



Equality and Diversity Framework 2025-2029

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1. Foreword

Equality, diversity and equity is relevant to us all. As an organisation we strive to embed these values to help meet the needs of people from all of society and understand that everyone has right to fair and equal treatment.

Understanding equality, diversity and equity is important if we want to deliver person-centred, effective and efficient services. Equality is about creating a fairer society where everyone can participate and have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and no one is unfairly disadvantaged. Diversity is valuing peoples' differences and addressing their different needs and situations. Equity recognises that everyone has different circumstances, and characteristics, which means we have different needs to obtain access and opportunities.

The councils' Equality and Diversity Framework 2025- 2029 sets out the council's ambition to tackle discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and promote good relations both in our workforce and community. It includes eight Corporate, Education and Licensing equality outcomes and mainstreaming actions which are intended to address the most significant inequalities emerging from local evidence and involvement activities that could have the greatest positive impact.

The framework looks forward and demonstrates how, through a wide range of policies, initiatives, and continuous improvement activities, we're working to embed equality and diversity throughout our organisation and meet our responsibilities as a public sector body.

This document presents West Lothian Council's Corporate, Education Authority and Licensing Board Equality Mainstreaming Report for the period 2025 - 2029.

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Leader of the Council

Graham Hope
Chief Executive

April 2025

2. West Lothian Context

- 2.1. West Lothian is a great place to live, work and do business, West Lothian Council aims to improve quality of life and opportunities for all citizens. We are a top performing council with a reputation for innovation, partnership working and customer focus. The council is central to the provision of services that affect people's everyday lives, for example, housing, education, libraries, leisure and benefits. We therefore recognise that all services provided by the council need to reflect and consider the impact that they may have on equality. We aim to provide improved services that meet the needs and priorities of local community.
- 2.2. According to the National Records of Scotland, on 30 June 2023 the population of West Lothian was 183,810. This is an increase of 1.1% from 181,730 in 2022. Over the same period, the population of Scotland increased by 0.8%. In 2023, West Lothian had the 10th highest population out of all 32 council areas in Scotland. Between 2001 and 2023, the population of West Lothian has increased by 15.6%. This is the 5th highest percentage change out of the 32 council areas.
- 2.3. In terms of overall size, the 45 to 64 age group was the largest in 2023, with a population of 51,966. In contrast, the 75 and over age group was the smallest, with a population of 14,485. Between 2001 and 2023, the 25 to 44 age group saw the largest percentage decrease (-6.7%).
- 2.4. West Lothian faces a growing and ageing population. The demographic and population projection data for West Lothian shows a population where older adults are increasing in number and will form a greater proportion of the population over time. The numbers of people in West Lothian aged 65 to 74 is expected to increase by 19% by 2028 with those aged over 75 increasing by 39%. This is compared to the Scottish average growth of 14.4% in the 65 to 74 population and 25.4% increase in those aged over 75 during the same time period.
- 2.5. Between 2018 and 2028, the number of people aged 75 and over in Scotland is predicted to increase by 25.4%. However, in West Lothian the number of people aged 75 and over will increase by nearly 39.4%
- 2.6. Similar to previous years there were more females (51.1%) than males (48.9%) living in West Lothian.

3. Our Services

Chief Executive, Finance and Property Services

- 3.1. The Chief Executive office provides a number of services including Elections Administration, Complaints and Enquiries, Emergency Planning and West Lothian Lord-lieutenant.
- 3.2. Finance and Property Services plays a key role in providing positive leadership so that the council along with our Community Planning Partners continue to modernise and provide high quality services, fulfil the needs of our communities, and secure targeted outcomes. This service is comprised of the Anti-Poverty Service; Audit, Risk and Counter Fraud; Construction Services; Financial Management Unit; Property Management and Development and the Revenues Unit.

Education Services

- 3.3. West Lothian Council's 67 Primary Schools, 13 Secondary Schools, 60 early learning centres and 6 additional support needs schools deliver Education Services to over 27,500 pupils and over 3,200 children in nursery schools, their parents/carers and the wider community.

Housing, Customer and Building Services

- 3.4. Housing, Customer and Building Services' vision is to improve lives and properties by designing and maintaining communities, homes and buildings. The service covers the functional areas of Building Services, Customer and Community Services, Housing Need, Housing Operations, Housing Strategy and Development and the Performance and Change Service.

Operational Services

- 3.5. Operational Services plays a key role in the management and direct delivery of front line services to those who reside, visit and work in West Lothian. This service is grouped into five functional areas; Facilities Management, NETs, Land and Countryside Services, Passenger Transport, Recycling, Waste and Fleet Services, and Roads & Transportation Services.

Corporate Services

- 3.6. Corporate Services plays a key role as an enabling service and provides a wide range of services covering all aspects of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Human Resources (HR), Legal Services, Corporate Health and Safety, Corporate Procurement Services, Customer Service Centre, Performance and Information and Corporate Communications.

Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration

- 3.7. West Lothian Council's Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration Service grouping covers the functional areas of Economic Development, Employability,

Environmental Health & Trading Standards, Planning Services which includes the Education Planning, Environment and Climate Change teams, and Regeneration. The service has also taken over the co-ordinating role in the Community Planning Partnership.

Social Policy

3.8. Social Policy encompasses a wide range of services planned with and delivered to a large number of people with a spectrum of differing needs: Children and Families, Adults with a Disability, Older People, those with a Learning Disability, those with Mental Health problems, as well as the Criminal and Youth Justice Service. Some social policy functions are part of a partnership arrangement that integrates health and social care. West Lothian Council and NHS Lothian have delegated some functions to the [West Lothian Integration Joint Board \(IJB\)](#).

4. Legal context

Equality Act 2010

4.1. The Equality Act 2010 came into force on 1 October 2010. It brings together over 116 separate pieces of legislation into one single Act and sets out the personal characteristics that are protected by law and the behaviour that is unlawful. By simplifying legislation and harmonising protection for all of the characteristics it aims to make a fairer society, improve public services, and help business perform well.

Public Sector Equality Duty

4.2. Section 149 of The Equality Act 2010 came into force in April 2011, introducing a new Public Sector Equality duty. The Public Sector Equality Duty (often referred to as the 'general duty') requires public bodies in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct;
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- Foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

4.3. The protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race – this includes ethnic or national origin, nationality and also includes Gypsy/Travellers.
- Religion or belief – this includes a lack of belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership (but only in respect of the duty to consciously consider the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by The Equality Act 2010).

4.4. Everyone is protected by the Act. Every person has one or more of the protected characteristics, so the Act protects all of us against unfair treatment.

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012

4.5. The Scottish Government has introduced a set of specific equality duties to support the better performance of the general duty by public bodies. These duties include requirements to:

- Develop and publish a mainstreaming report
- Publish equality outcomes and report on progress (at least every two years)
- Assess and review policies and practices
- Gather and use employee information
- Publish gender pay gap information
- Publish statements on equal pay
- Consider award criteria and conditions in relation to public procurement
- Publish in a manner that is accessible

4.6. The Council as an Education Authority must also meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012. The Council also administers the Licensing Board and must meet the requirements of the Act and Regulations when undertaking its duties in this regard. Accordingly, the Education Authority and the Licensing Board outcomes and mainstreaming actions for 2025 - 2029 are included in this framework.

4.7. The council's latest gender, ethnicity and disability pay gap information can be found in the council's Equal Pay Statement.

Procurement Duty

4.8. Public procurement is the process by which public bodies acquire goods, services and works from third parties to meet customer and service user needs.

4.9. The council is committed to best value and promoting fairness and equality in sustainable procurement. The [sustainable procurement duty](#) requires that before a contracting authority buys anything, it must think about how it can improve the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of the area in which it operates, with a particular focus on [reducing inequality](#).

5. Equality Outcomes

5.1. Equality outcomes are focused on the most significant and persistent inequalities. In setting the Equality Outcomes, the council has been mindful of the issues of proportionality, scale, severity and concern. Furthermore, to maintain a consistent approach, our equality outcomes were developed to address the priorities of the [Corporate Plan 2023 – 2028](#) and have been aligned with the priorities set out in our Local Outcome Improvement Plan. The council's Corporate Plan has identified five priorities for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28. These reflect the areas that are the most important for the community and improving the quality of life for all living, working and visiting West Lothian.

6. Equality Outcomes Consultation

6.1. The West Lothian Equality Outcomes for the next four-year period, 2025- 2029, have been developed through evidence gathering and engagement work. Working in partnership with East, and Midlothian Lothian Councils (including their education

authorities and Midlothian’s licensing board), NHS Lothian, Health and Social Care Partnerships and Integration Joint Board, a set of draft equality themes and outcomes for consultation was developed. These were based on research and evidence from different sources and on conversations with services, forums and organisations that help and support people throughout August to October 2024.

6.2. The online consultation was open from 1st November 2024 to 31st January 2025, welcoming feedback from people with a variety of life and personal experiences on the draft equality themes and outcomes. In total, 221 responses from organisations and individuals were submitted to the online survey across the Lothians. A summary of the comments is provided below:

- The majority of respondents agreed that the equality themes identified were important to address.
- Accessibility must address digital inclusion, inclusive communication and the physical environment.
- Concerns were raised in general about the lack of affordable, social housing available and the impact this has on different protected characteristic groups. Houses should be designed to facilitate independent living and a “home for life.”
- Access to support networks, families and the local community is vital to prevent isolation.
- Homelessness should be addressed within the housing theme, with proactive action taken.
- More funding and resources are needed to make significant change and progress in Education.
- There are not enough special education needs places
- Bullying must be tackled not only through training, but a culture-shift in attitudes and the curriculum should include more teaching about different cultures, beliefs and identity to increase awareness and acceptance.
- Creating better pathways for disadvantaged groups to access employment, changes in recruitment processes and providing training for all recruiting managers on equalities and unconscious bias can address the barriers people face in accessing employment opportunities.

The online consultation was available in various languages and format via the Recite Me function on the West Lothian website and in British Sign Language.

7. The Council as an Employer

People Strategy

7.1. The Councils’ [Peoples Strategy 2023 -2028](#) acknowledges the critical role that a motivated, skilled and capable workforce plays in every aspect of service delivery and continuous improvement and sets out a plan for the actions which will support and drive the development and effective leadership of our employees. The council recognises the benefits of a diverse workforce and is committed to the goal of eliminating discrimination and promoting equality and diversity across the organisation. Underpinning the People Strategy is a commitment to promote and celebrate diversity throughout the council by consulting, engaging and acting on the views and concerns of employees and embedding these issues into service delivery, policy development and employment practice. The mainstreaming activities below support the Equality Mainstreaming Outcome 4 – West Lothian is a Positive and Inclusive Place to Work.

Employee Health and Wellbeing Framework

7.2. The Council promotes a proactive and structured approach to supporting employee

wellbeing through its Employee Health and Wellbeing Framework.

Carer Positive Accreditation

- 7.3. The council is a Carer Positive accredited employer and supports employees who provide unpaid care to dependents through a number of resources and provisions available internally and externally to support them to manage the demands of their caring responsibilities while continuing in employment.
- 7.4. Through the promotion of such provisions, the council has been able to take the opportunity to improve the information we hold on employees with caring responsibilities. Currently, 252 employees have confirmed their status as an unpaid carer and the council continues to look at ways to further support Carers in employment.

Disability Symbol Scheme

- 7.5. The council continues to be accredited as a “Positive about Disabled People” employer and is accredited as a disability level 2 Employer in the Disability Confident Scheme which maintains our commitment to demonstrating that we take positive action to attract, recruit and retain disabled people.

Flexible Working

- 7.6. The council’s Supporting Flexible Working Policy makes provision for Hybrid and Homeworking introduced following remobilisation from the Covid 19 pandemic. In addition, the Policy provides an extended flexible working scheme and increased flexibility within the working day. The council continues to offer flexibility to all staff that goes beyond the statutory right to request flexible working, along with the option to purchase additional annual leave and utilise special leave in line with council policy.

Learning and Development

- 7.7. The council is committed to continuous improvement in service delivery and recognises that the continuing ability, skills and commitment of our employees is at the heart of what we do. The council has invested in a variety of ways to train and raise awareness of issues relating to equality and diversity including:
- Delivery of the equality and diversity training as part of the corporate induction
 - E-learning and face to face courses for employees and managers regarding mental health
 - Roll out to all council employees of the mandatory corporate equality and diversity training
 - Development and delivery of online Integrated Impact Assessment training
 - Delivery of bespoke training for services with specific protected characteristics

8. Mainstreaming activities to enable change

8.1. Mainstreaming equality means integrating equality and diversity into the day-to-day workings of the council. We aim to do this by taking equality into account as we exercise our functions and deliver our services in line with the [Policy on Equality in Employment and Service Provision](#).

8.2. Mainstreaming equality has a number of benefits including:

- It helps ensure that council services are fit for purpose and meet the needs of our community.
- It helps attract and retain a productive workforce, rich in diverse skills and talents.
- It helps the council work toward social inclusion and supports the communities we serve to improve the lives of everyone who lives in West Lothian.
- It helps the Council to continually improve and better perform through growing knowledge and understanding of the benefits of an inclusive organisation.

8.3. The Council continues to make good progress in mainstreaming equality since the publication of our first Equality Mainstreaming Report in 2013. A summary of activities undertaken by the Council to drive improvement is set out in the sections below.

Assessing impact

8.4. Assessing impact is an important part of the public sector's decision making process. It is important in developing any proposal to understand how the needs of different groups and the potential barriers they face may differ. Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is the mechanism that allows us to critically assess whether a 'policy' has wider impacts beyond its intended outcomes and if it impacts differentially on different groups in our communities.

8.5. An integrated impact assessment (IIA) is a tool that helps public authorities make sure their policies, and the ways they carry out their functions, do what they are intended to do and for everybody. Carrying out an IIA involves systematically assessing the likely (or actual) effects of proposals (policies, strategies, plans) on people in respect of the nine protected characteristics. The process includes looking for opportunities to promote equality that may have previously been missed or could be better used, as well as the potential negative or adverse impacts that can be removed or mitigated, where possible.

8.6. West Lothian Council's Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process has been used since 2018 to assess the potential impact of proposals on equality and socio economic disadvantage. Improvements have been made to help those conducting IIA to focus on relevant factors. A new template and guidance has been extended to include consideration of human rights and children's rights. This broader, integrated assessment helps ensure that the duties and considerations of the Human Rights Act and United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC) are met in addition to those of the Equality Act and Fairer Scotland Duty. Further consideration is being made to include the Consumer Duty.

8.7. The council has embedded a human rights based approach into the IIA process to ensure that people's rights are put at the very centre of policies and practices. When completing an IIA the council considers the extent a 'policy' impacts on the key PANEL principles of Human Rights. These are as follows:-

- Participation – people should be involved in decisions that affect their rights. Participation must be active, free, meaningful and give attention to issues of accessibility, including access to information in a form and a language which can be understood
- Accountability – there should be monitoring of how people's rights are being affected, as well as remedies when things go wrong
- Non Discrimination – All forms of discrimination must be prohibited, prevented and eliminated. People who face the biggest barriers to realising their rights should be prioritise
- Empowerment – Everyone should understand their rights, and be fully supported to take part in developing policy and practices which affect their lives
- Legality – requires the recognition of rights as legally enforceable entitlements and is linked in to national and international human rights law

8.8. A joint Steering Group with our local authority partners in Edinburgh, Midlothian, East and NHS Lothian work together to improve the quality and quantity of IIAs carried out.

Engaging with people who have lived experience

8.9. The council continues to work with partners in promoting and mainstreaming equalities in West Lothian and has communicated and engaged with a wide range of services, partners and organisations to raise awareness, share experiences and explore the challenges people face on a day to day basis. In particular, the Council works with the following forums:

- LGBT Youth Scotland who provide expertise to help the council support lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people in the community of West Lothian who access our services.
- The West Lothian Access Committee works across the private, public and third sector to remove physical and attitudinal barriers to equality and to promote all aspects of independent living within the West Lothian community. The council continues to consult with this group regarding disability access issues particularly in relation to new build council housing and refurbishments.
- The Disability Forum acts as a consultation forum on disability (including learning disability) based equality issues to inform policy and service development.
- The Community Race Forum acts as a consultation forum on race equality and issues around culture and religion in the development of policies and services.
- The Faith Group acts as a consultation forum on religion and belief based equality issues to inform policy and service development.
- The Council's Community, Learning and Development services support the LGBT Youth Group Glitter Cannons to work collectively to support other young people in the West Lothian Community, raise awareness of LGBT issues and promote equality, diversity and inclusion.

Data and Evidence Gaps

- 8.10. There is a lack of equality data on some critical issues. Despite improvements, significant gaps in equality data remain. In some areas, data and evidence gaps were exacerbated by the pandemic. Addressing these evidence gaps must continue to be a significant priority so that we can collect and analyse data about protected characteristics.
- 8.11. Lived experience, or people's expertise and perspective derived from their involvement with events, services and interventions, represents an important data and evidence base for the council. By improving and embedding community engagement practice we can ensure that our communities are genuinely engaged and empowered and can therefore be involved in decisions that affect their lives. By achieving a common understanding of community engagement at all levels of the partnership, coordinating and consolidating community engagement activity, and ensuring that staff and community members have the right tools to undertake engagement that is appropriate and fit for purpose, we can help to achieve active and empowered communities. We want to achieve better quality engagement that is effective and influential and informs decisions and service provision. Improving community engagement, and the structures, processes and practices that help deliver it will ultimately result in improved outcomes for our communities.
- 8.12. We welcome action by the Scottish Government and others to address evidence gaps and improve the equality evidence base in Scotland.

9. Equality Outcomes 2025- 2029

- 9.1. West Lothian Council's Corporate, Education Authority and Licensing Outcomes for 2025 -2029 are:

Corporate Outcomes

1. People in West Lothian have improved access to services.
2. There will be a better understanding and intolerance of discrimination and violence against people with protected characteristics.
3. People's right to an adequate standard of living will be respected and protected.
4. West Lothian Council is a positive and inclusive place to work

Education Authority Outcomes

5. Pupils have a greater sense of belonging and safety in schools
6. Better mental health and wellbeing of pupils

Licensing Board Outcomes

7. The Licensing Board will seek to promote equal opportunity of access to licensed premises in West Lothian
8. The community of West Lothian is able to engage effectively in the exercise of the Boards licensing functions.



West Lothian
Council

Equality Outcome Plan 2025 – 2029
(Corporate, Education and Licensing)

CORPORATE EQUALITY OUTCOMES

Equality Outcome 1: People in West Lothian have improved Access to Services

People with communication support needs can face widespread exclusion and discrimination. It is estimated that over a million people in Scotland have some form of communication support need. ¹ This means it is a concern for all of our communities and public authorities.

Inclusive communication means communicating in ways that people prefer and find easiest. We want to get better at using inclusive communication across all the services our organisation provides. We know that inclusive communication will impact positively on our ability to provide accessible services, assist in creating a sense of belonging and help meet the needs of all people and across protected characteristics.

Having an inclusive communication approach demonstrates the council's commitment to inclusive practices. Inclusive practice nurtures a sense of belonging among communities. When individuals feel valued and included, they are more likely to actively participate, contribute their unique perspectives, and form meaningful connections with others. This sense of belonging is crucial for fostering positive relationships and promoting overall well-being.

By promoting inclusivity and offering online and in person opportunities, the council play a vital role in combating discrimination, bias and barriers to accessing services. Environments where diversity is valued and celebrated are less likely to perpetuate stereotypes or engender discriminatory behaviours. Inclusive practice fosters a culture of respect and acceptance, leading to greater social harmony and cohesion.

General Equality Duty

Will help to advance equality of opportunity to access services that provides accessible information, appropriate assistance and support.

Outputs

- Improved communication methods for customers with specific access requirements (BSL interpreters or Text Relay services for deaf customers; Language translation services for customers for whom English is not their first or preferred language; Recite Me text to speech software on web communications).
- More awareness of mental health and accessibility of information and support for people to access the available services at earlier points in their mental health journey.
- The council routinely explores the use of other emerging technologies and physical devices which may provide support to customers.
- Schools will ensure pupils have digital literacy competency before leaving.
- Improved digital skills across different protected characteristics

Actions

Areas for potential action, but not limited to:

- Undertake the Scottish Government's Inclusive Communication Self Assessment
- Minimise digital exclusion
- Improve communications and use of language to positively impact the BAME community whose first language is not English, those with learning difficulties, BSL users.
- Involve those with lived experience of barriers to communication to help us identify what action we need to take to improve what we do.
- Encourage and support people from ethnic minorities and people with disabilities to take part in civic life through voting, political participation and community activities like volunteering.
- Assess feasibility of creating a peer group to cross-check web content to improve accessibility.

Measures of progress (indicative)

- Digital training sessions offered to all equalities groups.
- Digital support sessions provided to all equalities groups.
- Increase in the percentage of customers accessing the website as a percentage of West Lothian population.
- Service users are provided with information accessible to them on services provided by the council particularly, those who face barriers through disability, language and digital exclusion

Equality Outcome 2: There will be a better understanding and intolerance of discrimination and violence against people with protected characteristics.

Everyone should be able to feel safe in their communities. People from deprived areas are more likely to experience crime. People with disabilities, LGBT people and people from ethnic and religious minority backgrounds continue to be victimised because of their protected characteristics and women are far more likely to be victims of domestic abuse and sexual crimes.

Gender based violence is a function of gender inequality and results in physical, sexual and psychological harm or suffering to women and children, or affront to their human dignity, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Violence against women includes: domestic abuse; rape; sexual harassment and intimidation at work and in the public sphere; commercial sexual exploitation, including prostitution and trafficking; child sexual abuse; forced and child marriages; female genital mutilation.

Hate crimes are abhorrent and target marginalised and vulnerable members of our communities with devastating effect on both victims and their families. Hate crimes are any crimes that are targeted at a person because of hostility or prejudice towards that person's: disability, race or ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation or transgender identity. It is important for us all to come together to challenge intolerance and report incidents of hate crime.

General Equality Duty

Advancing equality of opportunity for adults (predominantly women), and children and young people who experience gender-based violence to access support.

Help to eliminate race discrimination and discrimination based on religion, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different racial and religious/belief groups.

Outputs

- Victims, witnesses and partner agencies feel more confident in reporting hate incidents through a variety of methods
- Incidents involving harassment of people based on their protected characteristics are recorded.
- Raised awareness on Modern Slavery.

Actions

Areas for potential action, but not limited to:

- Promote and celebrate diversity by working with partners to promote events, celebrations and activities.
- Raise awareness of and increase confidence to report ableism and prejudice motivated by disability.
- Promote and raise awareness of the existing 3rd party reporting sites that are in West Lothian.
- Increase awareness of Hate Crime amongst our employees and the wider communities of West Lothian.
- Revise gender based violence training to include more specialist training on issues such as Forced Marriage, LGBT experiences of gender based violence, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and honour based abuse.
- Introduction of a Prevention of Sexual Harassment Code of Practice

Measures of progress (indicative)

- Increase in the number of Environmental Visual Audits (EVAs with partners to highlight any safety risks within the built environment.
- Increase in the number of women supported by the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault Team (DASAT)
- Development of Safe and Together, a whole system approach for tackling domestic abuse on a partnership basis.
- Staff and members of the public will have a greater awareness of third-party reporting centres for hate crime
- Staff will have a greater awareness and understanding of violence against women and girls (VAWG) and sexual harassment.
- Staff have a greater awareness of their responsibilities to prevent discrimination and harassment at work.
- Other measures to be developed following the conclusion of the Advancing Race Equality Action Plan work.

Equality Outcome 3: Peoples right to an adequate standard of living will be respected and protected.

The right to an adequate standard of living includes having access to housing that allows people to live independently and with dignity, and be able to live free from poverty, with the support of social security where required. People should also have access to, and control over, effective and high-quality social care and support.

West Lothian is an area that has a mix of urban and rural communities, a significant jobs base in its own right and is well located relative to other parts of Scotland for jobs and services. In relation to poverty and related indicators, West Lothian as a whole is usually at or just below the Scottish average. The area's recent economic history has been one of industrial change. In addition, the area has experienced significant population growth, which is set to continue. However, there are still underlying issues of poverty and deprivation with a core of individuals and households experiencing extreme hardship and wider groups experiencing financial difficulties and challenges.

As set out in the Scottish Government's Housing to 2040 consultation, it is important that everyone has access to a home that is warm, affordable, accessible and that fits their needs. Increasing access to affordable housing and mitigating poverty and exclusion to create a fairer society is a priority.

General Equality Duty

Work to achieve this outcome will help us to provide opportunities for people with disabilities and ethnic minorities for inclusive and sustainable housing and tackle the determinants of poverty for all protected characteristics.

Outputs

- Help households struggling with fuel costs.
- Identified pathways for vulnerable people in transition and at risk of homelessness.
- Support for young people and others who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- Housing for older people and those with a disability to achieve greater independence.
- People have access to a home that is warm, affordable, accessible and that meets their needs
- People will be better supported to maximise their incomes and increase their financial resilience.

Actions

Areas for potential action, but not limited to:

- Support households struggling with fuel costs by providing help to access one off energy grants and hardship funds.
- Promote Advice Shop services to support vulnerable tenants.
- Deliver services between the councils Access2employment service and third sector partners to provide employability support to young people and others who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- Deliver an Education Programme to identify and prevent potential homelessness and raise awareness of homelessness within schools.
- Continue to provide aids and adaptations to service users to ensure people can live independently.
- Support people to access the benefits they are entitled to.
- Provide money, debt and welfare advice to help people maximise their income.
- Increase uptake of childcare entitlements, free school meals, clothing grants and Education Maintenance Allowance.
- Promote financial awareness and understanding among vulnerable groups and communities.

Measures of progress (indicative)

- Increase in the number of adaptations and accommodation requirements supported
- Development of transition pathways for all people presenting as at risk of homelessness.
- Number of Access2employment clients supported into Employment, Education or Training.
- Increase in the number of applications for energy grants and hardship funds.
- Increase in the number of residents supported by the employability service.
- Increase the proportion of homeless households resettled in permanent accommodation, and reduce the average time taken to close homelessness cases.
- Members of our most vulnerable communities are supported to maximise their incomes by increasing the uptake of benefits and entitlements, and providing money and debt advice.

Equality Mainstreaming Outcome 4: West Lothian Council is a positive and inclusive place to work

Stable and well-paid employment provides people with income to support themselves and their families, and contributes to a sense of identity, independence and wellbeing. Many people from protected characteristic and socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds face significant barriers to employment and struggle to secure good quality jobs. These groups also experience unfair outcomes such as persistent pay gaps, occupational segregation, and unequal treatment from employers and colleagues

Occupational segregation is a significant cause of women and children's poverty. Poverty is a likely outcome of low-paid employment over a lifetime. Women with children also face constraints in finding work that is commensurate with their skills and aspirations as well as flexible in terms of childcare and other caring responsibilities. A lack of options can force women into part-time, low paid work, thus affecting the lives, health, and opportunities of their children. Resulting from the impact of the economy, there is growing evidence of a disability and ethnicity pay gap which requires to be monitored.

The council has made significant progress in relation to implementation of structures, processes and employee engagement on equality and diversity in recent years. Further focus on increasing the diversity of our workforce and raising employee and management awareness and capacity to understand the specific needs of customers within the equality protected characteristics is required to ensure that we have a workforce which is confident and comfortable being authentic in the workplace.

Embedding an inclusive and supportive workplace culture where people have confidence that their safety and wellbeing is a priority. We remain committed to tackling inequalities and championing diversity, supported by policies, procedures and practices that are inclusive and fair. Workforce health, safety and wellbeing also remains a priority, ensuring a working environment that minimises risks to our people's physical and mental wellbeing, assists work-life balance and supports people to make positive health choices.

General Equality Duty

Employees have equality of opportunity to support services, and to foster good relations in their place of work

Outputs

- Support for employees to continue in work while managing caring responsibilities.
- Employees have access to appropriate information and advice about mental, physical, financial and workplace wellbeing.
- A diverse workforce that reflects the communities we serve.

Actions

Areas for potential action, but not limited to:

- Support local people from diverse backgrounds to build employability skills and secure good quality and fair employment with opportunities to progress within their chosen area of work or move to other types of jobs.
- Improve data, recording and intelligence on the composition of our workforce and increase the diversity of the workforce.
- Improve data on employee satisfaction and experiences, disaggregated by protected characteristics.
- Promote initiatives to address occupational segregation.
- Minimise gender, race and disability pay gaps.
- Provide training for staff that will improve understanding of Equality and Diversity and how it applies to their work.
- Strengthen procedures on reporting, investigation and follow-up of harassment and victimisation, and deliver training to support this.
- Embedding a proactive and supportive approach to employee safety and wellbeing, including physical, mental and financial wellbeing, underpinned by a compassionate leadership approach.
- Embed health and safety best practice into our mental health and well-being strategy
- Championing fair work practices and an inclusive workplace where all employees are able to participate fully in all aspects of work.
- Ensuring effective employee voice and positive engagement with trade union colleagues.

Measures of progress

- All employees have completed mandatory Equality and Diversity training.
- Implementation of a Supporting People Who Care Policy.
- Recruitment and Selection practices that take account of the diverse nature of our community and take account of the variety of roles across the council.
- Increased awareness of the 4 pillars wellbeing toolkit.
- Improvements in staff wellbeing and positive outcomes resulting from effective supporting attendance that takes account of protected characteristics.
- An Employee network that meets regularly and members who feel that the work of the network makes a difference.

EDUCATION AUTHORITY OUTCOMES - Wellbeing, Inclusion & Attendance

Equality Outcome 5: Pupils have a greater sense of belonging and safety in schools
West Lothian's inclusive approach affords all children and young people the opportunity to be part of their own community, boosting their emotional wellbeing and developing skills for learning, life and work. West Lothian's approach celebrates diversity and allows children and young people to develop an understanding and recognition of differences, contributing to the development of increasingly inclusive, empathetic and resilient communities.
General Equality Duty
Will help to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and advance equality of opportunity for children in school services.
Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased confidence for staff in dealing effectively with bullying incidents.• Pupils and parents reporting that they feel bullying is dealt with effectively.• School staff will continue to access and analyse inclusion data which enables them to plan interventions at individual, group and at whole school level.
Actions
<p>Areas for potential action, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider our approaches to gathering local and national data for the purposes of Health and Wellbeing analysis, leading to the further identification of required areas of focus.• Refresh the capacity and approaches that individual schools and clusters use to effectively evaluate approaches to ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion.• Continue to support aspirations of The Promise (https://thepromise.scot) with a focus on attainment and wider achievement for our care experienced children and young people.• Implement an early intervention Early Years, Primary and Secondary Attendance strategy. This will require a focus on ethos and relationships, targeted interventions for vulnerable groups, effective partnerships and robust policy, procedures and data analysis.• Continue to embed the presumption of mainstream strategy across all establishments in West Lothian.

Measures of progress

Identified key measures of success for this outcome will be tracked, monitored and reported. It should be noted that detailed analysis of specific target groups within each measure will also be undertaken by Education Services as appropriate to context. For example: Reduction in school based Bullying and prejudice-based incidents.

Outcome 6: Better mental health and wellbeing of pupils

Support all young people to achieve success through the provision of effective and robust support, using a multi-agency approach. This will highlight the importance of inclusion, through the development of the planning process across education learner and community support services and involvement of young people in decisions about how their needs should be met.

General Equality Duty

Will help to advance equality opportunity to achieve their full potential, be free from any artificial barriers, such as prejudice or discrimination.

Outputs

- Strategic planning that enables children and young people to continue to access services and support for their mental health and emotional wellbeing within their community.
- Development of Health and Wellbeing curriculum which continues to building resilience.
- Children and young people's voice within schools continues to help promote autonomy and equality.
- All children and young people have support for their wellbeing through a staged intervention process.

Actions

Areas for potential action, but not limited to:

- Continue to embed the vision of Active Schools & Community Sport to provide inclusive access for all and uphold pupils' right to participate in PE, physical activity and sport. The service takes a targeted approach, where necessary, to achieve that vision and to facilitate improvement in attainment, attendance, and physical and mental wellbeing.
- Develop professional learning pathways for all staff which enhances their practice in the delivery of high-quality learning experiences in health and wellbeing, including mental wellbeing, for all children and young people. There will also be professional learning to support children and young people with additional support needs.
- Ensure all establishments promote open, positive, supportive relationships across the school community, where children and young people will feel safe and secure.
- Work with parents/carers to secure better outcomes through enabling them to support their child's health, wellbeing and attendance.

- Develop professional learning pathways for all staff which enhances their practice in the delivery of high-quality learning experiences in health and wellbeing, including mental wellbeing, for all children and young people. There will also be professional learning to support children and young people with additional support needs.

Measures

Identified key measures of success for this outcome will be tracked, monitored and reported. It should be noted that detailed analysis of specific target groups within each measure will also be undertaken by Education Services as appropriate to context. For example: Pupil Wellbeing Survey (secondary) – increase in the number of pupils reporting that they are feeling safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included.

LICENCING BOARD OUTCOMES

Outcome 7 The Licensing Board will seek to promote equal opportunity of access to licensed premises in West Lothian

Every year, [Euan's Guide](#) asks disabled people, their friends, families, and carers to share their real experiences of accessibility in the Euan's Guide Access Survey Supported by the Motability Scheme. In 2024, over 6,500 people took part in the survey, with 70% of respondents saying the lack of disabled access has directly affected their goals, plans or aspirations, and 78% are not confident about visiting new places when thinking about accessibility. The 2024 Access Survey shows that 62% of respondents will avoid going to a venue if it has not shared its disabled access information and 77% of respondents have found a venue's website to be misleading, confusing or inaccurate when checking before a visit.

Through the Licensing Board Policy Statement, the Licensing Board promotes equality of access to all licensed premises within West Lothian. Access to leisure and recreational facilities has both direct and indirect impacts on people's physical and mental health. By having accessible premises this will allow people with a disability/long term condition to participate positively and more actively in society.

General Equality Duty

Work to achieve this outcome will help us to advance equality of opportunity for disabled people, foster good relations and eliminate discrimination.

Outputs

- The licensing Board better understands the diversity of needs of West Lothian's equalities groups.
- Accessible information on the functions of the Board, and process of making an application.
- The Board continues to work in partnership with agencies including Police Scotland and the local Licensing Forum, who each have a separate statutory role to play under the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005, with equal regard to the interests of persons with protected characteristics.
- Encourage applicants to undertake detailed Disability Access and Facilities Assessments.
- Reasonable adjustments to assist applicants, objectors and the public to engage in the licensing process are available on request.

Actions

- The Board will promote accessibility to all licensed premises in West Lothian for people with disabilities through its application of the relevant provisions of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 and its statement of licensing policy.
- All staff and Licensing Board members will undertake equalities training on a rolling programme.
- Identify actions from the annual meeting between the Board, the Forum and the annual report from Police Scotland regarding the operation of liquor licensing in West Lothian.
- The Board will promote accessibility to all gambling premises in West Lothian for people with disabilities through its application of the relevant provisions of the Gambling Act 2005 and its statement of licensing principles.
- Review the Licensing website, application forms and standard documentation regularly to ensure that these are as accessible as possible.
- Disability Access and Facilities Statements (DAFS) are submitted along with all applications for premises licences.

Measures of progress

- All licensing team staff and Board members have completed equalities training.
- All actions from the annual meeting between the Board, Forum and Police Scotland progressed to completion.
- The Council website information is updated to reflect changes in the law and procedures relating to liquor licensing, as required.

Outcome 8 - The community of West Lothian is able to engage effectively in the exercise of the Boards licensing functions

The Board recognises the need to ensure that the licensing process is accessible to all. They recognise that people who find it difficult to get involved (for example, because of language barriers, disability, poverty or discrimination) can help to influence the decisions that affect their lives.

General Equality Duty

Work to achieve this outcome will help us to advance equality of opportunity, and eliminate discrimination.

Outputs

- The Board will seek to ensure that the service it provides offers equal opportunity for engagement by persons with protected characteristics.
- WLC licensing policy signposts licence holders to their duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- Work in partnership with Police Scotland and the Licensing Forum to identify any issues arising in connection with persons with protected characteristics and address such concerns.
- Identify, monitor and address any service concerns specific to persons with protected characteristics

Actions

- Use the customer feedback form (sent to all customers) to identify any service concerns specific to persons with protected characteristics in order to monitor and address such concerns, as appropriate.
- The Board will review its website, application forms and standard documentation regularly to ensure that these are as accessible as possible.

Measurements

- The number of Disability Access and Facilities Statements (DAFS).
- Customer feedback forms completed and actioned.

هذه المعلومات متوفرة بلغة بريل وعلى شريط وبخط كبير وبلغات الجالية.
الرجاء الإتصال بخدمة الترجمة على الهاتف **01506 280000**

এই তথ্য আপনি ব্রেইল, টেপ, বড় অক্ষরে এবং কমিউনিটির বিভিন্ন ভাষাগুলিতেও পাবেন। অনুগ্রহ করে ইন্টারপ্রেটেশন অ্যান্ড ট্রান্সলেশন সার্ভিসের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করুন। টেলিঃ **01506 280000**

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براؤمر بانی انٹرپرائزنگ اینڈ ٹرانسلیٹنگ سروس سے ٹیلیفون نمبر **01506 280000** پر رابطہ قائم کریں۔

Informacje te mogą być przekazane na język Braille'a, dostępne na taśmie magnetofonowej lub wydane dużym drukiem oraz przetłumaczone na języki mniejszości narodowych.

Prosimy o kontakt z Usługami Tłumaczeniowymi pod numerem **01506 280000**

Information is available in braille, tape, large print and community languages. Contact the interpretation and translation service on **01506 280000**.

Text phones offer the opportunity for people with a hearing impairment to access the council. The text phone number is **18001 01506 464427**. A loop system is also available in all offices.

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