Workforce Inclusion Strategy 2025-2027
Valuing Every Role and Voice: Building on our Foundations

1. Overview and vision

This Strategy sets out our commitment to creating a council where inclusion is embedded in every decision we take, every interaction we make and every service we run. It primarily sets out our approach to inclusion for anyone employed by Lancaster City Council.

Our work in producing this strategy has demonstrated that we have a strong foundation to achieve our vision, but we want to continue to grow and develop so that every colleague feels empowered to thrive and contribute to a workplace culture that values all roles and voices equally, from community based to office-based roles, for majority and non-majority groups, and everybody in between.

Achieving this vision contributes to fulfilling our organisational purpose: 'in partnership with our communities, creating a district where people can flourish'.

This strategy sets out our strategic aims and provides an action plan of initiatives to help us achieve them.

2. Our commitment – a message from our Leadership Team

At Lancaster City Council, inclusion means more than compliance.

We are committed to fostering an environment where everyone feels safe, heard, respected, and empowered to thrive. It's not about ticking boxes or simply meeting legal requirements - it's about creating a workplace where everyone genuinely belongs.

When inclusion is embedded in everything we do, it strengthens our organisation and leads to better outcomes for our residents, businesses, and visitors. A workforce that reflects the diversity of our communities helps us build trust, deliver our Council Plan more effectively, and ensure that everyone we serve feels represented.

In an inclusive, supportive workplace, people feel confident to speak up, collaborate, and innovate. When individuals feel valued and included, they are more engaged, their wellbeing improves, and they're able to bring their whole selves to work — performing at their best. A diverse and inclusive culture attracts talent, fuels creativity, and drives progress.

We also recognise that inclusion isn't one-size-fits-all. Everyone brings different experiences, needs, and perspectives. That's why this strategy has been co-created with people from across the council — to reflect who we are and who we want to be.

3.   What we mean by inclusion

We understand that the term inclusion is broad and can mean different things to different people. For us, we use the definition provided by the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD): it is about including people in a way that is fair for all, values everyone's differences, and empowers and enables each person to be themselves and achieve their full potential and thrive at work.

An inclusive workplace culture is one in which everyone feels that they belong, through feeling safe in being themselves, that their contribution matters, policies and practices are fair and a diverse range of people are supported to work together effectively.

The initiatives that we have identified in this strategy are positive actions to address discrimination and barriers to enable and empower:
- equal access
- equal opportunities
- equal treatment
- equal resources
- equal outcomes
- equal impact.

We recognise that inequality exists and intend to address it by identifying and removing barriers to equal access cross the employee lifecycle.

This strategy supports the Equality Act 2010, which is the UK legislation that provides protection from discrimination in the workplace for nine protected characteristics:
- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity

- race
- religious belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

We are committed to going beyond the provisions of the legislation by taking a holistic approach to inclusion; and we will take an intersectional approach (where we acknowledge that every person has a number of different and intersecting identities, including the nine characteristics, that may impact on equality of outcomes). We will also not be limited by the nine protected characteristics, understanding that factors such as physical appearance, accent, socio-economic status, etc may all contribute to a person not being able to thrive.

4.   How we developed the strategy

Working with partner organisation Inclusive Employers we have used their 6 Pillars of Inclusion to develop this strategy and action plan:

1. **Engage:** Listening to and Understanding Every Voice
2. **Equip:** Empowering Leaders and Managers with Tools for Everyday Inclusion
3. **Empower:** Creating Space for Employees to Shape Culture
4. **Embed:** Integrating Inclusion into Decision-Making
5. **Evaluate:** Measuring Progress and Refining Approaches
6. **Evolve:** Sustaining and Sharing Inclusion Excellence

The initial phase involved gathering as much data and insight into our workplace as possible. This included looking at existing data and our policies; followed by gathering insights from colleagues to determine the key issues to address, and action planning workshops with colleagues to start to co-create an action plan.

5.   Themes identified during insight gathering

The themes that were uncovered during our insight gathering phase were:
- We need to be more deliberate and targeted in our inclusion priorities;
- We need to strengthen the approach to capture and use equalities data;
- We need to distribute responsibility for inclusion more widely and deeply across the council;
- We need to equip line managers and leaders with a shared understanding of inclusion needs and the necessary skills;
- We want to encourage our organisational culture to develop so that every colleague is engaged in embedding diversity and inclusion into the day-to-day actions and behaviours of colleagues, line managers and leaders.

6.   Our priorities and how we'll achieve them

Using the themes identified above, we have developed the following priorities:

1. Improve our data and insight to build an evidence based approach to inclusion work

Purpose: we understand the importance of collecting the most appropriate data to deeply understand our people, inform decision making and building a strong evidence base. This will help us prioritise Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) interventions to meet our legal responsibilities and to move beyond compliance so that we are an inclusive organisation.

How we'll achieve it:
- Clearly define our data collection goals
- Review and improve how we collect data, including qualitative data
- Review our reporting structures to ensure governance is embedded
- Communicate with colleagues to make it clear how their data has influenced decision making

2. Support our staff networks to foster an inclusive workplace culture

Purpose: we recognise and value the work of our staff networks (including Staff Ambassadors and the Staff Wellbeing and Inclusion Group), acknowledge the complexities and mental load of this work, and commit to equipping, empowering and enabling them to fully support the delivery of this strategy and beyond.

How we'll achieve it (in full partnership with our staff networks):
- Refine and clarify the scope, roles and responsibilities of our staff networks
- Ensure training and development opportunities are available to support the work
- Review the governance arrangements between staff networks and senior leadership to ensure that inclusion is part of decision making across the council
- Review how we recognise and celebrate the work of the staff networks, including key roles such as chairs/co-chairs
- Promote the value of the work of the networks.

3. Develop inclusive leadership and line management practices

Purpose: it is crucial to equip line managers and leaders with a shared understanding of inclusion needs and the necessary skills to translate high level awareness into action.

How we'll achieve it:
- Build awareness and understanding of inclusion, inequality and differing lived experience
- Develop empathy and reflective practice skills, including coaching as a management practice
- Enhance our equality mindset through data and evidence
- Create accountability and embed inclusion in leadership practices
- Provide support to leadership and management across the employee lifecycle to embed inclusive practices.

4. **Support a further cultural shift toward greater inclusion through inclusive policy development, inclusive HR practices and inclusive communications**

Purpose: to encourage further progress on our journey towards embedding inclusion in the day-to-day ways of working, communicating and behaving, including all colleagues, line managers and leaders.

How we'll achieve it:
- Create accountability for cultural change using the data we collect
- Enhance accessibility (physical, digital and informational) for our non-office based colleagues
- Embedding inclusion into policy development and review.
- Ensure inclusive communications
- Foster inclusive HR practices.

7.   Glossary of terms used in this strategy

Term	What we mean
Equality	Treating everyone fairly and without discrimination so that they have the same access to opportunities.
Equity	Equity in the workplace refers to the fair treatment of all employees, taking into account their individual needs and circumstances. Unlike equality, which treats everyone the same, equity recognises that different people may require different resources and opportunities to achieve similar outcomes. It involves identifying and addressing systemic barriers and disparities to ensure that everyone has a fair chance to succeed. Equity aims to create a level playing field by providing tailored support and interventions to those who need them.
Diversity	Diversity is about taking account of the differences between people and groups of people, such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, etc, so that these differences are recognised, valued and respected.
Inclusion	Inclusion in the workplace refers to creating an environment where all employees feel valued, respected, and able to fully participate and contribute. It involves actively ensuring that everyone, regardless of their background or personal characteristics, has equal access to opportunities and resources. Inclusion goes beyond merely acknowledging

	diversity; it requires proactive measures to address and remove barriers to participation and progression, fostering a culture where differences are celebrated and leveraged for the benefit of the organisation.
Intersectionality	We understand that people have different aspects to their identity, such as race, gender, religion, etc. Intersectionality refers to how those different identities shape the experiences of each individual, whether that be power or privilege, etc.

Valuing Every Role and Voice Action Plan

Priority 1: Improve Our Data and Insight to Build an Evidence-Based Approach to EDI			
Objective	**Actions**	**Measures of success**	**Priority**
Review System Capabilities	Assess HR system capabilities for updating and maintaining protected characteristic data.	Full understanding of system capabilities and gaps. Plan to address gaps.	HIGH
Integrate Census Data	Collect relevant Census data. Investigate how this can be added to the Annual EDI Workforce Data dashboard. Raise awareness for those using the dashboard so they understand the purpose of it and how to use it.	Census data added to the Annual EDI Dashboard and used for enhanced demographic insight. Awareness of workforce data dashboard.	MEDIUM
Incorporate EDI Data into Employee Lifecycle	Begin integrating protected characteristic information into all stages of the employee lifecycle.	Data is being collected and is representative. EDI data available and visible for recruitment, absence, learning and development, offboarding,	MEDIUM

	Raise awareness to colleagues why we are collecting this what we are doing with it.	performance management and HR cases.	
Conduct Staff Surveys	Hold focus groups with staff networks to gather deeper insights from the staff survey and then look to model this practice in further HR activity. Include EDI data collection in future surveys.	Focus groups well attended. Insight collected and integrated into specific HR / people processes. Loop closed with feedback on progress shared with the staff network groups.	HIGH

Priority 2: Support Our Inclusion Allies to Foster an Inclusive Workplace Culture			
Objective	**Actions**	**Measures of success**	**Priority**
Strengthen feedback mechanisms	Define the support framework for Staff Networks to empower their role in driving organisational change – including the potential for an EDI "Board".	Clear framework and understanding of allyship. EDI ingrained into governance processes.	HIGH
Establish Organisational Objectives	Integrate organisational-wide objectives for employees engaged in inclusion work,	Clear SMART objectives.	MEDIUM

	recognising their contributions formally.	Clear reward and recognition process. Success celebrated at relevant and appropriate places.	
Assess Digital Tools	Ensure the rollout of Microsoft 365 licenses supports inclusive practices and enhances accessibility for all employees.	Usage of licenses by front line workers	HIGH
Development of learning plans for staff networks	Determine skills to develop and put learning plans in place	Each staff network member has a learning plan	MEDIUM
Monitor and evaluate progress	Develop a system to report on issues raised and actions taken Conduct an annual review to ensure staff networks feel that they are seen and heard	Reporting system in place and reviewed Annual review in place, actions plans in place	MEDIUM

Priority 3: Develop Inclusive Leadership and Line Management Practices			
Objective	**Actions**	**Measures of success**	**Priority**
Set Inclusion-Related KPIs to create accountability across the organisation	In liaison with the Performance Manager, determine the feasibility of establishing KPIs related to inclusion for leadership and management evaluation.	Inclusion KPIs embedded into leaders and managers performance management. All leaders and managers taking responsibility and accountability	MEDIUM

		for the ongoing development of an inclusive workplace culture.	
Line managers are equipped with the necessary skills to support an inclusive workplace culture	Build a suite of training to improve line manager awareness and understanding of inclusion Introduce coaching programmes Invite staff networks to share lived experiences where they feel comfortable in doing so Share data analyses to encourage a shared understanding of inclusion progress	Completion rates of courses Managers report that they feel confident in their understanding of how to support an inclusive culture Managers report that they understand the data	LOW

Priority 4: Drive a Cultural Shift Toward Greater Inclusion Through Policy, HR Practices, and Communications

Objective	Actions	Measures of success	Priority
Celebrate Well-being and Inclusion:	Collaborate with the Communications team to develop a campaign celebrating well-being, inclusion, and the achievements of the Staff Networks.	Comms plan to celebrate and raise awareness of EDI, including an annual review. Increased visibility of Staff Networks.	MEDIUM

		Active involvement in National Inclusion Weeks.	
Accessibility Review for Frontline Workers:	Partner with Marketplace & I to conduct an accessibility review, ensuring frontline workers have necessary support.	Accessibility review completed. SMART plan to address findings and gaps. Increased engagement from front line workers.	HIGH
Enhance Website Accessibility:	Work with the Communications team on a new website design to address and improve accessibility issues.	TBC	MEDIUM
Promote Lived Experience Awareness:	Utilise a suite of e-learning resources to raise awareness of diverse lived experiences, supplemented by group discussions. Investigate the potential of introducing Human Libraries as a tool for sharing personal stories and experiences.	Visible and easy to access inclusion e-learning. Good engagement with the e-learning options. Lauch of Human Libraries. Regular communications (including blogs etc) raising awareness of different lived experiences of colleagues and residents.	LOW

Foster inclusive HR practices	Continue with our work to improve inclusive recruitment practices	Deliver Recruitment Strategy objectives	MEDIUM
	Continue to develop toolkits for managers via our Enabled Manager programme	Toolkits developed	
		Policies continue to be reviewed	
	Ensure policies and training are updated to reflect legal protections, eg Worker Protection Act	Support available is used	
	Promote availability of support such as software to help with Dyslexia		