

## **Equality Scheme 2022–2024**

### **Driving positive change to make a difference**

#### **About the WMCA**

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) is made up of 18 local authorities, the Local Enterprise Partnerships, the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, and the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority.

It was created in 2016, when the government gave us powers and money to improve people's lives in the West Midlands.

It is managed by the WMCA Board. The board is made up of seven local authority members.

We work regionally and also help local authorities to work locally. We deliver some services ourselves. This includes regional public transport and adult skills. We also bring together different organisations and people and guide their work. This includes helping regional businesses to grow, making sure new houses are built, and regenerating areas that need it. We listen to the views of different communities and organisations and make sure that they influence what happens in the region.

Our vision is a 'more prosperous and better connected West Midlands which is fairer, greener and healthier'.

Our Corporate Aims and Objectives (2022–24) include six aims to help make this vision a reality:

- Promoting inclusive economic growth in every corner of the region
- Ensuring everyone can 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 central government
- Developing our organisation and our role as a good regional partner

## **Why we care about equalities**

I am delighted to introduce the WMCA's 2022–24 Equality Scheme. The Scheme sets out our vision, ambitions and what we will do to promote inclusion and tackle inequalities over the next three years. It is supported by an action plan and is fully in line with our wider Corporate Strategy, which we published in November 2021.

An inclusive West Midlands economy where everyone can thrive is central to our vision of improving the quality of life of everyone who lives and works in the region. If we want to make this vision a reality, equality, diversity and inclusion must be our guiding principles. We can only make a real and valuable difference to the quality of people's lives by making equalities part of everything that we do.

The regional equality challenge is large. We need to be bold, think creatively, listen to what our residents and communities tell us, and work together to change things for the better.

We will also continue to work to make our workforce more diverse, so that it fully reflects the diversity of our communities. 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 put our Strategic Equality Plan into practice over the next three years. It is vital that we meet the equality objectives we set out in this plan so that all the communities we serve are confident that we are working for them.

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

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

Laura Shoaf

WMCA Chief Executive

## **Introducing the Equality Scheme**

This Equality Scheme sets out what we want equality, diversity and inclusion to look like in the West Midlands by 2024, and what we will do to get there. It describes how we will reduce inequality and improve the quality of people's lives.

The Equalities Act 2010 is the most important law in this area. It lists nine 'protected characteristics'. We explain these later in this document. But we believe that true commitment to equality and diversity goes further than this. It matters to everyone.

We produced this Scheme after talking to organisations and communities across the West Midlands. It uses knowledge that we have gained over the last few years.

The regional equality challenge is big, especially now because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The WMCA needs to lead the way. We must respond to what our residents tell us, and work closely with communities and other organisations. We must put equality at the heart of everything we do.

## **Our vision and commitment**

Everything the WMCA does is about improving life for people in the region. Our ambition is to 'build a more prosperous and better connected West Midlands which is fairer, greener and healthier'. Equality, diversity and inclusion are essential to this.

We want an economy where everyone can do well and no-one is left behind. All residents should benefit from it. The benefits include jobs and economic opportunities. They also include good physical and mental wellbeing, and inclusive, well-connected, supportive, vibrant communities.

These aims are more important now than ever. Poverty is a big problem, and the gap between rich and poor is growing. Your background and wealth affects your health and what health services you can access. Unemployment, low skills and poor performance at school are problems for our region's young people. Race, class, gender, disability and age still affect what opportunities you get and how well you do in life.

The Covid-19 pandemic has seriously affected the economy and society. It has hit some communities harder than others. This includes the poorest people in society and also some minority groups. These groups already faced inequality and disadvantage and this has got worse, regionally and nationally.

Although WMCA and others have worked to try to reduce the inequality gap, society is still very unequal. There is still a lot of work to do. We can make that work bolder, broader and deeper in several ways.

- We need more information about different inequalities and how they are linked to each other. We can use this to challenge inequality and remove barriers to equality for everyone.

- We need to make sure that none of our plans and strategies have an unfair impact on anyone. Equality, diversity and inclusion must be part of everything we do.
- We need to work *with* communities, especially communities who haven't been listened to in the past. We will involve citizens in our decisions and how we work. We will recognise that different groups and individuals have different needs. That way, we can make sure that everything we do works for them.
- We want to be a model for the other organisations in the region. We will show others how to promote equality, diversity and inclusion, instead of just telling them.
- As we work, we will look back at what we've done to see how well it worked. We will learn from this. If we need to, we will change how we work.

### Links to other strategies

There are lots of strategies that describe the work going on in the West Midlands. Equality needs to be part of all of this work. It is essential to these strategies:

- **WMCA Corporate Strategy 2021–2024.** This describes the WMCA's main ambitions for the region and what we need to do to achieve them.
- **Movement for Growth.** This is the main strategy of Transport for the West Midlands (TfWM). It describes plans to improve the transport system of the region.
- **Local Industrial Strategy.** This strategy describes what we will do to grow the economy in the West Midlands.
- **Strategic Economic Plan (SEP).** The SEP sets out how we can improve quality of life for everyone in the West Midlands.
- **West Midlands State of the Region Report.** This annual report helps us to decide what we should focus on in future in different areas of life, including equalities.
- **WM2041.** This strategy describes the region's plan to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2041.

Other important strategies, policies and schemes include:

**Regional Skills Plan**

**Skills Deal**

**Housing Deal**

**Single Commissioning Framework**

**West Midlands on the Move**

**Thrive West Midlands**

**Inclusive Growth Decision-Making Tool**

### Our legal duties

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination. It also helps to make sure that people have equal opportunities at work and in the services they can access. It includes a list of 'protected characteristics'. Employers and service providers are not

allowed to use any of these characteristics as a reason to discriminate against anyone:

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

A part of the law called the 'Public Sector Equality Duty' describes how public authorities like the WMCA must follow the Equalities Act in their work. Its aim is to make these authorities think about equality in everything that they do.

The Duty says that the WMCA must:

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

### **Knowing our communities: the regional equality challenge**

Knowing the facts about inequality helps us to decide what the most important problems are and what we need to do to about them. Here are some important statistics on the West Midlands, taken from the 2011 Census.

#### ***Population***

The West Midlands Metropolitan Area includes Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton. In mid-2018, the population was 2,916,458.

Population density (how many people live in a particular area) is highest in Birmingham and lowest in Solihull. In the Metropolitan Area there are 31.8 people per hectare. This is much higher than the England average of 4.2.

The area has the second-highest birth rate in the UK. As the population grows and changes, the region's needs will change. For example, we will need more homes and better transport links. Changes could also put more pressure on the environment.

## ***Race and ethnic background***

The region has the largest non-white population in the UK outside London. Asian and Asian British people make up the largest group after White British people. But many other ethnic groups live here. As the population grows, this diversity will probably grow too.

## ***Faith or belief***

People are more likely to say that they are religious here than in England overall.

## ***Sex***

The split between the sexes) is similar to in England and Wales as a whole: 50.5% of people are female and 49.5% are male.

## ***Age***

Birmingham is the youngest city in Europe. Nearly 40% of residents are under 25. More people are under 16 than in many other UK regions. The over-65 population is smaller than the UK average, except in Solihull and Walsall.

## ***Sexual orientation***

In 2018, 2.3% of the West Midlands population said that they were gay, lesbian or bisexual. Organisations that support gay, lesbian and bisexual people say that the real figure is higher: between 5% and 7%.

## ***Disability***

In this area, 6% of households include someone with a limiting long-term illness. The average for England and Wales is 4.7%. The proportion of people who are disabled (19%) is slightly higher than for England and Wales (18%).

## ***Social inequality***

Almost half of households in the region are in one of the 20% most-deprived areas in England. Birmingham is the most deprived local authority in the region: it is seventh out of 317 English authorities for deprivation. All of our local authority areas except Solihull are in the top 100 local authorities in the country for deprivation. Walsall, Wolverhampton and Sandwell are in the top 25.

Unemployment is higher here than it is nationally. Birmingham's unemployment rate of 7.8% is the second highest in the country. The average income is below the national average. Lots of jobs are low-paid and low-skilled. Unemployment is higher for young people. This is linked to qualifications: about 30% of young people in the Metropolitan area have fewer than five GCSEs. More working-age people here have no qualifications than in any other English region.

Even households where someone is in work can be affected by poverty. This is because of low wages, zero-hours contracts, insecure jobs and the cost of housing. Only half of people in the region can afford to buy a house. Three out of ten people under 40 can only afford to live here because of social housing. Fewer people own a

house or live in social housing than in the past, and more people rent privately. This often means bad living conditions, high rent and little security. Around one-fifth of neighbourhoods have high levels of overcrowding and poor housing.

Digital inequalities are a problem: 13% of residents have never sent an online message or email (nationally, the figure is 7.8%). More people are not online in this region than in England overall.

Poverty also affects health and wellbeing. The West Midlands has the highest percentage of obese (very overweight) adults in England. Almost one-third of residents spend less than half an hour a week exercising. This is two hours less than the recommended minimum. By the age of 11, one-quarter of children are already more at risk from health problems linked to unhealthy lifestyles, including Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and anxiety and depression due to obesity. People in poorer households are also much more likely to have mental health issues.

People from ethnic minorities, disabled people, young people and women are more likely to be poor, to be unemployed or in poor jobs, and to have low levels of qualifications and skills. They are less likely to own a house or have a mortgage. They are more likely to live in deprived areas and to suffer because of physical and mental health inequalities. The poverty rate is as high as 50% for Black people, people of Bangladeshi or Pakistani origin, and disabled people.

### ***Covid-19***

The Covid-19 pandemic has made inequalities worse. The people with protected characteristics who have been worst affected are young people, older people, women, single parents (90% of whom are women), people from lower socio-economic groups and with less education, ethnic minorities, and disabled people. These groups will probably also be worst-affected by recessions following the pandemic. There are several reasons for this.

- They're more likely to be exposed to Covid-19 or to have severe symptoms if they get it.
- Because of health inequalities, they were already more likely to have health problems.
- They're more likely to be unemployed and to be poor.
- The automation of some jobs is more likely to affect them.
- Covid may have damaged their education or stopped them from getting skills.
- They face more barriers to travelling.
- They are more likely to have mental health problems, and less likely to be physically active.
- They're more likely to suffer domestic abuse.
- They're more likely live in poor housing or to be homeless.
- They find it harder to get information and to access the support they need.

### ***Summary***

- The region's population has grown a lot in the last ten years. It is likely to keep growing.

- The birth rate has increased faster than it has nationally. This will put more pressure on education, employment and housing.
- As people live longer, there will be more people aged over 65 and with disabilities. This will put more pressure on transport, healthcare and social services.
- The growing numbers of younger and older people mean that there won't be as many people who are the right age to work.
- The population will probably get more diverse.
- Social inequality is high. The problems include lots of people living in deprived areas, high unemployment and low qualification levels.
- Residential segregation, where some minority ethnic live mainly in specific areas, is growing.
- More jobs today need skilled workers. Lots of people don't have the skills and qualifications they need.
- Transport poverty is widespread. It is a bigger problem on the edges of the main urban areas. Without good transport links, it is harder for people in these areas to reach job and education opportunities.
- More jobs are being lost to automation. This affects people with less education and in lower-paid jobs the most. It is also more likely to affect young people because many jobs that offer a first step into work are more likely to be automated.
- It is more important than ever to have digital skills. As lots of businesses and service providers use online systems more, people who don't have digital skills will struggle. People from poorer backgrounds are more likely to be in this position.
- Covid-19 has already made inequalities worse. It will lead to periods of recession that will make them even worse.

## **Our workforce**

The WMCA should lead the way in the region as an organisation committed to diversity. To help us do this, we regularly collect information on our workforce and recruitment. Here are some of the most important details (from September 2021).

### **Sex**

Women make up 52% of our workforce. The proportion of women in senior jobs is slightly lower: 43.3% of staff who earn between £43,000 and £52,000 a year are women; 41.9% of staff who earn over £52,000 are women.

### **Race**

People from minority ethnic backgrounds make up 30.5% of our workforce. This is higher than the national average but lower than the average for the West Midlands Metropolitan area. The proportion of minority ethnic staff in senior jobs is lower: 28% of staff who earn between £43,000 and £52,000 a year and 25.5% of staff who earn over £52,000 are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

## ***Disability***

People who report that they have a disability make up 12.6% of our workforce. This is roughly the same at all salary levels.

## ***Age***

The table below shows the age range of our workforce:

Age	Percentage
16–25	7.2%
26–30	13.4%
31–35	13.1%
36–40	17%
41–50	28.2%
51–65	19.3%
66 and over	0.8%
No age given	0.9%

## ***Pay gap***

From April 2018, organisations legally have to report their ‘mean’ and ‘median’ gender pay gap. The mean gender pay gap is the difference between the average salary for female staff and the average salary for male staff. The median salary is the amount earned by the person in the middle if you put all staff in a line from the highest-paid to the lowest-paid. The median pay gap is the difference between the median salary for female staff and the median salary for male staff. We also report the race pay gap: this is the earnings gap between white British and minority ethnic employees.

Our mean gender pay gap in March 2021 was 8.72%. Our median gender pay gap was 11.2%.

Our mean race pay gap was 6%. Our median race pay gap was 5.7%.

## **What residents tell us**

As well as using research and data, we talk regularly to customers, staff and other partners to make sure that we understand local needs and priorities.

Because we have a big role in delivering transport, we collect lots of information on what people think about this subject.

- Transport Focus does surveys on buses, trams and trains to see how happy passengers are with transport services. Since the pandemic, Transport Focus has done this more regularly. They record the gender, age and any disabilities of people answering the surveys. This helps us to see if there are specific problems for people with these protected characteristics.
- TfWM does an annual survey with Ring and Ride members, Metro/tram users and Swift ticketing customers. It has a 'mystery shopper' programme, where customers secretly review the service. 'Bus Passenger Champions' go out on the transport network to ask people's views too. These all help us to measure how good the service is.
- We do 'before and after' surveys for all major new developments and projects. We also do product-testing with customers to make sure new products and services meet their needs.
- Our 'Keep WM Moving!' online community platform lets people talk to us and work with us on projects that they're interested in. This helps us to understand how we can improve West Midlands transport and communicate better about it.
- We have started a telephone-based study to look at how satisfied users are with all types of transport. It will also get the views of people who don't use public transport. By December 2020 we had done 2,000 surveys, and we plan to do many more.
- TfWM has done six public engagement surveys in the last year. We promoted an online survey on WMCA's social media channels and email and got more than 14,000 responses. This is a huge help in telling us what people think about travel and transport in the West Midlands.

We talk to many people on other subjects too. The WMCA has a database of regional and local community and equality groups. We use this to consult as widely as possible, and to engage regularly with different groups on the things that matter most to them.

Our Young Combined Authority (YCA) is a broad group of young people aged 16 to 25, from across the West Midlands. It helps to guide the WMCA's decisions, and to challenge them. A new 'YCA Community' helps us to have conversations with an even wider group of young people.

In summer 2020, the West Midlands Recovery Coordination Group set up a Citizens Panel of residents from across the region. This helped the Group to understand communities' experiences during and after the pandemic, and their hopes and fears for the future. This led to the Community Recovery Roadmap mentioned earlier.

The WMCA's Annual Workforce (Employment and Recruitment) Report contains data on the diversity of our staff. We also talk informally with our employees regularly, and more formally through surveys and feedback sessions, to find out how well we're doing on equality and diversity.

## **Achievements and progress**

Since we published our 2017 Equality Scheme, we've done various things improve the lives of people in the West Midlands, especially the most vulnerable people.

### ***External initiatives with positive inclusion impact***

#### *Transport*

- We launched an apprenticeship scheme giving 16- to 18-year-olds half-price fares on rail, bus and tram services. This reached 100,000 young people who didn't get the reduced fare before because they're not in full-time education.
- We launched a 'Baby on Board' and a 'Please offer me a seat' badge scheme for pregnant women and disabled people on public transport, to encourage other passengers to offer them a seat.
- We implemented the Women's Concessionary Fares scheme to support the women who were worst affected by changes to the state pension age.
- We offer free travel on public transport for disabled people and older people, and cheaper travel for young people.
- We reduced crime on public transport through the Safer Travel Partnership. We created new bylaws to deal with anti-social behaviour on buses.
- We improved bus stations, interchanges and bus stops, added bus priority measures, and extended the Metro.
- We added equality and accessibility actions to the West Midlands Bus Alliance action plan (part of the Vision for Bus strategy). For example, this includes using 'next stop' announcements more widely on buses.
- We started using our Swift ticketing products more widely. This makes tickets easier to buy and more affordable. We plan to extend this approach, with Swift on Rail, Swift apps, and Swift account-based ticketing.
- We increased rail capacity and launched the West Midlands Grand Rail Collaboration. This helps to make sure that trains run more reliably, fares are easy to understand, and trains and stations are high-quality.
- We delivered walking and cycling programmes, and the Better Streets Community Fund to help communities make their streets better for cycling and walking.
- We began work with new partners to look for new ways of making travel easier for low-income groups.
- We ran a trial of Demand Responsive Transport, which provides travel on demand. We continued to improve the Ring and Ride door-to-door service for people who find it difficult or impossible to use public transport.
- We set up a Regional Integrated Control Centre. It will help road, rail and tram networks to cope with pressure and it will give travellers better information when services are disrupted.
- We continued the award-winning Workwise project, which gives free travel to newly employed people and apprentices.
- We produced and promoted accessibility products to make travel easier for disabled people. We worked with National Express and regional and local disability groups to make a disability awareness training DVD for bus operators in the region and beyond.

### *Productivity and skills*

- We ran a trial of an employment support programme to help unemployed people and people on low incomes to get into and progress in work.
- We offered unemployed people free construction training and a guaranteed job interview through the Gateway retraining programme.
- We delivered mentoring schemes for young people, to raise their aspirations.
- We set up a regional network of technical education and training. This includes the Digital Retraining fund, Digital Skills Pilot and Digital boot camps, to help people get digital skills and get into the digital sector.
- We delivered digital training for under-represented groups.
- We helped businesses to increase their numbers of young apprentices. We used progression coaches to help unemployed young people find work and training opportunities.
- We started a new approach to adult education. This supported unemployed people and people in low-paid jobs to get new skills and improve their chances of finding a better job.

### *Housing and land*

- We agreed a single regional definition of housing affordability and a framework to make sure that houses are good-quality and affordable. This helps us to make sure that local housing that suits local needs and incomes.
- We launched a regional design charter. This is another tool that we can use to make sure housing is well designed and high-quality.
- We have supported a big increase in new homes since 2017. We are on track to deliver more than our target of 215,000 new homes by 2031.
- We used land funds to get hold of suitable land and make the best use of it.
- We worked with local councils and partners to improve town centres, create more transport hubs, and make transport more efficient.
- We identified 'brownfield' sites that may have been unused for decades, so that they can be redeveloped for positive uses.

### *Wellbeing*

- We set up the Population Intelligence Hub, working with Public Health England and local partners. The hub is a way to share in-depth and up-to-date information about local public health.
- We delivered the 'Thrive into Work' Individual Placement and Support Pilot. It has helped 550 people with physical or mental ill health to find jobs.
- We launched the 'Thrive at Work' scheme to help companies to focus more on their staff's wellbeing and mental health, including tackling inequalities. Over 400 businesses have joined the programme so far.
- We continued 'West Midlands on the Move'. This strategy promotes physical activity and wellbeing and tackles health inequalities. It has helped to create new public active spaces in deprived areas and expanded 'Goodgym', with over 6,000 community projects.

- We supported better partnership working to make ‘place-based health and care’ as successful as it can be.
- We set up a task group to plan a programme of activities tackling regional health inequalities in the context of Covid-19.
- We developed the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Academy. This provides better support to help people with a mental health condition, disability or long-term condition find or stay in work, and to help businesses make their workplaces healthier.
- We promote ‘Include me’ West Midlands. This programme aims to make the region a shining example for helping disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to be physically active. Sixty-seven organisations have signed a commitment to change, and a new Disabled Citizens Network has been set up.

### ***Public service reform and improving quality of life***

- We gave policy- and decision-makers tools to make inclusive growth more central to how they work. Local authorities have already used these tools effectively in East Birmingham and North Solihull.
- We set up the WMCA Homelessness Taskforce. This brought extra resources into the region to support its work, including the Housing First pilot (which has supported 355 people into tenancies so far) and the RSI programme (which has helped 1,211 people to get housing and support services). The taskforce has also helped partners in the region to respond to the challenges of the pandemic.
- We ran a veteran's mental health and homelessness work programme to support veterans at risk of homelessness, with help from the Royal British Legion.
- We developed a new, more effective regional approach to reducing violence and exploitation, through the Violence Reduction Unit.
- We published *Punishing Abuse*, a report which gives evidence of the need to reform youth justice services and wider services for children. The NHS has invested £1m in following the report’s recommendations.
- We involve communities in making decisions and setting priorities for the Covid recovery programme.
- We launched the Coalition for Digital Inclusion to tackle the ‘digital divide’ between those who can access and use digital technology and those who cannot.
- We worked with regional partners to make sure we’re all working towards the same aims.

### ***Environment and energy***

- We worked with regional partners to develop more sustainable transport, such as eco-friendly buses.

- We worked with Local Enterprise Partnerships to create Energy Innovation Zones in places that face energy issues like poor housing quality and insulation and fuel poverty. This helps us to focus on tackling these issues and make energy more affordable and efficient.
- We designed a West Midlands Fuel Poverty programme with the West Midlands Fuel Poverty Task Force. This will support vulnerable people by promoting energy efficiency.
- We published a #WM2041 five-year plan to help tackle climate change. Our ambition is to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2041. Inclusivity is central to this. Actions will include dealing with fuel poverty and working with businesses, schools, colleges and universities to give local people the skills to work in the new green industries.

### ***Inclusive communities, culture and digital***

- We set up the Young Combined Authority. This brings together a diverse group of young people, aged 16–25. It will help to guide and challenge decisions that WMCA makes about the future of the region.
- We wrote an Inclusive Leadership Pledge to encourage leaders and employers to commit to being more inclusive in their organisations. This included an awareness campaign and online advice. Over 250 organisations signed the pledge.
- We set up a Cultural Leadership Board to promote a cultural sector that better reflects the diversity of our communities. The board will support diverse leadership and participation in culture.
- We set up a leadership commission to look at why the senior leadership of the region does not reflect the diversity of our communities. The commission made recommendations for how we can improve this.
- We developed a digital strategy to make the West Midlands the UK's best-connected region and give everyone access to digital opportunities, particularly if they are in poverty.

### ***Organisational diversity and inclusion initiatives***

- We delivered equality awareness campaigns (some with senior leadership involvement), developed equality resources, and trained staff and managers on equalities, mental health, unconscious bias and disabilities.
- We started a volunteering scheme that lets staff work for up to three days a year to support a charitable cause of their choice.
- We got Living Wage Employer status and planned to expand the Real Living Wage to all organisations that deliver contracts for WMCA.
- We introduced ways to support good mental health and wellbeing for staff. This includes a 'Mental Health Volunteering Buddies' scheme with trained volunteers.

- We developed an approach to supporting employees who experience domestic violence.
- We changed our advertising to make our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion more obvious and encourage people from under-represented groups to apply for jobs.
- We developed the 'Building our Future Workforce' strategy. Among other things, this aims to give people from under-represented groups the skills they need for leadership roles. It helps young people not in education or training (NEET), care leavers, people with disabilities, homeless people, ex-offenders and armed forces veterans.
- We changed our recruitment policy so that we now advertise all jobs below a certain salary as apprenticeships.
- As a result of our work, we got or kept several accreditations and quality marks. These include Disability Confident Leader status, Thrive at Work Wellbeing Accreditation, an Armed Forces Covenant Gold award, and Leaders in Diversity Accreditation.
- We have been recognised as an Inclusive Top 50 Employer for three years in a row. We were in the Times Top 50 Employers for Women 2021.
- We supported staff diversity networks and a wellbeing and inclusion group. These groups advise on how to make our organisation more equal.
- We produced a Reasonable Adjustments Policy. This describes what we will do to meet our legal duty to make our policies and actions more inclusive and avoid discriminating against anyone.
- We have greatly increased our percentage of disabled, young and female staff (including at senior levels) over the last three years.

### **Next steps: our equality objectives and priorities**

**Objective 1:** Provide accessible, affordable, safe and inclusive transport services to our wide range of customers.

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

Main activities:

We will relaunch 'Project Empower' to tackle sexual harassment on public transport.

1. We will reach out to schools and community groups to get important safety messages out to young people, disabled people and harder-to-reach groups.
2. We will keep using 'restorative justice' for young people who commit anti-social behaviour.
3. We will run campaigns against hate crime.
4. We will have social media strategies to reach out to more communities.
5. We will run a targeted road safety campaign to make the roads safer and address inequalities for vulnerable road users.

- Theme 2. Commonwealth Games: Deliver an accessible and inclusive Commonwealth Games.

Main activities:

1. We will make all Games venues accessible by public transport and signpost everything clearly.
  2. We will have accessible shuttle buses from transport hubs to venues and blue badge parking at venues.
  3. We will use extra services to add to the public transport available.
  4. We will have easy-to-use ticket payment options for transport, and free public transport for Games staff and volunteers.
  5. We will make stations, transport hubs and other infrastructure more accessible.
  6. We will improve transport links on Metro, Sprint and the rail network across the region and beyond.
- Theme 3. Value for money, affordability and employment support: Make sure services are good value for money and people can access employment, education and leisure opportunities.

Main activities:

1. We will set up account-based ticketing, make the fare structure simpler, and make sure customers always get the best-value fares.
  2. We will introduce ways to pay that suit those customers who need the most support.
  3. We will keep improving Workwise. This scheme provides free travel to help people get into employment.
  4. We will review whether concessionary fares and supported travel could help more people.
  5. We will include the needs of excluded groups in the Inclusive Transport Action Plan.
  6. We will work with transport operators to see whether we can introduce reduced fares for companions travelling with pass users.
- Theme 4. Sustainable travel and decarbonising transport: Make sustainable travel more accessible and affordable.

Main activities:

1. We will co-ordinate the inclusive cyclist group to make improvements for disabled cycling.
2. We will carry on supporting cycling and walking events, including in more deprived areas.

3. We will introduce a cycle hire scheme and think about what concessions and incentives will encourage people to use it.
  4. We will support 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; talk to people as widely as possible, so that we can understand all customer needs and can meet them better.

Main activities:

1. We will deliver training and resources about equalities and disability for staff who work with our customers.
  2. We will carry on working with vulnerable young people and think about new travel offers for young people. This includes support for care leavers, people not in education, employment or training, and apprentices.
  3. We will help TfWM's Youth Forum to grow and deliver projects that meet young people's needs.
- Theme 6. Inclusive transport services for all: Make sure the infrastructure, information and services we provide are accessible to more people, with customer service that meets individual needs.

Main activities:

1. We will improve infrastructure and customer experience at our bus stations and major interchanges by refurbishing and new station developments.
  2. We will extend our Metro network to make it more accessible.
  3. We will look for other ways to make rail stations more accessible.
  4. We will keep running the subsidised bus network to provide socially necessary services.
  5. We will help to produce and advertise accessibility aids that make travelling easier for disabled people.
  6. We will keep funding Ring and Ride. We will improve the service and customer satisfaction with it.
  7. We will explore ways to connect community transport better with wider public transport.
  8. We will use 'Data Insight' and TfWM's online community network 'My Community' to do research and speak to all communities.
- Theme 7. Strategic transport and policy: Make sure our strategic transport schemes and policies are inclusive and promote a fair network.

Main activities:

1. We will launch an updated local transport plan to support our five 'motives for change', including 'Creating a Fairer Society'.
2. We will make the network better connected and make sure it meets more diverse needs.
3. We will think about the impact of Covid-19 on different groups and make sure that transport helps people to access employment and training, especially those hardest hit by the pandemic.

**Objective 1 main outcomes:**

- The network will be safer and more secure. The most vulnerable groups will feel safer on the network.
- The Commonwealth Games experience will be inclusive, affordable and accessible.
- There will be more inclusive and affordable transport services.
- Cycling will increase among a diverse range of residents.
- Accessibility will be improved in transport infrastructure.
- Ring and Ride customers will be more satisfied with the service. A diverse range of disabled users will use it more.
- A Transport Plan will be in place with inclusivity and accessibility targets.

**Objective 2:** Deliver schemes, strategies and programmes across the region that are good for equality and inclusion and that reduce socio-economic disadvantage and poverty for our diverse communities.

- Theme 1. Affordable and inclusive housing provision: Implement the affordable housing policy and delivery programme to support regeneration and make high-quality employment available for local people.

**Main activities:**

1. We will invest in regenerating and reusing town centre sites.
2. We will invest in brownfield sites to provide housing and employment.
3. We will bring together investment in specific areas ('inclusive growth corridors') to create economic growth, better opportunities, increased physical activity and better transport links.
4. We will encourage all organisations to use the WMCA affordable housing definition.
5. Under the Single Commissioning Framework, we will make sure that 20% of new housing is affordable.
6. We will make sure developments that we support provide a minimum number of apprenticeships.
7. We will encourage our suppliers to employ more young people, and people from under-represented groups.

8. We will use the West Midlands sustainable design charter to make good design the norm.
9. We will engage with local charities to help homeless families to get accommodation.

- Theme 2. Skills equity: Increase skills levels so that local people can get sustainable employment, and enhance skills at higher levels so that all communities benefit from the region's economic growth.

Main activities:

1. We will provide activities to help young people to prepare for work.
  2. We will set up clear career entry and reskilling routes for unemployed adults, particularly those from under-represented groups.
  3. We will increase the take-up of good-quality apprenticeships, targeting under-represented groups.
  4. We will commission skills provision for disadvantaged groups.
  5. We will support people to get English language skills.
  6. We will continue the employment support pilot for unemployed people and people on low incomes.
  7. We will support skills training for those who need it the most.
  8. We will support retraining for people at risk of losing their jobs to automation.
  9. We will deliver more higher skills training to help people to be more productive and earn more.
  10. We will develop training and recruitment in specific sectors to help unemployed people get good jobs locally.
  11. We will deliver a Commonwealth Games 'Jobs and Skills Academy' to support local people, including under-represented groups, to get jobs, training and volunteering opportunities.
- Theme 3. Public service reform: Deliver more inclusive growth, with the confidence to shape investment, infrastructure and services more deliberately around social and economic goals.

Main activities:

1. We will work with local authorities and others to promote social innovation using a toolkit and a flexible team.
2. We will co-ordinate activities to address social challenges, including a 'Coalition for Digital Inclusion'.
3. We will bring together local authorities to address health inequalities by tackling some of the wider causes of poor health.
4. We will bring together partners to tackle homelessness, through the Homelessness Taskforce.
5. We will deliver a Covid-19 recovery programme.

6. We will work with the Police and Crime Commissioner to reduce crime and improve the criminal justice system.

- Theme 4. Wellbeing: Create a region where positive, proactive and preventative approaches to wellbeing and engagement are the norm, giving our diverse population a better chance to do well in life and work.

**Main activities:**

1. We will keep delivering the Thrive into Work programme to give employment support to people with mental or physical health conditions.
2. We will expand the Thrive at Work programme to support workplace wellbeing.
3. We will update the Mental Health Commission Thrive Action Plan and consider a Black Thrive initiative for the region.
4. We will work with the Police and Crime Commission to improve the criminal justice system.
5. We will continue the Include Me programme to engage more widely with disabled people.

**Objective 2 main outcomes:**

- There will be more affordable housing (16,500 houses a year), including on brownfield land.
- Town centres will be regenerated.
- The Regional Design Charter will be adopted more widely, and the proportion of accessible housing will be higher.
- Unemployment will be lower, and so will the percentage of people with no qualifications. The percentage of people with level 3+ qualifications will increase, especially for the most disadvantaged groups.
- More people will be taking up apprenticeships.
- People with complex needs will have better employment, health and wider outcomes, and regional deprivation levels will be lower.
- Health, housing, education and employment inequalities will be lower.
- The commitment to more diverse leadership in the region will be stronger.

**Objective 3:** Ensure that equality is embedded in all key areas of WMCA's work, that the WCMA has a strong regional influencing role on equalities and that the needs of our diverse communities influence decision-making.

**Objective 3 themes and activities:**

- Theme 1. Embedding equalities: Make equality considerations a central part of decision-making.

Main activities:

1. We will use the Equality Impact Assessment process in all of WMCA's most important activities.
  2. We will look again at outcomes for the groups worst affected by COVID-19 and address this unequal impact.
  3. We will develop clear diversity aims and targets in all of WMCA's most important activities.
  4. We will develop better ways to monitor and report on equality and inclusion.
- Theme 2. Community engagement and co-production: Engage with more of the region's diverse communities, so that their needs and views are considered when we develop and deliver our strategies and programmes.

Main activities:

1. We will deliver a variety of ways to engage with citizens, including the Young Combined Authority and Skills Street Team.
  2. We will keep residents informed and use what they tell us to shape our decisions.
  3. We will explore new ways to 'co-produce' services. This means working with service users and partners to make services better.
  4. We will work out the best way to engage with all WMCA communities and involve them in decision-making.
  5. We will carry on engaging and talking to community groups across all the protected characteristics.
- Theme 3. Social value: Deliver equality through procurement (buying in goods and services) by making sure that contractors act fairly and meet our equality principles, and that social value (benefits for people and communities) is delivered through WMCA contracts.

Main activities:

1. We will carry on treating equality as an essential part of the procurement process.
  2. We will collect diversity data on business procurement and use it to make sure we're attracting a diverse range of suppliers.
  3. We will look for ways to have a bigger, broader impact with our social value policy.
- Theme 4. Influencing change: Work with regional organisations to increase diversity at senior levels and find opportunities for change.

Main activities:

1. We will follow RACE Code principles to increase diversity at senior levels in the WMCA.
2. We will make sure that the Young Combined Authority can challenge and influence WMCA policies and decisions.
3. We will support Leadership Commission activity to permanently improve diversity at senior levels.
4. We will bring together a Race Equalities Taskforce to help us to address racial inequalities.
5. We will bring together a Life Chances Commission to help us to understand barriers for young people in the region and find ways to remove these barriers.
6. We will bring together partners in a Coalition for Digital Inclusion.
7. We will set up a Mental Health Commission to help us understand the challenges and priorities after COVID-19.

**Objective 3 main outcomes:**

- WMCA will keep its Race Code accreditation.
- A vibrant, representative Young Combined Authority will influence our policies effectively.
- There will be a regional commitment to increase diversity at senior workforce levels.
- Social value will be used effectively so that goods and services are ethical and have positive social outcomes.
- A fair procurement process will attract a diverse range of suppliers.
- We will engage with residents consistently, and what they tell us will influence decision-making.
- Equality impacts will be central in decisions about all the most important areas of WMCA work.
- Mental health outcomes will be better for West Midlands residents.
- Strong efforts will be underway 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 WMCA staff, helping the organisation to become an inclusive employer that people want to work for, where equality informs our culture and behaviour.

- Theme 1. Workforce diversity: Attract and hire a wider pool of candidates that reflects regional diversity, and make sure that employees can make the most of their skills and talents.

Main activities:

1. We will review and improve how we recruit staff.
  2. We will use the apprenticeship levy to improve the skills of people from under-represented groups and give them more work experience.
  3. We will deliver staff development initiatives, including Career Pathways, and make sure there is fair access to promotions.
- Theme 2. Employee equality awareness and competence: Improve staff equality and diversity skills, making sure that they are confident, well skilled and actively engaged in delivering equality.

Main activities:

1. We will run regular equality campaigns.
  2. We will keep delivering equality training, including targeted training for managers and customer-facing staff.
  3. We will develop other resources to help staff to be more aware of equalities.
- Theme 3. Understand and improve staff experience, listen to staff on equality issues, and make sure that they understand their responsibility for delivering the equality agenda.

Main activities:

1. We will help our staff diversity networks to develop.
  2. We will do regular surveys to understand what staff think about equality.
  3. We will make equalities a central part of the new individual performance management framework.
  4. We will introduce objectives for senior leadership that are focused on equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Theme 4. Supporting employee wellbeing and equality of outcomes: Make sure that employees feel supported and are treated fairly, and that positive mental health and wellbeing is seen as important across the organisation.

Main activities:

1. We will raise awareness of widespread health conditions that are linked to lifestyle (like diabetes, cancer, heart disease and stroke) and help employees to make lifestyle changes.
2. We will make wellbeing an important part of our hybrid working policy.
3. We will look for ways to improve staff benefits.
4. We will create 'resilience' and 'stress' toolkits.
5. We will find other ways to support employees' mental health.

- Theme 5. Workforce data and transparency: Improve the quality of equality and diversity workforce data we collect, use it more effectively to address barriers to employment for under-represented groups, and make the information publicly available.

Main activities:

1. We will carry on monitoring our workforce to understand how well different groups are represented.
2. We will do an equal pay audit every two years.
3. We will report any pay gaps between different minority groups.
4. We will set race and gender diversity targets.

#### **Objective 4 main outcomes:**

- Staff diversity will increase where gaps have been identified, including at senior levels.
- All staff will complete all compulsory training on equality and diversity.
- Staff engagement and satisfaction levels in staff surveys will be high. Staff will report positive views of inclusion in the workplace.
- Internal mentoring and positive action initiatives will be successful.
- We will achieve Gold Covenant status and we will keep our Disability Confident Leader and Leaders in Diversity status.
- We will reach silver Thrive at Work status.
- Staff sickness absence rates will stay low.
- The gender pay gap will be lower.
- Senior leadership will show clearly that they are committed to inclusion.

A detailed action plan is included with this Scheme as Appendix A. It identifies actions under each individual theme.

#### **Monitoring and reviewing the scheme**

We will develop ways to measure how well we are achieving the action plan. The WMCA Senior Leadership Team will monitor this and will come up with new actions where necessary. We will monitor how well we're doing and report on this every year. The Audit Risk Committee and the Combined Authority Board will see these reports and will help to make sure we are making progress

We will fully review the Equality Scheme every three years. The next version will be due in January 2025. But equalities is a constantly changing field, and we don't need to wait until the full review in 2024 to think about whether any changes are needed. The Scheme should be a living document. It will always be open to improvement. You are welcome to make comments or suggestions and give us advice on our

equalities work at any time, and we will update the Scheme in response if we need to.

The Scheme is publicly available on the WMCA website and to staff on our intranet site.

### **Responsibility and accountability**

All staff and others associated with the WMCA must make sure that their actions meet the requirements of WMCA equality policies and the Equality Scheme.

The following groups have specific responsibilities:

- The Inclusive Communities Portfolio Lead member has overall responsibility and accountability for making sure the Scheme's objectives are delivered effectively.
- The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) is responsible for providing consistent and high-profile leadership on equality and diversity and promoting equality and diversity strategies both inside and outside the WMCA.
- All heads of department and managers are responsible for making sure that the Equality Scheme is implemented in their service areas, that their staff are fully informed about their responsibilities, and that they receive support and training so they are able to carry them out.

### **Consultation feedback, queries and questions**

For consultation feedback, questions or queries, or 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](mailto: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](mailto:customerservices@wmca.org.uk)

Phone: 0345 303 6760

Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm

Saturdays, 9am to 1pm

Sundays and Bank Holidays, Closed