



# **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STRATEGY**

**2022 – 2026**

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## **WEST LANCASHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION (EDI) STRATEGY 2022 – 2026**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

West Lancashire is one of 12 districts in Lancashire and has a diverse community. In 2020, the district had a population of 114,496 and is made up of a number of small towns, villages, and rural farmland.

We recognise that people who provide and use our services come from varied backgrounds and have different experiences. We value this diversity and the ways in which it contributes to the richness of life and the character of the community we serve.

The Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy 2022 to 2026, sets out our commitments and objectives for the next 4 years and will build upon what we have already accomplished and details our renewed commitment to achieve even more.

This EDI Strategy is aligned to our corporate objectives and ambitions and our vision for a fully embedded, diverse, and inclusive culture within West Lancashire.

#### **2. OUR COMMITMENT**

Our priority is to develop, commission and deliver services that will help to overcome discrimination and disadvantage and remove barriers to access and opportunities in the Borough.

We will use our position and influence to promote equality in all aspects of community life and equality and diversity underpins our overall council strategy, our policies and procedures and our corporate vision and values.

We want to create an inclusive workplace that reflects the communities we serve, where everyone feels valued and respected because of their differences.

This strategy applies to all of our functions and activities including employment, service delivery, budget setting, procurement, and regulatory functions.

#### **3. OUR EQUALITY STATEMENT**

We want every resident and visitor to West Lancashire to be treated fairly and with dignity regardless of age, sex, disability, race, belief, and sexual orientation and with respect to their marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity or gender reassignment status. We also acknowledge that in December 2016, the UK Government formally adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of anti-Semitism.

We will use our position and influence to promote equality in all aspects of community life.

Everyone that works or has a role at West Lancashire Borough Council will:

- Promote and maintain an atmosphere in which people of all backgrounds feel welcome, valued, and respected,
- Understand that equality is not about treating everyone the same but about recognising and addressing the specific needs, experience, and background of individuals,
- Treat each person as an individual and find out what their needs are rather than making assumptions,
- Be prepared to take a flexible approach, ensuring all service users can access our services,
- Be aware of the behaviours and barriers that can form discrimination and understand the negative impact these can have on service users, visitors, and staff,
- Speak out and report if they witness, become aware of or are a victim of any form of discrimination, bullying, unfair treatment or harassment,
- Not victimise, or attempt to victimise, anyone who has made complaints on discrimination or provided information on discrimination,
- Be aware of and take account of the Council's policies,

We will regular monitor and report on the progress we make in addressing discrimination and disadvantage in our Borough and this progress will be evaluated regularly by our senior managers and elected members.

#### **4. OUR VISION**

Is 'West Lancashire together; the place of choice to live, work, visit and invest'.

##### **4.1 Our Priorities are:**

##### **Create a clean and environmentally sustainable borough.**

- Build resilience to climate change and reduce our carbon footprint.
- Reduce waste production and increase reuse and recycling.
- Enhance and improve a safe, built environment.
- Preserve the natural environment, biodiversity, and landscape.

##### **Generate prosperity in our borough.**

- Attract investment, support businesses and direct wealth into the local economy and support co-operatives.
- Provide opportunities for regeneration, housing, and economic business growth.
- Identify the housing needs of the borough and work with partners to address them.
- Attract high quality job opportunities and support people into employment and training.

##### **Foster inclusive and healthy communities**

- Reduce health and wellbeing inequalities.
- Design services around residents and communities
- Support our Armed Forces and vulnerable residents.
- Provide safe, quality, and affordable homes as a social landlord.

#### **Manage a resilient, financially strong Council.**

- Maintain a balanced budget and transparent decision-making.
- Continue to improve our services and deliver value for money.
- Attract, retain, and develop an engaged, skilled, and motivated workforce including through an Employee Recognition Scheme

#### **4.2 We have a set of Employee Core behavioural standards for everyone that works or has a role at West Lancashire Borough Council**

- Putting Customers first - Understanding customers and putting customers at the heart of everything we do.
- We will Do what we say we will do when we say we will do it.
- Being Positive and Adaptable - Responding positively to change, being optimistic in finding solutions to challenges and operating with honesty and integrity.
- Taking Responsibility and Achieving Results - The ability and willingness to focus on achieving individual and organisational goals.
- Working Together - Working together across teams, services and with partners to achieve the objectives of the Council.

#### **4.3 Everyone that works or has a role at West Lancashire Borough Council is expected to:**

- Promote and maintain an atmosphere in which people of all backgrounds feel welcome, valued, and respected.
- Understand that equality is not about treating everyone the same but about recognising and addressing the specific needs, experience, and background of individuals.
- Treat each person as an individual and find out what their needs are rather than making assumptions.
- Be prepared to take a flexible approach, ensuring all service users can access our services.
- Be aware of the behaviours and barriers that can form discrimination and understand the negative impact these can have on service users, visitors, and staff.
- Speak out and report if they witness, become aware of or are a victim of any form of discrimination, bullying, unfair treatment or harassment.
- Not victimise, or attempt to victimise, anyone who has made complaints on discrimination or provided information on discrimination.
- Be aware of and take account of the Council's policies.

## **5. OUR PRINCIPLES**

### **5.1 Equality**

Equality is about ensuring a fairer society where individuals or groups of people are not treated less favourably, and where everyone can participate and have the same opportunity to fulfil their potential.

## **5.2 Diversity**

Diversity is about recognising the value of difference. It means considering and appreciating all the unique characteristics that make people who they are. This includes, but not limited to, national origins, language, race, colour, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, and family structure. Diversity also encompasses diversity of thought and life experiences.

## **5.3 Inclusion**

Inclusion is about creating and maintaining a culture where people feel welcomed and valued for who they are as an individual or group.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion are tangible and are critical to our success as a Council. They are outcomes and they are measurable. The combination of the three give greater impact and change that can be established on our EDI journey.

## **6. LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT**

As a public body, West Lancashire Borough Council is subject to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

### **6.1 The Equality Act**

Under the Equality Act 2010 we have certain duties which we must have regard for when going about our business to advance equality:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The 9 Protected characteristics identified within the Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Further information on the protected Characteristics and the current statistics for West Lancashire are detailed in Appendix 1.

### **6.2 The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)**

States we must, in the exercise of all our functions, have due regard to the following three aims:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Under the duty we must publish:

- Equality objectives at least every 4 years that are specific and measurable.
- Information on an annual basis to showing how our employees and citizens who share a protected characteristic are affected by our services and functions.

The Council also publishes information regarding the equality profile of its workforce annually which can be found on the Intranet via the link : [What our duties are - West Lancashire Borough Council \(westlancs.gov.uk\)](https://www.westlancs.gov.uk)

## 7. OTHER INEQUALITIES

Whilst not protected characteristics under the Equality Act, the Council considers the following as important issues to address equality, diversity and inclusion and further information is available in Appendix 2.

- Modern Day Slavery Act
- Socio-economic inequality
- Antisemitism
- Islamophobia
- Neurodiversity
- Human Rights
- Hate Crimes and Incidents
- Menopause
- Carers

### 7.1 Groups

We have a Lead Member with responsibility for equality within the Policy and Resources Committee.

We have established our EDI Working Group from representatives from each service area. The main duties and responsibilities of the working group members are:

- To design and develop Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity Objectives, linked the to the Corporate Priorities for the Council
- To recommend these objectives to CMT and Policy and Resources Committee for adoption by the Council.
- To promote, facilitate and monitor the delivery of the Council's equality objectives and report progress to CMT and Policy and Resources Committee on a regular basis.
- To design and develop a Corporate Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity Strategy, linked the to the corporate priorities and the EDI objectives for the Council.
- To recommend the Corporate Strategy to CMT and Policy and Resources Committee for adoption by the Council.
- To support the Council in meeting its Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)
- To promote awareness of E, D&I in local service DMT's and Team meetings
- To encourage the take up and assist in the delivery of training, support and guidance on E, D&I within their own service area.
- To assist and advise on effective communication with staff and stakeholders both corporately and locally on progress made on EDI objectives and actions.
- To undertake regular training and receive updates.
- To produce reports to CMT and Policy and Resources Committee on a regular basis, providing update on the EDIWG activities, including recommending and

requesting approval for actions.

- Chaired by the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager, the Senior Manager responsible for EDI.

## **7.2 Benchmarking and Existing Policy Support**

- We are a Disability Confident Employer, level 1 Committed, and we will use this tool to make improvements and learn from our submitting partners.
- We have been awarded the Armed Services Covenant Employers Recognition Scheme Silver Award
- We have policies aimed directly to provide support to Veterans and their families,
- We have a number of requests actioned to help people with caring responsibilities and a policy to support this.
- We have number of people with disabilities we have supported to stay in work, including some disability related redeployments,
- We have a number of people who have been able to take flexible retirement.
- We provide cost of living support.
- We operate a credit Union.
- We run regular pre-retirement advice sessions.
- We have mental Health First aiders.
- We offer counselling and other life issues support through our partnership with Zurich and the DWP Able Futures

## **7.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- We use EIAs as a policy and service improvement tool to help us to identify what we need to do to better meet our community's needs and provides us with an opportunity to consider how we can further promote equality, diversity, inclusion in everything that we do.
- The Council's approach to Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) has been integrated into the organisation's decision-making process with all proposals requiring one.

## **7.4 Learning**

- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion is covered during induction and is embedded in all training.
- We have a Series of Equality Training modules available online for all staff including a guide to reasonable adjustments, unconscious bias, and communication with deaf and hearing-impaired customers. The full suite of Equality Training available on our eLearning system, Our Learning, is detailed in Appendix 2.
- Equality training is an essential mandatory training provision, and an understanding of equality and diversity matters is addressed annually during the staff development Appraisal process.
- We provide specific Equality and Diversity online training for Councillors with links to support documentation.

## **7.5 Management Information and monitoring**

- We have employee data on equality and diversity, that enables us to look at trends and report progress.
- We recognise that equality monitoring is central to its principle of operating fairly and equitably in terms of both employment practices and service design and delivery. We need information about the characteristics of our community, staff, and service users, if we are to understand people's needs and to monitor whether or not we are meeting them.
- Regular reports will be considered by CMT and Policy and Resources Committee that show where we are in relation to progress against our equality objectives.

## **8. OUR ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE**

## **9. OBJECTIVES & HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THESE**

The following outlines our key EDI objectives that are aligned to our Corporate Priorities. A separate EDI action plan will be developed to outline the specific actions, who is responsible for each activity, the deadline for completion and the measurement of success. See Appendix 3 for Equality Objectives.

The Equality Objectives in summary are:

- To support the delivery of an improved leisure facilities, offer within the Borough, in collaboration with partner organisations, that is open and accessible to all, to encourage all citizens within the Borough, to live active and healthy lifestyles, that improves the life chances of residents and have a positive impact on the West Lancashire by promoting Health and wellbeing in the community.
- To support the continued development of the digital inclusion, offer to improve access to the Council's services across all sectors of the borough's residents, to improve the overall wellbeing of citizens of the Council. To work collaboratively to develop and deliver targeted prevention and intervention services that reduce health inequalities and increase wellbeing & physical activity.
- To encourage a diverse range of applicants for recruitment into our workforce, that reflects the population of West Lancashire.

## **10. HOW WILL WE MEASURE SUCCESS?**

### **Data**

- We will use our employee diversity data to measure our progress on increased recruitment, retention, and staff development of those from underrepresented groups.
- We will work together with Services to monitor and improve the use of equality data already collected and encourage the increase in obtaining quality data that can help with better decision making.
- We will compare our data to external sources to evidence how reflective we are of the communities we serve.

### **Feedback**



- Our People surveys will be anonymous, so it is not possible to include EDI indicators within this data capture process. However we ensure additional support is provided for completion of Our People Survey forms by facilitating drop in and added assistance sessions to support the survey roll out..
- Our customer surveys will include EDI indicators which will give a baseline measurement and better understanding of their experiences; allowing us to find out if people feel that we are making progress.

### **External Standards**

- We will build on our Disability Confident Employer status from level 1 to level 2.
- We will aim to achieve the Armed services Covenant ERS Gold Award by 2026

## **4. WHERE ARE WE NOW?**

We recognise that we are on a journey, and we have established a 4-step evaluation process to assess how successful we are with our EDI implementation:

### **11.1 Level 1**

As required by the Equalities Act 2010. Reporting of statistics and Equality documentation and policies and procedures publicly available.

#### **Achieved**

### **11.2 Level 2 - Awareness and understanding**

Leadership and management recognise and are committed to the benefits of EDI to our overall success. Data readily available and Equality Impact Assessments undertaken.

#### **Achieved**

### **11.3 Level 3 Integrated EDI**

Implementation of EDI strategies and actions across all activities to promote and support positive and inclusive behaviours in the delivery of functions and services.

#### **Working towards**

### **11.4 Level 4 Sustained EDI**

EDI forming part of our overall Council strategy and will impact on our success, with role models being visible at all levels of the organisation.

#### **Ambition to achieve.**

## **12. LINKS TO OTHER DOCUMENTS**

This strategy supports and influences other key documents such as the Equality pages on the external website, Equality in employment statement, People Strategy, Access to information, Access to translation services and on the internal intranet such as Dignity at work policy, HIV and AIDs policy, Equality Impact Assessment Guide, Working Practices on religion and belief in the workplace, gender identity and

gender reassignment, People Strategy, Access to information, Access to translation services and employee behavioural standards. Further details and links are listed in Appendix 4.

### **13. EVALUATION & REPORTING**

We will monitor and report on the progress we make in addressing discrimination and disadvantage in West Lancashire in relation to the equality objectives and this progress will be evaluated regularly by our senior managers and Elected Members. These quarterly updates will include equality data, as well as providing a general account of our progress in relation to our objectives.

This is a working document that will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to make sure it meets the needs of our customers, colleagues, and partners.