

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. Our aim is to provide informative and supportive learning sessions to help staff develop their knowledge and understanding around all aspects of mental health and wellbeing.

We present different sessions twice a month on teams giving information regarding different issues that can affect your mental health for example: sleep and mental health, financial challenges, drugs and alcohol awareness, and more recently for eating disorder week. We have introduced a new session on this topic.

We also have a Facebook group with 375 members.

We also have 546 people on the healthy minds mailing list.

We currently have 7 steering group members plus ourselves as the two chairs. We are currently doing some work on increasing the steering group involvement.

Chair: Helen Saunders & Lindsay Harvey

Date: 03/03/2025

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

The 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. The themes coming from that group are workload, relationships, alcoholism, mental health in general. This group has been talked about in other services and I have had people ask if they can join the sessions. Simon who runs these sessions has said he would like to keep this group for LBS and has offered support to others in other directorates to set up their own. There is also a women's' mental health talking group that has been set up for a year at LBS which is still finding its feet. We plan to reach out to this group and offer help and support going forward.

How are you feeling? sessions- every Wednesday 11am-12pm

These informal sessions were set up in covid and are still going strong. We have a regular group of people and also some people who drop in and out. These sessions give staff the chance to let us know how they are feeling about work, life, money or just in general. We usually have a different topic each week and have twelve regular attendees that come to these sessions.

The sessions bring people together and get them talking to people that they wouldn't usually talk to and encourage peer to peer support. People have said these sessions are a lifeline for them.

We also work with different agencies (external) and colleagues across the council to be able to co-deliver the sessions that we provide on our monthly programme. We have just had a session with Forward Leeds in January talking about dry January and alcohol (the effects and addiction) also we had delivered a grief awareness session with Full Circles Funeral Service. This was very well attended and received positive feedback from those suffering with grief and loss.

Introduction of the Staff Network: Race Equality Staff Network

The Race Equality 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.

Chairs: Carole Gentles and Hayley Lloyd-Henry

Date: 3 March 2025

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

Member Engagement

We have regular bi-monthly network meetings, which are attended by around 60 persons per session. We regularly invite a host of colleagues across the organisation to speak on areas of member concerns. We also host a fortnightly coffee and chat session, where staff can drop in without a set agenda, it creates a space for support and dialogue.

Celebrating and Recognising Diversity Calendar

There are a number of events during the year that the network will highlight and put on events, such as Black History Month, not only for our members but to provide information and learning for all staff. We have worked the Equalities Team to co-ordinate our approach and they have led on some events, such as Islamophobia Awareness Month.

Engaging Allies

Following the far-right uprisings last year a group of mainly white colleagues decided to take action in committing to anti-racist practice and supporting the RESN. This follows on from work the network has undertaken to encourage allyship, and we successfully co-hosted a meeting during Race Equality Week (3-7 February 2025), which was attended by 130 colleagues across the organisation.

Supporting Ethnically Diverse Colleagues

The network is supporting several colleagues who are experiencing issues within the workplace where staff feel their ethnicity is a factor. We have always advocated for very swift conflict resolution and have been successful in encouraging mediation, which could otherwise prove costly in terms of time, emotional distress and money, to the organisation.

Impress Development Programme

The network was able to facilitate a 4 week programme, which normally costs several hundred pounds per person but was offered to 6 persons at zero cost for ethnically diverse colleagues. The aim of the programme is to promote staff into more senior positions, recognising the barriers that occur within the recruitment process when people have a protected characteristic, and how individuals can be empowered to navigate this.

Freedom to speak up Guardian (FSUG) Peer Support

Staff networks championed this role being brought into the organisation in 2022, and we are pleased with the joint work, both formal and informal, and peer support that has naturally occurred between the network and the FTSUG.

Ongoing challenges and priorities for 24/25

Workplace Culture

We remain concerned about the lived experience and progression of ethnically diverse staff within the organisation. We have received recent data which reports to both an underrepresentation of staff in general, which is compounded when we look at more senior and JNC grades, some directorates having as little as 5% representation of ED staff at this level. We are disappointed that the figures we reported to this board in January 2024 *'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'*, remains the same in the recent data obtained.

We believe the key role that leaders and managers play needs further attention, and although the EDI training was delivered successfully to 2000 managers, there is still a gap between the organisations values and what occurs in the workplace in terms of behaviours.

The far right riots prompted many staff to approach the network, about feeling safe whilst travelling to and at work, and the lack of empathy many staff encountered from managers and colleagues. We have raised this as a health and safety matter which also requires further attention.

We want to see more local conversations in teams, and training delivered within an EDI strategy across the organisation.

Middle East Conflict

Concerns relating to the middle east conflict remain, and feedback from ethnically diverse staff is being aired and discussed, particularly in relation to communications and messaging across the organisation.

Many members of staff feel particularly impacted and affected due to having family and friends who live in the region. Discussions have taken place about the type and level of support affected staff can reasonably expect to receive and how difficult topics and conversations can be openly discussed.

CLT, HR and the FTSUG have been involved in these discussions alongside members of the Race Equality Network. Network chairs have managed these sensitive issues well and it has been, and remains challenging to navigate.

Recruitment and Progression

As mentioned within culture above, we believe that the lived experiences of many of our members is poor, and we have reports of people feeling unsupported when expressing a desire to progress, or having attended an interview, received poor feedback or rationale about why the candidate was not successful.

The network has expressed the need for more accountability and monitoring of protected characteristics throughout the whole job application process, shortlisting, interviews etc. We want diversely represented panels to be standard and HR to ensure they occur on every occasion.

Advice on diverse panels is available, but we are unsure how closely this is monitored. In order to increase representation, especially at PO2 upwards we need to have this running as a matter of urgency.

We welcome the introduction of the positive action scheme, but we are concerned that without clear oversight and support at senior levels and clear, measurable targets its success will be hindered. We would welcome some clear aspirational workforce diversity targets (which are led by the data) to underpin this strategy and for regular monitoring to take place across every directorate.

Understanding the impact of EDI measures

A clear set of quantifiable metrics regarding issues such as representation in grievances, disciplinary procedures, bullying/harassment at work, the take-up of apprenticeship/training programmes, alongside representation at senior leadership and management should be gathered and periodically reported to staff networks (and other EDI related groups) to enable the organisation to understand whether we are making progress towards achieving race equality and in respect of other colleagues with a protected characteristic.

Digital Disconnect

We remain concerned about many ethnically diverse staff not having knowledge or being able to attend meetings due to the nature of their role, and not having computer access of a log in.

We have raised this repeatedly and would be keen to hear of actions to address this.



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. We believe that much of the help, support, and advice we all need from time to time is already out there among colleagues. We provide a mechanism to help women widen their networks and have ready access to more colleagues regardless of grade, job title or where you work.

Chair: Lydia Anchen

Date: 03/03/2025

Our Priorities 2024/25

The network has 4 key priorities identified following consultations with women about what they wanted from the network and how they could be involved

1. **Women's Life Course:** Clearer strategies and policies around Women's life course, health, and wellbeing 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

Success Stories

- **Stable Leadership:** The chair has now been in place for over a year and the steering group is stable and experienced, offering an excellent platform for the network to move forward, develop and better support women within the organisation. **Each steering group member takes a lead on one of the network priorities.**
- **Effective Communication:** We have well established communication channels, including a Facebook group with over 1000 staff, a mailing list reaching 187 member and 30 allies. We regularly reach out to members and allies on a monthly basis. These approaches **act as a mechanism for sharing information, widening women's networks and provides opportunities for women to get help and advice from other women.**
- **Network Ambassadors:** 20 Network Ambassadors are in place and active in different directorates, enhancing support and information sharing among women. Our ambassadors have been holding sessions looking at specific elements affecting **women's life course health and wellbeing**, this has included the impact of fertility in the workplace, and regular in person drop-in sessions relating to periods and menopause which have contributed to making progress in the women's life course.
- **Senior Leadership Support:** 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.

- **Mentoring Programme:** We launched our mentoring programme which has seen 18 senior women mentoring 18 junior colleagues, **supporting women with their career development, personal development, progression goals and confidence.**
- **Male Allies:** We have made progress in work with male allies within the organisation, our **Senior Male Allies Lead** is Lee Hemsworth, Chief Officer for Community Hubs, Welfare and Business Support with a further **30 allies from around the authority recruited.**
- **Listen and Learn Sessions:** We have held regular Listen and Learn Sessions for staff, which have been opened to all colleagues covering important topics and featuring notable speakers. This has included **sessions on leadership journeys** from the Director of Public Health, Deputy Director Social Care, Head of Procurement and the Director of Strategy and Resources. A session on **gender bias fundamentals** was delivered jointly by a male ally and network ambassadors. We have also held a **joint session with the Carers Network and Super Families** during carers week and a session with HR during **Fertility Awareness Week** around understanding policy changes, providing targeted support.
- **Policy review and Training Resources:** Network ambassadors and steering group members have provided valuable feedback to the organisation on a recent review of the Dignity at Work policy as part of a wider piece of work on Worker Protection Act 2023 (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) which is a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. They have also provided feedback on mandatory sexual harassment training products. **The feedback provided has contributed to addressing sexism and misogyny in the workplace and supporting women experiencing this.**
- **Toolkit of Resources:** Most of the online sessions organised by the network have been recorded and shared through our monthly updates. This ensures that there is a **suite of resources available for colleagues across the organisation on key issues and topic affecting women in the workplace.**

Challenges

As a network we acknowledge all the work that the organisation is doing on the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) agenda and want to ensure that this is benefiting all women in the workplace. We would like to see more progress being made in:

- **Support for women experiencing menopause in the workplace:** We support women experiencing menopause in the workplace who require more support from their managers. In some cases, this is due to a lack of understanding and awareness of menopause symptoms and their impact on work, as well as a challenge around how reasonable adjustments might be used to provide more support, whilst also ensuring the grievance process works effectively in these cases.
- **Benchmarking the organisation in relation to gender equality:** As a network we feel this is important as it will give an objective measure of progress by comparing practices and data against other local authorities and leading companies. This will help the network and organisation identify areas for improvement and will enable us to focus our efforts where they are most need.
- **Work relating to a partnership approach to making misogyny a hate crime:** The effort to make misogyny a hate crime is still in its early stages. Although it's included in the updated hate crime strategy and a working group has been formed, progress has been slow with only one meeting held so far.

Priorities for 25/26

Our priorities as a network remain from 24/25 as there is still more work to be done on each element, although we continue to make strides ahead in most areas.



Introduction of the Staff Network

The LGBT+ Staff Network was the fourth Staff Network formed at Leeds City Council, originally established in 2008. After a period of inactivity, a piece of work led to the LGBT+ Staff Network being re-established. Today, the network provides a safe and inclusive space for all Council staff who identify as LGBT+ or who are allies of the community.

Our aim is to improve the lived experiences of LGBT+ staff within the Council, fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace. The network is led by a Chair supported by a Steering Group comprising representatives from across the Council's services.

The LGBT+ Staff Network collaborates closely with the LGBT+ Hub (the Council's public-facing engagement body), the Equality Team and the EDI Team in Human Resources.

Success Stories – Where the Staff Network is Doing Well

- **Support Spaces:**
 - Our weekly online Talking Space, named “The Tea,” remains a popular forum for forming community connection, discussion of contemporary issues, sharing stories, and offering advice.
- **Survey of Network Members:**
 - Conducted a comprehensive survey of network members to understand their demographics, needs, and perceptions of the Council's inclusiveness. The results revealed that the majority see the network's purpose as:
 - Providing a safe and confidential space for LGBT+ employees and allies to raise issues (e.g., initiatives like “The Tea”).
 - Acting as a critical friend on LGBT+ issues.
 - Advising the Council on equality matters affecting employees and citizens.
 - Insights from the survey informed forward planning, including prioritising member-driven activities.
 - Notably, over half of respondents answered “maybe” when asked if the Council delivers LGBT-inclusive services effectively, highlighting the need for greater visibility, especially regarding trans inclusivity.
- **Visibility Day Engagement:**
 - Produced 18 blogs for Visibility Days, highlighting 34 LGBT+ figures from diverse backgrounds and over 31 pieces of LGBT+ media for staff to explore and also wrote a blog for Leeds Mind for LGBT+ History Month.
- **Stonewall Benchmarking:**
 - Collaborated with Human Resources and the Equality Team to submit the 2024 Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, maintaining Leeds City Council's position in the Top 100 LGBT+ Inclusive Employers at number 84, marking our 7th year in the top 100.

- **Leeds Pride Involvement:**
 - Co-led the Council's Pride activities which saw an estimated 80,000 attendees in the city.
- **Organisational Engagement:**
 - Engaged with the Chief Executive and all the Directors in a session to discuss Staff Networks and our experience of the work on EDI over the last 12 months.
 - Co-ran an event with the other Staff Networks for Day for Staff Networks on the theme of "Raising The Bar".
 - Engaged in an early piece of work with the LGBT+ Member Champion on a LGBT+ network of networks in Leeds being established.

Ongoing Challenges and the Political Landscape

1. Hostility towards LGBT+ Identities:

- The current political climate in the UK and globally has amplified challenges for the LGBT+ community. Nationally, the government's ban on puberty blockers for minors, alongside delays in banning conversion therapy creates more challenges for members of the LGBT+ community. Internationally, the resurgence of far-right rhetoric globally with a marked increase seen in the last 6 months has emboldened anti-LGBT+ sentiment. These developments contribute to a hostile environment, from a micro level like increased microaggressions to a macro level with increased hate crimes against LGBT+ individuals—particularly trans people

2. Organisational Hesitation:

- As LGBT+ identities have become the subject of political contestation, as detailed above, this has led to noticeable organisational hesitancy in engaging with the network or LGBT+ matters, driven by concerns over public backlash or fears of getting it wrong. While we recognise the pressures on the Council in terms of capacity and budget constraints, it is critical that all protected characteristics receive equitable focus and support.

3. Uneven Ownership of LGBT+ Inclusion:

- LGBT+ inclusion often remains the responsibility of the Staff Network or the Equality Team, with limited engagement from other parts of the organisation. While some directorates actively champion inclusion, consistency is lacking. We urge the Council to adopt a more proactive and distributed approach to ownership of LGBT+ events and inclusion initiatives.

5. Barriers to Participation:

- Time constraints remain a significant barrier for staff wishing to participate in the network. Survey respondents highlighted concerns about balancing workloads with protected time for staff network involvement. Clearer messaging to managers about the importance of protected time is needed.

Priorities for 2025

1. Delivery of Key Member Priorities:

- Organise more collaborative events with other staff networks.
- Deliver additional training and awareness sessions on LGBT+ issues.
- Facilitate networking and mentoring opportunities for LGBT+ staff and allies.

2. Critical Friend Role:

- Strengthen our role as a “critical friend” to the organisation, ensuring that LGBT+ inclusion is embedded in both internal practices and external service delivery, as highlighted as a key purpose of the Staff Network by members.

3. Visibility Days:

- Continue producing high-quality content for LGBT+ History Month, Trans Day of Visibility, Lesbian Day of Visibility, Bi Visibility Day, Leeds Pride, and more. Expand participation through collaboration with other staff networks.

4. Embedding Early Consultation Practices:

- Work with organisational leaders to establish a framework for early consultation with the LGBT+ Staff Network on any changes to policies, systems, or practices that may affect LGBT+ staff or service users. This will ensure meaningful input can be incorporated into decisions and avoid last-minute adjustments.

5. Formal Action Plan:

- Develop a formalised action plan, aligning LGBT+ inclusion workstreams with broader organisational initiatives like the Race Action Plan and the Disability Action Plan

6. Improved Representation and Data

- Currently 3.67% of the Council workforce identifies as LGB against Census figures of 4.25% for Leeds, with the majority being represented in lower-paid grades (taken from the 2024 Q3 EDI dashboard). Our systems do not currently capture trans identities as a separate metric which was picked up in the 2024 Scrutiny discussion, so we do not have this visibility of representation in the workforce. We would like to see improved LGBT+ recruitment and development more consistently through the organisation.



Introduction of the Carers Staff Network (CSN)

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 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 an established peer group called Carers Super Families (CSF) lead Louise Sanderson, which is aimed specifically at colleagues with children, of any age, 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: 3 March 2025

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

Both CSN and CSF have 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. Support and raising awareness have been achieved through various mechanisms throughout the year.

Carers Staff Network (CSN)

- Hosted key date events celebrating and raising awareness e.g., Carers Right Days, Carers Week and National Inclusion week.
- Delivered a number of care, share and chat sessions on carer related topics, e.g. Carers Assessment & GP support, managing finances for carers, supporting carers of Dementia sufferers and Power of attorney/trusts for carers etc.
- Promotion of and raising awareness of legislative changes on flexible working and the introduction of statutory carers leave in April 2024.
- Provided individual support through Carers Facebook page, chat sessions and 121 calls.
- Attendance at council wide and directorate meetings/events including staff network collaboration.
- Continued collaboration and partnership working with the Carers Employers Forum/ Carers Leeds. Supporting and learning from other Leeds employers to improve the experience of carers in the workplace.
- Support/consult HR with changes to policies and employment provisions impacting carers.
- Successful roll-out of a staff survey jointly with DAWN and Healthy Minds focused on carers, mental health, and disabled colleagues.

Carers Super families (CSF)

- Monthly guest speaker sessions with featured talks from Welfare & Benefits, SENSAP, Leeds Teaching Hospitals and a listening session with the Deputy Director for Learning from Children & Families.

- Ongoing collaboration with Leeds Parent Carer Forum (LPCF), with a focus, specifically on Health.
- Lived experience sharing within the network and across the Council through EDI sessions to raise awareness and to facilitate valuable support.
- Collaboration with City Development colleagues to consider the accessibility of council services e.g. Leeds City Museum.
- A focus on improving technology to communicate with new and existing members including the creation of a new SharePoint HUB, electronic newsletters, and other promotional materials.

Ongoing challenges and priorities for 25/26

A key challenge that continues for the CSN side is not having sufficient members to support the delivery of the network. The lead though remaining involved has stepped back on corporate responsibilities e.g. partnership meetings and the Diversity forums due to capacity and work priorities. Since the summer, the Carers Super Families per group lead has stepped in to cover these elements for the network. This is an interim measure pending a new lead being sourced.

As carer awareness increases so does the need to ensure the support available is known to both carers and managers so that staff are supported in their work/ life balance. This in turn enables the council to retain carers in its workforce, reduce absenteeism and for carers to feel heard and valued. Priorities and areas of focus for the network to support this going forward are:

Carers Staff Network (CSN)

- To continue to try increase the size of the core delivery group of the CSN.
- To source a substantive Lead for the CSN.
- Refresh documentation and related evidence for the Carers Confident Accreditation for submission 25/26.
- To identify and follow-up initiatives and actions from the recent Disability & Carers Survey staff survey undertaken jointly with DAWN, Healthy Minds, and Carer Super families.
- In addition to email and the CSN Facebook page, explore communication channels to increase links with carers. E.g. via Teams channels, with a focus on improving the network's engagement with non-ICT users.
- Encourage localised subgroups, e.g. Leeds Building Service's neurodiversity carer group. City Development's carers support group

Carers Super Families (CSF)

- A Super Families Action Plan for 2025/26 has been developed; however, this should be reviewed in accordance with the broader results of the Disability & Carers Survey.
- Explore additional promotional opportunities with MySelfService to communicate with front line staff.
- On going promotion of Leeds Parent Forum events and the feedback from Super Families parental voice.
- Celebration event in June for 5 years of the network!

Continue to raise awareness and visibility of carers, continue to be their voice.



Introduction of the Disability and Wellbeing Network

A network focused on the support for disabled colleagues has existed for over 20 years. The Disability and Wellbeing Network (DAWN) has evolved over time and currently has just over 200 members. Overall, DAWN exists to provide support for disabled staff, those with long-term health and mental health issues, carers and allies. Our aim is centred around removing barriers for disabled colleagues in the Council. This means creating safe, trusted and at times confidential spaces where disabled colleagues can share their lived experiences with other disabled colleagues, seek support they may need in work and be their authentic selves without fear of judgement or prejudice.

DAWN runs a lively range of meetings and activities for its members, including the weekly “Cuppa and Chat”, which is a peer support group, as well as the network's strategic bi-monthly meeting, where speakers and stakeholders are invited to consult the network and share information on disability and accessibility issues affecting the city. Our meetings are well-attended, and we also have an established Teams Channel where network members can network and share information. The network also has a separate neurodiversity peer support group, which has 70 members and meets monthly.

Maisie Roberts led the network for the last year, having been the vice-chair for two years prior, and has recently stepped down. The Network also has a steering group, which meets regularly. The network does not have a Chair at present and is currently finalising plans for a new Network Chair.

Lead: Maisie Roberts and Paul Leahy

Date: 03.03.2025

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

- This year we have led a major piece of work: the Disability, Carers, and Mental Health Survey. This received over 500 responses. This comes after successive years in the Staff Survey where disabled people (and carers) have scored much lower than other protected characteristics in terms of key indicators (like career progression or sense of inclusion). The aim of the survey is to go into much more detail to understand the experiences of disabled people and carers within the workplace. We hope that with this information will lead to change in the organisation to better support disabled people's needs.
- Last year, our major focus as a network was on reasonable adjustments and highlighting the challenges network members were facing getting the right reasonable adjustments in place in work. This is still a continuing issue. However, since raising the issue, mandatory training on reasonable adjustments for managers has been introduced to upskill managers on this.
- This year, we worked with corporate communications to rebrand the network, who consulted network members (see logo above). Through this, we have introduced colours from the disability pride flag to the new logo and are continuing to work with comms to create pop-up banners, lanyards, posters and email signatures. We have also collaboratively created new hashtags for the network, which are ‘without barriers, without limits’ and ‘diverse, dynamic and determined’.
- DAWN's neurodiversity peer support group has doubled in size, since it launched last year, to 70 members. The group meets monthly and has received excellent feedback from members who welcome having a safe space in the Council to connect with other neurodivergent people. The group also organised a call with the previous Chief Executive, Tom Riordan, to raise more awareness and understanding about neurodiversity within the organisation. [The recording can be found here.](#)
- DAWN launched a Neurodiversity Guide last year, which has been well received by managers and colleagues alike, who fed back that they welcomed more information on supporting neurodivergent people. The guide was written by neurodivergent members of DAWN and has been used by Occupational Health and HR to share good practice. This year, we plan to launch a similar guide on ME and are in the final stages of publishing it.
- DAWN organised a listening session for the network during the riots and disturbances that arose last year, to keep network members up to date on key developments and to provide a space to ease anxieties and ensure safety during this stressful and difficult period.
- DAWN continues to consult on accessibility and disability issues affecting the city and this has included major construction and highways projects including the Woodhouse Lane Gateway scheme, West Yorkshire Mass Transit Scheme, Beckett Street scheme and Calverley Footbridge. We have also worked with the Council's Access Officer to feedback on the accessibility of public art works and sculptures in the city.

Introduction of the Staff Network

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

Chair: Rob Clayton

Date: 03/03/2025

Success Stories

- A **new chair** Rob Clayton assumed sole chairing of the network in October 2024 and has been developing a refreshed programme for 2025 with closer links to the Council's HR Team to develop progression and training opportunities for colleagues at all levels but more specifically at non-manager grades.
- **Stepping into Management** links have been developed in 2024/25 with the CAN Chair now attending training session for aspiring managers. CAN and the Stepping into Management Programme have similar agendas so a positive development and link up.
- **Reed Recruitment links** continue to be in development with a brief now agreed and plans in place to launch interview and recruitment training covering CV writing, interview preparation, skills matching and more.
- The network has a **growing Membership** with colleagues regularly contacting the network for support and to join the mailing list.
- Re-establishment of **quarterly network meetings** in 2024, two such session have now taken place with plans for quarterly meetings in 2025.

Priorities for 2025/26

The network is still in the process of re-establishing itself. A key element of this will be organising and running both specifically designed events and more generic and informal sessions, wider plans include:

- Involvement in the Aspiring Leaders Programme with a view to providing support to the participants with **career advice and preparation** and specific session on **decision making and political awareness**, this is now in diaries for June 2025.
- A clearer and more focussed role in trying to ensure all staff feel supported to progress. The network is now setting out the **importance of one to ones and appraisals**, being prepared and having a focussed approach to continuous professional development to achieve progression supported by line managers through established one to one and appraisal route.
- Stronger links to the **Being Your Best Manager Offer/Community** – to enable possible wider dissemination of the training offered to managers to all staff.
- **Progression Support** aimed at colleagues in other staff networks so a cross cutting aim to support colleagues with protected characteristics to progress and achieve their ambitions.
- **Rebranding and Updating** the network's online presence is a key priority for the year.

Challenges for 2025/26

There are still 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. This remains a theme, but works is ongoing to more clearly define roles within the steering group of the network.