

Leeds City Council – our ongoing improvement journey

Stories



Equality framework for local government
November 2015

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Knowing your communities

Allotments and Equality Monitoring

Leeds City Council wanted to ensure that issues of equality were being considered on allotments, e.g. when considering general accessibility, managing waiting lists and serving eviction notices. To assist this process, an Equality allotment questionnaire was distributed in 2013.

From those who responded, the survey results showed the following: 23% of allotment holders have a mental health condition; 3.1% have a physical impairment; users are predominately male. Also, many allotment sites are reliant on using temporary chemical toilet facilities; there was a need for better toilet facilities and to provide better access for those with mobility issues.

The results were shared with the self-managed allotment associations who were encouraged to be aware that a percentage of their allotment plot holders would likely have a mental health condition and to take this into consideration with any communication with plot holders. The associations were able to use the results to help them review and improve their procedures and allotment rules to create improved access to allotments from all groups of people.

Some sites also used the equality data analysis and the value and importance of allotment sites to secure grant funding for better toilet facilities.

Localities – Domestic Violence update

In response to the City wide Domestic Violence Strategy and action plan the Inner South locality wanted to know the issues experienced within their area to enable them to respond with appropriate local action.

In September 2014, members participated in a domestic violence workshop which brought together participants from a range of partners. These partners included: Housing Leeds; Asha; Hamara Centre; Leeds Domestic Violence Team; Leeds Safeguarding Team; West Yorkshire Police; the JESS; Beeston, Cottingley, Middleton clusters; members of the public from across the inner south area.

After a brief presentation about the new city wide Domestic Violence Strategy and action plan, and a flavour of the domestic violence issues affecting inner south Leeds the group split into three discussion groups covering each of the three wards which make up inner south: City and Hunslet; Beeston and Holbeck; Middleton Park

Participants welcomed the opportunity and space to talk about domestic violence and abuse and the way it manifests itself in relationships. A particular challenge identified was recognising domestic violence and abuse in a relationship including: controlling behaviour in relationships between young people; emotional and financial control in a relationship; intergeneration violence and abuse; domestic abuse for individuals living in extended families; the way domestic violence and abuse manifests in different communities who make up inner south Leeds.

Following the workshop, a local action plan was produced that would involve partner engagement including local communities and members of the public

Well being - Hunslet Methodist Church - Wednesday morning drop in

The weekly breakfast and activity club was established in October 2012, initially in response to local parents who expressed the need for a local play group. The main aim was to reduce isolation in the community by offering a warm, safe environment the club is unique in the area catering for pre-school children and their parents/ grandparents/ carers and isolated older people regularly attracting 30 + people each week of all ages.

A typical session would have babies and toddlers as well as older people. A free simple breakfast is provided and we have some basic toys and equipment, much of it second hand, for the pre-school children. Pre-owned clothing and household goods are given away, as and when we have them. Interaction between the differing age groups is visible and our older guests enjoy watching the children at play.

The Drop In is open throughout the school holidays, which is much appreciated by cash strapped families. Whatever the weather, the younger children are able to exercise by riding around the large hall on trikes and scooters, which is so beneficial for their health and development. During school holidays, the older siblings of our regular children attend and when funds have been available, we have been able to buy in the services of a childrens' entertainer to engage with them for a short period.

What really makes this Drop In unique is having the Foodbank which operates upstairs at the same time. The location and timing of this Foodbank session was chosen by the Project Manager specifically because of the Drop In. Foodbank clients are able to share a breakfast and the Drop In facilities and the Drop In can refer its users to Foodbank on the red voucher system if needed. With this symbiotic relationship operating, we are able to serve the community on many levels.

Migration Yorkshire – volunteer development

Great work from Migration Yorkshire in relation to volunteer development through the Integration Up North project, which has assisted 11 people to find a variety of work. 7 found full-time work, 2 found part-time work, 1 is working part-time and studying part-time and 1 is volunteering part-time.

The personal circumstances for volunteers have been varied for example: a qualified teacher from India; a student studying full-time and looking for part time work; individuals in receipt of benefits and looking for work; a software engineer looking for a change in career, very little English language – to name but a few.

Volunteering has enabled individuals to share their knowledge, experience and skills as well as extend their circles of friends creating wider social networks. Importantly people have been able to gain references from volunteering, some people have been able to access specific advice and support for completing application forms and preparing for interviews and others have accessed ESOL classes. Gaining employment either part-time or full time was a shared experience by everyone.

Public Health and Places of Worship

This is a collaborative project between academics, statutory and third sector organisations (including Faith Action), Public Health England, the local Faith Forum and the University of Leeds. It aims to support the delivery of Public Health interventions for people from minority ethnic communities within places of worship, particularly in area of high deprivation, with a high mix of Black and Minority Ethnic population and high adherence to a faith community.

The outcomes of research are yet to be shared and acted upon but in initiating the project the following can be said:

- Collaborative working has provided access to resources, communication and engagement channels and an infrastructure for decision making
- Learning has been gained from earlier initiatives that demonstrated how places of worship can be used to support delivery of Public Health interventions, such as: promoting health of congregations; profiling domestic violence and abuse – an event for Imams and mosque staff; sharing information about specific health topics
- Leeds faith leaders have been recognised as committed to and engaged with delivering suitable Public Health interventions at places of worship



Place shaping, Leadership, Partnership
and organisational commitment

Member Champions Working Group

One of the challenges for Leeds has been in overcoming any cross-party political differences to ensure progress and effect improved outcomes. The Member Champions Working Group was set up in 2011 with representation from all the main city-wide parties: Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Green.

Chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) the group provides space to discuss equality and diversity matters, including legislation that impacts on local government. Key roles of the group:

- Provide support and promote the development of the equality agenda for Elected Members
- Engage with communities in particular through the Councils 'Equality Assembly'
- Act as a political interface with key policy areas.

In particular, it acts as a forum to address and challenge progress against the council's equality priorities. This has led to an increased focus by directorates and services on equality outcomes and debates about some of the areas of equality which have traditionally received less focus.

Adopting Chatham House rules (where notes are produced but questions from Councillors are recorded anonymously and officers answers are not recorded) has led to open and robust conversations about challenging or difficult issues.

Better Lives for Older People: options for long-term residential and day care services

Overseen by the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board a review was undertaken of residential and day services for older people in Leeds. This took into account: significant reductions in resources available following the Governments Comprehensive Spending review published in 2011; national legislation, guidance and research, including independence, wellbeing, choice and transformation; national and local demographic data and current provision.

Importantly, consultation and engagement activities were able to gain the views and experiences of: residents; people using services; carers; families and friends; staff; community organisations, elected representatives, partners in the NHS, the voluntary and independent sectors and members of the general public.

The picture nationally and locally is of a population living longer and future generations of older people increasingly requiring their support to be delivered in their own homes. The overwhelming message from older people and their families can be summarised as people in residential and day services wanting to remain in their current locality, close to families and friends and the neighbours they are familiar with.

The outcomes of the review have included:

- A better understanding of the changing demographic profile of older people in the Leeds area
- A better understanding of the wishes and concerns of people who would/could be affected by any changes
- An indication that people agreed with proposals to create: new services as alternatives to residential and day services; specialist services aimed at preventing premature entry into residential and day services, and new services being developed in the independent sector

Tenant Empowerment

Previously, council houses in Leeds were managed by three Arms-Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) who set up a number of different ways for tenants to 'get involved'. These have continued since the ALMOs restructured in 2013 and housing returned to the council under a single department called Housing Leeds.

The following are examples of some of the activities that have taken place as a result of tenant involvement and empowerment:

Leeds Parent Champion Project: this was set up after it was identified that, within Burmantofts' large BME population, there was a need to improve parenting skills and improve cultural awareness. In summer 2014, the first of a number of 6-8 week courses were run in partnership with the Together Women's Project and facilitated by Total Families. Aimed at 16-45 year olds, participants said 'the parenting course was good', helped them 'improve parenting skills and build confidence to deal with their children's problems and behaviours'. It also led to the first 'Leeds Parenting Champions', parents agreeing to 'take action' and further courses to other groups across the city.

HUGO (Helping You Get Online): one question on the STAR survey (Customer Satisfaction Survey 2013) asked whether people had internet access in their homes. It highlighted that 50% of tenants citywide had internet access in their homes (not including mobile devices). In some areas (e.g. inner south) the figure was as low as 47%, illustrating the need for the HUGO project.

HUGO is a digitally enabled bus bringing an internet style cafe to the doorstep. It does this by flooding free Wi-Fi across each neighbourhood that it visits. The project, assisted by volunteers, was created in partnership with Leeds Federated, First Bus, Job Centre Plus, IGEN and Learning Partnerships.

Within the last 12 months this has resulted in: increased access to HUGO internet and digital support; increased on-line confidence for new internet users; supported 86 into full time work; created 16 new employment opportunities through networking; supported work experience and further training opportunities; supported 84 people into new business start-up opportunities and introduced 2 sheltered Vintage Digital Tea Parties with a 4 more planned for late 2015

Back to Front

Public Health is supporting residents to grow food in some of the most deprived but culturally vibrant areas of Leeds.

In 2009, Public Health consulted with over 400 people living in back-to-back housing communities. These are often 'born abroad' residents with some degree of knowledge about food growing but who may lack access to public food growing sites in the area. The results of the survey highlighted some of the key barriers for residents growing food, for example: small, paved, gardens with inadequate soil; a preference for flowers; fears of theft or vandalism.

A partnership project, Back to Front, obtained funding to develop training materials, create a website, design and construct three demonstration gardens and organize training for and with local people. In total, over 200 people were supported to use their front gardens to grow food. In addition, the Fewston Bridge communal garden was set up.

Informal feedback from service users indicates that the project is a success: some people are eating healthier; have expressed physical health benefits, positive mental health and wellbeing; have connected with neighbours and learnt new skills.

Every Disabled Child Matters Charter (EDCM)

Councillor Judith Blake signed the revised EDCM 'Local Authority Disabled Children's Charter' on behalf of the council enabling Leeds to fulfil its pact with disabled children and to put them at the heart of all future decisions which impact upon them. A comprehensive audit was undertaken to assess whether Children's Services and its key partners were meeting the commitment of the charter, which identified some areas for improvement.

A 'monitoring plan' was created, implemented, monitored and revised on a regular basis. Progress against the monitoring plan and the charter in general is reported regularly to the Complex Needs Partnership Board and Children's Trust Board .

As a result, the following areas for disabled children and their families have been improved:

- Better and additional short breaks.
- Joint working and a coordinated approach through disabled children working group.
- Access to child care for working parents of disabled children.
- Empowerment and participation through parents groups and forums.
- Early support and improved transition for disabled young people to adult services.
- A sub-group of disabled children under Leeds youth council to increase their voice and influence.

Families First Programme: Domestic violence / parental mental health issues

The circumstances in this particular household was a Mum who was addicted to prescription medication. She was struggling with parenting and needed support to apply behaviour strategies within the home, including bedtime routines. The family had financial issues and needed support to increase household income and ensure the house had appropriate beds / etc. for the children.

Mum had also experienced significant domestic violence from a former partner, some of which had been witnessed by her children. The emotional impact had led to school attendance issues and limited involvement in leisure activities. The extended family were supporting Mum and her children but had their own support needs too.

Intervention was led by the Health for All Families First keyworker and delivered by a range of partners. This intervention included: home visits; close working with the Targeted Services Leader; addiction support; self-esteem and confidence support; support to get job ready; support to the extended family; advice on health; access to social activities.

Positive outcomes from the interventions included:

- The children's presentation, attainment and attendance at school improved.
- A restraining order against the ex-partner was secured leading to improved personal safety for both Mum and her children
- The family are more financially stable.
- Mum is engaged in appropriate treatment for her substance misuse.
- Mum is continuing to engage with key worker support to enhance her approach to parenting in the home.

Domestic Violence: service redesign

Following research a successful joint bid was made to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Transformation Fund to re-design the delivery of domestic violence services. Named as the Front Door Safeguarding Hub, this service went live in May 2015 and brought together a range of partners.

Through their daily tasking meetings the Front Door Safeguarding Hub examines all high risk cases regardless of point of referral. Although it is still early days, the new model is already delivering improved outcomes for individuals, victims, families and communities impacted by domestic violence and abuse.

Leeds Children's Mayor Programme

The Children's Mayor Programme was introduced in response to consultation with over 2000 children and young people who said having a voice and influence was an important issue for them.

Each year, Year 6 pupils in primary schools are invited to write short manifesto expressing how they would improve Leeds if they were the Children's Mayor. These have to be based on the '12 Wishes' for a more child friendly Leeds. In 2014, over 600 pupils from across 32 schools wrote their manifestos. A panel of Youth Councillors, members from the Youth Parliament, Child Friendly Leeds Junior Advisors, ward councillors and the retiring Children's Mayor shortlisted the entries to ten. The manifestos of these were published and school children voted for their top three. A special reception evening was held in November inside the Council Chamber where the ten finalists read their manifestos to the assembled guests before the Lord Mayor announced the winner.

The newly elected Children's Mayor, Amy Eckworth-Jones, presented a deputation at a full council (to all 99 city councillors) in January 2015. The councillors voted unanimously for the idea 'Have fun, Play safe' which was then passed to the Executive Board and a report submitted that outlined how the council and partners could support the winning idea.

Outcomes of the programme:

- More children and young people feel they can make their voices heard and actively put their ideas into action
- Those 600 children who wrote their manifestos were thinking like active citizens and considered how their communities can help make Leeds into a better city
- Over 6,000 children and young people have taken part in a citywide democratic process equipping with an understanding and skills to be democratically engaged citizens of the future.

Out 2 18 and Transtastic

Young Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Questioning people, attending youth groups wanted safe space to be themselves and explore topics in relation to their sexual orientation and gender identity. Out 2 25 was set up (which became Out 2 18) and Transtastic then evolved for young transgender/gender variant people who did not necessarily identify as gay and had some different support needs.

Members from both groups have been involved in fun, supportive and influencing activities. Examples include:

- attending the Youth Pride Games in Manchester 2013.
- involved in the Safer Leeds campaign, developing materials relating to Domestic violence.
- attending a national bullying event.
- sharing personal experiences with others at the Equalities Assembly Conference 2014.
- attending the Gay Pride event in London with assistance from Stonewall.
- working with Blast - an organization who works with boys and young men around child sexual exploitation.
- working with the Leeds Art Gallery to promote awareness of LGBT Art during LGBT History month.
- carrying a banner with Yorkshire MESMAC for Leeds Pride'.
- working with the Fixers media project to produce a website for LGBTQ youths.
- inviting 'Leeds Involving Care' to speak to the groups about information sharing on medical forms.

Outcomes for young people involved in the groups include:

- learning skills that help them make informed choices and stay safe
- built confidence and self-esteem
- raised their own aspirations and the aspirations of others
- improved service provision for young LGBT people by challenging the way things are done

Takeover Day 2014

The Children's Commissioner's Takeover Day provides an opportunity for children and young people to get an insight into council decision making and to offer their input into those decisions.

On Friday 14 November 2014, two 15 year old pupils from Boston Spa School spent the day with James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) and Sarn Warbis (Senior Policy & Performance Officer). James has managerial oversight of a number of council owned community centres and the council has critical decisions to make about the future of these which will involve extensive consultation and engagement activities with all interested groups.

James, Sarn and the two pupils spent the day visiting a number of the community centres, some of which are leased to and run by third sector organisations. This was an opportunity to compare the facilities and activities provided within the individual community centres and to discuss the following with the centre managers: how they are funded and run; how they identify the activities and services to provide; how they link in with local communities and other organisations.

The pupils were able to ask questions and offer their observations on what they thought worked well and where provision did not meet the needs of the community, particularly in relation to potential use by teenagers. Their views and ideas provided a useful and unique insight that was used within the review of council community centres that is currently taking place.

Scrutiny of the equality impact assessment process

Some members of the Equalities Assembly felt that the EIA process resulted in some services and policies failing to fully give due regard to equality and diversity. They were concerned that, whilst due regard was given at the beginning of the process, it was not always fully considered throughout the whole process. They also felt that the council was not fully involving all equality groups in the whole EIA process.

After some members of the Equality Assembly's Disability Hub met with the Leader of the Council and senior managers, the Leader requested a scrutiny review of the EIA process. This scrutiny involved representation from each of the six Equalities Assembly hubs: Age; Black and Minority Ethnic (BME); Carers; Disability; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT); and Religion or Belief.

The review was held over two days. It enabled the scrutiny panel – made up of councillors from all political parties – to broaden their knowledge of the EIA process and the ways in which the council ensures that it pays due regard to equality issues relating to all goods, services and policies that affect the citizens of Leeds. Representatives from the equality hubs each had the opportunity to explain why they felt the EIA process was or was not fit for purpose.

At the end of the review the scrutiny panel agreed that they were satisfied with the EIA process, and that the council was meeting its legal duty of giving due regard to equality issues. In addition, the panel made some recommendations to enable the council to strengthen its approach. As a result, the following improvements have been made:

- An Access and Use-Ability Group has been established to influence planning decisions (in addition to existing consultation and engagement activities included within the planning process);
- Systems are in place for the Equality Team to report to Scrutiny Boards instances where an Executive Board Member has been advised that due regard has not adequately been considered during the decision-making process;
- Through specific and targeted training, the importance of consultation and involvement in the decision-making process is being reinforced for key decision-makers;
- The Equality Team continues to work on ways of ensuring that membership of the Equalities Assembly reflects the changing demographics of Leeds.

I have a better life....because of a blog

Blogging was introduced in the council in 2013 to ensure all available methods of communication, including social media, were being used by services to reach existing and potential customers. Despite initial teething problems, during the first three months after the launch we had 50 blog posts and 3,423 views

Increasing use of blogging, the Communication Team were interested in whether blogging was making a difference so one of the blogs they posted asked 'So does this blog work for you?'

It garnered the following response from a disabled customer: "I wouldn't have heard about DALES [a council funded service for the hard of hearing]. Now I can hear my doorbell and my neighbours aren't bothered by my TV".

Signing the Covenant between Religion or Belief Organisations and Leeds City Council

Following the partnership work with the University of Leeds in summer 2014, a report titled 'Leeds City Council - Taking Religion or Belief Seriously' was produced. It identified a number of key challenges for the council in engaging with religion or belief organisations and one of the recommendations was for the council to publish a clear strategy for engagement with religious communities.

Using information from the report, the Council worked with Leeds Faith Forum to amend a template designed by Faith Action for local authorities establishing formal engagement relationships with religion or belief organisations.

This has resulted in a Covenant for Leeds – a joint commitment between faith communities and the council that will practically focus on developing the following key areas of work:

- Sharing examples of work already being undertaken, in particular best practice.
- Ensure the council and the religion or belief sector share learning and development opportunities where possible.
- Provide clarity around the availability of support and funding from the council and Third Sector.
- Ensure the religion or belief sector take part fully in city wide and local community consultations to inform the delivery of public services.

All key religion or belief organisations, along with the council, have signed the Covenant. Leeds Faiths Forum is acting as the key delivery partner and a working group formed within the Third Sector Partnership to monitor the covenant.

The rise of social media use in housing

Council homes in Leeds were previously managed by three Arms-Length Management Organisations (ALMOs). In 2013 management of council homes returned to the council as a single body – Housing Leeds.

Prior to this, each ALMO had a Facebook page for the Social Housing Equality Framework, as well as a 24-page tenants' magazine distributed every three months. Under new arrangements, Housing Leeds distributes a 12-page magazine to tenants every 4 months. Aware of both the reduction in information being sent to tenants and the potential of a growing audience for information accessed digitally, Housing Leeds decided to promote and increase its use of social media.

To achieve this, Housing Leeds:

- Set up Housing Leeds Facebook and Twitter accounts;
- Advertised social media on leaflets and in the tenants' magazine;
- Contacted all Housing Leeds tenants with known email addresses, encouraging them to 'like' its Facebook page; and
- Produced business cards with QR codes for scanning on mobile phones, enabling quick and easy access to Housing Leeds Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Use of Facebook and Twitter enables Housing Leeds to:

- Engage with a diverse and growing audience;
- Promote housing campaigns, and issue-specific campaigns/days, such as National Housing Day;
- Celebrate religious and cultural events as they are happening;
- Promote partnership working, good news stories, up and coming community events;
- Promote community groups and events, and ways to get more involved in local community activity;
- Promote apprenticeships and job opportunities;
- Showcase tenant involvement through a tenant blog; and
- Directly answer questions from tenants who post on Facebook or Twitter

As a result, Housing Leeds has:

- Increased opportunities and channels through which tenants can engage directly with the council;
- Increased the number of tenants communicating directly with the council:
 - Facebook 'likes' almost doubled in the nine months to March 2015
 - Twitter had 877 followers by March 2015, with over 1200 tweets and retweets; and
- Maintained a range of communication methods, to ensure that the increase in digital communication does not exclude tenants who prefer more traditional methods.

Counselling in Children's Centres

Working with internal partners in 2013 and 2014, the Children's Services Commissioning team undertook the scoping and procurement of a new counselling services contract within Children's centres. The new service was intended to deliver an individual counselling service to parents and carers of children aged 0 to 5 years, thus enabling children to live in safe and supportive environments with parents who are able to maximise emotional health and wellbeing, and support and parent in the best possible way.

The Commissioning team wanted to be sure that any potential service providers had the capacity to deliver counselling services across a city the size of Leeds, in close partnership with other providers, and with a range of communities and neighbourhoods as diverse as those in Leeds. Services needed to be open to all beneficiaries within the target group, and it was particularly important for delivery of counselling services to be tailored to the needs of individuals who may experience multiple disadvantage in accessing services.

To gauge whether potential providers had the required understanding, capacity and approach, commissioners ensured that the service specification and evaluation criteria reflected the specific requirements of working with diverse and disadvantaged communities. Potential providers bidding for the contract needed to demonstrate:

- An understanding of the particular needs of the target group and how these would be met;
- How activities would be developed, promoted and delivered to provide equal access to the target group;
- Their competence in promoting equality and diversity; and
- How they took into account issues of equality and diversity in their work.

Additionally, throughout the period of the contract the provider would be monitored against specific measures including:

- Families that have a child protection plan or CAF in place; and
- A range of demographic information: gender, age of client and children, ethnicity, disability.

This case study demonstrates that issues of equality and diversity are embedded in the approach of the commissioning team, from scoping and procurement through to monitoring of delivery.

Identifying and responding to young people's needs for the development of the Community Drug and Alcohol Service Prevention, Treatment and Recovery Service

Working with internal and external partners between 2013 and 2014, Strategy and Commissioning undertook the scoping and procurement of a community drug and alcohol prevention, treatment and recovery service. The new service was intended to be integrated across all age ranges, and delivered through one organisation rather than the previous practice of 15 providers.

As part of the Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integrated Impact Assessment (EIA) process, young drug and alcohol users currently accessing the service were asked about the issues they face and their requirements of a new service. The issues identified through this engagement then informed the specification for the new service, and were used to determine bidders' understanding of these issues. Key points raised were that:

- Young people did not want to be associated with older drug and alcohol users, so wanted to access a different venue;
- Young people wanted a service that was clearly marketed and aimed at them;
- Siting services in locations not specific to drug and alcohol – such as GP surgeries – is crucial (alongside appropriate communication and branding) in encouraging young people to access the services;
- Other groups – such as students and young professionals – may perceive themselves as different from other alcohol and drug users; and
- Parents may be reluctant for their children to be treated alongside older, more hardened drug users or people with severe alcohol issues.

As well as helping to shape the specifications for the service being commissioned, the points raised by young people enabled the commissioner to better understand the issues relating to young people and how these could be incorporated into service delivery. As a result:

- Drug and alcohol services are now provided through a young people's base in the city centre, and through community venues, so that young people accessing the service do not come into contact with older drug and alcohol users; and
- Requirements included in the service specification include:
 - the provision of a Facebook site solely targeted at young people, reinforcing the fact that the service is targeted at them; and
 - clear and targeted branding and layout of social media sites, aimed at young service users.

Developing positive activities for young people living near Ley Lane Playing Field, Armley

Residents and a local school in Armley contacted the Area Support Team. They were concerned about a local playing field blighted by drug dealing, antisocial behaviour and dog fouling. The school and some local residents wanted to investigate how best to tackle these problems.

Over a period of nine months, various consultation and engagement activities – including fun days – were carried out, to generate ideas about what could be done to make the playing field safer and more accessible. The initiative has been supported by councillors and a range of teams within the council.

The Area Support Team developed a bid for funds to install recreational equipment on the field and introduce youth activities in the area. A total of £16,000 has been allocated, and the following actions agreed:

- Installation of a football post and pitch markings;
- Re-surfacing of the footpath running across the field;
- Installation of outdoor gym equipment; and
- Weekly play sessions carried out by Breeze Leeds to teach young people new skills and activities.

Actions already implemented include:

- Installation of a community notice board;
- Three new bins to discourage littering; and
- A community clear-up day.

Although some of the installation and action has yet to take place, early signs are promising. Drug dealing has been displaced. The initiative has forged better links within the community, and has boosted cohesion. There are proposals to set up a 'Friends of' group, possibly working in conjunction with the local school's PTA – allowing for more funding bids to be developed for further initiatives..



Involving your communities

Armley Sauna Testing Initiative for older Men who have Sex with Men (MSM)

The Armley Sauna Testing was an initiative for the prevention of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's) amongst men who have Sex with Men (MSM). The initiative was based on evidence of need established by statistical data, a local pilot, expressed community needs and the results from the initial phase of the project.

The largest and busiest men's sauna in Leeds the Armley Steam Complex was selected as a suitable venue as research suggests that MSM, who don't identify as homosexual, are unlikely to attend traditional sexual health services. The majority of MSM using the Complex had never had an HIV test, were more likely to have higher numbers of sexual partners and also engage in riskier sex practise.

Delivered in partnership this project was able to: diagnose and facilitate treatment for undiagnosed STI's amongst older MSM; establish baseline data; test new ways of working; distribute sexual health information and increase the number of vulnerable men reached, tested and treated.

Due to the success of the pilot this service is now an integral part of the integrated sexual health service and we are currently exploring additional outreach in other MSM Leeds Saunas. Outreach in saunas forms part of the integrated service specification with clinical and voluntary sector providers working in partnership.

The following comments were received from some patients:

'Love the fact that this is a walk in clinic, love that it's free, all round good experience'

'Discreet, helpful, good advice'

'Clear and informative, easy to discuss sexual issues with you'

'Making patients relaxed, not judging'

Community Consultation of Leeds Adult Social Care directly managed BME Day services for older people

Adult Social Care manages ten day-centres for older people. Two of these centres (Apna and Frederick Hurdle day centres) provide specialist support to Black and Minority Ethnic communities. A review was undertaken taking into account: the needs of existing and potential service users; take up of current service provision; demographic data; research into other complimentary services within Leeds and financial pressures.

An important aspect of this was involving people who currently use these services, their carer's and family as well as other interested groups such as: staff; elected members; trade unions; partner organisations. All methods of engagement were used including workshops, questionnaires, briefings with trade unions and staff, letters to GP's and establishing a reference group. This was designed and done jointly with the council and Leeds Involving People, a service user and carer organisation.

Although service users could and did use these mechanisms it was also felt that some people may find it difficult to express their views, experiences and concerns in such settings. So 1-2-1 meetings were arranged with all service users.

Adopting a co-production and co-design approach meant that everyone who participated was able to be involved in the design of a service that would meet the needs of the diverse communities. Outcomes of discussions included:

- Some people preferring ASC continuing to manage the service, but the majority recognised that keeping things as they are is not viable
- Suggesting a partnership with a voluntary sector provider taking over management of the two services and delivering a wider range of day support to BME communities – was the preferred model
- Better links should be established with local BME community groups and Neighbourhood Networks
- Proposing the centres should have a wider remit in relation to the services on offer, explore opening to a wider client group and operate as a Community Resource Centre
- Existing resources within BME communities should be more effectively used, in particular volunteering opportunities

Introduction to Community Engagement Training

The council has an approach, a toolkit and support/advice on how to consult, involve and engage with communities potentially affected by proposals and decisions. There are many examples of good practice across the organisation however inconsistencies in approach have been identified which have led to less effective consultation, engagement and involvement.

After identifying a need the Consultation and Engagement Training was developed and facilitated to assist council staff to engage effectively and exchange good practice. Setting out the councils approach, introducing a variety of tools and providing space for participants to share concerns and ideas there has been a number of improvements:

- Consultation and engagements activities have been better co-ordinated – so the same people are not being involved numerous times
- There is an increase in collaborative consultation, involvement and engagement with partners
- Activities are being thought through and made more accessible to those people being involved
- Staff are feeling more confident about what they are doing to involve people in a timely manner
- Information already collected is being used more effectively
- Tools available are being used more
- Staff who have attended training are keeping in touch with each other and the facilitators - so activities are more effective and ideas are being shared

Equalities Assembly

The Communities Team, working in partnership with Adult Social Care (ASC), delivered a workshop relating to Better Lives Lived (Adult Social Care Local Account 2013/14). It was attended by communities representing all equality strands and enabled the council to engage with hard-to-reach groups. Findings from the workshop helped in the design of the Local Account and helped ASC better understand how their clients want to access services.

A principle behind the Local Account is to consult with the very people who know what it's like to use ASC services. As part of the consultation plan, engagement took place with the Equalities Assembly which has close to 250 members. Many of the Equalities Assembly's members either directly access or support others who use ASC services.

The event gave ASC the opportunity to hear first-hand what Better Lives meant to the city's diverse communities. People were able to comment about the good things ASC is doing, the bad things and what it can do better.

Access needs were taken into account, including providing personal assistants, arranging transport and providing materials in alternative formats. British Sign Language interpreters were also provided.

It was recognised that working with the Equalities Assembly would help to give equality groups a voice.

External Provision of Homecare Services

Commissioned home care services were previously secured under the terms of the Community Home Care Framework Agreement (2010). With this contractual agreement nearing its end an opportunity was created to recommission home care services which meet differing needs of people who have eligible care needs and meets the requirements of the Care Act 2014.

The independent sector, including the 32 home care framework providers (representing both national and local businesses), delivered 86% of the total commissioned home care support in Leeds in 2013-14; this equates to 1,525,701 hours of support annually. The contracts have generally worked well in terms of quality and value.

During the past year, council officers have undertaken extensive work involving a range of key stakeholders to determine how homecare services could become more focussed on improving outcomes for people. As well as helping to shape the commissioning and contract model, the points raised by current and potential service users, carer's and family have enabled the commissioners to better understand the issues relating to people of all ages with care needs and how these could be incorporated into service delivery.

The proposed commissioning and contract model has been developed and designed to lay foundation for meeting requirements of the ethical care charter, benefitting both service users and staff. These include, for example:

- personalised 'outcome based' commissioning
- flexibility of service providers to meet the needs of service users
- the use of the 15 minute visits
- consistency of staff providing services
- the recruitment and retention of a care workforce sufficient for the future needs of the City.
- improved terms and conditions for homecare staff – aspirations in relation to living wage, staff travel

Hyde Park Health and Wellbeing

Health and wellbeing data has highlighted some key areas of concern in Hyde Park. The large student population (who have comparatively good health and wellbeing), means the figures are likely to underestimate the issues for some vulnerable groups. The non-student population has some of the worst health and wellbeing outcomes in the city. Some people are experiencing premature mortality and poor long term health due to a number of factors. These include lifestyle factors such as alcohol, smoking and lack of physical activity leading to obesity.

Wider factors connected to health issues include: high unemployment (especially amongst young people); low income; poor educational attainment; poor quality housing stock. A contributory factor is the poor take-up of statutory preventative health services. There are also issues around low income, money worries and unemployment that affect health and wellbeing.

There are significant statutory resources in Hyde Park (including primary and social care) allocated to health and wellbeing. These are complemented by the work of the third sector and religious groups. Hyde Park has a number of strong religious and community organisations and local leaders. The aim was to meaningfully consult with local organisations and residents to ensure that key priorities could be identified, avoiding duplication and leading to improved outcomes for residents.

A wellbeing questionnaire was designed to consult with local residents and businesses about how needs can be met that isn't just delivered to them but involves them. Local community leaders and key community contacts used different ways to engage people in the consultation. This resulted in many residents and local businesses/service contributing ideas, for example:

- Learning from other parts of the city
- Organisations interested in developing local physical activity sessions
- Building on/using 'people' assets within the community
- Look at sharing resources to fund activities, such as transport

The next steps are developing a plan with the local community, businesses, local leaders and statutory services

Learning English in Leeds Website

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision used to be overseen by Skills for Life. Despite central government funding cuts, which have had a negative impact on ESOL provision nationally, Leeds has continued to provide ESOL. The main provider is Leeds City College, with more provision now in the hands of the voluntary and private sector.

Research and analysis undertaken in 2010 identified patterns of ESOL provision, funding and attendance were complex. Key to this was access to information about ESOL provision across the city.

The Learning English in Leeds website made a difference to students and professionals by providing:

- An accessible and comprehensive online directory of ESOL provision in Leeds
- A 'one stop shop' for adult migrants wanting to develop their English language skills, and for advisers
- Assists new arrivals in finding the most appropriate ESOL classes and planning their progression across provision in Leeds
- Space for the ESOL sector in Leeds to develop practice and plan strategically to meet the language education needs of learners

Website: www.lel.help

Middleton Skate Park

Middleton Youth Partnership was initially formed to explore the viability of converting disused changing rooms into a youth club. However, after consulting with young people and youth workers, it quickly became apparent that buildings were not the issue: there were already youth club sessions at St Cross Church, South Leeds Youth Hub and some mobile Youth Service provision. The biggest request was for the creation of a local skate park.

Consultation was undertaken which established local young people were strongly in favour of a Skate Park. It also identified 12 young people who were interested enough to get involved in the design of the Skate Park. Providing the partnership with a clear mandate for the project, planning permission was sought and secured. £81k of funding came from various sources including Housing Leeds, the third sector and the Inner South Community Committee.

The approach taken by the partnership led to:

- A clear mandate from local young people in support of developing the project
- Genuine consultation and involvement of young people helped secure funding
- Vital information was gathered during engagement activities that influenced the design brief and tender specification

Ultimately, local young people made decisions on an £80,000 contract

Rainbow Roofs

Formed in 2010, Rainbow Roofs is a tenants group representing the voice and experience of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) tenants. Initially representing tenants from the West of the city, the group now represents tenants citywide.

They use all methods of social media to promote themselves and their activities and have featured in 'Tenants Magazine' and 'Leeds City Magazine.'

Rainbow Roofs has assisted in increasing the understanding of the issues that LGBT tenants and colleagues face which has positively impacted on policy and practice within housing services. For example, they:

- were consulted with on the Housing Strategy 2015
- were acknowledged in the Housing Strategy as a case study
- attended Pride 2012.
- Police / LASBT attended Rainbow Roofs meetings
- held a hate crime conference with the disability housing group and investigated the process of Hate Crime reporting
- assisted with mystery shopping
- questioned and improved the equality monitoring form
- helped design One Minute Guides for young LGBT people
- attended a Sheltered Forum.
- the chair attended Housing Office Team meetings to promote Rainbow Roofs as well as discuss the issues that LGBT tenants have in the community.

Licensing of Sex Establishments Policy

Leeds City Council's Sex Establishment Statement of Licensing Policy considers and determines the locations and the numbers of lap dancing clubs sited across the city. This policy addresses applications for new licences as well as looking at renewing current licences.

In 2013, Entertainment Licensing resolved to review and update the licensing policy. During previous consultations, it had become apparent that the majority of responses were being received from people with either very negative or very positive views of the clubs. In light of this, officers and Members thought it important to get the broader view of people of Leeds.

The Citizens Panel provided a cost-effective method to seek public opinion and enough responses were sought to combat the survey being skewed by any extreme factions. The results of the survey were used to inform the Licensing of Sex Establishments Policy, in particular influencing the number of and potential localities for siting lap dancing clubs.

The resulting policy was used to determine five applications to renew sex establishment licences. Three of these five licences were not renewed. Two of the businesses challenged the decision by way of a judicial review. One of the premises asked for permission to challenge the policy; however, this request was denied as the policy had been subject to a robust consultation period which the business chose not to engage with.

During the judicial review, the judge was complimentary about the way the policy was developed and examined carefully the part of the policy which related to location and numbers.

Social Care Community Forum for Race Equality (SCCFRE)

The Social Care Community Forum for Race Equality was established in 1992 following disturbances in Chapeltown in 1980. Open to all Black Minority and Ethnic (BME) community organisations, at present, the forum has over 120 voluntary, community and faith groups (as well as individuals) on its mailing list.

Although the forum is run by Adult Social Care it covers issues relating to: children, health and housing, and anything that is deemed relevant to its members. Regarded by the council as a vital component for engaging BME communities to influence decision making the following are examples of its achievements:

- Continues to work closely with the council to address a number of key issues, e.g. lack of employment, unmet social care needs and educational under-achievement
- Contributed to the charging review for care services; self-directed support; integrated care; fair access to care; carers' strategy; assistive technology to ensure BME people are able to access services to meet their needs
- Supported a successful bid to the Migration Impact fund which was used to develop and build capacity with new arrivals to Leeds – this has led to a permanent post within Adult Social Care and a network of volunteers supporting other new arrival to settle

Transforming Day Provision for people with Mental Health Needs

Day service provision in Leeds, for people with mental health needs, has always been made up of a mixture of council run and voluntary sector provision. These provide both building based and community services. Responding to need, significant financial challenges and a reduction in grants a review was undertaken in 2011 to ensure a model of service provision was in place that used resources effectively and efficiently to deliver positive outcomes for service users.

The review included: research and analysis of existing provision and potential need: an audit of service usage across all day services; extensive consultation and engagement activities with all interested stakeholders, with significant contributions from existing service users. This was then used to inform the proposed new provision for the Mental Health Recovery Service, the tendering process and contract specification and future monitoring of service provision.

The following outcomes are as a direct result of involving service users:

- Setting up the Mental Health Advisory Board (the body overseeing the transformation programme) which included a specific requirement within its constitution for a co-chair role, to be filled by a service-user representative – ensuring the voice of service users is always heard
- Agreement to continue work supporting those people concerned with the term 'recovery' – concerns had been raised during consultation about what a recovery service would mean to people and specifically whether this would lead to discharge, some felt they would 'never recover'
- user led recovery groups in addition to staff led recovery groups

Welfare Benefits Advice

Welfare Benefits were approached by members of the Bangladesh Centre Committee in Harehills who were concerned about the lack of advice services available to members of the Bengali speaking community who were not confident with their English. As a result of this, a pilot of welfare advice surgeries was set up within the Bangladesh centre on Roundhay Road.

The surgeries were supported by a local Bengali interpreter and advice workers provided for free from GIPSIL's welfare team, a voluntary sector serving the local community.

Detailed evaluation is currently taking place on the project however initial feedback is that residents are:

- now accessing services that they feel comfortable using
- seeking more informal advice that reduces the risk of being misadvised
- needs are being identified and addressed at an earlier stage reducing the need for crisis intervention

Hate Crime

Rainbow Roofs (Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Trans Tenants group) and Disability Forum (west Leeds) highlighted that there was an under reporting of hate crime for disability, homophobia and transphobia. To increase the awareness of Hate Crime across the city they organised city-wide multi-agency event 'Leeds Challenges Hate Crime'.

Along with local and national keynote speaker and information stalls, the event was publicised and followed on Twitter via #LeedsChallengesHate.

The event successfully raised awareness of the issues, fostered good working relationships between the different organisations and supported the city's wider launch of the Hate Crime Strategy 2014.

Attendees at the event and those following on twitter fed back that they:

- Have a better understanding of what is meant by hate crime
- Increased their knowledge about reporting hate crime – making them feel more confident about both reporting and advising other about how to report hate crime
- Increased knowledge about resources and services available for people concerned either as a victim of or witness to hate crime

Should Leeds Bid to be European Capital of Culture 2023?

'Should Leeds Bid to be European Capital of Culture 2023?' was the first question for Leeds and involved informal discussions with elected members, internal and external stakeholders and most of the main cultural organisations in the city to seek their views.

Following a very supportive response, and in line with the new type of civic relationships proposed in the Commission for Local Government, an open meeting was then held at the Town Hall in January 2014. This event was attended by nearly 300 people with additional debates taking place on the day and via local radio phone-ins and on social media. On Twitter 344 different people contributed 817 Tweets using the hashtag #Leeds2023.

Universal support for Leeds making a bid was gained and provided a strong mandate to develop a 'City conversation'. This involved extensive discussion, and consultation and engagement activities over a 14 month period to test support for such a bid further from the broadest range of communities, stakeholders and partners, in particular our city's diverse communities. Dispelling the myth that 'culture' is another name for 'high art for the wealthy' was an important message to ensure communities would get involved. Getting anyone to think about making a decision on the city doing something nine years into the future puts it into the 'not urgent' category. It was heartening therefore so many people have contributed, so far....and are keen to continue being involved.

The outcome of engagement activities so far has been:

- Approval from the Executive Board to process a bid for Leeds
- Understanding what difference bidding could make to the diverse communities of Leeds
- Ideas being generated and initiated of what groups and individuals can contribute

Inspire To Achieve: mentoring

This mentoring initiative targeted 14 to 16 year olds at Mount St Mary: a Catholic inner-city school located in an area of high deprivation, high pupil premium, free school meals and high levels of worklessness. The school analysed available data and identified a number of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students with low aspirations, borderline C and D level grades and limited prospects for progression.

Supported by the mentoring team within the Education Business Partnership, contact was made with the African Caribbean Society at the University of Leeds resulting in their under-graduate students becoming mentors. Studying a range of subjects such as maths, engineering and law, young people at the school saw their mentors as positive roles models.

Positive outcomes from this mentoring programme included the young people:

- committing themselves to their mentoring sessions – turning up at arranged times
- developing individual targets with their mentors and working on achieving these
- talking about their aspirations

Against the areas assessed within the programme, improvements were seen for:

- self confidence
- time management/ organisation of self
- levels of attainment
- GCSE course work grades

Leeds Student Unions and LCC Engagement Event February 2015

Leeds Student Unions already have a variety of mechanisms in place to ensure students are engaged and contributing to council decision making. For example: involvement in projects considering waste and housing; increased membership within the Citizens Panel and involvement in budget proposal discussions.

Following the establishment of the Working Together group in 2014, which aimed to improve collaboration and better relationships between six of the Leeds student unions, the group presented a deputation to the council's Executive Board explaining how they felt that students were under-represented within the council's decision-making process. With agreement from the board to explore this further the group worked in collaboration with key council officers to identify key forums/ boards that would benefit from student representation and organise a joint engagement event in 2015.

"Leeds Student Unions and Leeds City Council Working Together to make Leeds the Best City" event took place in February 2015. With a number of presentations and themed discussions on community safety and fear of crime; street cleansing and bins; housing the event successfully:

- Facilitated networking between services and students – with a view to leading to continued working relationships
- Generated conversation in an open environment
- Identified examples of issues, concerns and also good practice experienced by students for services to learn from
- Increased students understanding of service provision and how to access services

Leeds Museums and Galleries - volunteering

Effort continues to be made to attract a diverse array of people to become volunteers at Leeds Museums and Galleries. Analysis of equality data supplied through volunteers application forms, findings from an on-line survey, feedback from Volunteer Managers and Voluntary Action Leeds networks and lessons learned from previous volunteering projects identified under-representation of men and Black and Minority Ethnic people volunteering, particularly in Museums and Galleries.

A number of actions were identified to increase volunteering in general but also to target those under-represented groups. These include for example:

- Creating broader advertising opportunities through Voluntary Action Leeds and producing some targeted advertising
- Ensuring that volunteering opportunities are flexible enough to meet the needs of volunteers and the service
- Arranging visits to communities and organisations to spread the word about volunteering opportunities.
- Making connections with people by collecting oral stories and 'objects in a suitcase' – these will form changing and emerging history
- Offer a range of projects at Temple Newsam, other museums and within communities.
- Write to all key BME organisations and societies across the city to arrange publicity sessions.
- Use current volunteers to help sell the benefits of volunteering e.g. social and confidence building

Over time these actions have led to the following outcomes:

- Improved the diverse representation of volunteers
- Increased the range of volunteering opportunities
- Capturing people's stories and journeys that will contribute to the rich history of Leeds
- Gained positive feedback from volunteers and sharing their time to promote motivation and to recruit new volunteers

Volunteering and Diversity: personal testimony

I'm not a big one for volunteering, so when I got asked if I would go on an Interim Executive Board (IEB), I immediately thought it would be useful to my area of work – an IEB is a bit like a caretaker management team of school governors to turn-around a school in some sort of trouble – this particular one would mean I was helping one of Leeds' most diverse schools, make improvements.

The school is based in a rapidly changing place...on the edge of the city centre. It's pretty dense council housing but if you walk there rather than drive you get a more positive feeling about the area. Like the general area, the school is affected by a changing intake: 34 different first languages other than English are spoken. Dealing with that kind of diversity takes some special skills. Moreover, this is diversity that reflects what's happening in the world. Families are here because of global issues: conflict, repression (and) really severe economic hardship.

Being on the board I am part of a team tasked to help solve problems (including) governance, finance, structures, behaviours and strategy. With good education and teaching at the school and support from the school improvement team for professional assurance I feel I am able to contribute something positive to the lives of others, whilst learning a lot that benefits my professional and personal outlook on life.

I have found volunteering has been massively beneficial. I appreciate much more how Leeds is changing in relation to migration and how we can turn challenges this brings into a big future opportunity. I've learnt to think far more about how we need to make sure our services are right, representative (and) based on need. This is critical to how well people are received and we can all thrive in the long term. Seeing how well teachers can do this is awesome but also showed me that everyone can do something personal to make a difference too. Volunteering doesn't have to be heroic or inspired to get something back.

Takeover Day For People With Learning Disabilities

The following is an article written to celebrate the takeover of Council Chambers by learning disabled people:

'The atmosphere was charged and expectant for the fourth Great Council Chamber Takeover Day in Leeds (2014). The event was bigger, better and bolder than ever.

The grandiose council chamber in Leeds Civic Hall was occupied by more than 100 people with learning disabilities, sitting in seats usually reserved for LCC councillors. The public gallery was also filled to capacity.

This community-led engagement event was co-ordinated by Tenfold: the learning disability forum in Leeds. They also had input from people with learning disabilities and support organisations across the city.

The approach is intended to be inspirational and aspirational and empower disadvantaged and vulnerable adults to fully engage in the democratic process.

Speeches were heard on topics that are important to learning disabled people. The topics included: feeling safe; transport; employment opportunities; having friends; better healthcare.

Following each speech, the issues were opened for audience debate. Guests were there to listen, respond and pledge what support they could have on improving the lives of people with learning disabilities. Guests were invited from the business and commercial sector, transport, education, the council, the NHS, as well as the police, fire and rescue services.

Year on year, this event builds interest and momentum and raises awareness about the lives of learning disabled people. As a spectacle, it is vibrant, energising, funny, emotional...but never disrespectful or tokenistic. This innovative and mutually inclusive approach creates positive change and influences local decision making. It is truly 'democracy in action.'



Responsive services and customer care

Leeds City Council Access Officer

We use Access Officers to ensure that we not only fulfill our legal obligations under the Equality Act but also that we adopt an inclusive approach to service provision and the creation of new environments in terms of access for disabled people. Over the past decade, Leeds city centre has seen a significant increase in the range of leisure and entertainment venues. It is important that these services are accessible by all.

The role of our Access Officers includes:

- Advising LCC directorates, services and employees.
- Providing advice on legislation to members of the public, business and service providers.
- Advising on Building Control and Planning applications, in terms of inclusive design and the latest design guidance.
- Working across the council to ensure that accessible and inclusive environments and services are created.
- Taking a pro-active approach to inclusion and access, as well as responding to customer feedback.

Access Officers help to ensure that the access needs of disabled people is fully considered throughout the services and functions we provide.

Volunteer Access Stewards Scheme at Leeds City Council Outdoor Events

The need for specialist stewards at LCC events was identified in 2014 based on feedback from disabled customers, and officers (LCCs Access Officer and the Events Team). This feedback highlighted that some disabled people attending events would benefit from being able to identify stewards on site who could provide specific information on the accessible services and facilities provided at events. It was also identified that accessible services and facilities which were provided at events sites required supervision/ management to avoid mis-use or abuse by people who did not require them.

Introducing the Access Stewards has enhanced the experience of many disabled visitors. Through good practice, the council hopes to create a culture of confidence in the disabled community such that all disabled users have no 'perception' of barriers when considering attending an event. The council has made a commitment to always endeavor to 'go beyond the minimum' in terms of provision of accessible services and facilities.

BSL Video Interpreting

The provision of BSL Video Interpreting was implemented to assist communication with deaf and hard of hearing customers when accessing council services both face-to-face and over the telephone.

Prior to this service, when a deaf or hard of hearing customer wanted to contact the council they had to request a face-to-face BSL interpreter or communicate by writing information down and pass between themselves and the officer. This could take two weeks or longer to arrange. This meant that deaf and hard of hearing customers were not getting an equal service.

Research was carried out, a range of options were appraised and a tender specification was created for the provision of BSL Video Interpreting, in-line with LCC procurement rules.

The procured service was set-up at the Compton Community Hub (LS9) and 2 Great George Street (LS1) for face-to-face contact and BSL Live on the council's website. A deaf or hard of hearing customer can go to either of these venues and access a BSL Interpreter via video phone. They can also contact the council from their own pc or mobile device (once they have downloaded the appropriate software). Further work has been completed to where this service could be rolled out further.

The BSL Video Interpreting and BSL Live service has greatly improved deaf and hard of hearing customers being able to access council services. One customer who attended the Compton Centre told staff that the service had given him a voice.

Early education provision for 2-year olds

Since July 2013 families who meet certain criteria may be entitled to up to 15 hours of free early education for their two year old children. Due to the demand for places out weighing supply in some of the more deprived areas in Leeds our Children's Services approached our Customer Services with a view to securing space for locations for early education provision. Following these discussions locations were identified at both Dewsbury Road one Stop Centre and Compton Community Hub and we were able to provide the additional places which were needed.

Employment and Skills: youth employment

National data and research shows that the increase in unemployment during the recession has disproportionately impacted on (amongst others) young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs). Actions were taken to try and address this.

The **Leeds Apprenticeship Hub** was set up in July 2013 to promote apprenticeships to local SME businesses and young people to meet the skills needs of business as well as to provide a career entry point for young people. The Hub is also working in partnership with Microsoft to promote IT Apprenticeships. The opening event took place in March 2015.

The **Leeds Apprenticeship Training Agency (ATA)** supports small and medium sized businesses to recruit and take on apprentices; it is a limited company, jointly owned by the council and Leeds City College. There are 53 apprentices on roll with 148 SME businesses engaged who are looking to provide new apprenticeship roles.

The **Education Business Partnership (EBP)** team builds links between schools and local businesses to provide creative, realistic work-related learning opportunities for children and young people aged 11 to 18; in April 2014 to March 2015, 8,697 school pupils accessed an EBP mentoring and employability programme and 970 businesses and university volunteers have supported the programmes.

The **Leeds 18-24 Headstart programme** secured £1.3m to support 800 young people aged 18-24 years old deemed furthest from the labour market. This programme commenced March 2014 to runs for 2 years. It assists young people aged 18-24 years claiming Jobseekers' Allowance for at least 6 months (with referral from Jobcentre Plus). 77 young people have gained employment; 36 businesses have engaged with the programme; 197 young people have started their placements and gained work experience.

The award-winning **Set for Success Programme – Devolved Youth Contract** works in partnership with Aspire IGEN and was delivered by EBP to help 16-17 year olds NEETS to re-engage with the labour market. Over the course of the programme 179 young people (16-17 year olds) have been supported into work and 973 young people (16-17 year olds) have improved their employability skills.

The **Re-Making Leeds programme** (supported by Leeds College of Building and York College) identified skills gap in SMEs in the local construction sector. The service worked with partners to submit a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund and secured £840k. The programme started in September 2014 and provides trainees with the skills needed to maintain, repair and refurbish mainly pre-1919 and traditional properties in Leeds. 22 people on the Re-Making Leeds programme to date have improved their skills and 9 have gained work experience.

Civic Enterprise Leeds - various stories

The **Passenger Transport Service**'s review and simplification of Health and Safety forms led to an increase in the number of health and safety alerts which are submitted each week. As a result of this we have put a number of preventative measures in place such as magnetic harnesses and have also created the role of Enhanced Passenger Transport Assistant which is responsible for providing support to children with specific needs.

Customer feedback (from older people and children in particular) about our **Passenger Transport Service** has resulted in improvements in personal safety where simple but effective modifications have been put in place for example; the installation of handlebars and safety bars which prevent people from accidentally falling out of opened back doors.

We deliver 480 hot **community meals** to older people across Leeds each day. More than half of these people receive subsidised meals. Our menu is varied and we cater for a wide range of dietary needs including Kosher, Halaal, ethical needs, nutrition and portion size, soft foods. Our delivery staff also carry out a basic welfare benefit check (to ensure that our customers are receiving benefits which they are entitled to) and provide important social and supportive. Many of our customers who may not have contact with another person for days/weeks - on Christmas day, 250 older people received hot meals through community meals through community meals

Presto is a service which is aimed at older people who need a helping hand to maintain their independence but who are not eligible for services. The service was initially launched in the Moortown and Alwoodley areas of Leeds during April 2015 and following successful implementation was rolled out city wide in June 2015. Presto offers - companionship, housekeeping, home and garden maintenance, social support and transport facilities through our Passenger Transport service. Customers are already benefiting from the services provided although it is too early to evaluate the overall impact.

The current government scheme aims to ensure that every young person at key stage 1 (aged 4-7 years) has a hot meal each day and for many children this maybe the only hot meal they get. Our **Catering Service** currently caters for 166 special diets (including ethical and religious needs, specific healthcare needs, measured portions and specific types of food). We work closely with all schools in Leeds, to understand and meet need. A special 'diet hotline' is available which records all details provided by parents, guardians, doctors and nurses for each child and each child has a unique reference number to ensure their specific dietary needs are both monitored and met.

POMOC (help)

The Police and Community Safety became involved with the Eastern European Community residing in the Armley area of Leeds. In an attempt to better integrate this community, the Police and Community Safety contacted us at Armley Community Hub wanting to discuss the possibility of using the Community Hub as a base for a volunteer who would provide advice to the community relating to - jobshops, credit union, money advice, computers, health, schools and education. Since 2013, a result of these discussions, Armley Community Hub has continued to provide advice sessions which are aimed primarily at addressing the needs of the Eastern European Community.

POMOC has proved to be popular service within the Eastern European Community who provide feedback indicating that they are benefiting from the services provided.

Community Hub: St Georges Centre (Middleton)

Our customers can access a wide variety of services through our Community Hubs (At St Georges Hub we have range of services under one roof including: NHS, Credit Union, Police and Council Services.

Mrs S visited the minor injuries unit (NHS) at St Georges Centre whilst there she noticed a sign relating to Step Change (a debt charity) and asked one of our customer services for more information. After sensitively questioning Mrs S to determine which service would best meet her needs (Step Change or Credit Union), Mrs S was advised to contact Step Change using the Freephone service available in St George`s Hub. Mrs S told our customer service officer that she had £30,000 worth of debt which she had not told anyone about. Her visit to the Community Hub to attend the minor injuries unit had resulted in her obtaining support with her debts and finance. Mrs S had taken the first steps to sorting out her debts.

Compton Community Hub - equality support

Our customers can access a wide variety of services through our Community Hubs, the co-location of services has significantly improved the quality of service that we are able to provide. These are some examples of the support provided through our Compton Community Hub.

Ms T approached a member of our library staff and explained that, against her will, her family were planning an arranged marriage for her. She was instantly signposted to a private and confidential chat with a Customer Service Officer. In the wake of this, the young woman was referred to Social Care. By working together, Ms T was able to access services which were able to provide the necessary support.

Customer Services staff work closely with Community Safety to support customers following incidents of Hate Crime and family abuse. Victims who do not wish to meet Community Safety in their home due to concerns about personal safety are offered the option to meet at the Hub. Our services have worked together to:

- Support a customer with learning difficulties who was experiencing mental and physical abuse from her family. This resulted in the provision of a safe place and support from social care and housing options
- Support a customer experiencing racial abuse from neighbours which resulted in the customer being rehoused
- Support a customer who was experiencing domestic violence which resulted in provision of emergency accommodation and permanent rehousing away from the area.

Our Library was allocated funding to provide language books to support learning. To ensure that we purchased appropriate books, we consulted with ESOL tutors who were able to recommend a variety of suitable books. The recommended books were purchased and are loaned out regularly to students.

Leeds City Credit Union (LCCU) stories

The Leeds City Credit Union has assisted numerous people with saving, debt advice and solving debt issues. Below are some of those examples.

Mrs X had rent arrears of over £3k. She was signposted to a Money and Budgeting Support Officer by a Housing Support Officer to look at ways in which she could reduce her arrears prior to appearing in court with regards to her tenancy. The intervention from Credit Union and Mrs X making regular payments on her rent account saved her from eviction and also saved Housing Leeds the cost of court proceedings to have her evicted.

Miss B was already a LCCU member and came into the Middleton branch to apply for a top-up on her loan. Her father-in-law had recently died and she was unable to pay the funeral costs. LCCU fast-tracked a loan for Miss B and she had the money within a couple of days; she acknowledged her appreciation by leaving a box of chocolates at the Middleton branch.

Mr and Mrs Y were struggling with numerous debts after finding themselves on benefits for the first time in their lives. Both of them were in a serious car accident leaving Mr Y to act as Mrs Y's carer. Also, Mr Y incurred injuries that caused his HGV license to be revoked. Mr and Mrs Y are proud people and were initially resistant to LCCU's help. These financial pressures led to anxiety and further health issues. Ultimately, LCCU attended several appointments with Mr and Mrs Y including two home visits to tackle all their debts and open a budget account. Mr and Mrs Y subsequently started paying into a LCCU bill paying account for 7 months and cleared their rent arrears. They are feeling happier and their health has improved.

Miss C was referred to LCCU because she was struggling with doorstep lenders. She informed LCCU that her credit was poor and that she felt she was probably beyond any help they could offer. Miss C had taken loans from three doorstep lenders and was paying them £660 a month. LCCU managed to consolidate the three debts over two years, reducing the monthly payment to £160 which Miss C found much more manageable.

Mr Z was seen by a Tenancy Management Officer who quickly identified that he had financial problems to the point that he wasn't buying enough food. It later became known that Mr Z was struggling with the loss of his wife. A financial inclusion officer visited Mr Z and took him a food parcel. Mr Z was quite overwhelmed with the generosity of AVHL and welcomed the help of the financial inclusion officer.

Mr Z was in rent arrears of nearly £500 and was recommended for the rent assist fund. He was living alone in a 3-bed property (his former family home) and was going to be affected by the under-occupancy charge. Mr Z was offered a one bedroom bungalow and is now managing his bills; this has given him great peace of mind.

Leeds City Council Welfare Support Scheme (LWSS)

The council's Local Welfare Support Scheme (LWSS) was introduced 1 April 2013. This replaced the DWP's former Social Fund scheme (crisis loans and community care grants). The purpose of LWSS is to assist vulnerable people by meeting their short term needs for subsistence / financial support to maintain their independence within the community. The council was given 2-year government funding of £2.9m to run the scheme. It was up to the council to decide if it wanted a scheme (and if so...) and how to run it. The scheme we introduced was 'cashless' and provided assistance with basic needs to establish or maintain a home in the community and/or emergency support. From the 1st April 2015, the Government stopped funding the scheme. However, Members acknowledge the success and value of the scheme so funding continued within 2015/16.

Through the scheme we were able to support clients:

By providing emergency payments for food – overcame immediate hardship for families for what is a fast and efficient process, the orders being made on line direct to Asda, the Council even booking the delivery time whilst in communication with the client to include evening and weekend deliveries.

By providing emergency payment for fuel – fuel for heating & cooking.

With no telephone access – ease of claiming, avoids un-necessary financial hardship and allows telephone to be main channel of contact.

Experiencing domestic violence – fast & safe removals, the Council dealing very much with the provider and avoiding undue hardship and upset on the client.

With Disability/special needs – the award met the client's specialist requirement/adaptation, the allowance of an increased financial provision allowing this to occur.

With special Dietary/religious beliefs – met clients requirements rather than them refuse their entitlements.

Who are elderly – enabled clients to return home as soon as possible reducing delayed stays in hospital due to not having food/essential furniture.

To reduce access barriers – ensured all clients could access the scheme via telephone regardless of language skills / capabilities.

Migrant Access Project (MAP)

The MAP is very important to Leeds City Council to help reduce pressures on statutory services and to help new arrivals settle in Leeds, and this is beneficial for all the people of Leeds.

Two hour weekly drop-in sessions are delivered in partnership with Touchstone and Public Health. Members drop in to share their successes as well as their issues. Those who are unable to attend are offered the opportunity to a separate one to one with the Commissioning Officer for the MAP or the Community Development Worker at Touchstone. Services have been informed of the drop in and are invited to attend, some services such as Leeds Skyline (works with mainly African communities in preventing and testing of HIV), Niche tobacco, Voluntary Access Leeds have continued to attend drop-ins to learn about the migrant community network and to support their activities. Members of the Migrant Community Network (MCN) raise concerns and possible solutions, request support needed in order to meet the needs of their communities.

Through the project, members are fully supported and connected to services who both understand and are able to support their needs. The project helps to members to build their confidence and also provides the necessary support to help members to integrate.

Tobacco Control

Research and evidence around tobacco control interventions abounds but this is not always specific to certain communities and groups. In collaboration with York University we have been seeking to determine the modifications required in intervention and service delivery to ensure these are relevant to the target groups whose behavior we are hoping to influence. In relation to second hand smoke exposure we conducted household surveys in areas of the city known to have a high proportion of South Asian families. Our results suggested that exposure to second hand smoke in the home was higher than in the general population. In relation to the usage of niche tobacco products, although prevalence was not determined, anecdotal evidence suggested that use of niche tobacco products was also higher within certain BME communities.

Studies have been designed and are currently being conducted to test out the feasibility of modified interventions in a range of settings. We have recently tested a modified smoke free homes intervention using the mosque setting across Leeds, Birmingham and Bradford, a study working with pregnant women around second hand smoke and are currently testing adaptations to the more traditional smoking cessation standard treatment programme to take into account the unique nature of niche tobacco use.

We are now in the process of collating and analyzing data. Once papers have been written up and published we will consider applying for funding for larger trials to further test the effectiveness of the adapted interventions. The outcome of the trials will inform the future commissioning / delivery of tobacco control interventions.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) - Multi Storey Flats Customer Support Project

The Welfare Reform Act 2013 led to changes in housing benefit which reduced the amount of benefit paid to claimants if they are deemed to have too much living space in the property they are renting. This Act came into force on 1st April 2013. In Leeds the multi-storey flats presented a particular problem in that if a customer vacates a two/three bed multi-storey flat it is often difficult to rehouse customers in these blocks at full occupancy. Customer profiling helped identify that there was an issue as it illustrated that the under occupancy charge was going to affect 789 tenants living in our multi storey flats

In February 2014 Housing Leeds set up the DHP Multi -Storey Flats Customer Support Project team (MSF Project). Their aim was to sign tenants up to receive 6 months of discretionary housing benefit in return for agreeing to having some form of support package in place to meet their needs. The support package looked at assisting customers with providing a permanent solution to resolve their current situation. Even if a customer was not in work by the end of the project they should be work ready and better able to manage their limited budgets. The MSF Project initially sent out flyers to those affected, then made phone calls and visited the tenants. This led to interviews and signing an 'activity agreement' to gain 6 months DHP. This agreement was attached to an activity plan, which enabled people to pick topics that they wanted support and help with such as cooking on a budget, volunteering job shops. The MSF Project also utilised the HUGO (Helping you get online) bus (please see Tenant Empowerment storyboard) for tenants to have support accessing the internet and help to search for jobs etc.

Those who took part in the project were financially better off not only with their rent arrears, but also the total debt that they owe to other creditors and they also have more disposable income.

- 102 tenants have moved into work.
- 73 tenants have carried out voluntary work.
- From the final surveys completed, 97% of participants said the project has made an improvement in their quality of life; 53% said it had made a big improvement.

Caring Dads - Leeds

Caring Dads (CD) is a voluntary group work programme for men who are at risk of committing domestic violence and therefore, at risk of causing harm to their children. The programme constitutes 17 sessions. The central theory behind CD is that men will be more motivated to engage in an intervention to address their abusive behaviour if the focus is ostensibly on their relationship with their children. The CD pilot in Leeds was delivered by Safer Leeds, Leeds City Council and included group “facilitators”, who delivered the group work, central coordination and management and partner Support Workers who worked with clients’ partners or ex partners to ensure their safety and wellbeing. The group work took place in the first half of 2014 in different locations across Leeds.

Here is a snapshot of the Dad’s views:

- “Things have totally changed in the house...me and [partner] don’t shout at each other now.”
- “I’m talking more to the kids about feelings.”
- “Caring Dads is the best thing I have done in my life. I have learned so much. Every dad should do this programme, so many children would benefit.”
- “I’ve stopped yelling at my children (and) I give them more praise.”

Here is a snapshot of the facilitator’s views:

- “He’s developed real ability to consider others’ perspectives in the family.”
- “He earlier referred to how children feared him, one of them he could see shaking at times. Has been rewarded by feeling closer to them, has been regaining their trust though realises he has to keep working on this.”
- “The manifestation of P’s mental health problems can cause agitation and lack of stability in the group but he appears to have remained focussed on keeping calm and steady in his relationship with his partner and around his child. He seems determined to continue making positive changes.”

Here is a snapshot of the partner’s views:

- “W’s more loving and patient.”
- “I’d like to see what he’s doing in that group cos there’s been a big change for the good at home.”
- “The group was really positive on both our relationship and his anger management. He’s not as alone, has new friends. He talks more.”
- “His relationship with me and the children has improved. His mental health and moods have improved. He’s more cheerful and was excited and always looking forward to the Carina Dads sessions.”

Hate Incident Reporting System for schools and children's settings in Leeds

In autumn 2014, the Children's Services Equality and Diversity Board implemented a revised process for reporting hate incidents in schools and other children's settings. Pre- 2014, hate incident reporting only focussed on schools and academies (excluding other children setting such as children centres) and didn't meet the requirements of the latest equality legislation (for example: in terms of the breadth of protected characteristics) nor of Ofsted's new inspection framework. Collecting numbers of incidents rather than specific details of incidents made it difficult to track the impact of the interventions which were implemented.

The new process was developed through a multi-agency approach which brought key stakeholders together to develop preventative strategies in order to ensure that children and young people feel safe and supported. The new system encompasses all hate incident categories and provides intelligence and support for addressing issues, identifying incidents and patterns within communities.

Hate incidents and bullying can potentially have a detrimental impact on the experience of children and young people growing up in Leeds. This system is an attempt to develop a coordinated city wide approach to monitoring and tackling hate crime and bullying, including responding to patterns of activity at both school and cluster level. It provides invaluable intelligence and assists in the delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan and the Leeds Hate Crime Strategy.

Child sexual exploitation and taxi licensing

Concerns had been raised at an early stage by the Section Head Taxi and Private Hire Licensing in relation to the position in Rotherham. In September 2014 a small group convened (including Children's Services, police and taxi licensing) to consider whether the robust measures in place in Leeds around taxi licensing could be further improved.

As a result of this work taxi operators and drivers have more robust checks made before and after licenses are granted (including regular DBS checks), there is better joint working with the police, and safeguarding training is in place for drivers, operators, elected members, licensing panel and more widely..

It has been recognized that Leeds is leading the way in taxi licensing, but the council has taken the approach that there is always room for further development. The work, to date, has provided:

- further reassurance that only fit and proper persons will be granted taxi licenses,
- a discussion arena to ensure that where there are low level police issues raised a protocol can be developed to ensure consistent and sustainable reference to taxi licensing
- Joining up between different parts of the council eg an individual was reported to the police, by leisure center staff, due to an incident involving outraging public decency. When it was realized that he was a taxi driver further action was taken to suspend him and to ensure that any children he had were protected. This would not have occurred without the increased awareness

The safeguarding lead officer event in June 2014 focused on child sexual exploitation (boys). This raised awareness across the council, prompted considerable discussion, both about cse, and also about stereotyping. At the Jan 15 event the previous 6 months' progress reported by the Assistant Chief Executive, included work on taxi licensing and cse

Female Genital Mutilation

The first city region conference on female genital mutilation was held in Leeds in September 2014. It was an opportunity to raise the profile of this issue and to launch the research which Black Health Initiative (BHI) had produced. This has provided a catalyst for a significant focus on female genital mutilation with better links and partnership working taking place. The strategic multi agency FGM consultation group has now been established and has a robust action plan in place. To further increase the profile and awareness Heather Nelson (BHI) made a presentation to the council's safeguarding lead officers in Jan 2015, and Tom Riordan, Chief Executive, made a presentation at the NHS conference on FGM in February 2015.

Ongoing work is taking place to raise awareness and ensure that services are in place to meet the needs of those who are victims of this abuse. In particular:

- members have taken a lead role via the scrutiny on domestic violence where fgm was raised and included as part of the inquiry
- we have actively supported the work of the BHI and the Gambian Volunteers (this group includes a number of Gambian men who are championing change in their community)
- we are leading the strategic multi agency group which is keen to ensure clear pathways and a joined up approach

As a result of the initial research, work is currently taking place to develop a project in Harehills. This has been commissioned by East North East Public Health Team. It recognises that practicing communities have been reluctant to disclose the existence of FGM within an environment where they feel it is misunderstood. Some families know that it is illegal and are fearful of the consequences of disclosure. The project aims to build a more integrated response to FGM issues, which can help to:

- Reduce women and girl's distress,
- Improve service access/responses for vulnerable women,
- Reduce risk of infant mortality
- Help save sparse public service resources as issues are identified earlier, rather than at a crisis point

Modern day slavery

Modern day slavery (human trafficking) had not been formally addressed in Leeds at a city level, primarily due to lack of understanding of the issue and lack of recognition of the extent to which it is an issue for Leeds. This meant that there was limited work taking place to address the victims of modern day slavery, many (but not all) of whom are women and from BME backgrounds. In 2013 Operation Angelstoke took place. This was a major anti-trafficking operation in Leeds, led by West Yorkshire Police. The operation was a catalyst for enhancing our understanding of the nature and potential scale of the problem across the city. The perpetrators of the slavery in relation to Operation Angelstoke were predominantly Eastern European, which presents a further equality dimension to this area.

Workshops were held with senior leaders (to raise awareness of the issues), and commitment gained to working positively with partners and developing a joint approach. The council has developed a strategy which has raised the profile and enables modern day slavery to be addressed within a clear structure. An operational working group is now being developed which will lead to relevant services including trafficking and slavery considerations into their daily function.

In January 2015 a dedicated Anti-Trafficking unit was established by West Yorkshire Police. Leeds is at the forefront of implementing the strategy across partners to achieve the vision and is a member of the West Yorkshire Anti Trafficking Network. The Leeds strategy is in line with the National Strategy from the Home Office and the National Police Strategy

In addition to other channels a new reporting avenue has been developed – Instinct. This provides an avenue for council staff to report concerns (anonymously if they wish to) that they may not be able to report in other ways.

The net result of Operation Angelstoke to date is the rescue of approximately 70 vulnerable individuals. It has raised the profile of modern day slavery and has resulted in better partnership working and understanding how to address this area so that there are positive outcomes for individuals. In addition the Instinct line has (between Feb and April 2015) provided information from LCC staff:

- Named an Asian Male who is suspected of human trafficking for the purposes of sham marriages.
- Identified a Czech female who is believed to be sexually exploited by a named male.
- Identified a male who is suspected of visiting Eastern Europe with the intention of trafficking females into the UK for the purposes of sexual exploitation.
- Named a landlord suspected of housing victims of trafficking.

All these cases are being investigated by West Yorkshire Police. In addition the most appropriate way of providing support for potential victims is being addressed, alongside any potential cohesion issues as a result of involvement by people from BME communities.



A skilled and committed
workforce

Care2Work

The ambitions of the Care2Work programme are:

- to guarantee work placements for children and young people in care and those leaving care
- to create more job opportunities for these young people

To help achieve these ambitions the Care2Work task Group was formed to review and improve Care2Work processes. They were able to ring fence entry level posts specifically for care leavers and simplify the recruitment process to remove potential barriers and to speed up the process:

- rather than filling in lengthy application forms, the young people were asked to send CVs
- interviews were kept informal
- job flyers were sent to partners to assist in identifying young people they deemed to be 'job-ready'
- work experience placements were offered to those applicants who were unsuccessful at acquiring a post

Further work is still taking place to, for example – recruit care leavers in other service areas as part of the Care2Work programme and to increase appropriate resources to assist the process.

For young people leaving care the positive outcomes include:

- 4 care leavers secured jobs
- 2 more posts were being recruited to in another service area
- 1 work experience placement has been carried out
- further work experience placements are being created

My swim through the talent pool: personal testimony

Thirty years after starting working with the council I started getting back pains. I loved my job as Head cook so put up with the pain, but after a couple of years and increased bouts of sick leave I reached the stage where it was obvious that I was not going to be able to continue to work in a kitchen.

Supported by my line manager I was referred to Occupational Health and along with discussions with my doctor it was stated that I needed to do work of a clerical nature, without long periods of standing, or any heavy lifting. I was faced with three options: leave my employment on health ground; be terminated for continuous episodes of extended absence, or ask for redeployment.

Like a lot of people, I could not afford to be out of work and had very little knowledge of working in an administrative capacity. Full of fear and trepidation and with the thought of redundancy at the back of my mind I volunteered to go into "the talent pool", with a view to finding some work I could do.

I was allocated a caseworker, and she helped me to realise that I had a lot more potential, and skills, than I thought I had. She reassured me that she would be actively working to help me secure a post. Having identified the sort of work that I could do, I started doing what is referred to as 'Meaningful Work' in various departments within the Council. I began to learn new skills, and gained a working knowledge of several administration systems operated by the Council. This increased my confidence tremendously, and the people I worked with were very willing to show me the ropes and help me through this time

Graduate programme: personal testimonies

A year after starting on the graduate scheme, I was offered promotion – I would not have been able to go for this role without the support and training I received through the graduate scheme. I manage two members of staff, run a website and social media account and produce numerous publications. I love working for the council and am so grateful for the opportunity to begin my career as a graduate.
(Female graduate)

I wanted to work in the public sector as it reflects my values. Being out as a lesbian in the workplace is important to me. I haven't experienced or witnessed homophobia in the council – this is testament to our collective commitment to 'live our values'...I am confident that oppressive language and attitudes won't be tolerated. Links between the council and Stonewall are vital – for the workforce and for the citizens of Leeds. I'd like to see the LGBT staff forum develop, to better raise our profile as an LGBT-inclusive organisation to work for. We need a workforce that reflects the diversity of the population of Leeds – I'm striving to help us achieve that.

(LGBT graduate)

The graduate programme has presented me with some fantastic opportunities. I have helped to organise a key regional event (Education Summit 2015), I've been involved in a cross-council project on safeguarding, I've taken up volunteering opportunities. I have become a governor in a Leeds primary school, which gives me a better understanding of my role in Children's Services. With a strong support network from colleagues, and opportunities to develop and strengthen my skills and knowledge, working with Leeds City Council has been very positive. I look forward to developing my career further.
(BME graduate)

The graduate programme has given me a great start with the council, through a well-structured induction and valuable on-the-job experience. I really enjoy working with external partners from 3rd sector organisations, schools and colleges, and members of the public. The programme has given me a good understanding of the council's vision, values and culture.
(Male graduate)

Mentoring made a difference to me – personal testimonies

Being a mentor enables you to see the world from a completely different perspective. I had arrogantly assumed mentoring would be a one-way process, but the real value is in the sharing of experience. This was my first time as a mentor...I'd be keen to do it again!
(Mentor)

I found out about the opportunity for mentoring though the Disabled Staff Network, and I jumped at the chance. My mentor asked me what I wanted to get from being mentored, so I have been focusing on building my skills to be able to advance my career. She is a great listener, she encourages me, sets me challenges, and helps me explore my reluctance to deal with certain situations. She is warm and friendly. Most importantly, my mentor is in my corner.
(Disabled Staff Network member)

I took up the opportunity of having a mentor, a new experience for me after over 30 years with the council. My mentor was external to the council – I found their impartiality really valuable. Mentoring has been of great benefit to me. I have become more patient and understanding, and have learned different approaches. As a direct result of being mentored, I have now become a mentor myself.
(Mentee)

I was in two minds about being mentored, as I don't easily open up to others. But I have found the sessions really comfortable and have been able to discuss the issues I wanted to work on. Mentoring has helped me work on my confidence and self-esteem, and I have made progress in my work life as well as my personal life. I have found mentoring really beneficial, and would definitely recommend it.
(Mentee)

School Leavers Programme: personal testimony

I thought the school leavers programme would be a great opportunity for me to get some experience. It was my first time in an office-based job, but I had great support, and did really well. My role included preparing papers for meetings, making travel arrangements, taking minutes in large meetings, and managing all correspondence into the directorate. I moved into the Child Friendly Leeds team, where I managed the inbox, supported various events, represented Child Friendly Leeds at staff engagement events, managed the nominations for the Child Friendly Leeds awards, as well as shortlisting for the awards, administration of the event, and front-of-house duties on the night.

I am no longer on the School Leavers Programme, but have a new role in Workforce Development. This is an exciting and incredible opportunity for me. I am proud of all I have achieved since starting the programme, and feel I have gained so many skills and so much knowledge and experience. I have learned a lot and have gained so much confidence in this journey.

Flexible working and reasonable adjustments: personal testimony

Because of a chronic illness, I was having long periods of absence from work and was regularly relapsing. Following three months' sickness absence, my work pattern changed so that I was able to work more flexibly. Working at home on Tuesdays and Thursdays maintains a routine, breaks up my week, and means I don't have to travel to and from work on those days (saving me four hours a week). My work lends itself to working at home, so there is no negative impact on the overall team. Spending less time travelling means I can fit in rest periods and medical appointments with little or no impact on my working day. For the past three years, I have had no periods of sickness absence linked to my long-term condition.



Young People and Opportunities

A female, BME primary school pupil had aspirations to be a journalist. Because of this, she and her school friend (who wanted to be a social worker) volunteered to video Rachel Reeves MP. Both girls prepared questions and filmed the interview, then presented it at Celebrating Women in Leeds 2014: an International Women's Day event hosted by (now leader of the council) Cllr Judith Blake.

The pupil also made contact with the YEP Newspaper Group and was mentored by a senior female journalist.

At Celebrating Women 2015, both pupils talked about what had happened to them during the previous year. The pupil interested in journalism stated that she was officially a young person reporter for the YEP. In addition, the pupil interested in social work is still on this path and is currently learning about it from actual social workers.

LGBT Hub and Staff Network – working in partnership

The LGBT Staff Network operated as a virtual network (with ad hoc email communication) for 18 months, having failed to find members willing to take on the role of chairs. At the same time, changes in the support for the LGBT Hub led to a reduction in membership and in attendance at quarterly meetings.

Ideas for new projects were being raised by staff, partners and citizens but there was no capacity to develop them. Lack of capacity was also calling into question involvement in activities such as LGBT History Month and International Day Against Homophobia and Trans Phobia.

It was clear that capacity issues in both the Hub and the Network needed to be addressed. To date, the following measures have been taken:

- A staff survey (open to all staff) resulted in 40 new members on the Staff Network mailing list;
- Members of the Staff Network are being actively encouraged to take part in Hub events;
- Organisers of the Staff Network and the LGBT Hub regularly meet, to avoid duplication of effort and to ensure that resources including staff time and budget are shared and used as effectively as possible;
- Marketing and other communications go out to both mailing lists where appropriate;
- To encourage wider participation:
 - the venue for the Hub meetings is now being varied, with the most recent meeting being held away from the Civic Hall, in the gay village; and
 - meetings now include a social element at the end;
- Social media is being used to reach large numbers of people involved in other LGBT networks; and
- Subgroups such as Trans, BME and women have been targeted, sometimes via other agencies.

As a result of this activity:

- Volunteers have come forward to write terms of reference for the Hub, set up a Bi subgroup, and work on proposals for an LGBT community centre;
- Further proposals are being developed to focus on issues affecting Trans, BME and women;
- The Hub and Staff Network are discussing assisting with the establishment of an LGBT Professional Network in the city; and;
- The Hub and Staff Network are working with a private sector sponsor – a large construction company – wishing to support LGBT issues as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility.

Equality and Diversity Training: building on excellence

Council homes in Leeds were previously managed by three Arms-Length Management Organisations (ALMOs). In 2013 management of council homes returned to the council as a single body – Housing Leeds.

In 2012 each ALMO was separately accredited with an 'excellence' rating from the Social Housing Equality Framework, and in each area there were recommendations for further training to broaden knowledge and understanding of various protected characteristics – for example: people with mental health issues, and those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT).

As well as specific training needs relating to the previously separate ALMOs, Housing Leeds were aware that newly created roles brought with them various equality and diversity training needs, and that approaches needed harmonising across the new organisation. To meet these needs, Housing Leeds:

- Delivered a range of equality-related training covering topics relating to mental health; HIV; LGBT issues; Traveller, Gypsy and Roma communities; unconscious bias;
- Carried out an Equality and Diversity 'Tool Box' talk with contractors;
- Delivered training around executive report protocols, specifically the approach to identifying and reporting the ways in which the organisation has given due regard to equality and diversity, and carried out equality impact assessments;
- Issues a monthly Equality and Diversity 'hot topic' (information team staff e-bulletin) including quizzes, videos and case studies – to be completed individually or in a team meeting – as well as being a means of raising awareness, and celebrating religious and cultural events;
- Has a system of Staff Equality and Diversity Members, meeting regularly to address different aspects of equality and diversity; and
- Plans equality and diversity e-learning for all managers, as well as ongoing training for all staff including new starters.

This range of measures gives Housing Leeds the confidence that it is building on its 'excellence' ratings by targeting equality and diversity information and training across all levels of staff, enabling them to improve their understanding of the diverse communities in which they work. It also means that systems are in place to ensure that equality impact assessments are robust, and that executive reports are written in a way that demonstrates how the service is paying due regard to equality and diversity.