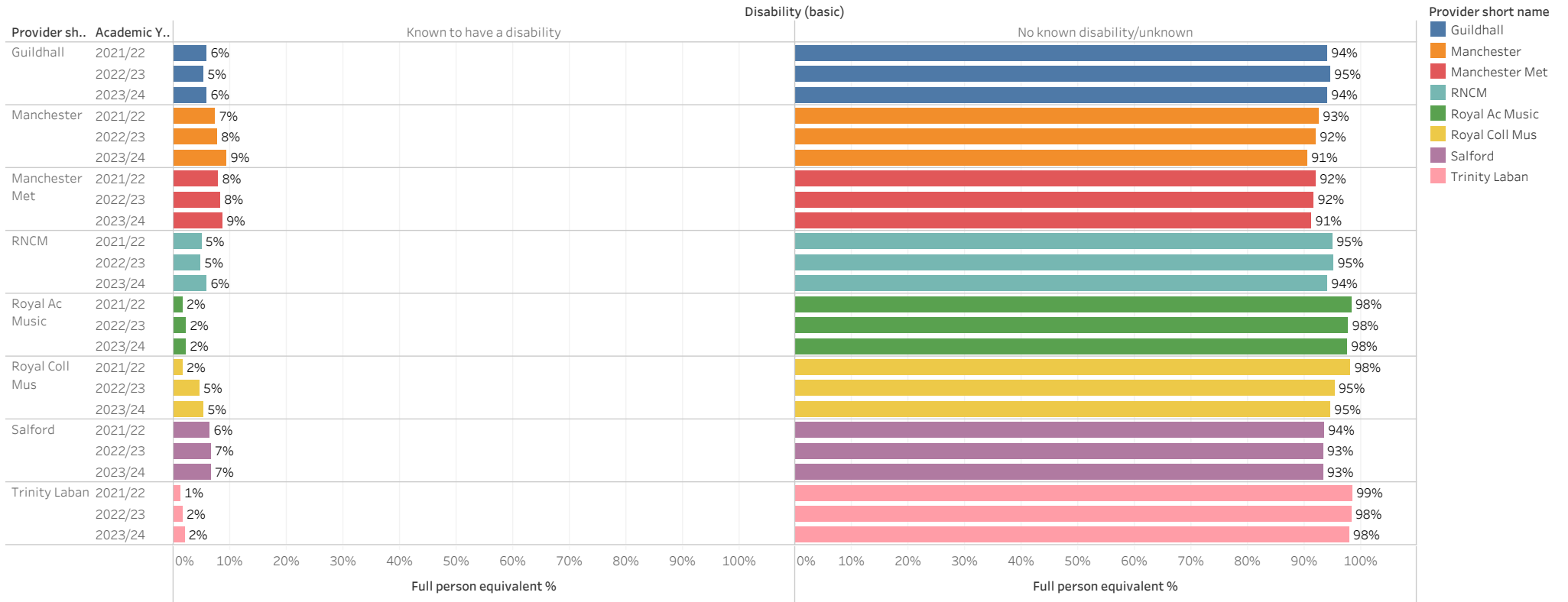
The College remains committed to ensure we make progress against the objectives set out in our BEDI Policy and each of the Supporting Strategies for Research, Education and our Artistic Strategy, particularly the targets set out in the Access and Participation Plan (APP). We will also continue to report on progression of the HR Objectives and Development and Fundraising activity.

Next year's report will focus on the targeted activity around consent training for students and further embedding the new OFS Condition of Registration: Preventing and Responding to Sexual Misconduct which commenced from 1st August 2025, alongside the Workers Protection Act for Staff, which requires employers to take steps to eradicate sexual harassment in the workplace. We will continue to focus on supporting students with Neurodiversity and continue our commitment to working in partnership with students and our community to celebrate and explore diversity through the model of cross college engagement.

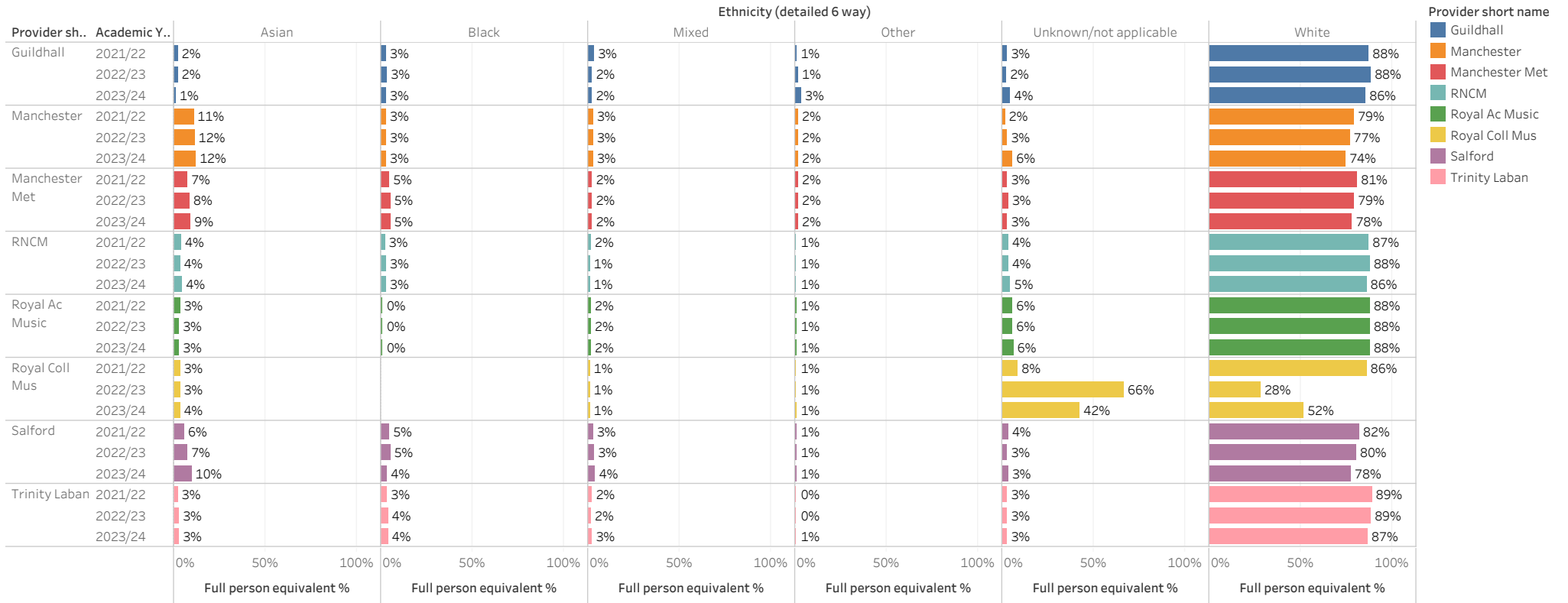
2025 Staff by Age



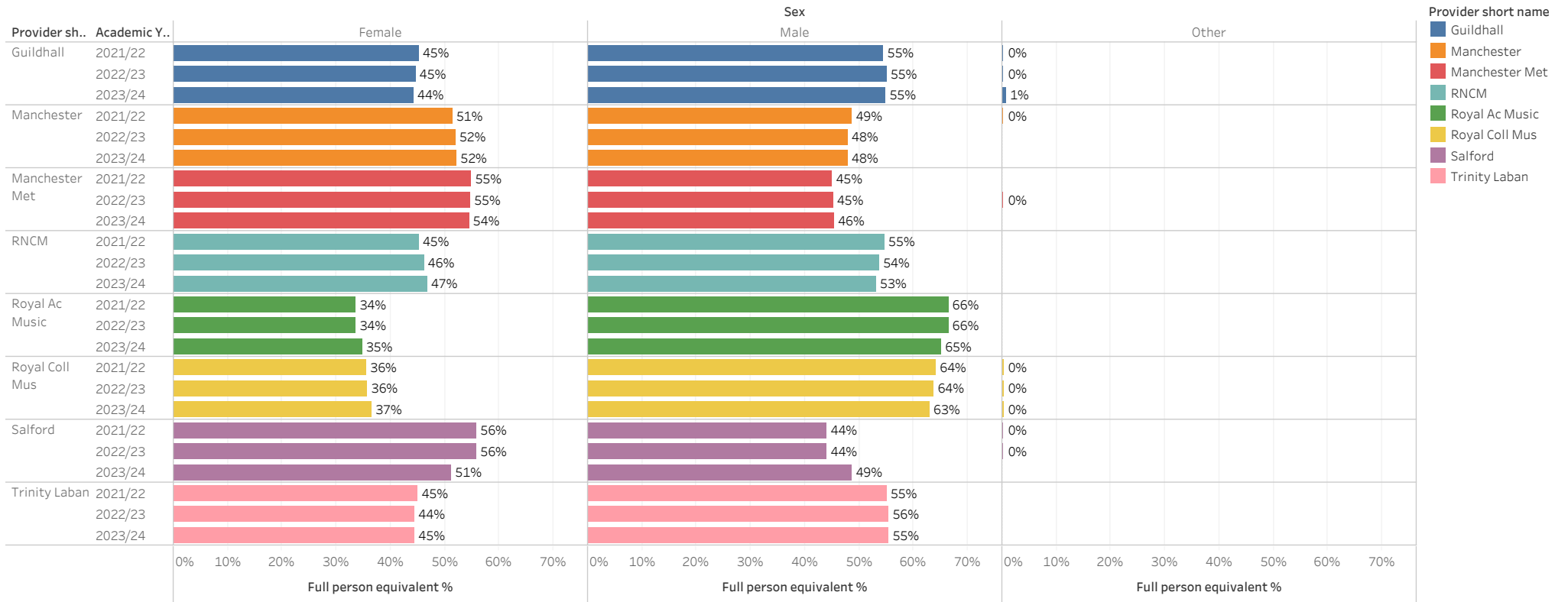
2025 Staff by Disability



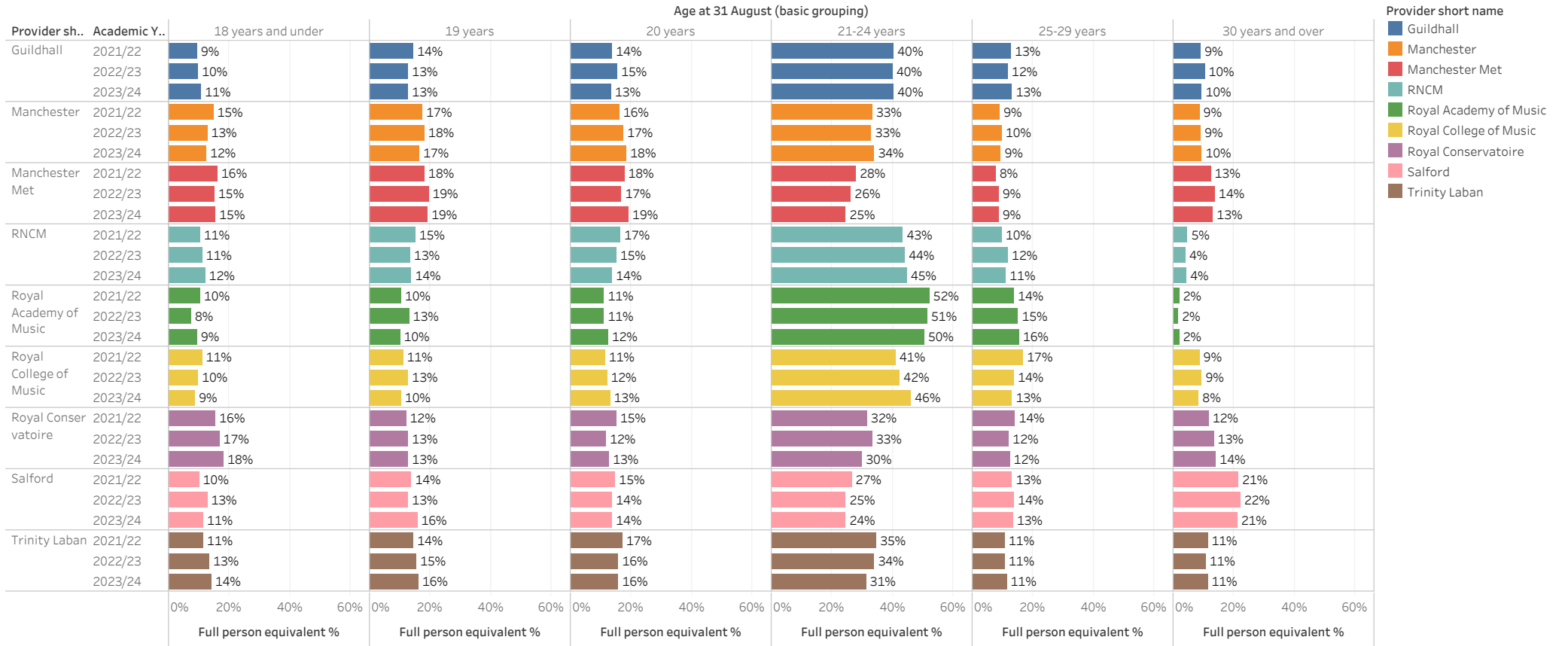
2025 Staff by Ethnicity



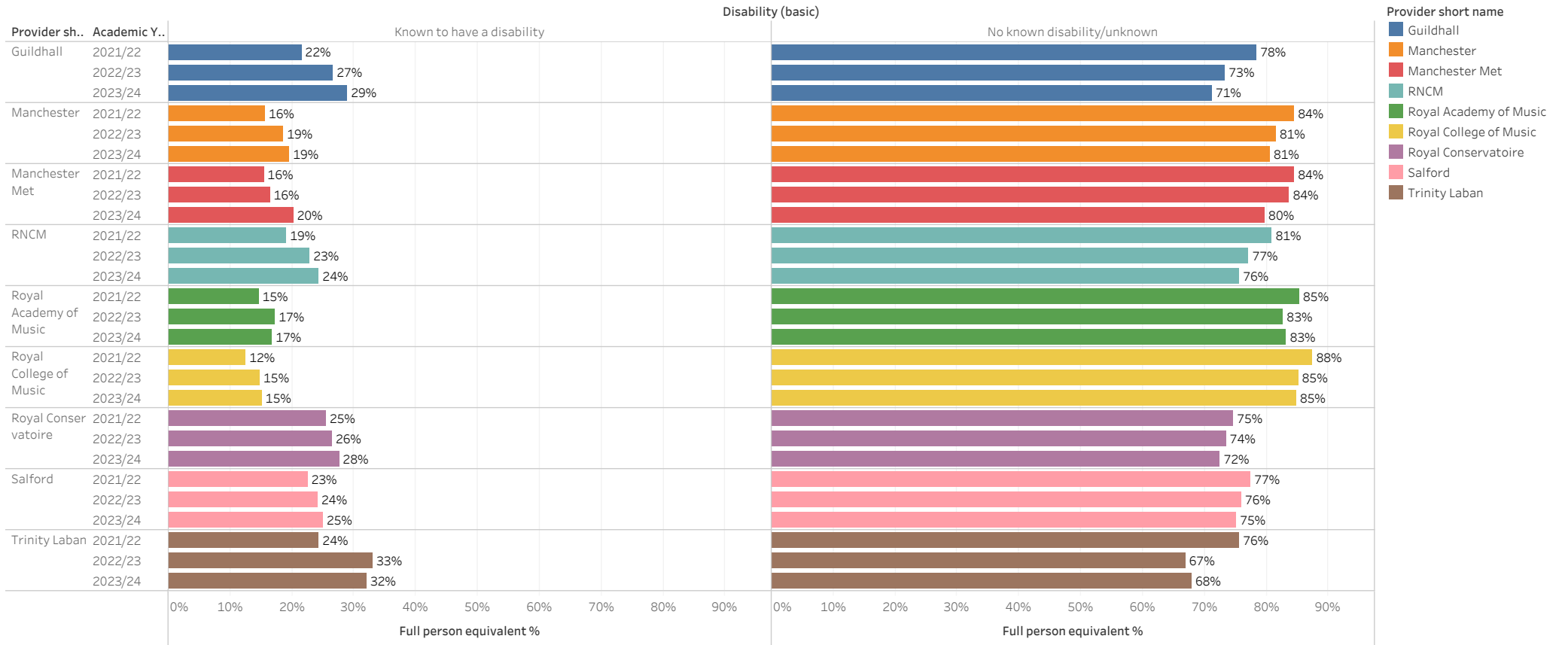
2025 Staff by Sex



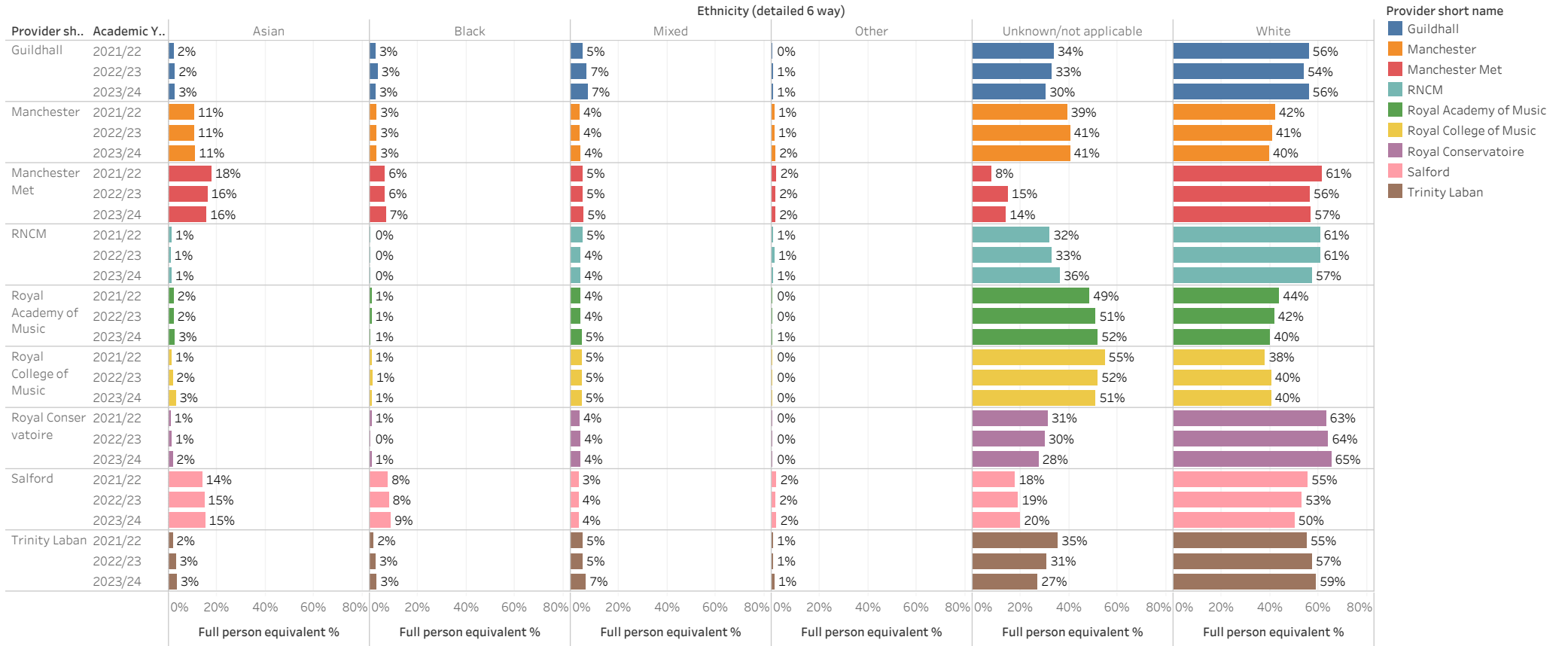
2025 Student by Age



2025 Student by Disability



2025 Student by Ethnicity



- Provider short name**
- Guildhall
 - Manchester
 - Manchester Met
 - RNCM
 - Royal Academy of Music
 - Royal College of Music
 - Royal Conservatoire
 - Salford
 - Trinity Laban

2025 Students by Sex

