



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Report 2025–26

Evidence in support of compliance
with the Public Sector Equality Duty

March 2026



West
Yorkshire
Combined
Authority

Tracy
Brabin
Mayor of
West Yorkshire



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Foreword

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority is committed to creating a brighter West Yorkshire that works for all. A region where everyone, regardless of background or where you've come from, can enjoy a life that is well-connected, safe, prosperous, and happy.

It is therefore essential that Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) is firmly embedded in everything we do – from the policies we create to the projects and services we deliver for the 2.4 million people who call West Yorkshire their home.

This annual report represents a milestone. It is both the end of the final year of delivery for our first Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan and the starting point as we develop our EDI Strategy 2026-2030. It provides robust evidence through data and examples to show the progress we have made and celebrate the impact that the work of the Combined Authority has had for our people – those in the organisation and in the communities we serve.

For the second year running, we have maintained a median gender pay gap of 0% and with sustained effort we continue to narrow our ethnicity pay gap. We have also started reporting on our disability pay gap to understand our current position and inform future plans to address these disparities.

While as an organisation we have been unafraid to tackle issues head-on, digging deeper where we need to in order to understand the root causes of disparities in experiences or outcomes, it does not mean that our work is done. We need to do more to hit our target of removing the ethnicity pay gap by 2028 and to create a workforce that is demographically representative of West Yorkshire continuing into 2030. More broadly, the greater autonomy offered by further devolution is a significant opportunity in how we can work for and with our communities.

The creation of the EDI Strategy will reflect our organisational maturity and ongoing pledge to ensure that everything we do is strategic and delivers for all people across the region.

I am pleased to present this report outlining our progress over the last 12 months. Thanks to Hannah Pennick, Rachael Evans, Alan Cale, Staff Network Group co-chairs, and members of the EDI Steering Group for their contributions to this report and for coordinating the delivery interventions across the organisation.

**Ben Still,
Chief Executive Officer**

Overview

Public Sector Equality Duty

This report provides information from the financial year 2025/2026 regarding our progress towards the Combined Authority's agreed [Equality Objectives](#) that form three of the five priorities of the Combined Authority's EDI Plan [2022-2025](#). It also outlines the current methodology for understanding the employee profile. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public sector organisations like the Combined Authority to consider how their policies and/or decisions affect people and communities, who have and share protected characteristics named under the Equality Act 2010. To comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public sector organisations must have due regard for:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between people.
- Fostering good relations between people.

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 replaced all prior equality legislation to provide a single legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. The nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are: Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment (Gender Identity), Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, and Sexual Orientation. This report includes employee profile data for the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability status
- Race
- Religion or beliefs
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Our objectives under the Public Sector Equality Duty

The Combined Authority’s Equality Objectives 2022-2025

1. Champion equity, diversity, and inclusion externally and develop an excellent regional and national reputation.
2. Consult and engage with our people, communities, and businesses to understand their diverse needs and ensure our services meet their needs.
3. Ensure our workforce reflects the diversity of West Yorkshire.



Figure: Wheel of Power

Progress against our equality objectives

Introduction

This is the final year of reporting against the outlined equality objectives, with the next iteration being developed as the key pillars of the EDI Strategy. The existing equality objectives have set a strong foundation on which to reach the ambitious vision for the region as outlined in the [West Yorkshire Plan](#). Over the course of the delivery of this plan, activities which have benefits to inclusion both across the region and internally as an employer have been included within business plans to make sure that these can be measured.

There has been a refresh of the organisation's EDI policy and vision. The Combined Authority's EDI vision is to embed equity, fairness and inclusion in all we do to create better outcomes for all. This emphasis on outcomes is a testament to the maturity that has come as a result of the EDI plan and the current objectives. Through outcomes focus, there is a greater evidence base to demonstrate not only compliance with our legal requirements, but how the work has meaningfully improved the lives of colleagues and communities. This evidence also means that future activities can be strategic and impactful, seeking to target services and projects in a way that means the most to the people of West Yorkshire.

The actions within the plan have been delivered across teams and coordinated at a senior level through the Senior EDI Champion, Sarah Eaton (Director of Strategy, Communications and Intelligence) and the Inclusivity Champion, Fatima Khan-Shah. Representatives across directorates coordinate the delivery of the EDI plan and are responsible for reflecting these objectives in business plans and team workplans. As delivery of this plan concludes and the next iteration of equality objectives are developed and published, this report reflects the progress that the Combined Authority has made in embodying its values and working towards its vision as an organisation which works for the diverse communities across the region.

Partnership Working

One of the most important ways that inclusive change is delivered is through working in partnership with organisations across the region and beyond.

The Combined Authority continues its longstanding partnership with the NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB). In particular this partnership focuses on factors that affect population health, including economic growth, climate and tackling inequality. Social determinants of health and inclusion have a significant level of overlap. Further in this report, there will be evidence to how these organisations are working together to embed a health in all policies approach across the work of different teams at the Combined Authority. There are shared roles between the two organisations: the Inclusivity Champion and the Associate Director for Improving Population Health. There have also been three public health registrar placements at the organisation, who worked to develop some key guidance to support the organisation to sustainably and proactively consider social determinants of health in policy development.

Internally, the Combined Authority has continued to work with the five staff network groups: WeCan (disability), PROUD@WYCA (LGBTQIA+), Embrace (race equality), the Young Employee Network and the Gender Equality Group. These groups each have an executive sponsor from the senior leadership team to support and advocate for their work. The co-chairs of each of these groups attend the EDI Steering Group quarterly, to ensure that the voice of colleagues at all levels and from all backgrounds are represented in this forum. These groups have a critical role, and they are often consulted and engaged with regarding key organisational decisions. They also deliver events, development opportunities, and community activities which will be discussed later.

The Combined Authority has a crucial role in two key EDI groups: the West Yorkshire EDI

Partnership, and the Northern Mayoral EDI Partnership. These are valuable spaces where EDI officers can collaborate to share best practice and support in finding solutions to shared challenges. The West Yorkshire EDI Partnership is chaired by the Inclusivity Champion and has a remit which ensures alignment in activities across each of the five districts, the ICB, and the West Yorkshire Police. This group have a focus on community cohesion and how to manage community tensions. The Northern Mayoral EDI group focuses on strategic challenges specifically to Combined Authorities, and members are representatives of Combined Authority linked to the Great North, a mayoral led partnership encouraging inclusive growth across the north of England. This has been a vital forum for sharing insights, advice and best practice which has been strengthened between 2025/26.

Furthermore, our Strategy team have also been working closely with the West Yorkshire Local Infrastructure Organisations (LIOs) to strengthen the Combined Authority's strategic relationship with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector. Officers meet with the LIOs monthly to discuss Combined Authority and sector priorities and have been working together with Local Authority partners and place LIOs to establish a West Yorkshire VCSE Leadership Group. The group is being created to give the VCSE sector a voice in devolution and will act as the sector's strategic point of contact with the Mayor of West Yorkshire.

Key Highlights

We are pleased to showcase some of the key highlights from our inclusion work from 2025-26. Over the past year the Combined Authority has:

- Run an organisation-wide deep dive into reasonable adjustments and created an action plan to ensure all colleagues have access to consistent support in the workplace.
- Won the Disability Champion award from Vercida, recognised for actively advocating for disability inclusion through a number of initiatives, which resulted in high levels of engagement from candidates with disabilities.
- Maintained a 0% median gender pay gap for the second year in a row and continued to close our ethnicity pay gap. We have also started reporting on our disability pay gap so we can track progress year on year for more protected characteristics.
- Reached 1,000 members of the Women of West Yorkshire Network, co-chaired by the Mayor and Inclusivity Champion. The network has run a series of events including the WoWY Festival which was delivered in collaboration with Bradford City of Culture 2025 and attended by nearly 2,000 people.
- Extended delivery of the Mayor's Cost of Living Fund to support the communities most in need across West Yorkshire.
- Continued investment in the Women's Safety Unit, demonstrating commitment to tackling violence against women and girls.
- Launched a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreting service in May 2025 for customers using our staffed bus stations, and travel centres and for the Inclusive Travel Team and other services.
- Produced the Inclusive Engagement Framework (IEF) and supporting handbook. This provides a clear and consistent guidance on how we engage with the public, build ongoing and trusted relationships, and ensure that any consultation or engagement activity genuinely informs the work that we do.
- Trialled a new engagement exercise in partnership with regional VCSEs to reach key community groups that had been missed out in pre engagement exercise or who were identified as highly impacted by the Equality Impact Assessment.
- Hosted a photography exhibition focused on the theme of 'safe spaces' featuring photos taken by 47 children from Leeds Youth Service, understanding how children view environments which made them feel safe or unsafe. This was then used to inform conversations about interventions on what would make them feel safer.

Champion equity, diversity and inclusion externally and develop an excellent regional and national reputation

Championing our approach

The Mayor remains committed to creating a region where equity, diversity and inclusion is at the centre of all activities and decision making. Commitment to building an inclusive region is central to the Mayoral Pledges and are embedded through each directorate of the organisation.

The Inclusivity Champion workplan has continued to be delivered. The plan has sought to ensure that inclusion is considered at all levels of decision making within the Combined Authority and the Integrated Care Board, ensuring that services are targeted at those who have the greatest need, and making sure the voices of seldom heard communities are captured and their concerns addressed.

The Inclusivity Champion spoke at a Women in Transport event in Bradford highlighting how the new franchised bus network will take the needs of diverse communities into account.

Multifaith partnership working has been a priority for the Inclusivity Champion, especially relating to building sustainable relationships and supporting community cohesion. In February 2026 there was a multifaith event exploring how faith leaders and groups could be connected in to the work of the Combined Authority. It was attended by over 70 faith leaders from each of the districts.

The Inclusivity Champion has chaired the Digital Inclusion Board, where there has been significant overperformance on where people in the most need have been connected. The Digital Inclusion West Yorkshire programme has engaged over 317 organisations to support an enhanced digital inclusion offer.

This includes:

- Delivering digital inclusion awareness training sessions to staff and volunteers within community organisations
- Referring organisations to data banks and device loaning schemes
- Connecting organisations to digital inclusion networks
- Supporting organisations to apply for a total of £1.2m in funding bids

There has been progress with connecting other organisations to more effectively embed this work.

The Women of West Yorkshire (WoWY) network has been another key area of focus. Over the year there have been several events, including the first WoWY Festival attended by almost 2000 people to celebrate Yorkshire Day. This event was run in connection with Bradford2025, showcasing the cultural offer of the district. There were performances, speeches, and an opportunity for network members to showcase their organisations.

The WoWY network also reached the key milestone in December 2025 of 1,000 members. This vital milestone has demonstrated that there is appetite and momentum to continue the advocate for gender equality across the region. There were a series of press articles following this achievement which boosted membership further.

The Mayor's Cost of Living Fund has been extended. This provided £750,000 of new funding to help those most in need across West Yorkshire. This is the third round of funding since October 2022 and overall has seen £3

million given to the five local authorities in the region who work with local charities and voluntary organisations to support the hardest hit through the cost-of-living crisis. The fund has supported 61,000 individuals and households with advice and support, as well as access to warm spaces and food parcels

Over the past year, and as part of the transition to become a Mayoral Strategic Authority, the creation of an overarching Outcomes Framework is in development to ensure effective and consistent measurement of activity and impact is embedded across the organisation. This is strategically aligned with the Local Growth Plan and Local Transport Plan. Crucially, EDI measures and outcomes are being embedded within the Outcomes Framework so that inclusive metrics are being consistently measured across everything we do as an organisation. This standardises and recognises EDI outputs and outcomes as strategically ambitious and valuable.

Inclusive Economy, Skills and Culture

The Healthy Working Life Programme has exceeded the overall employment targets for providing support to access employment or self-employment. The original target was to support 4309 people, but the actual numbers have been 5310. This includes supporting VCSE organisations.

The Employment and Skills team have supported 606 businesses with their skills programmes, utilising £797,125 of the Apprenticeship Levy. 278 apprentices have been supported, an increase on the target of 148%.

A variety of initiatives including Skills Booster and Construction contracts have allowed us to support 36,088 adults to upskill or retrain in the region, increasing employment opportunities and economic output.

The West Yorkshire Fair Work Charter is a network of employers across the region committed to offering fair work, good pay, fair, secure and flexible working conditions, as well as supporting greater wellbeing, diversity, and social mobility within the workplace.

The West Yorkshire Fair Work Charter continues to build its membership, with 314 businesses across all sizes and sectors having joined since its launch in late 2023.

The Library School Book Fund has provided library resources for 44 primary schools in West Yorkshire that are currently without a library, which will receive the full package including library installation. A further 20 schools are in the next category of highest need who will benefit from resources, book stock, staff training and wrap-around support.

Training is being delivered to 45 housing association staff to support dementia ready housing and dementia ready policies adopted by 15 of the West Yorkshire Housing Partnership providers. The content has been developed by Alzheimer's Society, and the remit of who this training is being delivered to has expanded so there can be even greater impact of these sessions.

2025 presented an incredible opportunity with Bradford2025 to present a strong cultural offer reflective of the diverse make-up of the city. The target was to deliver 1,500,000 individual in-person audience attendances: by December 2025 the Bradford2025 programme had delivered 3,139,198 in-person audience attendances.

Policing and Crime

The Violence Reduction Partnership have developed an online education programme that will increase understanding of the Child First Theory of Change, Public Health approach and Influential Factors. This has been reviewed by the Public Health and Violence Reduction teams to ensure that the content is meaningful and impactful.

There has been continued investment in the Women's Safety Unit, aligning to the Mayoral pledge of prioritising the safety of women and girls. The new Violence Against Women and Girls strategy from national government has been reviewed and will be considered as the organisation's Women and Girls Strategy is refreshed.

The Mayor held a roundtable with MPs with a specific focus on advocating for the prevention of violence against women and girls in April 2025. In particular, discussions centred around early intervention and prevention work including relationships education for every child across the country, and sustainable long-term investment in specialist violence against women and girls' services.

West Yorkshire partners working in the domestic and sexual abuse arena are regularly convened to discuss actions to address DSA. There is a six-monthly focused group to share best practice across West Yorkshire, the first of which met in December 2025.

The second Reclaim the Night event took place in October 2025. This year, there were a series of simultaneous events taking place across all five districts. It was attended by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, with each district having a different focus area, but all working towards the shared mission of ending violence against women and girls and advocating for women's safety.

The rights of children in the built environment are championed through communication with local authority partners, embedding child-friendly design in the housing strategy and hosting an event in May 2025 for planning and transport colleagues focusing on child-friendly neighbourhoods.

Safer Parks work continues to develop, leading to a pilot project in Bradford using open spatial data to map parks against the Safer Parks guidance principles.

Health

A Health in all Policies Toolkit and associated plan to embed the toolkit within the Combined Authority has been progressed, linking in with key strategic documents including the Outcomes Framework and the Investment Framework, and getting support from the Health Foundation Mayoral Regions programme. There has been a self-assessment process to identify priority areas for actions to embed a Health in all Policies approach.

Alongside the Health in all Policies Toolkit there is also a set of design principles for embedding health inclusion in the programmes of the Combined Authority. There are supporting resources and principles to enable programmes across the Combined Authority to embed health inclusion in order to maximise opportunities to promote population health and reduce inequalities.

Transport

As part of the corporate membership of the Women in Transport network, there was an equity survey completed which identified the Combined Authority as a sector leading organisation for advancing gender equity. This is credited to the majority-women workforce and excellent record on progression and pay parity for women colleagues. This success stands out in the content of the wider UK transport sector, which is male dominated and underperforms in terms of gender equality.

The Combined Authority provides AccessBus, a school transport service specifically for children with special educational needs or disabilities.

Mayor's Fares have continued through 2025, capping the cost of a single bus journey to £2.20 and below the national cap level. This makes public transport across the region more affordable and available to as many people as possible. Over 11,000 under 26-year-olds accessed discounted bus and train travel through the travel pass scheme.

In January 2026 there were 46,445 blind / disabled person's travel passes in circulation in West Yorkshire. In January 2026 there were 314,359 senior travel passes in circulation in West Yorkshire.

The Combined Authority launched a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreting service in May 2025 for customers using our staffed bus stations, and travel centres and for the Inclusive Travel Team and other services. Customers used the service on 38 occasions.

A fares, ticketing and retail strategy is currently in development to determine the new approach

for a franchised bus network. This strategy carefully considers the EDI implications of different fare structures and approaches.

A procurement strategy is currently under development for mass transit. This strategy will explore opportunities to incorporate key principles established within the EDI action plan such as ensuring that small/medium enterprises (SMEs) are connected to the supply chain for mass transit where possible and establishing frameworks that will encourage sharing of best practice across the supply chain.

In tandem with the procurement strategy, work is also underway to further develop mass transit's approach to social value in alignment with the social value needs assessment piece. Options to undertake a focused piece of work around this are currently being explored.

Work continues to implement an EDI action plan for mass transit. Introductory meetings have been organised with each of the mass transit pillar leads to ensure colleagues across the programme understand their role in ensuring EDI is effectively embedded from the earliest stages of design through to operation.

The EDI action plan is a reflection of mass transit's ambition to align and build on the strong precedent set by the Combined Authority has set by putting EDI at the heart of everything we do and leading the way to embed these values across our work. The focus is developing a mass transit system that acknowledges and celebrates the full range of human difference across West Yorkshire. The aim of the Combined Authority and the mass transit team is to create opportunities for everyone in the region by prioritising EDI from the early planning stages.

This is underpinned by the joint sustainability and EDI goal for mass transit: 'Support the development of a best-in-class Mass Transit system for West Yorkshire that creates lasting

opportunities for those across our region by embedding sustainability, accessibility, and inclusion into every aspect of the system from early development, through design, construction and into operation.' This goal to be best in class for EDI, along with the mass transit EDI action plan exemplify the ambition to not only fulfil the legal and moral obligation under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty, but where appropriate, go above and beyond them too.

EqlAs have been carried out as required for key decision points to date across the programme for the likes of the 2024 mass transit consultation and the Mass Transit Vision 2040 document. An EqlA for Phase 1 of mass transit has been commissioned and is now in the process of being scoped.

Working in conjunction with delivery partners across the mass transit program, an Integrated Impact Assessment is also being scoped which will capture a more holistic view of what the impact of mass transit will be, and how it will affect West Yorkshire's communities by considering wider implications to determinants of health and wellbeing, alongside other key factors such as equalities and environment. This will ultimately help ensure that key decisions made around mass transit's development, design, construction, and operation, are more transparent and lead to more positive outcomes for communities.

The work of the VCSE sector is a key driver for the Mayor's plan to create a brighter West Yorkshire that works for all. Strengthening the relationship between the VCSE sector and West Yorkshire Combined Authority would enable both to deliver improved outcomes for all our communities and groups, including the most deprived and disadvantaged.

Consult and engage with our people, communities, and businesses to understand their diverse needs and ensure our services meet their needs

The Combined Authority carries out extensive consultation and engagement to hear from people that will be impacted by our work, and give them the opportunity to influence decision making. During 2025/26 we have carried out over 40 individual consultations / engagements.

Consultation activity is hosted on Your Voice, our digital engagement hub.

Your Voice key statistics April 2025 to end of January 2026:

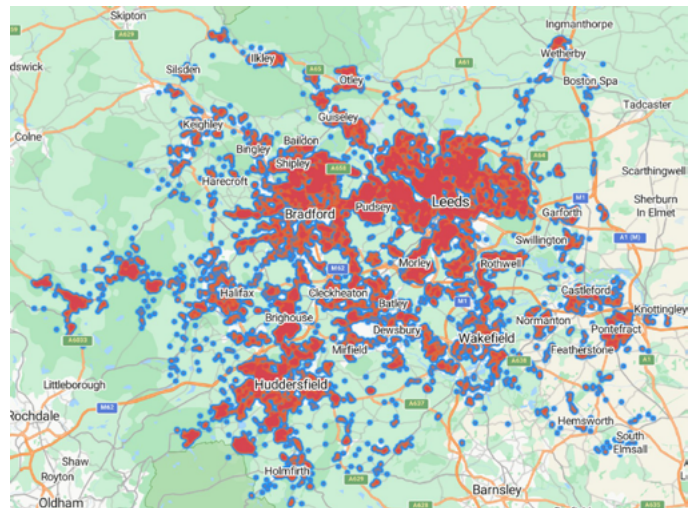
- 251,900 visits so far (already higher than previous years and we don't have figures for the full year: 180,000 in 2023/24 and 221,000 in 2024/25)
- 68,700 document downloads so far (up year on year: from 57,000 in 2023/24 and 62,000 in 2024/25)
- 682 new registered users so far (achieving our target of 500 new registrations/year for the third year running)
- Total registered users as of January 2026 = 4,822 accounts

Face to face engagement in communities across West Yorkshire: since 1 April 2025 to end of January 2026 the Communities, Consultation and Engagement team has engaged in person with approximately 6,000 people across 128 different events (including community group meetings, workshops, drop in events, webinars, on street chats and panel events).

There has been a Consultation and Engagement dashboard constructed to help monitor levels of responses to surveys from various protected characteristic groups, Your Voice registrations, spread of events attended and heat mapping

survey responses. This information can ensure that any gaps in engagement activity can be addressed and also avoids duplication and can inform activities intelligently.

Heat map showing the geographical distribution of completed survey responses to our consultations across West Yorkshire:



Consultation and engagement should inform decision making and those that take part should be kept informed of how their feedback has been used. We have committed to closing the feedback loop and are strengthening the consistent use of “you said, we did” reports with a new template due to be launched soon.

Inclusive Engagement Framework

The Communities, Consultation and Engagement team have produced the Inclusive Engagement Framework (IEF) and supporting handbook. This provides a clear and consistent guidance on how we engage with the public, build ongoing and trusted relationships, and ensure that any consultation or engagement

activity genuinely informs the work that we do. The IEF reaffirms our commitment to equitable, diverse and inclusive engagement and establishes the standards by which we operate. The handbook sets out the roles and responsibilities of anyone who might be involved in the consultation or engagement process and provides advice about how engagement can be embedded in work across the organisation.

The IEF makes explicit that engagement within the Combined Authority extends beyond the public; it involves business, public and voluntary sector organisations, and internal engagement. The principles of the IEF are noted as being applicable to business and stakeholder groups.

To ensure that the IEF can be embedded in all our work, the team developed a comprehensive action plan to be delivered within the next 18 months. The action plan includes seven key objectives and within each objective there are set actions to help reach that objective:

- **Objective 1:** Inclusive engagement is part of the organisational plans and processes
- **Objective 2:** Make it easier to identify the communities who are impacted by our work
- **Objective 3:** Raise awareness of and provide various methods for people to get involved which are tailored to their need
- **Objective 4:** Utilise a range of communication and engagement methods
- **Objective 5:** Work more collaboratively with colleagues and district partners to reduce consultation fatigue
- **Objective 6:** Increase colleague's awareness and knowledge on the importance of engagement activities
- **Objective 7:** Monitor impact, learn and improve

The team has already started working on the action plan and good progress has been made on all these objectives with many actions in progress and a few completed. One of the key actions was to raise awareness about the importance of engagement. The Communities, Consultation and Engagement team delivered

an internal spotlight session regarding inclusive engagement, attended by 120 colleagues. They are also attending all directorate outcome boards to discuss with HoS best ways to link with their teams to embed engagement in their work. The team has also been in conversations with HR colleagues about the possibility of developing an internal training session for colleagues. Other completed or in progress actions include updating key templates with a bigger focus on EDI, piloting a new engagement project working directly with VCFSE organisations, developing a Power BI tool and further development of the Consultation and Engagement Hub and team meetings as requested.

Engaging with people with protected characteristics

The Consultation and Engagement team review Equality Impact Assessments to determine the protected characteristic groups that are most affected and therefore the consultation approach.

The Combined Authority is developing an Accessibility Design Reference Group. The role of this group is to commission those with lived experience relating to accessibility to review transport initiatives and ensure that the services and infrastructure that is designed, commissioned and implemented by the Combined Authority are fit for purpose and can be made as accessible as possible. It is anticipated that this group will be operational in summer 2026.

In February 2026, the Combined Authority organised an event aimed at bringing together faith and community leaders and organisation from across West Yorkshire to celebrate their contributions to their local communities, raise awareness of the Combined Authority's work and highlight opportunities for collaboration in areas such as skills, education, business, and community development. The event was attended by 72 people including leaders and members of various faiths with strong links and influences in their communities, VCSEs representatives, local authority EDI representatives and NHS organisations. Senior

leaders from the Combined Authority were also in attendance, including the CEO, DMPC, Inclusivity champion, Directors and Heads of Service, who engaged in round table conversations with event participants around themes of safety, culture, business, transport, housing, climate, health and skills. The Combined Authority is keen to continue to engage with these groups in the future.

Following the ruling by the Supreme Court on the Equality Act, the Mayor and the Inclusivity Champion attended a community listening circle in Leeds for LGBTQIA+ people to understand their concerns, particularly relating to safety and access to services. These communities were particularly affected and concerned

Transport

In September, the Dewsbury Bus Station project team worked together with Yorkshire based social enterprise, Visits Unlimited, to have an accessibility audit carried out at the temporary Dewsbury Bus Station. The audit was carried out by an experienced Accessibility Auditor, who is himself a wheelchair user. Arriva also assisted the audit by providing a bus and driver. This audit helped the project team learn more about bus boarding and how the design of bus stands can affect accessibility for wheelchair users.

In line with West Yorkshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (EVI) Strategy principle four: 'Ensure easy to use, fair and accessible to all:' Accessibility for all is embedded within the Local EVI programme, from using a data led intervention targeting, ensuring consistent standard to installation are used across our district partners to contractual key performance indicators that hold suppliers accountable to delivering PAS 1899:2022 Electric Vehicles Accessible Charging | BSI compliant sites.

The project team have worked with spatial colleagues to acquired Motability Operations User data, which has been turned into a heat map within the West Yorkshire Charger Allocation Mapping Tool. The mapping tool is accessible to district partner to enable a single point of truth. The heatmap will enable district partners to make data-led decision of where

accessible charging interventions will have the most impact.

As part of the statutory consultation for the Local Transport Plan, which ran from July – October 2025, the CC&E team trialled a new engagement exercise in partnership with regional VCSEs in order to reach key community groups that had been missed out in the pre engagement exercise or the EqlA showed that they would potentially be highly impacted by the plan. The key groups identified as missing from prior engagement were disabled people, ethnic minority groups (with a notable gap among Asian or British Asian communities), people of particular faiths (with a notable gap among Muslim communities) and women. Following a selection process, key organisations from each district were selected and commissioned to recruit, organise and deliver engagement sessions with their communities. This approach allowed us to reach 1,271 individuals, of which 64% were from racially minoritised communities, 70% identified as having a religion or belief, 47% disclosed a disability, 66% identified as female.

The Consultation and Engagement team carried out consultation regarding our proposed new double-decker bus fleet in late 2025. "On board buses" received over 5,000 responses. The On Board Buses campaign supported engagement with under-represented communities by shifting away from a predominantly digital-first approach and championing activity through experiential and owned channels. Experiential activity in bus stations, screens in bus stations and posters on buses allowed the campaign to reach people in accessible, everyday settings, including those with limited digital access. This was complemented by targeted owned channels, such as the MCard app, and in-person engagement that encouraged questions, answers, and conversion to happen in-the-moment, helping to lower barriers to participation.

There was extensive public consultation undertaken as part of the development of a new school transport policy, the outcome of which was discussed at the Combined Authority in July 2025.

Policing and Crime

The Serious Violence strategy was out for public consultation, with particular targeted input from the VCSE sector.

The policing and crime team have reviewed the government's new Violence against Women and Girls strategy to ensure that work across West Yorkshire is aligned; this is also being informed by the Serious Violence strategy consultation and feedback from the public at co-production events to ensure that any activities address the needs of women and girls in the region.

In September 2025, the Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) hosted a photography exhibition focused on the theme of 'safe spaces' featuring photos taken by 47 children from Leeds Youth Service. Children involved had taken part in a number of workshops, delivered by the VRP using PhotoVoice, a creative research methodology using photos as data. Children used disposable cameras to document what made them feel safe in their local areas and used the photos they had created to have conversations about what could be done to make them feel safer. They then worked with a photographer to create their own photography exhibition to showcase their findings directly to the people with the ability to make change, including the Mayor, councillors and policy makers.

Climate and Environment

West Yorkshire's draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) was developed through engagement with a range of stakeholder groups. Alongside hearing about the issues relevant to specific groups and end users, we wanted to find out what the different groups agree on, and what values they share. The Combined Authority adopted Natural England's research on participatory democracy to ensure that the strategy was well informed and locally rooted. The participatory democracy model directly involves citizens in decision-making processes. It was recommended by Natural England at the start of the process to develop the Strategies. It can lead to a greater sense

of ownership and trust, and more effective solutions, because valuable insights from community members can be considered for inclusion. Conversations could involve a group of stakeholders in learning about and identifying priority outcomes related to local nature recovery in the area in a deliberative approach.

Early engagement targeted young people; the Authority has committed to a 'Child First' approach, putting children's voices at the heart of policies and plans. Many people worry about their children and the environment and there is a known 'teen dip' in nature connectedness. West Yorkshire has a young profile, and the pilot LNRS work delivered in other regions also identified this as a key group, so engagement with this group was important our strategy's development.

Two workshops were set up with 12 students from Greenhead College, Huddersfield. An illustrator in attendance captured their thoughts and grouped these into themes. Subsequently the illustrator produced a digital manifesto that outlined their views. This work identified that young people want more nature near to where they are, and for this to be easy and safe to access and spend time in. Children and young people want leaders to take action to help nature. And they would like more help to do things themselves.

Following the strategy's first public survey, several underrepresented groups were identified:

- Young people, aged 16-24. This group comprised 5.4% of our first public survey's responses, despite representing 11.7% of the region's population.
- Minority ethnic groups. In the first public survey, 89% of consultation responders were white; Asian/Asian British comprised 2.7%; Mixed/multiple ethnic groups comprised 1.4%; Black, Black British, Caribbean or African comprised 0.5%. This is despite 23% of the population identifying as being from an ethnic minority.
- People in areas of deprivation with poor access to nature (suggested by Natural England as a group for further engagement).

- People with health conditions or disabilities (suggested by Natural England as a group for further engagement and identified as a group to engage in our equality impact assessment).

We undertook additional engagement to reach these groups. Engagement activities featured a nature-based experience, such as a walk at Cromwell Bottom Nature Reserve, followed by a workshop to explore the strategy. Five workshops took place – one in each council district.

Key findings from this engagement included accessibility including physical barriers to accessing nature, such as the need for accessible transport. However, there are also broader accessibility barriers that are mental or cultural and relate to confidence or social norms. School was also seen as a missed opportunity for connecting young people with nature – young people want this connection and want opportunities. Rather than replacing existing community work, points were made about building on existing community foundations. Where possible, co-designing/ planning together with diverse groups is important to ensure that everyone's needs are met. Furthermore, safety and signage were recurring themes. Additionally, there was some frustration with one-off consultations and emphasis was placed on the importance of long-term involvement.

Taking the Child First approach, we engaged with children aged 8-15 to understand their connection with nature, as young children were not sufficiently represented in our earlier engagement. The results were considered to ensure the strategy did not conflict with children's views, but rather than extensively

influencing the strategy, the main aim was to provide an evidence base for future work to bring children closer to nature. Young people clearly want to connect with nature. When given access and opportunity they do so with enthusiasm and curiosity. They notice the positive effects connecting with nature has on their happiness and remember nature-based experiences for many years. However, barriers such as parental confidence, school pressures, and wider-ranging concerns about safety limit how often these experiences take place.

Additionally, a survey targeted this age group using a slider for children to show how part of nature they felt. Of the 113 respondents, 19% felt completely a part of nature, 26% felt quite a part of nature, and 30% felt somewhat a part of nature, while 9% felt they were not a part of nature. Open text responses showed that young people felt that being outside, walking and playing would help them to feel more a part of nature.

The strategy's statutory public consultation also set an objective to reach the groups that the first survey struggled to reach. Despite utilising a range of channels, the consultation still found these groups difficult to reach.

Ensure our workforce represents the diversity of West Yorkshire

For the second consecutive year, the median gender pay gap for the organisation remains at 0%. The ethnicity pay gap also continues to follow a positive trajectory of closing. For the first year, there has been a production of a disability pay gap so that going forward the trajectory can be tracked and potential interventions can be implemented if these pay gaps do not close sufficiently rapidly.

There has been a consolidation of management information data linked to the EDI dashboard, which allows for transparent visibility of targets to hit workforce targets in the EDI Plan to ensure that our workforce is representative of the diversity of the region.

The Combined Authority recruitment policy and process requires that at least one EDI related question is used in interviews and where possible that interview panels are diverse.

A wellbeing strategy has been developed with four key pillars to focus on the health and wellbeing of colleagues.

Family friendly accreditations continue to be an organisational priority and a high area of focus.

In November 2025 the Combined Authority became a member of the Women in Transport network at advocate level. This membership promotes and supports the advancement of women working in transport, and there are now 50 individual members across the Combined Authority. This Women in Transport membership was promoted at one of the stands during the 2025 Colleague Celebration event in November.

A mass transit people working group has been established to ensure accountability through the mass transit senior leadership team for resourcing including that EDI is embedded in the approach as the project moves through development, delivery and operational phases.

The EDI Steering Group commissioned a research project to better understand the process of requesting and implementing reasonable adjustments for colleagues with disabilities. This deep dive was carried out by the EDI Manager and involved running focus groups with HR Advisors, interviewing senior leadership and surveying colleagues with disabilities and line managers across the organisation. The results of this deep dive have informed an action plan which will be implemented through 2026 to improve our processes.

In February 2026, the Combined Authority was awarded the [Disability Champion award by Vercida](#).

The recommendations from this deep dive have been presented to the whole organisation in a spotlight session, as well as a specific presentation to the WeCan staff network to get their early feedback and indicate that their feedback has translated into action. The full report was also presented to the senior level performance board so that directors from across the organisation were sighted on proposed activities and could show ownership over the action plan.

Staff Network Groups

The Young Employee Network launched a mentoring scheme to pair those who are in their early career with more experienced colleagues to support their development.

The Embrace Network organised a series of guest speakers through Black History Month and Islamophobia Awareness month to go out to the whole organisation. These speakers addressed their lived experience and the importance of allyship.

The Proud network organised internal pride events and attended different pride parades across the region alongside the Mayor, including at Leeds Pride, the biggest in the region.

The Gender Equality Group arranged talks on Men's Mental Health for International Mens Day to spotlight the impact that gender discrimination has on men, and signposting to appropriate support for men in the region.

The WeCan network has been a key group to advocate for change and acts as a key point of contact to support in the work into reasonable adjustments and improving the experience for colleagues.



Employee Profile Data

Methodology

The 2025 dataset includes all employees currently employed by the Combined Authority as of 31 December 2025. The 2025 data provided through CiAnywhere has been benchmarked against the West Yorkshire population, baselined from the Census 2021. The key statistics for the different protected characteristics are explored in more detail in this report.

Our employee profile

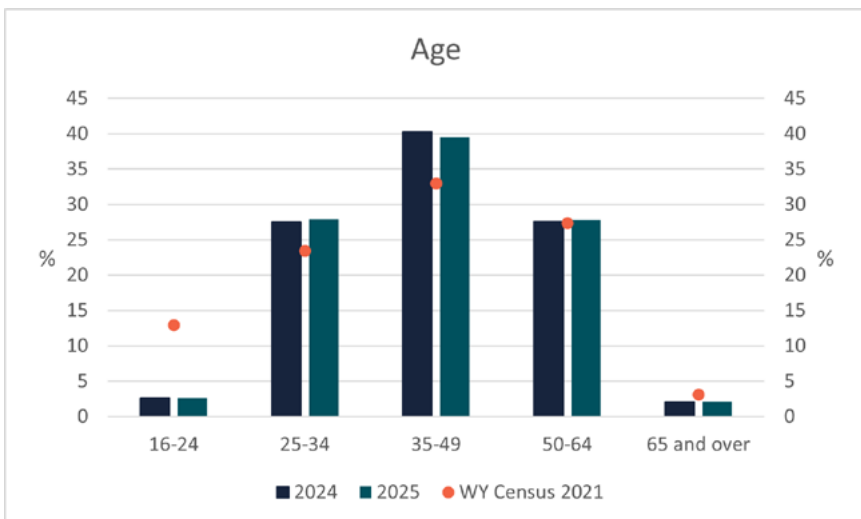
The employee profile of the Combined Authority has been benchmarked against West Yorkshire data from the 2021 Census. Where possible a working age population has been used. Data for other Combined Authorities is not consistently available for comparison and many of these areas have significantly different populations making comparison not sensible.

Age

Table 1

	Combined Authority 2023	Combined Authority 2024	Combined Authority 2025	Combined Authority 24/25 Change	Economically Active West Yorkshire Population Census 2021
Under 25	4.2%	2.6%	2.6%	0%	13.0%
25-34	27.2%	27.5%	27.9%	0.4%	23.5%
35-49	38.8%	40.3%	39.5%	-0.8%	33.0%
50-64	28.2%	27.6%	27.8%	0.2%	27.4%
65+	1.6%	2.1%	2.1%	0%	3.1%

Figure 2



Source: CiAnywhere

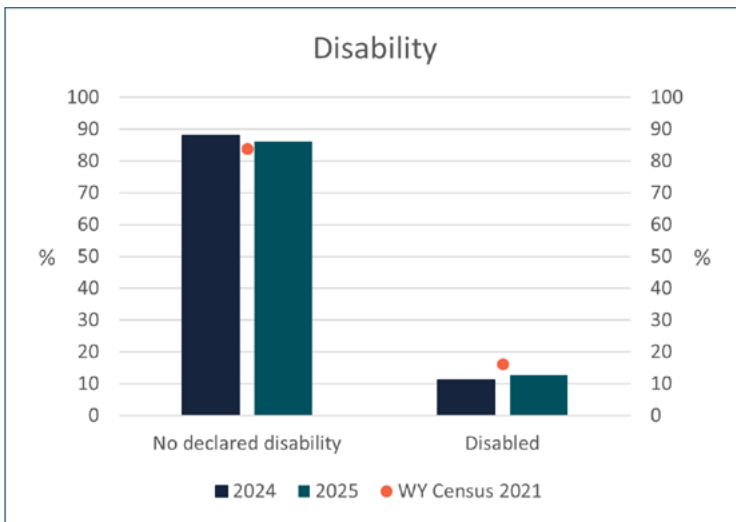
The economically active population of West Yorkshire broken down by age group is available from the 2021 census and is included [here](#). The age groups used have been realigned to mirror this analysis.

Disability

Table 2

	Combined Authority 2023	Combined Authority 2024	Combined Authority 2025	Combined Authority 24/25 Change	Economically Active West Yorkshire Population Census 2021
No declared disability	91.1%	88.1%	86.2%	-1.9%	83.8%
Disabled	8.9%	11.2%	12.8%	1.6%	16.2%

Figure 3



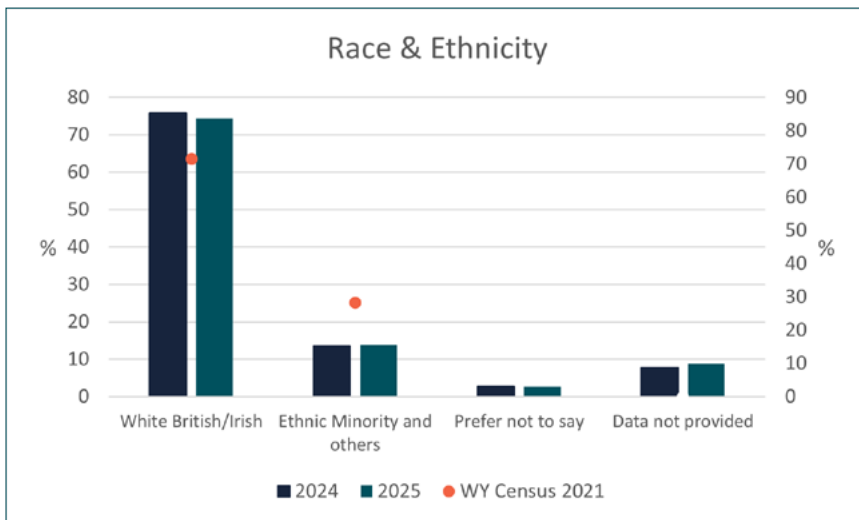
Whilst details of disability are recorded in CiAnywhere, the specifics are excluded from this analysis in line with the 2021 Census comparator. Data from the Census for disability by age is only currently available in 5-year age bands so the best working age comparison available is the 15-64 age group.

Race / ethnicity

Table 3

	Combined Authority 2023	Combined Authority 2024	Combined Authority 2025	Combined Authority 24/25 Change	Economically Active West Yorkshire Population Census 2021
White British/Irish	78.8%	75.9%	74.4%	-1.5%	71.6%
Ethnic minority and other	15.9%	13.5%	13.9%	0.4%	28.4%
Prefer not to say	0.6%	2.8%	2.7%	-0.1%	
Data not provided	4.7%	7.8%	8.8%	1.0%	

Figure 4



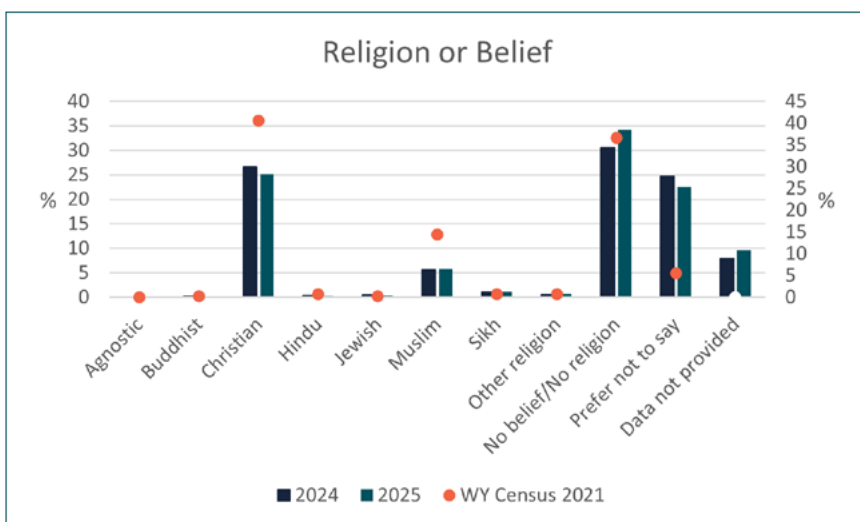
This is a compulsory question in the Census unlike religion, sexual orientation and gender identity which are all currently, voluntary questions and hence the prefer not to say category for those questions but not for ethnicity. The category ethnic minority and others includes everyone who has not identified as either White British/English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish or White Irish. The category recording is aligned with the GOV.UK [guidance](#).

Belief / religion

Table 4

	Combined Authority 2023	Combined Authority 2024	Combined Authority 2025	Combined Authority 24/25 Change	Economically Active West Yorkshire Population Census 2021
Agnostic	0.1%	0%	0%	0%	0.04%
Buddhist	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0%	0.27%
Christian	27.7%	26.6%	25.1%	-1.5%	40.62%
Hindu	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0%	0.77%
Jewish	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0%	0.30%
Muslim	5.7%	5.7%	5.8%	0.1%	14.50%
Sikh	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%	0%	0.82%
Other religion		0.5%	0.7%	0.2%	0.83%
No Belief/No religion	38.1%	30.5%	34.2%	3.7%	36.69%
Prefer not to say	7.1%	24.8%	22.6%	-2.2%	5.58%
Data not provided	20.1%	7.9%	9.7%	1.8%	

Figure 6



Data for 2025 continues the inclusion of ‘Other’ as a potential option with a notable percentage colleagues indicating they did not wish to state their religious belief. One in ten employees have not input data for this characteristic.

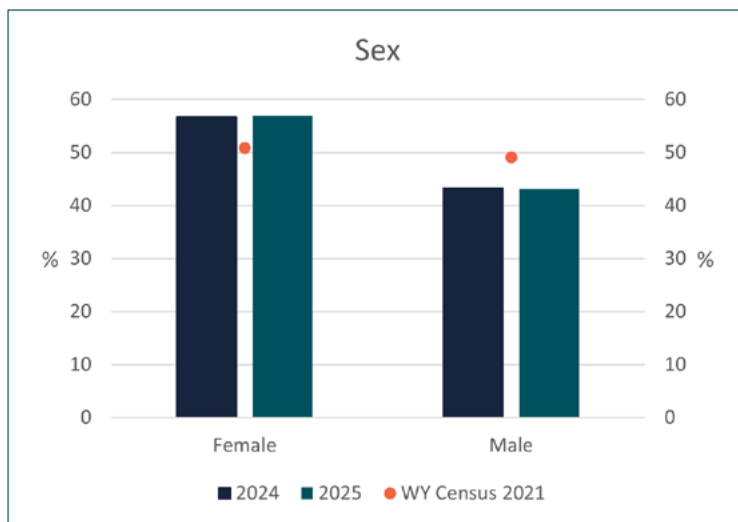
Source: CiAnywhere

Sex

Table 5

	Combined Authority 2023	Combined Authority 2024	Combined Authority 2025	Combined Authority 24/25 Change	Economically Active West Yorkshire Population Census 2021
Female	56.8%	56.7%	56.9%	0.2%	50.9%
Male	43.2%	43.3%	43.1%	-0.2%	49.1%

Figure 7

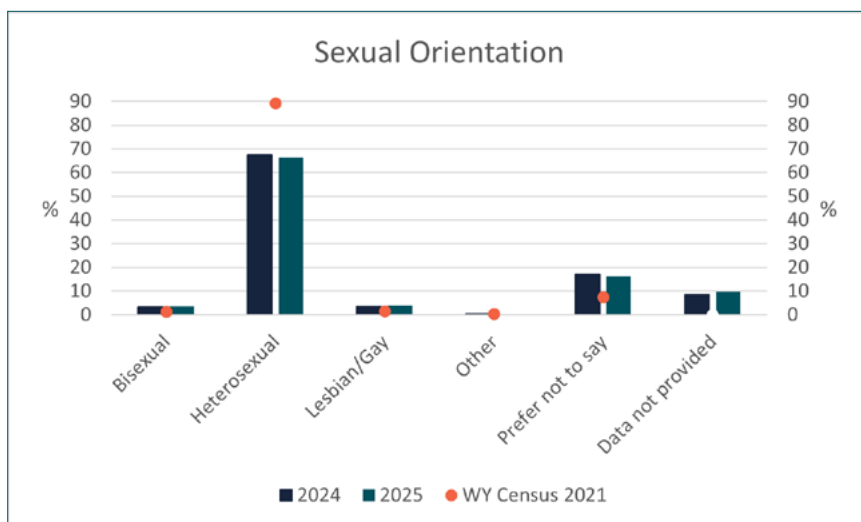


Sexual orientation

Table 6

	Combined Authority 2023	Combined Authority 2024	Combined Authority 2025	Combined Authority 24/25 Change	Economically Active West Yorkshire Population Census 2021
Bisexual	3.3%	3.2%	3.5%	0.3%	1.4%
Heterosexual	66.8%	67.4%	66.4%	-1.0%	89.3%
Lesbian/ Gay	4%	3.5%	3.9%	0.4%	1.5%
Other		0.4%	0.1%	-0.3%	0.3%
Prefer not to say	6.7%	17.1%	16.3%	-0.8%	7.5%
Data not provided	19.0%	8.4%	9.6%	1.2%	

Figure 8



The total headcount has increased by 5.2% from 975 in 2024 to 1,026 in 2025.

Find out more
westyorks-ca.gov.uk

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All information correct at time of writing.



West
Yorkshire
Combined
Authority

Tracy
Brabin
Mayor of
West Yorkshire