



Corporate Equality Strategy 2024-28

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Overview

Our approach to Equality and Accessibility is aligned to delivery of the County Council's Corporate Priorities:

- Delivering Better Services
- Caring for the Vulnerable
- Protecting our Environment
- Supporting Economic Growth

Underpinned by our Corporate Values: Supportive, Respectful, Innovative and Collaborative.

Our Approach and Context

The County Council has developed this strategy to underpin their clear aim to be a fair and transparent employer which is inclusive and reflective of our communities. The County Council will endeavour to provide services which are fully accessible, inclusive and delivered by people who reflect the communities we serve. We will increase peoples understanding of the role and functions of the County Council to encourage their participation. This strategy will bring together and formalise work which is already ongoing within the organisation and demonstrate our commitment to Equality, Accessibility, and Inclusion, for all who live, work, visit and prosper in Lancashire.

The Equality Strategy is designed to help drive a more consistent approach to issues which affect Services and Residents and Customers so that the good equalities, inclusion, and accessibility practice already evident in many areas can be delivered more consistently in all aspects of our work.

Alongside this strategy the County Council recognises its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 to prohibit discrimination of certain groups. These are known as the 9 protected characteristic groups namely, Age, Disability, Gender Re-assignment, Pregnancy & Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation and in situations related to employment Marriage & Civil Partnership.

The Equality Act applies to employment and access to goods, facilities, services, and public functions. As part of the Equality Act, the Public Sector Equality Duty was introduced in 2011 which placed specific responsibilities on public authorities like the County Council.

The three general aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty provide a backdrop for our Strategy. The aims are:

- To eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct which is prohibited under the Equality Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it



- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

The County Council's Equality Impact Assessment process is the leading mechanism for evidencing our compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. Ensuring that this is carried out objectively, fairly, and robustly where necessary will assist in defending legal challenges to our compliance with the Duty. This strategy also reflects new Government guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty for Local Authorities published on 18 December 2023.

According to the 2021 Census, Lancashire has a diverse population with:

- Ethnicity - 11% (135,888) of its residents identifying as being from Asian, Black or Mixed Multiple Ethnicities
- Sex - 50.9% (618,910) of the population are female and 49.1% (616,444) are male.
- Sexual Orientation - 1.4% (13,774) of the population identify as Gay or Lesbian, 1.2% (11,849) as Bisexual, 97.4% (915,745) Heterosexual
- Religion - 55% (675,521) of the population identify as Christian, 32% (389,377) as having no religion and 7% (85,174) as Muslim with other smaller percentages of other religions or beliefs
- Disability - 20% (247,070) of Lancashire residents who identified a disability as their normal day to day activities are limited a lot 11% (135,888) or a little 9% (111,182)
- 59% (728,827) of the Lancashire population is of working age (19-65 years) 0-18, 21% (259,413) and 65+ 20% (247,070).

NB. The percentages figures will fluctuate in different parts of the county and for different age groups. The numbers in brackets are for residents in Lancashire.

Our Equality Objectives:

1. Develop an inclusive workforce which reflects our communities
2. Ensure Services are inclusive and accessible
3. Enable participation and understanding of County Council activities
4. Ensure everyone's experience is a respectful and inclusive one.

Develop an inclusive workforce which reflects our communities

Whilst we have robust systems and policies in place, information from the staff survey (2023) shows that some employees don't believe they can be themselves at work, don't believe they are treated fairly or have experienced harassment, bullying or abuse from colleagues or managers in the last 12 months. We want to achieve a workforce where more staff feel they are included, can reach their potential and progress and which is more reflective of our communities of Lancashire. (LCC Staff Survey, 2023)



What will success look like?

- Everyone can see that the workforce is more reflective of the working age population and the communities of Lancashire
- All levels of the workforce reflect its demographics so everyone can see opportunities for development, career progression and role models
- Reduced levels of abuse, harassment and bullying experienced
- Everyone has relevant knowledge and understanding regarding equality and accessibility for their roles.

Ensure Services are Inclusive and Accessible

Whilst many services are delivered in accessible and inclusive ways, we are aware that these need to evolve to keep pace with changing demand, digital developments and changes within our population.

As a result of two Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman 'Findings of Fault' an action plan on delivering reasonable adjustments for disabled people has been approved and is being implemented across the organisation.

What will Success Look Like?

- "Reasonable adjustments" are embedded within Services including their anticipatory and evolving requirements
- Consistent compliance with Equality Impact Assessment procedures is evidenced and used to inform decision making for shaping and improving services
- Diverse communities are aware of and able to access services throughout Lancashire
- The Digital First strategy will evolve to be more inclusive of the diverse needs of Lancashire residents
- The buildings and venues used will be 'fit for purpose' and inclusive of the various needs of Lancashire residents, service users and employees
- Providing improved accessibility, inclusivity and affordability, using opportunities presented by the Lancashire Highways & Transport Strategy for people across Lancashire.

Enable participation and understanding of County Council activities

The County Council aims to increase participation in public life by underrepresented communities within Lancashire. To achieve this, the Council must provide information about the role of the County Council and how decisions are made. Increased understanding of what the County Council does and that we are an inclusive employer, will encourage people from underrepresented communities to apply for vacancies and increase participation.



What will success look like?

- Accessible County Council information is available to all communities
- Communities understand the recruitment process for County Council vacancies, particularly amongst under-represented groups
- Meet the Equality Act statutory requirements and ensure publication of the Equality Information and Equality Objectives
- Participation in consultations is more reflective of communities or of service users which informs decision making
- Enable residents from diverse backgrounds to find out more about the role and functions of County Councillors and potentially seek nomination.

Ensure everyone's experience is a respectful and inclusive one

The staff survey 2023 highlighted that 22% of respondents had experienced abuse, bullying or harassment from service users, their families, customers, or the public whilst carrying out their roles within the previous 12 months. Although the figures vary across services there is the potential for any employee to experience abuse, harassment or bullying at any time. There are arrangements to report and address this and information to help and support employees when these situations arise.

What will success look like?

- Employees will understand what harassment, abuse or bullying is and report it
- There will be robust arrangements in place to respond to reports of abuse, harassment or bullying by members of the public
- There will be clear messaging appropriate to the service which states that members of the public must be respectful towards County Council employees and that any harassment, bullying or abuse is unacceptable
- All employees will know that abuse, harassment or bullying of any colleagues is unacceptable and the consequences of such behaviour
- All employees will be aware of signs of hate crime, extremism, radicalisation and intolerance of any kind and how to respond appropriately
- The turnover of staff will reduce as more people chose to remain with the County Council as they believe it is a good place to work.

Conclusion

The Strategy will inform annual Delivery Plans which will be developed in Spring following publication of the annual Equality Information and Gender Pay Gap Reports. Findings from the Staff Survey and Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard Data Submissions will also contribute and link to the People Strategy.

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Useful Links

[Public Sector Equality Duty: guidance for public authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/public-sector-equality-duty)

[Lancashire Insight - Lancashire County Council](#)

<https://lancashireintranet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s218201/Report.pdf>

[Homepage | EHRC \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](https://equalityhumanrights.com/)

[Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010)

<https://intranet.ad.lancscc.net/media/19517/scwres-action-plan-report-june-2022.pdf>

<https://intranet.ad.lancscc.net/media/27119/staff-survey-results-2023.pdf>

[Census - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/)



Action	Equality Objective	Corporate Priority	Timescale	Outcome/Impact
Engage with managers to respond effectively to incidents of abuse, harassment and bullying of our employees	Develop an inclusive workforce which reflects our communities	Caring for the Vulnerable	June 2024	Consistent organisational messaging towards respectful treatment of employees
Develop a second mandatory Equality and Cohesion e-learning package which provides targeted and bespoke information for managers	Develop an inclusive workforce which reflects our communities	Delivering Better Services	Dec 2024	Production of an additional eLearning package specifically for managers to enhance understanding of equalities legislation related to their role and possible consequences
Engage with services to discuss effective and consistent use of the equality impact process	Ensure Services are Inclusive and Accessible	Delivering Better Services	Jan 2025	Consistent application of the EIA process across all services
Support Services to implement the "Action Plan on Delivering Reasonable Adjustments" to help deliver more accessible and inclusive Services	Ensure Services are Inclusive and Accessible	Delivering Better Services Caring for the Vulnerable	Ongoing	Reasonable Adjustment Action Plan implementation
Develop information accessible to all communities about the role of County Councillors and functions of the County Council	Enable participation and understanding of County Council activities	Delivering Better Services	Jan 2026	Increased knowledge and understanding of what is required to be a councillor and what the council does amongst diverse communities
Develop our provision of core information available in British Sign Language in advance of the	Enable participation and understanding of County Council activities	Delivering Better Services	Jan 2026	Increased use of BSL videos or on general website communications to the public

implementation of requirements of the BSL Act 2022		Caring for the Vulnerable		
Deliver webinars during hate crime Week campaigns and promote links to the eLearning module, H&S incident reporting and personal safety training	Ensure everyone's experience is a respectful and inclusive one	Delivering Better Services Caring for the Vulnerable	October 2024	Raised awareness for colleagues and managers of what constitutes abuse, bullying or harassment of staff/colleagues and consequences of behaviour being ignored
Reinforce corporate and service messages to customers, clients, relatives, and the public of our commitment to respectful behaviour at all times linked to hate incidents	Ensure everyone's experience is a respectful and inclusive one	Delivering Better Services Caring for the Vulnerable	September 2024	Heads of Service/managers monitor, record and respond to all reports of abusive behaviour towards staff. Data is used to review effectiveness of current practices and procedures
Analyse the Oracle health & safety data of staff reporting incidents of abusive behaviour to target interventions where required	Ensure everyone's experience is a respectful and inclusive one	Delivering Better Services Caring for the Vulnerable	December 2024	