

Equity and Inclusion Scheme 2022-24

Driving positive change to
make a difference



West Midlands
Combined Authority

Contents

About the WMCA	3
Foreword by Chief Executive	4
Introducing the Scheme	5
Our Vision and Commitment	6 - 7
Link to key strategies	8 - 9
Our Legal Duties	10 - 11
Social Inequality	12
The Impact of Covid-19	13
Summary of key Trends/Issues	14
Our Workforce	15
Understanding the Issues and Connecting with Residents	16 - 17
Achievements and Progress	18 - 22
Next Steps - Our Equity Objectives and Priorities	23 - 30
Monitoring and Reviewing the Scheme	31
Equality Action Plan	32 - 56

About the WMCA

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) was created through a devolution deal in 2016, where central government in Westminster gave us powers and money to improve the lives of people in the West Midlands by ‘propelling the economy to further growth’ in the context of international, national and regional challenges – including a skill deficit, legacy of worklessness, public service challenges and connectivity. We are a partnership between 18 local authorities and other bodies including Local Enterprise Partnerships, the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner and West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority. We have seven constituent local authority members who make up the WMCA Board.

We take on a range of roles to deliver on our shared regional ambitions, ensuring that our activity builds on work at a local level, led by local authorities. In some areas we are responsible for delivery of services (e.g., regional public transport and the provision of adult skills), while in other areas we convene and guide the work of partners (e.g., developing economic strategy to support regional businesses and unlocking sites for housing and regeneration schemes). We also play an advocacy role, amplifying the voice partners in the region to solve shared challenges.

Our vision is that of a “more prosperous and better connected West Midlands which is fairer, greener and healthier”.

Our Corporate Aims and Objectives (2022-24) outline six aims to help realise this vision:

- Promoting inclusive economic growth in every corner of the region
- Ensuring everyone has the opportunity to benefit
- Connecting our communities by delivering transport and unlocking housing and regeneration schemes
- Reducing carbon emissions to net zero and enhancing the environment
- Securing new resources and powers from local government, and
- Developing our organisation and our role as a good regional partner



Foreword by Chief Executive

I am delighted to present the West Midlands Combined Authority's 2022-24 Equity and Inclusion Scheme. The scheme sets out our vision, ambitions and proposed objectives for promoting inclusion and tackling inequity over the next three years. Our Scheme is supported by an action plan and is fully aligned within our wider Corporate Strategy, which was agreed and published in November 2021.

An inclusive West Midlands economy where everyone can thrive is fundamental to our vision. If we are to realise our vision of improving the quality of life of everyone who lives and works in the region, it is vital that equality, diversity, inclusion and equity are our guiding principles. We can only make a real and valuable difference to the quality of people's lives by embedding equalities in everything that we do.

The scale of the regional equality challenge means that we need to be bold, think outside the box, listen to what our residents and communities are telling us and work collaboratively to turn the tide.

We will also continue to strive to diversify our workforce ensuring it fully reflects the diversity of our residents. We will use the collective experience of that diverse workforce to deliver a high-quality service that meets the needs and expectations of all communities.

We will be putting our Strategic equity plan into practice over the next three years. It is vital we meet the equitable objectives we set out in this plan to maintain the confidence of all the communities we serve.

We all have a role to play in realising our equality vision and we can each influence this through our work, our behaviour, and our interactions with others.

I am looking forward to working with staff, partners and key regional stakeholders to make a difference to people's lives in the region

Laura Shoaf

Chief Executive



Introducing the Scheme

This Equity and Inclusion scheme sets out our vision, ambitions and proposed objectives for promoting equity, diversity and inclusion over the next three years. It intends to showcase the actions we will take to reduce the impact of inequity, making a real and valuable difference to the quality of people's lives.

The scheme takes a holistic approach, recognising that true commitment to equitable outcomes and diversity goes beyond just the nine protected characteristics. It has been produced following engagement with colleagues and interest groups in the West Midlands region and it builds on the knowledge that we have gathered over the past few years.

It recognises the scale of the regional equality challenge, particularly as the region recovers from the impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic. It is based on the premise that progress can only be achieved through strong corporate ownership, effective partnership working and by listening to what our residents and communities are telling us and responding appropriately.

The process behind developing this scheme has enabled us to reflect on our work streams and assess what upcoming challenges will require a firm focus. As an organisation, we aim to continuously improve and build upon our successes whilst ensuring inclusive growth is at the forefront of our deliverables and future plans.

The Scheme is divided into a number of sections, which together provide a complete picture of our holistic approach to inclusion, equity and diversity.



Our Vision and Commitment

Everything we do at the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) is geared towards improving some aspect of life for people across the region – that’s our reason for being here and it drives every move we make.

An inclusive West Midlands economy in which everyone can thrive and no-one is left behind is fundamental to our vision. Our residents must feel the benefits, in terms of physical and mental wellbeing, jobs and economic opportunities for all in healthy, inclusive, well connected, supportive and vibrant communities.

These aims have never been more important than at present.

The wealth inequality gap continues to grow; health inequalities are rife; there are significant issues with poverty, youth unemployment, low skills and poor school performance. People’s race, class, gender, disability or age continue to determine, at least to some extent, their life outcomes and access to opportunities.

The economic and social impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been severe and those who are already at the margins have been hit hardest. Not only has there been disproportionate impact on particular communities but existing structural disadvantages have been exacerbated nationally and regionally.

Despite our efforts to close the inequality gap, we remain a highly unequal and inequitable society. The challenge is significant and there is a role for us to play in driving positive change in the region.

To enable change we need a bolder, more systemic and more holistic approach to tackling inequity.

We need to fully understand the extent of existing inequalities and how they are interlinked.

We need to recognise the collective and differential impact of our strategies on our communities making sure that there is no disproportionate impact.

We need to work with our communities (especially those whose voices have not been heard) to design solutions that work for them.

We need to proactively seek ways to break the cycle of disadvantage for so many of our communities and support initiatives that work to close the inequality gap and drive forward equity.

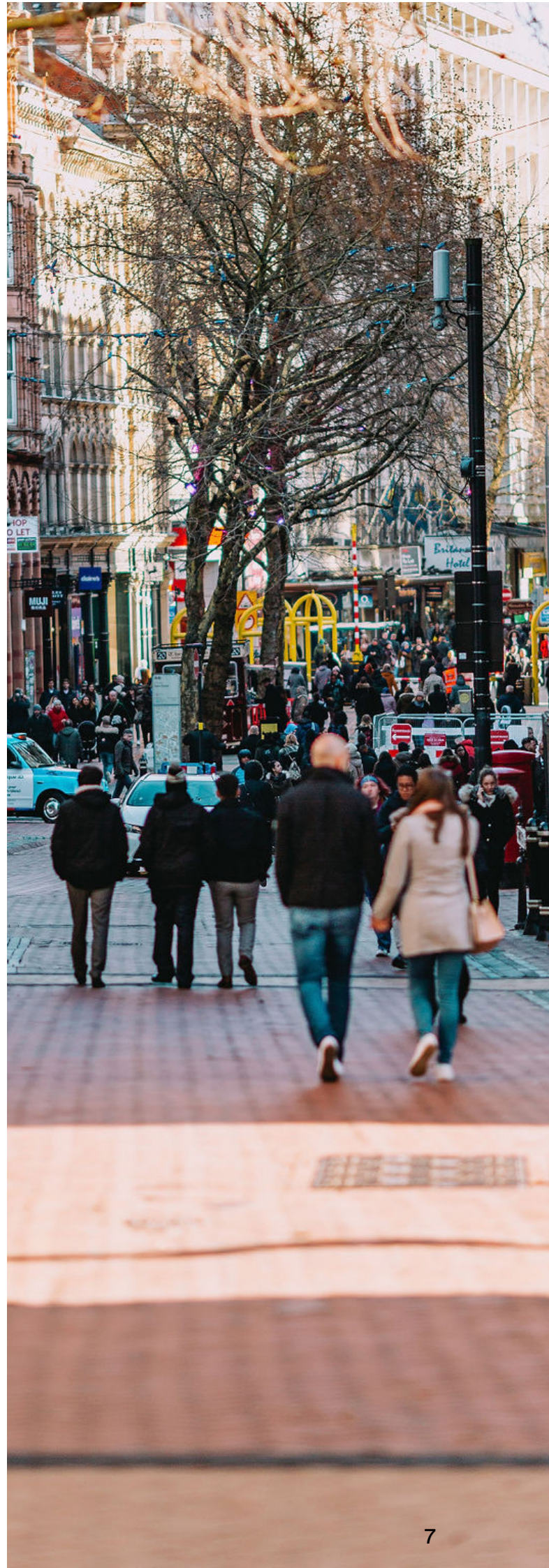
Last but not least, equitable outcomes and inclusion need to truly be integral to everything that we do and a cross-cutting theme across all key priorities, strategies and objectives. We need to ensure that the voice of the citizen is integral to how we plan, decide and deliver as an organisation.

Our Equity and Diversity Vision is fundamental to our overall vision of improving the quality of life of everyone who lives and works in the West Midlands and is embedded within our values and strategic aims and objectives.

If we are to succeed in realising our organisational vision of “building a more prosperous and better connected West Midlands which is fairer, greener and healthier”, inclusion, equity and diversity need to be our guiding principles.

A summary of key strategic principles are outlined below. We will:

- Work in a way which promotes equitable outcomes, diversity and inclusion and will model the changes we expect of others, also ensuring our employment, governance, decision-making and partnership working arrangements reflect these aspirations
- Take into account and value individual and group differences and implement policies and strategies that recognise people's different needs whilst also recognising intersectional commonalities
- Ensure our policies, strategies and services meet the key needs of our communities and that, where relevant, there is citizen and partner involvement and influence in decision making, planning, policy and service delivery.
- Challenge, where practically possible, any instances of inequity
- Ensure our services are equally accessible to all by identifying barriers to access and by working towards using more accessible and inclusive solutions
- Embed equality, diversity, inclusion and equity within our corporate priorities and key deliverables and monitor our performance in order to evaluate the effectiveness of our initiatives



Link to key strategies

WMCA Corporate Aims and Objectives 2022-24

The Strategy sets out the overall vision, aims and objectives of the WMCA, and articulates its role in responding to the key challenges facing the region. The strategy has six core aims, that of promoting inclusive economic growth in every corner of the region; ensuring everyone has the opportunity to benefit; connecting our communities; reducing carbon emissions; securing new powers and resources from central government and developing our organisation and our role as a regional partner

Movement for Growth

“Movement for Growth”, Transport for the West Midlands (TFWM) Strategic Transport Plan is the long term, overall transport strategy document for the West Midlands. Together with a 2026 Delivery Plan, Movement for Growth details ambitious plans to greatly improve the transport system to support economic growth and regeneration; underpin new development and housing; and improve air quality, the environment and social inclusion. Providing transport investment to reduce transport poverty and social isolation, health inequalities and encourage positive mental health is a key objective in the strategy.

Local Industrial Strategy

The Local Industrial Strategy sets out the strategic priorities and opportunities for driving growth and productivity improvements.

Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)

SEP sets out the vision for improving the quality of life for everyone in the West Midlands. The plan shows how the WMCA will use devolved powers and resources to deliver a stronger West Midlands with a focus on skills, innovation, transport and inward investment.

West Midlands State of the Region Report

The State of the Region Report provides an annual review of performance in the West Midlands across a range of economic and social indicators. The report provides an outline of where the region stands performance wise, to also include key equality performance figures. Developed in collaboration with key partners, the State of the Region Report outlines key areas of future focus, with a strong focus on supporting positive equitable outcomes.

Health of the Region Report 2020

The HOCR 2020 report highlighted persistent and widening health inequalities across the region, and how these stark inequalities were exposed and exacerbated by Covid-19. It creates a common purpose with a multitude of partners, a framework for whole system commitment on key priorities and a platform for continued action on inequalities. The report represents a fundamental shift towards tackling the entrenched social disadvantages that underlie the causes of poor health.

WM2041

A strategy to support the region achieving a net zero carbon target by 2041. A five-year plan highlights short and medium-term actions to meet the climate crisis with inclusivity, prosperity and fairness

Numerous additional strategies, policies and schemes have been developed to help support our wider objectives. including:

- Regional Skills Plan
- Skills Deal
- Housing Deal
- Single Commissioning Framework
- West Midlands on the Move
- Thrive West Midlands
- Inclusive Growth Decision-Making Tool
- #WM2041



Our Legal Duties

The Equality Act 2010 is the law that protects against discrimination and helps achieve equal opportunities in the workplace and in service provision.

The Act protects people from discrimination on the grounds covered by the previous equality laws. These grounds are now called 'protected characteristics'. They are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

The Act also promotes equality of opportunity to prevent discrimination arising in the first place.

The Public Sector Equality Duty came into force in April 2011. It replaced three previous duties on race, disability and gender, bringing them into a single duty, and extended it to cover age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment. Its aim is to embed equality considerations into the day-to-day work of public authorities, so they actively tackle discrimination and inequality and help make society fairer.

As a public sector organisation, the WMCA needs to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any related prohibited conduct;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a 'relevant protected characteristic' and persons who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Knowing our communities – Regional inequalities at a glance

The West Midlands Metropolitan Area comprises Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

Key equality highlights (as per the 2011 Census) are presented below.

Estimated Population:

The population was 2,916,458 in mid-2018.

Population density is the highest in Birmingham, with 42.6 people per hectare and lowest in Solihull with 12.1 people per hectare. On average, population density is 31.8%, the average for England is 4.2%.

The West Midlands Metropolitan area has the second highest fertility rate of all UK regions, is ethnically diverse and has a younger than average population. The growing population is likely to become increasingly diverse. The changing population may result in the need for more infrastructure and pressure on the environment.

Race and Ethnic Background

The West Midlands Metropolitan area has the largest non-White regional population outside of London. Asian or Asian British is the ethnic group that makes up the biggest non-white proportion of the population.

Faith or Belief

People in the West Midlands Metropolitan area have a greater level of religious affiliation than in England overall.

Sex

The split between the sexes (50.5% female and 49.5% male) is similar to England and Wales.

Age

The West Midlands Metropolitan area has one of the highest proportions of population aged under 16 and a lower proportion of people aged over 65 compared with other regions. Birmingham specifically is described as the youngest city in Europe, with under 25s accounting for nearly 40% of the population. The West Midlands Metropolitan area also generally has a lower percentage of people aged 65+ with the exception of Solihull and Walsall that have higher proportions of people above retirement age than nationally.

Sexual Orientation

2.3% of the West Midlands population identified themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual in 2018. However, key organisations such as Stonewall estimate the figure to be higher at 5-7%.

Disability

The West Midlands Metropolitan area has a larger percentage of people in households with a limiting long-term illness (6% of households compared to 4.7% in England and Wales). It also has a slightly larger proportion of disabled people than England and Wales (19% versus 18% in England and Wales).



Social Inequality

There is significant social inequity throughout the West Midlands Metropolitan area. Almost half of households located within the region fall within the 20% most deprived areas in England. Birmingham is the most deprived local authority within the metropolitan area, ranking 7th out of the total 317 English authorities (2019 indices of deprivation). Overall, except for Solihull, all local authorities within the WMCA area, fall within the top 100 local authorities for levels of deprivation, with Walsall, Wolverhampton and Sandwell falling within the top 25.

Unemployment across the WMCA is higher than the national average, with Birmingham having the second highest unemployment rate in the country at 7.8%. Average incomes in the West Midlands are below the national average and there is a prevalence of low value, low wage and low skill work. Youth unemployment is also a profound issue alongside qualification attainment, with approximately 30% of young people within the West Midlands Metropolitan area achieving less than 5 GCSEs, putting them at a disadvantage when getting onto the career ladder. The West Midlands Metropolitan area has the highest proportion of the working age population with no qualifications amongst all English regions, while skills shortages are also especially stark.

Both regionally and nationally poverty has shifted more towards in-work households (due to low wages, zero hour contracts and job insecurity) while the costs of housing are increasing significantly, pushing many people into poverty.

Only half of people in the region can afford to buy a home and three out of ten under 40s can only afford to live in the region if they live in social housing. There has been a decline in home ownership and social renting and an increase in private renting (for many households this means poor condition private

housing with high rents and little security). Around 1 in 5 neighbourhoods in the WMCA area have high levels of overcrowding and poor housing.

Digital inequalities are also stark - 13% of West Midlands residents have never sent an online message or email (compared to 7.8% nationally), with the region having the highest proportion of people who are offline across England.

The impact of deprivation is reflected in the health and wellbeing of the region. The West Midlands has the highest percentage of obese adults in England, with almost a third of residents spending less than half an hour a week exercising – 2 hours less than the Government recommendation. By the age of 11, a quarter of children within the region are already at an increased risk of developing health issues such as Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease as well as anxiety and depression due to obesity. Those in poorer households are also much more likely to experience mental health issues.

Ethnic minorities, disabled people, young people and women are more likely to face higher rates of poverty, unemployment or poor employment, low qualification/skills levels and are less likely to hold housing wealth. They are also more likely to live in deprived areas and experience physical and mental health inequalities. Rates of poverty are as high as 50% for those who are Black and Bangladeshi and Pakistani origin and for disabled people.

The Impact of Covid-19

The evidence base shows that inequalities have been exacerbated as a result of Covid-19. The protected characteristics most impacted by the pandemic and most likely to be impacted by the recession are young people, older people (due to the direct health impact), women, single parents (90% of whom are women), people from lower socio-economic groups and with lower educational levels, ethnic minorities and disabled people. These groups are more likely to be/have been affected for a number of reasons:

- Risk of exposure to Covid-19 or/and severity of symptoms
- Exacerbated wider health inequalities
- Rising levels of unemployment and increased poverty levels
- Accelerated automation impacting on this groups more
- Covid-induced educational and skills inequalities
- Increased transport barriers
- Worsening mental health
- Worsening physical activity levels
- Domestic abuse risks
- Increased risks of housing poverty or/and homelessness
- Access to information and key support services



Summary of key Trends/Issues

- The region has seen significant population growth over the past decade, and it is projected that recent trends will continue.
- Births in the West Midlands Metropolitan area have been increasing at a higher rate than the national average with implications for employment and housing (housing demand will continue to increase).
- As people continue to live longer there will also be an increase in the percentage of people over the age of 65 and people with disabilities with potential implications for a number of areas, such as transport and health and social services.
- The working age population will make up a smaller percentage of the population.
- The growing population will likely become increasingly diverse.
- Social inequity remains an issue with increased levels of multiple deprivation, high unemployment levels and low levels of qualifications.
- Segregation between different cultural groups is also continuing with distinct concentrations of Minority Ethnic communities within the area.
- There is an increase in jobs requiring qualifications within the West Midlands but residents lack the necessary skills and qualifications to gain employment within these areas.
- In the West Midlands, transport poverty is widely dispersed across the region but is more concentrated in urban peripheral areas. Difficulty accessing transport has a confounding effect on access to job opportunities and education.
- Automation is rapidly accelerating and is more likely to impact those with lower levels of education and in lower paid employment. It is also more likely to impact young people as many roles that offer a first step onto the career ladder are roles more likely at risk of automation.
- Digital competencies are increasingly in demand - as society shifts more towards online systems and phasing out face-to-face interaction, those who do not possess sufficient skills or knowledge (typically those from lower socio-economic backgrounds) will struggle to adapt.
- Covid-19 has already further exacerbated existing inequalities. Periods of economic downturn further widen economic and social inequalities and may have significant impact on budget allocation and service delivery.

An understanding of key regional inequalities and future trends/risks help us determine key areas of focus and enables us to refine our equity priorities and objectives.



Our Workforce

Analysis of key workforce and recruitment data enables us to identify gaps and develop solutions that can help support our diversity aspirations. A summary of key statistical information (September 2021) is included below.

Sex

52% of our workforce are women. The representation of women at senior positions is slightly lower with 43.3% (of employees paid between £43,000 and £52,000 p.a. being women and 41.9% of employees paid over £52,000 p.a. being women.

Race

30.5% of our workforce is from minority ethnic backgrounds, which is higher than the national average but lower than the West Midlands Metropolitan area average. The representation of minority ethnic employees at salary level 4 positions is lower, with 28% of employees paid between £43,000 and £52,000 p.a. being from minority ethnic backgrounds and 25.5% paid over £52,000 p.a. being of a minority ethnic background.

Disability

12.6% (81) of our workforce have declared that they have a disability with no significant variation by salary level.

Age

% by Age	
16-25	7.2
26-30	13.4
31-35	13.1
36-40	17
41-50	28.2
51-65	19.3
66+	0.8
No age given	0.9

Pay Gap

From April 2018 organisations are legally required to report their median and mean gender pay gap. The 'mean' gender pay gap shows the difference in mean pay between female and male employees (that is the average of the total of all employees' pay) while the 'median' pay gap shows the difference in median pay (that is putting all male/female employees in a line and identifying the pay of the person in the middle).

Our median gender pay gap (March 2021) is 11.2 and the mean gender pay gap is 8.72.

Our median race pay gap is 5.7 and the mean race pay gap is 6.



Understanding the Issues and Connecting with Residents

We have defined our objectives following continuous engagement and consultation with customers, staff and other stakeholders, as well as research insights and data. We regularly engage with residents to understand needs and this will continue to be a priority for us.

From a transport perspective:

- Transport Focus’s Bus, Tram and Rail Passenger Surveys measure passengers’ satisfaction with their local services. Since the pandemic, Transport Focus has undertaken a weekly survey (fortnightly during quieter periods) which explores people’s recent travel behaviour - conducting 2000 interviews per week. Information is broken down by a number of factors such as gender, age and disability which can help identify specific issues for different protected characteristics.
- Transport for the West Midlands (TfWM) has historically conducted an annual satisfaction survey with Ring and Ride members, Metro/tram users and Swift ticketing customers. Mystery shopper programmes and Bus Passenger Champion audits also enable measurement of the quality of the services provided to customers.
- Before and after surveys are always conducted for major capital schemes and projects, while product testing takes place with customers to ensure new products/ services meet their needs and are fit for purpose.
- Our “Keep WM Moving!” online community platform enables us to engage with customers, service users and local residents and collaborate on key projects of interest. The platform enables us to understand how we can help improve the West Midlands

transport offer both in terms of products and services but also the marketing/ communications element.

- A new telephone tracking study had been set up since October 2020 which will track satisfaction with all modes of transport used. It will also capture non traveller behaviour. Already 2,000 travel survey have been conducted since December with a continued commitment into 2021/22.
- In the past year six public engagement surveys undertaken by TfWM have taken place – with online survey promoted via WMCA social media channels and emailed directly to members of WMCA/TfWM databases. In total more than 14,000 responses have been received – helping us keep abreast of the public’s sentiments.



WMCA wide, we have developed a database of regional and local community and equality groups we engage with on a regular basis both in terms of structured consultations and regular engagement.

Our Young Combined Authority (YCA) brings together a diverse group of young people, aged 16 to 25, from across the West Midlands to help guide and challenge the WMCA as it makes decisions which will shape the future of the region. It consists of the YCA Board, which works closely with the WMCA on policy development, and a new 'YCA Community' for wider engagement.

In summer 2020, the West Midlands Recovery Coordination Group convened a Citizens Panel, comprised of people from across the region, to ensure that Covid-19 recovery was aligned to their fears, hopes and experiences. A Community Recovery Roadmap was developed that sets out six citizen priorities and four cross cutting principles identified by communities themselves and driven by our local authorities and their partners.

Our Annual Workforce (Employment and Recruitment) Report contains data on diversity of our workforce and is used to monitor progress and draw out the issues we need to take action on.

We also continually engage with our employees both informally and more formally through regular employee engagement surveys and feedback sessions.



Achievements and Progress

Since the publication of our 2017 Equality Scheme, we delivered a number of schemes and initiatives that had positive equality and inclusion impact and continued to work collaboratively with partners to generate real improvements in the lives of people in the West Midlands, supporting the most vulnerable in our communities and helping grow our regional economy. Some key external and internal highlights are outlined below:

External initiatives with positive inclusion impact

Transport

- Launched an apprenticeship scheme, offering all 16 to 18 year olds (not just those in full time education) a 50% fare reduction across rail, bus and tram services, enabling an extra 100,000 young people to benefit
- Launched a 'Baby on Board' and a "Please offer me a seat" scheme which support pregnant women and disabled people travelling by public transport by providing a badge or/and card that encourages other passengers to offer them a seat.
- Implemented a Women's Concessionary Fares scheme aimed at supporting those women worst affected by changes to State Pension Age
- Continued offering free concessionary travel on all modes of transport for disabled people, older people and discounted travel for younger people
- Further reduced crime on bus, train and metro through the Safer Travel Partnership and progressed the delivery of Bus related Byelaws, addressing various types of anti-social behaviour.
- Delivered a number of bus station, interchange and infrastructure improvements, bus priority measures and successfully completed further Metro extensions
- Refreshed the West Midlands Bus Alliance deliverables to support the Vision for Bus and incorporated specific equality and accessibility commitments (e.g. further roll outs of next stop on board announcements on buses)
- Widely rolled out our Swift ticketing products and developed a new Fares and Payment strategy which supports the roll out of Swift on Rail, Apps and Swift Account based ticketing with Best Value Capping to ensure people are more easily aware of the best and most affordable ticketing options for them
- Expanded rail capacity and launched the West Midlands Grand Rail Collaboration to tackle train service performance, simplify fare structures and improve the quality of trains and stations
- Delivered a number of walking and cycling programmes and managed the Better Streets Community fund to help communities across the West Midlands improve their streets for cycling and walking
- Initiated new partnerships to develop travel support packages for low income groups
- Trialled new Demand Responsive transport initiatives and continued with on-going improvements to the Ring and Ride service, a door-to-door service for people who find it difficult or impossible to use public transport
- Developed a Regional Integrated Control Centre to improve resilience on the road, rail and tram networks and help improve travel disruption information

- Continued delivery of the award-winning Workwise project supporting people back into employment.
- Produced and promoted a number of accessibility products to help support travel for disabled people and worked in partnership with National Express and key regional and local disability groups to develop a disability awareness training DVD for bus operator in the region and beyond

Productivity and Skills

- Launched and delivered an employment support pilot aimed at supporting unemployed people or people on low incomes to progress into and within work
- Delivered a construction Gateway retraining programme which offers unemployed people free construction training and a guaranteed job interview at the end of the course
- Provided mentoring opportunities for young people in the region to raise and support levels of aspiration across the region
- A regional network of technical education and training has been established – such as the Digital Retraining fund, Digital Skills Pilot and Digital boot camps supporting digital skills development and enabling people to enter the digital sector
- Positive action digital training initiatives have been delivered for underrepresented groups e.g. Black Codher
- Worked with businesses to boost apprenticeship take up in the region and supported unemployed young people through a progression coaches model to help them find work and training opportunities
- Developed a new approach to commissioning and delivering provision funded through the Adult Education budget and supported unemployed people and

those on low wages to upskill enabling them to improve employment prospects

Housing and Land

- Established a regional approach to defining housing affordability, ensuring that our funding is used to secure housing that reflects local incomes and local needs and channelled WMCA investment through our Single Commissioning Framework to ensure enhanced design quality and higher levels of affordability.
- Launched our regional Design Charter, providing an extra tool to secure good design and high-quality development.
- Enabled a significant increase in new homes since 2017, exceeding the target trajectory in the Combined Authority’s Housing Deal to deliver 215,000 new homes by 2031.
- Effectively deployed devolved land funds - directly acquiring, assembling and remediating land where there is clear market failure.
- Worked with local councils and partners to repurpose and reinvigorate town centres and maximise the growth potential of transport hubs and corridors.
- Brought forward brownfield sites for development, many of which have been dormant for decades, through our regional pipeline of housing and commercial sites, including opportunities in town centres and along key transport corridors.

Wellbeing and Prevention

- Developed a Population Intelligence Hub in collaboration with Public Health England and local partners to provide in-depth and timely intelligence on local public health.
- Developed a wellbeing dashboard to drive future decision making, in line with tools and analyses developed to measure and

benchmark the impact of inclusive growth policies.

- Launched and extended the “Thrive into Work” Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Pilot which helps people with physical or mental ill health into jobs, with over 700 people successfully securing jobs already
- Initiated plans for an IPS Academy to train provider staff and expand delivery
- Launched and continue to deliver “Thrive at Work”, an accreditation scheme which helps companies embed wellbeing into their business, with a strong focus on mental health and wellbeing as well as positive equality outcomes for staff, with over 500 businesses joining the programme and 50 already accredited
- Championing “Include me” West Midlands, a regional approach to making the West Midlands an exemplar region for engaging disabled people and people with long term health conditions to be physically active including 67 organisations pledging their commitment to change & new Disabled Citizens Network.
- Developed and continuing roll out of “West Midlands on the Move”, a Physical Activity Strategy which promotes physical activity and wellbeing, including a collaborative leadership programme to address inequalities, creating new public active spaces in deprived areas and expanding Goodgym delivering over 6000 community projects.
- Supported the effort for Placed Based Health & Care through key stakeholder engagement and collaboration
- Established a Covid-19 Task & Finish group to develop a regional health inequalities programme
- Produced the Health of the Region 2020 report setting out persistent and widening health inequalities in the region and calling

for systemic change.

Public Service Reform and Social Economy

- Created supporting structures and tools to enable policy and decision-makers to do ‘inclusive growth in practice’. The tools – including the Inclusive Growth Framework, Decision-Making Toolkit and Tests – have been used to develop strategy and investment proposals in the East Birmingham and North Solihull areas.
- Established the WMCA Homelessness Taskforce to ‘design out homelessness’, which has brought in extra resources into the region across its work programme. This includes the Housing First pilot, which has to date supported 355 people into tenancies, and the RSI programme, which has supported 1,211 people to access housing and support services. The taskforce has also been invaluable in helping partners across the region to respond to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Delivered a veteran’s mental health and homelessness work programme, including direct support to veterans at risk of homelessness through a spot-purchase fund hosted by the Royal British Legion.
- Developed a new regional, collaborative and scaled up approach to reducing violence, vulnerability and exploitation through the Violence Reduction Unit.
- Published “Punishing Abuse”, a report that provides the evidence for the reform of youth justice services and for further discussion and collaboration between local authorities on the wider reform of services for children – leading to £1m of investment from NHS England to implement its recommendations within the health system.
- Placed deliberative democracy at the heart of the community recovery programme by establishing a ‘citizens’ panel’ to shape ‘Levelling up the West Midlands, our roadmap

to community recovery’.

- In collaboration with WMCA’s Strategy directorate, launched the Coalition for Digital Inclusion to tackle the digital divide in the West Midlands.
- Worked with regional partners to build shared Public Service Reform commitments around prevention, addressing vulnerability and supporting greater place-based collaboration.

Environment and Energy

- Worked with regional partners to develop sustainable travel opportunities across the region to support inclusive growth.
- Supported Energy Innovation Zones in the West Midlands, in partnership with LEPs, to address specific energy issues and help overcome barriers to affordable energy infrastructure provision
- Designed a cross departmental, person centric, West Midlands Fuel Poverty programme with the West Midlands Fuel Poverty Task Force, which will support vulnerable people living in the West Midlands and ensure a strong local supply chain survives to deliver energy efficiency measure
- Published a #WM2041 five year plan to help tackle climate change with an ambition target of becoming net zero carbon by 2041. The plans has inclusivity built within it, with proposals on tackling fuel poverty and a focus on working with the region’s businesses and education institutions to give local people the skills to work in the new green industries.

Inclusive Communities, Culture and Digital

- Established a Young Combined Authority, bringing together a diverse board of young people, aged 16 – 25, from across the West Midlands to help guide and challenge the WMCA as it makes decisions which will shape the future of the region

- Developed an Inclusive Leadership Pledge, encouraging leaders and employers across the region to commit to realising greater inclusivity within their organisations. This also included an awareness campaign and an online toolkit of advice for the campaign – over 250 organisations signed up to the pledge
- Established a new Cultural Leadership Board promoting wider leadership and involvement in our region’s diverse range of culture. A key board objective is to support diverse leadership and participation in culture
- Established a leadership commission to explore why the leadership of the region does not reflect the diverse make up of our communities, which resulted in a recommendations report for how the whole region can work to improve diversity and inclusion at senior levels
- Developed a digital Roadmap strategy to ensure the West Midlands becomes the UK’s best connected region and to ensure access for everyone to digital opportunities, particularly those in poverty



Internal organisational diversity and inclusion initiatives

- Delivered a range of equality awareness campaigns (a number of which have had direct senior leadership involvement), developed equality resources and provided structured training for staff and managers, including mandatory equality training, mental health awareness training, unconscious bias training and disability awareness training for customer facing staff
- Introduced an “Employer Supported Volunteering Scheme” that allows staff up to 3 days per annum to support charitable causes of their choice
- Gained Living Wage Employer accreditation by working with the Living Wage Foundation to agree milestones for the roll out of Real Living Wage across all of the WMCA’s third party supplier contracts.
- Introduced a number of initiatives to support positive mental health and wellbeing for staff, e.g. a “Mental Health Volunteering Buddies” scheme with trained volunteers
- Developed a Domestic Violence policy to support employees who have or are experiencing domestic violence.
- Amended our advertising templates to strongly highlight our commitment to equality, diversity, inclusion and equitable outcomes, whilst also encouraging under-represented groups to apply for roles.
- Developed a “Building our Future Workforce” strategy designed to provide under-represented groups with the skills required for leadership roles as part of an overall learning and development strategy. The strategy also allows provisions for NEETs, care leavers, people with disabilities, homeless people, ex-offenders and Armed Forces Veterans.
- Revised our recruitment policy so that all vacancies under a certain salary scale are advertised as apprenticeships.
- Attained or/and retained a number of accreditations and quality marks, such as disability confident leaders status; Thrive at Work Wellbeing Accreditation; Armed Forces Covenant Gold award, and Leaders in Diversity Accreditation.
- Recognised as an Inclusive Top 50 Employer for 3 years in a row and were included in the Times Top 50 Employers for Women 2021
- Encouraged and supported the development of staff diversity networks and a wellbeing and inclusion group which oversees and advises on the development and implementation of the internal equality agenda
- Developed a Reasonable Adjustments Policy outlining our duty to provide reasonable adjustments and highlighting key roles and responsibilities
- Significantly increased the percentage of disabled employees, young people and female employees (including at senior levels) over the past 3 years



Next Steps - Our Equity Objectives and Priorities

Objective 1:

Provide accessible, affordable, safe and inclusive transport services to our wide range of customers

Objective 1 Themes and deliverables:

- **Theme 1** – Travelling safely and securely: Reduce total recorded crime and improve passenger perceptions of personal safety on the transport network

Key activities: We will relaunch “Project Empower” which aims at tackling sexual harassment on public transport in the West Midlands; we will reach out to schools and community groups to press home the wider safety messages among young people, disabled people and harder to reach groups; we will continue to operate “Restorative Justice” for young people committing acts of anti-social; we will actively run hate crime campaigns; we will create adaptive social media strategies which reach out and connect with, multiple communities; we will support delivery of a safer local road network with a focus on addressing inequalities for vulnerable road users through targeted road safety campaign

- **Theme 2** - Commonwealth games – Deliver an accessible and inclusive commonwealth games experience

Key activities: We will ensure all competition venues are accessible by public transport and that clear wayfinding and signage is available throughout; we will offer accessible shuttle buses from key transport hubs to venues and include blue badge parking in venues; we will use a number of additional services to

complement the public transport offer; we will introduce a range of easy to use ticket payment options for transport and offer free access to public transport for games staff and volunteers; we will deliver accessible infrastructure improvements including new stations and transport hubs and deliver improved transport links on Metro, Sprint and the rail network across the region and beyond

- **Theme 3** - Value for money, affordability and employment support: Ensure services offer good value for money and people are able to access employment, education and leisure opportunities

Key activities: Establish account based ticketing and fares capping to offer customers best value automatically and remove their need to consider complex fares; we will introduce inclusive fares and payment functions targeted at those customers that need the most support; we will continue to widen and improve the Workwise offer; we will commence a formal policy review into our current concessionary fares and Supported Travel Policies and explore new ways these policies could support more vulnerable people in the region; we will build on the work of the Covid-19 Equality Impact assessment into the transport needs of excluded groups and delivery on the Inclusive Transport Action Plan; we will explore the option of introducing a companion element to the concessionary pass through working closely with operators

- **Theme 4** – Sustainable travel and decarbonising transport: Narrow the sustainable travel inclusion gap and ensure sustainable travel modes are more easily accessible

Key activities: We will co-ordinate the inclusive cyclist group to make improvements for

disabled cycling; we will continue to support cycling and walking events across the region including in more deprived areas; we will introduce the West Midlands Cycle Hire scheme to encourage end to end journeys for people who do not ordinarily own a bike also considering concession options and incentives; we will invest in the development of community based cycling programmes so that disabled people can enjoy cycling

- **Theme 5** - Customer experience, communication and engagement – Improve customer experience for our diverse range of customers and engage effectively to understand and act on customer needs

Key activities: We will deliver equality and disability awareness training and resources for customer facing staff; we will continue to work with vulnerable young people in the region and explore new travel offers for young people including travel support for care leavers, those not in education, employment or training and those undertaking an apprenticeship; we will grow TfWM's Youth forum and deliver projects tailored to young people's needs

- **Theme 6** - Inclusive transport services for all: Ensure the infrastructure, information and services we provide are accessible to more people with a customer service that meets individual needs

Key activities: We will enhance infrastructure and customer experience at our bus stations and major interchanges through refurbishments and new station developments; we will extend our Metro network to improve accessibility and better serve the region; we will continue to explore opportunities for accessibility improvements in rail stations in the WMCA area; we will continue to run the subsidised bus network to provide socially necessary services; we will ensure production and publicity of accessibility related aids/products that improve the travel experience of disabled people; we will continue to fund Ring and Ride provision and will improve its operational efficiency and customer

satisfaction through a number of measures; we will explore options for community transport integration with wider public transport services; we will continue to use data insight as well as the TfWM 'My Community' as an online community network for conducting research and engaging in our diverse communities across the region

- **Theme 7** – Strategic transport and policy: Ensure our strategic transport schemes and policies are inclusive and promote an equal network

Key activities: We will launch our refreshed local transport plan, supporting our 5 motive for change including 'Creating a Fairer Society'; we will deliver on a more integrated and inclusive network which will support inclusive growth; we will consider Covid-19 impact on different groups and identify how transport can support equitable access to employment and training, especially those hardest hit by the pandemic.

Key outcomes include:

- Improved safety and security on the network and improved perceptions of safety for some of the most vulnerable groups
- An inclusive, affordable and accessible Commonwealth Games experience
- Introduction of new and retention of existing policies that help support transport inclusivity by delivering affordable transport solutions
- Increase in cycling take-up by a diverse range of residents
- Accessibility improvements in transport infrastructure
- Increased Ring and Ride customer satisfaction and a higher take-up of the service by a diverse range of disabled users
- A Transport Plan with clear inclusivity and accessibility targets

Objective 2:

Deliver schemes, strategies and programmes across the WMCA that help deliver positive inclusion and equitable outcomes, also reducing socio-economic disadvantage and poverty, for our region's diverse communities

Objective 2 Themes and deliverables:

- **Theme 1** – Affordable and inclusive housing provision: Implement the affordable housing policy and delivery programme supporting regeneration and generating high quality employment for local people

Key activities: We will invest in town centre sites to support their regeneration and repurposing; we will invest in priority brownfield sites across the region to bring them forward for housing and employment delivery; we will bring together investment in targeted inclusive growth corridors generating additional social and economic growth; we will support the embedding of the WMCA affordable housing definition and will continue to ensure that 20% of single commissioning framework new housing is affordable housing; we will introduce minimum apprenticeship requirements in WMCA enabled developments and support improvement in youth unemployment rate through supply chain appointments; we will deliver quality through the west midlands sustainable design charter to make good design the norm; we will engage with local charities to support homeless families into accommodation

- **Theme 2** – Skills Equity: Drive up skills levels amongst the region's communities to secure sustainable employment and enhance skills at higher levels so that all communities benefit from the region's economic growth

Key activities: We will continue to deliver a range of approaches to prepare young people for future work; we will establish clear career

entry routes and pathways for unemployed adults and those looking to reskill, particularly under-represented groups; we will accelerate the take up of good quality apprenticeships, targeting under-represented groups; we will commission skills provision for disadvantaged groups; we will support people to deliver language skills; we will continue delivery of the employment support pilot for unemployed people or those on low incomes; we will support skills upskilling for those who need it the most; we will support retraining for those at risk of losing their jobs to automation; we will deliver an increased range of higher skills training to support growth in productivity and earnings; we will develop additional, sector-specific training and recruitment programmes to help unemployed people access good local jobs; we will deliver a Commonwealth Games Jobs and Skills Academy to support local people in gaining jobs, training and volunteering opportunities, including under-represented groups.

- **Theme 3** - Public Service Reform: Deliver on the promise of more inclusive growth, with the confidence to shape investment, infrastructure and services more deliberately around social and economic goals

Key activities: We will work with local authorities and other partners to support and promote social innovation activity through a toolkit and flexible team; we will co-ordinate activities to address social challenges, including through a Coalition for Digital Inclusion; we will convene local authorities to address health inequalities by tackling some of the wider determinants of poor health; we will convene partners to design out homelessness, through the Homelessness Taskforce programme of activity; we will deliver a Covid-19 recovery programme; we will develop collaborative approaches with the Police and Crime Commissioner to reduce crime and improve the criminal justice system

- **Theme 4 – Wellbeing** Create a region in which positive, proactive and preventative approaches to citizen wellbeing and engagement are normalised, giving our diverse population a better chance to thrive in life and work

Key activities: We will continue delivery of the Thrive into Work programme offering employment support for people with a mental health and or physical health condition; we will expand the reach of the Thrive at Work employment programme, supporting positive workplace wellbeing; we will refresh the Mental Health Commission Thrive action plan and consider a Black Thrive initiative for the region; we will work with the Police and Crime Commission to improve the criminal justice system; and we will continue to roll out the Include Me programme, a regional approach to achieving wider engagement with disabled people.

Desired outcomes include:

- Increased affordable housing supply (16.5000 per annum), including on brownfield land
- Accelerated regeneration in town centres
- Wider adoption of the Regional Design Charter and an increase in the proportion of accessible housing
- A reduction in unemployment and the percentage of residents with no qualifications, along with an increase in the percentages of people with level 3+ qualifications ensuring benefits for the most disadvantaged groups
- An increase in apprenticeship take-ups in the region
- Better employment, health and wider outcomes for people with complex needs and reduction in regional deprivation levels
- Reduction in health, housing, education and employment inequalities
- A stronger commitment to diversify leadership in the region

Objective 3:

Ensure equity is embedded within all key WMCA work areas, the WMCA has a strong regional influencing role around the equalities agenda and decision making is informed by the needs of our diverse communities

Objective 3 themes and deliverables

- **Theme 1 - Embedding Equitability:**
Equitable considerations are an integral element of the decision making process

Key activities: We will embed the Equality Impact Assessment process within all core WMCA activities; we will revisit outcomes for groups disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and take action to address impact; we will develop clear diversity objectives and targets across all key WMCA delivery areas; we will develop stronger monitoring and reporting mechanisms on equality, equity and inclusion

- **Theme 2 – Community engagement and co-production:** Engage with more of the region's diverse communities to inform the development and delivery of our strategies and programmes

Key activities: We will deliver a varied portfolio of citizen engagement activity, such as the Young Combined Authority and Skills Street Team, to inform residents and future planning, to ensure all our decisions are shaped by residents, that our policy is fit for purpose, and to explore co-production approaches; we will define and articulate who WMCA communities are and identify how best to engage them and involve them in the decision making process; we will continue engagement and consultation with a range of community groups across all protected characteristics

- **Theme 3 - Social Value:** Deliver equity through procurement by making sure that practices are fair, contractors abide by key equitable principles and social value is delivered through WMCA contracts

Key activities: We will continue to include equitable considerations in key procurement documents with equality remaining a mandatory assessment criterion; we will collect diversity data on business procurement and use that information to inform procurement application targets; we will explore ways to increase the reach and impact of our social value policy

- **Theme 4 – Influencing change:** Work with regional stakeholders to improve diversity at senior levels and identify systematic opportunities for change

Key activities: We will implement key RACE Code principles within the WMCA; we will ensure there is a platform for the Young Combined Authority to challenge, inform and influence WMCA policy development and decision making; we will support Leadership Commission activity to drive systematic change and improve diversity at senior levels; we will convene a Race Equalities Taskforce to guide and drive action by WMCA and in the region to address racial inequalities through delivery and enabling activities ; we will convene a Life Chances Commission to better understand barriers facing young people in the region and shape targeted initiatives to address them; we will support the Leadership Commission to improve boardroom and workplace diversity; we will convene partners through a Coalition for Digital Inclusion; we will convene a Mental Health Commission to understand challenges and key priorities following COVID-19

Desired outcomes include:

- Retention of Race Code Accreditation
- A vibrant, representative Young Combined Authority that effectively informs policy making
- Improved regional commitment to increase senior level workforce diversity
- Effective use of social value to deliver community benefits
- An equitable procurement process that attracts a diverse range of suppliers
- A consistent and solutions focused approach to engagement with residents that informs decision making
- Equality impact considerations embedded within all key WMCA areas of work
- Improve mental health outcomes for west midlands residents
- A concerted effort to tackle regional racial inequalities



Objective 4:

Provide an accessible, diverse and inclusive working environment by improving the recruitment, retention, progression, development and overall experience of people employed by the WMCA, enabling the organisation to become an inclusive employer of choice where equity and equality informs our culture and behaviours.

Objective 4 Themes and deliverables:

- **Theme 1 - Workforce diversity:** We attract and appoint a wider pool of candidates reflecting regional diversity and ensure employees are supported to make the most of their skills and talents

Key activities: We will review recruitment practices and establish a clear positive action approach; we will utilise apprenticeship Levy for skills uplift for under-represented groups and deliver structure work experience programmes targeting under-represented groups; we will deliver a number of positive action staff development initiatives; we will introduce and roll out Career Pathways within the organisation to inform staff development and support equitable access to progression routes

- **Theme 2 - Employee equality awareness and competence:** Develop and improve staff equality and diversity skills, ensuring they are equality confident, competent and actively engaged in delivering the equality agenda

Key activities: We will run regular equality campaigns; we will continue to deliver equality training including targeted training for managers and customer facing staff; we will develop a number of equality resources to support employee awareness

- **Theme 3 - Understand and improve staff experience and staff voice on equality issues and ensure they are accountable for the delivery of the equality agenda**

Key activities: We will further develop our staff diversity networks; we will run regular pulse surveys to understand employee sentiments and views on equality issues; we will ensure equalities is fully embedded within the newly developed individual performance management framework; we will introduce senior leadership EDI objectives

- **Theme 4 - Supporting employee wellbeing and facilitating equitable outcomes:** Employees feel supported, are treated fairly and positive mental health and wellbeing is championed across the organisation

Key activities: We will identify and raise awareness of prevalent lifestyle conditions and identify ways to support employees; we will ensure wellbeing is a key consideration within our hybrid working policy; we will explore ways to enhance the staff benefits offer; we will create resilience and stress toolkits; we will introduce initiatives to help support employee mental health

- **Theme 5 - Workforce data and transparency:** To improve the quality of equality and diversity workforce data we collate and how we use it to address barriers to employment for groups under-represented in the workforce and make publicly available

Key activities: We will continue to monitor our workforce profile; we will produce a biannual equal pay audit; we will introduce race pay gap reporting; we will develop and community race and gender diversity targets;

Desired outcomes include:

- An increase in staff diversity, where gaps have been identified (including at senior levels)
- 100% mandatory training completion rates
- Positive staff engagement and satisfaction levels in staff surveys with staff reporting positive perceptions of inclusion in the workplace
- Successful internal mentoring and positive action development initiatives
- Achievement of Gold Covenant status and retention of Disability Confident Leader status and Leaders in Diversity accreditation
- Achievement of Thrive at Work wellbeing silver accreditation
- Retention of low staff sickness absence rates
- Reduction in gender pay gap figures
- Visible/clear senior leadership commitment on the inclusion agenda

A detailed action plan is included as Appendix A, identifying actions under each individual theme.



Monitoring and Reviewing the Scheme

We will develop metrics to measure our progress towards the scheme action plan. The WMCA Senior Leadership Team will monitor the delivery of the plan to measure progress against objectives and to identify new actions, as appropriate. The outcomes of the review will be collated in an annual progress report, alongside monitoring data. The report will be communicated to the Audit Risk Committee and the Combined Authority Board.

The Equity and Inclusion Scheme will be fully reviewed and amended on a three-yearly basis, with the next version of the scheme due in January 2025. Even though a full review will take place in 2024 we consider this scheme to be a living document, constantly open for scrutiny, comment, consultation and enhancement. Equalities is a constantly changing field. Comments, suggestions and advice are welcomed throughout our equalities work and so the scheme may be amended prior to the date specified. This scheme is publicly available on the Combined Authority website and to staff on our internal intranet site.

Responsibility and Accountability

All staff in the course of their employment and others associated with the WMCA have a responsibility to ensure that their actions comply with the requirements of WMCA equality policies and the Equity and Inclusion Scheme

The following groups have specific responsibilities

- The Inclusive Communities Portfolio Lead member has overall responsibility and accountability for ensuring effective delivery of the Scheme Objectives

- The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) is responsible for providing a consistent and high-profile lead on equity, equality and diversity issues and for promoting equality and diversity strategies and equitable outcomes both inside and outside the WMCA.
- All heads and managers are responsible for ensuring that the Equity and Inclusion Scheme is implemented and maintained within their area of responsibility, ensuring all staff are fully informed about their responsibilities and receive support and training in carrying them out.

Consultation Feedback, Queries and Questions

For consultation feedback, questions or queries and if you feel that the WMCA has not acted in accordance with its Equality Act duties, please contact the Equalities and Diversity Manager at:

WMCA, 16 Summer Lane,
Birmingham, B19 3SD

Email: equalities.team@wmca.org.uk

If you would like a copy of this document in a form more suited to your needs, please contact our Customer Services Team at customerservices@wmca.org.uk

Phone: 0345 303 6760

Monday - Friday, 8am to 6pm

Saturdays - 9am to 1pm

Sundays and Bank Holidays - Closed



Equity and Inclusion Action Plan

Objective 1

Provide accessible, affordable, safe and inclusive transport services to our wide range of customers



Theme

Travelling safely and securely

Aim

Reduce total recorded crime and improve passenger perceptions of personal safety on the transport network

Actions required

Incorporate the ‘See Something, Say Something’ initiative into the new West Midlands One app solution and continue to actively promote it

Rebrand, relaunch and promote “Project Empower” which aims at tackling sexual harassment on public transport in the West Midlands

Continue a robust policy towards providing support within schools and community groups to press home the wider safety message among young people, disabled people, harder to reach groups and socially excluded sections of the community with a target of a 30,000 people reach per annum

Support repeat victims of crime through a multi-agency approach and ensure that the Safer Travel Partnership’s approach to safeguarding is current and effective

Continue to proactively manage offenders on the network to behave lawfully including support, prevention and where necessary enforcement of those engaged in repeat criminal activity

Continue to operate “Restorative Justice” for young people committing acts of anti-social behaviour and crime on the public transport system with a target of 50 referrals per annum and investigate the option of expanding the scheme to light and heavy rail

Actively run hate crime campaigns to encourage victims of hate crime to report to police or third party reporting lines hence tackling hate crime on public transport

Consider the establishment of a Safer Travel specific Independent Advisory Group in preparation for the Commonwealth Games as well as a dedicated Transport Neighbourhood watch

Create adaptive social media strategies which reach out and connect with, multiple communities

Ensure a co-ordinated partnership transport response to event planning in a number of ways, including through developing an interface and strategy that utilises Safer Travel Police, partnership and other resources at events that will have a significant impact on the transport network

Work with partners to improve the network’s environmental features including waiting facilities, vehicle conditions and other assets to further enhance passenger perceptions of personal safety

Develop an end to end journey approach to addressing the safety requirements of the travelling public

Implement and utilise new and existing civil enforcement powers in relation to safer travel, including bus byelaws.

Ensure that Park and Ride plans include safety and security in every element of their creation and operation

Launch the new Regional Road Safety Action Plan and support delivery of a safer local road network with a focus on addressing inequalities for vulnerable road users through targeted road safety campaigns

Work closely through our road safety partnership with the West Midlands Police, West Midlands Fire Service and our local authority partners as well as with the Police and Crime Commissioner to make our streets safer

Undertake comprehensive reviews of fatal collisions to better determine causation factors, demographics and additional data for vulnerable groups

Theme

Commonwealth games

Aim

Deliver an accessible and inclusive commonwealth transport games experience

Actions required

Deliver the Commonwealth Games Transport Plan in a way that ensures reduced impacts on everyday journeys using a broad range of measures to manage travel demand

Develop and deliver an inclusive communications and engagement strategy for the development of the Games Strategic Transport Plan and its associated work streams, ensuring all communities are informed and have the opportunity to benefit from the Games

Ensure all competition venues are accessible by public transport and that clear wayfinding and signage is available throughout.

Offer accessible shuttle buses from key transport hubs to venues and include blue badge parking in venues

Use a number of additional services to complement the public transport offer during the Commonwealth Games, including services for people who find it difficult or impossible to use conventional public transport.

Introduce a range of easy to use ticket payment options for transport and offer free access to public transport for ticket holders and games staff and volunteers

Deliver accessible infrastructure improvements including new stations and transport hubs and deliver improved transport links on Metro, Sprint and the rail network across the region and beyond



Theme

Value for money, affordability and employment support

Aim

Ensure services offer good value for money and people are able to access employment, education and leisure opportunities

Actions required

Rollout of a single app that will provide customers with the best ticket, passenger information and wider mobility options including parking and taxis.

Move to a uniformed fare stage and zonal structure across all modes and remove inconsistencies within the fares range.

Introduce account based ticketing and fares capping to offer customers best value automatically and remove their need to consider complex fares.

Introduce inclusive fares and payment functions targeted at those customers that need the most support.

Develop a holistically considered fares and payments solution that provides optimised access to transport for everyone.

Develop the fares functionality of the journey planner so that each planned journey is accompanied with information about the best fare and the instant ability to purchase that fare

Continue the roll out of mobility credits and Swift ticketing offers to beneficially support climate change, social outcomes and release urban development sites.

Continue to widen and improve the Workwise offer. Negotiate further ticket discounts for those seeking and obtaining employment and explore bike hire opportunities and discounts, including day ticket discounts for

job interviews

Further build on existing relationship with DWP, job centres, LA partners and employment providers to ensure increased take up and awareness of Swift ticketing options available to them.

Commence a formal policy review into our current concessionary fares and Supported Travel Policies and explore new ways these policies could support more vulnerable people in the region.

Introduce daily fare capping using both contactless and swift on all services

Explore take up of blind and disabled pass in other authorities and make sure we are inclusive in our assessment criteria specifications and work closer with SEND Home to School transport teams to promote the concessionary pass to young people

Build on the work of the Covid-19 Equality Impact assessment into the transport needs of excluded groups and delivery on the Inclusive Transport Action Plan

Explore the option of introducing a companion element to the concessionary pass through working closely with operators



Theme

Sustainable travel and decarbonising transport

Aim

Narrow the sustainable travel inclusion gap and ensure sustainable travel modes are more easily accessible

Actions required

Co-ordinate the inclusive cyclist group that will work towards recommendations that will inform future practice which makes improvements for disabled cycling

Continue to support cycling and walking events across the region with our partners and stakeholders, including in more deprived areas to encourage cycling take up amongst traditionally under-represented groups.

Introduce the West Midlands Cycle Hire scheme to encourage end to end journeys for people who do not ordinarily own a bike also considering concession options and incentives

Invest in the development of community based cycling programmes so that disabled people can enjoy cycling

Trial behaviour change in disabled people using public transport to places to get active (swift trial)

Ensure our transport network supports the climate agenda



Theme

Customer experience, communication and engagement

Aim

Improve customer experience for our diverse range of customers and engage effectively to understand and act on customer needs



Actions required

Continue to provide comprehensive equality and disability awareness training for all TfWM customer facing staff and offer regular awareness sessions on a number of equality related issues

Measure the success and reach of the Bus Alliance Customer Charter

Develop resources to help customer facing staff recognise and assist customers with hidden disabilities

Continue to work with vulnerable young people in the region and explore new travel offers for young people including travel support for care leavers, those not in education, employment or training and those undertaking an apprenticeship

Support our SEND Home to School Transport Teams across our region through delivering an inclusive transport network and supporting the uptake of Independent Travel Training

Develop and maintain a better understanding of the needs, attitudes and perceptions of people who use our transport system through the development of a detailed segmentation and persona framework also facilitated by an online citizen's panel community and through TfWM's Youth Forum

Grow TfWM's Youth forum and deliver projects tailed to young people's needs

Engage with more of the West Midlands diverse communities to effectively inform, develop and deliver our strategies, services and programmes through regular community engagement activities

Continue to consult with disability and wider equality groups for all key strategies, policies and major infrastructure schemes

Theme

Inclusive transport services for all

Aim

Ensure the infrastructure, information and services we provide are accessible to more people with a customer service that meets individual needs



Actions required

Deliver a number of rail infrastructure projects in the region and ensure they meet all key accessibility standards

Work with West Midlands Rail Executive to ensure station travel plans meet key accessibility requirements

Enhance infrastructure and customer experience at our bus stations and major interchanges by delivering a new multi modal, world class facility for bus and Metro customers in Dudley and by carrying out a refurbishment of Coventry Pool Meadow station

Extend our Metro network to improve accessibility and better serve the region

Continue to explore opportunities for accessibility improvements in rail stations in the WMCA area

Ensure our bus industry partners collaborate to deliver the best possible bus service experience for people by coordinating investment, effort and action through the management of the Bus Alliance, also ensuring equitable outcomes and considerations are fully embedded.

Through a Bus Service Improvement Plan, we will explore new fare reductions for young people as well as other excluded groups and new bus service opportunities through the Nation Bus Strategy funding.

Continue to run the subsidised bus network to provide socially necessary services

Trial a number of future mobility zone projects to improve employee and customer travel options and flexibility.

Continue to provide language line for those whose first language is not English

Continue to provide RNIB React enabled Real Time Information Displays across the network

and in all major interchanges

Continue to investigate opportunities for demand responsive transport as part of delivering our Vision for Bus and continue new pilots including the ‘West Midlands Bus On Demand’ which services the University of Warwick and the south Coventry areas

Measure the success and reach of the bus alliance customer charter

Improve information and communications for all transport users during disruptive events using travel demand management tactics in line with the resilience communication and engagement strategy

Ensure production and publicity of accessibility related aids/products that improve the travel experience of disabled people

Develop a new multimodal information portal on the West Midlands Network site to offer travel updates and deliver personalised messages on disruption information within affected areas, providing alternatives and linking with improved journey planning and ticketing capabilities.

Expand our capability to provide personalised information to customers

Develop a wayfinding and information strategy and launch a new wayfinding team within TfWM to provide consistent branding in all signage and wayfinding across the West Midlands transport network.

Work with partners to deliver improvements on multimodal timetables, interchange facilities and ticketing to ensure bus, rail and metro information is best in class

Increase in the number of vehicles fitted with tracking and audio-visual next stop announcements in the region

Continue to fund Ring and Ride provision through an enhanced service level agreement with the operator and clear standards

Improve Ring and Ride operational efficiency and customer satisfaction through bringing the call centre in-house, improving current booking systems, exploring its role in mainstream transport, enhancing the software to plan more efficient routes, improving branding and marketing and delivering on the operation of new accessible vehicles.

Set standards for customer service experience for ring and ride, explore and shape how customer services operate.

Explore options for community transport integration with wider public transport services as well as a total transport approach through collaborating in areas like SEND home to school transport, adult social care transport and Ring and Ride.

Continue delivering the Walsall shopper’s service for older people in sheltered housing and explore opportunities for developing similar services across the region

Continue the roll out of West Midlands on Demand and explore new routes and services

Continue to use data insight as well as the TfWM ‘My Community’ as an online community network for conducting research and engaging in our diverse communities across the region



Theme

Strategic transport and policy

Aim

Ensure our strategic transport schemes and policies are inclusive and promote an equal network

Actions required

Launch a refreshed local transport plan, supporting our 5 motive for change including ‘Creating a Fairer Society ‘

Deliver on a more integrated and inclusive network which will support inclusive growth.

Consider Covid-19 impact on different groups and identify how transport can support equal access to employment and training, especially those hardest hit by the pandemic.

Deliver on our Active Travel Fund and Starley Network of safe cycle routes across the West Midlands. This will include inclusive cycle network and working with Mencap to ensure cycle opportunities are inclusive.

Delivery of active travel to support a healthier West Midlands.





Objective 2

Deliver schemes, strategies and programmes across the WMCA that help deliver positive inclusion and equitable outcomes, also reducing socio-economic disadvantage and poverty, for our region's diverse communities



Theme

Affordable housing provision

Aim

Increase delivery of affordable housing in the region and explore new ways of doing so



Actions required

Effectively develop, collaborate and submit compelling business cases for additional funding from HMG to deliver WMCA approved priorities

Continue to ensure that all projects supported through the Single Commissioning Framework have a minimum of 20% affordable housing provision

Establish Collaborative Delivery Vehicle with regional Housing Association partners to bring forward development on additional brownfield sites and secure more affordable homes in the region

Review the operation of the regional affordable housing definition and the overall delivery of affordable housing in the West Midlands

Engage with the Homelessness Taskforce and contribute to efforts to secure additional funding and support for housing programmes that support homeless families into accommodation

Theme

Accessible Housing

Aim

Increase the accessibility of homes being built using the WMCA's housing and land funds



Actions required

Encourage and support wellbeing by design principles within new housing development across the region

Continue to ensure high quality, accessible design is considered when deploying housing and land funds

Develop and adopt a refreshed West Midlands Design Charter

Theme

Job creation

Aim

Create high-quality jobs through the deployment of WMCA housing and land funds

Actions required

Deploy devolved housing and land funds through the SCF to identified town centre and regeneration projects that provide jobs, skills and business opportunities

Secure new funding from HMG for investing in employment sites to bring forward new jobs and facilities

Bring together investment in targeted and locally agreed inclusive growth corridors generating additional social and economic growth at scale through joint approaches with TfWM, local authorities and other partners

Intervene, acquire, unlock and invest in priority brownfield sites across the region along public transport corridors that suffer from identified market failure to bring them forward for housing and employment delivery

Through the WMCA's pioneering approach to scaling up Advanced Manufacturing in Construction and Zero Carbon Housing, supporting the development of high-tech high-skilled jobs and supply chains in the region



Theme

Skills Equity

Aim

Drive up skills levels amongst the region's communities to secure sustainable employment and enhance skills at higher levels so that all communities benefit from the region's economic growth

Actions required

Continue to develop, test and deliver a range of approaches to prepare young people for future life and work, particularly those at risk of dropping out, including NEET prevention and re-engagement, work experience and mentoring

Accelerate the take up of good quality apprenticeships across the region (also targeting under-represented communities and young unemployed people) and maximise the transfer of unused levy to SMEs, particularly in priority sectors

Commission skills provision for disadvantaged groups (i.e., disabled people; young unemployed people or employed in low wages; homeless people; minority ethnic people; people with mental health issues; long-term unemployed) to give more people the skills to get and sustain good jobs and careers

Support people to develop language skills for work and life - English as a second language (at levels 1, 2) fully funded in priority places for adults who earn the living wage or less

Continue delivery of the employment support pilot to support those out of work and on low incomes in targeted communities, evaluate its effectiveness to end 2021

Through the Adult Education Budget, widen access to training for those in low wage and fragile employment to upskill to Level 3 and above to support in-work progression to better paid, sustainable employment

Working with Colleges West Midlands and

LAs, continue to develop support and targeting of NEET and those at risk of dropping out

Promote to employers the benefits of better job opportunities and meaningful work placements for young people

Support retraining for those who are at risk of losing their job to automation or due to their age or a health condition

Support young people in navigating the labour market through use of the regional youth employment platform

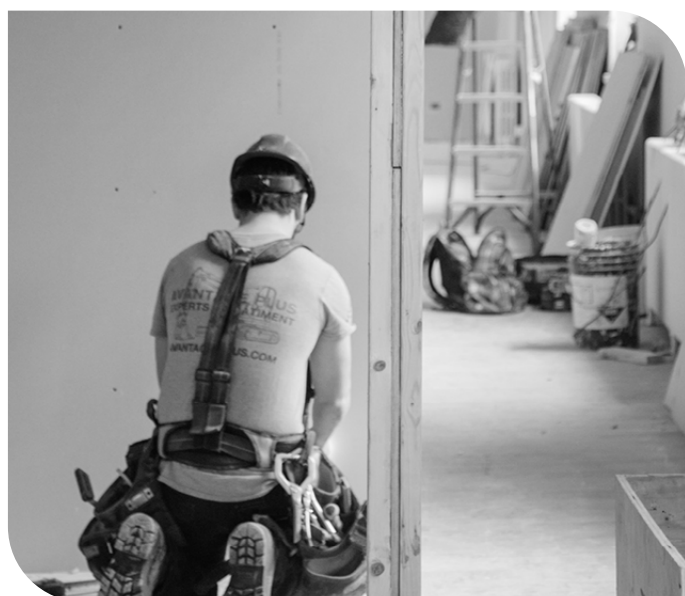
Support residents from all communities in accessing employment and skills opportunities through engagement with government, public and private sector partners

Establish clear career entry routes and pathways for unemployed adults and those looking to reskill, particularly women and under-represented groups, targeting sectors with growth and / or skills shortages

Ensure a network of locally-led Youth Hubs, delivering co-located employment and skills support for young people, particularly those from disadvantaged groups

Deliver Commonwealth Games Jobs and Skills Academy to support at least 6,000 local people in gaining jobs, training and volunteering opportunities

Develop additional, sector-specific training and recruitment programmes to help unemployed people access good local jobs, e.g., SWAPs



Theme

Public service reform

Aim

Deliver on the promise of more inclusive growth, with the confidence to more deliberately shape investment, infrastructure and services around social and economic goals



Actions required

Convene partners to design out homelessness, through the Homelessness Taskforce programme of activity

Co-ordinate delivery of Community recovery priorities

Collaborate with partners in the criminal justice system to nurture a trauma-informed region

Improve digital inclusion in the region through partnership with local authorities and civil society organisations

Embed inclusive growth within the activities of WMCA and its partners

Build expectations, standards and practices for measuring the impact of inclusive growth interventions and holding them accountable.

Support local authorities and their partners with local Inclusive-Growth-In-Action initiatives

Set up a cross-cutting group to bring together the different strands of work supporting veterans

Monitor equalities data at a regional level as part of a new approach to data and insights which will feed into the State of the Region and Health of the Regions reports

Theme

Wellbeing and Environment

Aim

Create a region in which positive, proactive and preventative approaches to citizen wellbeing and engagement are normalised, giving our diverse population a better chance to thrive in life and work

Actions required

Deliver the Thrive at Work Programme, expand its reach and promote a culture of support and awareness for mental health issues across the region

Continue to provide an employment support service for people with a mental health and / or physical health condition in primary and community care through the extension and continued delivery of the Thrive into Work Programme

Develop and sustain a physical activity programme with regional partners

Continue roll out of the Include Me programme, a regional approach to achieving wider engagement with disabled people and people with long term health conditions enabling them to be physically active

Continue to host a population intelligence hub within the Inclusive Growth Unit which provides holistic, real time data on the region's health and socioeconomic outcomes

Convene Local Authorities and other partners to address health inequalities by tackling some of the wider determinants of poor health in the region

Secure and implement the Radical prevention fund for the region using the latest technology to prevent ill health for the most vulnerable groups.

Oversee delivery of the Net Zero Five Year Plan

to support positive and inclusive environmental outcomes and work with partners on green transport and air quality

Establish a “Warm Homes Save Lives” delivery partnership to reduce the incidence of fuel poverty and facilitate a regional fuel poverty and scaling-up retrofit programme

Develop policies and deliver projects to ensure the energy infrastructure of the region supports a competitive industrial base, clean growth and social inclusion





Objective 3

Ensure equity is embedded within all key WMCA work areas, the WMCA has a strong regional influencing role around the equalities agenda and decision making is informed by the needs of our diverse communities



Theme

Embedding equitable outcomes

Aim

Ensure equitable considerations are embedded within all key WMCA work areas and are an integral element of the decision making process

Theme

Community engagement and co-production

Aim

Engage with more of the region's diverse communities to inform the development and delivery of our strategies and programmes



Actions required

Ensure equality impact assessments are conducted for all key strategies, schemes, deliverables and policies and that they help inform decision making

Revisit outcomes for groups disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and take action to address impact

Develop clear diversity objectives and targets across all key WMCA delivery areas and ensure progress on the delivery of the agenda is monitored and reported on in

Actions required

Develop, communicate and promote co-production principles across the WMCA and ensure there are mechanisms to ensure co-production outcomes are reflected in policy making

Define and articulate who WMCA communities are and identify how best to engage them and involve them in the decision making process

Continue engagement with a range of community groups across all protected characteristics to further understand some of the barriers they face and ensure community engagement input feeds into the Equality Impact Assessment process

Continue to consult with equality/community group contacts on emerging policies/strategies/reviews/schemes making sure they are involved in all aspects of service development and use feedback to shape policies/strategies.

Deliver a varied portfolio of citizen engagement activity, such as the Skills Street team, to inform residents and future planning and to ensure our decisions are shaped by residents

Theme

Social Value

Aim

Deliver equity through procurement by making sure that practices are fair, contractors abide by key equality principles and social value is delivered through WMCA contracts

Theme

Influencing change and diverse leadership

Aim

Work with regional stakeholders to improve diversity at senior levels and identify systematic opportunities for change



Actions required

Continue to include equality considerations in key procurement documents

Ensure equality remains a mandatory assessment criterion as part of the PQQ process

Continue to promote the benefits of inclusion and diversity to our suppliers through regular communications

Collect diversity data on business procurement, use that information to identify gaps and inform procurement application targets

Actions required

Implement key RACE Code principles within the WMCA

Continue to run a Young Combined Authority and ensure there is a platform for it to challenge, inform and influence WMCA policy development and decision making

Support Leadership Commission activity to drive systematic change and improve diversity at senior levels

Support and engage with established diversity networks (e.g. West Midlands Women's Voice) to drive change and influence policy

Convene a new Race Equalities Taskforce to guide and drive action by WMCA and in the region to address racial inequalities

Convene a Life Chances Commission to better understand barriers facing young people in the region and shape targeted initiatives to address them

Convene partners through a Coalition for Digital inclusion

Convene a Mental Health Commission to understand key priorities following Covid-19



Objective 4

Provide an accessible, diverse and inclusive working environment by improving the recruitment, retention, progression, development and overall experience of people employed by the WMCA, enabling the organisation to become an inclusive employer of choice where equality and equity informs our culture and behaviours.



Theme

Workforce diversity

Aim

We attract and appoint a wider pool of candidates reflecting regional diversity

Actions required

Review existing recruitment activities, processes and routes ensuring our practices do not inadvertently discriminate against candidates on the basis of a protected characteristic

More clearly define positive action in recruitment with a clear description of activities and outcomes

Publicise employment opportunities to under-represented/harder to reach groups in the region via specialist agencies such as Remploy, Career Transition Partnership and key charitable organisations (CPT) etc.

Liaise with Executive Recruitment agencies to support the delivery of our diverse leadership agenda

Promote and reinforce the social and business cases for increasing workforce diversity by raising awareness across all levels of staff through communication and training, e.g. unconscious bias training, regular conversations with HR business partners

Continue to recruit all vacancies at grade SP26 or below as an apprenticeship

Continue to use apprenticeship standards/Levy for skills uplift for underrepresented groups – levy in supplier chain to support underrepresented groups

Deliver and evaluate structured work experience programmes also targeting harder to reach groups, such as care leavers, people with disabilities, veterans and NEETs.

Continue to provide guaranteed interview schemes for people with disabilities and veterans

Enhance our approach to reasonable adjustments by delivering an improved, consistent system with consolidated reporting of the adjustments made (recruitment and employment)

Rethink and review our interview methods approach in line with external best practice to ensure it is fit for purpose, inclusive and enables the organisation to recruit the best candidates for the job

Attain Gold Covenant status



Theme

Workforce diversity

Aim

We offer development opportunities to employees currently under-represented in the workforce and ensure they are supported to make the most of their skills and talents

Actions required

Pilot offering strategic leadership apprenticeships to employees currently under-represented at senior levels in the organisation

Deliver internal mentoring (and reverse mentoring) to support the diversity and inclusion agenda targeted at women and minority ethnic employees

Consider ways to further utilise the levy to offer development opportunities to employees under-represented in the workforce

Consider activity around career pathways and talent management to ensure people can progress

Introduce and roll out Career Pathways within the organisation to inform staff development and support equitable access to progression routes

The review and update our Job Evaluation Scheme to support the Career Pathways approach

Introduce a succession planning and talent management framework for the organisation that supports our diversity aspirations



Theme

Employee equality awareness, competence

Aim

Develop and improve staff equality and diversity skills, ensuring they are equality confident, competent and actively engaged in delivering the equality agenda



Actions required

Ensure all new starters complete the online equalities training at induction level and deliver an induction session with equalities and wellbeing at its core

Run regular equality campaigns on a range of issues covering all key protected characteristics and wider inclusion issues as part of a wider equality and inclusion engagement strategy (i.e. language, microaggressions)

Continue to deliver face-to-face equality and disability awareness training to all customer facing staff

Deliver 'Unconscious Bias' training to all managers with a focus on recruitment and raise wider awareness amongst employees

Embed key equality principles within the managers' fundamentals programme

Develop a fit-for-purpose manager and employee Equalities and wellbeing portal to include support and guidance on a number of related topics (from recruitment, to wellbeing and development)

Develop and deliver annual calendar of inclusion events

Theme

Employee voice and accountability

Aim

Understand and improve staff experience and staff voice on equality issues and ensure they are accountable for the delivery of the equality agenda

Actions required

Launch and support staff-led diversity networks to give employees a voice and include in key engagement and consultation processes

Run regular pulse surveys to understand employee views on equality and inclusion and involve employees in decision making processes on areas of work that may affect them

Continue to engage with employees on the inclusion, and wellbeing agendas, also via the wellbeing and inclusion group

Ensure equalities and wellbeing are fully embedded within the newly developed individual performance management framework and better incorporate EDI principles within managers' 1-2-1 guidance

Introduce senior leadership EDI objectives (linked to performance) to help ensure senior leaders have overall accountability for driving EDI into values and a willingness to tackle representation

Retain Leaders in Diversity Accreditation

Retain Disability Confident Leader status



Theme

Supporting employee wellbeing and facilitating equitable outcomes

Aim

Employees feel supported, are treated fairly and positive mental health and wellbeing is championed across the organisation

Actions required

Improve our understanding of how mental health is managed across the organisation and introduce schemes/initiatives to help support employee mental health, resilience and wellbeing, including mental health awareness training delivery

Attain Silver Thrive at work accreditation

Embed wellbeing in the Managers' Fundamentals work programme to enable managers to cultivate teams that foster wellbeing

Identify and raise awareness of prevalent lifestyle conditions and identify ways to support employees

Promote a culture that recognises the impact of being constantly connected, the value of downtime and the need for healthy sleeping patterns and consider innovative ways to stay connected within and across teams

Promote a culture of zero tolerance of bullying and harassment

Continue to promote existing benefits and support mechanisms (i.e. Employee Assistance programme)

Explore ways to enhance the WMCA staff benefits offer

Continue to run the Employer Supported Volunteering scheme and advertise opportunities on a regular basis

Create online Resilience and Stress Toolkits for managers and staff enabling them to access information when they want and need to, enabling them to be 'better prepared to cope with life's transitions.

Continue to promote existing resources (i.e. stress risk assessments)

Continue to deliver wellbeing webinars and develop resources on topics covering the five pillars of wellbeing, i.e. healthy lifestyle behaviours, personal resilience, musculoskeletal



Theme

Workforce data and transparency

Aim

To improve the quality of equality and diversity workforce data we collate and how we use it to address barriers to employment for groups under-represented in the workforce and make publicly available



Actions required

Continue to monitor workforce profile for each protected characteristic to identify gaps/improvement needs and introduce a more detailed race breakdown. Report bi-annually and via the annual equalities review report

Continue to collect, analyse and monitor recruitment data on protected characteristics to identify gaps/improvement needs

Produce a biannual equal pay audit

Identify opportunities to promote and encourage employees to voluntarily disclose their diversity data to ensure our actions as an employer are evidence led and improvement focused.

Publish gender pay gap data on an annual basis and introduce race pay gap reporting

Externally communicate race and other diversity targets and steps taken to improve diversity, including outcomes

Analyse training and development data more consistently to ensure development opportunities are accessed widely



**West Midlands
Combined Authority**