

Report of Director of Resources

Report to Resources and Strategy Scrutiny Board

Date: 24 January 2022

Subject: Staff Inclusion Update: Improving the experience and outcomes of Disabled / Carer colleagues at Leeds City Council, and Feedback from Staff Networks

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: 10.4(3)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary

- Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board, following the race equality action plan presentation in September 2021, requested additional updates from other staff networks, and this report gives the latest position on the (DAWN) Disability and Wellbeing Network (including Healthy Minds), the Carers Staff Network and the BAME network.
- The Equality Act 2010 says you are Disabled if you have a physical or mental impairment, visible or hidden, that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities (which can last 12 months or longer and be recurring).
- In the UK, 1 in 5 people have a disability, 80 per cent of which are said to have a hidden disability.
- A Carer is someone who provides unpaid care and support to a family member or friend due to their disability, health condition, frailty, mental health problem, addiction or other health and care need. If you are looking after a child, including your own child, who has special physical or mental health support needs, then you are also a carer.
- There are some 13.6 million unpaid carers across the country, including 4.5 million people who first started caring during the pandemic and 800,000 young carers. Each of these carers provides vital support to a family member or friend, often at considerable personal cost.
- In 2019 Leeds City Council made a commitment as a Disability Confident Leader. As one of the largest employers in the city we have an opportunity to show strong leadership and act as an exemplar to other employers by championing "healthy" working (both in how people work and

the environments where they work), and by taking a person-centred, social model of disability approach to the care of our employees in work and in supporting those with long term health needs and disabilities and those with caring responsibilities.

- This is demonstrated in our Equality Improvement Priorities 2018 – 2022. One of these priorities aims to ‘provide effective support to disabled people and people with long term health conditions with a focus on those with poor mental health to access the labour market and sustain employment with the objective of increasing the number of people experiencing mild to moderate mental health moving into work’.
- In February 2021, this scrutiny board received a joint commitment from Corporate Leadership Team and our BAME Staff Network to improve the work experience and outcomes for BAME colleagues in Leeds City Council. This was an initial item focussing on the Council’s response to a call for urgent action from the BAME staff network in response to the Black Lives Matter movement, the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on those communities and colleagues and the need to address a broad range of issues for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) colleagues working in the Council, some new and many longstanding.
- As a consequence, this Scrutiny Board requested additional updates from other staff networks, and this report gives the latest position on the Disability and Wellbeing network (including Healthy Minds), and the Carers staff network along with a further update from the BAME network. Board members were keen to hear directly from the networks as well as from leaders and those involved in developing new strategies both from BAME colleagues but also from a range of staff networks. The appendices to this report provide additional statements from these sources and reflect the aims of this report and discussion of the Board at the September meeting when a further item on Improving the experience and outcomes of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues at Leeds City Council, was considered. Board members were keen to hear directly from staff networks and receive regular updates in relation to the ongoing work on Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority colleagues at the council. Representatives from the DAWN, BAME, Healthy Minds and Carers networks will be in attendance at the meeting.
- Attached at Appendix 6 is the Joint CLT and BAME Staff Network Action Plan which was also considered by the Board in September but is attached here in order to provide added context to the comments from the BAME staff network which are included as a separate Appendix 4 and reflect the ongoing dialogue between that network and CLT and the Council generally.
- Since the onset of COVID in March 2020, the Council has supported approximately 8,500 staff working online from home through varying sets of measures imposed by the government providing equipment from desks chairs and computer monitors, plus any specialist equipment if required to continue working at home.
- During this period HR has worked closely with the Staff Networks to provide support (and where required risk assessments) for vulnerable and shielding staff, disabled colleagues, and working carers by helping them stay safe but connected online or in a workplace, focussing on individual need, where no “one size fits all”. Making sure staff had the right tools to do their work was critical at this time, particularly anyone with a reasonable workplace adjustment (e.g., assistive technology users).
- During lockdown we supported over 600 staff who needed to attend a workplace because of their disability or long-term health need, or because they could not work from home. We recognised the impact COVID had on some groups (e.g., LGBT+, BAME, those with mental ill health and on the autistic spectrum who maybe more vulnerable to anxiety and isolation; and single parents, working carers and parents with young children who had little or no respite from juggling work, home schooling and caring).
- A core team from Health & Safety, Occupational Health, HR, IDS and Asset Management all contributed to support these groups. Keeping people connected was key to everyone’s well-being with social media (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp) and peer support groups (e.g., Healthy minds, Mental Health First Aiders “Listening Ear”, DAWN’s “Cuppa n’ Chat” and LGBT+ networks “the Tea”) being just a few of the initiatives taken to support our workforce. We were

keen to know how our workforce was feeling during this time, so we asked them using four staff wellbeing pulse surveys throughout the period to all staff and one working from home survey specifically targeted at remote workers.

- The Disability and Well-being and Carers Networks worked with HR to evaluate the findings from the most recent staff wellbeing pulse survey 4 (carried out between 30 July - 16 August 2021) which had specific questions to identify how Disabled staff and working carers were feeling. Some additional questions were asked of all colleagues to identify whether they were disabled, were a carer and what would improve their working life experience? The responses from 3,709 colleagues indicated 16% believed they were disabled or had a long-term impairment, while 9% confirmed they had caring responsibilities.
- In the fourth wellbeing pulse survey responses were received equating to a quarter (26%) of the total LCC workforce of around 14,000. Of these only 181 or 5% were staff without regular access to a PC.
- The 2011 census indicates 16.7% of the Leeds Community consider themselves disabled and 10% with un-paid caring roles.
- Analysis of this data compared to equality declarations held in existing staff records (SAP) shows a significant disparity between those who have identified themselves as being disabled in the recent pulse survey and those who have identified as being disabled in our workforce equality data. This presents an interesting dilemma, which warrants further investigation to be included as part of our action plan for the networks overall.

1. Best Council Plan Implications (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- Our [People Strategy 2020-25](#) sets out our ambition to be the Best Place to Work with a clear focus on creating a great all round employee experience for all staff, with the support of their leaders and managers working in a positive organisational culture, driven by our council values.
- Inclusion sits at the heart of our People Strategy – we strive to ensure that all employees can be their best and are treated fairly.

2. Resource Implications

- The Council employs 844 disabled employees (November 2021), which represents 6% of the overall workforce. 1272 (9%) have declared themselves as working Carers. In terms of representation at senior leadership roles 22 (6%) of JNC are Disabled while 36 (9%) of JNC staff are Carers.
- Scrutiny Board is keen to understand more about the council's workforce profile and how this compares to the wider city working age population.
- The details of the demographics indicate 16.7% of the Leeds Community consider themselves disabled and 10% with un-paid caring roles

Recommendations

- a) Resources Scrutiny Board is asked to:
 - I. Note the contents of this report.
 - II. Note the Disability and Carers Action Plan 2021-23 and the council wide activity available to support this work.
 - III. Receive further updates and reports as this important work progresses.
 - IV. Receive wider inclusion updates in the future from across the networks and various characteristics.

3. Purpose of this report

- 3.1 To provide Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board with an update on the joint commitment from Corporate Leadership Team and our Disability and Wellbeing / Carers Staff Networks and our Healthy Minds peer support group to improve the work life experience and outcomes for colleagues in Leeds City Council and to provide an update on the same issues in relation to the BAME staff network following consideration at meetings in February and September 2021.

4. Background information

- 4.1 In February 2021, and an update item in September 2021, this scrutiny board received a report setting out a joint commitment from Corporate Leadership Team and our BAME Staff Network to improve the work experience and outcomes for BAME colleagues at Leeds City Council. This committed the Council to:

- Do more to listen to and understand your real lived experiences Disabled Staff and Working Carers in our workforce
- Not shy away from uncomfortable and challenging conversations, nor ignore hard truths
- Do all we can to eliminate inequality and discrimination wherever we find it
- Deliver immediate and long-term change by creating the plan together, and keeping your issues high on the agenda
- Expect everyone in the council to play their part – this is a whole *#TeamLeeds* effort, and there will be allies and ambassadors right across the organisation working with you for change
- Take a zero-tolerance approach to inequality in the workplace taking all allegations of inequality seriously. We will challenge and address inappropriate behaviour

- 4.2 Therefore, this Scrutiny Board requested additional updates from other staff networks, including the BAME network, and this report gives the current position on the Disability and Wellbeing network (including Healthy Minds), the Carers staff network and the BAME staff network all appended to this report in Appendices 2-5. The above commitment to BAME colleagues could equally be applied to Disabled colleagues and working Carers within LCC.

- 4.3 The impact and outcomes we aim to achieve include:

- Trust across the organisation to speak up
- Better progression and development
- A more representative workforce across all characteristics
- Reduced inequality to improve colleagues' everyday experience.

- 4.4 Equality monitoring in the Council records 90% of our workforce have declare they have a disability or not with only 6% declaring a disability, while 66% declare they are a working carer or not with only 9% declaring they are a carer. We know that some people do not define themselves with the word "disabled" if they have a sensory impairment, have periods of mental ill health, have a hidden disability like autism, dyslexia, ADHD or who have a long-term health condition. So more may need to be done to improve people's confidence in disclosing equality data in the Council and so understand their lived experiences as either a disabled person or a working carer.

- 4.5 The overall representation varies across our directorates, by grade, service and role. Work is taking place to produce a more detailed and granular level report which will enable us to better understand the representation of different groups that make up our Disabled and carer community and how this compares to our working age population in the city. This will be shared as part of a new dataset for tracking progress against disability and carers equality action plan measures showing representation levels at different grades, for the organisation as a whole.

Employees November 2021						
	FTE	Headcount	Disabled	carers	Not declared Disabled	Not declared carer
Staffing Numbers	12105	14126	844	1272	1411	4889
		100%	(6%)	(9%)	10%	35%
A1-C3	6284	7850	471	663		
		100%	6%	8%		
SO1-PO4	4282	4647	282	445		
		100%	6%	10%		
PO5-PO6	1174	1246	69	128		
		100%	6%	10%		
JNC	365	383	22	36		
		100%	6%	9%		

5 Main issues

5.1 Disability and Carers Action Plan 2021-23

5.1.1 Further to the existing short term activity plans in the disabled and carers networks, a Disability and Carers Equality Action Plan 2021-23 has been developed. This has been approved by CLT, the Disability and Wellbeing network and the Carer's network.

5.1.2 The staff networks and HR reviewed the feedback from the council wide survey conducted Autumn 2020 and the most recent pulse 4 survey, to make sure that all the key issues were being addressed in the plan. Survey results were also shared with all Chief Officers to inform service level action planning.

5.1.3 A number of themes emerged from the staff survey around improving the everyday experience of disabled and carer colleagues at work. These were:

- Education and understanding, creating open and honest discussion, respecting and celebrating difference
- Improved staff awareness across the characteristics
- Improved management support and consistency across the organisation
- Being valued, listened to and treated equally and fairly
- Improved special leave and sickness policies
- Continued support of flexible agile working
- Improved communications

5.1.4 A copy of the Disability and Carers Action Plan 2021-23 can be seen in **Appendix 1**.

This identifies the key priorities, outcomes and measures.

- 5.1.5 The action plan with clear accountabilities and timescales will be used to track the progress being made across the work themes. The necessary connections to corporate groups and local service Equality and Diversity Boards have been made, as part of a review of council wide equality and diversity governance arrangements.
- 5.1.6 Our members have put forward several suggestions for priority attention, following their initial reflections on the disability and carers equality action Plan. These are listed below, and are places where we are looking to dedicate our attention and resource:
- Improved awareness and understanding through inclusion training for all staff (including Social Model of Disability)
 - Continued work on the agile working options through (NWW) new ways of working
 - Supporting managers to be confident and competent around equality in the workplace (Inclusion Essentials/Inclusive Leadership/Unconscious Bias)
 - Review of various policies (including special leave, recruitment/grievance)
 - Develop guidance on supporting neurodiverse conditions in work
 - Ensure all managers and staff understand the Supporting Staff at work Charter and apply the Reasonable Adjustment and Working Carers passports where appropriate
 - Review managers guidance on Working Carers in line with new national policy
- 5.1.7 Commit to be a Disability Confident Leader and re-submit application with the support of the Business Disability Forum and complete the BDF Disability Standard.
- 5.1.8 Alongside the local service activity, a range of corporate actions are in progress to support delivery of the Disability and Carers Action Plan. These are described in the table below:

Disability and carers Action Plan priority	Activity
Staff Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing review and checks regarding the experiences of disabled and working carers who raise claims of inequality - so that we are confident that all cases are taken seriously, and we improve the support people get in these circumstances. • Introducing the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian approach – with the intention for a council-wide roll out. • Working with EDI boards to engage services and improve communications roll out. • Promoting and embedding the Council values and Manager habits, to strengthen our expectations around diversity and inclusion, and drive cultural change so that more Disabled and carer colleagues have positive experiences around the support they receive from their managers. • Introducing an improved development offer for leaders and managers – to raise awareness and improve skills and knowledge around inclusion. To include practical areas such as ensuring managers are confident and competent in addressing reported incidents of discrimination within work. • Continuing to ensure that all Disabled and working Carer colleagues have up to date individual Covid Risk Assessments - for those who continue in front line roles, and those who are returning to the workplace soon. • Encouraging colleagues to take on the role of ‘decision makers’ in formal meetings and casework -so that decision makers in our disciplinary, grievance and appeals process are representative of all our diverse workforce.

<p>Staff progression, learning and development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing recruitment and selection – ensuring we have fair and transparent policy, process and practice. Removing barriers and bias, diverse panels, training around inclusion for managers. • Improved monitoring and analysis of recruitment and progression data for Disabled and Carer colleagues – to identify issues, guide our decisions and target resources into the right areas • Positive action and support for Disabled and Carer colleagues to aid career progression, especially into leadership positions – e.g., reverse mentoring programme and other training opportunities – training for managers and HR on positive action – reasonable adjustments and tie-breaker decisions) • Having a corporate cohesive strategy on recruiting long term unemployed disabled with learning disability/difficulties and those with neurodiverse conditions through supported employment • As part of the ‘right resources for the right audience’ approach, we suggest the need for some role-specific disability skills training e.g., disability-smart recruitment, procurement, communications and service provision • Establishing our corporate position around mandatory training – for all staff and all managers. • Exploring more ways to share good practice and learning with other organisations in Leeds, such as the Anchors and Forum central. Promoting the work, we have done around engaging with our staff networks as a consultation forum, is something other organisations could really learn from.
<p>Communication and Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and agreeing a corporate workforce vision for Inclusion and Diversity • Creating a link with all directorate EDI boards to aid communication • Creating more and better opportunities 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 this influences service development and improvement. • Working alongside directorate teams, to share and monitor the outcomes from Equality Impact Assessment and findings from service reviews. • Continuing to collaborate with partners to deliver inclusion events and training throughout the year, with checks that they are reaching all teams. To raise the awareness and understanding and ensure that more staff act as strong ambassadors and allies and have the knowledge and skills they need. • We have been a Mindful Employer since 2011 and have recently re-signed the Charter, we need to work more closely with the mindful employer coordinator in Leeds to promote good mental health practice within our workforce
<p>Measurement and impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producing and sharing regular data and reports that show how we are performing on all the measures included in the Disability and Carers Action Plan • Equality impact assessment on Future Ways of Working, to ensure that any issues and challenges specific to Disabled and Carer colleagues are identified

	<p>and addressed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmark our progress on equality and inclusion with partner organisations within the city and region and nationally E.g., BDF, Inclusive Employers, Stonewall etc. • We need to ensure there is a strong whole-organisation approach to inclusive procurement – all goods and services provided to employees or service users need to be accessible. This means the pre-qualification questionnaire or procurement framework should ideally include stronger criteria around how potential suppliers: are committed to removing barriers for people with disabilities and long-term conditions; provide products and services that are accessible to disabled people; and review their products and services with the involvement of disabled people. • In relation to the Future Ways of Working project we are collaborating with the University of Leeds on what Hybrid or Agile working may look like. With Leeds being invested in this research project we want to ensure inclusion is at the centre of future local and national plans so the voices of disabled staff and working carer are considered
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with directorates to ensure Disabled and carers communities across the city have access to relevant, high quality services – whether directly delivered or commissioned by the council. • Working with Asset Management and Facilities to create a fully inclusive Civic Estate with an emphasis on new ways of working and staff collaboration.
<p>An accessible and Inclusive working environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue work with our Access Officer and the Staff Networks to explore what is helpful to ensure environments we work in are inclusive and accessible. • Working with Asset Management and the future ways of working team to create a future proofed accessible Civic estate for all. This will consider all aspects of inclusive design, including integrating the needs of those with neurodiverse or neurological conditions and share this with partner organisations across the city. To complete the new ways of working project work ensuring the impact on both disabled and caring staff are taken into account therefore providing the best work life balance while meeting service needs

5.1.9 Leeds City Council continues to engage with its partners, including the Anchor Institutions, the Health & Social Care Academy, NHS and other networks, to share its policy and practice, learn from others and augment its impact across the city and its communities.

5.1.10 A recent example of our regional collaboration around Disability and Carers has been the continued work with the third sector and Anchor organisations establishing the International day for people with disabilities on December 3rd and the planned disability and carer events calendar for 2022.

5.1.11 In addition to regular updates on our Action Plan, it is proposed that similar updates are brought forward on our wider inclusion work.

6. Consultation and engagement

6.1 Listening to the lived experiences of all Disabled and Carer colleagues is fundamental to driving positive change. As set out in our joint commitment with the Disability and carers Action Plan, all members of the workforce will be expected to play their role too.

7. Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

7.1 Our relentless focus on this crucial work will continue, including progressing the organisational Action Plan, further creating a supportive work environment for staff and being informed by listening to the experiences of our diverse communities.

8. Council policies and the Best Council Plan

8.1 Inclusion underpins the delivery of the Best Council Plan, our People Strategy 2020-25 and Best Place to Work ambitions.

9. Resources, procurement and value for money

9.1 The business case for inclusion and diversity is stronger than ever. It directly impacts on team performance and creativity, service reputation and reach, relationships with communities and partners, talent attraction and retention. There are clear benefits for getting it right, and significant consequences and lost opportunities for not doing so.

10. Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

10.1 There are no legal implications related to this report.

11. Risk management

11.1 The risk of failing to work on these actions is that the workforce across the characteristics will continue to feel marginalised removing the creativity a diverse work force can bring.

12. Recommendations

12.1 Resources and Strategy Scrutiny Board is asked to:

- A. Note the contents of this report.
- B. Note the Disability and carers Action Plan 2021-23 and the council wide activity in place to support this work.
- C. Receive further updates and reports as this important work progresses.
- D. Receive wider inclusion updates in the future.

13. Appendices

- 13.1 Appendix 1 – Disability and Carers Equality Action Plan 2021/23.
- 13.2 Appendix 2 – Carers Network feedback on successes and future challenges faced by the Council
- 13.3 Appendix 3 – DAWN Network feedback on successes and future challenges faced by the Council
- 13.4 Appendix 4 – BAME Network feedback on successes and future challenges faced by the Council
- 13.5 Appendix 5 – Health Minds Network feedback on successes and future challenges faced by the Council
- 13.6 Appendix 6 – Joint CLT and BAME Staff Network Race Equality Action Plan 2021-23