

## **Annex 1 – Local Authority responses (October 2023)**

### **Bolton**

At Bolton Council we are currently using the findings from the GM Big Disability Consultation to inform and address inequalities across different workstreams. This includes the following:

- The evidence base has helped to inform the Cost-of-Living borough wide events – delivery, content and accessibility.
- Additional consultation has taken place at a local level to look at the cost-of-living impact and subsequent support needed.
- Since then there has been an agreement among partners that we develop a local anti-poverty strategy with specialist support from Greater Manchester Poverty Action .
- Information cascaded to officers and partners to inform local Directorate programmes of work.
- The datasets are supporting the delivery approach for the Household Support Fund, with a proposal to set aside funding for residents with disabilities.
- Currently monitoring our funding programmes, including the Hardship Fund, to determine which protected characteristics are accessing support and determine whether there are barriers to access.
- Informing our marketing, communications and event plans for inclusivity, this included the King's visit in January 2023 and the Food & Drink festival in August 2023.
- The datasets are informing the delivery of the UKSPF projects, with reference to infrastructure.
- The dataset is helping to support service delivery in Children's & Adults Services.
- Informing our training delivery model for frontline staff in customer service and Equalities.

- Sessions developed and carried out around inclusivity to service providers e.g. practice educators conference.
- Regularly monitoring of our website for accessibility.
- Digital Champions staff have undertaken Ability Net training, looking at ways to improve digital accessibility. This training will be cascaded to the Council's volunteer network to support community engagement in digital accessibility.
- Informing workforce support for disabled employees, as well as inclusive recruitment practices.
  - Linked to work with disability connect – updating practices around inclusivity for neurodivergent employees and job applicants
- Fairness in employment monitoring form has been activated to include more information around all characteristics, including disability
- Equalities case studies under development into humanising statistics and the work done by Bolton's Fund (our key local fund for supporting VCSE groups and grassroots activity).
- Inclusive guidance for line managers for supporting neurodivergent employees under development
- Greater emphasis on awareness for disabilities, with a focus on directing employees to available training.

## **Bury**

2022 was Bury's year of focus on Disability, during that time we have a Disability Action Plan (produced through our Inclusion Working Group which includes a disabled employees' Staff Group and which promotion of the survey and review of findings were tabled focusing on:

- Making Democratic Services more accessible - We are actively encouraging groups who work with people with disabilities to attend committee meetings We are currently looking into making committee papers Read Easy and printing in different formats.

We continue to actively encourage groups who work with people with disabilities to attend committee meetings. To support this work, we are taking part in the GM Civic Leadership programme.

Documents from committees are available in different formats on request.

- A toolkit is being created on how to build and make already existing buildings more accessible. Cross disciplinary teams have agreed accessible routes in the town hall and accessibility guidance for colleagues to ensure buildings are accessible for planned and unplanned visitors to our buildings.
- Developing a guide to make consultations accessible and inclusive (quiet spaces, description of space and layout, virtual and in person events, digital exclusion etc). No current update on this
- We are creating a steering group with local VCFSE groups who support people with disabilities to check and challenge our policies and processes. Discussions were taken with a view to setting up disability forums however risks were identified that this would establish siloed working and ownership of disability awareness activity, rather than embedding disability focus and activity across current networks. Instead, this plan has changed whereby consultation will be undertaken via Bury VCFA across a range of their supported networks and groups rather than setting up an new standalone disability forum.
- In December we hosted a conversation with staff with disabilities on how we ensure we're a safe organisation to work for, for people with disabilities. From this we are looking into the way we recruit by actively sending emails to interviewees with a list of reasonable adjustments for them to choose from (with other as an option) so that the onus isn't on them to reach out to us. This is complete.
- We also have an e-learning module on disability which is being actively promote. This is complete.

## **Manchester**

- Since the last update, our HRODT team have incorporated findings from the survey, amongst other engagement work, into the development of a Disability

Action Plan to improve the ways we attract, retain and develop disabled staff at MCC. One of these actions is developing a Workplace Adjustment Hub which will provide support, advice and guidance to disabled employees and those with a long-term health condition. We have recruited a Workplace Adjustments Manager to develop this work.

- We have refreshed our internal equality data monitoring and Equality Impact Assessments to ensure better data capture of residents engaging with our services and to improve our evidence base.
- A Communities of Identity report, looking at the experiences of marginalised communities within the city, was presented to MCC's Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee in September. This used the survey findings to highlight key issues for disabled residents, and the report highlighted several instances of good practice in community engagement and made recommendations about how MCC can improve in this area. In particular we looked at health, housing, education and employment outcomes for disabled people and showcased work with the SEND local offer for young people and the MDC. We are committed to updating this report annually to track progress in reducing inequalities of outcomes for Manchester's marginalised and minoritised communities. (Link: <https://democracy.manchester.gov.uk/documents/s41825/Communities%20of%20Identity%20Report%202023.pdf>).
- Manchester Disability Collaborative (MDC) is multi-agency partnership comprising of disabled people and their organisations (DPOs), VSCEs, as well as public and private sector organisations; all working towards the common goal of improving equality and inclusion of disabled people in Manchester.

The aims are to:

- Amplify the voices of disabled people in Manchester.
- Facilitate coproduction and codesign between Manchester's influential organisations and disabled people.
- Be the leading forum for all matters relating to disability in the city.

The Collaborative is unique and has resulted in significant changes to how public and private services are delivered in the city. This includes work on accessible housing, the built environment, inclusive education, health and social care, employment opportunities and leisure facilities in the city. We are looking to better

align and connect MDC with other engagement and involvement forums, including the Community Health Equity Meetings (CHEM), patient partnerships, HealthWatch and neighbourhood engagement teams.

- Community Health Equity Manchester (CHEM)

The main purposes of CHEM are to:

- Build trust and resilience between communities and statutory organisations.
- Share and amplify community voice and to provide insight to the design and delivery of health-related interventions.
- Be evidence led, making proportionate use of granular data and insight together to reduce inequalities.
- Work in collaboration and partnership
- Through targeted engagement grants, the CHEM programme and the associated Sounding Boards has become a crucial part of our system infrastructure for addressing health inequalities, even more relevant in light of 2021 Manchester Census.
- The 5 sounding board cover disabled people including people with learning disabilities, communities experiencing racial inequality, which include Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black African and Caribbean Sounding Boards, Inclusion Health groups and people or groups that experience multiple forms of discrimination that intersect or combine (intersectionality).

## **Oldham**

Oldham's EDI strategy is due to be refreshed by 2025. Over the next year, the Policy Team will be reviewing progress made to date and will undertake work to refresh our EDI strategy. We will focus on what our key priorities will be over the next few years, including how can better support disabled people across the borough. As such, we will consider how we can help residents with limited mobility access all council services easier.

- We are continuing to evaluate how our decisions impact vulnerable residents through comprehensive EIA assessments

- A new Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been developed. The primary outcomes which the plan is aiming to achieve is to reduce the gap in life expectancy and health life expectancy within Oldham, and between Oldham and the national average, ensuring that all residents, including people with disabilities, can experience the best possible health and wellbeing throughout their lives.
- Other aims of the Strategy include:
  - Supporting our residents to gain the knowledge and skills to confidently make choices and participate in decisions about their own health
  - Giving children the best start in life
  - Improving mental wellbeing and mental health Reducing smoking
  - Increasing physical activity
- The Council have also directed part of the Household Support Fund provided by central government to support those residents who are disabled, or are carers, claiming Council Tax Reduction with energy costs over winter, as these residents often suffer from higher energy costs.
- The council's adult social care team and customer service team are working together to provide more holistic support with financial, debt and budgeting issues for residents more likely to suffer from disabilities and have problems meeting the cost of home care.
- Oldham established an Access Needs Task and Finish Group in early summer 2023 with broad representation from across council services. The scope of the review includes:
  - sensory impairments including hearing impairments, visual impairments and deafblindness,
  - Learning Disabilities and Autism,
  - English as a second language and
  - Dementia.
- We are considering what's working well and where we can strengthen our delivery to improve our consistency across council services as part of our Residents First approach. This has included learning from good practice, lived experience from residents and staff and identifying priority areas of focus. We

are due to present an update and options for consideration to Management Board in November 2023.

- In advance of this update, we have prioritised the following activity:
  - Reintroduced dementia friends training. We now have a network of Dementia Friends across council services.
  - Launching Learning Disability Friends training delivered by Oldham Personal Advocacy Limited for council staff during September and October.
  - Introducing a targeted focus on improving the diversity of our Residents Panel including residents with disabilities and access needs.
- We currently use several forums to engage with residents with disabilities, including through our VCFSE partner, Action Together, and through Oldham's disabled people's panel, facilitated by the GM disabled people's panel.

## **Rochdale**

Rochdale is using the finding and recommendations from the GM Disability Report in the following ways:

- It helped inform the warm spaces sustainability assessment and Rochdale's subsequent approach and offer.
- It is informing Rochdale's Poverty Strategy, which is currently in development.
- It has helped inform the offer we have made through the Household Support Fund. Rochdale has specifically targeted organisations assisting households, which are reliant on medical equipment to assist with a disability/medical condition making fuel and food vouchers available.
- It has informed the criteria for assessment for Rochdale's Warm Homes Scheme, which offers assistance in replacing boilers, windows etc to households facing hardship.
- Rochdale Council's customer services team (recognising the impact of digital exclusion) will shortly provide a face-to-face offer around the borough, to ensure that residents are in receipt of all the financial benefits, which are available to them.

- Adult care team has have committed to reviewing the care charging policy in summer 2023 and have developed a new Financial Wellbeing Team who are working on a resource around pro-active benefit checks and support for Adult Social Care service users.

## **Salford**

We have been busy in Salford with a number of areas identified from the recommendations. Some work is council specific, some VCSE-led and some were CCG – now Integrated Care Partnership.

As a council

- Our Salford wide equality strategy has a robust action plan linking to the objectives.
- Council officers are meeting with the new chair of the Salford Disability Forum to look at how we can further the recommendations in Salford.
- Equality Impact Assessments – are carried out part of this process issues impacting on disabled residents are identified are addressed or mitigations identified. As Salford has become more diverse and a large population growth, we are also identifying more intersectional issues.
- We have a robust digital Inclusion strategy – council led, but delivered via a partnership network across Salford, with key focus on the most excluded.
- Targeted actions to support disabled residents have included Tech and Tea drop in's in community venues which are low-level digital skills community programme,
- support delivered by Henshaw's within a community venue with the view to rolling the specialist support out across the city.
- Equipment and support have been given to Salford Disability Forum and also to Salford Deaf Gathering.
- The digital inclusion team carry a broad range of mainstream and specialist hardware/software to ensure they deliver a tailored approach to our residents.



- Salford Disability Forum are one of the 4 organisations to receive a grant from the council which contributes to their running costs. A good working relationship between the SDF board and the equalities and inclusion lead is well established.
- Work in partnership with Salford Deaf Gathering is being developed. The work is focused on; improving council processes when engaging with our d/Deaf residents, inclusive communications, ease and access of council services and support needs of the d/Deaf community, raising staff awareness of how to book and access to BSL and trialling video relay.
- Work with Public Health – As part of the Covid response in Salford, a number of community organisations were funded to engage with their communities to get key messages into communities. Post Covid, this work with our “Trusted Voices” organisations has developed in order to build skills and capacity for the grassroot organisations in order to address health inequalities and barriers.
- As part of the skills and employment workstream Salford supported employment service has secured funding to support 140 participants over 2 years. Salford Supported Employment Service ran by Salford City Council and the Growth Company will help adults with autism or learning disabilities who are currently unemployed to find suitable paid jobs. The service will provide people with one-to-one support, including in-work training and guidance for both the new recruit and employer, which can include minor workplace adjustments which could benefit all their employees.
- Salford Women and Girls’ commission - As part of an initiative to identify and address issues impacting on women and girls who live or work in Salford, targeted engagement sessions were carried out to consult with disabled women’s groups and attend listening events to ensure disabled women’s experiences were included. Identified Issues were fed into the final report and recommendations and have informed wider equalities work.
- A presentation from the disabled people’s panel to the council’s corporate steering group which is chaired by our CEO.

- Salford workforce disabled staff forum, Equal In Salford – is rescoping and reviewing its TOR and wants to strengthen how it informs and contributes into the council.
- Gaddum supporting the council staff carers group.
- Currently In the process of Recruiting 8 LD champions to take part in decision making panels across the council and health partners.
- Coproducing a self-advocate model for LD which will be used to Engage and recruit service users to inform 3 cross cutting priorities.

#### Salford CVS/VCSE sector

- A development worker to provide bespoke development / capacity-building support over a 12-month period for Disabled-people led and impairment-focused groups, specifically sensory and physical impairment-focused disabled groups.
- A funding pot to strengthen sensory and physical impairment focused community and voluntary groups / organisations in Salford.
- Create, develop and support a Network for groups / organisations to participate in with the aim of it becoming self-sustaining after 12 months
- Set up a network for Disabled-people led and impairment-focused groups, specifically sensory and physical impairment-focused disabled groups
- Commissioned inclusive communications training, disability awareness training, funding a support worker for the D/deaf community 2 days a week and grants to a number of disabled led VCSE organisations.

#### **Stockport**

- Advice services - in Stockport, we are consolidating our core debt support, welfare advice and information offer, adding a cost-of-living advice line, and investing in both benefits uptake work and Neighbourhoods based outreach.
- Warm spaces – Stockport council rolled out a Warm Spaces project last year in Winter, with over 120 venues provided. As part of this, we disseminated

communications about the issues with pre-payment meters. We are planning to run a similar programme this winter.

- Social Care Charging project – Project with the aim of maximising disabled people's benefits and supporting people to navigate the social care charging process and submit claims for Disability Related Expenditure (DRE) to reduce charges responding to concerns from the disabled community in Stockport. Disability Stockport is working with the Social Care team at Stockport Council to improve internal systems for disabled people.
- Retrofit - The Council's on-going relationship and coordination with Age-UK and our Climate Action Now strategy is helping us offer small-scale retrofitting support across the borough.
- Household Support Fund - Stockport Council has allocated £0.800m across seven Trusted Partners to target specific vulnerable support households including households with a disabled person, households with a pensioner and unpaid carers. Of this, Disability Stockport has been allocated £0.200m to support disabled people. Trusted Partners carry out an assessment of need with any support provided personalised to meet the needs of the recipient.
- In Stockport we have invested in creating a bespoke Cost of Living helpline for residents to access direct support for all benefits and debt advice; and to help in crisis including by providing fuel vouchers and referrals to food banks and other food projects. Over the last 5 months from April-August our Cost of Living Line has answered 2078 calls with answer rate of 93% and average time to answer is 30 seconds. We have consolidated our welfare and debt advice, crisis support, cost of living line with a more proactive approach to running benefit uptake campaigns for example on attendance allowance. We are working closely with the VCFSE to do benefit uptake work.
- We have close relationships with our DWP colleagues locally and they are part of a wider network SCAIN (Stockport Community Advice and Information Network) which shares good practice and coordinates our advice and advocacy services across the Borough.

- We are considering how we can incorporate the voice of lived realities into our EDI training and would support the GM Panel if they rolled this out. The lead for the Ability Rights Network is seeking to be on the GM Disabled People's Panel as a representative from Stockport.
- As part of the Autism Strategy, the Autism Team have requested funding to co-produce and co-deliver ten training sessions on Neurodiversity from individuals who have lived experience on Neurodiversity
- Engagement work – Adult Social Care are engaging with a wide range of their service users and community based groups such as Carers of Adults with a Learning Disability (CALD) on a regular basis. The lived reality based feedback is informing how we deliver our services.
- Adult Social Care- are developing a 'Keeping it Real Board' which will involve service users and carers in strategic level decision making.
- All Age Autism Board – Now includes several residents with lived experience (3 autistic individuals and 2 parents of autistic young people) and has an autistic adult as a co-chair and is a good example of people with lived experience driving a strategy. The Board is currently exploring options to fund autistic people for their time to join the Board. The Autism Partnership Board has written to TFGM expressing concerns around travel passes.
- Learning difficulties - Stockport has strong disability focused programmes, e.g. SEND, Autism, etc. which include the voice of lived experience.
- Engagement with disabled people – Stockport Council has worked with Sector 3 (our VCFSE support agency) and local VCFSE groups to launch 'Stockport Ability Rights Network,' which will be funded by the council over a 3 year period. The network will focus on engaging DPOs, people living with a disability and organisations that support disabled people to:
  - Improve communication and engagement with local disabled people
  - Help communities who experience multiple disadvantages to have their needs recognised and their views heard
  - Ensure that local services and policies are developed with the needs of disabled people
  - Celebrate and value our diverse communities jointly with partners.

## Tameside

The GM Big Disability Survey findings were circulated throughout the organisation to relevant teams. The findings have informed work-streams and recommendations have been addressed through a range of actions:

- Within Tameside's 2023-2027 Equality Strategy, we have committed to a range of actions aimed at removing barriers faced by disabled people, including:
  - Improving relationships with VCSE groups
  - Working with services to map barriers for protected groups
  - Developing inclusive communications approaches aimed at specific protected groups – through the use of varied communications methods (e.g. leaflets, visual graphics, videos), translated materials, appropriate formats (e.g. Braille, Easy Read).
  - Increasing the accessibility of consultations to seldom heard groups by providing easy read formats, paper versions etc.
  - Reviewing all Council physical spaces to ensure that these are accessible for people with physical disabilities and visual/hearing impairments as well people who are neurodivergent.
  - Advancing on the EDI training offer to staff to include training on neurodiversity.
  - Reviewing recruitment processes to improve recruitment of under-represented protected groups amongst the council workforce
  - Promoting the Council website's Recite Me accessibility tools which include an assistive toolbar enabling visitors to the website to customise content to suit their needs. As part of the assistive toolbar, visitors to the website can edit colour and text sizes, navigate the website using speech recognition software and utilise the screen reader function.

Across Tameside MBC, we have also addressed a number of the recommendations through the following actions:

- The development of community navigator roles, based in Tameside One, who will offer in-person assistance to help residents to access support by ensuring they are applying for the right source of funds and guide them through the process. Additionally, they will gather information, consider wider support needs, income maximisation and warm referrals for additional support.
- HSF funding has also been allocated towards financial support for those who are not in receipt of Government Cost of Living Payments.
- Tameside Libraries are now part of the Good Things Foundation National Databank, which can offer free SIM cards to adults who cannot afford to access the internet. Residents will normally receive data for up to 6 months.
- In August 2022 a Digital Inclusion officer was appointed, to develop and deliver a two-year programme of activities to address digital exclusion and digital skills.
- Tameside has developed a Digital Inclusion Plan, detailing the current schemes of work, key contacts and resources. The plan also incorporates the National Data bank work, Care leavers connectivity programme, refurb and recycling of digital equipment projects and GM wide projects being rolled out in Tameside.
- In June 2023, Tameside Council held a digital festival – ‘TechKnow.’ The TechKnow festival was two weeks dedicated to digital skills, training and support in Tameside, celebrating the great digital advances that are currently happening, to raise issues around the digital divide and awareness of support available to help people with their digital needs. The TechKnow festival was designed to encourage and support residents who wanted some help in using online technology, and aimed to reach out to people who are digitally excluded in the borough, over 700 people engaged with the festival.
- In September 2022, a full engagement event took place which was aimed at people with learning disabilities and autistic adults. This event was called The Big Chat, and this year, it focused on three key themes – Advocacy, Belonging and Good Health. As a result of discussions during the event, it became clear that both service users and professionals did not find it easy to

locate information about advocacy services, or what types of advocacy were on offer. Consequently, Tameside MBC and Voiceability (new Tameside Adult Social Care Advocacy provider) have updated the information on the advocacy web pages, and are working to raise awareness and understanding with clear information that is easily available in different formats.

- A Big Chat specifically for Autism is also being planned for April 2024 (World Autism Month).
- Recruitment for a newly created Learning Disability and Autism Team is underway within Adult Services. This team will support people who have a learning disability, autistic adults and also supporting the needs of young people coming through transition to help prepare them for adulthood.
- Adults Services has a Homes for All Transformation Team that focuses on ensuring there are fit for purpose homes for all; a key element of this is to consider the needs of people with learning disabilities and autistic adults. They work closely with providers, practitioners and local people and ensure that services are planned where possible, adaptable when needed, and people are appropriately involved through the accommodation process to live fulfilling and independent lives. There is a Homes for All Steering Group now set up where the housing options for vulnerable adults are considered, including planning of new housing for the future meeting the needs of young people as they transition to adulthood, bringing people back to Tameside who are living out of borough, and working with housing providers on new stock.
- Supported Employment services through Routes to Work continue to raise awareness of their supported employment offer, through active engagement of young people and adults, local providers, and schools and colleges, to increase take up of supported internships, paid employment, volunteering and work placements. They maintain a key focus on NEET (not in education, employment or training) work with the SEND cohort.
- Work is also being undertaken with the SEND Team and Economy, Employment and Skills Team to develop and increase the Supported Internship offer and this will be taken forward with funding through the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi). A Supported Internship offer is in place with a partnership model between Active Tameside, Tameside

Hospital and Tameside College. There are shared aspirations for supported internships to be available across a wider range of employment sectors.

- To improve access to information, Adult Social Care have appointed a dedicated communications officer.
- Both the Learning Disabilities and Autism Partnership Boards have people with lived experience as key members and who are involved in discussions, reviewing council activities, making decisions and raising any key concerns. The Learning Disability Partnership Board have chosen their three priorities to focus on for 2023/24 which are advocacy, belonging and good health but with a spotlight on mental health.
- A new EDI training for staff across the council has been rolled out, including training on socio-economic disadvantage.
- The voice of people with lived experience is at the heart of all training in Adult Services is being delivered in partnership with service users to ensure people are listened to about how they want to be supported. People with lived experience also form part of Adult Social Care recruitment panels for key roles that have learning disabilities and autism responsibility. When appropriate, people with learning disabilities and/or autism are invited to be part of adults commissioning processes, whether that is to develop service specifications, or to evaluate the tenders that come in.
- Tameside Council have mandatory e-learning modules on topics including Autism awareness, learning disabilities and mental health for the social care workforce. Both the LD and Autism Partnership Boards will have a key focus on rolling out the nationally mandated Oliver McGowan training The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism | Health Education England ([hee.nhs.uk](http://hee.nhs.uk))
- Through the Partnership Boards, with health having been identified as a key priority since the pandemic, there has been a real focus on improving take up of annual health checks with targeted action with GP Practices. There are Identified Learning Disability Champions in all Practices who meet to share learning, best practice and training. GP practices with a lower uptake of Annual Health Checks (AHC) have been identified; to support these practices from early on in the annual cycle to try to address this moving forward.



## Trafford

- We are exploring the development of a Disabled Peoples' Organisation for Trafford through discussions with Beyond Empower and Trafford Community Collective together with the GM Coalition of Disabled People as part of ensuring we have an over-arching voice for disabled people living in the Borough. More work to be done although capacity is currently a barrier to progressing.
- Trafford Deaf Partnership (TDP) which brings deaf residents together with representatives of organisations such as GMP, Trafford NHS ICB Locality, (formerly Trafford CCG), Healthwatch, various Council service areas e.g., Adult Social Care, Licensing & Taxis, Bereavement Services and Manchester Deaf Centre. The aim is to advise on how to make services more accessible to deaf people especially those who use BSL and require BSL Interpretation services. The TDP meet bi-monthly at Trafford Town Hall.
- Beyond Empower / Empower You who support healthy, active lives for disabled people and work to make activities more accessible for disabled people learning from their lived experience. [Empower You - Beyond Empower](#)
- We have an extensive list of groups run by and working with disabled people in Trafford and share these lists with lead officers who organise consultations on local initiatives and improvements. For example, our Planning Team are currently working on a bid for funds to improve Longford Park and Stadium in Stretford, so these groups are being invited to put forward suggestions on design improvements and accessibility etc.
- Trafford Deaf Advocacy Service is funded by our Commissioning Team, and work closely with TDP and partners, providing a liaison and advocacy service between individual deaf residents and service providers particularly in health care, local businesses, Council Tax team, DWP etc.
- We have BlueSci that offers Trafford Community Mental Health Services – some activities commissioned by the Council and work closely in partnership.

- Voice of BME Trafford offer exercise classes such as 'healthy hearts and hips' to local people particularly those from African, African-Caribbean and Asian communities. Some activities commissioned by the Council and work closely in partnership.
- Trafford Disability Drama Group for adults 'living with disability labels' - [Trafford Directory | Trafford Disability Drama Group](#)
- Lived Experience Advisory Panels (LEAP) - Parents Forum's Lived Experience Advisory Panels are for Trafford parent carers who have lived experience of SEND services, and who can share their insights and experiences.
- We have a concessionary leisure pass for disabled people.
- Trafford Carers Centre [Contact us \(traffordcarerscentre.org.uk\)](http://traffordcarerscentre.org.uk)
- Our Welfare Rights team specialise in complex cases and the majority of our clients either have a disability or are deemed as being vulnerable. 15.7% of referrals come via Adult Social Care and 13% come from the NHS and CMHT's. Although these referral figures appear low it is important to note that 55% of total referrals are self-referrals directly from the client. PIP is the most common issue for the team after benefit checks with 26.7% of our total number of referrals being PIP related.
- Good news story - a client who came to our team out of desperation and the officer asked the client if they were in receipt of Severe Disability Premium payments. Despite seeking advice from other information and advice services this had never been mentioned previously. An application was completed, and the client later received a letter stating that not only were they eligible the claim was also being backdated to 2017 and the client was awarded £19,000. This additional benefit alongside the backdated award means that the client can now spend money on things to assist with her disabilities. It also highlights the need for experienced advisors who are aware of the lesser-known benefits which can make a massive difference in quality of life.

## Wigan

Wigan Council has noted that the recommendations came at a great point for Wigan, it will influence the new equality approach and the new era of the Deal. We are connected with the GM Disability Panel through our EDI member – Embrace and we also have great working relationships with other local groups who are championing disability equality.

Specific pieces of work include:

- Wigan Council are continuing to work on the New Era for the borough building on the foundations of the Deal. We continue to work with our staff, VCFSE sector, residents, businesses and communities to coproduce the next steps, recognising existing gaps, inconsistencies, and the unprecedented challenges we face and go bigger and deeper in the New Era. There continues to be a specific focus on:
  - inequality and a commitment to address it throughout our philosophy, strategy, and approach.
  - community health and wealth building and sustainability as key ingredients to improving outcomes for residents, communities, and businesses.
  - a more confident, mature, and systematic approach to deep engagement and co-production at strategy, service and operational levels.
- In Wigan we are about to embark on a large engagement project to influence a new Wigan borough equality approach (Launch November 2023). Happy Smiles CIC (Disability equality training provider) are joint Independent Facilitators for the engagement project (With Everything Human Rights). We also have a few additional VCFSE members with a focus on disability as members of the EDI Steering Group and Equality Strategy Design Group who support and overlooks this engagement project. The conversations will cover a wide range of policy themes, transport, digital, housing, employment, health etc.
- Through the Deal for adult social care and health we take a proactive approach to supporting people to live their best lives.
- We focus on people's strengths, assets and skills to help them achieve their aspirations and support overall health and wellbeing.
- Shared lives service - [What is Shared Lives? \(wigan.gov.uk\)](https://www.wigan.gov.uk/what-is-shared-lives/)

- We have two health development officers working with our supporting living teams who work closely with both residents and staff and have been using a test and learn approach to supporting them with changes and improvements in health and wellbeing, including food, shopping, cooking, being active, getting connected etc. They are seeing positive changes and engagement from residents and staff.

### Housing

- We have a good understanding of the need for accessible accommodation across all tenures from our Housing Needs Assessment (2020), this is now being refreshed for 2024.
- We are currently in the process of completing a new asset management strategy which will focus on providing quality homes for all.
- We also have an ambitious new build programme which includes extra care facilities in the heart of communities. The Council has a 'future-proofing' policy so that, over time, more homes will be 'suitable' because the common major adaptations will already have been done.
- In addition to this, we have a committed aids and adaptations team whose prime aim is to ensure people can remain in their own homes and receive the adaptations to do this- this is a positive step and we have seen an increase in referrals as we recognise that being in your own home has a positive impact on individuals long term health.
- We keep a record of adapted council homes and our HomeFinder scheme aims to match people to adapted properties.
- This approach is more difficult in privately owned homes because of restrictions on how DFG is spent. However, we are exploring alternative schemes to support modifications to the homes of older private owners as their needs change.

### Social care (charging)

- The council continues to contribute to national work and lobbying for changes to the way adult social care is funded to reduce the burden on local residents,

and for a sustainable funding settlement for local government and adult social care.

### Training (culture change)

- Our Senior Management Team took part in a Leadership training day (Nov 2022), which was hosted by two local groups (including a local disability training provider CIC). We intend to repeat this again in 2023.
- An internal inclusion plan has been drafted and been codesigned with staff.
- We are working to commission a local provider to work alongside us and increase knowledge and understanding around EDI, and the protected characteristics including disability.
- We also currently work currently with a local provider who delivers bespoke disability awareness workshops to some areas of the organisation and specific training. For example, around positive risk taking when working with disabled people.
- A pilot learning session has taken place in our Children's services around EDI awareness. Following the success, the training is being rolled out to all managers then staff, by a local provider we have worked in partnership with. This will be an initial awareness, followed by specific learning around the protected and Wigan additional characteristics followed up by a final phase bringing this back together and considering issues such as intersectionality.
- Our internal inclusion plan has been agreed by our Senior Management Team and been endorsed by our Confident Council Scrutiny committee. This focuses on key areas:
  - Engagement, comms and co-design
  - Learning
  - Data and insight.
- We continue to work closely with a local provider who delivers bespoke disability awareness workshops to some areas of the organisation and specific training. For example, around positive risk taking when working with disabled people.

### Voice of the Disabled People

- As a council, one of our most important responsibilities is to work in partnership with our communities to support and enable people to meet and overcome the challenges they face and to make the most of and create opportunities. Over the last 10 years, we've been trying to do this through The Deal. However, we know that the world has changed since then, so now we have taken stock and will re-set. We have been running a host of 'new era' conversations, including working with community-led engagement through the Community Connection Group (A group of community leaders who have worked alongside us to shape the process, engaged their networks and communities to explore the questions, and helped us interpret the feedback we got to develop recommendations). Wigan and Leigh Embrace (members of the GM Disabled Peoples Panel) sat on the group.
- Community Capacity Officers (CCOs) in neighbourhoods can support residents to set up their own group or to connect with existing groups. Help with setting up a constituted group.
- CCOs can work with VCFSE organisations who are supporting disabled residents to ensure they can be fully accessible. For example training, adaptations.
- CCOs linking groups into different Council departments, e.g. events team.
- Provide external funding support to community organisations supporting disabled residents, some recent examples include (but not inclusive) The Hamlet £10k, Standish Lip Reading Society £10k and Ashton Deaf Club.
- Support other Council teams looking to access funding to support disabled residents – The Communities team have worked with the 'Be Well' team to identify funding to install new pool pods for wheelchair users.
- Making sure that groups can network with each other through neighbourhood networks and our boroughwide network.
- Wigan Council attends Wigan Access Committee, a local advisory group. We address and issues raised and currently supporting them to recruit new members.
- In Wigan we are about to embark on a large engagement project to influence a new Wigan borough equality approach (Launch November 2023). Happy Smiles CIC (Disability equality training provider) are joint Independent

Facilitators for the engagement project (With Everything Human Rights). We also have a few additional VCFSE members with a focus on disability as members of the EDI Steering Group and Equality Strategy Design Group.

- Wigan Council attends the GM Equality Officers group and GM NHS Equality Group and Tackling Inequalities Board.
- We have met with Wigan and Leigh Embrace who sit on the GM Disabled Peoples Panel to discuss how Wigan can implement the recommendations and how the report can influence the new Wigan borough equality approach.
- Disabled people equality community groups, including Wigan and Leigh Embrace sit on the local EDI Steering Group.

### Digital

- Henshaw's are providing a provision of digital enablement support for adults with visual impairments. This includes assessments, technology training, help with grant applications (to support purchasing digital equipment), skills for seeing training, digital information, advice, and guidance. Our web and innovation team are shadowing some of this work so we can learn from the lived experience of those with visual impairments (trying to use tech and get online). This project is for 12 months which started in January 2023. We have managed to secure further funding until 01.01.2025
- We are continuing to look how we gift tablet devices and Echo Shows to disabled adults (over 18s) or over 50's. Recipients will receive volunteer support to use the device and learn basic digital skills. We are also developing further training for our TechMate volunteers and the council team. staff on the different software/assistive tech to help people to get online.
- Staff and volunteers who support residents with technology received training from Ability Net to equip them with the knowledge and skills to assist individuals with disabilities in accessing and using technology. This empowered our staff and volunteers to provide better support, enhance accessibility and promote inclusivity in our TechMate tea party sessions (digital support drop ins).
- Our Digital Communities Partnership is growing from strength to strength, and we have recently gained 4 more new members which include Wigan Warriors

Community Foundation, Wigan Athletic Community Trust, Green Grass Community Centre and Age UK taking the partnership to 24. The team visit and support all members with basic digital skills including those with disabilities. They also train the volunteers so that they can run their own sessions and educate them about sustained support which is a crucial step towards a more inclusive and supportive digital world

### Leisure

- The local Be Well leisure offer for disabled people [Active Inclusive \(wigan.gov.uk\)](#) alongside the wider leisure offer.

### Cost of living/ Maximising income

- Adopted the Socio-Economic duty in Wigan in 2019.
- Carer is also a local protected characteristic in Wigan.
  - Staff support who are carers include Carers Champions
  - Carers are entitled to 10 days(pro-rata) carers leave per year. This is in addition to Special Leave, this offers vital support for our staff who are carers at those times when they need it most.
- Working with and principal member of the GM Poverty Alliance.
- Within the Household Support Fund October 2022 to March 2023, Authorities had the flexibility within the scheme to identify which vulnerable households are in most need of support and apply their own discretion when identifying eligibility, in doing so particular consideration should be given to households who cannot increase their income through work. Wigan's HSF for this period for households with disabled family members was households in receipt of Council Tax Disabled Band Reduction received a single award of £80 (awarding £104k across the borough). There will be no application process with payments being made by Post Office cash voucher or directly into bank accounts. (Cash first is a key priority in Wigan).
- Household Support Fund April 2023 – March 2024 had made a one-off cash award by BACs or PO cash voucher to households receiving a Council Tax Disabled Band Reduction, awards totalling £148,170 to 1,347 families.



- Additional support has been delivered through referral and self-service requests:

Electrical Appliance	21
Energy	960
Food	728
<b>Total</b>	<b>1709</b>

- Many awards for food and energy are ongoing monthly awards.
- The current Household Support Fund has been developed to encourage the boroughs unpaid carers to make applications to receive support and help towards their rising food and energy costs. So far, we have made awards to 51 carers totalling nearly £3,000.
- Income Maximisation is a priority, engaging with our residents making sure every contact counts, through our welfare rights teams, welfare support and our Here for You campaign.
- We continue to use our own Welfare Rights Team and our partners to deliver income maximisation for our vulnerable residents who may have entitlements to benefits that they were unaware of.
- A series of 16 Energy Advice Events including income maximisation are being held in our Life Centres from October to December. These events are in partnership with our own Local Welfare Support Team, AWARM and partners Green Doctors, the CAB and Age UK.
- Age UK offer income maximisation for older adults and older adults with disabilities; as well as handyperson services to help people stay safely at home for longer.
- Money Advice Referral Tool developed in partnership with Greater Manchester Poverty Action Group (GMPA) – the aim of the tool is to help identify appropriate expert organisations to refer residents struggling financially to, to maximise their income and reduce their need for emergency assistance in the future. We have launched the tool in Wigan, and this is being used across our warm welcoming spaces and other VCSE organisations.
- This year our warm welcoming spaces will have refresher training and support on the Money Advice Referral Tool to make sure as many residents as

possible access help and support. We are looking to develop roadshows to take to venues to provide advice and support to customers visiting,

- We cascaded the GM Winterwise booklet to support older adults and older adults with disabilities with advice and guidance for keeping well during winter, which included a wide range of information from income maximisation (e.g., promotion of pension credit top up); strength and balance; eating well; etc [Winterwise guide - Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)
- The Winterwise booklet will be shared again this year, with preparations underway currently.
- The council has developed a programme of support '[Here for you](#)' and organised a large scale partnership event on 15<sup>th</sup> November.
- Our [Supported Employment Service](#) (SES) is to support people with a disability or long-term health condition to gain and sustain paid employment.

## Data

- Data gathering forms a key part of the part of our Equality Impact Assessments. Specifically, the Impact Analysis action plan which requires decision makers to gather the existing information available, to identify whether the proposed strategy/project may give rise to a discriminatory outcome or unmet need. All projects/changes are expected to have an EIA.
- We are refreshing our approach to EIAs and support given to staff. Within this review we will be looking how best to undertake an annual cumulative impact assessment
- In Wigan, as an employer, our Organisation Development Inclusion and Talent Team have been reviewing how to improve the recording of equality information of our staff to help us support individuals.
- We are currently developing interactive Census based datasets which will be made available online for staff and communities to use. Included in this will be data on age, sex, race, religion/belief, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, legal partnership status and armed forces.

## Disabled voters

- From May 2023, Returning Officers needed to take all reasonable steps to provide support for disabled voters at polling stations, as required by the Elections Act 2022.
- Wigan worked in collaboration with GMCA and the other nine local authorities to ensure that all polling stations were accessible to the needs of voters with disabilities.
- In the run up to the May 2023 elections we wrote to all residents with a household notification letter (HNL) and included with a postal vote application for non-postal voters which gave an alternative option of voting for disabled voters.
- Further communication was included in:
  - Council Tax booklet/ Borough life magazine.
  - Housing residents' weekly newsletter.
  - Social media posts.
  - Internal communications/ training to polling station staff.
  - Posters in Libraries.
  - Wigan Council video channels – Instagram/TikTok

#### Accessibility at Polling stations

- Some temporary buildings, and all 'portable' polling stations were fitted with temporary ramps to assist wheelchair users with entering and leaving their building.
- A new information page on the council's website was created to provide information on the improvements to accessibility in polling stations and included a section where residents could request additional support at their polling station.

#### Signage

- All polling stations are provided with a large Polling Station sign to attach outside so
- voters with can easily identify the building is being used polling station.
- Additional signage is also provided for directing voters on how to enter and exit the
- building.

#### Polling station staff training

- Polling station staff have been given extra 'accessibility training' which included:
- Information on the barriers faced by disabled voters at the polling station and how polling station staff can help reduce them.
- Providing an information video by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB).
- Highlighting and raising awareness that not all disabilities are visible or obvious, and that polling station staff should not make assumptions about what equipment voters might need.
- Stating the importance of clear communication about the voting process.
- Providing training on the use of equipment provided at the polling station to enable or make voting easier in the polling station for disabled voters, including the tactile device.
- Providing awareness that voters with sight loss may use apps or torches on their mobile phones as an aid better lighting.

#### Polling station equipment/signage

- All polling stations included equipment and signage to assist, and support disabled when voting