

Westmorland and Furness Council Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Annual Report

March 2024 - March 2025

Version 0.1.2

Date issued: 22/04/2025

Contents

Contents	2
Foreword	3
Introduction.....	4
Definitions	4
Scope.....	4
Equality objectives	5
Public Sector Equality Duty.....	5
EDI Action Plan.....	7
Equality objectives and workstreams	7
Progress made	9
Equality objective 1	9
Highlights of some of the progress we have made in this area:	9
Equality objective 2	9
Highlights of some of the progress we have made in this area:	10
Equality objective 3	11
Highlights of some of the progress we have made in this area:	11
Case studies	12
Assistant Chief Executive Directorate	12
Enabler Services Directorate	14
Resources Directorate	16
Thriving Communities Directorate	17
Thriving Places Directorate	20
Adult Social Care Directorate	22
Children's Services Directorate	23
Changes to our area	25
Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act (2010):	25
Additional Characteristics for Westmorland and Furness:.....	30
Looking ahead	33
Phase 2 - beyond the current action plan.....	34
Closing comments	35

Foreword

We published our first position statement on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), in March last year, which included the first set of equality objectives for the Council, as well a two year EDI Action Plan, which outlined the areas that we would work on to achieving our objectives.

Now that we are at the end of the first year of our work on the EDI Action Plan, we are very pleased to present this update report which outlines the progress we have made so far.

The report includes detail on the actions we have taken under each of the workstreams in the Action Plan. We bring these actions to life in more detail through case studies across each of our directorate areas, including introducing a new EDI learning platform for colleagues at the council, better embedding EDI in our commissioning and procurement processes, and making important accessibility improvements in our housing portfolio and car parks, through to direct changes in the work of the Council as a result of feedback from Poverty Truth Commissions, and a fantastic piece of work to recycle and reuse bulky waste items to divert them away from landfill whilst supporting those with learning disabilities.

As a public authority, Westmorland and Furness Council is subject to the public sector equality duty set out in the Equality Act 2010, but this work for us is about going beyond statutory requirements, EDI is fundamental to us as an organisation.

Our aim is to deliver best practice in how we consider EDI in all that the council does, whether in relation to individual customers, communities or our own workforce and councillors.

We have made great progress in the first twelve months of the Action Plan, and we are looking forward to achieving even more in the second year of the current plan from April 2025-March 2026.

When the current Action Plan comes to an end in March 2026, we will then move into Phase 2 of our EDI work at the council. We will start to map out these plans throughout 2025, ensuring that we continue to build attention to EDI in everything we do to make Westmorland and Furness a great place to Live, Work, and Thrive.

Alison Hatcher

Assistant Chief Executive, and Chair of the W&F Corporate EDI Action Group

Councillor Helen Chaffey

Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Organisational Culture and Communications

Introduction

In March 2024, Westmorland and Furness Council released our first Statement on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)¹.

This Statement included the first set of Equality Objectives for the Council, as well a two year Action Plan, outlining the workstreams that will support us to achieve these objectives.

Now at the end of the first 12 months from the release of the Statement, Objectives, and Action Plan, in this report we outline the progress we have made in our first year.

As a reminder, we have outlined as a reminder below what we mean by Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, as well as the characteristics within the scope of our EDI focus.

Definitions

We use the following definitions of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:

- **Equity** - means that, in some circumstances, people need to be treated differently in order to provide meaningful equality of opportunity.
- **Diversity** - recognising, and celebrating, that people have different characteristics, backgrounds, attributes, cultures and experience.
- **Inclusion** - actively ensuring that everyone is included, welcomed, represented and reflected, in our services, council and community.

Scope

We have agreed that the following groups and characteristics are within scope of the EDI work the council undertakes.

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act (2010):

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage/civil partnership
- Maternity/pregnancy
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

¹ [Our equality objectives, EDI statement and action plan | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)

In addition to the protected characteristics above, we also recognise these characteristics as equally important in our focus:

- Armed forces families
- People who are care experienced (having experience of the care system)
- Rurality
- Socio-economic inequality

We recognise that there are other groups in Westmorland and Furness who are also vulnerable and / or experience barriers to enjoying the same opportunities as others, and will strive to address this in our work, too.

Equality objectives

The equality objectives we agreed are outlined below:

- **Equality objective 1:** Establish and embed structures and processes that help to ensure an EDI focused approach at all levels of the organisation.
- **Equality objective 2:** Enhance our understanding of our customers and communities, and provide services that reflect the needs of, and are accessible to all.
- **Equality objective 3:** Strengthen knowledge of our workforce and their experiences in the organisation in order to enable a diverse workforce in which everyone can progress.

Our simple ambition is to reduce inequalities and discrimination within Westmorland and Furness. We want to be a council that understands and takes account of the varying needs and experiences of the different groups among our community, working hard to ensure all our residents, staff and members are included, supported, and celebrated for who they are.

Public Sector Equality Duty

As a public authority, the council is bound by the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the Equality Act (2010), which requires us to have due regard to the following general duties:

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

Our EDI Objectives, Public Statement and Action Plan, all ensure that we are compliant with the general duties of the PSED outline above.

We are also under specific duties that require us to:

- Set one or more equality objectives at least every four years
- Provide information on the organisation's compliance with the general duty every year, and
- Publish specified information on the organisation's gender pay gap data every year.

By setting our Equality Objectives and publishing an annual report on our progress towards achieving them, as well as annually publishing data on the organisation's gender pay gap, we are ensuring that we are compliant with the specific duties under the PSED.

All of this information can be found on the Westmorland and Furness Council website².

² [Equity, diversity and inclusion | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)

EDI Action Plan

In this section you can remind yourself of the Action Plan workstreams and read about the progress we have made towards achieving them.

Equality objectives and workstreams

We used the Local Government Association's Equality Framework for Local Government³ to understand and map out the work we need to undertake to strengthen our approach to EDI.

Our EDI action plan is informed by the four modules below, and pulls together existing planned work and new activity into a single workstream that will help us progress through the framework:

- Understanding and working with our communities.
- Leadership and political commitment
- Responsive services and customer care
- Diverse and engaged workforce

Our three equality objectives for the initial period 2024-2026, and linked action plan with ten workstreams and selected activities, are outlined below⁴:

Equality objective 1: Establish and embed structures and processes that help to ensure an EDI focused approach at all levels of the organisation.

- Workstream 1: Establish and embed structures and processes that help to ensure an EDI focused approach at all levels of the organisation.

Equality objective 2: Enhance our understanding of our customers and communities, and provide services that reflect the needs of, and are accessible to all.

- Workstream 2: Improve customer data collection and analysis across the organisation and develop a suite of data tools to support EDI work.
- Workstream 3: Ensure council communications and engagement approaches reinforce and support EDI focus across W&F
- Workstream 4: Ensure external partner input in the ongoing development of W&F EDI workstream

³ [Equality Framework for Local Government | Local Government Association](#)

⁴ [Our equality objectives, EDI statement and action plan | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)

- Workstream 5: Strengthen cross-council approaches to understanding, engaging with and representing our communities
- Workstream 6: Ensure our services take account of the needs and experiences of all members of our community and are accessible to all.

Equality objective 3: Strengthen knowledge of our workforce and their experiences in the organisation in order to enable a diverse workforce in which everyone can progress.

- Workstream 7: Review and improve council EDI data and monitoring to understand council trends and gaps
- Workstream 8: Review approach to recruitment to embed EDI into process
- Workstream 9: Design and launch staff and member support offers on EDI
- Workstream 10: Ensure that all W&F HROD policies and processes reflect EDI issues

Progress made

In this section we have outlined the actions achieved in the first 12 months of our EDI Action Plan.

We have outlined progress made against each of the ten individual workstreams, under each of the three equality objectives.

Equality objective 1: Establish and embed structures and processes that help to ensure an EDI focused approach at all levels of the organisation.

Workstream 1: Establish and embed structures and processes that help to ensure an EDI focused approach at all levels of the organisation.

Highlights of some of the progress we have made in this area:

- CMT EDI champion in place, Alison Hatcher – Assistant CEO, who also chairs the Corporate EDI Action Group.
- Cabinet Portfolio lead for EDI, Cllr Helen Chaffey - Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Organisational Culture and Communications.
- Corporate EDI Advisor appointed to lead this role at the Council, Jamie Hooper, who joined the organisation in August 2024.
- Established a Corporate EDI Action Group to shape the corporate approach to EDI; the group meets quarterly and includes representation from every directorate.
- Established EDI Action Groups in each of the seven directorates at the Council; each of these groups are now working on their own individual action plans to sit under the Corporate EDI Action Plan.
- Overhauled the Equality Impact Assessment process at the Council, to increase the number and quality of equality impact assessments undertaken by staff – you can read more about this in the case study section later in this report.
- The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee have scrutinised progress against the Corporate EDI Action Plan annually since 2024.

Equality objective 2: Enhance our understanding of our customers and communities, and provide services that reflect the needs of, and are accessible to all.

Workstream 2: Improve customer data collection and analysis across the organisation and develop a suite of data tools to support EDI work.

Workstream 3: Ensure council communications and engagement approaches reinforce and support EDI focus across W&F.

Workstream 4: Ensure external partner input into the ongoing development of W&F EDI workstream.

Workstream 5: Strengthen cross-council approaches to understanding, engaging with and representing our communities.

Workstream 6: Ensure our services take account of the needs and experiences of all members of our community and are accessible to all.

Highlights of some of the progress we have made in this area:

- Directorate EDI Action Groups are undertaking mapping exercises to assess any gaps in EDI data and are identifying steps to address this as part of their EDI action planning.
- Published privacy notice on Council website in relation to data collection⁵
- Established the Cumbria Observatory with specific data on EDI across the Westmorland and Furness population⁶
- Published our Public Statement on the Council's approach to EDI⁷
- Relaunched the Westmorland and Furness Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Partnership Network. This group will better ensure external partner input into the ongoing development of W&F EDI workstream.
- Continued to work closely with team developing W&F Community Power offer to ensure that the groups in the scope of our EDI work are central to these opportunities across the Council.
- Working on supporting a cross organisational approach to how W&F seeks the lived experience of its community and builds this into service development processes.
- By overhauling the Equality Impact Assessment process, we are also ensuring that our corporate EDI objectives are fully reflected in our corporate service planning processes.
- We have been working with key services internally to develop a consistent organisational approach to the accessibility of council documents and information, especially the website – you can read more about this in the case study section later in this report.
- We have been working on updating our translation and interpretation service, developing further guidance and the promotion of the service internally, to better support accessible communication and engagement with community members.
- We have been developing proposals for a programme of capital works to improve accessibility of the council estate of buildings – you can read more about this in the case study section later in this report.

⁵ [Privacy notice | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)

⁶ [Cumbria Observatory – EDI](#)

⁷ [Our equality objectives, EDI statement and action plan | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)

- We have been considering how equalities can be further reflected in commissioning and procurement processes and contract monitoring, particularly how engagement with both internal and external partners can help to shape service redesign.

Equality objective 3: Strengthen knowledge of our workforce and their experiences in the organisation in order to enable a diverse workforce in which everyone can progress.

Workstream 7: Review and improve council EDI data and monitoring to understand workforce trends and gaps.

Workstream 8: Review approach to recruitment to embed EDI into process.

Workstream 9: Design and launch staff and member support offer on EDI.

Workstream 10: Ensure that all W&F HROD policies and processes reflect EDI issues.

Highlights of some of the progress we have made in this area:

- We have undertaken a data collection exercise to establish gaps in our workforce EDI data.
- We are developing an internal data collection project for staff on EDI areas to improve our data monitoring, and to enable public reporting on our workforce data.
- The HR team has been driving forward significant EDI initiatives to create a more inclusive and supportive workplace, including working to develop and refine key policies that support employees at all stages of their careers. – you can read more about this in the case study section later in this report.
- In 2024 we achieved Disability Confident Leader status, a significant milestone in our commitment to supporting employees with disabilities and long-term health conditions.
- Implemented processes for regular analysis of pay/progress of different groups as well as gender, and we have published our Gender Pay Gap report⁸.
- Launched a new EDI Learning Hub for all Westmorland and Furness Council staff members to access, ensuring that colleagues have access to further information, resources, training, and links to useful organisations across each of the protected and additional characteristics identified in the scope of the Council's EDI work.
- Launched a member resource pack on EDI for W&F Councillors, which includes local data, W&F guidance, and signposting to useful resources.
- Established a Member's EDI Special Interest Group to better engage W&F Councillors in our EDI work, and to support their further learning and education too.

⁸ [Our gender pay gap and workforce data | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)

Case studies

Here we have highlighted some case study examples from each of our directorates about how they are bringing their work on EDI to life.

Assistant Chief Executive Directorate

Teams in this directorate:

- Programme Management Office
- Communications
- Strategy, Data, and Insight
- Joint Emergency Management and Resilience
- Team Barrow

Case study:

This is the directorate where our EDI work sits corporately, and so we've been doing a lot of work supporting the organisation to better embed EDI across everything it does.

Two major improvements we have made in this area include an overhaul of our Equality Impact Assessment process, and the launch of our new EDI Learning Hub.

Equality impact assessments (EIAs) are one of the tools used by public bodies to demonstrate how they are meeting their legal duty to show due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty. An EIA helps test the activities of the Council by identifying any potential unmet needs and making sure that we do not negatively impact on any of the protected characteristic or additional characteristic groups identified by the Council.

Where potentially negative impacts on certain groups are identified, the Council will consider what actions it can put in place to address these disadvantages, or whether plans should be amended to remove the disadvantage.

We have now overhauled the process by which we complete, process, and manage EIAs, to increase both the volume and the quality of impact assessments being completed. We have moved the assessment template online to make the completion process easier, we have published additional guidance and training on how to complete EIAs along with a suite of supportive information on the kinds of impacts to consider, and we have linked EIAs to a central dashboard to be able to monitor all assessments being completed across the organisation.

This is an important change towards effectively embedding EDI in the organisation, making sure that we provide the best possible service and opportunities for all service users of Westmorland and Furness Council.

Case study:

We have also launched a new EDI Learning Hub for all Westmorland and Furness Council staff members to access.

The EDI Learning Hub is our new central learning space for all things EDI. It includes a wealth of information around EDI generally, but it is also broken down by each protected characteristic and additional characteristic group identified by the Council, ensuring that colleagues have access to further information, resources, training, and links to useful organisations across each of these areas. We have built this new learning hub to support Council staff members to be more informed and educated around the needs of each of these groups.

The learning hub also supports the other training and education we offer to staff at the Council, including a mandatory Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging eLearning module that all new colleagues must complete on arrival, and other bitesize learning modules on areas like unconscious bias, psychological safety, and having difficult conversations in the workplace.

Enabler Services Directorate

Teams in this directorate:

- Legal services
- ICT
- Human Resources and Organisational Development
- Customer and Digital

Case study:

Over the past year, the HR team has been driving forward significant EDI initiatives to create a more inclusive and supportive workplace. The HR team has been actively improving our recruitment processes to ensure they are accessible, inclusive, and supportive of diverse talent. We have enhanced job descriptions to improve accessibility, alongside creating guidance to help managers develop inclusive role profiles.

As part of our commitment to supporting underrepresented groups, we have engaged with charities and specialist agencies to promote positive action and targeted recruitment, helping to attract a more diverse workforce. A key change to our Guaranteed Interview Scheme now ensures all armed forces veterans and personnel are eligible, not just those for whom the armed forces were their last employer.

We are proud to have achieved Disability Confident Leader status, a significant milestone in our commitment to supporting employees with disabilities and long-term health conditions. Additionally, we have signed up to other accreditations, including the Care Leaver Employer Charter and Covenant, reinforcing our dedication to creating an inclusive and supportive work environment. These accreditations align with our broader EDI strategy, and we are actively exploring further partnerships to continue strengthening our commitment to inclusion.

Alongside these initiatives, we have been working to develop and refine key policies that support employees at all stages of their careers. A new EDI policy has been drafted to formalise our commitments, while an updated Reservist policy—which now includes Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAV) - will soon be released. Our upcoming Life Events policy will provide additional support for employees navigating significant personal changes. We are also finalising updated guidance on reasonable adjustments, along with enhancements to the employee passport, ensuring colleagues receive the support they need in the workplace.

Employee wellbeing and engagement remain a priority, and we have developed an EDI and Wellbeing communications plan to promote and celebrate key awareness dates, fostering a more inclusive workplace culture. A review of online content accessibility is also in progress to ensure our materials are fully inclusive and engaging for all employees.

Case study:

Our Digital team have played a key role in ensuring that accessibility is at the forefront of our digital channels. Joint training through AbilityNet has been completed with the Web Development Team and colleagues in Communications on website accessibility and an elearning module is in place for making documents accessible for the website. Our Organisational Development team are also undertaking online learning sessions on Accessibility of Documents that staff can book onto, these are very popular and have received great feedback.

Case study:

Our Customer Charter was approved at Cabinet at the end of 2024 and our Customer Experience Manager worked with the Corporate Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Adviser on ensuring that EDI was at the heart of this. This document has now been translated into 9 different languages and are available on request from Customer Services.

Our Customer Services teams are also ensuring that EDI is fundamental in the current and future work. One example of this is attending a session with Adult Social Care on lived experience to hear from people in our community about their challenges and how we could do things differently in support. It was a very powerful session, hearing directly from people who used our Services.

Among the discussion, the team received feedback from residents in our community with hearing impairments who find it very difficult to contact us without using a representative to talk on their behalf. As a result, we are looking at providing chat bot functionality in the new Customer Relationship Management system to give customers choice and enable everyone to communicate directly with us in the future.

Case study:

As part of the customer improvement work in Barrow and Kendal we will be providing space for residents/customers to meet with an officer in a setting that is accessible. Our interview rooms currently do not allow for easy access for wheelchair users or families with prams, so this is being taken into account and addressed as part of the work.

Trauma Informed Practice Training is being arranged for our Customer Advisors to ensure that they are aware of the impact trauma can have on individuals and that challenges this can present. We hope that this will support a better understanding for our officers and an improved experience for our customers.

Resources Directorate

Teams in this directorate:

- Finance
- Commissioning and Procurement
- Corporate Assets, Fleet and Capital Programme

Case study:

The Commissioning and Procurement team has been working closely with the Corporate EDI Advisor to look at better embedding EDI in the commissioning and procurement processes at the Council. This includes reviewing when Equality Impact Assessments are completed, what EDI elements are included in service specifications, and ensuring the team is aligned consistently with the EDI action plans across all other directorates.

The Commissioning and Procurement team are also taking a proportionate approach to bring EDI into engagement work with stakeholders. Engagement with both internal and external partners begins early in the process to shape service redesign. We recognise that this has to be a proportionate approach and is decided on a case by case basis depending on the significance of the contract and the degree of transformation needed.

One example of this work is in the review of the Council's translation and interpretation service. The commissioning team sought feedback from different community groups who use the service in order to make improvements moving forwards, including refugees and asylum seekers, users of our Adult Social Care and Children's Services, and groups in Kendal and Barrow from the Cumbria Deaf Association. Feedback from these groups influenced the service specification of the new service, ensuring that we can deliver a new service that continues to be fit for purpose.

Case study:

Our Corporate Assets, Fleet and Capital Programme have also been reviewing how we can make vital changes needed to ensure the accessibility of our Council buildings across Westmorland and Furness, both for staff members and for the community.

We have previously conducted accessibility audits across Cumbria County Council buildings, but we have now commissioned a new piece of work to audit the accessibility of the remaining buildings in our entire estate.

Once we have compiled the overall picture from these reports, we will begin work to making improvements across the portfolio.

Thriving Communities Directorate

Teams in this directorate:

- Public Health
- Safe and Strong Communities
- Community Infrastructure
- Housing

Case study:

The Housing Service carry out EDI monitoring to truly understand their customers and tailor their services to the information received.

Our 'Knowing our Customers to Improve our Services' form was implemented as an equality monitoring program, which aimed to ensure that all our tenants, including the elderly and those with disabilities, people with visual impairment or hearing difficulties, received fair, respectful and personalised assistance by our Officers and Contractors whether that be when visits were made to their home by Housing Officers or when our Contractors and Caretaking Services attend to carry out repairs.

One of the questions we ask is, 'If any of the following would improve the service we offer please indicate':

- Time to answer the door/telephone.
- Caller to Knock Loudly and wait.
- Help needed with reading/writing.
- Support or help required.

A common challenge faced by the Housing Service is to ensure as a priority all our tenants are adequately supported when for example, our Contractors need to access their homes for maintenance or repairs. Some of our tenants, especially those with mobility issues, may struggle to answer the door quickly and our Contractors may unintentionally overlook tenants, leading to missed appointments or tenants feeling disappointed their issues are not resolved effectively and efficiently in line with our repair priorities.

The 'Knowing our Customers to Improve Services' form was implemented to support vulnerable tenants. The 'Knock Loud and Wait' approach was to give tenants ample time to answer the door, this simple method has allowed for continuous improvement from a customer service perspective and also has significantly reduced missed call outs by our contractors reducing call out fees and staff resource to re-issue repair logs.

In partnership with the British Deaf Association (BDA) we have also installed flashing Light bulbs linked to doorbells to assist tenants with hearing difficulties. Another example is providing our Housing Matters Magazine in large print to residents with visual impairments or translation of documents e.g. tenancy agreements into tenants first language to ensure equality and inclusivity for all tenants and improve communication.

We work closely with our Contractors and staff to provide training to really understand the needs of our tenants truly putting residents at the heart of our services and in line with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Consumer Standards.

Case study:

South Lakeland Poverty Truth Commission (SLPTC) took place between September 2022 and December 2024 with the aim of understanding the impact of poverty locally and the services and systems around it.

The dispersed nature of poverty across South Lakeland means that it tends to remain obscured by the relative wealth which exists in South Lakeland - this is due to a combination of lack of digital connectivity, poor access to transport and the stigma of poverty in small rural communities.

Recruitment of “community commissioners” took place through facilitators reaching out to individuals located via groups, networks and organisations linked to issues such as food, farming, faith, health, housing and other support services. Motivations ranged from wanting to share their experiences with wider service providers directly, to gaining more insight into poverty and services designed to respond to this.

By the end of SLPTC, Community Commissioners had increased their skills and confidence to share their lived experience and speak about poverty and recognise their power to influence wider service providers.

Proactively going out to communities and discussing in depth their challenges and life experiences resulted in a richer understanding of the issues and led to:

- Input into Westmorland and Furness Council (W&FC) new strategies including: Customer Services, Customer Charter, Community Hubs and the Poverty alleviation plan.
- Cumbria Development Education Centre (CDEC) worked with commissioners to finalise a ‘knowledge bank’ of resources and materials to deliver training with council and Cumbria CVS staff, and to share on W&FC’s new ‘Equality, Diversity & Inclusion’ platform.
- SLPTC was able to identify priorities and steps towards solutions through their four working groups – Mental Health, Person centred services, Community hubs and Domestic abuse.
- The final SLPTC public event was attended by more than 70 guests in addition to the commissioners, coordinator and facilitators.

Case study:

The Westmorland and Furness Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy sets out a 10-year blueprint to describe how local organisations will work together to meet the current and future health needs of everyone living in Westmorland and Furness. It describes the shared

vision, ambitions and objectives to improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities.

The strategy is developed through a detailed understanding of the local population and their assets and needs. National and local data provides essential insight into outcomes for the population and community and stakeholder engagement helps us to understand the experience of living in Westmorland and Furness.

Reducing inequalities is a cross cutting objective of the Strategy. The local and national data was analysed to understand the needs of communities considering protected characteristics and health inclusion groups. This analysis highlighted that the needs of the local population varied by age, sex, deprivation and existing disabilities such as severe mental illness and learning disabilities.

The strategy's action plan includes needs assessments to consider the needs of groups with protected characteristics, namely veterans and vulnerable children such as those who are cared for and care experienced. These assessments will inform future activity aimed to reduce health inequalities for these groups. The plan also includes actions to improve service data collection of protected characteristics and health inclusion groups, and the need to utilise this data to undertake health equity audits to ensure that local services are responding to the specific needs of sub-populations.

A simple survey based on two questions was shared to understand experiences of living in Westmorland and Furness, particularly in relation to staying healthy and well. A full set of demographic data based on the census was collected. Of the over 700 responses received, the proportion of people responding with protected characteristics, including disability, was similar to the proportion living in our communities. Collecting the full demographic data enables further details of the needs of the local population to be understood and informs actions to reduce health inequalities.

Thriving Places Directorate

Teams in this directorate:

- Climate and Natural Environment
- Inclusive and Green Growth
- Sustainable Transport and Highways
- Waste and Environmental Services

Case study:

The Sustainable Transport team have been working to make EDI an early consideration in our activities, projects, and policy development. We have built it into our Service Plan development process, which we do as a team exercise. This is to reinforce our commitment to early consideration.

We have identified two Accessibility Champions at Manager level, and they help bring a 'check and challenge' to our work.

Where possible we are building in EDI consideration to our projects and policy e.g. one of the key activities of the Parking Review is to look at the service through an EDI lens to identify areas of improvement.

One example of this work is a project to upgrade ticket machines at Westmorland Shopping Centre Car Park. We have had extensive discussions about the need to ensure the machines are accessible, and our requirements have been tailored to support inclusivity. In practice this means that machines will offer cash and cashless payments, and these options will be available on all levels. The car park will also retain staff support for car park users.

Case study:

Another example is the work the Sustainable Transport team have been developing to roll out accessible Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points across Westmorland and Furness.

By 2035, 2.7 million disabled drivers in the UK will rely on public Electric Vehicle Charge Points (EVCPs) due to limited private parking. Motability Scheme vehicles will comprise a significant share of EV users by 2030, as Zero Emission Vehicle sales rise with government mandates.

EVCPs are just one part of the wider built environment and must not create an additional and unnecessary obstruction for existing users of our roads and pavements. Careful site selection and placement can help mitigate the overall impact of this new street furniture, and consideration of the walking / wheeling distance from the EVCP to seating, accessible toilets, car park exits or pathways to the street can make a meaningful difference.

On a technical level, we will use the WFC procurement process to mandate that new EVCP hardware is compliant with PAS 1899:2022 (Clause 5), with accompanying software and apps to be compliant with, or demonstrably working towards, PAS 1899:2022 (Clause 8).

Each EVCP location will bring its own opportunities and challenges, including the availability of electrical grid connection, but we will work with the Charge Point Operator (CPO) and our communities of place and experience to improve outcomes at any given site.

Case study:

Our Waste and Environmental Services team have also been considering EDI in their work.

The Assisted Collection Service is available for all residents across Westmorland & Furness who can't take their waste/recycling to the collection point due to ill health, infirmity, or disability. Householders can request an assisted collection, and there are no checks necessary. This can be on a temporary or permanent basis, depending on individual circumstances. The collection can also be arranged on behalf of someone else.

The assisted collection is part of the normal service available to all householders. The only requirement of the householder is that their bins are positioned in a safe and visual position for the crews to collect, empty and return.

An assisted collection won't be available if there are any adults over the age of 18 living at your address that can assist with putting the bins out.

Householders can apply for an assisted collection through the website

<https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-street-cleaning/bin-collections/request-assisted-bin-collection>

Case study:

In the South Lakeland area, the Bulky Waste Collection, is partnered with the organisation Right 2 Work. The Furniture Warehouse is part of the Right 2 Work Group and is a Community Interest Company (CIC) based in Kendal.

Once a householder has paid for the collection, Right 2 Work will contact residents who have requested a bulky waste collection to arrange collection of the items.

Householders are asked to leave items outside their property on the day of collection, but if they are unable to move the item outside, Right 2 Work will go into the house to collect the item. This has to be stated and arranged when booking a collection.

All items are assessed to see if they can be re-sold on their online shop or stripped down to separate the materials for recycling.

Since 2011, Right 2 Work have been collecting and recycling unwanted furniture from residents throughout South Lakeland. They recycle, reuse and direct waste away from landfill. Their mission is not only to sell second-hand furniture but also support the community by helping individuals with learning disabilities. The model enables benefits to customers and enhances the lives of individuals that are supported through Right 2 Work.

Adult Social Care Directorate

Teams in this directorate:

- Operations
- Care Services
- Quality, Resources and Transformation

Case study:

The Adult Social Care EDI Action Group is currently concentrating on improving our data recording. We have developed an EDI Dashboard, which collates gaps in the gathering of EDI data within our Integrated Adults System (IAS), that we use for recording our customer's social care needs. This is monitored monthly at the Directorate Management Team performance review meeting. Over the last 12 months, we have seen an increase of 15% in recording across all protected characteristics, and 32% in nationality.

The work to improve this data quality is seen as a first step; this will allow us to accurately identify inequalities experienced by our population, and subsequently take targeted steps to mitigate/reduce them.

Phase 2 of this work is to ensure that we are taking practical steps to improve access to Adult Social Care for groups who are marginalised. While accurately targeted actions rely on an improved data position, initial work can take place to ensure that Adult Social Care colleagues, as well as colleagues in the wider council, are considering the impact of protected characteristics or additional characteristic groups identified by the Council on individuals' ability to engage with/access services.

Case study:

As well as improving the data we have for our service users, the Adult Social Care team have also been developing a plan to increase and improve the data we have in place for staff members too. This piece of work will ensure that we are better able to identify where we need to make improvements in workforce diversity, as well as to support colleagues in the best way possible to help them thrive at work.

We have also been making improvements around training too. In addition to the Corporate EDI training, which is mandatory for all staff, we also provide training from a Social Work and Occupational Therapy perspective on LGBTQ+ and Neurodiversity, which is designed to promote inclusive practice and reduce barriers experienced by members of these groups.

Children's Services Directorate

Teams in this directorate:

- Education and Inclusion
- Children and Families
- Quality, Resources and Transformation

Case study:

In March, the Children's Services Management Team hosted three in-person events in Barrow, Penrith and Kendal for all directorate staff focussed on the theme of EDI, both within our workforce and outward-facing with our children, families, partners and communities. The sessions had been co-produced with the directorate's EDI Action Group who wanted to capture some of the great practice which is already happening in our teams and spark ideas for next year's EDI action plan. At each event, attendees discussed:

- Our 'Group Agreement' – how can we make this a safe space to explore EDI together?
- What is EDI?
- How does Children's Services align with the corporate approach to EDI?
- What are we already doing to promote EDI externally? What more can we do?
- How can we make recruitment more inclusive?

One example of the great practice already happening was the work of the Participation Team who have engaged with Cared For and Care Experienced Young People through the Young Inspectors Programme and Youth Parliament. Some emerging themes for our next action plan are: further developing how we support Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), the representation of the child / young person's identity in our record-keeping, and more support for neurodiversity in Special Educational Needs provision.

Before the session attendees were asked - on a scale of 1-10 - how confident they were in talking about EDI. At the end they were asked again and overall reported a 30% increase in confidence.

Case study:

Supported internships are one of the ways the council is committed to ensuring young people with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) have the same employment opportunities as their non-SEND peers. The Westmorland and Furness Education & Inclusion Team have worked hard to promote this opportunity to schools, colleges, parents, young people and employers.

In 2023-2024, 33 young people accessed a Supported Internship programme (an increase of 61% on the previous year), working with a variety of employers including heavy engineering companies, the NHS and the visitor economy. By the end of this programme 90% progressed into employment with the remaining young people extending their programme into 2024-2025.

[Watch this video](#) to hear about the positive impact this programme has had for Finn.

In 2024-2025, there are **37** young people participating in Supported Internships, which represents over 5% of our 16-24 year old EHCP cohort. The team continue to work with employer engagement groups to broaden the vocational pathways with recent success in recruiting an apprenticeship training company, BAE and a Ministry of Defence contractor to work with our young people from September 2025.

Changes to our area

Since we released the Position Statement in March 2024, we have been able to access more updated statistics on our local population from the Census and other sources.

This section you can read more about the latest information we have access to about our local population in Westmorland and Furness. All the data listed below has been sourced from the Cumbria Observatory⁹, unless otherwise stated.

We have broken down each of the nine Protected Characteristics in the Equality Act (2010), as well as the four additional characteristics that we have agreed at W&F Council.

Westmorland & Furness covers an area of 3,760 square km. [Population data from the 2021 census](#) shows a population of 226,550 (split between Barrow (67,400), Eden (54,700) and South Lakeland (104,450) localities); an average population density of 60 people per square km (compared to a national average of 395 people per square km).

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act (2010):

Age

Age	Westmorland & Furness	North West	England
Total aged 0-14	32000	1305100	9838700
Total aged 0-14 (%)	14.1	17.6	17.4
Total aged 15 - 64	136500	4725700	36249800
Total aged 15 - 64 (%)	60.2	63.7	64.2
Total aged 65 and over	58500	1386200	10401200
Total aged 65 and over (%)	25.8	18.7	18.4

Disability

Disabled people in Westmorland & Furness	Percentage
Day to day activities not limited (not disabled)	82.8%
Day to day activities limited of which broken down below:	17.2%
Day to day activities limited a little	10.2%
Day to day activities limited a lot	7.0%

⁹ [Population Report for Westmorland & Furness – Cumbria Observatory](#)

Married or registered civil partnership

Relationships across Westmorland & Furness	Percentage
Married or in a registered civil partnership	49.0%
Never married and never registered a civil partnership	31.9%
Separated but still legally married or still legally in a civil partnership	1.8%
Divorced or civil partnership dissolved	6.6%
Widowed or surviving civil partnership partner	8.1%
Married or civil partnership couple	30.6%
Lone parent family	8.3%

Living arrangements across Westmorland & Furness	Percentage
Living in a couple	62.3%
Not living in a couple	37.3%

Maternity / Pregnancy

General fertility rate per 1,000 (2022)¹⁰

Area	rate per 1,000
Westmorland and Furness	47.7
England	51.9

Multiple births rate per 1,000 (2022)

Area	rate per 1,000
Westmorland and Furness	8.5
England	14.6

Under 18s births rate per 1,000 (2022)

Area	rate per 1,000
Westmorland and Furness	2.0
England	3.4

¹⁰ [Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care](#)

Premature births (less than 37 weeks gestation) per 1,000 (2019 – 2021)

Area	rate per 1,000
Cumbria	78.1
Barrow-in-Furness	75.4
Eden	73.8
South Lakeland	65.0
England	77.9

Healthy life expectancy at birth (2021-23)

Area and gender	Life expectancy
Westmorland and Furness – Male	63.2
England – Male	61.5
Westmorland and Furness – Female	64.4
England – Female	61.9

Life expectancy at birth (3 year range) 2021-23

Area and gender	Life expectancy
Westmorland and Furness – Male	79.6
England – Male	79.1
Westmorland and Furness – Female	83.5
England – Female	83.1

Percentage of deliveries to women from ethnic minority groups (2022/23)

Area	Percentage
Westmorland & Furness	3.5%
North West	21.9%
England	25.3%

Ethnicity

There has been an increase in ethnic minorities resident in Westmorland and Furness since the 2011 census, with more languages spoken, linked to global migration (specifically the Syrian Refugee, Afghan Resettlement and Homes for Ukraine Schemes, as well as local placements through Home Office Contingency Hotels).

Ethnicity across Westmorland & Furness	Percentage
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	1.0%,
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	0.3%
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	0.8%
White	97.6%
Other ethnic group	0.3%

Language

First language across Westmorland & Furness	Percentage
English first language	98%

Religion

Religion across Westmorland & Furness	Percentage
Christian	55.5%
Buddhist	1.0%
Other religion	0.4%
Muslim	0.4%
Hindu	0.1%
Jewish	0.5%
Sikh	0.0%
No religion	37%
Not answered	6%

Sex

Gender across Westmorland & Furness	Number	Percentage
Females	112,427	49%
Males	115,760	51%

Gender Identity (% of the population)

Area	Gender ID the same as sex registered at birth	Gender ID different sex registered at birth	Trans Women	Trans Men	All other gender IDs	Not Answered
England & Wales	93.5%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	6.0%
Barrow	94.8%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	4.9%
Eden	94.4%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	5.3%
South Lakeland	94.5%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	5.2%

Sexual orientation (% of the population)

Area	Heterosexual	Gay or Lesbian	Bisexual	All other Sexual Orientations	Not Answered
England & Wales	89.4%	1.5%	1.3%	0.3%	7.5%
Barrow	91.1%	1.2%	1.0%	0.3%	6.4%
Eden	91.0%	1.0%	0.8%	0.2%	7.0%
South Lakeland	90.8%	1.1%	0.9%	0.2%	7.0%

Additional Characteristics for Westmorland and Furness:

Armed Forces families

The 2021 Census estimates that 8,944 veterans live in Westmorland and Furness¹¹

Area	% of population aged 16+ who have previously served in the Armed Forces
Westmorland & Furness	4.7%
Barrow	4.8%
Eden	4.6%
South Lakeland	4.5%
England and Wales	3.8%

People who are care experienced

Children looked after at 31 March each year under 18 (2024)

Area	Rate per 10,000	Number
Westmorland and Furness	63	246
England	70	

Children starting to be looked after each year under 18 rate per 10k (2024)

Area	Rate per 10,000	Number
Westmorland and Furness	18	71
England	28	

Number of care leavers by age (2024)

Age across Westmorland & Furness	Number
Westmorland and Furness aged 17 to 18	35
Westmorland and Furness aged 19 to 21	86
Westmorland and Furness aged 22	16
Westmorland and Furness aged 23	24
Westmorland and Furness aged 24	17
Westmorland and Furness aged 25	29

¹¹ [UK armed forces veterans, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

Rurality

Westmorland & Furness Council is England's most sparsely populated local authority area. 55% live in a rural area¹².

Area	People per km2
Westmorland & Furness	60.7
Eden	25.8
Barrow-in-Furness	864.6
South Lakeland	68.2

Socio-economic status

Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) combines information from seven domains to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation. The domains are: Income; Employment; Education; Skills and Training; Health and Disability; Crime; Barriers to Housing Services; Living Environment. Each domain, or Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA), is given a weighting and is based on a basket of indicators.

LSOAs by decile in Westmorland & Furness (2019) 1 = most deprived, 10 = least deprived	Percentage
Decile 1	8.3%
Decile 2	5.6%
Decile 3	4.2%
Decile 4	7.6%
Decile 5	16%
Decile 6	13.2%
Decile 7	13.2%
Decile 8	17.4%
Decile 9	9.7%
Decile 10	4.9%

This data was published in 2019 by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

¹² [Population density - Census Maps, ONS](#)

Households in temporary accommodation

Area	Households in temporary accommodation	Households in temporary accommodation (rate per 1,000)
Westmorland & Furness	41.3	0.4
North West	6530	2
England	99887.5	4.2

Fuel Poverty:¹³

Westmorland & Furness	Number of households	Percentage
Households living in fuel poverty	15,387	14%
England average		13%

Child Poverty:

Percentage of children under 16 living in families with low income (2022/23)	Westmorland & Furness	North West	England
Number of children under 16 living in families with Absolute Low Income	4562	287882	1645067
Percentage of children under 16 living in families with Absolute Low Income	13.3	20.7	15.7
Number of children under 16 living in families with Relative Low Income	6110	375559	2091956
Percentage of children under 16 living in families with Relative Low Income	17.8	27	20

Free school meals (FSM):¹⁴

Percentage of schools pupils eligible for and claiming Free School Meals (FSM) 2024	Westmorland and Furness	England
Percentage of nursery school pupils eligible for and claiming FSM	0%	4.4%
Percentage of primary school pupils eligible for and claiming FSM	12.4%	19.6%
Percentage of secondary school pupils eligible for and claiming FSM	11.5%	18.5%
Percentage of special school pupils eligible for and claiming FSM	33.6%	35.7%

¹³ RM113 - Provision of unpaid care by age – ONS 2021

¹⁴ Department for education 202324

Looking ahead

Now that we have completed the first year of our two year action plan, we will move into the second half of the plan from April 2025 through to March 2026.

Actions we are planning to achieve in the next 12 month include (but are not limited to):

- Further develop our EDI communications approach with planned ongoing comms related to EDI, both internally and externally.
- Continue to develop and review EDI best practices in recruitment and retention. This will include the introduction of further policies and practices to support the Council to be a great place to work, as well reviewing our recruitment practices to ensure a more inclusive process for prospective candidates. As well as continuing to build on our commitments around recruitment in the Armed Forces Covenant Gold Award, and as a Disability Confident Leader.
- Continue to upskill managers on the importance and application of EDI in practice, through specific training on appointment / induction, developing improved manager guidance on EDI, and by offering continued support through our HR and Organisational Development teams to ensure managers are aware of the benefits of inclusive recruitment, and are equipped to support their team members in the best ways possible.
- Continue to improve and introduce new EDI related policies e.g. Equality Policy, Reasonable Adjustments Policy, Volunteering and Life Events Policy, and a new Sexual Harassment policy.
- Re-launch our portfolio of staff network groups with enhanced resource.
- Relaunch EDI data collection across the entire W&F workforce, including Councillors.
- Establish EDI monitoring process for complaints.
- Update council communications and engagement strategy setting out how council will engage, supporting a cross organisational approach to how W&F seeks the lived experience of its community and builds this into service development processes.
- Develop guidance for prospective suppliers on W&F EDI approach and objectives.
- Develop and agree proposals for a programme of capital works to improve accessibility of the council estate.
- Engage with external partners and communities to develop a phase 2 EDI workstream and objectives beyond Spring 2026

Phase 2 - beyond the current action plan

Throughout 2025/26 we will begin the process of developing what the next stage of our EDI work will look like.

This work involve consultation and engagement will all key partners and stakeholders, both internally at Westmorland and Furness Council, but also externally with the community, key delivery partners, expert organisations, businesses and employers, and beyond.

This work will lead us to develop and agree a new set of EDI Objectives for the Council, as well as a supporting Action Plan to achieve these objectives.

If you would like to be involved in this work, please let us know by emailing:

equalities@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

We will publish our plans for Phase 2 of our EDI work in April 2026.

Closing comments

“As an external partner, I am impressed by the significant strides Westmorland and Furness Council has made in the first year of their EDI Action Plan. The Council's commitment to embedding equity, diversity, and inclusion at all levels is evident through their comprehensive approach and tangible outcomes.

The establishment of dedicated EDI champions, the overhaul of the Equality Impact Assessment process, and the launch of the EDI Learning Hub are just a few examples of the impactful initiatives undertaken. The Council's proactive engagement with external partners and communities, coupled with their transparent reporting and ambitious plans for the future, demonstrate a genuine dedication to fostering an inclusive environment for all.

I look forward to continuing our collaboration and witnessing further progress in the coming year.”

Guy Tirvengadam, Chair of W&F Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Partnership

“The progress being made by our Poverty Truth Commission is directly impacting not only those who are struggling with poverty but also those who struggle with mental health and neurodiversities. Being involved gives us hope that real change is being made in our town and for our community.”

Alex Taylor, Community Commissioner

“Being part of the Poverty Truth Commission has made me feel much more confident and a lot less isolated [...] I feel like they [the Civic Commissioners] really do listen to what we are saying. Being involved has made me feel empowered and that I can really make a difference to people's lives and I hope it can continue long into the future”

Hayley Stevens, Community Commissioner

“It has been really encouraging to work in partnership with the Westmorland and Furness Council over the past 12 months on a number of projects that reflect the importance the council places on equality, diversity and inclusion.

This is evidenced in the investment of time as well as resource in the Poverty Truth Commissions in South Lakes, Barrow and Eden, as well as the work on cohesion which recognises the importance all sectors have to play in making Westmorland and Furness a welcoming, inclusive and safe place to live.”

Laura Goad, Director at Cumbria Development Education Centre