

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion – Workforce Update

Date: 19 February 2024

Report of: Director of Strategy and Resources

Report to: Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

This report provides an update to Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board on progress made on our approach over the past year delivering our vision for workforce Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in our organisation.

Our role and responsibility as an inclusive employer is strongly aligned to our city-wide singular [EDI vision](#). Our approach continues to be led by the commitment that Leeds must 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. We know that for this to happen, we all need to take individual responsibility for our actions and behaviours.

Our EDI plan is underpinned by organisational values set out in a recently refreshed organisational plan of "[Being our Best](#)", and our [People Strategy 2020-2025](#). Together these strong principles guide our ambition to be the best place to work. It defines our role as a values-led employer, how we deliver services to citizens of Leeds, and our collaborative approach to working with our communities.

Overall, we have made significant progress on the five workforce EDI priorities during the last year, particularly with the mandatory training for all managers, the EDI dashboard, launching the Aspiring Leaders Programme, embedding the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian role and supporting the excellent work of our staff network groups. However, we also know that there is always more to be done to achieve consistency throughout such a large and complex organisation, not least given the financial context, but we are determined to continue to develop an inclusive organisational culture. This report features some highlights of progress and outstanding challenges.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

- a) note the content of the report and identify any future scrutiny actions that arise from discussions
- b) consider whether the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board should provide formal comment on the ongoing EDI work being carried out by the authority, through a Scrutiny Board statement that would reflect the Board's consideration of this issue since the 2021/22 municipal year.

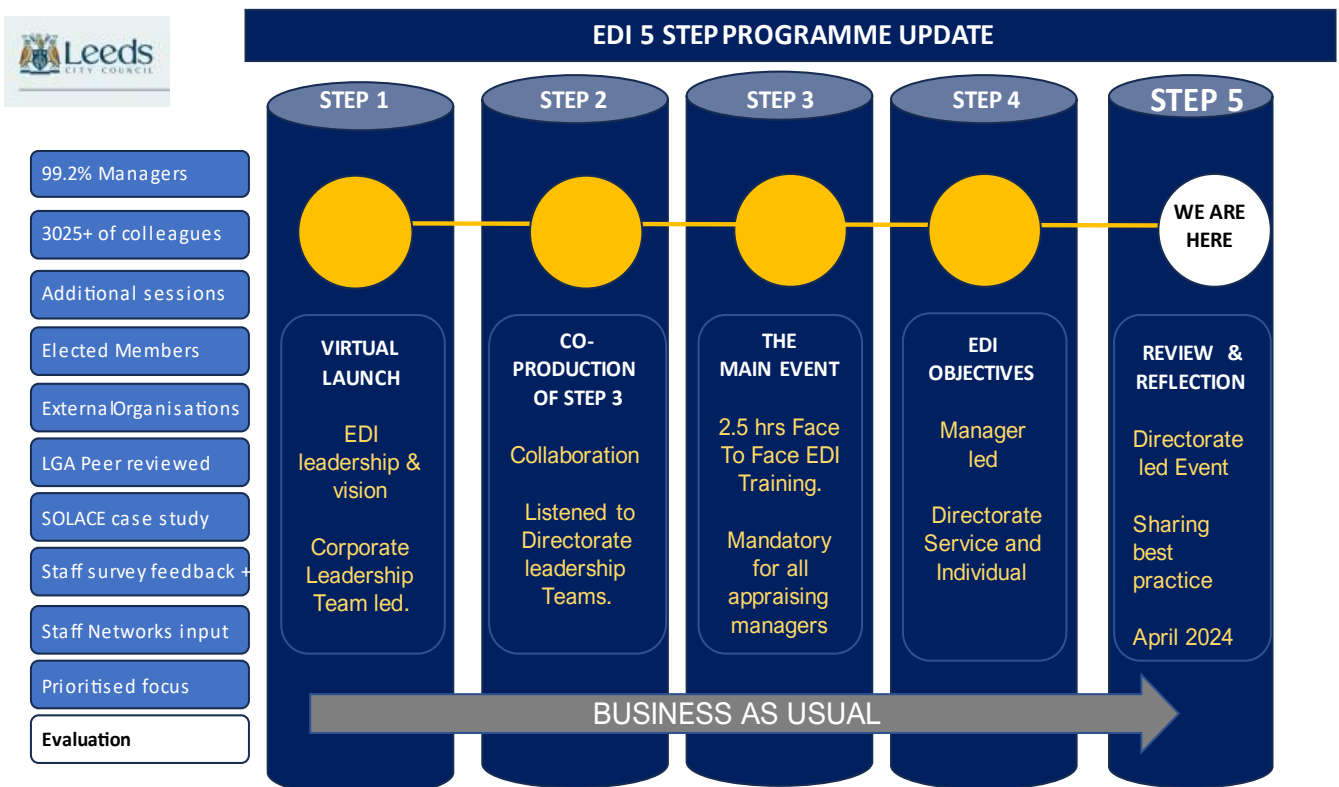
What is this report about?

OUR 5 WORKFORCE PRIORITIES ON EDI.

Recruitment and initial welcome	Progression	Training for staff and managers	Speaking Up and Zero tolerance	Data and monitoring
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- 1 In March 2023, we evidenced progress on our workforce EDI plan, and shared with Scrutiny Board how the organisation had established a clarity of purpose by setting out our strategic approach of 5 workforce priorities through which delivery of EDI outcomes can be progressed across the organisation. We had set in train a number of significant activities in a work plan on Recruitment, Progression, Training, Zero Tolerance & Data Monitoring. Together they formed a strong basis for culture change, with our managers being enabled to be agents of change in their role of significant influence in their various services. A key plank of the plan was our 5 Step programme for change to enable the organisation to have a consistent focus and tracked development journey on EDI. We can report that we have seen continued progress on actions taken but remain alert to opportunities to continue our development journey on EDI and enable a consistency of approach across the organisation.

Training - Be Your Best EDI 5 Step Programme



- 2 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 below of our progress through STEPS 1 – 4. We are now in position to move on to STEP 5, to embed the outcomes and benefits of the previous 4 steps of the programme. Our objective on this strand is to provide high quality training on EDI to all appraising managers in the organisation and other relevant stakeholders. We want to ensure we get the offer right and that all managers engage

with learning and grow within the EDI journey of the council. This will in turn enable teams across the council to embed EDI within appraisals and everyday service delivery.

Activities On The Be Your Best (BYB) 5 Step Programme From March 2023

- 3 In the past 12 months the following has been delivered:
 - a) STEPS 1 – 4 of our EDI programme have been successfully delivered.
 - b) Significantly, we have delivered the core of the EDI programme (STEP 3 - Mandatory face to face session) to 99.2% of all appraising managers in the organisation. That is around 2,200 managers. We concluded this in July 2023.
 - c) As well as appraising managers, we further trained 800+ other supervisory colleagues, taking the total trained to 3025 so far.
 - d) We have delivered STEP 3 to Executive Board members, Chairs of Community committees, Members of Cabinet, Scrutiny Boards and other council committees.
 - e) We have had various requests to support external organisations who have a working relationship with the Council, with their EDI training. With our very limited resources we have been able to support a small number of external teams by taking them through the STEP 3 EDI training, which is the core of the programme.
 - f) To ensure continuity and consistency in the organisation, including new managers, we have been running STEP 3 in quarterly sessions as a continuation of EDI support.
 - g) Within the past year, we have been externally peer reviewed by the LGA on our EDI strategy, actions and delivery of this programme to positive acclaim.
 - h) The 5 STEP programme has also been the subject of a good practice case study by the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE).
 - i) In our most recent staff survey colleagues identified our EDI approach and its impact as one of the most improved objectives in the organisation.
 - j) We have also been reviewing our EDI training resources and materials provided through Skillboosters to ensure they are fit for purpose and meet the organisation's needs.
 - k) In the second and third weeks of April 2024 we will move into **STEP 5** which are planned sessions by each directorate to review and reflect on the impact of the programme, how objectives that were set in STEP 4 have been actualised and to share any key learning and best practice across the organisation. It will also present opportunities to work collaboratively on shared challenges identified through the experience of managers so far.

SPEAKING UP

- 4 Our objective on this strand is to tackle discrimination and unacceptable behaviour. We want to set a high bar, enabling all colleagues to feel confident to raise concerns in the organisation, knowing that the organisation will act in a timely, fair and transparent way, to follow up concerns raised. The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian came into post in June 2022. The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian works independently and impartially across the organisation to capture the lived

experiences of colleagues and share this within the Council at a level that can truly hear that feedback with a view to bringing about positive change where needed.

- 5 The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian role and Freedom to Speak Up as a concept has been long established within the NHS, however, Leeds is the first Council to undertake the role of the Guardian and its associated strategic approach. The significance of the Council's commitment to developing a positive speaking up culture within the organisation through Freedom to Speak Up should not be underestimated. This commitment means that we are developing a culture of reflection and learning to improve both colleague and customer experiences. It is also worth noting that Leeds City Council is at the beginning of their Freedom to Speak Up Journey which signifies a considerable cultural shift in our approaches to reflection, learning and improvement. The Guardian has identified that Leeds City Council has a valuable protective factor to its success in its strength of commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and the Council values and behaviours.
- 6 Since their appointment, the Guardian has been working diligently to promote their role across the organisation including some key frontline services. Working in collaboration with key internal stakeholders (such as: HR, Internal Audit, CLT, Staff Networks and the Chief Executive), the Guardian has established a reliable system for sharing the lived experiences of colleagues with the Chief Executive, Council Leadership Team (CLT) and managers across the organisation.
- 7 As well as establishing operational protocols for Freedom to Speak Up the Guardian has begun to embark on supporting the organisation to create and embed a positive speaking up culture. This work has included attendance at service specific events, the offer of training to introduce colleagues to psychological and sociological concepts which support Freedom to Speak up approaches within the organisation and collaborative engagement with specific services in direct response to staff survey feedback.
- 8 The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian engages in regular attendance on some key strategic boards in relation to EDI, people and culture including: BCT People and Culture, Corporate EDI Board, HR Leadership Team (HRLT) and Corporate Leadership Team (CLT).
9. Notwithstanding the success of the launch of Freedom to Speak Up within Leeds City Council, the capacity of the Guardian remains a cause for concern. The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian can be accessed by all Leeds City Council employees. Periods of high demand negatively impact the Guardian's ability to respond. Options to mitigate the risk of the Guardian's capacity continue to be actively explored. However, the very confidential and specialist nature of the role is a significant barrier to potential solutions regarding the increase in capacity and support for the Guardian.
10. Although the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian has been successfully promoting their role across the Council, the size of the organisation impacts the organisation's ability to ensure that all colleagues are aware of and understand the Guardian's role. Furthermore, successful promotion of the role amongst frontline staff is disproportionately, negatively impacted due to the challenges of the digital divide. The approach the Guardian has taken to promoting their role amongst frontline staff is by way of physically attending specific service engagement events. Whilst this has been successful, this in-person approach has significant impact on the Guardian's capacity.
11. When a colleague raises a concern or suggestion via the Freedom to Speak Up process, the organisation is expected to respond to them. Timeliness of responses remains a challenge within the organisation. During a recent senior leader engagement call The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian introduced some set expectations in relation to timescales for the responses from the

organisation. Although it is too soon to assess the impact of this, it is hoped that this will go some way to reducing the delay experienced in the responses from the organisation.

12. The role of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian is to raise the concerns or suggestions of colleagues to the organisation at a level that can consider what they are saying and implement positive change where needed. The role of Guardian does not extend to tracking any actions required for positive change to occur, nor does it enable the Guardian to hold the organisation to account for a lack of change occurring. This remains the responsibility of the organisation. Currently, the organisation does not have a systematic and reliable mechanism for corporately capturing and tracking through the positive changes (where needed) as a result of a colleague speaking up. The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian will continue to work with senior leaders within the organisation to support them to establish a proportionate and effective mechanism for ensuring that where needed, positive change occurs within the organisation following colleagues raising concerns or suggestion via the Freedom to Speak Up process.
13. Although Freedom to Speak Up has solid foundations within the organisation in its Council Values and Behaviours; the much-needed approaches to enable Freedom to Speak Up to become a success are still being developed. These approaches are a way of being for an organisation and will take some time to embed for example: the concept of psychological safety, compassionate leadership and trauma informed approaches to listening up. The organisation must also adopt approaches which promotes leaders' and managers' awareness of organisational blindless to speaking up concerns being raised. The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian very much views this as a journey of cultural growth both for the organisation as a whole and for individual leaders and managers. This is something that will take time, training and support to embed, however the Council is on a positive trajectory to success in this area.
14. One notable limitation of the Freedom to Speak Up role is that by its very purpose it will attract commentary from staff which will highlight where our Council Values and behaviours may have fallen short. All colleagues across Leeds City Council have the Freedom to Speak Up and their voices should be heard and valued by the organisation, however, it is also important to note that there are many areas of the Council who have been successful in developing a positive approach to improving colleague and customer experience. This good work is not necessarily captured via the Freedom to Speak Up route. As such, it is important that the organisation continues with their commitment to staff recognition and praise. This too provides a substantial contribution to colleagues feeling valued and included.
15. When Freedom to Speak Up truly becomes a way of being for the organisation, it will fully demonstrate its own values and behaviours in a way that is tangible to every single colleague. By listening to themes raised via Freedom to Speak Up, the organisation has a golden opportunity to respond in a way that is helpful, and that also supports and values all colleagues. Through Freedom to Speak Up as a concept, Leeds City Council strives to be a psychologically safe organisation, which listens to colleagues' voices and where appropriate uses this to inform decision-making. This will result in a reduction in discrimination for our colleagues and customers, increase diversity of thought at a strategic decision-making level and ultimately improve the lived experiences of our workforce.
16. All key stakeholders recognise the capacity challenges that managers and leaders face in relation to successfully embedding positive approaches to systemic cultural change which will yield results. This takes a commitment of not only hearts and minds, but a practical commitment of their time and attention. However, the importance of improved approaches to EDI and valuing colleague voice should not be under-estimated by the organisation. The organisation's moral compass, how the organisation does things and treats people is

guaranteed to help steer the course for navigating what is set to be a very challenging next chapter for the organisation.

Staff Networks

17. 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. As part of this report there are seven appendices included, these provide independent input to this item from all staff networks in the Council.
18. Each network has submitted their view on the progress made on EDI by the Council since they last attended the Board in 2022. This includes their views on successes, where the Council is doing well and making good progress on EDI, ongoing challenges and problems faced by their network and priorities for 2024/25. Whilst these are very much organic to each network a number of themes can be drawn out:
 - The networks are led by valued colleagues doing work that makes a real difference in terms of organisational culture.
 - All networks face understandable capacity challenges which can limit the delivery of all their ambitions, likewise sometimes broader capacity challenges also limit activity.
 - The networks are at different stages in their lifecycle, but also have quite a number of issues in common that are picked up in the 5 workforce priorities which are reviewed periodically and included at section 1 of this report.
 - Most networks have strong approaches to communication and have taken up the opportunities offered by social media to increase and enhance their overall presence.
 - All have a CLT member as their champion, some also have a member champion to support their development.
 - Some networks connect across to relevant wider communities such as the Equality Hub and have external facing links such as with Microsoft, Careers Employers Forum, Reed Recruitment and Network Rail.
 - Some of the networks have focussed on making progress with allyship and have seen significant success over the past year.
 - The networks have strong examples of joint working and have often contributed to or co-produced events through the Staff Network Partnership which is made up of the all the network leads.
 - The networks have delivered a large range of events and tend to operate a 'mixed economy' of formal events and more frequent informal peer to peer sessions.
 - Data and benchmarking are key themes with some of the networks wanting improved use of data to inform their work or wanting to benchmark against other organisations to support improvement and enhance the experiences of their network members working for the Council.

19. 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. Key areas of work include:
- a) 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.
 - b) Task & Finish EDI group has representation from staff networks so as to inform the outcomes of the work on recruitment and progression.
 - c) 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. We currently rank 70th in the top 100 employers and are awaiting our indices results for 2023 submission in late spring 2024.
 - d) Developing an assessment and benchmarking exercise with our Women’s 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.
 - e) The Director of Strategy & Resources leads the Diversity Staff Forum where all network leads meet with the Director, elected members, Head of 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.
 - f) Each staff network is supported by a member of the Corporate Leadership Team as a senior champion of that network, providing corporate leadership steer to each network.

Recruitment

20. In light of the financial challenge, the drive to recruit has significantly reduced in the organisation. Our objective on this strand is to ensure our approaches are transparent and inclusive. We set out to develop trust in our recruitment processes by applying an EDI lens to what we do when we recruit and how we welcome new colleagues into the organisation. We want to ensure inclusivity is not only at the heart of our recruitment processes but understood and seen to be the case. This is led by a Task & Finish group of officers that were introduced in the update in March 2023. The group continues to be effective in its role. It has:

- a) Successfully influenced development of clear guidance for managers on recruitment and selection process, the need to use diverse recruitment panels, and guidance on how to achieve this. A dip sample survey following its introduction revealed the below.

The sample survey confirmed that most recruiting managers were aware of the guidance, but reported support needed in the form of a diverse panel pool to pull from, to support consistent use of diverse panels.

100% of those surveyed were aware of the guidance.

65% had used diverse panels in recruitment.

75% said they found it challenging to form a diverse panel, without a pool.

- b) Advised on the development and introduction of manager guidance on an inclusive recruitment approach that acknowledges and better supports the needs of applicants who may declare a disability, providing improved guidance to support managers in an inclusive recruitment and selection process.

Progression

21. Our objective on this strand is to provide an enabling environment to support colleagues to progress. 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:

- a) 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.
- b) Taking specific action by introducing 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 starts on the 30th January 2024. The programme has been popular with 250+ colleagues expressing an interest, resulting in 54 applications for the 1st stage, down to 30 after the 2nd stage, 20 making it to interview and 16 successful aspiring leaders starting the programme. We have a 69% to 31% female to male ratio in the successful cohort.

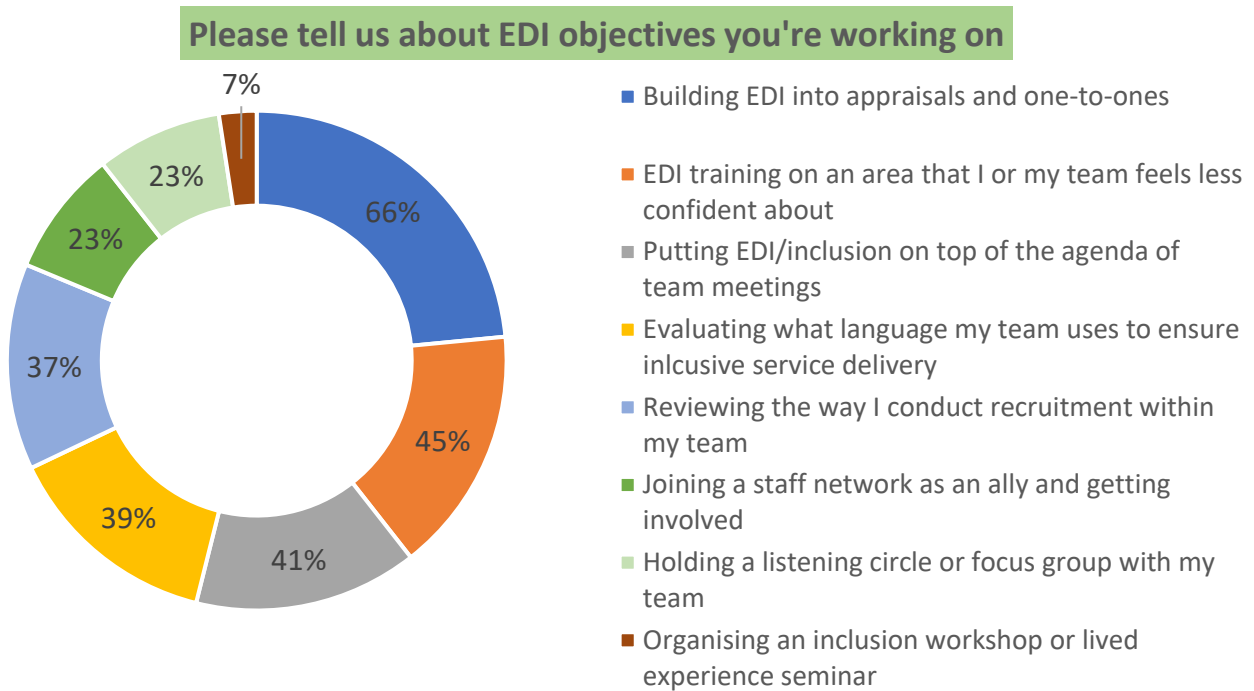
Aspiring Leaders Programme

Key facts:

- 18-months programme
- 16 places recruited
- For principal officers (PO1-PO6) into leadership
- Open to ethnically diverse, disabled, carers, women & LGBT+ identities

Data and Monitoring

22. On the basis of work completed up to STEP 4 we conducted an anonymous survey of our 2,200 appraising managers about how they were setting EDI objectives and ensuring that they were embedding the learning from the training programme. 778 managers responded to the survey and the outcome is captured in the chart below. It demonstrates that managers are focussing on a breadth of EDI activity in how they were setting EDI objectives after completing the EDI training delivered in STEP 3.



23. Our objective on data and monitoring is to enable us to track progress and monitor the impact of our EDI approach, particularly on representation. Our staff survey as a qualitative exercise providing assurance about the lived experience of colleagues. Quantitative data is important in enabling analysis of how representative we are of our Leeds communities. It should demonstrate, or otherwise, how effective our plan is at delivering representation in the workforce. The following has been introduced to support this:

- a) In collaboration with the Leeds Institute for Data Analytics and significant time investment in technical development work, we introduced the Leeds City Council EDI Data Dashboard for managers in December 2023. All our 2,200 appraising managers, staff network leads and directorate EDI leads can analyse how representative services in the local authority are.
- b) The dashboard provides the organisation with the ability to compare staff make up in a service to the Leeds City Council data and importantly to Leeds District census data. We can now assess gaps in representation at a service level in our organisation in a data driven, clear way. This is a powerful tool that provides an opportunity to address under-representation based on good data. The data dashboard includes our protected characteristics, new starters, leavers and can also be analysed by grade levels.

- e) Provide more targeted support to particular service areas where EDI could be a specific challenge.
- f) Continue to develop and embed the FTSUG role, including accountability for responses and follow through.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing Inclusive Growth Zero Carbon

26. The ongoing EDI activity supports the Council’s organisational values and contributes to all staff feeling valued and being treated fairly in the workplace enabling them to bring their whole selves to work. Creating a positive Be Your Best environment will enhance staff satisfaction, encourage progression and provide a culture through which the Best City Ambition can be delivered.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:
Have ward members been consulted? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

- 27. Consultation and engagement are ongoing with the Chief Executive, CLT and Council Leadership in terms of development of EDI activity.
- 28. From a scrutiny board perspective this issue was identified as an area of interest for Board members as the work programme was developed early in the 2023/24 municipal year. The Council’s EDI workstream has featured at this meeting on a number of occasions in recent years and this item reflects the Board’s ongoing interest in this area.
- 29. Staff Networks have also been consulted in terms of attendance and contribution to this item and representatives from the networks will be in attendance at today’s meeting to set out their views on the Council’s approach to EDI and the ambitions and priorities of their networks.

What are the resource implications?

30. There are no specific resource implications contained in this report.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

31. This report has no specific risk management implications.

What are the legal implications?

32. This report has no specific legal implications.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

33. This is not a decision making report and is provide as an information and update report to the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board, as such no other options were considered.

How will success be measured?

34. The Council's ongoing commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, as set out in this report, has a wide range of specific priorities including delivery of the 5 Step EDI Programme, the Aspiring Leaders Programme, continued development of the Freedom To Speak Up Guardian role, zero tolerance, inclusive recruitment and better data and monitoring of EDI information. Continued development and delivery against these workstreams will contribute significantly to the success of the Council's approach to EDI.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

35. This report brings together a number of initiatives being delivered on EDI, as an update report to the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board there is no single deadline for implementation of these. In line with the accountabilities set out in the overall EDI strategy, the Director of Strategy and Resources is responsible for leading the workforce aspects of EDI, although we are clear that EDI is the responsibility of everyone and in particular of all managers.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Race Equality Staff Network Update
- Appendix 2 – Women's Voice Staff Network Update
- Appendix 3 – LGBT+ Staff Network Update
- Appendix 4 – Dawn Staff Network Update
- Appendix 5 – Working Carers Network Update
- Appendix 6 – Healthy Minds Network Update
- Appendix 7 – Career Advancement Network Update

Background papers

- [Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board January 2022, - Staff Inclusion Update: Improving the experience and outcomes of Disabled / Carer colleagues at Leeds City Council, and Feedback from Staff Networks](#)
- [Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board December 2022 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Update and Staff Networks](#)
- [Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board March 2023 – Equality Diversity and Inclusion – Follow Up](#)

Appendix 1

Introduction of the Staff Network

The Race Equality Staff Network, formerly the BAME (Black Asian Minority Ethnic) Staff Network, is a network which aims to provide support to ethnically diverse colleagues and to improve the experiences of ethnically diverse colleagues in the workplace.

Chair: Hayley Lloyd-Henry & Carole Gentles

Date: 24 January 2024

Success Stories – where the Staff Network is doing well and making good progress.

(1) Network name change, move away from term BAME and using term ‘ethnically diverse’ to describe our members.

From November 2022–July 2023, the network consulted with its members in relation to the universally disliked term BAME, the use of which was also raised by ethnically diverse Councillors at Scrutiny in January 2021. The term was criticized as not offering any diversity or recognising the differences of staff or communities that are not white, by referencing all non-white persons as a homogenous group.

We led discussions at network meetings, consulted via email and used online voting systems, so we could get as wide a reach as possible for members to express their preferences, as to which terminology they felt reflected persons instead of BAME. We also worked with the organisation to embed the term ‘ethnically diverse’ as our preference in reports etc.

(2) The ongoing conversations around recruitment and progression– Task and Finish Group

Fair recruitment and staff progression has always been of great importance to our members. Ethnically diverse staff are not currently represented at every level within the organisation. We are under-represented at 17% of the total workforce (local ED population in Leeds is 27%) and there is a glass ceiling around PO2 level. This matter of staff progression was also highlighted in the Workforce Race Equality Standard Report completed in 2023.

We believe that changing the culture of who we recruit, and how we recruit, will lead to a more equitable workplace. The Recruitment T&F group, led by John Ebo, is an area where inspirational conversations take place around this agenda.

A cross sector of colleagues and staff network leads are discussing matters such as diverse panels, unconscious bias and positive action, and how this can be used to transform the workplace. We are also looking at quick wins so that these changes occur sooner rather than later.

(3) Engaging with allies

In 2023 the network established an allies programme, which involved the development of a separate mailing list for allies, a half-day in person event at the Banqueting Suite in May and subsequent online events via teams.

The programme has demonstrated to the wider council and senior leadership the real strength and competency of us as a network and as a steering group of black females. The level of uptake has been high – there were over 120 attendees at the in-person event, and we have over 250 colleagues signed up to our allies mailing list. This demonstrates that there is a real desire to learn about anti-racist practice from many colleagues within the organisation.

(4) Delivering awareness sessions on a variety of culturally significant days and heritage months

The network has delivered over 36 events across 2022 and 2023, which included topics such as:

- Celebrating Leeds Black Lives with DJ Fluid for Black History Month;
- Adoption Experiences within the South Asian Community for South Asian Heritage Month;
- Addressing Anti-Muslim Prejudice for Islamophobia Awareness Month;

- Hearing the lived experience of a Gypsy colleague during Gypsy Roma Traveller Heritage Month;
- 'Lunch and Learn' session about the Jewish Festival of Purim;

The sessions help to build awareness of the broad range of cultures and communities within Leeds, both as a workforce and as a city. It also creates a space for colleagues to have conversations around challenging issues and to learn from differing perspectives.

(5) Establishing regular wellbeing 'coffee break' online sessions which take place every other Wednesday afternoon

We wanted to ensure that members have a space to communicate in an informal setting, to encourage peer-to-peer support and networking, and to be able to share any frustrations or concerns they may have in a safe space. We have a group of core members who offer to guide the conversation gently, and as co-chairs we identify any issues raised by members which may require signposting for additional support.

Ongoing challenges and priorities for 24/25:

The network's priorities are to continue to develop the initiatives set out at (2), (3) and (4) above and to work with the organisation to deliver on the work set out in the Race Equality Action Plan. Challenges for the network and for the organisation are listed below:

- (1) **A key challenge for the network is resources.** The network has recently lost its sole steering group member and so the responsibility for progressing the work of the network falls on the co-chairs alone. This is a big ask as we are volunteers with demanding day jobs. We also have concerns about succession, and who will continue the conversation when we resign.
- (2) **A key challenge for the organisation is the lack of success measures and indicators.** We are aware that the organisation has a data tool which sets out the representation within the organisation against protected characteristics, but more needs to be done in terms of other quantifiable metrics which we can use to benchmark progress. Without this, it will be difficult to assess year on year, if we are making progress towards achieving race equality.
- (3) **The network co-signed a Race Equality Action Plan with CLT in 2021.** This has largely been superseded by other developments regarding EDI, such as the Council's 5 EDI Priorities and the review into the Workforce Race Equality Standard. However, the network would like to ensure that the Action Plan remains a focus for the organisation and that the commitments made under the plan are delivered.
- (4) **A key challenge for the organisation is around representation.** Whilst the LCC workforce is around 17% ethnically diverse, it does not reflect the local population of Leeds which according to the 2021 census data is around 27%. The disparity is even greater at PO5 and above, which stands at 13% ethnically diverse. We do not feel this is an accurate reflection of the talent and ambition that exists amongst ethnically diverse staff. We are working closely with HR, on a T&F group which will look at how the organisation both recruits with inclusion and equality in mind, examining the entire process, including how we assure applicants, of our commitment to equality and inclusion. This will include better training for recruiters, making the process more diverse whilst increasing accountability along the way. We also want to see that development and progression is available to all staff within the workforce who desire to do so.
- (5) **Another key challenge for the organisation is around workplace culture.** Whilst we recognise the successful completion of training for all measures on EDI, we are still hearing reports of pockets of resistance to the agenda and instances of poor behaviours, which are not being resolved as quickly as we would like, and we reference the GPR completed in 2022. We call on the organisation to continue to root out poor behaviours and promote early conflict resolution and a 'speak up' culture, without detriment to those who voice concerns.
- (6) **Another challenge is engaging with digitally disconnected staff.** The Race Equality Action Plan 2021-23 identified this as an issue, and we have yet to see any substantial progress by the organisation on bridging this gap. Many of our members fall within this demographic.



Appendix 2

Introduction of the Staff Network

Women's Voice provides a safe space for discussion and support on issues that affect women in the workplace. We provide a collective voice for women and take the lead in addressing issues that affect women in the workplace. Women's Voice has at its heart a belief that much of the help, support, and advice we all need from time to time is already out there among colleagues you just haven't met yet. We provide a mechanism to help women widen their networks and have ready access to more colleagues regardless of grade, where you work or what your job is.

Chair: Lydia Anchen

Date: 22/01/2024

Success Stories

- A **new chair** has been appointed after nearly two years without one and the **steering group** has been reconvened with a refreshed membership.
- **Network Ambassadors** are in place in different directorates, and we have a **Facebook group with over 1000 staff** which acts as a mechanism for sharing information with women and a place for getting help and advice from other women.
- The work of the network is championed by our **CLT Lead** Julie Longworth, Director Children and Families and the **Lead Member for Women** Cllr Heselwood.
- We are making progress in work with **male allies** within the organisation.

Priorities for 24/25

The network held a successful International Women's Day and had several consultations with women about what they wanted from the network and how they could be involved. From this we have identified the following priorities:

1. **Women's Life Course:** Clearer strategies and policies around Women's life course, health, and wellbeing (not just menopause) are needed, and a better understanding on how these impact in the workplace.
2. **Career Development and Progression:** This includes access to coaching, mentoring, and training and development opportunities, and the impact for part time staff and those with caring responsibilities.
3. **Eradicating Sexism and misogyny:** Addressing sexism and misogyny in the working place and supporting women experiencing this. We would also like the Council to support a partnership approach looking at a campaign to make misogyny a hate crime.
4. **Benchmarking Leeds City Council:** We want the Council to benchmark themselves against other employers in relation to gender equality e.g., the Times top 50 employers.

As a network we acknowledge all the work that the organisation is doing on the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) agenda and we want to ensure that this is benefiting all women in the workplace. We welcome the steps that the organisation is taking to enter the Times Top 50 Employers for Gender Equality. This assessment will help the organisation to highlight areas of good practice and areas that can be strengthened. It will identify specific actions that will add value to the organisational approach to EDI in relation to gender equality and provide the women's voice network with baseline indicators to inform our priorities.

Our ask of the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board is that you would review and assess the findings of the Times Top 50 Employers assessment when it is completed and monitor and review actions that will be taken by the organisation in response to the assessment.



Appendix 3



LEEDS CITY COUNCIL
**LGBT+
STAFF
NETWORK**



Introduction of the Staff Network

The LGBT+ Staff Network was the 4th Staff Network formed in Leeds City Council, with the first iteration set up back in 2008. The current model of the network was reformed in 2015 by Rob Wilson after a period of time where the network had not met.

The Staff Network is open to anyone who identifies as being LGBT+ or is an ally of the community. We exist to create an area where the community and allies can be together in safe spaces and work to improve the lived experience of LGBT+ staff within the Council. The chair is supported by a Steering Group made up of staff members from areas across the Council.

The Staff Network also works closely with the LGBT+ Hub, the Council's outward facing engagement body, and the Equality Teams (in Human Resources and Communities, Housing and Environment) to ensure there is consistency in LGBT+ inclusion in the city and in the Council.

Chair: Kat Denvir (she/her)

Date: 17.01.24

Success Stories – where the Staff Network is doing well and making good progress.

- Membership to the LGBT Staff Network has increased nearly 12% since February 2023.
- The network facilitates a 'talking space' (playfully named 'The Tea') in Teams. This meets weekly and is open to all staff to check in with each other, discuss contemporary issues, to share stories and recommendations and for seeking support and advice.
- Members of the network led on delivering a well-attended LGBT+ Inclusion training session for National Inclusion Week and delivered a Trans Voices session created by trans and non-binary staff at the request of a directorate.
- Worked collaboratively with Children's Services on their updated Gender Identity policy following system changes to Mosaic and delivered training sessions to over 150 workers within the service.
- Lead on updating our Teams infrastructure with new functionality that allows for staff to record their pronouns if they chose to.
- Co-led on Leeds City Council's Pride activities including running the Community Marketplace and having over 100 staff present in the Leeds Pride Parade.
- There has been continued posting of blog writings highlighting national Visibility Days. Staff members are encouraged to submit and collaborate on content that is available on Insite, SharePoint, and through our newsletter. Last year we wrote 12 blogs highlighting 20 LGBT+ figures from a variety of backgrounds and over 20 pieces of LGBT+ media for people to check out over the year.
- We worked in collaboration with our colleagues in Human Resources and the Equality Team to produce the 2024 Stonewall Workplace Equality Index to benchmark how we're doing as an organisation and employer in embedding LGBT+ inclusion.

Ongoing challenges and priorities for 24/25

One of the most significant challenges faced by the LGBT+ Staff Network, which also directly impacts service delivery in the Council, is the ongoing climate of hostility and politicisation of our identities. This is not purely a perceived view by members of the network but mirrored in data about the increase on hate crime figures perpetrated against the LGBT+ community (particularly trans people), the lack of a ban on conversion therapy and national policy proposals that directly impact LGBT+ people, particularly young people.

The second significant challenge directly relates to the first. Because of the political sensitivity of our identities, there has been what is felt to be an organisational hesitation to engage with the network or with LGBT+ issues because of fears of getting it wrong or fears of challenge. We acknowledge that the organisation continues to be under significant pressure in terms of capacity, staffing and budget but we have seen active and proactive engagement on other equality related agendas and want to see more equitable engagement by the whole organisation on all protected characteristics.

The third challenge relates to the lack of shared ownership in terms of LGBT+ inclusion in the organisation. The Staff Network or the Equality Team currently “hold the ring” on the majority of LGBT+ events in the organisation, and the expectation is for them to continue to own this, particularly from an internal corporate perspective. We do acknowledge that there are areas of this Council who are proactively engaged and doing excellent work – but it is not consistent across all directorates. It would be our challenge back to the organisation to become more proactive in engaging with corporate events, which the network would be happy to be engaged with, advertised, and be involved where capacity allows.

Our priorities for 24/25 are:

- Work in collaboration with the Staff Network Partnership (the body for all the Staff Network Leads) to progress our objectives on Allyship and Ambassadors.
- Expand our “Talking Spaces” initiative, which are staff-run spaces. By the end of 2024, we want to have a Lesbian, a Gay, a Bi, a Trans and Non-binary and a Neurodivergent talking space set up and running regularly.
- Run an organisational survey during Q1 2024 that identifies improvements the Network could make to our running but also areas that LGBT+ people or allies identify as a priority for progress.
- Continue to produce content for the variety of Visibility Days for our community including LGBT+ History Month, Leeds Pride, Trans Day of Visibility, Lesbian Day of Visibility, Bi Visibility Day and more.
- Create a formal action plan with workstreams that the network can progress and workstreams that the wider organisation needs to own, aligning to the Race Action Plan and the Disability Action Plan.
- Work as a more formal “critical friend” to the organisation to ensure that LGBT+ inclusion is being considered as part of their internal running as well as in the service delivery.



Appendix 4

Introduction of the Staff Network

The Disability and Wellbeing network has approximately 180 members and is led by Terry Pycroft who is the Network Chair. Maisie Roberts is the Vice-Chair of the network. Linked to DAWN, is the Healthy Minds Network.

Chair: Terry Pycroft

Date: 29.01.2024

Success Stories – where we the Staff Network is doing well and making good progress.

This year has been one of our most successful years. We have a lively membership of colleagues who regularly attend our weekly 'cuppa and chat' meetings every Friday that provide a support network for our members as well as 6 weekly DAWN meetings where we consult on key disability and wellbeing issues across the city. On top of this, we have:

- Launched our DAWN Awareness Ambassador Network. DAWN awareness ambassadors bring their lived experiences to raise awareness and understanding across the council – they act as subject matter experts on their disability and support others navigating their own disability.
- Set up our DAWN Teams Channel, which connects all our network members and provides a platform for them to network, seek advice and share their experiences.
- Ran a series of awareness sessions throughout the year, run by network members, sharing their lived experiences on their disability. This included awareness sessions on autism, ADHD, functional neurological disorder, diabetes, osteoporosis, chronic fatigue, and much more.
- Celebrated and put on special events on disability awareness during National Inclusion and International Day for Disabled People (December 3rd), Disability History Month (November/December) and Disability Pride Month (July).
- Led a campaign on Invisible Disabilities within the Council, to raise awareness of different invisible disabilities, dispel any myths and stereotypes around invisible disabilities and to highlight the importance of not assuming someone's identity just by looking at them.
- We are working towards publishing lived experience guides to support managers in the organisation to raise their awareness and understanding of specific disabilities. At the beginning of February, we are launching the ME/Chronic Fatigue Guide for Managers and at the beginning of April we will be launching the Neurodiversity Guide for Managers during Autism Acceptance Week. These guides provide an overview of these conditions, suggest reasonable adjustments, and provide lived experience accounts from Council colleagues.
- We held a survey workshop event with the Healthy Minds, Super Families and Carers Network in June 2023. We consulted network members on important themes that were affecting them at work with the Council's intelligence and policy team. The workshop has led us to develop a "deep dive" survey that will be launched in Spring 2024 and will record disabled colleagues as well as carers views around those specific themes.

- We established key links with external organisations such as Microsoft and Network Rail. Microsoft have been supporting us with accessibility issues and we consulted on Network Rail's recent plans for Morley Train station.
- We consulted on accessibility and inclusion issues for internal council projects, including the Town Hall, Christmas Market, Light Night, the City Square scheme, Leeds City Bikes, the A660 scheme.
- Members contributed and consulted towards to the Council's mandatory EDI training package for managers, with members sharing their lived experiences via EDI training videos that were shown in the training.

Ongoing challenges and priorities for 24/25

As a network, we have faced several issues that have affected our members.

- A key issue that has emerged strongly has been the **poor understanding of reasonable adjustments in the organisation**. DAWN members have told us about cases where managers: did not know how to support them; denied their request for reasonable adjustments to be considered; did not put their agreed reasonable adjustments in place; did not follow guidance from Occupational Health; decided their adjustments for them without consulting them; and removed their reasonable adjustments without consultation.
- The Network believes language matters. We would advocate replacing the term reasonable adjustments with workplace adjustments. This will discourage managers from questioning what is reasonable or defining what is reasonable based on service needs rather than the needs of the disabled person. There should be a presumption that managers say "yes" to reasonable requests for support. Managers have attended mandatory EDI training this year, but as a Network we believe we need to go further and provide more in-depth training and policy on workplace adjustments, which sets out our legal duty of care under the Equality Act 2010 both as managers and as an employer. This will ensure disabled colleagues are properly supported.
- Fairness is not about treating everyone the same: it is about treating people according to their needs. According to our members, some of our managers do not yet seem to have this awareness. To put this into practice, the Council should adopt a more flexible approach in line with the Flexible Working Policy and Supporting Staff at Work Charter. Both documents encourage managers to treat colleagues according to their needs. More detailed guidance around how to facilitate conversations around disability would be welcomed so that managers are able to put workplace adjustments in place: the guidance should emphasise that the disabled person is the expert on their own disability and that listening to the disabled person is key to supporting them in a meaningful way. The Network believes the Council should adopt an overarching disability policy, which would define what is required to ensure disabled colleagues have the appropriate support and inform managers what is required as part of their duty of care. We also feel that the existing reasonable adjustment passport needs to be re-promoted and cascaded across all parts of the organisation. Currently reasonable adjustment passports are not saved centrally, which has meant that disabled colleagues' passports have not always been honoured. Reasonable adjustments should be reviewed regularly – at least once every 12 months – taking into account colleagues' changing needs.
- A key issue that the Network has also faced is the **growing number of disabled colleagues in the performance management and sickness system**. Disabled people within our workforce have long faced stigma, discrimination, and disadvantage. Greater flexibility is required around phased returns and the attendance and performance process to ensure that disabled colleagues are not unfairly disadvantaged through these processes. We have noticed as a Network that the number of members going through this process has grown over the last year. Adopting an overarching disability policy would ensure that a fair, consistent, and transparent approach is delivered by our managers and HR. Too often disabled colleagues feel they are on their own in an isolated position where they are labelled as failing either because of their attendance or performance has been judged unfairly. In this situation, disabled people internalise their experiences and blame themselves for their circumstances rather than the organisation, which in many cases has failed in the support given to them.

- Linked to this, **a consistent approach to reasonable adjustments in the recruitment and selection process is still needed.** Network members have reported that they have not been provided with adjustments despite declaring their disability and asking for adjustments. To remove as many barriers as possible for disabled colleagues, there are a whole range of adjustments that could be revolutionary in terms of making our recruitment process more accessible and equitable, and increasing the level of representation of disabled people in the Council. Reforming these processes would also recognise the value that all disabled people can bring to more senior roles. For example, a clear and blanket policy of providing interview questions to everyone who applies for a job at the Council, would dispel manager confusion over the current guidance. Members report that recruiting managers are still cautious, confused, or even opposed to providing these sorts of simple adjustments. Having a dedicated person in HR with a good understanding and knowledge base on disability to oversee reasonable adjustment requests in the recruitment process would also dispel some of the confusion around this.
- We also **need to encourage more disabled people to join the Council.** We are not representative of the city in terms of the number of disabled people we employ. Currently 6% of our workforce is disabled, compared to 18% in Leeds. A simple scheme to encourage this is the Supported Internship programme, which the Employment and Skills service is currently leading. We should also look to implement job trials. The rules around positive action allow us to target disabled people in the recruitment process, which is not permitted for any other protected group.
- **Career progression is a key issue affecting network members.** We have noticed that many members, who have the ambition to progress, are stuck in entry-level roles and the representation of disabled people at more senior levels within the organisation remains poor. More targeted positive action development initiatives, targeted at disabled people, combined with a talent pool that recognises people's strengths would help with both internal recruitment and flexible redeployment. By recognising everyone's individual talents and skills, we could utilise our workforce more flexibly and dynamically to meet the changing demands of our Council.

Appendix 5

Introduction of the Carers Staff Network

The Carers Staff Network was initially established as a virtual network in 2016/17 to be the voice of carers. The network supports council colleagues who alongside being employed have caring responsibilities for family members or relatives who are dependent on them for day-to-day needs they cannot do for themselves. Dependants can be any age and can include those with physical or mental health needs, long term medical conditions and other reasons such as substance misuse. The network is led by Mej Chaudhry and has evolved to deliver support through a range of mechanisms. As part of the network there is also an established subgroup called Carers Super Families aimed specifically at colleagues with children, with additional needs and long-term medical conditions. Although clear similarities with the needs of wider carers, this group supports specifically the unique circumstances and journey of carers/families who receive either short or lifelong diagnosis for their children.

Lead: Mej Chaudhry, **Date:** January 2024

Success Stories – where the Staff Network is doing well and making good progress.

Over the past year the network has worked hard to increase awareness of carers in the organisation, to understand their experiences whilst creating a wider appreciation of the challenges they face, and to provide the support they require. Increased engagement has been evident from carers and from managers wanting to better equip themselves to support their staff. Support and raising awareness have been achieved through various mechanisms throughout the year. The network has:

- Delivered Care, share and chat sessions on a range of carer related topics such as dealing with bereavement, managing finances, supporting carers of Dementia sufferers and Power of Attorney/Trusts for carers etc.
- Hosted key date events celebrating and raising awareness e.g., Carers Right Day, Carers Week and National Inclusion week.
- Provided individual support through a Carers Facebook page, chat sessions and 121 calls.
- Supported the formation of other smaller localised carer support groups,
- Lived experiences have been shared by network members to raise awareness and understanding across the council of being a carer in the workplace, work life/balance, challenges faced, and support received including contributing to EDI videos.
- Attendance at council wide and directorate meetings/events including staff network collaboration, e.g., Healthy Minds session.
- Worked in partnership with the Carers Employers Forum/ Carers Leeds. Collaborating to support other Leeds employers to improve the experience of carers in the workplace.
- Prepared draft documentation and related evidence for the Carers Confident Accreditation which is anticipated for submission next financial year.
- Held focus groups/workshops in partnership with DAWN and Healthy Minds, supported by LCC's Intelligence and Policy team to inform a joint survey in 2024 focusing on carers, mental health and disabled colleagues. To be rolled out in Spring.
- Working in partnership with LCC/HR through consultation on employment policies/processes such as grievance, recruitment, service reviews, LCC EDI plan, as well as external facing consultations by the council and other bodies such as the city square scheme, transport and carers leave.

Carers Super Families

- Have gone from strength to strength including regular guest speaker slots from the NHS, internal Children & Families Directorate colleagues and wider charities/support groups.
- Have undertaken a localised survey to inform next steps for the group in 2024.
- Involved with wider statutory parent carer forum now established in Leeds including corporate review of support to SEND families/EHCPs.

Ongoing challenges and priorities for 24/25

As a network our key challenge is not having sufficient members to help deliver the work of the carers staff network which primarily falls on a few. This however is understandable due to the pressures of the work environment and work/ life balance for carers. The networks priorities and areas of focus going forward are: -

- To expand the size of the core delivery group of the Carers Staff Network.
- Establish carer ambassadors, wider support.
- Support the council launch '**Our commitment to support working carers**'.
- Encourage localised subgroups; for example, Leeds Building Service's early talks about starting a neurodiversity carer group.
- Continue collaborating with HR/EDI team to help deliver carer related elements on the draft action plan following the 2023 staff survey results, e.g., career progression, support and awareness.
- Continue collaborating with DAWN, Healthy Minds, and Carer Super families on the implementation of a directed survey for carers and disabled colleagues in 2024, as well as any follow-up initiatives that may be necessary.
- Improve the Carers Staff Network's engagement with non-ICT users.
- Support/consult HR with changes to policies and employment provisions pertaining to flexible working hours and new carers leave taking effect in April 2024.
- Review the Carers Passport.
- Raise awareness of upcoming legal changes regarding carers leave and flexible working hours through different communication channels.
- Take forward Super Family survey feedback including promotion to non-ICT users and influencing any corporate direction with support to parent carers.
- **Continue to raise awareness and visibility of carers, continue to be their voice.**



STAFF NETWORKS

Valuing diversity through
empowering staff networks





Leeds
CITY COUNCIL



Appendix 6

Introduction of the Staff Network

The Healthy Minds Staff Network is a peer-to-peer support network for people either with mental ill health or people wanting to know more about how to support someone with mental ill health.

We present different sessions twice a month on teams giving information out on different issues that can affect your mental health for example: sleep and mental health, financial strain, and your mental health.

We also have a Facebook group with 359 members.

Chair: Helen Saunders

Date:22/01/2024

Success Stories – where the Staff Network is doing well and making good progress.

We recently started a Men's mental health talking group called Simon's Space at Leeds Building Services. Which has been very popular with the men at this service. There is also a women's mental health talking group that has also been successful at Leeds Building Services.

We held a mental health first aiders conference on the 20th of December 2023 in the civic hall we had brilliant speakers including:

- Vanessa Wenham (our freedom to speak up guardian)
- Darren Crowe (financial challenges and mental health)
- Emma Jaye (Deputy Head of HR)
- Ian Cawthorne (Occupational Health Manager)
- Paul Wilkes (Andy's Man Club)
- Javed Bobat (Mental health trainer independent)
- Tom Riordan (Chief Executive)
- Lindsey Harvey (Healthy minds looking after you)
- Lauren Turnbull (Public Health)

This was a brilliant conference and people took away a lot of information.

We also work with different agencies (external) and different people across the council to be able to deliver the sessions that we do monthly.

We also have a How You Are feeling session that runs every Wednesday 11am till 12pm these are fantastic sessions where we have a brilliant group of people talking about different topics each week e.g., how you are feeling around stress, how you are feeling about work. These sessions bring people together and get them talking to people that they wouldn't usually talk to. People have said these sessions are a lifeline for them and I have regular people coming to this as well as new people.

Ongoing challenges and priorities for 24/25

Ongoing challenges for me would be reducing stigma and discrimination in relation to mental health. The priority is to try and stamp this out through training and information. It's also about leaders creating a culture where people feel comfortable talking openly about things, we are so fortunate that Tom sets that culture right from the top.

Although getting to the frontline colleagues is a challenge, we can do it, but we do need the support of the services to help achieve our goals. We have different Facebook pages, however, we understand that not all our frontline colleagues access these pages for one reason or another so we simply cannot rely on this form of communication. We still must acknowledge there is a digital divide when it comes to accessing and receiving information.

There are working groups within the frontline services who can and do share information but in order to raise the profile and for colleagues to truly understand not only the issues but to have a knowledge of the support available – requires more work.

Only when the issues are given the time and the platform to be discussed and knowledge shared can we make a positive change.

We know this is a lot easier said than done due to the hours worked, shifts and even the very nature of their role means colleagues who are off-line are difficult to bring together to discuss these issues – but if we never do, we never will.

This year our focus will be looking at addiction and what we can do to provide support. I have Forward Leeds coming in to do a healthy minds session on addiction and what services they offer. I will also link up with the mental health action group who have active Leeds, public health, adults who are all involved. Also, to link up with public health and see what healthy minds and public health can work together on.



Appendix 7

Introduction of the Staff Network

The Career Advancement Network (CAN) formerly known as Early Careers Network (ECN) is a platform designed to empower staff members in the organisation to excel in their careers. CAN is a comprehensive network that aims to connect individuals across the council, providing them with invaluable resources, opportunities, and support to advance their careers at all grades. The network offers a range of services, including mentoring, skill-building workshops, job postings, and networking events. We have a focus on fostering, sharing knowledge and aiming to create a vibrant community that assists staff members to be the best they can.

Co-Chairs: Sasha Walton and Rob Clayton

Date: 31/01/2024

Success Stories

- A **new steering group and co-chair** have been created after nearly two years with limited capacity at leadership level. The steering Group has now expended to five members.
- A **new CLT sponsor** is in place with Mariana Pexton, Director of Strategy and Resources having quarterly input into the network's activities and providing support and guidance as required.
- Since the refreshed chairing and steering group has been established the network is **refreshing its approach** and looking to deliver **career progression sessions in partnership with Reed recruitment agency** which will look to deliver support with Interview techniques/preparation, CV development, finding the right role, career development and applications.
- We have featured in one of the **CEOs staff update emails** advertising the re-branding of the network and raising awareness of its existence to **attract new members and re-establish the network with colleagues**.

Priorities for 24/25

The network is looking to re-establish itself following a period in which it had limited capacity. A key element of this will be organising and running both specifically designed events and more generic and informal sessions throughout 2024/25, some initial plans are as follows:

- Involvement in the new Aspiring Leaders Programme with a view to providing support to the 16 participants with **career advice and preparation** and specific session on **decision making and political awareness**.
- Initial contact with services to **design and deliver bespoke career support** that meets the needs of services and can help staff advance and progress their careers.
- Plans to relaunch and rebadge coffee morning and informal network meetings as **Be Your Best sessions** in line with the overall training programme being delivered by the Council.
- Completing the **re-branding of the network** and updating our online presence

More generally, the network strongly welcomes the interest of scrutiny in this area of the Council's work, there has been undeniable progress in how the Council has incorporated EDI into its people management strategies in recent years. We hope to support the themes set out in the Being Your Best Organisational Plan and support career advancement and progression for colleagues that will contribute to delivery of the aims set out in the Best City Ambition.

Challenges for 2024/25

Whilst the network has increased capacity there will still be challenges in terms of available time to develop and deliver the network's agenda which could be a limiting factor in delivery of all the network's ambitions.