

<b>Date of Meeting: 12 December 2022</b>
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<b>Paper Title:</b> Early Careers Network
Category of Paper: Appendix 1

## 1. Purpose

To provide the Strategy & Resources Scrutiny Board members with an update on the progression of the Early Careers Network.

## 2. Background Information

2.1 The Early Careers Network is a professional network, set up and run for Leeds City Council's junior workforce. We are an autonomous group of peers, and we strive to create an encouraging environment where members can flourish by building upon and learning new skills to make themselves more employable.

2.2 The network also allows members to meet peers from different areas of the council, with a view for these relationships to continue and grow throughout their careers. This will contribute towards LCC's workforce becoming more flexible and will help to facilitate cross-directorate working. The network contributes to the multi-generational workplace.

2.3 The Early Careers Network is intended for the young and junior workforce. Therefore, age is the protected characteristic that the network has a focus on.

2.4 Membership is also open to all those working in Leeds City Council that feel they would benefit from being in a professional network focussing on early career issues. A steering group meets regularly to oversee the activities of the network and co-ordinate its aims on behalf of the wider membership. Members of the steering group will attend the Diversity Staff Forum on behalf of the network.

2.5 The network is not directly accountable to HR; but will work in close partnership with HR and other areas across the authority.

2.6 The network contributes and reports to the Diversity Staff Forum on a regular basis to provide updates on activities and projects. The Early Careers Network (ECN) welcomes the support and involvement of elected members and senior officers in Leeds City Council to help us achieve our objectives and champion our work.

## 3. Key Issues / Outcomes

### Outcomes

3.1 During the Covid pandemic the ECN steering group lost a lot of its members due to increased workloads and staff leaving the authority; therefore, the Network Lead is the only one working on the priorities. The Network Lead is currently recruiting to the network. This will allow the network to offer more going into 2023.

3.2 The Networks agreed that during 2022 that our priority would be 'Burn Out and Preventing It'; therefore, all the Leads have worked closely together to ensure that we have supported staff members, been able to offer advice and signpost those that needed further support.

3.4 The Network has worked with HR and John Ebo on reviewing and improving Leeds City Council's grievance policy. A report has been written and recommendations made.

3.5 The way that the council recruits' staff is high on the agenda of the Early Career Networks Lead and is part of the EDI Recruitment Task & Finish Group:

- Working with HR employee relations and resourcing team in co-producing an EDI centred and outcome focussed recruitment approach.
- Act in the capacity of a trusted sounding board for emerging approaches on our recruitment practice, with a specific emphasis on improving EDI outcomes for Leeds City Council.
- Actively seek and generate good practice exemplars on EDI focussed recruitment approaches that has practical applications for Leeds City Council.
- Influence the implementation of EDI led recruitment ideas corporately or in directorates and service areas were deemed appropriate.
- Act as ambassadors for the positive inclusion outcomes that an EDI centred recruitment approach can deliver for Leeds City Council.
- Collectively consider policy developments and the associated EDI implications/opportunities in recruitment for Leeds City Council and make recommendations.
- Share lessons from each other's experience, EDI knowledge and service approaches to inform corporate activity on EDI centred recruitment.
- Commit to assisting Leeds City Council to improve EDI outcomes in respect of recruitment to Sept 2023.

3.6 Due to the Early Careers Network not having a steering group, the Network Lead has been working with other Networks to support events such as National Inclusion week, Career Progression sessions, GROW session for the BAME community for Black History Month and Well Being sessions.

3.7 As the Early Career Network Lead I will be working closely with the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian. This will consist of helping to facilitate the launch event, signposting officers to her and helping the Guardian with events in the future.

### **Key Issues**

3.1 One of the main key issues now is the lack of steering group; however, this is being worked on and the Network will have a steering group going into 2023.

3.2 The Networks are increasingly being asked to contribute to what seems to be HR responsibilities. This is taking the Leads away from being able to put 100% into their Networks, giving the attention to officers that need assistance and running events.

3.3 As a Network Lead I have staff members that come to me for help and advice around bullying, officers feeling that they are being prevented from progressing in the organisation due to a protected characteristic and our admin staff / frontline staff not being treated fairly. This can be detrimental to the Network Leads depending on how serious the issue is. As Leads we hear some difficult stories.

3.4 The digital divide that still exists in the council prevents Networks reaching lower graded and frontline staff. These departments will not know about the same opportunities as others and as a result do not get the same progression opportunities.