



**Leeds**  
CITY COUNCIL

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2023 – 2024



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## Section 1: Introduction and context of Leeds

*The Best City Ambition is our overall vision for the future of Leeds. At its heart is our mission to tackle poverty and inequality and improve quality of life for everyone who calls Leeds home.*

*Our Three Pillars are at the centre of the Best City Ambition. They capture the things that will make the biggest difference to improving people's lives in Leeds – and many of the big challenges we face and the best opportunities we have relate to all three. The Best City Ambition aims to help partner organisations and local communities in every part of Leeds to understand and support the valuable contribution everyone can offer – no matter how big or small – to making Leeds the Best City in the UK.*

The Equality Improvement Priorities 2021 - 2025 have been produced to ensure that the council meets its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 and to compliment the Best City Ambition. The council's equality improvement priorities have considered the protected characteristics as required under the Equality Act 2010. We continue to recognise poverty as a barrier that limits what people can do and can be. We have, therefore, included priorities that address poverty as we recognise that several protected characteristics are disproportionately represented in those living in poverty.

We are conscious that there is not an equality priority for every protected characteristic, but all characteristics are considered. We are committed to equality for all our citizens and believe that improving a service for one community will have a positive impact for all communities. We will continue our work across all the protected characteristics, whether there are specific equality improvement priorities which are explicitly focussing on them. We will consider all communities when we give due regard to equality at both strategic level and operational activities.

### **Demographics: A Changing Population**

The population of Leeds as of the most recent release of data from the 2021 census is 812,000, an increase of 8.1% from 2011 when the population was 751,000. This is the third largest rise in Yorkshire and the Humber behind Selby (10.2%) and Wakefield (8.4%). The Y&H average is 3.7%. The increase in population of England and Wales overall is 6.3%. Leeds remains the second largest local authority area by population after Birmingham. In Leeds there has been an increase in the population aged 65 and over of 15.7% (compared to England and Wales at 20.1%) and of children aged under 15 years of 12.4% (compared to England and Wales at 5%).

Looking at the projected population 2018 to 2028:<sup>1</sup>

- Over the 10 years 2018 to 2028, the peak of those primary age increases will start feeding into secondary school, with a large increase in the number of teenagers in Leeds. There are projected to be 12,500 more young people aged between 11 and 17 by 2028 (21.5%).
- In the next 10 years, the increase in the older population is projected to be even bigger with 20,000 more people aged 65 and over resident in Leeds in 2028 than in 2018.

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<sup>1</sup> ONS 2016-based projections

- The Leeds population overall is predicted to continue to grow, reaching 830,500 by 2028; a 41,300 (5.2%) increase from 2018. The working age population will have a smaller percentage increase (2.6%) than both the population of 0 to 15-year-olds (6%) and those aged 65 and over (15.3%).

The makeup of the city is outlined below (please see appendix 2 for further detail):

- Leeds continues to become more ethnically diverse. The national 2021 Census showed that the proportion of the population from non-white British backgrounds has risen from 18.9% of Leeds population to 26.6%.
- According to the 2020 School Census the proportion of the school population from ethnically diverse backgrounds has nearly doubled since 2005, increasing from 17.9% in 2005 to 35.5% in 2020.
- The greatest ethnic diversity is in younger age groups, with 36.6% in primary schools and 33.6% in secondary and post-16 settings.
- In 2020, 20.5% of Leeds school pupils spoke English as an additional language, with the top five main languages being Urdu, Polish, Romanian, Arabic and Panjabi.
- According to the national 2021 Census, the population aged 65 and older is less ethnically diverse than younger age groups, but the proportion from ethnically diverse backgrounds will increase as people who settled in Leeds, as young adults grow older.
- The religious profile of the city is changing. The proportion of the population who say they have a religion fell from 65% to 54%. The numbers of people identifying as Christian fell by 76,479 but at 419,790 still make up the largest identifying group. The numbers of people identifying as Muslim rose by 22,282 to 63,054 and Muslims remain the second largest self-identifying religious group in the city. All other religions measured in the census increased in number except for the Jewish community where a small decrease of 580 was recorded.
- For disability 6.9% of the population said their day-to-day activities are limited a lot (down from 7.9%) while 9.8% said their day-to-day activities were limited a little (up from 8.9%).
- The 2021 Census collected information on sexual orientation and gender identity for the first time. 4,754 people answered no to the question is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth. 4.3% of the population identified as non-heterosexual.

Socio-economic analysis (notably the analysis based on the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation and the 2019 update of the council's Poverty Fact Book) show that a range of inequalities persist across the city and linked with deprivation levels, are particularly concentrated in specific localities with long-term related challenges such as access to employment, housing, language and literacy, skills, health, and care responsibilities.

A significant number of people in Leeds were already being impacted by low income and poverty before COVID-19 took effect in March 2020. The slow economic recovery alongside reductions in public spending has significantly impacted the poorest members of society. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 show the geographic concentration of deprivation in the communities of Inner East and Inner South Leeds, confirming the wider analysis of poverty and deprivation undertaken in the Joint Strategic Assessment of 2018.

Based on the IMD 2019:

- Leeds has 114 neighbourhoods (24% of its 482) in the most deprived 10% nationally. Although the IMD is based on neighbourhoods and is designed to identify pockets of deprivation, the government also publish summary measures for larger areas like local authorities. There is no single 'best' local authority measure, and the ranking of Leeds varies depending on the measure used.
- Local authorities are often ranked on the proportion of neighbourhoods in the most deprived 10% nationally. Leeds is ranked at 33 out of 317 local authority districts (1 is most deprived) on this measure. However, there are two measures which identify local authority districts with large numbers of people experiencing deprivation. These are the income scale and the employment scale. The income scale ranks local authorities on the number of people experiencing income deprivation. Leeds had the 4th highest number (with Birmingham ranked 1, Manchester ranked 2 and Liverpool ranked 3). The employment scale ranks local authorities on the number of people experiencing employment deprivation. Leeds had the 3rd highest number (with Birmingham ranked 1 and Liverpool ranked 2.)

## Section 2: The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Vision and Action Plan

A refreshed approach to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, including a Vision Statement and Action Plan, have been developed to move us 'up a gear' on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda and were agreed by Executive Board in February 2023. It supports the strategic policy and governance already in place around this agenda including our Equality and Diversity Policy, Due Regard (Equality Impact Assessment process), Equality Improvement Priorities and Equality Annual Report, the Corporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Board and policies around employment, procurement and partnership working.

Our ambition is for Leeds to be a city that is fair and just, that recognises and embraces people's different needs, situations, and ambitions. A city where the barriers that limit what people can do will be removed, and everyone will be enabled to be their best. For this to happen, we all need to take responsibility for our actions and behaviours and contribute positively to change. Although the council has legal responsibilities concerned with Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, we want to do more on this agenda because it is the right thing to do and there is a need to do more over and beyond statutory requirements. Delivery of a successful programme around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is essential to support our Best City Ambition. The Best City Ambition is our vision for the future of Leeds. At its heart is our mission to tackle poverty and inequality and improve the quality of life for everyone who calls Leeds their home.

There has been a notable societal shift with significant events over the past two years, not least the impact of the Black Lives Matter movement, the increasing awareness of violence against women and girls, the inequalities exacerbated and exposed by the Coronavirus pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, the ongoing impact of Brexit, and a significant rise in the reporting of hate crimes against protected characteristic groups. This has raised expectations, with strong calls for greater and faster change. We see this shift as a positive opportunity, and we are keen to **move up a gear**.

As an important next step, the Vision Statement and accompanying action plan sets out **three areas for action** covering the council's role as:

- **An employer** driving the workforce agenda based on the council's values.
- **A service deliverer/provider**, including commissioning and contracting, based on the council's values.
- **A partner in supporting communities to thrive**, based on the Best City Team Leeds approach.

By building on the good work, we already do and using the insight from a broad range of stakeholders, we aim to target our actions and resources in the right areas. The views of Leeds communities, local people, our partners, council teams and employees are crucially important to success. These views have shaped the action plan and will continue to do so moving forward, with our Equality Assembly, Equality Hubs and Staff Networks playing a key role alongside the many valuable and varied engagement channels that we have in Leeds.

The action plan will be kept under regular review to ensure it stays relevant to the changing times we live in. **We will report progress against the action plan every year via this Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Annual Report and the first full year (April 2023 to March 2024) updates can be found below.** Updates on our progress against the Equality

Improvement Priorities have been incorporated within the section on service delivery through the council. It will remain **a fluid document** to account for any significant events that require a more tailored and specialist intervention.

Results from the 2021 census show that the city is **becoming increasingly diverse** with more people from ethnically diverse communities, larger numbers observing diverse faiths or identifying with no faith, more people who were born overseas, significant numbers of disabled people and, for the first time, data on sexual orientation and gender identity showing an above national average number of people as identifying as LGBT+.

The last decade has seen the city and nation face **multiple significant challenges** which have often **impacted disproportionately** on people from protected groups including economic challenges resulting in austerity, Brexit and community tensions, a rise in hate crime, the pandemic, and the current cost of living crisis.

The Equality Act has been in place since 2010 and **communities expect a faster and more clearly outcome-based focus** moving forward. Disabled people still struggle to access buildings and services because barriers remain in place. Discrimination against people based on race and sexual orientation continues to take place in society. Women and girls face increasing discrimination, harassment, and sexual violence. People from across the protected characteristics are still under-represented in positions of authority and in multiple sectors of the economy and society.



### **Section 3: Update on progress against the People and Communities pillar of the Action Plan**

The Action Plan identifies 5 high level priorities against the People and Communities strand and an update against each of these is provided below:

1. **Strengthen and develop our community engagement approach** including the review and development of the Equality Assembly and Equality Hubs.

The council has equality consultation and engagement forums for the main protected characteristics (the Equality Hubs) for LGBT+, Religion or Belief, and Disability which are facilitated directly by the Safer and Stronger Communities Team and for Race (the Culturally Diverse Hub), Women and Girls, and Older People which are facilitated on the council's behalf by Voluntary Action Leeds, Women's Lives Leeds and Leeds Older Peoples Forum respectively. Collectively, these Hubs are known as the Equality Assembly and have been in place since 2009/10.

The Hubs are led by 'Hub Representatives' who are members of communities with support from the council and our partner organisations. They meet throughout the year and are a platform for council services and other organisations to get advice, guidance, support, and constructive challenge around the development of service delivery. As well as the meetings, the Equality Assembly and Hubs have an extensive mailing list and social media to communicate with members.

We have been undertaking a light touch review of the Assembly and Hubs during the first half of 2024 and this is summarised within appendix...this has focused on arrangements for recruiting Hub Representatives and ensuring the voices of Carers and Children and Young People are represented effectively.

2. **Celebrate the diversity of our city** and its people and communities through supporting a programme of activity for International Months, Weeks, and Days.

For several years, the council has been lighting the civic buildings and encouraging other building owners and managers in the city with the capacity to light their facilities as well to celebrate a wide variety of international days (alongside national civic and local charity events). In addition, flags are raised for a variety of days from the Civic Hall or Town Hall including for LGBT+ events, International Day of Older People, Interfaith Week and Windrush amongst others. A process for assessing these requests is in place through the council's governance team supported by Safer and Stronger Communities colleagues.

Starting in 2022 a new programme of lighting civic buildings was agreed in conjunction with Leeds Faith Forum and Concord Interfaith to celebrate important faith days which has been very well received by faith communities.

The Equality Team also hold a budget for supporting activity throughout the year delivered either directly by Safer and Stronger Communities Team, third sector partners or frequently a collaboration between both. Some examples of this include:



- Leeds Pride, LGBT+ History Month, Bi Visibility and Trans Days of Visibility
- International Day of Disabled People
- Interfaith week
- Refugee Week
- World Aids Day
- International Day of Older People
- Black History Month
- International Women's Day
- Hate Crime Awareness Week and Islamophobia Awareness Month
- Holocaust Memorial Day and Remembering Srebrenica

3. **Develop our third sector infrastructure** which focuses on equality, diversity, inclusion, and migration and hate crime.

In addition to the work on EDI, progress is also taking place against the Hate Crime agenda. The Hate Crime Strategic Board and the Operational Group provide strategic leadership and operational capacity to deliver the city's Hate Crime Strategy. Key outputs in the last 12 months have included:

- Review of the councils Third Party Reporting Centres and Signposting Centres and the establishment of a network to support these. Extensive training of staff in these centres has taken place. A regular newsletter has been planned and will start in the Autumn of 2024.
- The successful delivery of an extensive programme of activity for Hate Crime Awareness Week and Islamophobia Awareness Month in the Autumn of 2023 and developing plans to repeat these programmes for the Autumn of 2024 in collaboration with Third Sector partners and West Yorkshire Police.
- Build on our previous work adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition on anti-Semitism and the definition on Anti-Muslim Prejudice we held a conference in December 2023 to further develop our approach to these two areas. This was planned prior to the Terrorist attacks in October 2023 in Israel and subsequent conflict in Gaza which have resulted in significant increases in hate crime against both Muslims and Jews.

The Equality Team work closely in partnership with colleagues who support the third sector and share resources and capacity between both functions which assists with the important collaboration on building third sector EDI capacity.

Current examples of development work in this area include work to support the city's ambition to have an LGBT+ Resource Centre through Pride of Place and working closely with Women's Lives Leeds in collaboration with colleagues in Safer Stronger Communities around the consultation and engagement platform that is the Women and Girls Hub and with a particular focus on misogyny. Hub meetings were re-launched for Older people in 2023 and Leeds Older People, as the commissioned organisation are continuing to work with the Equality Team to strengthen engagement and increase turnout at their meetings.

4. **Widen our partnerships** at city, West Yorkshire, regional, national, and international level to ensure we can continue to be a leader in EDI and associated work and incorporate best practice wherever possible.

We have significantly strengthened our partnerships during the last 12 months around the EDI and associated agendas and examples of this include:

- Joining the new 'Working Together for an Inclusive West Yorkshire Forum' with the other West Yorkshire councils, Mayors Office and West Yorkshire Combined Authority. This is now chaired by the Mayor of West Yorkshires Inclusion Advisor Fatima Khan-Shah and has proved especially useful during the last months in helping collaboration around tensions arising from the Middle East
  - We have restarted the Leeds Equality Network which focuses on service delivery and communities facing work with other public sector partners, the Third Sector and Private Sector. This is being chaired by the councils Equality Team with a Vice Chair from the NHS.
  - The Equality Team successfully organised the first meeting of the Core Cities Equality Network since before Covid and these will now take place on a quarterly basis with a focus on collaborating on challenges around different protected characteristics and also different shared workstreams such as Giving Due Regard.
5. **Deliver a cohesion strategy** for the city that brings together key stakeholders and agendas and builds on our work around the Intercultural Cities Programme.

Following a successful visit from the Council of Europe in 2022 that commended our approach and commitment to becoming an Intercultural City, the council has continued its efforts to develop a cohesion strategy for the city that aims to bring different communities together to build a stronger and more cohesive city.

A public survey was launched during the first quarter of 2023/24, alongside focus groups with community groups and consultation with young people, which has been extensively promoted asking for citizens' input. An extensive analysis of the results of the public survey and focus groups has been undertaken and initial findings have highlighted key areas of concern for our communities that prevent people from getting know each other and form relationships and understanding with people from different backgrounds. The findings have also provided an insight into the type of activity suggested that would assist in bringing communities together.

The proposed cohesion strategy will be developed using the results from the survey later in the year before submission separately to Executive Board.

## **Section 4: Update on progress against the Service Delivery pillar of the Action Plan**

The Action Plan identifies 5 high level priorities against the Service Delivery strand and an update against each of these is provided as follows:

- 1. Review and strengthen our approach to ‘giving due regard’** to equality, diversity, and inclusion with an improved focus on monitoring outcomes and reporting these.

The council’s approach to giving due regard is delivered via our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Impact Assessment (EIA) process which is required under both law and council policy for all decision making. It is well developed and well used. However, training for officers has not taken place since before the pandemic and we have started to undertake training of key report writers across Directorates to address any gaps in knowledge in the context of the wider EDI training programme for staff as we seek to maintain and strengthen the quality as well of the quantity of due regard being given.

Working with Corporate Governance we are considering how to undertake light touch audits of the quality of the due regard given across the organisation during 2024.

We also plan to review the four existing documents used to record due regard and reduce these to two combined screenings and full impact assessment templates, merging the existing separate forms for workforce and service delivery. This will take place before the end of 2024 and will be accompanied by extensive communications to report writers and decision makers.

### **2. Deliver the councils Equality Improvement Priorities**

Colleagues across the council have detailed their progress against the equality improvement priorities to assist with the development of this annual report and these can be found further below in this service delivery section.

- 3. Strengthen our governance arrangements** at all levels of the council and improve transparent and accessible reporting so we can clearly show progress against our priorities.

The council has established a range of governance arrangements across all levels of the organisation for both officers and Elected Members and these include:

- Corporate Equality Board - the Board is chaired by the councils Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion manager from Safer and Stronger Communities Team and is made up of officers from Safer and Stronger Communities, Human Resources, and the chairs of the Directorate Equality Boards. The Board has reviewed and strengthened its terms of reference in the last year and has a direct link into CLT via the Director of Adult Social Care and Health and the City Solicitor who chair the Adult Social Care and Public Health and Strategy and Resources Equality Diversity and Inclusion Boards respectively. Key messages from the boards work are passed to Corporate Leadership Team bi-monthly.

- Directorate Equality Boards - these are chaired by directors, deputy directors or chief officers and include representatives from every council service area. Role descriptions for members of these boards are being developed at a Directorate level.
  - Equality Lead Members meetings - Equality Lead Members from the Labour Group are in place for the protected characteristics, and they meet quarterly with the Executive Board Member for Communities who leads on Equality. A role profile for the Lead Members was agreed early in 2023. A new Lead Member for Care Experienced is proposed for the 2024/25 year.
  - Member (Equality) Champions meetings - the cross-party Member Champions Working Group includes representatives from different parties in the council chamber and meets bi-monthly to provide check and challenge around progress against the councils Equality Improvement Priorities.
- 4. Improve how we communicate key messages, priorities, and programmes** to all council staff to ensure everyone can contribute to the equality, diversity, and inclusion agenda.

Work is complete to review and strengthen all the content on the Equality Toolkit on Insite which provides information to staff on the EDI agenda as well as the content on leeds.gov which provides information to citizens. The pages on leeds.gov are all uploaded by the website team including accessible information on the annual report, vision and action plan. The pages on the Equality Assembly are due to be reviewed after the July Executive Board and the newly refreshed content for Insite has been submitted to the Insite Team for them to create.

Work is continuing to review the social media accounts used to promote the work of the Equality Assembly and Equality Hubs across various platforms including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

A communications plan for Equality Diversity and Inclusion including the outward promotion of all International Days, weeks and months has been developed between Safer and Stronger Communities Team and Corporate Communications Team.

The first four editions edition of a quarterly newsletter on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion were produced and distributed by the Equality Team in Safer and Stronger Communities for staff during the 2023/24 municipal year.

All council internal communications to senior managers, all managers and all staff regularly include information relating to the EDI agenda.

**5. Focus on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis** and the long-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on people and communities through all our service delivery.

Work to mitigate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis has focused on ensuring people and communities most impacted, are linked to support and advice in the city. The strategic and operational arrangements have representation from across Council and Health services, and a range of external partners including the third sector. This ensures that the approach has been considered from a range of perspectives and concerns/ issues highlighted at the earliest opportunities. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion has been integral to regular Executive Board [Cost of Living Update Reports](#) and the work has been consulted upon at the Equalities Assembly, and through a wide range of groups and forums including those specifically representing the equality characteristics groups.

The Financial Inclusion Team within Leeds City Council's Communities, Housing and Environment directorate works on multiple projects and strategies to mitigate the impact of poverty and inequality in the city. Work is based on an evidence-based approach, collaboration and partnership working with a range of diverse partners and external agencies, many of whom work directly with people and communities experiencing financial exclusion to ensure projects, and initiatives are directed and influenced by real lived experience. Key project areas include;

- Money Information Centre (MIC) & Leeds Poverty Fact Book
- Leeds Financial Inclusion Steering Group & Leeds Food Insecurity Taskforce
- Partnership work with advice agencies, support organisations and networks including Leeds Credit Union, Forum Central, Voluntary Action Leeds, Leeds Food Aid Network, Illegal Money Lending Team, Leeds Debt Advice Network etc.
- Leeds Healthy Holidays & support for Leeds School Uniform Exchange
- Leading work on addressing Gambling Related Harm
- Delivery of financial Inclusion training & presentations
- Cost of Living crisis response, including delivery of Household Support Fund, Welcome Spaces and the Cost of Living & Welfare Breakthrough Project

Delivered in collaboration with partners, Financial Inclusion training covers a range of issues including Leeds Money Information Centre and routes to support, cost-of-living crisis, child poverty and gambling harms. Sessions have led to a significant number of staff, volunteers, frontline services and elected members increasing knowledge and understanding of the diverse needs and experiences of people in poverty, as well as the support options available in Leeds. Recent sessions have included:

- Adult Social Care - Better Lives Board, Better Together, Forum for Race Equality in Social care and Health
- Childrens Services - Social care staff, Early Help & Directors Development sessions
- Health: Health and Wellbeing Board, Public Health (various), Local & Primary Care Partnerships
- City partnerships: Migration Partnership, Leeds Debt Forum, Leeds Food Aid Network, Leeds Community Anchor Network, Age Friendly Board & Partnership, Leeds Maternity Strategy Health and Wellbeing group, Armed Forces Covenant, LGBT+ Hub, Religion or Belief Hub.
- Frontline LCC teams: Gas & Electric, Housing Leeds, Community Hubs & Libraries.

Despite the strong, established supportive infrastructure in Leeds, the actions undertaken have not been enough to prevent increasing numbers of households falling into poverty and hardship. The cost-of-living crisis has exacerbated the situation, with worsening inequalities and financial difficulty, particularly for low-income households. Funding instability and cuts to local authority, NHS and third sectors continue to increase the pressures, challenging the operations of services, at a time of rising need. Cross sector examples of organisations reaching untenable positions are being seen, with necessary service reviews, reductions and policy changes being considered which are detrimental to the capacity and capability of support in the city. The focus for the financial inclusion team will continue to be tackling poverty and inequality across the city, for all Leeds residents.

## **Health and Wellbeing**

**Equality Improvement Priority:** Support protected characteristics and priority demographics to become or remain physically active, to decrease health inequalities across the city.

### **Equality Improvement Priority Update:**

#### **What have we achieved:**

Active Leeds have supported older people through grant support for bowling clubs with predominantly an older membership; partnership working with Leeds Older Peoples Forum and Leeds Beckett University; and complex and specific health programmes for older people. Children and young people can access specific junior gym hours in leisure centres and a joint paper was produced from Active Leeds and Child Friendly Leeds to Exec Board Dec 2023 regarding Play Sufficiency in Leeds, which includes looking through the lens of the child. Nine priorities for Leeds identified through the Play Sufficiency research and several sharing of the learning events taken place to influence the approach within Leeds. Active Leeds supported and encouraged CYP and staff members living in residential settings to increase their physical activity levels and to increase their awareness of local leisure opportunities and delivered a sports day for looked after children in Summer 2023.

Active Leeds hosted a number of disability sports clubs on site such as wheelchair basketball at Morley LC, events such as a CYP SEND event at John Charles, impairment specific tennis tournaments, and directly delivered a comprehensive programme of disability swim hubs and additional needs swimming lessons across a number of leisure centres. Low sensory gym sessions started at Pudsey Leisure Centre after learning from people with neurodiverse conditions what would support them to access the gym and then expanded to the John Charles Centre for Sport, John Smeaton, Middleton, and Pudsey leisure centres. Carers continue to access free entry to any Active Leeds session when supporting a disabled person.

The service continued to update and develop the Active Leeds guidance on transgender and non-binary people accessing services, ensuring all staff are aware of the latest information. Menopause education and yoga sessions were delivered at The Peoples Gym which is fully inclusive gym that is designed with the LGBT+ community in mind. Football kit was provided to a new LGBT+ asylum seekers community football team.

Active Leeds secured funding through the Integrated Care Board (ICB), to provide Yoga during and post pregnancy for women with a high risk of gestational diabetes across a number of settings. As part of Leeds Baby week Active Leeds provided pre-natal and post-natal activities for free over a course of a two-week period. This was the first time these sessions were delivered in leisure centres.

Strength and balance programmes have been set up at the Mandela Centre in Chapeltown, connecting with multiple multi-faith partners in the area. Through a partnership with major sportswear company Sweaty Betty, our Leeds Girls Can programme supported a group of Leeds South Asian teenagers to develop their groundbreaking new sports hijab project. Further funding was secured through the Sweaty Betty Foundation to deliver a targeted project for girls from ethnic minority backgrounds to experience a variety of sports and physical activities. Working in partnership with Chapeltown Youth Development Centre we



created a scholarship programme to provide young black people with the opportunity to access the gym and swimming sessions during off-peak times. Active Leeds has been linking with Leeds City of Sanctuary to support groups of people seeking asylum at three hotels in Leeds with free physical activity opportunities.

Community Iftar Event was held with Hamara and Leeds Utd Foundation as part of the Active Through Football scheme, bringing communities together at Ramadan. New Dawn Islamic School hire the full adult social care area at Holt Park Active on a Friday evening.

The service has supported the development of women only changing rooms at an established men's rugby club and delivered a recorded online webinar showcasing the project with South Asian girls that has been placed on the Yorkshire and Humber Learning platform. Women's only transition cycling courses menopause cycling day have been held with Cycle North. Education and support through physical activity is being delivered to women within Ripon House, a hostel for women who have served prison sentences.

Armley Leisure Centre promoted community cohesion with the delivery of a Tuesday night youth project in partnership with the youth service, InterPlay, New Wortley Community Centre and BARCA, alongside tackling anti-social behaviour by engaging with the Ministry of Boxing to create a diversionary activity within the centre. "Let's Move" South Leeds event was held at Cross Flatts Park co-ordinated as an opportunity to bring communities together through celebrating local activities on offer. The Active Leeds Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration working group meets on a monthly basis and involves a cross section of the service, used to drive and disseminate all equality related updates, topics and work areas across the respective teams across the service.

Active Leeds are helping to tackle socio-economic inequality and poverty by developing a city-wide partnership sharing, collecting and distributing sports kit, clothing and equipment, securing partnerships with manufacturers and retailers to ensure that not having the correct kit is no longer a barrier for people. Working with the 'Fred Perry Tennis Trust', Active Leeds deliver four free tennis programmes for children and adults, at Armley Park. Financial support in the shape of discretionary rate relief and sports equipment grants have been given to sports clubs based in the most deprived wards. Funding was secured through Swim/bike/run to enable families from the lower socio-economic areas in Leeds to attend a fun Halloween themed swimming session. Free swimming lessons delivered for children entitled to free school meals through the healthy holidays programme. Get Set Leeds Local worked within 4 of the top 1% most deprived LSOA's developing co-produced and community led interventions to support communities to 'move more'.

A large project took place to review and revamp the Active Leeds website ensuring content was more accessible for all, including the removal of pdf's, images with text, alteration of colours etc. The service had a drive to be as inclusive and as diverse as possible with our campaign imagery, using real members from our centres, showcasing the diversity of our members and offering.

Included additional training for staff around neurodiversity in the workplace, but also how this builds awareness about customers with neurodiversity and how to support them to feel comfortable in the environment.

**The difference we have made:**

Older people have been supported through Active Leeds programmes through health check events, physical activity tasters, continuation in suitable sessions in leisure centres, home exercise programmes, and through the LEAP project. All supporting people in priority localities, with physical activity navigation, signposting, support and ultra low membership costs. Play Sufficiency is now being supported at a Strategic level, with a new Play Champion.

Sports clubs with disabled participants benefit from reduced prices; disability swim lessons are smaller class sizes allowing greater levels of support and are now held in 8 leisure centres; and safe and inclusive sessions for people with neurodiverse conditions are now more widely available across leisure centres.

Mindfulness sessions delivered to the groups of people that identified as women or non-binary have provided safe welcoming spaces, as have the football sessions that supported those people seeking asylum, with free training from Leeds United Foundation, and free sports attire to enable to play safely.

The ICB funded project has been a successful intervention for reducing the prevalence of gestational diabetes, and pre and post-natal activities provided have brought women together providing a fun and active intervention for mothers.

The major collaboration project with Sweaty Betty and teenage south Asian girls in Leeds for the design of a new sports Hijab will have a positive impact on reducing the barriers faced by Muslim women and girls participating in sport and physical activity. Hotel residents seeking asylum have been able to gain free access to three local Active Leeds leisure centres on a rotational basis and were also supported with kit/clothing donations and additional activities such as led walks, runs and cycling, enabling positive physical activity experiences they would not otherwise have had.

The project at Ripon House has enabled improved mental health outcomes for the women it supports, around mindset, better choices, behaviour change and support through the menopause journey.

Intervention projects at Armley LC have provided safe spaces for children and young people as well as tackling some of the anti-social behaviour issues experienced in the locality, and 49.76% of court bookings on the Armley Park weekly free tennis lessons were made by those living in IMD 1-3.

The Active Leeds website is now more compliant with new accessibility legislation, with an increase seen in online bookings onto disability swimming lessons.

**What we still need to do:**

Active Leeds will continue to support the groups seeking asylum through the work of Leeds City of Sanctuary, as part of the wider plan for LCC to become a council of sanctuary and continue to support the inter-cultural cities network. The kit donation scheme partnership will continue with a drive to secure resources to continue to test and learn from this approach, to build the evidence base and measure the impact that we make.

Low sensory sessions will be rolled out at further leisure centre sites, and disability swimming lessons will also be expanded. Co-produced community sport & physical activity programmes will continue to prioritise priority characteristics. Through the work of the Get Set Leeds Local project an extension of funding will allow expansion into Gipton and Harehills, with a focus on the highest areas of deprivation within them.

Active Leeds EDCI working group will continue to champion equality related issues for the service, and there is a need to expand its membership with more participants from diverse backgrounds in the service. Discretionary rate relief and sports club equipment grants will continue to support those in priority localities.

Active Leeds marketing campaigns need to continue to showcase underrepresented groups, and the removal of all pdf's replaced by more accessible bookable timetables on the website will occur.

The roll out of the new Active Leeds strategy in 2024 will underpin all of the above principles and areas, alongside the desire to undertake the Cultural Cohesion Quality Mark assessment for the service.

**Equality Improvement Priority:** Review and respond to the impact of Covid 19 on communities and communities of interest with a focus on health inequalities.

- Work with Community Health development providers to understand the impact of COVID 19 in inner City wards.
- Develop the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) pathfinder programme, expanding the reach across the city.
- Support the development of asset-based community development across the Council and wider health and care system

### **Equality Improvement Priority Update:**

#### **What have we achieved:**

Community Health Development (Better Together)

Better Together is a Public Health commissioned service, which uses community health development approaches to strengthen individual and community resilience and improve health and wellbeing.

It uses an outreach approach to identify people who will most benefit from engaging with the service and then works with them to identify local needs and ensure appropriate support and interventions – mainly group work and 1:1 support.

It aims to reduce health inequalities by primarily focusing on addressing social determinants of health. There is a secondary focus on promoting healthy living and protecting health within communities. It only operates in Indices of Multiple Deprivation Decile (IMD) 1 communities.

These are Armley, Beeston and Holbeck, Bramley and Stanningley, Burmantofts and Richmond Hill, Chapel Allerton, Cross Gates and Whinmoor, Farnley and Wortley, Gipton and Harehills, Hunslet and Riverside, Headingley and Hyde Park, Killingbeck and Seacroft, Little London and Woodhouse, Middleton Park and Temple Newsam (Halton Moor).

In the West of Leeds, the approach is led by Barca Leeds. In the South of Leeds, it is led by Health For All with Asha, Holbeck Together, and St Luke Cares. In the East of Leeds, it is led by Feel Good Factor with Shantona, Space 2, Touchstone and Zest.

Better Together has been effective at engaging with, and reaching into, diverse communities at risk of experiencing significant health inequalities. They are trusted Third Sector organisations, able to connect with communities and develop and design approaches with them. We look at the most recent data – such as the recent Census – to ensure that their approach is reflective of local communities.

#### **ABCD:**

There is a strong focus on equality embedded within the development and implementation of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD). We have continued to focus on the development and delivery against our ABCD priority plan ambition: To expand Asset Based Community Development across Leeds, shifting power to people and supporting communities to thrive.

With a continue focus on social capital, community driven and led activity, empowering people to become community leaders, to reduce health inequalities.

We have been building the sustainability of our fourteen ABCD Pathfinder sites, place based and active in all priority ward areas experiencing the highest levels of deprivation and health inequality. We have continued to strengthen and develop wider networks and partnerships, with a strong focus in the Third Sector and the top 1% priority areas. Two of our sites have a learning disability lens, two sites are Neighbourhood Networks, one as Tennant and Management association, one working with the Roma community and the Gypsy Roma Traveller Outreach and Inclusion Team to promote public health messages post pandemic. This year we are expanding to seventeen sites across Leeds, and have collaborated with our partners in health, localities, taking into consideration work being undertaken by Leeds as part of becoming a Marmot City. We have prioritised priority neighborhoods, with higher Indices of Multiple Deprivation, identifying small pockets of deprived neighborhoods within more affluent wards to ensure a strong equity focus.

ABCD Pathfinder sites have been offered EDI training, guidance, and support to ensure the ABCD Community Builders they employ offer an inclusive approach to community development. We are using learning from the inequalities highlighted through COVID 19 to further engage with communities of interest and to ensure citizens from these communities are empowered to be community connectors, and community leaders.

We have successfully delivered year one of the Levelling up Shared Prosperity Fund, under Communities and Place, focusing on working with the most deprived communities in Leeds:

- A Neighbourhood Matching Scheme - Voluntary Action Leeds are developing a scheme to build on the interest in formal and informal volunteering opportunities that nurture neighborliness.
- Continuation and development of the 'Hey Neighbour' scheme - Leeds Older People's Forum are developing the scheme that enables individuals and small community groups to develop an asset-based approaches in their own neighbourhoods and communities through micro grants and community partnerships.
- An ABCD Pathfinder site based at Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation.

The Neighbourhood Matching Scheme project delivery has been supported through the Local Community Anchor Network with delivery partners representing a diverse range of communities from different ethnic backgrounds.

We have continued to develop joint working partnership with Leeds 2023 neighbourhood hosts, and support around the Leeds 2023 Legacy agenda, whose mission is to play an active role in the city and region's social, economic, and cultural recovery from the pandemic.

More recently we have been developing our partnership with the Migrant Access Project, and the Strategic, Coordinated and Inclusive Approach to Migration in Leeds, City of Sanctuary's work, with an aim to support in embedding and asset-based focus and support on the delivery of the five key priority areas, more specifically to:

- Strengthen resilience and build capacity (increasing confidence to adapt and thrive)
- Strong Partnerships (working together as a city / enabling an effective citywide response)

We have continued to develop the ABCD Learning Collective for anyone in the third sector, with an equality focus to support people, and reduce their health inequalities.

We have developed an Asset Based Leeds City Council Learning Network for all staff to reflect and consider working practice and approaches through an inclusion, asset-based lens, creating asset-based 'Community builders' across the Council that supports our equality improvement priorities: Support the development of asset-based community development across the Council and wider health and care system.

**The difference we have made:**

Better Together operates at scale. The service has an annual target of meaningfully engaging with 10% of people in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation Decile (IMD1) communities in Leeds.

Therefore, annually approximately 20,000 people are engaged in a variety of settings – door knocking, events, galas, places of worship, tower blocks and many more – where people live, work, and socialise.

They are delivering a wide range of group work and activities in the target areas, including:  
Food and Cooking:

- Recipe stations; Cook and chat; Grow and cook; Eatwell course; Food pantries
- Physical Activity: Walking groups; Yoga; Gardening groups; Tai Chi; Pilates; Zumba
- Conversation and peer support: Coffee and connect; Men's groups; Conversations clubs; Parent's groups
- Employment, Skills and Education: Developing You; ESOL; Digital skills
- Arts and Crafts: Sew it Seams; Family Craft Time; Creative Thursday; Knitting groups; People Poetry; Heart to Art

Over 2,500 people engaged in groups in the last year. This is in addition to established groups. Where appropriate, we encourage groups to become sustainable and create capacity for more new groups.

They have provided flexible capacity to address key Public Health issues, such as our response to the Covid 19 pandemic. They delivered practical support (food, medicine, social connections), and promoted testing and vaccinations in communities. With their high level of community trust, visual presence, and compassionate approach, they were able to successfully engage with communities. They led on the operational delivery of the Leeds Track and Trace service in communities. More recently, they have played a key role in our response to Cost-of-Living issues.

Validated outcome measures are used to evidence the impact that they make – the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) and Office for National Statistics (ONS) loneliness scale – as well as activity data and case studies.

**ABCD:**

The stories below highlight how ABCD has had a positive impact on individuals and communities:

The Hey Neighbour project was commissioned to alleviate the impact on mental health during the recovery phase of the pandemic response. COVID-19 disproportionately impacted on communities of interest with shared protected characteristics.

Twenty-five small and micro community led projects supporting to nurture neighbourliness and focusses on enabling human, rather than digital, connections and addressing inequalities by prioritising areas of high deprivation. These projects have evidenced a

diverse range of activity to nurture community building amongst LGBTQ+, elderly, intergenerational activities, and physical disability projects.

A group of women in Hunslet have come together as part of a skills sharing project funded through the Neighbourhood Matching Scheme, sharing skills with each other such as cooking, crochet and language skills to assist with translation (Tamil and Somali) to encourage other volunteers to participate in the project. The group is self-led, with the women deciding what skills they want to share and learn from each other. Feedback from participants have shared that the group has helped improve self-confidence and social inclusion, as well as breaking down cultural barriers by sharing stories about their lives over sharing food prepared together. The group are exploring how to become self-sustaining through selling some of the things they have made during their sessions.

A man with lived experience of mental ill health used small sparks funding to set up a space for men with mental health diagnosis to come together to use art as a way of expressing themselves and support with improving their mental health. The group looked out for each other, building connections and friendships, they recognised when a member became seriously ill and supported him to get the help he needed.

They group commented that having peer support from others has helped improve normal day to day life: "It's created a routine and a support network outside of the sessions."

A local community connector who is a refugee was enthusiastic about removing attitudinal barriers to understand the lived experiences of others, was excited to share a film with her community of asylum seekers and refugees. Bringing together over two hundred people to attend the event and a considerable proportion of the audience had a lived experience of the asylum process. The Community Connector is actively involved with the Leeds City of Sanctuary. an ambassador for The Voices Network UK and a Trustee for Human Beings Yorkshire.

Attendees reported that it was a moving and inspiring event, and people had said they felt energised and felt a shared sense of community, the connector will be organising more gatherings and events in the future.

### **What we still need to do:**

#### *Better Together:*

- To continue the positive work and ensure that they target groups furthest away from services.
- Cost pressures (fuel and supporting activities) related to inflation are leading to financial pressure on the service, so we are linking them into appropriate support.
- The impact of cost-of-living pressures and living with the effects of Covid on communities has led to greater demand and complexity for Better Together providers.
- Better Together staff are impacted by this too and retaining and supporting them is increasingly a challenge.
- Finding accessible, affordable venues can be a barrier to spreading delivery of groups and activities across the geographical areas covered by the contracts – providers and Public Health colleagues are exploring opportunities around this issue on an ongoing basis.

#### *ABCD:*

- Deliver the ABCD Plan on a Page Key priorities in line with the Best City Ambition



- Work to secure investment into the ABCD programme
- Manage the three asset-based UK SPF Grants that focus on ‘people and place’ linking micro assets to local economy.
- Continue to strengthen and develop wider networks and partnerships, with a strong focus in the Third Sector and the top 1% priority areas.
- Work with our partners to build on the legacy of Leeds 2023 Neighbourhood Hosts work, with an asset-based lens.
- Deliver on the member engagement plan to ensure LGA’s Peer Review recommendation to invest in member development on strengths-based community development is successfully achieved.

## **Age Friendly City**

**Equality Improvement Priority:** Ensure everyone can benefit from an age friendly city where people age well, regardless of where they live or their protected characteristics, enabling older people to be valued, feel respected and appreciated, and are seen as assets.

Influence across the Council and wider partners to ensure age, as a protected characteristic, is considered in strategic priorities and plans.

Recognise the barriers faced by older people who are, or are at risk of, being vulnerable, marginalised or disadvantaged, and put interventions in place to remove or reduce these barriers.

### **Equality Improvement Priority Update:**

#### **What we have achieved:**

*Developing a greater understanding of the needs and barriers faced by older people through:*

- Implementing the refreshed Age Friendly strategy and action plan, which is based on consultation with key elected members, representative groups such as Age Friendly Ambassadors, Leeds Older People's Forum, and Community Committees.
- Ongoing sharing and use of the State of Ageing in Leeds report which includes information on the needs and barriers experienced by older people.
- Ensuring community voice is strengthened in Age Friendly Board and Partnership meetings.
- The Falls Steering Group to understand inequalities in needs in relation to falls and inequities in access to services.
- Sharing of older people's mental health data with the Mental Health Strategy Priority 7 group and Age Friendly Leeds Partnership, to help shape plans.
- Using learning from the Time to Shine programme.
- Conducted further work to hear the voices of people in later life (50+) as part of the Director of Public Health Annual Report – 950 people in later life and 50 professionals working with people aged 50+

*Influenced across the Council and wider partners to ensure age, as a protected characteristic, is considered in strategic priorities and plans through:*

- The Age Friendly Board prepared a response to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Leeds Local Plan and influenced the inclusion of Age Friendly as an 'enabler' in the Best City Ambition.
- The involvement and commitment from domain leads from across the council to report actions against key objectives of the Age Friendly Board (Appendix Annual Report).
- The formal 5 year partnership that we held with the Centre for Ageing Better centred on 'what works' to make Leeds a better place to live and age for anyone aged 50+. The influence of this partnership on age-friendly homes, transport, neighbourhoods and employment have at a local and national level have been formally written up in the report '[Making Leeds the best city to grow old in - the power of partnership](#)'
- Attendance at the Corporate Equalities Board to raise awareness of Age Friendly Leeds and the interconnections with equality and age as a protected characteristic.

- Providing an update on actions to the Health & Wellbeing Board (November 2023).
- Providing bi-annual updates to Adults & Health DLT.
- Securing funding from Adults & Health for the Friendly Communities Programme (Leeds Older People's Forum) to support Council and partners' services and organisations to become Age Friendly and provide an older peoples' response to consultations.
- Providing Public Health leadership for key actions within the priority 7 workstream of the Mental Health strategy which focusses on ensuring older people have access to information and services that meet their needs.
- Providing Public Health leadership for the citywide Falls Steering Group, which supports the Frailty Population Board and outcomes relating to preventing unplanned hospital admissions due to falls.
- Contributing to the development of the Leeds Food Strategy (2022-2030) to ensure older people are considered, particularly around health and wellbeing. Supporting the consultation to ensure that older people's views were captured.
- Contributing to the Leeds Public Health Winter and Heat Plans ensuring that older people are considered and protected during times of adverse weather.
- Working with the Policy team to plan and deliver the State of the City event focussed on economic outcomes amongst people aged 50+.

*Put interventions in place to remove or reduce barriers faced by older people through:*

- a. Working with Commissioners/services and the Friendly Communities team (Leeds Older People's Forum) to develop and implement age friendly principles to ensure services are accessible and inclusive of older people and those with protected characteristics by:
  - Implementing Age Friendly organisations across Local Authority leisure centres, health settings and neighbourhood networks (170+ in total), delivering the Age Friendly Ambassador programme (300+ in total) and the Wise Up to Ageism training.
  - Facilitating Council sign up to the Centre for Ageing Better's Good Recruitment for Older Workers pilot which aims to reduce ageism in recruitment.
  - Supporting the Council to adopt the Age Friendly Employer Pledge, working towards creating an age friendly culture, hiring age-positively, being flexible about flexible working, encouraging career development at all ages, and ensuring everyone has the health support they need.
- b. Working with partners to ensure a preventative approach is taken in later life to address individual risk factors as well as the wider determinants focusing on those who are more likely to experience inequality to ensure they age well through:
  - Age Friendly Board overseeing delivery against Age Friendly Strategy domains that reflect the wider determinants e.g. housing, transport, employment.
  - Age Friendly Partnership ensuring continuous professional development and networking to members to maximise impact on preventative opportunities for ageing well.
  - Initiating a review of needs relating to healthy ageing as part of the Annual Director of Public Health report.

- Oversight of falls steering group and planning and delivery of the falls prevention programme e.g. commissioning strength and balance sessions, Dance On, strengthening campaign (aged 40+) and Home Plus.
- Providing Lunch Club annual grants to promote and support voluntary groups who provide a hot, nutritious meal, warm welcoming space, and activities to reduce social isolation for older people. Grants administered to 80 organisations for 2023/24 period with weighting according to need and additional monies to support lunch clubs throughout winter.
- Delivering targeted initiatives to ensure that older people are considered and protected during times of adverse weather e.g., delivering winter funding for lunch club grants, Stay Well This Winter grants, workforce training and fuel poverty videos providing key messages in community languages (for Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities) shared via WhatsApp groups within the target communities by the community leader.
- Work with ethnically diverse communities such as funding Leeds Irish Health and Homes, working with communities to translate materials during the cost-of-living crisis.
- Work commenced between Adults & Health Commissioning team, Public Health and LOPF to promote and develop a healthy ageing 'core offer' with Neighbourhood Networks to build on what works best and look at the parity of service across the city.
- Recommissioned the Home Plus (Leeds) service, delivered in partnership by Care and Repair, Green Doctor, and Age UK Leeds. Home Plus is a service aimed at enabling and maintaining independent living through improving health at home, helping to prevent falls and supporting people with cold related health conditions.

### **The difference we have made:**

Examples to demonstrate the impact of the work include:

- Age Friendly/accessible businesses and organisations - An increase to 170 in total, 70 of which to date in 2023-24.
- Age Friendly Ambassadors who spread the message and advocate for Age Friendly – An increase to 300 in total, 100 of which to date in 2023-24 have been recruited.
- Between April 2023 and Dec 2023, 268 older people attended a falls prevention programme, with 83 of these completing the programme. The programmes have demonstrated improved falls prevention outcomes across several measures.
- Home Plus Service: April to September 2023 approximately 600 households were assisted to reduce fuel poverty, 1,700 assisted to reduce falls risks. Service was recommissioned in October 2023, with 300 households so far assisted to reduce fuel poverty, and 866 households assisted to reduce falls risks. Good access across some target groups.
- Lunch clubs – approximately 80 funded across the city with approximately 3,000 beneficiaries.

### **What we still need to do:**

Develop a greater understanding of the needs and barriers faced by older people through:

- Completion of further work to hear the voices of older people e.g. as part of the Director of Public Health Annual Report and feed this into reviews of the Age Friendly Strategy & Action Plan for 2025-2028 and broader service and strategic plans.

- Conducting further work on understanding the healthy ageing needs of ethnically diverse communities in later life.
- Delivery of project with LOPF and Performance Ensemble on Creative Healthy Ageing which will use a test and learn approach to engaging with older people on key priority topics.
- Insight gathering on food and food security needs of people in later life, working with LOPF.
- Further review of older people's mental health data with the Mental Health Strategy Priority 7 group to help shape plans.

Influence across the Council and wider partners to ensure age, as a protected characteristic, is considered in strategic priorities and plans through:

- Reviews of the Age Friendly Strategy & Action Plan for 2025 onwards.
- Developing a forward plan of key consultations for response of the Age Friendly Board and working with LOPF Age Friendly Steering group to amplify the voices of older people.
- Agree the informal partnership arrangements between the Centre for Ageing Better, Leeds City Council and LOPF.
- Ongoing engagement with the Corporate Equality Board.
- Ongoing engagement with Health & Wellbeing Board in relation to the Age Friendly priority in the Health & Wellbeing Strategy.
- Contributing to the development of action plans in response to the Leeds Food Strategy (2022-2030) to ensure older people are considered, particularly around health and wellbeing and food security.

Put interventions in place to remove or reduce barriers faced by older people through:

- Ongoing work with Commissioners/services and the Friendly Communities team (Leeds Older People's Forum) to develop and implement age friendly principles to ensure key services are accessible and inclusive of older people and those with protected characteristics.

Working with partners to ensure a preventative approach is taken in later life to address individual risk factors as well as the wider determinants with a focus on those who are more likely to experience inequality to ensure they age well:

- Working with partners to take stock of the Director of Public Health Annual Report key findings and recommendations.
- Implementing the renewed Falls Steering Group plan which includes actions in relation to improving falls prevention pathways, equity of access to service and mapping primary prevention of falls.
- Ongoing review of reach and outcomes of preventative services and support e.g. Home Plus, Strength & Balance, lunch clubs, Stay Well this Winter Grants
- Review and delivery of actions relating to active ageing, nutrition and mental health.

## **Sustainable Infrastructure**

**Equality Improvement Priority:** To ensure that work to deliver the city's climate ambition of net zero provides opportunities for and is inclusive of all communities, including those characteristics protected by law under the Equality Act 2010.

### **Equality Improvement Priority Update:**

#### **What have we achieved:**

##### Energy and efficiency

The following was completed in our energy and efficiency work stream:

- Created a new webpage signposting the options and funding available to people and make their homes more efficient and comfortable to live in
- The council's Home Energy Help team has launched the next Home Upgrade Grant scheme aimed at potentially fuel poor households without gas central heating and working in partnership with an external energy services provider to ensure as many households as possible benefit from government funding before it expires in March 2025.
- The council's Home Energy Help Team part funds the Home Plus Leeds service to help vulnerable and low-income residents with energy efficiency and fuel bill advice, small scale energy efficiency improvements and referrals to grants for larger improvements.
- Locally administered the Community Climate Grants which provide funding for local projects, support local priorities and make neighbourhoods greener, healthier and cleaner. The applications were assessed against their impact on deprivation.

##### Electric Vehicle charging

- The Council is currently concluding its second phase of On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) grant funded charge points which sees a further 27 dual 7kw charge points installed across nine Council car parks.
- A third phase will be delivered in 2024/25 providing a further 17 dual 7kw charge points across 11 locations. These charge points are all located within walking distance of areas of housing without off-street parking, acting as an enabler for all communities to transition to electric vehicles.
- In 2024/25 we will commence working on further EV charging infrastructure utilising the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Grant funding working with WYCA. We are engaging with stakeholders on site designs that will look at incorporating the PAS1899 standard that covers accessibility needs for vehicle charging points. PAS1899 is a document that sets out good practice in delivering inclusive and accessible public chargepoints.
- Ultra-low emission vehicles (such as electric, hybrid) are surging in popularity among Leeds residents and businesses, having doubled in number in the last year alone, with over 50,000 registered plug-in vehicles in the city according to government data, providing both improvements in tailpipe emissions and carbon emissions. The number of public charging points is also increasing rapidly with increased commercial investment as well as delivery of grant funded networks.

##### Communications and engagement

Our digital communications (such as the Leeds By Example website and information on [www.leeds.gov.uk](http://www.leeds.gov.uk)) comply with accessibility regulations to ensure that it can be accessed

and understood by people of different reading ages and languages (using translation software), and is also compatible with equipment to read-out text for those with visual impairments. In all our consultation and engagement on projects we always ensure we reach as broad a cross section of the Leeds community as possible, identifying the most appropriate method of consultation.

Following the merging of services to create the Climate, Energy and Green Spaces team in April 2023, a service-wide Equalities working group was established, with representatives from a variety of teams. This group provides opportunity for officers to share information on upcoming projects and schemes requesting feedback in relation to equalities, diversity and inclusion, particularly prior to consultation and communication work.

### White Rose Forest

Tree planting has taken place in the last 12 months to increase tree canopy cover in the most deprived wards in Leeds. The Woodland Creation Scheme, which contributes to the White Rose Forest saw specimen trees (2.5 metres high) and saplings (450 -600mm high) planted in the following wards which include areas of multiple deprivation and high density urban areas: 344 specimen trees in Beeston and Holbeck, Bramley and Stanningley, Cross Gates and Whinmoor, Farnley and Wortley, Gipton and Harehills, Headingley and Hyde Park, Hunslet and Riverside, Killingbeck and Seacroft and Little London and Woodhouse. 747 saplings were planted in Cross Gates and Whinmoor and 2678 saplings planted in Killingbeck and Seacroft wards. The planting all took place during winter 2023/2024.

### **The difference we have made:**

#### Energy and Efficiency

- Assisted 830 (during first three quarters) low income, vulnerable residents in fuel poverty through Home Plus
- Assisted 399 households with a cold related illness with heating interventions through Home Plus
- Assisted 200 (during first three quarters) households with a cold related illness with heating interventions through Home Plus
- Assisted 25 residents with cold related illness with large energy efficiency/heating measures through Warm Well Homes.
- Commenced the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) scheme assisting mainly low-income residents without gas central heating. As of the end of March 2024, 65 homes had been signed up with 7 completed.
- Assisted Housing Leeds to install energy efficiency measures on/in several hundred properties.

#### Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging

Increases in the use of charge points installed through commercial investment, mandated through planning conditions and through delivery of council projects will continue to improve the air quality in the city for all sectors of the community especially those in areas of multiple deprivation who tend to be in close proximity to transport related sources of air pollution.

### **What we still need to do:**

Across all the workstreams, we will look to improve our equality monitoring to ensure we better understand the distribution of grants and services to allow us to take targeted action where required to improve representation.



### Leeds Food Strategy

The Leeds Food Strategy is designed to ensure the people of Leeds have a vibrant food economy where all sections of the community can access local healthy and affordable food. The Food Strategy is led by the council and Foodwise Leeds and is planned to run to 2030. Ongoing delivery of the strategy aims is led by Public Health, Financial Inclusion and Climate Energy & Green Spaces, to improve health outcomes and tackle food security, which will have the effect of contributing to reduced economic and health inequalities in Leeds, as food poverty corresponds closely to patterns of financial deprivation and exclusion in the city.

### Community Parks

Consultations are underway to create a 'plan on a page' for each of the 65 community parks in Leeds which are managed by Leeds City Council. Over the next few years, we will be working to develop a plan for each of these parks based on the thoughts and opinions of local people to ensure they are the best they can be. A key element of these plans is ensuring that the parks are welcoming, inclusive and accessible for everyone who wants to use them.

### Energy and efficiency

Continuing installations on the Home Upgrade Grant scheme to install energy efficiency, low carbon heating and renewable energy measures in low-income households that don't currently benefit from gas central heating.

**Equality Improvement Priority:** Deliver well designed transport infrastructure, streets and public realm that is inclusive, people focused and accessible to all.

### **Equality Improvement Priority Update:**

#### **What have we achieved:**

Last report detailed 'what we still need to do' as:

- Continue to engage with and grow Leeds' access and diversity networks when consulting on schemes
- Deliver on the new H&T 'Be your best' EDI action plan – developed to stage 4 by end of May 2023
- Focus on emphasising the social values of H&T schemes in communications.

Since January 2023, H&T Comms Team completed actions against a new EDI initiative, 'Connecting Leeds for All'. CLFA identified existing and perceived barriers preventing different people across Leeds from seeing our communications, feeling engaged and taking part in consultations.

CLFA has improved consultation response rates from under-represented demographics.

We created three priority objectives and demonstrated progress against them by January 2024:

- Consultation feedback matched ward demographics with reports to evidence
- Materials made accessible to those who would previously described barriers (digital exclusion, visually impaired, time-poor, English as another language)
- Found and developed new engagement opportunities with previously unreachable diverse stakeholder groups.

The H&T 'Be your best' action plan has been developed to stage 4 and is into stage 5 as of April 2024. Details of the outcomes of stage 4 can be found in section 2b.

The social value of H&T schemes has been communicated in several ways, from press articles about how an older people's home celebrated the refurbishment of their access road, social media content showcasing female workers in the industry and tree planting involving diverse school children.

#### **The difference we have made:**

1. *Priority:* Improved consideration of EDI in scheme development, procurement, design and delivery.

##### *Actions taken:*

Staff have undertaken EDCI training relevant to H&T. Increased check and challenge of projects presented at H&T Board and at major Boards, for e.g. CRSTS Exec Board. Consultation ongoing at Staff Networks and Disability Hubs to ensure all issues are being addressed with scheme design, consultation and delivery. Autumn 2023 Consultations including CRSTS projects in the city centre have also been shaped with accessibility in mind – see Priority 4 for details of how access groups were better engaged with 3D models, for example.

##### *Outcomes:*

Improved team awareness and better outcome in terms of scheme design and delivery. Better demonstrating that H&T scheme promoters have given "due regard" to EDI.

Accessibility groups including National Federation for the Blind and Age Friendly Steering Groups have fed back during 2023 that our methods of engagement have improved.

2. *Priority:* Ensuring an inclusive working environment – undertaking available training and call out “banter”.

*Actions taken:*

- EDI Working Group, Race Equality Group and Women’s Group operating with H&T EDI Action Plan
- Training for all PO6s (then cascaded through teams – including face to face sessions in depots) on behaviours, including ‘calling out’
- Promotion of Vanessa Wenham as ‘Freedom to speak up’ Guardian
- Standing item on senior management and team agendas supporting individual staff to raise any EDI issues
- Implementation of EDI calendar which is used as a tool to highlight cultural or EDI related events / dates and promote activities related to them – supported by regular discussions and presentations on EDI related topics.

*Outcomes:*

- More inclusive working environment for all staff
- Better team spirit and cohesion
- Face to face meetings working well with active discussion and increased awareness

3. *Priority:* Inclusive recruitment practices recognising where teams are not representative and seeking to address the balance.

*Actions taken:*

- Job descriptions reviewed in advance of any team recruitment and language adjusted / review essential criteria to make sure they are essential to the role.
- Discussions had regarding wording of advert and location of advert to attract women and ethnic minorities into Highways and Transport teams (still not getting enough diverse applications so this is a work in progress).
- Mixed recruitment panels to be used i.e. male / female / ethnicity
- PATH trainee recruitment (supporting racially diverse people into work)

*Outcome:*

PATH recruits progressing through structure and now in permanent roles and some success sponsoring external candidates (female recruit into Flood Risk Management).

4. *Priority:* Identify and mitigate existing barriers preventing people from bringing their whole selves to work or external people taking part in consultations.

*Actions taken:*

- Age-friendly and Dementia-friendly training and commitment to a nationally recognized Action Plan
- Made reasonable adjustments for colleagues who are not neurotypical
- Improvements to the accessibility of external communications and the inclusivity of consultations to ensure we ‘treat people fairly’.

*Outcomes:*

- The team has embraced these improvements and feel able to be themselves at work to the extent they were highly commended in 2023 at the Corporate Awards for ‘Treating People Fairly.’

- Accessibility improvements such as QR codes, What three words use, 3D models etc and reasonable adjustments are now standard practice

**What we still need to do:**

- Continue EDCI check and challenge of schemes. Ensure all major programmes of work have detailed Equality Impact Assessments.
- Improve number of allies within H&T
- Social values promotion within communications
- Improve inclusive recruitment (currently limited due to financial challenge) to better represent the population of Leeds and improve inclusion in the service.
- Continued training and normalisation of being uncomfortable / calling out bad behaviour to improve inclusion and the percentage of staff able to “bring their whole selves to work”.

## Culture

**Equality Improvement Priority:** Through Leeds Culture Strategy, engage Leeds communities to create and enable new opportunities to promote increased engagement with culture by Leeds diverse communities through Leeds 2023 and the council's existing cultural and grants programmes.

Create and enable new opportunities to increase engagement with culture by Leeds' diverse communities through Leeds Culture Strategy, Leeds 2023 and the council's existing cultural and grants programmes.

### **Equality Improvement Priority Update:**

#### **What have we achieved:**

Through 2023 the Leeds Culture Service – Arts Events and Venues, Culture Programmes and Leeds Museums and Galleries – delivered a wide-ranging programme of activity through which the equality improvement priority is promoted and progressed. This summary provides a snapshot of activity, including LEEDS 2023 which sits within the Leeds Culture Strategy.

- Created the new **Leeds Cultural Investment Programme website and funding programme** with a focus on accessible formats including large scale print and BSL information. There are now five funding streams designed to enable creative and cultural activity in Leeds to flourish for the benefit of all who live, work, study and visit the city. These funding streams are Inspire, Grow: Project, Grow: Revenue, Thrive and Cultural Anchors.
- In connection with the above delivered the final **arts@leeds** and **Leeds Inspired** funding rounds for 2023/24 with an emphasis on 'People, Communities and Place'. Diversity characteristics and geographical reach across the city were priorities in the decision-making process for 2023/24 resulting in an increased diversity of programmes and target communities.
- Cultural grants and in-kind infrastructural support, which have continued to enable and support community-led festivals including Leeds West Indian Carnival and Leeds Pride to return to live, large-scale community event delivery following the Covid restrictions of 2020 & 2021.
- Delivery of **Hibiscus Rising** in collaboration with the David Oluwale Memorial Association (DOMA) a breathtaking 10-metre-high hibiscus flower by Yinka Shonibare CBE, African-inspired batik patterns honouring the life and legacy of David Oluwale. This new permanent artwork on Meadow Lane offers an opportunity to reflect on Oluwale's life story and creates a joyful, peaceful place for people to come together and connect. Inviting the city to remember the past and imagine a more inclusive future.
- With Council support, LEEDS 2023 achieved diverse community representation for the year of culture including:
  - **My World, My City, My Neighbourhood** (MWMCMN)
  - **Hidden Stories** – arts, heritage and community collaborations
  - **WOW Barn** – engaging women, girls and non-binary people to create a safe space, both physical and psychological, for sharing, celebration, discussion and learning.

- **My Leeds 2023** where 33 Neighbourhood Hosts, one for each ward, partnered with local anchor organisations, delivering a wide range of cultural events and activities representing and connecting the demographics of Leeds
- **Broadening Horizons** development programme for West Yorkshire based artists. Through peer exchange, workshops, professional development and research, 20 Global Majority artists gained insight and built connections to support international working.
- Through the **Leeds Inspired What's On** promoted year-round promotion and 'free to access' to cultural and creative activities available across the city, with focus around seasonal breaks and school holidays, and places providing free activities and meals.
- Through collaborative work with the centre for Cultural Value and University of Leeds, commenced work on improving data collection – including better demonstrating impacts and benefits for Leeds' diverse communities.
- Collaborative work with Leeds University's centre for Cultural value on the **Woodhouse Moor Women's safety project**, original research funded by the Mayor of West Yorkshire Tracy Brabin, through engagement and collaborative work the partnership is developing and test-driving a series of creative solutions to place making.
- As part of a larger focus on **gender equity and representation in commissioning and public art**; working across departments with Safer Leeds ongoing work on the Ask for Angela project, new app launched in 2023 and a mural to mark Leeds zero tolerance of violence towards women and girls.
- Culture Programmes co-delivered major events to promote the city's diversity – including **Leeds Creative Skills Festival**, a day for aspiring artists, musicians, writers, and creatives to have the opportunity to learn from some of the best artists and creatives in the industry. From live performances to interactive workshops, there was something for everyone at the First Direct Arena.
- **Smeaton 300** was a creative programme by artists, engineers, designers and anyone who wants to get playful with engineering. Inspired by the work of Leeds born John Smeaton, the UK's first Civil Engineer. Smeaton 300 celebrates the life and legacy of John Smeaton all the way up to his 300th birthday in 2024. In 2023, the programme got playful with engineering at museum events. Saw STEAM activities in schools and interactive workshops in libraries. Brought talks and debates from bright minds to get us all thinking big about the future. And look up at the sky with **Moon Palace**.
- **Carriageworks Theatre** delivered relaxed and dementia friendly performances. Carriageworks Young Theatre Makers with targeted engagement by children who are eligible for Free School Meals and/or are care experienced.
- **Culture Programmes worked with Leeds Art Gallery to deliver the exhibition Found Cities, Lost Objects** exploring the urban environment through the eyes of women and gender non-conforming artists in an Arts Council Collection exhibition in connection with local artists and residents. Addressing themes ranging from safety and navigation to concepts of belonging and power, it acknowledged the privileges and inequalities which allow some people to roam freely, while also considering the boundaries that may curb the experiences of others. Encouraging reflection on relationships with build environments and an inclusive city which is welcoming for everyone.

### **The difference we have made:**

**My World, My City, My Neighbourhood** saw artists and heritage organisations collaborating with communities to co-create cultural activity. An example activity was the first Leeds International African Festival, including a jollof rice competition led by Ndidi Nkwopara in collaboration with members of Leeds' African diaspora.

**Neighbourhood Hosts** were reflective of Leeds' diverse communities. The training programme and co-creation process was designed to ensure the grants scheme and celebration are representative, inclusive and accessible to all.

**The National Retrospective** was a celebration of the contribution of Black and Brown artists to the cultural landscape over the last 75 years and includes "Hibiscus Rising" - a new public artwork by Yinka Shonibare remembering David Oluwale.

**The WOW Barn** was a collaborative "barn-raising" spectacle grounded in a community movement of women, girls and non-binary people. In the lead up to the Barn, thousands of people were engaged in the planning, design and content of the barn and then 300 women and non-binary people, both novices and professionals, were involved in raising it over a 24hr period. The women, girls and non-binary people worked alongside experts to upskill and build a new generation of women and girls in construction and providing a space for new and transformative conversations. The Barn also hosted the Women of the World festival, designed via public consultation, celebrating women, girls and non-binary people across West Yorkshire and discussing how the barriers they face can be overcome long term, all surrounded by music, dance, comedy and food by world class local artists.

**Leeds 2023 – My World, My City, My Neighbourhood** the community-based project rooted in co-creation with local communities. The overarching programme delivered a wide-ranging collection of projects across different areas of Leeds such as:

- setting up community art clubs in Garforth and Swillington
- the history of the textile industry in Guiseley
- untold stories of Bangladeshi women in Beeston
- creating a printing press in Headingley
- a photography project along Meanwood Road.

As well as geographical communities, some projects based their work around communities of interest or shared identity such as the Skateboarding community or the Irish community across the city. Outcomes include:

- 165 artists were involved in the delivery of 22 projects across the programme.
- 2,105 participants took part in the 22 projects as participants, with an additional 3,735 taking part as audience members (e.g., at community sharing events or performances).

**LEEDS 2023 – Hidden Stories** – arts, heritage and community collaborations involving seven heritage organisations working with artists and communities to uncover and share a "hidden" story. Strands included:

- Harewood House and local communities exploring the historic circular relationship between the estate, food, and local communities
- Royal Armouries and members of the LGBTQ+ community investigating the gendering of items in the collection and curating a new exhibition



- Thackray Medical Museum in Harehills working with SAA-UK and young people to investigate hidden narratives relevant to its annual exhibition programme
- MILIM CIC, script writers and the Jewish community producing a new performance to explore the heritage of Leeds' Jewish community in the 50s & 60s
- Gill Crawshaw collaborating with disabled artists in Leeds to produce a new exhibition exploring the history of disabled mill workers in the city
- Mill Hill Chapel and Lens Labs Leeds with members of Leeds' six major faiths to explore the relationship between place, faith and community which resulted in a new photography exhibition.
- British Library working with communities in Holbeck to uncover local myths and legends and produce a new immersive digital installation.

#### **What we still need to do:**

- Continuing work is needed to develop more robust and **coherent approach to data collection and analysis** e.g., in relation to programming, audiences and grant funding. The development of the new LCIP website and movement on to online funding applications is a huge forward step for this work.
- In collaboration with the Centre for Cultural Value and University of Leeds, the Culture Programmes team is exploring the development of a '**cultural impacts framework**' – including an emphasis on improved monitoring of access and engagement by protected characteristics.
- The refreshed **Leeds Cultural Investment Programme** launched in 2023 is already more effectively monitoring access and engagement, aligned with the Council's core EDI strategy. This includes retention and analysis of unsuccessful applicant data to identify themes and better understand barriers to access.
- The culture service will continue to demonstrate **EDI at the heart of programming** – including publishing policies and useful information and tools on the service website.
- Analysis of feedback and data collected from visitors to the **Found Cities, Lost Objects** exhibition and looking at next steps and potential for Victoria Gardens and the public realm nearby. How do we continue to have conversations around improving reflection on relationships with build environments and how the city can be more inclusive city and welcoming for everyone.

## **Housing**

**Equality Improvement Priority:** Ensure that consideration of equality and the characteristics protected by law is a key focus of our delivery of Housing services with a focus on:

- Delivering a Housing Growth Programme that provides housing of the right quality, type, tenure and affordability in the right places
- Providing the right housing options to support older and vulnerable residents to remain active and independent
- Improving energy performance in homes, reducing fuel poverty
- Minimising homelessness through a greater focus on prevention

### **Equality Improvement Priority Update:**

#### **What have we achieved:**

**Housing Growth** – We built 204 new homes and acquired a further 86. The new homes included several accessible homes to meet specialist needs or to support independent living for older people requiring higher levels of care and support. Of the acquired properties, 10 were specifically to support rough sleepers through the Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme. The scheme has now provided 38 X 1 bed properties dispersed across the city. Homes are made available as “ready to move into accommodation”. 33 properties were to accommodate families from Afghanistan and Ukraine. A further 43 family homes were provided through the Councils Right of First Refusal / Buy-backs to align with demand in local areas. Bespoke properties have been delivered to meet the needs of specific families.

**Improving housing options for older and vulnerable residents** - We opened our third Extra Care scheme in October 2023. Gascoigne House, Middleton has 60 apartments and connected to the scheme are 12 accessible bungalows for working age adults with a physical or sensory impairment. In partnership with us, Home Group took handover of a 62-unit Extra Care scheme in Woodlesford, with residents moving in from April 2024. Planning has been approved for a 65-unit Scheme in Armley, with plans to be on site in late 2024. The Health & Housing service continue to support our chronically sick and disabled residents. We have recently appointed two Caseworkers to provide a service to hospital in-patients around smoother discharge pathways.

**Reducing fuel poverty in homes** - In 2023/24, work was completed to over 1,400 homes. This included installation of Air Source Heat Pumps to six high rise blocks providing low-cost heating and hot water to replace the electric storage and immersion heaters. We obtained Social Housing Decarbonisation Funding to install Ground Source Heat Pumps at Clayton Court and Grange. We installed external wall insulation to 126 back-to-back homes, and 150 non-traditional homes. We are currently installing external wall insulation to seven high-rise blocks with work completed at six so far and the seventh block due for completion in early May 2024.

**Minimising homelessness** - We offer support to people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, and provide general housing advice for anyone experiencing an issue. There is a bespoke offer in place for young people, victims and survivors of domestic abuse, refugees, customers leaving hospital or prison, rough sleepers, Armed Forces veterans and members of the LGBT+ community. The service has been offering financial assistance to those struggling with the cost of living through the Household Support Fund and operates a bond scheme/first month rent in advance to help secure new housing.

Relationships have been strengthened with registered providers to support quick pathways for those most in need. As part of the design of the new homelessness strategy, qualitative feedback was that the LGBT+ community were under-represented. A data capture change was introduced to our CRM system so that we can review approaches from this community. Dedicated staff have been attending the LGBT+ Social and Wellbeing Café to provide housing advice. A youth hub was started at Merrion House so that young people can access quick housing support. A Staying Close pilot has recently been launched to support care leavers to transition from care to independence

**The difference we have made:**

**Housing Growth** - 290 individuals and families in housing need have been provided with secure accommodation. The additional properties made available through the Rough Sleeper Programme, alongside the dedicated support on offer, has resulted in reduced rough sleeping and the associated issues such as begging and substance misuse.

Feedback from people occupying the homes ... *"I am extremely happy with my new home and thanks to everyone involved in making the property available to me"*

*"Thank you again for being so kind and....helping me. I got a beautiful house...I am crying with happiness. God bless you".* 100% of new builds and 50% of acquired homes are in priority neighbourhood areas, increasing the provision of council homes in these areas. 86% of acquired homes and 63% of new builds in priority neighbourhoods meet the demand for family accommodation in these areas.

**Improving housing options for older and vulnerable residents** - Community-based activities are strong and running at all Extra Care schemes, including bingo run by volunteers; a mother and toddler group coming regularly for lunch; pen pals and a reading scheme with a primary school. A resident of one of the working age disabled adult bungalows in Middleton has set up a domino club for residents in the Extra Care scheme. Compliments at Gascoigne House include "I've got my mother back" (son of resident) and "They thought I was coming here to die; I've actually come here and started living" (a resident). Adaptation Caseworkers have an active caseload of 122 customers that they provide on-going support to and have successfully rehoused 42 households where their current property couldn't be adapted saving the Council significant money. Independent Living Officers carried out 1,420 Medical Needs Assessments this year. We have completed 932 adaptations in the public sector and 649 in the private sector. We also completed several hundred minor adaptations.

**Reducing fuel poverty in homes** - Ground Source Heat Pumps use less energy to produce the same amount of heat as electric storage heaters, reducing fuel bills by 30% on average against last year's kWh levels. Homes that have benefitted from external wall insulation will see a reduction in heat loss, an increase in thermal comfort, and a reduction in energy consumption, leading to a reduction in energy costs. Tenants have told us how pleased they are with the works. Of customers who have benefitted from the works, 16% were over 70, 30% were from an ethnically diverse background, 2% identified as LGBT+ and 16% classed themselves as disabled. The homes benefitting from these works have mainly been in wards with the highest levels of fuel poverty.

**Minimising homelessness** – we accepted over 5,100 duties to prevent or relieve homelessness. For customers at risk of homelessness, we positively prevented homelessness in 77% of cases. This included over 400 moves into private and housing association accommodation; advice and support to over 700 customers suffering domestic abuse, with referrals made to the Sanctuary Scheme for 459 victims; 42 prison leavers supported into accommodation through our ex-offender scheme; we have assisted 174 refugees who have approached as homeless into a positive accommodation outcome.

Attendance of the LGBT+ Social and Wellbeing Café has supported the community to access immediate housing advice in a safe environment. An example of making a difference at the café was for a transgender customer who had been asked to leave the family home by their parents. They were able to access an assessment, advice, and assistance at the café. They were supported to register a housing application, were awarded priority, and given options on how to resolve their housing need. The café has strengthened partnerships with other services with referral mechanisms created so that council officers can offer the right support. The Youth Hub is successfully supporting young people to make informed and planned decisions about their housing, preventing a homeless situation or needing to go into care, whilst working towards longer term independent solutions. In addition to the properties made available through the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme, we are committed to providing an offer of accommodation to anyone rough sleeping with a wide range of 'off street' provision in place. The Ashlar House provision opened at the end of March 2023 and continues to provide 15 bedspaces in a supported accommodation setting for rough sleepers – this has been fully utilised throughout the year.

**What we still need to do:**

**Housing Growth** - deliver c750 new affordable homes per year over the next 3 years across all sectors. Deliver a further 25 properties through the Rough Sleepers Scheme.

**Improving housing options for older and vulnerable residents** - Start on site for one Extra Care scheme and develop plans for a further scheme by end of 2026.

**Reducing fuel poverty in homes** - Connect three high rise blocks at Lovell Park to the Leeds PIPES network which takes advantage of low carbon heating and hot water supplied by the Recycling and Energy Recovery Facility (RERF) at Cross Green.

**Minimising homelessness** - We are approaching 1 year of data that will allow us to review our approaches from the LGBT+ community and identify how the service can strengthen its offer moving forward. To increase temporary accommodation provision to support the current demand and maximise availability of housing in all sectors for those who are most in need.

## Inclusive Growth

**Equality Improvement Priority:** Supporting residents and businesses to improve their skills, support into work and into better jobs.

### **Equality Improvement Priority Update:**

#### **What have we achieved:**

The Employment & Skills service has delivered or partnered in a number of targeted programmes, initiatives and events which progress the equality improvement priority:

- **The Employment Hub** - offers tailored 1-2-1 support via a number of different employability programmes which cater for people with a range of disabilities.
- **Developing You (DY)** - pre-employment support course designed to improve **wellbeing and confidence, targeting people with common mental health disorders** such as **anxiety and low mood**.
- **DY 50+** - same as above but exclusively for 50+ clients.
- **Learning Disability DY** - a **learning disability**-bespoke version of DY has been co-produced with the Employment Task Group (ETG) as part of the Being Me Strategy to meet the needs of residents with a **learning disability** who are “**starting to think about work**”.
- **Employment Hub Mental Health** - a service for Primary Care staff, set up to target a gap in provision: individuals with **common (and sometimes complex) mental health disorders** managed in primary care who don't meet the thresholds for employment services offered by Workplace Leeds or Leeds Mental Wellbeing Service.
- **The Leeds Talent Hub** - focuses on adapting recruitment methods and building on the good practice models in the health and care system to target residents in the most deprived areas of Leeds, a **proportion** of whom (8%) have **declared disabilities**.
- **SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Next Choices** event took place at Leeds First Direct Arena aimed at supporting **young people** who have **SEND**.
- **Employment & Skills** led the delivery under the NDTI contract Internships Work including establishing a **SEND employment forum** and delivering a **reverse jobs fair**.
- To date for the 23-24 academic year (Aug 23 – Mar 24) the **Community Learning** programme has supported 2294 learners across a number of informal learning opportunities and of these 25% declared a **disability**, 54% of which was in relation to **mental health**.
- The **Wellbeing & IAG service** was launched delivering support to learners on programme and staff.
- The **Community Learning & Employer Provider Apprenticeship Programmes** were awarded **Outstanding** across all categories in the Ofsted report, December 23. This is the first Local Authority to have achieved this under the current EIF inspection framework since September 2019.
- A **Work & Health** project has commenced involving **Senior Leaders** from **Employment & Skills, Public Health, Children's Services** and **Health Partnerships** looking at how we can effectively support people in Leeds to thrive through access to good work.

- Leeds bids were submitted by **Employment & Skills** and partners for UKSPF Pillar 3 grants to support **young people** and **working age adults** with **health conditions** into work.
- **Employment & Skills** contributed to a regional bid as part of the **West Yorkshire Work & Health Partnership** for a DWP/Department of Health & Social Care grant to offer light touch **signposting support** to residents with **less complex health conditions**.

During period the service also won or was nominated for several awards:

- *SEND Next Choices* event was shortlisted as a finalist for the APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) Best Innovation and Demand Management Initiative award and also won the “Outstanding Diversity and Inclusion” award at the Yorkshire Learning Providers 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary awards.
- The service won The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion award at the Leeds Digital Festival 2023 awards.

#### The difference we have made:

Measure	Total	Disability total	Disability %	Mental Health as % disability
People accessing services	9799 (10,623)	1076 (1538)	11% (14%)	57% (58%)
People into work	2457 (2,239)	156 (218)	6% (7%)	51% (53%)
People with improved skills	2975 (2,948)	526 (593)	17% (17%)	53% (56%)

The fact the Mental Health Contract has come to an end accounts for the slight dip in performance regarding the percentage of customers presenting with mental ill health.

During the period:

- The **Employment Hub** has supported 1894 residents of which 301 were disabled 40% of whom was due to mental ill health.
- **Developing You** has supported 23 people, 14 have improved their skills with 1 people moving into employment.
- **Developing You 50+** has been delivered twice, 11 people have started the course and 4 have completed.
- Two cohorts of the 12 week **Learning Disability Developing You** programme have been delivered: 21 people have started the course, 17 completed the course, 3 of whom have successfully been supported into volunteering.
- The **Employment Hub Mental Health** has supported 17 people of which 2 has achieved an employment outcome and 2 have moved into education or training.
- The **IAG and Wellbeing service** has offered IAG & WB guidance to 898 Adult Learners and 266 have received one-to-one support.
- The **Connecting Communities to Health and Care** programme has supported 337 people, 126 of which have improved skills, 140 have gained employment and 46 are being supported to improve functional skills to achieve the required level to move into employment.
- **SEND Next Choices**: 2,200 young people attended to learn about job offers, apprenticeships, volunteering and training opportunities from 67 employers.

- The **Leeds SEND employment forum** will develop a strategic approach and action plan aimed at improving **sustainable paid employment** outcomes for **young people with SEND**.
- Following on from the **Reverse Jobs Fair**, West Yorks Combined Authority, Swarthmore, Luminate Education Group, Reed in Partnership, Speak Up Rotherham and the Thera Trust are all keen to collaborate and learn from the event.

#### **What we still need to do:**

- Through delivery of the Future Talent Plan the service will maintain its focus on improving employment outcomes for disabled residents and will continue to expand and align programmes in the city according to funding and capacity.
- **Employment & Skills** will continue to contribute to the **West Yorkshire Work & Health Partnership** overseeing **WorkWell** arrangements in Leeds, should the bid be successful.
- Scoping of Leeds City Council **job retention** strategies to supplement possible WorkWell approaches.
- Contributing **employment expertise** to city-wide **Prevention Multi-Disciplinary Team Pilot** looking to align services influencing the **wider determinants of health** to focus on 5 lifestyle factors that contribute to the 5 most **prevalent conditions** that cause 50% of deaths in Leeds.
- Link with **Workplace Leeds** to support the **employment function** within the **Mental Health Transformation Hubs** in West Leeds, Hatch and Leeds Student Medical Practice and The Light.
- Development of the relationship with **Community Builders** to further embed **ABCD** principles and approaches into the **personal development** of learners.
- Contribute to the development of **employment aspects** within the **Disability Strategy** and the **Volunteering Strategy**.
- Continue to develop a **coherent and measurable** approach to **wellbeing delivery** as part of **Community Learning** influencing regional colleagues via workshop sessions.
- The strategic review of the **Work & Health** context in Leeds will confirm **shared priorities** from an individual and employer perspective, laying the foundations for **prospective bids** in this integral area.
- Continue to work with Anchor Organisations to embed agreed outcomes from the Employment workstream review e.g. development of a **diversity dashboard**, promotion of the **Age Friendly Pledge** and **Fair Work Charter**.
- Discussions are underway to expand delivery of the **Learning Disability Developing You** programme to **The Bridge in Holbeck**.
- **The Leeds Supported Internship Programme** will continue until end March 2025 and includes a comprehensive programme of events, webinars and resources all aimed at increasing the number of supported internships and will be coordinated by the Leeds SEND Employment Forum.
- **The Good Jobs, Better Health, Fairer Futures project** will be evaluated and learning taken forward to transition appropriate initiatives into business as usual.
- **SEND Next Choices:** the third event has encompassed learning from previous events and will continue to expand the reach of this well-regarded event.

**Equality Improvement Priority:** Ensuring equality is a key focus of delivering Inclusive Growth and building economic resilience for Leeds and everyone living and working in the City.

## **Equality Improvement Priority Update:**

### **What have we achieved:**

#### Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy 2023 – 2030

In September 2023, the Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy 2023-2030 was approved by Executive Board. The strategy aims to ensure that the future of our city is more inclusive, healthier and greener and that everyone living in the Leeds can have the opportunity to flourish. It forms a key pillar of the Best City Ambition, setting out how we will tackle poverty and inequality through inclusive growth.

The strategy refreshes the big ideas within the three themes of People, Place and Productivity, with equality, diversity and inclusion embedded throughout:

#### People

- 1) Tackling poverty and inequality to improve people's lives
- 2) Supporting people and businesses in a rapidly changing labour market
- 3) Making sure education and training meets local needs

Example: In 'Supporting People and Businesses in a rapidly changing labour market', we are raising the bar on inclusive recruitment, better jobs and healthier workplaces. Our [Future Talent Plan](#) helps organisations to prioritise equality, diversity and inclusion to overcome the labour market challenges of the future.

#### Place

- 4) Investing in our places and transport to create a sustainable economy and greener future
- 5) Maximising the potential of our city centre and local high streets
- 6) Connecting and strengthening our communities

Example: In 'Connecting and strengthening our communities', we are increasing the benefits of city centre growth into surrounding communities. These neighbourhoods remain cut off from the city centre by busy roads, rail infrastructure and generally poor-quality older development.

#### Productivity

- 7) Stimulating innovation which drives and delivers measurable impact towards a healthier, greener and inclusive future
- 8) Helping businesses and organisations to become more productive and thrive in the face of change
- 9) Promoting Leeds as a global destination for people to visit, live, work, study, and invest in

Example: In 'Stimulating innovation which drives and delivers measurable impact towards a healthier, greener and inclusive future', we are backing diverse innovators and entrepreneurs from all communities that have ideas with high growth potential. We have developed multiple routes of support such as our innovation@leeds grant funding programme.



### Delivery of the Inclusive Growth Strategy

Over the last six months, work has taken place to maximise our approach and build awareness of the new strategy. This includes growing the Inclusive Growth Partnership, which is our mechanism to engage about inclusive growth with a wide range of stakeholders from across the city. The partnership has grown from 900 members in 2022 to over 1,300 members in 2024.

We hold three events per year to bring the partnership together, with the last event held in January 2024 including a session exploring the barriers facing female entrepreneurs. We ensure these events are accessible and inclusive through the use of an Inclusive Events checklist which we developed as team as part of our EDI Team Plan. This helps us to consider aspects such as venue accessibility and the diversity and representation of speakers.

### Leeds Anchors

Now in its sixth year, our Anchors Network continues to maximise its collective contribution to the city. Through funding from the Health Foundation as part of the Good Jobs, Better Health, Fairer Futures project, the council is exploring how Anchors can address health and economic inequalities in the city including increasing their connections with local communities.

A Leeds Business Anchors Network launched in September 2023, bringing the Leeds Anchor model to large private sector businesses. These businesses have the scale and influence to make a significant impact, including through their relationships with local communities.

### **The difference we have made:**

#### Inclusive Growth Strategy delivery highlights

Since the launch of the new Inclusive Growth Strategy, key developments and major new funding announcements have been enabling us to accelerate our approach to delivering projects highlighted in the strategy. An update on progress for Scrutiny Board in April 2024 can be found [here](#).

Highlights which reflect the difference made in terms of equality, diversity and inclusion include:

- The council's Employment and Skills Adult Learning Service plays an important role in delivering the Future Talent Plan, tackling barriers and widening participation to basic skills and career progression and improving people's life chances. Following an Ofsted Inspection in December 2023, the service achieved an Outstanding Judgement.
- Leeds City Council has collaborated with the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) to explore how women can be better prioritised in local economic strategies, with a report called [Women's Work](#) launched at an event in March 2024. The report explores how women can be supported to participate in the economy and achieve their full potential, and how some of the key barriers can be tackled.

### Social Progress Index

As well as enabling us to see how the city and its wards are faring in terms of inclusive growth, the SPI has been used by different teams across the council. For example:

- More widely, it is supporting us in understanding our progress towards the Best City Ambition. The updated Ambition aims to articulate how we measure success more clearly and includes a monitoring framework which draws on the SPI.
- The SPI has been used by the Localities Team to inform the development of Priority Neighbourhood Plans, which include SPI scorecards. For example, key challenges flagged by the SPI such as NEET (not in education, employment or training) levels have been reviewed by community partnerships and led to positive community action.

#### Anchors case studies

- As part of the Good Jobs, Better Health, Fairer Futures project, a community listening exercise was completed in three areas of the city to understand local priorities around employment and skills and connect community members to Anchor organisations to co-develop solutions. One of the recommendations was for employers to work with community-based organisations to design and deliver local recruitment activities such as job fairs within locally trusted and accessible spaces.
- A number of Anchors are involved in the Connecting Communities to Health and Care Careers Programme which is led by the Leeds Health and Care Academy. The programme signposts people from disadvantaged communities into vacancies, as well as education, training and language courses. As of 2023, over 850 people are on the programme, and 87% are from a diverse background.
- As a Business Anchor, Leeds Building Society have provided free office space for community organisation Holbeck Together, supporting their lunch club and donating food and toiletries to local residents. They have made progress such as achieving diversity targets at senior leadership level, and are also exploring how they can tackle barriers to home ownership facing disadvantaged groups and how they can support the financial independence of vulnerable young people.

#### **What we still need to do:**

- Continue delivery of the Inclusive Growth Strategy and underpinning strategies and plans including the Future Talent Plan, Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy etc. An annual review of the progress achieved since launching the strategy will be published in the Autumn of 2024.
- The next Inclusive Growth Partnership event will take place in July 2024, as part of the schedule of three events per year.
- We will seek to encourage a widening use case for The Leeds SPI 2024 model and also partake in a deep dive analysis.
- Work continues to support the Anchors and Business Anchors Network, as well as exploring how the two networks can undertake collective action to maximise impact for the city's communities. Priorities for Leeds Anchors Network in 2024 include formalising the network's commitment to Age Friendly pledges and the West Yorkshire Fair Work Charter.
- We will review the recommendations of the CLES Women's Work report to see if there are new indicators that we need to include in our measurement.
- We will continue to develop our data in order to build our understanding of the difference we're making.

## **Safer Stronger Communities**

**Equality Improvement Priority:** Improve equality outcomes across Safer Stronger priorities and programmes of work. Being responsive to local needs, to create thriving, resilient communities, promoting respect and tackling the causes of poverty. Key actions:

- improve the approach to migration in Leeds
- keeping people safe from domestic violence and abuse
- prevent and reduce levels of hate incidents by ensuring victims witnesses and third parties of hate incidents are supported and offenders are brought to justice
- improve equality outcomes in the council's approach to Locality Working with a focus on addressing inequality and poverty
- helping people out of financial hardship by tackling the financial challenges of poverty, deprivation and inequality

### **Equality Improvement Priority Update:**

#### **What have we achieved:**

##### Localities

Localities have been working more intensively in targeted areas of the city to reduce poverty and inequality. As part of the Community Committee review, consideration has been given to those with protected characteristics and how the committees can best support the differing needs of the local communities that they serve. A key objective is to engage with a wide variety of young people and that this engagement reflects the true diversity of the area. Several committees also held Youth Summits, including a citywide special education needs and disabilities Youth Summit.

The Neighbourhood Improvement Board continues to develop a focused approach across the six most disadvantaged wards in the city. An Engagement and Listening project has been commissioned which will develop a new system for engagement in the six wards.

##### Financial Inclusion

Work of the financial inclusion team over the past year has focused on welfare provision and the cost of living. Long term projects include; Maintaining the Money Information Centre (MIC) & Leeds Poverty Fact Book; Leeds Financial Inclusion Steering Group & Leeds Food Insecurity Taskforce; and Partnership work with advice agencies, support organisations and networks including Leeds Credit Union and Forum Central. The team have lead on the Coordination of Leeds Healthy Holidays & support for Leeds School Uniform Exchange as well as leading work on addressing Gambling Related Harm and providing Cost of Living crisis response, including delivery of Household Support Fund, Welcome Spaces and the Cost of Living & Welfare Breakthrough Project.

##### Hate Crime

The Hate Crime Operational Group has continued to work on behalf of the Hate Crime Strategic Group to progress activity against the priorities in the Hate Crime Strategy. The Anti-Muslim Prejudice Working Group have made progress on their action plan including establishing a Community Reference Group in July 2023. In partnership with Stop Hate UK, third party reporting centres have been relaunched over 23/24. New centres have been established and these as well as the existing reporting centres have received training lead by Stop Hate UK with inputs from the Leeds City Council Anti-Social Behavior team and West

Yorkshire Police. The hate incident reporting process in schools is proving to be successful with more schools making reports over 23/24.

### Domestic Violence

Work has continued on the co-production of the new Leeds Domestic Violence and Abuse strategy with voices of victims-survivors have been at the forefront of its development. The Domestic Violence and Abuse Voices Project has expanded, and staff have been recruited to ensure the voices of children and the LGBT+ community are being heard and their experiences and views influence decision-making. This is in addition to the existing Women's Victim-Survivor Forum. Workforce development continues to be delivered which recognises experiences people of different protected characteristics may have.

### Migration

The migration and resettlement agenda has had a considerable focus on the changes that national policy has brought to people seeking sanctuary, new refugees and those being resettled as part of schemes and pathways.

### **The difference we have made:**

#### Localities

The continued focus on the locality working approach in the six target wards, and the NIB's continued leadership, ensures that Council services and partners target efforts, resources, and initiatives to where they are most needed. The LGA Peer Review recognises the council's approach to working in localities has delivered tangible results. Over 500 young people have been involved in the Youth Summits and 1084 young people have been involved in other forms of Youth Activity Fund consultation, with over 50 schools/organisations being involved in bringing young people along to the Youth Summits and/or involved in any other consultation.

#### Financial Inclusion

A key focus for the Financial Inclusion Team continues to be the **provision of welfare & debt advice in the city**. Leeds City Council were allocated £14.2 million (April 2023-March 2024) via the Department for Work and Pension's **Household Support Fund 4. Healthy Holidays** provision in 2023 reached over 22,000 children and young people eligible for free school meals across the Easter, Summer and Christmas holiday periods. **Sessions** with a variety of Leeds City Council teams, boards and partners have led to a number of staff, volunteers, services and elected members increasing knowledge and understanding.

#### Hate Crime

Actions taken between 2023-2024 have led to increased and enhanced partnership working. The team raised awareness and increased knowledge of LCC staff and partners through a series of campaigns, training and events such as during Hate Crime Awareness Week in October which included a launch event focusing on LGBT+ related Hate. A program of training and events was also delivered for Islamophobia Awareness Month. A multi-faith event focused on Anti-Muslim Prejudice and Anti-Semitism took place in December 2023.

#### Domestic Violence

The Leeds Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy 2023-2028 launched in November sets out key priorities to ensure that services continue to improve how they meet the needs of people such as younger and older people, those with physical or mental health issues, learning disabilities or neurodiversity, LGBT+ individuals, people from culturally diverse

communities, faith groups, those for whom English is not their first language, those with insecure immigration status, those living with complex needs or experiences such as sex workers, drug or alcohol users or victims of domestic servitude.

Ethnically diverse victims-survivors of domestic violence and abuse regularly attend the Domestic Abuse Local Programme Board and through the victim-survivor forum have had opportunities to speak directly to senior police officers about their experiences. In the last 12 months, 2107 training places have been delivered to practitioners across Leeds, upskilling the workforce to recognise and respond to domestic violence and abuse.

### Migration

- **Improve access to services** - The demographics in Leeds continue to change and the migration and resettlement teams continue to work closely with communities.
- **Change attitudes and behaviours** - Training sessions co delivered with Migration Yorkshire have led to a number of staff increasing their knowledge and understanding.
- **Increase awareness and understanding** - Visiting internal and external teams to raise awareness of national policy changes, potential implications for service users and services
- **Strengthen resilience and build capacity** - 23 third sector organisations were successfully awarded grants through national funding to deliver a range of support for people seeking asylum and newly granted refugees. Leeds Together for Ukraine appeal funding has successfully awarded a total of £135,071 to 10 grants.
- **Strong partnership approaches** - The report on migration was submitted to Exec Board.

### **What we still need to do:**

#### Localities

Further conversations will be taking place as part of the Community Committee Review regarding the Community Committee delegations, as Elected Members want meaningful delegations given to committees where they can add value. Partnerships are now starting to come together in each of the six Priority Wards. UKSPF funding has been secured to deliver projects to improve Digital Inclusion and promote Social Action projects within the six Priority Wards. As there was little interest in a citywide LGBT+ Youth Summit, the Communities Team decided to take a different approach to engaging with LGBT+ young people where they can, if requested, go out to an Organisation at a convenient time.

#### Financial Inclusion

Despite the strong, established supportive infrastructure in Leeds, actions undertaken have not been enough to prevent increasing numbers of households falling into poverty. The continuation of insecure, short-term funding and timescales is also a barrier to the sustainability and planning of supportive measures. Key workstreams for 2024 include; Financial Inclusion training and presentations; Cost of Living response work; Management and related training for Money Information Centre resources; Delivery of Household Support Fund 5 and; Delivery of Healthy Holidays, support for Leeds School Uniform Exchange; and Support for Leeds Food Insecurity Taskforce.

#### Hate Crime

The Leeds Hate Crime strategy will be renewed later in 2024. Considering rising levels of hate because of the conflict, the Equality team will be looking at way to mirror the existing

structures in place around Anti-Muslim Prejudice to also incorporate antisemitism. There will be further capacity in the team as a hate crime officer will be recruited in mid-2024.

### Domestic Violence

Work is now focused on delivering the new strategy which is focused on four main areas: 1. Awareness, prevention, and early intervention 2. Responding to risk and harm 3. People causing harm (perpetrators) and 4. Children and young people. As Domestic Violence and Abuse can affect anybody we will work as a partnership to ensure EDI considerations remain central to our delivery of the strategy.

### Migration

- **No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)** - development of an internal document for frontline services providing an overview of NRPF and the offer of support in Leeds.
- **Migration Strategy** - will be reviewed in 2024-25 with a particular focus on aligning with the Best City Ambition to tackle poverty and inequality.
- **City of Sanctuary** - achieving awarded membership of the local authority network.
- **Resettlement** - improve engagement and access to English learning for women
- **Illegal Migration Act** - keep abreast of ongoing policy development, implementation and responses to support communities and services in Leeds

## **Child Friendly City**

**Equality Improvement Priority:** We recognise that children from some backgrounds protected by equality law are at risk of having a poorer start in life and are at more risk of being in state care or in custody. The purpose of this priority is to address this inequality of outcome, reducing its impact and prevalence so that all the youngest citizens of Leeds are protected, grow up having fun and are supported in their family wherever possible.

### **Equality Improvement Priority Update:**

#### **What have we achieved:**

##### **Child and Family Poverty**

Leeds faces a rising number of children living in deprived areas, compounded by effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. As the effects of high inflation persist, families face escalating costs for necessities like food, housing and childcare some groups are more vulnerable than others, such as people who have special educational needs and disabilities, women, and people from black, Asian or minority ethnic communities. These groups are overrepresented in poverty statistics.

The Child Poverty Strategy is a cross council strategy which focuses on mitigating the impact of poverty experienced by child and young people across the city. Progress on work undertaken within each priority is provided regularly by the priority leads at bi-monthly board meetings chaired by Cllr Venner. The Child Poverty Strategy outcomes are significant and help to support the most deprived families. Key examples include the *Healthy Holidays programme*. The council leads the programme in partnership with Leeds Community Foundation which is funded by the DfE. It has been running since 2018 and provides enriching activities and healthy food to school aged children who are eligible for Free School Meals across the city. The council and Leeds Community Foundation have also funded *Zero Waste Leeds (ZWL)* which provides a co-ordinated uniform reuse scheme to the city as part of the wider *Leeds School Uniform Exchange*. The aim of the scheme is to reduce the number of uniforms sent to waste, reduce the stigma of wearing second hand clothing and tackling poverty through encouraging more families to reuse and donate rather than feel pressured to buy new uniform every term.

##### **Work to support the needs and issues experienced by different community groups:**

*GRT Outreach & Inclusion Team* supports families from our Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities in Leeds to achieve their potential on a whole range of individual social, health and educational issues. Working alongside the Front Door Early Help Service, the team provides one to one support to families in need of additional Early Help often resulting in a reduction in professional concerns diverting away from Childrens Social Work services.

Disproportionality of black and mixed heritage boys in Youth Justice Service (YJS) and other statutory services in C&F Services. Addressing this issue remains a priority area of the work for the Leeds YJS service and its partners. The action plan for this area of work, including updates on relevant data, is regularly fed into both management meetings and to the Leeds YJS Partnership Board. *The Turnaround Project* also addresses this issue. The Turnaround team have been focusing on the areas where it is believed the most difference can be made, particularly with first time out of court disposals and early ASB involvement, and to ensure that priority is given to speech and language, educational needs, and parenting support.

Since 2022 a range of work has been carried out to investigate the possibility of *black and mixed heritage, or more generally ethnically diverse children and their families, being under-represented in Early Help related services*. This work included conducting a survey to gather any relevant data services had on the experiences of black and mixed heritage boys to be able to identify any significant differences in the proportion of children from each ethnic group accessing services. In September 2023 it was agreed that a Strategy (Rethink) Formulation be conducted to look into the wider issues in more detail and decide the appropriate activity to further investigate this possibility and identify the barriers to services experienced by some ethnically diverse communities.

Ensuring equality of opportunity for all children, young people and families in the city remains a priority for the directorate this includes: addressing the bullying and discrimination C&YP experience including racism, homophobia or due to their faith or abilities, etc. Celebrating its 10th birthday in 2022, Child Friendly Leeds (CFL) Team used the findings of a breadth of consultation activity to update and develop the 12 CFL wishes. *CFL Wish 4 focuses on celebrating differences and addressing bullying and discrimination*. In 2023 both a planning and a working group were established to determine the short and long term goals to deliver this wish. These goals were included in the CFL 12 Wishes Action Plan shared at the CFL Ambassador Event held in July 2023.

#### **The difference we have made:**

##### Work done to mitigate the impact of Child Poverty:

*Healthy Holidays Programme:* In Easter 2023, the programme reached 5,330 children and young people and served over 29,542 portions of food. Last summer 46 lead schools (65 schools in total), 48 third sector organisations and 16 council provisions took part in Healthy Holidays, reaching 8768 primary, and 3100 secondary school-aged children, with 76,500 portions of food served. Providers also took up the offer of catch-up swimming through Active Leeds – 650 children attended 5 days of lessons at one of thirteen sites in the city.

*Leeds School Uniform Exchange:* The programme has had significant success - in Easter 2023 1,374 items of uniform were given out helping 219 families with a total cost saving of £23,358 (based on DfE Cost of School Uniform Report, the average cost of uniform is £17). In the summer of 2023 98 pop up shops gave out 16,714 items helping 2,787 families, equating to a cost saving of £284,138.

##### Work done to support the needs and issues experienced by different community groups:

In 2023 the Gypsy Roma Traveller Team held 130 universal drop ins to support the community with needs such as housing concerns, benefits, employment, GP registrations, birth registrations and healthy start vouchers; collaborated with St Vincent's, the team supported 976 individual family members with their immigration applications; completed 160 school applications for newly arrived children, and through work with ZeroWaste Leeds, were able to provide free good quality school uniforms and winter coats for all children via the School Uniform Exchange.

##### Work to determine the possibility of black and mixed heritage, or more generally ethnically diverse children and their families, being under-represented in Early Help related services.

As mentioned above, a Rethink Formulation exercise was undertaken over 4 meetings between November 2023 and February 2024. At the end of the formulation a combination of 4 factors were determined to be areas to focus work. These are data quality and information recording; an incomplete understanding of informal/community provision; early intervention support that doesn't match with need along with continued struggles to engage ethnically diverse families and communities.



Ensuring equality of opportunity for all children, young people and families in the city (Wish 4) to begin to this progress a host actions have been undertaken which include developing an anti-bullying survey for school based staff to gain information on the work schools are doing to address bullying and discrimination; the creation of Wish 4 Blog and Anti-Bullying Resources page on the School Wellbeing Site, and analysis of the My Health My School Survey bullying questions for 2023.

**What we still need to do:**

Child Poverty: The overall strategy that was refreshed in late 2023 to reflect the new priorities both nationally and within Leeds will be published in April 2024. The Child Poverty Board will continue to progress the priorities within the plan despite the budgetary challenges the authority faces that may affect the funding of some of the areas of work included in the strategy.

The team supporting the *Healthy Holidays* scheme are currently evaluating the 2023 programme of work and planning the 2024 programme in the knowledge that the need for the support provided remains as strong as ever given the cost of living crisis and rising food costs. The allocated funding for this by the DFE has reduced and the team is planning next steps.

Free School Meals: The Health & Wellbeing Service, in partnership with Leeds University are currently developing a survey to explore breakfast provision in Leeds schools. The survey will aim to map current provision, identify gaps and encourage more schools to provide a nutritious breakfast as part of their offer. Providing breakfast in schools can help to remove hunger as a barrier to learning. The project will identify the schools who may be eligible for free or subsidised breakfast offers and ensure they are maximising available funding.

Work to support the needs and issues experienced by different community groups:

*GYPSEY, Roma Traveller History Month* takes place in June each year. Work is underway to plan for activities taking place during month in 2024 including development of the briefing sessions that are due to be held to tackle prejudice, challenge myths and to amplify the voices of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in wider society. The briefings also provide practical tools for engaging with GRT communities and raise awareness of the support services available in Leeds.

Under representation of certain ethnic group accessing Early Help Services: the actions determined to progress this work will continue to be delivered through the working group. Planned work includes consulting with families who have received early help support or at least had an initial contact with one of the early help services and sharing the formulation with all relevant partners. Work will also include finding out the reach and nature of the support and advice offered by the third sector partners and community groups to the city's ethnically diverse communities.

Ensuring equality of opportunity for all children, young people and families in the city.

*CFL Wish 4: work to progress the wish includes the development of action plan* to address the bullying and discrimination experienced by C&YP in the city based on the analysis of Hate Incident Reporting data by Leeds schools, findings of My Health, My School Survey and the anti-bullying school survey. Once drafted the action plan will be taken to C&FS EDI Board, Hate Crime Strategic Board and shared with schools for information and gain their approval to support the plan.

## **Equality Improvement Priority: Strategic Approach to Racial Equality in Learning Settings / Educational Attainment**

### **Equality Improvement Priority Update:**

#### **What have we achieved:**

Refresh of 3 A's Plan - Attainment, Attendance, Achievement: The refreshed 3A's Plan was approved by Executive Board in November 2023, and is central to the delivery of one of the CYPF obsessions - "young people in Leeds attend school, achieve, and attain well", and they also "continue their route of a sustained education, apprenticeship or employment destination".

The *Closing the Gap* strategy is dedicated to closing the attainment gaps and fostering a culture of excellence and diversity within our schools and settings. The strategy is aligned to the Refreshed 3As strategy, the Best Council Plan, and LCC EDI Vision and is updated by officers across Children and Families services working towards the strategy objectives. The three strands within the plan have been shared and discussed with primary and secondary headteachers in family of schools meetings across Leeds.

Termly primary, secondary and supplementary *schools EAL and BAME network meetings* have taken place throughout the year. The networks in addition to the access to learning team training courses, newsletters and web resources, equip staff to increase the capacity of schools, parents and communities to accelerate outcomes for EAL learners and enhance culturally responsive practice. In January nine schools in the secondary network focused on the Bilingual Reading Buddy project; the creation of the Wellbeing Questionnaire for Multilingual and ED pupils; the Language Guide to transfer errors; Migration in Leeds-questions to facilitate parental engagement in learning, and the EDINA teacher modules.

Leeds Beckett University held a Learning and Working in Anti-Racism conference to explore addressing structural inequalities across education & employment. Information discussed at the conference included an overview of the latest research and projects to support education and anti-racism. Workshops were also held and the information from the workshops is being used to develop a programme of support for vulnerable Black and Mixed heritage boys as part of the closing the gap strategy.

Schools Health & Wellbeing Service identified the *Cultural Cohesion Quality Mark (CCQM)* as the main EDI objective and service specific training has been completed on EDI and schools, Diversity Role Models and Unconscious Bias.

To support schools with their work on EDI, in-house *EDI training* has been delivered in the 0-19 Learning team that has included input on language, discrimination, micro-aggressions, privilege and oppression. There has also been input from 'Diversity Role Models', a national organisation who deliver free sessions in schools. The Learning teams have shared their offer with schools through Leeds for Learning and EDI has been built into all colleagues' appraisal targets.

The Governor Support Service (GSS) have taken part in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions about raising awareness of Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). It has been recognised that Diverse Governing Boards in settings are likely to increase the focus on outcomes for different groups of pupils, therefore EDI is now included on agendas for Governing Body clerk CPD sessions.

The city frequently welcomes young people and their families because they have come to work, study or have been forced to leave their home countries seeking protection and refuge. *The New Arrivals Programme* introduces six online modules catering to diverse school needs. With a range of topics including EAL pedagogy, assessment, teaching and learning strategies, engaging with parents, and understanding the diverse needs of

refugee/asylum seeker/GRT pupils, the program accommodated between 3 and 5 delegates per session.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND): The Leeds Area SEND Partnership Board has been relaunched which is co-chaired by children's social care, health, and education. The purpose of this board is to bring all the relevant partners together to improve joined up planning for children with SEND to improve their outcomes.

The Everyone's Included SEND and Inclusion Strategy has recently been reviewed and relaunched. Young people, parents, carers, and professionals were consulted throughout the rewrite of the strategy.

A self-evaluation (SEF) has also been completed for children and young people with SEND. The SEF identified that there were issues in relation to timeliness for completion of Education, Health, and Care plans (EHCPs). As a result, an external provider (Price Waterhouse Cooper) was commissioned for a root and branch review of the EHC assessment process including actions as to how to improve.

In addition, work continues with the Leeds SEND Youth Forum. The role of the forum is to communicate with young people and enable them to take part in consultations and share their views on service review and developments. In addition, the Voice, Influence and Change Team have established strong mechanisms for engaging and consulting with parents, carers and children and young people with SEND. These include the Parent Carer Support Group Network, SEND Summit for young people, takeover of the Leeds Area SEND Partnership Board and voice and influence links in specialist, mainstream, resourced, partnership and alternative provisions (APs).

#### **The difference we have made:**

Cultural Cohesion Quality Mark Unconscious Bias training has been delivered to 17 primary and secondary schools across Leeds, Leeds City Council teams and services that work with children and families, including, governors, social workers, children's homes, adoption services and partners such as Leeds Museums and Healthwatch. The CCQM training emphasises the importance of recognising, monitoring, managing, and reducing personal biases. This foundational training aligns with the Cultural Cohesion Quality Mark framework, encourages individuals and organisations to be culturally responsive and equitable in the delivery of provision and services. This is critical for improved outcomes, attainment and achievement. 100% of feedback is Good or Excellent.

The Health and Wellbeing Service and the CCQM also gave very well received presentations at the Show Racism the Red Card event held in October 2023

Supporting learners of English as an Additional Language (EAL): Through the Closing the Gap strategy schools are being supported to accelerate the progress of children who have English as an additional language. Last academic year 21 schools took part in the programme aimed at strengthening the leadership of EAL across school. In addition, 37 consultant school visits have led to an increase of staff knowledge and improvement of practice.

The New Arrivals Programme: Modules 1 and 2 have already taken place this academic year (2023/24) and have had a noticeable impact on staff confidence in supporting EAL learners and their families.

EDI Training: Ongoing CPD sessions in all learning teams throughout the year has raised the profile, awareness and understanding of EDI to ensure a focus on EDI so that, where appropriate, recommendations to schools are provided (e.g., included in school visit forms and discussions with leaders), which focus on improving educational attainment/improving race equality in learning settings.

Special Educational Needs and Disability: The action plan was developed and further consultation with focus groups with the above cohorts is planned. A new Parent Carer Forum has been established to represent the views of parents with children with SEND. The Leeds Local Offer website was redeveloped and launched in April 2024.

**What we still need to do:**

Closing the Gap strategy aim is to continue to make progress by:

- Enhancing the cultural proficiency of services, teams, colleagues to support the change of attitudes, behaviours, practices, and structures that sustain inequality through continued CPD
- Increasing access to learning for pupils with English as an Additional Language
- Improving the health and wellbeing of learners at risk of marginalisation
- Developing targeted strategies to increase the achievement and attainment of the most vulnerable EAL pupils and those at disproportionate risk of race-based inequalities
- Researching and sharing good practice on supporting the development of increased diversity in school leadership and governance
- To achieve the above examples of work teams and services aim to deliver include:
- Supporting subject leaders through the Learning Leeds Partnership LP to:
- Develop their and their colleagues understanding of equality, diversity, and inclusion, applying it across their teams and embedding it in provision in the classroom
- Ensure each team member has the required knowledge, understanding and awareness to celebrate difference, value all, eliminate discrimination to help everyone to be their best.
- Focusing on conducting further audits in schools, implementing targeted cultural days, and ensuring comprehensive representation across all areas of provision within schools and settings.
- Creating a network for ethnically diverse middle leaders to support them into senior leadership. The program will be designed to empower and encourage leadership potential that will make a lasting impact on the educational landscape.

EAL Champions program will run again in the Spring and Summer terms of 2024. The impact of this initiative has been noteworthy, with schools reporting increased confidence and enhanced readiness to support EAL learners. Moreover, EAL Leads now possess comprehensive information about their role and are better equipped to champion EAL in their respective schools.

The New Arrivals Programme: modules of the programme will continue to be delivered throughout the course of 2023/24 and 2024/25.

Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND): Further development of the action plan through consultation is the future focus with the agreement of timescales and milestones.

## **Cross Council Budget**

**Equality Improvement Priority:** To ensure that in the determination of the annual revenue budget appropriate consideration is given to ensuring that it complies with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and that financial spend is increasingly aligned with the council's strategic aim of reducing inequalities.

### **Equality Improvement Priority Update:**

#### **What have we achieved:**

A full Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Inclusion (EDCI) Impact Assessment was undertaken on the budget proposals for 2024/25 which accompanied the Executive Board Report. In addition to this all-service review proposals were required to have an EDCI screening attached to them. A service review group from across the council including staff from services and corporate functions considered each service review proposal including the potential EDCI implications and this fed into recommendations to decision making groups which includes Executive Board and Full Council.

The total General Fund Revenue Budget 2023/24 is shown in the table below:

	Net managed budget £000s
Adults and Health	199,370
Children and Families	157,421
City Development	37,900
Strategy and Resources	91,800
Communities, Housing and Environment	107,731
Strategic and Central Accounts	24,735
	<b>618,957</b>

EDCI is also considered after the budget has been approved. Actions and savings identified during the budget setting are subject to further reviews to ensure full consideration to proposals including EDCI before any decision is finalised and agreed. EDCI reviews add the most value when considered during the initial stages of developing of functions or service change examples include:

- any proposals to introduce or add to a service,
- any proposals to remove, reduce or alter a service,
- any new policies or changes to policies,
- any proposals to adopt policy priorities, strategies and plans,
- services or practices that have not previously considered equality and diversity,
- changes to staffing structure where groups of employees are likely to be negatively affected,
- any proposals in relation to procured or commissioned services.

If the council fails to give due regard to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration, giving rise to risk of making poor and unfair decisions which may unlawfully discriminate against particular groups and worsen inequality. The decision may be open to legal challenge, which is both costly and time consuming.

**Decision making framework:** Each department produces a **report** which inform the decision-making process and ensure that due regard to equality and diversity has been considered, with an emphasis on equality related information and plans for monitoring the

decision and its impact on different equality characteristics. Reports that relate to Executive Board, Full Council, key delegated decisions or a significant operational decision explicitly and clearly state that either: a) a screening form and/or equality impact assessment has been completed in relation to the report content and the proposed decision being taken - key information should be taken from the screening/ assessment and included within the report. DDR reports are reviewed and signed off by finance professionals and EIA are included with these reports.

**The difference we have made:**

The consideration of EDCI within the relevant governance around the annual setting of the budget provided decision makers with the statutory due regard to EDCI information as required under the Equality Act 2010 and gave decision makers important information to shape the final outcomes of the budget proposals for the council.

Throughout the 2023/24 financial year, the council has held ongoing discussions with Trade Unions regarding the financial position and mitigating actions to manage the projected overspend. These actions include, with agreed exceptions, a staff recruitment freeze, a restriction on the use of agency staff and overtime, and a freeze on non-essential spend (e.g., business travel, subscriptions etc.) - new controls and additional challenge have been introduced to deliver these targeted actions. Discussions have also highlighted that the savings proposals, (as considered by the Executive Board at its meetings in October and December 2023, will be subject to consultation where appropriate, and will be taken forward during 2024/25 and beyond. In previous years this has been constructive and has collectively worked to avoid, reduce, and mitigate the need for compulsory redundancies in the authority. To support the delivery of these savings proposals, the council has continued to promote a number of workforce measures such as the purchase of additional annual leave, voluntary reductions in hours (e.g., career breaks and reducing the working week) and flexible retirements.

The council's workforce profile: In-work poverty and low pay remain issues of national concern. In Leeds, work continues to tackle this, reflecting the commitments in the Low Pay Charter adopted by Council in April 2015. • From 1st April 2023, the council's minimum hourly rate increased to £10.90 which mirrored the Living Wage Foundation's recommended minimum rate of pay. These changes will continue to have a positive impact on in-work poverty, particularly for women, those under 25 years of age and part-time workers.

**What we still need to do:**

The Budget proposals are set within the wider strategic context of the council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2028/29 which was approved by the Executive Board on 20th September 2023.

Further savings proposals will be required to close the latest estimated gap in the council's budgets in 2025/26 and 2026/27, which could result in additional reductions in the number of budgeted FTE posts. Any service reviews that arise as part of the further budget savings proposals that may impact upon council staffing will undergo consultation on a service level with the appropriate Trade Union representatives.

There is ongoing dialogue with the third sector around budget pressures, future direction of travel and investment in the sector including budget challenges and future plans.

## **Cross Council Procurement**

**Equality Improvement Priority:** *Budget impact on equality and procurement:* To ensure our contract processes have a positive impact on the council's equality and diversity aims and objectives through the money the council spends via its contracted arrangements

### **Equality Improvement Priority Update:**

#### **What have we achieved:**

Procurement and Commercial Services (PACS) aims to promote equality and diversity in the procurement process by using the National TOMs framework to measure the social value of its awarded contracts with the goal of reflecting the demographics of the City of Leeds. The framework provides a set of themes, outcomes and measures that PACS can use to set clear social value objectives for each contract, monitor and report on social value, and encourage innovation and collaboration among suppliers. By adopting this framework, PACS can ensure that its contracts have a positive impact on the community this may include measuring the impact of a contract on different groups of people, such as those from disadvantaged backgrounds or minority groups, and assessing its contribution to broader social and environmental outcomes.

The Social Value team has been in place since June 2023 and the documentation was changed last year so that the data relating to the performance indicator/measures could be collected. As these are relatively new data captures, work is ongoing to ensure that this can be captured by our existing Social Value platform rather than manually relating to Modern Slavery and the Real Living Wage.

Good industry / working practice is best or common practice that includes standards, practices, methods and procedures conforming to the contractual obligations and all applicable law and regulatory requirements. Comprehensive and detailed service specifications are the foundation of good industry working practices and should conform to contractual obligations as well as all applicable laws and regulations. PACS provides guidance on drafting specifications that reflect equal opportunities legislation and good industry practices. For example, to consider and reflect legislation, guidance and good industry practice in respect of equal opportunities and in the preparation of Equality Plans should be set out in the service specification.

There is an ongoing requirement for suppliers to provide an Equality Plan and for Equality Impact Assessments to be completed prior to procurement commencement (CPR 3.1.7).

#### **The difference we have made:**

The Social Value platform has allowed the team to capture information relating to equality measures for reporting purposes.

Awarded contracts (completed procurements) which included the updated Equality measures are located on the Social Value platform. The Council's new Social Value partner, on PACS request, has modified the Social Value platform to enable PACS to report on the equality outcomes that will be managed by the new Social Value team. The data will be entered into the new platform for reporting purposes. The Real Living Wage and Modern Slavery reporting will also be managed by the same team with appropriate management information available in the future.

The Council's Terms and Conditions and Selection Questionnaires have recently been further amended to reflect that the contractor shall comply with all relevant Equality legislation as set out in our terms and conditions (including the 2023 amendments).

PACS supported Leeds City Council's Stonewall submission which focused on what the organisation does to ensure that our processes and systems are inclusive.

Suppliers are contractually obliged to adhere to the legislations and specific requirements as detailed in the service specification that should cover (as a minimum) the following:

- The contractor to identify the specific equality activities they will undertake;
- The contractor to identify how compliance with the Equality Plan will be evidenced;
- The contractor to identify which equality issues are specific to the contract or the council, which the contractor is required to follow as per the provision of the contracted service.

The service lead is responsible for ensuring compliance with the above requirements.

An equality and diversity procurement workshop pack has been developed to run workshops on how equality and diversity specifically relates to procurement. On specific schemes, suppliers are invited to bidders' events where we share our knowledge of equality and diversity to encourage best practice and to ensure that suppliers are aware of expectations in being an equal opportunities employer and delivering a fully diverse and inclusive service.

On Monday, the 2nd October 2023 we held an EDI in Construction event at Leeds University to ensure that it embedded into our supply chains.

On the 27th September 2023 we hosted our internal National Inclusion Week EDI event to over 200 internal staff, which highlighted the importance of this work.

Work is being undertaken within the procurement team to review and simplify our documents to make it easier for SMEs/VCSE organisations to tender for contracts. This includes:

- understanding the barriers to bidding for Council contracts
- providing potential suppliers with training, support, and guidance regarding bidding for public contracts.

#### **What we still need to do:**

- *Monitor compliance:* regularly monitoring compliance of the contract terms and conditions will ensure that all parties are treated equally and fairly.
- *Data:* Increase reporting relating to EDI for contracts.
- *Training:* to seek training opportunities for contract managers via the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team on diversity and inclusion to ensure that they are aware of the issues and can identify and address any biases in the contract management process.
- *Training:* to ensure that pre-market engagement activity includes information relating to EDI and its importance within the Council.
- *Encourage diversity amongst suppliers:* encourage the inclusion of suppliers from diverse backgrounds and ensure that they have an equal opportunity to bid for contracts.



- *Supply chains*: encourage suppliers to work with supply chains to ensure that every supplier is thinking about EDI.
- *Supplier outreach and engagement*: Actively reach out to diverse suppliers, provide information about procurement opportunities, and encourage their participation.

## Section 5: Update on progress against Workforce – The Council as an Employer section of the Action Plan

Following on from 2022/23's report, we set out the following actions in relation to workforce priorities under our 5 areas of focus. We said we would take action to:

- Make the council **the Best Place to Work**, in line with [our People Strategy 2020-25](#)
- Create a **great all-round experience for all staff**, with the support of their leaders and managers, in a positive organisational culture driven by our council values.
- Create a **diverse and representative workforce** at all levels in the council through **fair recruitment, progression and development**.
- Do more to **listen to and understand the real, lived experiences** of colleagues at work, and build a culture in which **people have a strong voice and feel able to speak up**
- Support the **Freedom to Speak Up Guardian** role to be embedded in the council.
- Take a **zero-tolerance approach** to racism and discrimination, and challenge inappropriate behaviour.
- Act on the findings of our **Workforce Race Equality Standard** project in Social Care and use it to inform council wide change.
- Continue to build **modern and inclusive workplaces, practices, and team cultures**.
- **Support** staff through change – especially in relation to our ongoing financial challenges, workforce reductions and service reviews
- Ensure everyone has **high quality appraisals and wellbeing support**.
- Develop **inclusive policies and processes**.
- **Benchmark and network** with others

### WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED – PROGRESS UPDATE

#### BE YOUR BEST EDI 5 STEP PROGRAMME OF TRAINING

- Over the past 12 months, the organisation has kept pace with the programme of change we set out to deliver on EDI. There is no doubt that our financial challenge and the necessity to ensure the successful management of this obligation has been a priority for all of us in the organisation.
- We have maintained momentum through this challenge and are assured by the evidence that EDI is being embedded within the organisation. We have provided

high quality and comprehensive training on EDI to all appraising managers in the organisation and we are beginning to reap the benefits.

- Significantly, we have **completed the comprehensive 5 step EDI programme of training** and culture change that we set out to deliver at the beginning of 2023, although we are very clear that this is not the end of the journey.
- Managers had set individual and team EDI objectives sometime back at the previous step 4 and we had allowed appropriate time for the opportunity to begin to work on achieving them, in order to embed change.
- Step 5 was a planned and welcomed reflective session targeted at each of our 5 directorates. It served the purpose of identifying what was working well, celebrating success, sharing good practice and provided the opportunity for learning from each other, in preparation for next steps.
- The emphasis was of a directorate led approach which provided a focus, enabling a common context and lens through which to assess EDI progress. Our directors each provided leadership of the session, as they had done at Step 1, setting out the strategic context, but more importantly, demonstrating the importance of values and behaviours why these are key to Being Our Best in the organisation. We concluded STEP 5 as the final phase of a comprehensive programme of change.

At Step 5, we were able to reflect:

- **Across 5 directorates** of the organisation with over **1,500+** managers and colleagues focussing on culture change, celebrating successes, identifying areas of challenge requiring more work thereby planning better for the future.
- learn and share from **20+ Show & Tell examples of real EDI** focused change projects taking place across personal, teams and service led EDI objectives.
- provide managers with **action planning tools** to move into the next stage in embedding EDI both for themselves and within their teams, taking action to include our values across services.
- Agreed that Step 5 was an invaluable addition to our EDI approach and that we will now **commit to an annual session** focussed on Workforce EDI.



colleagues to raise matters they would not have ordinarily raised, in the absence of the role.

- Barriers to speaking up are being successfully challenged, judging by the level of casework and interactions that the FTSUG is receiving. Leeds City Council is progressive in this respect as the only Local Authority with such a role, but mindful that the caseload should be managed appropriately with support to the FTSUG as needed.
- Support through the Head of HR EDI is provided to the FTSUG, who shares emerging themes from her casework, whilst maintaining confidentiality. Where there is a particular strong theme a collaborative and joint approach is taking to how the case is progressed.

## **LEEDS CITY COUNCIL STATEMENT**

- In 2022 Leeds City Council made a public declaration of our commitment to tackle discrimination. We set out in a defining statement on zero-tolerance, our strong stance on tackling discrimination, expectations of all employees of the organisation and the potential consequences that could follow proven misbehaviour.
- Given the focus on EDI over the recent past and the focussed work that is driving change it is timely to refresh the statement from 2022. An up-to-date 2024 statement has been added to this report as appendix 6 which more accurately reflects our current stance on zero tolerance against all forms of discrimination. For the avoidance of doubt, our position remains ever stronger as result of continuing work to be our best, embedding values in all parts of the organisation.

## **PROGRESSION**

*ACTION: Supporting people to progress in the organisation.*

- We recognise that we have work to do to be more representative across the organisation, in senior roles, in particular.
- Over the past year we have evidenced an improvement at senior levels, of more women and ethnically diverse leaders in some our senior roles. In the corporate leadership team and Children + Families directorate as examples.
- Our corporate objective is to provide an enabling environment to support colleagues to progress, whatever your background. We want to use the data and evidence available to us to direct our priority and ensure colleagues have opportunities to develop and progress through our organisation. We want our managers and colleagues to be their best in delivering services to Leeds citizens.
- To achieve that we need to enable opportunities for targeted and supported development. We have therefore prioritised the following:
- Analysis of our staff survey results pointed to an opportunity to support colleagues across our protected characteristics into middle and senior leadership roles of the

organisation. This will enable more representative and diverse leadership teams across the organisation, where we know we have under-representation at leadership levels.

- At the beginning of 2024 we launched a comprehensive Leeds City Council Positive Action Aspiring Leaders Programme (ALP) to support PO1 – PO6 colleagues from protected characteristics and diverse background into leadership.
- The programme is now 6 months in existence and is made up of 16 successful applicants. At month 6, progress has been good as follows:

### BYB Aspiring Leaders Programme

- ✓ 16 Aspiring leaders from 258 Expressions of Interest on the programme.
- ✓ Detailed feedback on the 3 way selection performance delivered.
- ✓ Each has had 360 review leadership feedback to inform their development.
- ✓ Individual and targeted leadership Personal Development Plan in place.
- ✓ Senior mentors in place and development sessions are running.
- ✓ Monthly leadership directed learning exchange X4 delivered.
- ✓ Leadership Masterclass (technical leadership skills) X2 delivered.
- ✓ Corporate Leadership Team sponsor (Director of Strategy & Resources check in sessions X 4
- ✓ Access to leadership forums, Best Council Leadership Team, Leadership Conference, Corporate Leadership teams.

Next 12 months

- Base programme continues.
- **Best Council Ambition Corporate challenge project**
- 4 Teams
- 12 months from July 2024 to June 2025.
- Corporate Project Sponsor check in quarterly.
- Value adding corporate challenge question.
- Present findings at the end of the project to CLT.

### STAFF NETWORKS - (Role, Outcomes and Impact)

The voice of colleagues in the organisation forms a key part of delivering relevant EDI progress. Protected characteristics and their representation across the organisation are a demonstration of how well EDI is embedded within our organisational culture. Over the past year we have continued supporting networks, ensuring they operate with the required

independence as a critical “friend” and being a representative voice of colleagues in the workforce development work in the organisation.

- Through 2023 corporate support has continued to enable staff networks to function as effectively as possible. All Staff Network leads meet on rotation with the Head of HR EDI to ensure appropriate corporate support is provided.
- Task & Finish EDI group has representation from staff networks in order to inform the outcomes of the group on recruitment and progression.
- Working with our LGBT+ staff network collaboratively to deliver organisational assessments and bench marking submissions such as Stonewall workplace indices that seeks to measure how we ensure we are an inclusive employer of LGBT+ identities and identifies areas for improvement. In our latest submission Leeds City Council ranks 84<sup>th</sup> in the top 100 employer list and we hold the LGBT+ inclusive employer GOLD Award.
- Developing an assessment and benchmarking exercise with our Womens Voice staff network using the Times Top 50 framework to identify where we are achieving on the benchmark and where we need to prioritise our work to support women better.
- The Director of Strategy & Resources leads the Diversity Staff Forum where all network leads meet with the Director, elected members, Head of HR - EDI and communities EDI colleagues on a 6 weekly cycle. This provides the networks with the opportunity to engage with the organisation at both strategic and operational levels, through the support of a senior colleagues from our corporate leadership team.
- Staff networks have been a critical friend on the progress of our EDI challenge in the organisation. Appendix 10 provides a detailed overview of each network’s assessment of progress and challenge that they see as important to move faster and further in the organisation’s journey.
- Our staff networks add value to the organisation, ensuring the voices of colleagues are embedded into our EDI approach. In ensuring they continue to be supported and remain successful, there’s an opportunity to review and refresh representation of all protected characteristics and a framework for how they remain effective. This needs to be on a planned and measured basis, in the context of capacity challenges for the organisation.
- Scrutiny Board for Strategy & Resources have had an oversight and assurance role, holding the organisation to account on the work it has been leading on EDI. The workforce EDI priorities are scrutinised at the board at regular intervals and the summary view, report and statement by Scrutiny board is attached as appendix 7, setting out its support of progress thus far and further actions that can be taken to continue on the successful EDI journey thus far.

## CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

- Much has been achieved in the period of this annual review; however the organisation is not complacent, understanding that we have more to do on the work force EDI agenda. Lessons learned from 2023/24 has enabled a refreshed approach. The plan for the current year 2024 -2025 is underway and we are clear about where we need to focus our resources under our 5 priorities, to continue to progress EDI in the organisation. We will deliver the following plan of activity as next steps set out below.

