



Wigan[♥]
Council

Creating fair opportunities for all

Public Sector Equality Duty 2024/25 report

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Foreword

At the heart of our work lies a simple but powerful belief: that everyone deserves to thrive. Over the past year, we have continued to build on our shared commitment to fairness, inclusion, and unity, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Our borough-wide movement Progress with Unity has 'creating fair opportunities for all' as one of its core missions. This report reflects the progress we have made together in 2024/25 in our mission to break down barriers that create inequalities. It tells the story of a partnership that listens, learns, and leads with purpose. A borough that recognises the strength in our diversity and the value of every voice. From tackling health inequalities to improving access to services, we have taken meaningful steps to close the gaps that hold people back.

But progress is not a destination - it is a journey. And while we are proud of what we have achieved, we know there is more to do. That is why we are renewing our commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty with fresh energy and sharper focus. We are embedding equity into everything we do, from policy and planning to delivery and decision-making.

This is not just about compliance. It is about culture. It is about creating a future where everyone, regardless of background, identity, or circumstance, can live well and contribute fully. It is about working in partnership with our communities, listening with humility, and acting with integrity.

Thank you to all our partners, colleagues, and residents who continue to challenge us, support us, and walk with us on this journey. Together, we are not just making progress, we are building unity.

Councillor Laura Flynn

Lead Member – Youth Opportunities and Equality.



Our Commitment to Equality: Embedding Fairness in Everything We Do

We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to thrive, regardless of their background, identity or circumstances. That is why the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty are not just legal requirements, they are central to how we work, plan, and serve our communities.

The Equality Duty applies to most public bodies across Great Britain. It asks us to think carefully about how our decisions, services, and employment practices affect people, especially those who may face disadvantage or discrimination. It is about making equality part of our everyday thinking.

What the Duty Means in Practice

The Duty has two parts: a general duty and specific duties that help us meet it.

The General Duty

Under Section 149 of the Equality Act, we must have due regard to three key aims whenever we carry out our functions:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other behaviour that is unlawful under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people from different backgrounds, helping to build understanding and respect.

These aims guide everything we do, from shaping policy to delivering services and supporting our workforce.

The Specific Duties

To help us meet the general duty, we must:

- Publish equality information annually, including data about our employees.
- Set and publish measurable equality objectives at least every four years, showing how we are working to make a difference.

In 2023, the Government refreshed its guidance on how public authorities should meet these duties. We have used this to strengthen our approach and ensure we are doing more than just meeting the minimum, we are striving for meaningful change.

Protected Characteristics: Who the duty covers

The Equality Duty protects people from being treated unfairly because of who they are. It applies to the following characteristics:

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

The first general duty, eliminating discrimination, applies to all these characteristics. The other two aims apply to all except marriage and civil partnership.

Going Further: Our Local Priorities

In Wigan, we have chosen to go beyond the national framework. We have added four local protected characteristics that reflect the lived experiences of our residents:

- Carers
- Armed forces personnel
- People facing socio-economic disadvantage
- Care experience, e.g. Looked after children and care leavers

These additions help us focus on the people who need us most, and ensure our work is rooted in compassion, fairness and unity.

Our equality objectives

All Different, All Equal: Moving Forward Together

In 2022, we set out clear equality objectives to guide our work. These helped us focus on the right things, improving access, tackling inequality, and embedding fairness in everything we do. But we knew we could go further. So, we listened.

Over the past year, we have worked with residents, partners, and community voices to co-produce a new set of promises, ones that feel real, relevant, and rooted in people's everyday lives. These are our 'All Different, All Equal' promises. They reflect what matters most to our communities and what we must do to build a fairer, more inclusive borough. Our equality promises strongly support our Progress with Unity missions.

Our Promises, in plain language

We have made three simple, powerful promises:

- **Services, spaces, schools, workplaces and information across the borough should be easy to use, welcoming, and open to everyone.**

This means removing barriers; physical, digital, or cultural, so that everyone can take part, feel included, and access what they need in a way that works for them.

Whether it is a service, a public space, a school, a workplace, or the way we share information, we promise to make it accessible, welcoming, and inclusive for all.

- **Celebrating what makes people different and what brings them together, to help build stronger, kinder communities.**

By creating more opportunities to learn about each other's experiences, cultures, and identities, the borough can grow understanding, challenge stereotypes, and strengthen social connections.

We will raise awareness, challenge stereotypes, and create opportunities for people to connect, learn from each other, and build stronger social bonds.

- **Racial and disability inequality must be recognised and addressed through meaningful action.**

Discrimination and unfair treatment continue to affect too many lives. Tackling these issues head-on is essential to creating a fairer, more equal borough for all.

We are committed to addressing the inequalities that too many people still face, especially around race and disability. We will listen, act, and hold ourselves accountable.

These promises are more than words. They are a shared commitment to fairness, dignity, and respect. And they are a key part of how we are delivering **Progress with Unity Mission One: Create fair opportunities for all children, families, residents & businesses.**, by removing barriers, reducing inequalities, community belonging, and making sure everyone has the chance to thrive.

Knowing our community

The new census data (2021) give us a large refresh of community data.

We developed [an interactive dashboard](#), so you can easily search for insight into the diversity of Wigan borough.

However, a summary of how Wigan borough has changed since 2011 are as follows.

Population

- Between the last two censuses (held in 2011 and 2021), the population of Wigan increased by 3.6%, from just over 317,800 in 2011 to around 329,300 in 2021.

Age

- The average (median) age of Wigan increased by one year, from 40 to 41 years of age. Wigan borough has a slightly higher average age than the Northwest and England (40 years).
- The number of people aged 50 to 64 years rose by just under 7,700 (an increase of 12.7%), while the number of residents between 35 and 49 years fell by just under 9,100 (12.6% decrease).

Disability

- 9.4% of Wigan residents were identified as being disabled and their day-to-day life is limited a lot. This figure decreased from 12.3% in 2011. These are age-standardised proportions¹.
- Just under one in nine people (10.8%) were identified as being disabled and limited a little, compared with 11.3% in 2011.
- The proportion of Wigan residents who were not disabled increased from 76.4% to 79.8%.
- The decrease in the proportion of residents who were identified as being disabled and limited a lot was greater in Wigan (2.9 percentage points) than across the Northwest (2.1 percentage points, from 11.2% to 9.1%). Across England, the proportion fell by 1.6 percentage points, from 9.1% to 7.5%.

¹ Age-standardised proportions are used throughout this section. They enable comparisons between populations over time and across geographies, as they account for differences in the population size and age structure.

However, Census 2021 was undertaken during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This may have influenced how people perceived their health status and activity limitations and therefore may have affected how people chose to respond.

Unpaid care

- In 2021, 4.4% of Wigan residents (aged five years and over) reported providing up to 19 hours of unpaid care each week. This figure decreased from 7.0% in 2011. These are age-standardised proportions. This decrease matches the Northwest and England.
- In 2021, 2.3% reported providing between 20 and 49 hours of unpaid care each week, compared with 1.9% in 2011.
- The proportion of Wigan residents that provided at least 50 hours of weekly unpaid care decreased from 3.5% (2011) to 3.4% (2021).
- Census 2021 was undertaken during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This may have influenced how people perceived and managed their provision of unpaid care and therefore may have affected how people chose to respond. Also, caution should be taken when making comparisons between 2011 and 2021 because of changes in question wording and response options.

Religion

- In 2021, 30.3% of Wigan residents reported having "No religion", up from 15.3% in 2011. Slightly higher increase compared to Northwest and England.
- In 2021, 62.8% of people in Wigan described themselves as Christian (down from 77.8%), while 4.7% did not state their religion (down from 5.5% the decade before).
- The census question about religious affiliation is voluntary and has varying response rates, caution is needed when comparing figures between different areas or between censuses.

Marriage and civil partnership

- In Wigan, the percentage of adults who were married or in a civil partnership decreased from 47.6% in 2011 to 43.8% in 2021.
- The percentage of adults who had never married or registered a civil partnership increased from 32.9% to 37.2%
- The percentage of adults who had divorced or dissolved a civil partnership decreased from 9.9% to 9.8%.

Ethnic groups

- In 2021, 1.8% of Wigan residents identified their ethnic group within the "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh" category, up from 1.1% in 2011. Across the Northwest, the percentage of people from the "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh" ethnic group increased from 6.2% to 8.4%, while across England the percentage increased from 7.8% to 9.6%.
- In 2021, 95.0% of people in Wigan identified their ethnic group within the "White" category (compared with 97.3% in 2011)
- In 2021, 1.3% identified their ethnic group within the "Mixed or Multiple" category (compared with 0.9% in 2011).
- The percentage of people who identified their ethnic group within the "Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African" category increased from 0.5% in 2011 to 1.2% in 2021.

Our progress

This section will detail some examples of our progress.

Embedding Equality into Strategic Missions

The [Progress with Unity](#) plan is two borough-wide missions:

 Mission 1 Create fair opportunities for all children, families, residents & businesses. <i>"Together, we will break down the barriers that create financial, health, education and environmental inequalities in our borough."</i>	 Mission 2 Make all our towns and neighbourhoods flourish for those who live and work in them. <i>"Together, in genuine partnership with our residents and businesses, who know our communities best, we will help each town and neighbourhood in the borough to celebrate and maintain their identity whilst understanding and helping to achieve what is needed to thrive."</i>
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- Mission 1: Create fair opportunities for all children, families, residents and businesses - "Together, we will break down the barriers that create financial, health, education and environmental inequalities in our borough."
- Mission 2: Make all our towns and neighbourhoods flourish for those who live and work in them - "Together, in genuine partnership with our residents and businesses, who know our community best, we will help each town and neighbourhood in the borough celebrate and maintain their identity whilst understanding and helping to achieve what is needed to thrive."

These missions directly align with the three aims of the PSED: eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations. By focusing on breaking down barriers, whether financial, health-related, educational, housing, transport, or environmental—the plan

ensures that equality is not a standalone goal, but a golden thread running through all activity

Progress with Unity is not just a council initiative, it is a shared movement involving residents, businesses, public services, and the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector. This collaborative, place-based approach ensures that diverse voices shape decisions, helping to meet the PSED's requirement to consider the needs of people with different protected characteristics.

The plan emphasises listening deeply to communities and using local insight to shape services. This aligns with the PSED's emphasis on understanding the impact of decisions on different groups. By co-producing strategies with residents and focusing on lived experience, the council ensures that services are more inclusive and responsive.

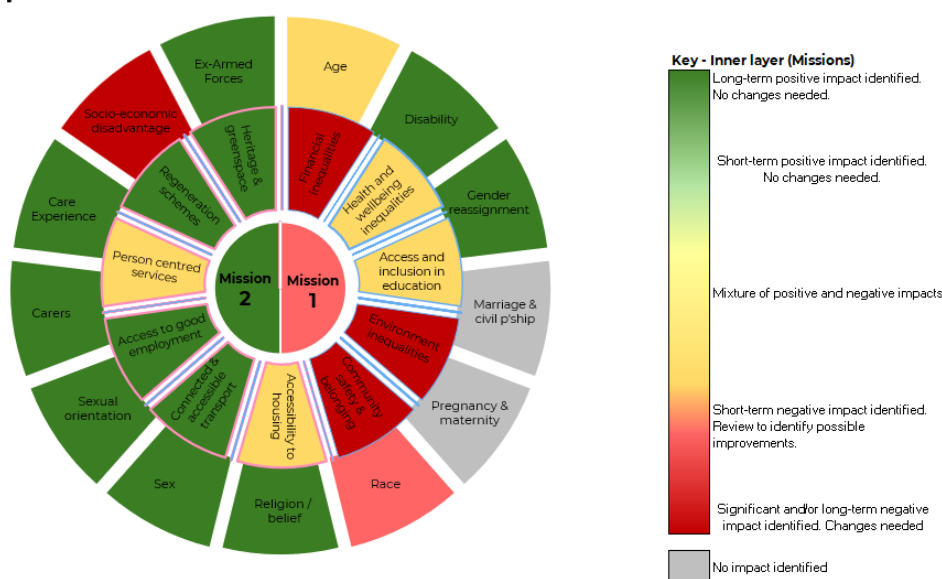
Co-production and codesign is threaded through our children services strategic and operational delivery plans. This is supported by a robust [participation strategy](#) and our commitment to listen to children and families and improve their lives.

Mission Compass: A New Impact Assessment Tool

To strengthen accountability and transparency, Wigan Council has introduced a Mission Compass - Progress with Unity Impact Assessment Tool. This tool helps officers and elected members assess how decisions impact the Progress with Unity Missions and affect different communities, including those with protected characteristics. It supports compliance with the Equality Act by:

- Avoiding unlawful discrimination.
- Identifying and addressing potential inequalities.
- Embedding equality considerations into everyday decision-making.

The tool also includes a visual output to clearly show the impact of decisions, making it easier to track progress and ensure that equality remains central to policy and service design.



LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

We welcomed the peer team to the council for our Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge in January 2025. This is an important and well recognised exercise which will help us become an even better council.

The [LGA peer review recommendations and report](#) highlighted our strong commitment to addressing inequality through a strategic and collaborative approach. The report included:

- Progress with Unity fosters collaborative working with partners to address inequality across the borough. The approach is person-centred, focusing on fair opportunities and flourishing neighbourhoods. The peer review team noted that this vision is widely supported by councillors, staff, and partners, showing belief in its potential to drive meaningful change. diverse communities.
- Our strong relationships with community organisations, businesses, and public sector bodies. These partnerships are seen as a core strength, enabling more inclusive and effective service delivery. As Progress with Unity evolves, the council is working to clarify partner roles and deepen engagement to better tackle inequality.

In summary, it noted our significant strides in addressing inequality through strategic reform, strong partnerships, and a clear vision for inclusive growth.

Working Together for Equality: Listening, Learning, Leading

We believe that everyone should feel seen, heard, and valued. That is why we are working together with partners, communities, and faith groups to build a borough that is fairer and more inclusive for all.

Through our Equality and Diversity Steering Group, we are bringing together voices from across the public, voluntary, community and faith sectors. These are people and organisations who care deeply about fairness and are helping us shape a better future.

An Interfaith Network has also been established, which is already creating powerful connections, opening up new conversations, building understanding, and strengthening partnerships across our borough.

We are proud that Wigan Borough is also well-connected to wider Greater Manchester Equality Panels, with local representatives helping shape city region conversations and decisions. This ensures our borough's voice is heard and that we are learning from others while sharing what works here.

Looking Ahead

This work is part of our wider mission to tackle inequality, one of the core missions of Progress with Unity. It is about making sure everyone, no matter their background, can thrive.

Together, we are building a borough where equality is not just a word, it is something we live and lead by, every day.

Working Together for progress

In Wigan, we are proud of the progress we have made in keeping our communities safe. Our **Community Safety Partnership** brings together local organisations, services, and residents with a shared commitment: to protect and support every person in our borough, especially those who are most at risk.

By working in unity, we are tackling some of the toughest challenges facing our communities, like organised crime, domestic abuse, town centre safety, youth justice, reoffending, and gender-based violence. These issues affect people differently, and we are determined to respond in ways that are fair, inclusive, and rooted in understanding.

This approach reflects our commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) of eliminating discrimination and harm, advance equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between different groups, building trust and unity across our borough.

The **Wigan Safeguarding Adults Board** (WSAB) has committed to a person-centred, community-focused approach that reflects the values of Progress with Unity. Their [2025–2027 Strategic Plan](#) outlines how they are:

- Embedding equity through a Quality Assurance Framework that tracks outcomes and ensures safeguarding is effective for all, especially those most at risk.
- Adopting Ways of Working, such as “See the person” and “Connect to neighbourhoods,” to ensure safeguarding is rooted in lived experience and local context.
- Focusing on transitions, such as from childhood to adulthood, to ensure no one falls through the gaps.
- Using digital tools to improve access and responsiveness, while ensuring digital inclusion is considered in safeguarding responses.

Wigan’s Health and Wellbeing Board is leading a bold, long-term strategy, [Creating Health 2024/2034](#), that directly targets the root causes of inequality. Their approach includes:

- Hyperlocal, holistic services that are tailored to the needs of each community, recognising that health inequalities are shaped by wider social and economic factors.
- Community Wealth Building to reduce poverty and improve access to good jobs, housing, and education, key drivers of health.
- Designing health into neighbourhoods, ensuring that places are safe, inclusive, and supportive of wellbeing.
- Shifting resources to prevention, so that issues are tackled before they escalate, especially in communities facing the greatest disadvantage.

This strategy is a practical expression of Progress with Unity’s first mission, creating fair opportunities for all.

The **Wigan Safeguarding Children Partnership** is focused on making sure every child, regardless of background, ability, or circumstance, is safe and supported. This includes:

- Listening to children’s voices, especially those from young people who experience inequality and discrimination.

- Targeting support for children affected by poverty, trauma, or discrimination.
- Improving access to services for children with SEND, care-experienced young people, and those from diverse communities.

Unpaid carers often face hidden inequalities—financial strain, isolation, and poor health. Wigan’s **Carers Forum** and **Strategic Partnership Board** are working to change that by:

- Recognising carers as a local protected characteristic.
- Providing wraparound support for wellbeing, employment, and respite.
- Ensuring carers’ voices shape services and decisions.

This work helps build a borough where carers are valued, supported, and empowered.

Mission 1:

Create fair opportunities for all children, families, residents and businesses.

"Together, we will break down the barriers that create financial, health, education and environmental inequalities in our borough."



Mission 1

**Create fair opportunities
for all children, families,
residents & businesses.**

*"Together, we will break
down the barriers
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Our workforce

To deliver our two core missions, creating a fair and thriving borough, as defined within the Progress with Unity, we must first establish the right conditions internally. This means building a workforce that reflects the diversity of our communities and ensuring that all colleagues have equitable opportunities to grow, develop, and thrive.

Our aim is to create a workplace where everyone feels valued, has a genuine sense of belonging, and is empowered to bring their whole selves to work. By fostering this environment, we not only enhance the wellbeing and engagement of our workforce but also strengthen our ability to deliver inclusive and responsive services to residents.

To support this ambition, we are implementing a range of internal initiatives designed to embed meaningful change. These actions are aligned with our mission and our six ways of working, ensuring that colleagues experience the values we promote and are equipped to support the needs of a diverse borough.

Staff Networks

Staff Networks are designed to foster an inclusive workplace culture by providing peer support and enabling staff to contribute to decision-making processes at all levels. A key principle guiding these networks is the concept of “Nothing about us, without us,” which reflects a commitment to co-production, ensuring that decisions affecting specific demographic groups are made with their direct involvement.

Training, Tools and Guidance for Inclusive Practice

We are committed to expanding the range of training, tools, and guidance available to staff and managers to build inclusive skills and embed inclusive behaviours across the organisation. This includes training modules that address key topics such as unconscious bias, affinity bias, and microaggressions, equipping individuals with the awareness needed to foster respectful and equitable working environments.

In addition, online guidance is being developed to support inclusive practices such as inclusive recruitment and the implementation of reasonable adjustments. These resources provide practical advice covering all protected characteristics, alongside Wigan's four locally recognised additional characteristics: Care Leavers, Armed Forces Personnel, Carers, and individuals experiencing Socio-Economic Disadvantage.

To support everyday team management, a suite of practical tools is being developed. These resources are designed to help managers apply inclusive principles in their daily interactions and decision-making, ensuring that inclusion is not only reflected in policy but actively practiced throughout the organisation.

The Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard (SC WRES)

Innovative work is underway within both Adults' and Children's Social Care to improve the experiences of staff from ethnic minority backgrounds. This initiative is part of a national programme led by Skills for Care and aims to address disparities in workplace treatment and career progression. The impact of this work has extended beyond social care, influencing broader organisational policies and practices such as the revision of the Dignity at Work policy and the expansion of hate incident reporting categories to better address discrimination and promote equity.

Greater Manchester Elevate

Greater Manchester Elevate is a targeted development initiative aimed at supporting staff from racially diverse backgrounds and those with disabilities. The programme provides equitable access to professional development opportunities, addressing barriers that may limit progression for individuals who face systemic disadvantage in the workplace.

By creating a more inclusive pathway for career growth, GM Elevate seeks to improve representation at senior levels, particularly in higher-paid leadership roles where these groups are currently underrepresented. The long-term ambition is to foster a more diverse leadership landscape across the organisation, contributing to greater equity and inclusion.

Reverse Mentoring

We are preparing to launch phase two of our Reverse Mentoring Programme, which pairs senior leaders across the Adults and Children's Directorates with mentors from racially diverse backgrounds. This initiative is designed to foster mutual learning, challenge perspectives, and build cultural competence at leadership levels.

These open and honest conversations have contributed to enhancing the cultural confidence and competence of organisational leaders, helping to shape a more racially aware and inclusive workforce. Looking ahead, there is a strong ambition to expand the programme to support a broader range of demographic groups.

Creating Health

The health of our population has changed dramatically in the 50 years since Wigan Borough was formed.

We have successfully reduced deaths from heart disease, respiratory illness and cancers by acting on the things that cause these illnesses.

These improvements have however been compromised by the impact of the pandemic, enduring austerity and the difficult financial landscape. While we have a wide array of health promoting assets within our borough, overall, the health of the population is worse than the average in England. Our residents experience shorter lives and spend less time in good health than the national average. Within the borough, health outcomes also vary greatly across local communities. These health inequalities persist throughout the life course, across a range of health outcomes, and are predominantly associated with deprivation.

The recent challenges and opportunities that our communities are living through requires a new response that draws on lessons from the past to improve social conditions and which builds on the strengths of our borough. Through this response we are refocusing our efforts on reconnecting with local people, understanding their contribution, needs and strengths, and fostering a culture for health and wellbeing with support and services delivered where people live and want them.

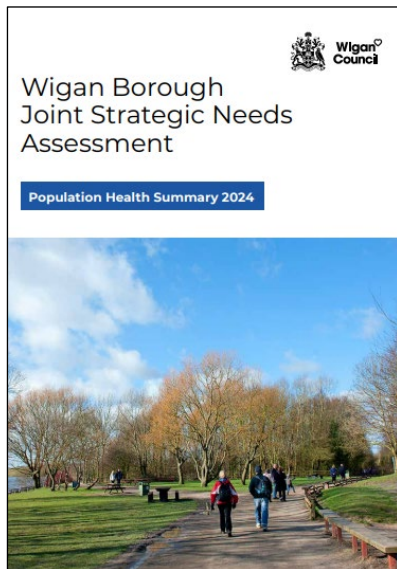
Progress with Unity intends to tackle inequalities and enable our towns and neighbourhoods to flourish; both of which are critical to improving quality of life for everyone.

This is our opportunity to transform health through an integrated approach to the social, economic, commercial and environmental conditions in Wigan and where organisations and communities are deeply connected.

The “[Creating Health Strategy](#)” sets a framework for change across the borough to improve population health and address health inequalities.

It is informed by a clear understanding of our local population through our recently refreshed [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#). This will guide our decision making and enable us to co-design services

and preventative support for groups and neighbourhoods most at risk of poor health outcomes.



Wellness Hub

The vision for the future of the leisure facilities in Wigan Borough is focused on pivoting a traditional sports and physical activity offer to a Wellness Hub.

This places our assets at the heart of communities, transitioning from traditional leisure facilities to community focused wellness centres. Over the last three years, we have strengthened our partnership and collaboration with local and national health providers, VCFSE sector and internal council services to achieve this vision. This has been achieved by transforming under-used or vacant rooms into wellness consultation rooms and offering these spaces to partners and our Be Well Wellness Coaches to deliver their services to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents.

We have offered several clinics and delivered four Health and Wellbeing roadshows at our leisure centres to provide free blood pressure and health checks as well as providers showcasing their services. These have attracted over 800 residents, many of them being communities who experience inequalities, who have not attended their GP for over two years.



Inclusive Community Rugby Sessions

In partnership with Wigan Warriors, the council supported inclusive rugby sessions open to all ages and abilities.

These sessions aimed to promote physical health, social inclusion, and community bonding. Notable attendees included Challenge Cup winners and council representatives, reinforcing the council's commitment to inclusive sport.

Children and young people's education

Children and young people in Wigan have excellent opportunities across their educational journey. We are proud that 99.4% of our early years settings and 100% of our FE Colleges are good or better and that 94% children across our school age cohort attend a school that is good or better.

There is an excellent partnership across all education settings and regardless of designation, all our education leaders continue to work together as 'The Wigan family' to improve outcomes.

We have strength in how we work together across the local authority and with our partners in health. This has meant we have been able to keep pace with tight deadlines and project planning relating to the implementation of childcare sufficiency expansion and wraparound programmes.

We are confident that working together, we will continue to see improvement across all settings and there is a strong commitment to

ensuring there is a clear focus on addressing inequalities across education, and to improve outcomes for our more disadvantaged groups. Children, young people and family experiences are at the heart of everything we do in Wigan Council's Children's Services.

Collaboratively working with children and families

We shape and design our services at a local level, meeting need and delivering improved outcomes through collaborative working with our schools, third sector and our statutory partners. Examples of how we have utilised this approach effectively include:

- The delivery of our network of [family hubs](#) which includes our offer
- for children with emerging and additional needs.
- The [All Child programme](#) in some of our most deprived localities, which we part fund alongside our third sector partner.
- The design and implementation of our [Family Safeguarding Model](#) which we have aligned to localities and the redesign of our adolescents targeted services model Reach.

Young people's safeguarding

Our Mental Health Support Teams in Schools are in place across a number of schools and colleges, delivering the right support at the right time in partnership with the school link team.

Our co-produced and joint funded Our Safe Space Service for children in care and care leavers and their carers.

The Wigan Safeguarding Children's Partnership arrangements have been considerably strengthened as part of continuous improvement work. Governance in the Wigan Safeguarding Partnership has been enhanced through the commission of an independent scrutineer who supports a high challenge, high support culture based upon a common commitment to learning.

This challenge and learning are evidence-led through detailed partnership data and an established programme of multiagency audit which supports identification and evaluation of local safeguarding priorities.

The board has supported the implementation of the [Early Help and Prevention Strategy](#), the development of the [Children's First Partnership Hub](#) and the delivery of arrangements for Complex Safeguarding and they have supported and overseen the delivery of the Family Safeguarding Practice model throughout 2024.

Case study - Heinz meanz skills for care leavers

A traineeship programme for care leavers with one of Wigan's biggest employers has seen outstanding results.

The programme, in partnership with Kraft Heinz, Wigan and Leigh College and the council, provided ten care leavers with the opportunity to learn new skills in a work environment.

Many care leavers have experienced trauma and some have barriers to accessing training and employment. The traineeship proved to be an effective introduction to work.



Five of the young people progressed onto a full apprenticeship with Heinz, all of whom have special educational needs as well as being care experienced.

This model was highlighted as good practice and was recognised with a visit from senior Government civil servants.

Looked After Children and Care Leavers

We took the bold step by recognising Care Experience (e.g. care leavers and looked after children) as a local protected group. This means:

- Their needs are considered in every policy and service.
- Support is tailored to help them overcome barriers and thrive.
- Their lived experience shapes decisions from housing to education to mental health.

This is a clear example of Progress with Unity in action, putting those most affected by inequality at the centre of change.

Working in partnership with youth groups

The Council supports and works with many groups and networks to address exclusion and inequalities, such as Autism Engagement Group, Global Friends, BeYou, Children in Care Council - Million Voices and Care Leavers Forum - Connected Families.

Asset based approach

Wigan's adult social care model is built around a simple but profound principle: Recognise and nurture the strengths, talents, and skills of residents, communities, and partners to improve wellbeing and outcomes. This approach shifts the focus from what people lack to what they can do, and how their networks and communities can support them.

Key features of the approach

- **Person-Centred and Strengths-Based:** Services are designed around individual strengths, not deficits. Residents are seen as active participants, not passive recipients of care.
- **Six Ways of Working:** Listen deeply, See the person, Do the right thing, Connect to neighbourhoods, Know this place and Show our love and pride. These ways of working guide staff behaviour and decision-making.
- **Team Wigan Behaviours:** Staff are encouraged to Be Positive, Be Accountable, Be Courageous, and Be Kind, reinforcing a culture of empowerment and innovation.
- **Co-Production:** Adult Social Services are co-designed with residents and partners, ensuring they reflect real needs and aspirations.

- Examples include redesigning home care, supported living, day services, and carers' support.
- Technology and Innovation: Smart tech is used in supported living and virtual care visits. AI tools are being piloted to reduce admin and free up staff time for direct care.

Outcomes and Impact

- £35 million in efficiencies over 10 years.
- 94% of care home beds rated Good or Outstanding by the CQC.
- 97% of people with a learning disability supported to live in their own home or with family (highest in NW, 3rd in England).
- No waiting lists for homecare.
- 100% of commissioned providers pay the real living wage.

Financial Wellbeing

Our '[Here for You](#)' campaign launched in 2022 and has provided a wide range of advice and support to help people understand their eligibility to benefits, borrow wisely, keep warm and stay well.

Thanks to our commitment to innovation and permission to 'do the right thing' our teams have secured more than £5m of income to people's pockets which they were entitled to but were not claiming.

Our Joint Intelligence Unit and our Customer Experience and Support created a single view of residents at a household level, to identify and provide support to those most impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. The data-led approach enabled customers most likely to be entitled to unclaimed welfare benefits, reductions, discounts, and exemptions to be supported through claim processes.

Customers were contacted by phone and invited to face-to-face events, with experts in welfare rights and advice in attendance. As of January 2025, the team have helped over 2,500 residents claim approximately £11.5 million of additional income. Income maximisation is just one part of our Financial Wellbeing Partnership work which is co-developing a strategy to support our residents.

The council adopted socioeconomic disadvantage as a local protected characteristic in 2019 and considers the impact of decisions on socioeconomic disadvantaged residents/households within our impact assessment (Mission Compass).

Case Study - Here for you – Colin & Linda's story

Colin and Linda Taylor are just one couple who have had their lives changed by the income maximisation work of Wigan Council.

Pensioners who have been helped by the programme have received an additional income of over £400 a week which they did not know they were entitled to claim.

Colin said: "I woke up one morning to find an email in my in-box inviting us to come to the Life Centre to see whether we were getting the right benefits.

"We came in and met an amazing lady who helped us complete the application forms.

"Within the space of an hour I was walking away with tears running down my face."

It meant the couple could now pay for essential items, like new glasses, clothing and even food, which they would struggle to afford previously. "It changed our lives," added Linda

Older residents

Wigan has the fastest ageing population in Greater Manchester, and is responding by:

- Expanding extra care housing: 130% increase since 2018, with purpose-built homes that support independence.
- Asset-based adult social care: Focused on strengths, community support, and co-designed services.
- Real Living Wage for care workers: Recognising the value of the care workforce and improving service quality.
- Digital health innovations: Including fall detection, smart tech in supported living, and virtual care visits.

These efforts aim to reduce health inequalities and support older adults to live well in their communities.

Support for Veterans and Armed Forces

In Wigan Borough, support for armed forces veterans is underpinned by a strong and collaborative approach between the [Armed Forces Community HQ](#) (AFCHQ), the Royal British Legion, and Wigan Sea Cadets, among others. and Wigan Council, reflecting a deep commitment to the wellbeing of those who have served.

Within the 329,800 population of Wigan Borough, it is estimated that the population of the Armed Forces community is 23,000. When defining the Armed Forces community, we include currently serving, ex-serving personnel and their immediate families., and this significant community is at the heart of a range of services and initiatives designed to support their transition to civilian life and ongoing wellbeing.

AFCHQ, based at Molyneux House in Wigan, is a Community Interest Company that offers a wide array of services tailored to veterans, service leavers, and their families.

- Connecting Communities: supporting the development of inclusive activities which promote positive social networks and meaningful connections to reduce social isolation.
- Increased Health & Well-Being: a focus on prevention and early intervention through social activities, mindfulness, peer mentoring and physical wellbeing.
- Homes not Houses: safe, secure, affordable, and quality housing solutions for our community with a key to your own front door.
- Pathway Navigation: advocating access to statutory support while holding space for our community via delivery of holistic therapeutic interventions.
- Better Life Chances: championing growth opportunities such as employment, training and education while ensuring our community's voice is heard.

Wigan Council works closely with AFCHQ to deliver these services, demonstrating a strong local commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, which ensures fair treatment for veterans and their families.

The council also supports access to housing, leisure, and employment services, and provides a professional referral system to ensure veterans receive tailored and timely support.

This commitment is further reinforced politically through the appointment of a Lead Member for Armed Forces and Veterans, signalling clear leadership and accountability. Veterans are also recognised as a local protected group, meaning their needs are considered in all council decisions through the Mission Compass Impact Assessment Tool. This ensures that policies and services are inclusive and responsive to the armed forces community.

The council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group includes representation from veterans and armed forces communities, ensuring their voices are heard in strategic discussions. Additionally, Wigan has celebrated and shared veterans' stories through community storytelling and awareness campaigns, fostering borough-wide pride and recognition of their contributions.

In Wigan Borough we are proud of our military history and strongly recognise the members of our Armed Forces community, both past and present through a strong annual calendar of events which includes the following:

- Flag Raising ceremony on commemorative days i.e. D-Day, VE Day, Battle of Britain etc.
- Annual Armed Forces Day. • Remembrance Day events.
- Falklands Church Service.

In addition to these regular events, we have coordinated significant special events over the last 2 years which have comprised:

- Opening of the Higham Memorial in Mesnes Park
- Opening of hospital remembrance garden at RAEI
- Wigan Drill Hall Memorial with the Manchester 5th Regiment
- Wigan Warriors rugby Match in dedication to Armed Forces Community
- Afternoon Tea with The Mayor



Together, these efforts reflect a comprehensive and compassionate approach to supporting veterans in Wigan Borough, rooted in partnership, inclusion, and respect.

Supporting and valuing Carers

Wigan Council has redesigned services including carers support, ensuring they are co-produced with carers and partners to meet real needs and deliver meaningful outcomes.

Our Asset-Based Approach focuses on recognising and nurturing the strengths and contributions of carers, treating them as key partners in care delivery.

Our Healthier Wigan Partnership, integrated model brings together the NHS, council, primary care, and community organisations to support carers through joined-up services and preventative care.

Our Community Wealth Building, support Carers through employment pathways, ethical commissioning, and investment in the care workforce, many of whom are carers themselves.

Sporting Pride, Shared Purpose: A Borough Leading the Way

Wigan Borough has always punched above its weight when it comes to sport and 2024 has been a year to remember. From the incredible achievements of Wigan Warriors to Olympic champion Keely Hodgkinson and her coaches Trevor Painter and Jenny Meadows, our borough has taken centre stage nationally and internationally.

But what makes us proud is not just the medals and trophies, it is how our sporting heroes are helping lead the way in our Progress with Unity partnership. They are working alongside residents, community

foundations, businesses, and local organisations to inspire change and tackle inequality.

Sport in Wigan is not just about competition; it is about connection. It brings people together, celebrates our place and people, and helps us build a borough where everyone can thrive. That is why we are working with sports leaders to make our borough more inclusive, especially for young people who want to follow their dreams.

This work supports our commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty, which means we must actively promote fairness, remove barriers, and foster good relations between communities. Sport is one of the ways we do that, by creating opportunities, building confidence, and celebrating diversity.

Backing Local Talent

We are investing in the future through:

- The Believe Talent Fund: helping young people reach their potential.
- Our Be Well leisure service: supporting healthy and active lives.
- The Believe Sports Awards: recognising local success and inspiring others.



Our Digital Mission

In Wigan, we believe that technology should serve everyone. Our digital mission is about using innovation, data, and Artificial Intelligence to create fairer opportunities, better services, and stronger communities. It is not just about changing how the council works, it's about making sure no one is left behind as we move forward together.

Back in 2020, we laid the groundwork with our digital strategy. Now, inspired by our Progress with Unity plan, we are refreshing our approach to

reflect how far technology has come and how much more it can do to support our shared ambitions.

By 2025, we will have a renewed digital plan that puts people, fairness, and inclusion at its heart.

What We are Doing and Why It Matters

To make sure digital transformation benefits everyone, we are focusing on:

- Digital Inclusion: Making sure all residents, regardless of age, income, or background, can access and benefit from digital tools and services.
- Growing Our Digital Economy: Supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive in a digital world.
- Investing in Infrastructure: Building safe, modern systems that allow us to test and adopt new solutions quickly.
- Building Confidence and Skills: Helping our people and communities feel confident using technology.
- Using Data for Good: Improving how we collect and use data to understand needs, target support, and build trust.

Putting People First

Digital transformation is more than tech; it is about people. We are using collaborative tools to bring teams together, spark ideas, and solve problems creatively. By connecting data across services, we can spot patterns, predict needs, and respond faster, especially in areas where inequality is greatest.

This means we can:

- Target resources where they are needed most.
- Improve transparency and build trust.
- Make decisions that reflect real community needs.

TechMates programme

The programme provides one-on-one support and hosts drop-in sessions, called TechMate Tea Parties, to help residents build basic digital skills. These sessions are informal and person-centred, held in community hubs where participants feel at ease.

The number of TechMate Tea Parties has grown to 10 across the borough, held in various community settings like pubs, community centres, and sheltered accommodation, ensuring accessibility for all residents.

The TechMates initiative has shown impressive growth in those digitally supported or engaged. The number of residents we have engaged with and/or digitally supported increased by 60%, from 471 in the first two quarters of 23/24 to 755 for the first two quarters of 24/25.

Volunteer hours recorded increased by 78%, from 45 hours to 435 hours, and the hours of available support at sessions increased by 91%, from 134 to 255 hours. Collaboration is essential to the success of the TechMates program

Mission 2:

Make all our towns and neighbourhoods flourish for those who live and work in them.

“Together, in genuine partnership with our residents and businesses, who know our community best, we will help each town and neighbourhood in the borough celebrate and maintain their identity whilst understanding and helping to achieve what is needed to thrive.”



Mission 2

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Know this place

The council collects and publishes equality data to inform decision-making and ensure services are inclusive.

It uses this data in the new Impact Assessment Tool (Mission Compass) to ensure policies, services and decisions do not discriminate and actively promote inclusion.

Community Health and Wealth: Building a Fairer Borough Together

We know that when communities thrive, people thrive. That is why we are putting Community Health and Wealth Building at the heart of everything we do.

We are using our role as a council and as a key anchor in the borough to make sure the way we spend, recruit, and invest brings real benefits to local people. Whether it is through the way we commission services, support local businesses, or connect with residents, we are working creatively and collaboratively to build a fairer, healthier Wigan Borough.

We are proud to be working alongside partners who share our vision. Together, we are tackling the root causes of inequality and creating opportunities for people to live well, learn well, and work well.

Our Economic Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy are both shaped by this commitment. Community Wealth and Health Building is the thread that runs through them bringing together people, place, and purpose.

Since 2020, we have been growing this approach. We have strengthened leadership, created new spaces for collaboration, and launched an Internal Community Wealth Building Board to drive change across the council. We have backed this up with real action, like the Community Investment Fund, supported employment, community asset transfers, and Believe in Business.

These initiatives have helped people into jobs, supported local enterprise, and empowered communities to run buildings and services that matter to them.

Examples of what we have achieved together

- Built strong anchor networks and shared our commissioning plans.
- Delivered procurement training to help local businesses grow.
- Adapted recruitment and skills policies to support people into work and training.
- Focused on key sectors like social care, construction, housing, manufacturing, and the green economy.
- Continued to champion cooperatives, social enterprises, and community-led schemes.

Building an Inclusive Economy

Our approach is framed through its Progress with Unity plan and its Community Wealth and Health Building strategy, and our Economic Strategy.

In Wigan Borough, our journey to build an inclusive economy and deliver inclusive capital investment is rooted in the shared values and ambitions of our Progress with Unity plan.

Our Economic Strategy is a key instrument in Progress with Unity. It is designed to create fair opportunities for all children, families, residents, and businesses, and to ensure every town and neighbourhood flourishes.

Our Economic Strategy is not just about economic growth; it is about inclusive growth. It is about ensuring that prosperity reaches every corner of our borough and every member of our community.

We are embedding Community Wealth Building principles into everything we do. This means redirecting more of our annual spend back into the local economy, encouraging local businesses to buy from one another, and supporting the growth of cooperatives, social enterprises, and community-led organisations. By doing so, we are creating good jobs, supporting local supply chains, and building a resilient economy that works for everyone.

Our capital investment programme is equally values-led. With over £5 billion of investment planned over the next decade, we are ensuring that regeneration projects, from Wigan town centre to the transformation of Haigh Hall, deliver maximum social value. These projects are co-designed with our communities and partners, ensuring they reflect local identity,

meet local needs, and create inclusive spaces for living, working, and thriving.

We are also investing in the future of our workforce. Through programmes like [Believe in Your Future](#), we are raising aspirations in our schools and colleges, focusing on growth sectors such as construction, health and social care, and digital.

Accessible homes

Inclusive capital investment also means building homes that meet the needs of our residents.

Our housing programme is delivering low-carbon, accessible homes, with a focus on affordability, sustainability, and community wellbeing. We are working with ethical developers and using our procurement power to deliver social value, skills development, and employment opportunities.

In Wigan Borough, housing accessibility and equality are central to our mission to create fair opportunities and help our towns and neighbourhoods' flourish. Through our Progress with Unity movement, we have committed to a whole-place approach that recognises housing as a foundation for wellbeing, dignity, and opportunity.

Our housing programme is deeply rooted in the principles of community wealth and health building. Since 2010, we have delivered over 800 new council homes, with a further 250 planned by 2026/27. These homes are designed to meet diverse needs, including specialist schemes for autism, dementia, and older people, and are built to high environmental standards with low-carbon technologies. Accessibility is embedded in the design, with many homes built to be fully wheelchair accessible, ensuring that residents can live independently and with pride in their communities.

We understand that housing equality means more than just bricks and mortar, it means listening to our tenants, acting on their feedback, and ensuring that everyone has a safe, warm, and secure place to call home. Our Tenant Voice and Engagement team has led extensive consultation, with over 4,600 responses shaping our new [Tenant Engagement Strategy](#).

We have established a Damp and Mould Taskforce, adopted a proactive policy, and trained staff across services to identify and respond to housing issues, ensuring that no resident is left behind.

The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge has recognised housing as a key area for continuing transformation. It highlighted our commitment to improvement and the need to maintain focus on embedding change, particularly in areas like homelessness and children's social care. Our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy reflects this, setting out a collective vision to end homelessness through partnership, prevention, and person-centred support.

As we move forward, we are strengthening our governance and oversight of housing delivery, ensuring that our capital programme aligns with our missions. We are also working with partners across Greater Manchester to advocate for Wigan's needs in regional planning and funding decisions, ensuring our borough's voice is heard and our communities are supported.

Driving Forward an Inclusive Transport Vision

In Wigan Borough, our commitment to tackling inequality is embedded in every aspect of our strategic planning, including transport. As part of our Progress with Unity movement, we recognise that transport is not just infrastructure, it is a lifeline. It connects people to opportunity, supports independence, and enables our towns and neighbourhoods to flourish.

Our [Transport Strategy](#) is shaped by the voices of our residents and partners, and is designed to balance the needs of drivers with bold improvements to walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport. We know that poor air quality and limited access to transport disproportionately affect our most disadvantaged communities. That is why our approach is rooted in health equity, environmental sustainability and inclusive growth.

We are proud to be part of Greater Manchester's Bee Network, with Wigan leading the way in bus franchising, delivering cheaper, simpler fares and greater accountability. Our borough has already benefited from £70m investment in bus transport, and we continue to work with Transport for Greater Manchester to deliver electrification of rail lines, smart motorway upgrades, and new strategic road links that will unlock opportunity and reduce congestion.

Our five-year transport improvement plan includes:

- Wigan–Bolton rail electrification
- New Golborne Rail Station
- Expanded electric vehicle charging infrastructure
- Enhanced walking, wheeling and cycling routes in Leigh, Standish, Atherton, Tyldesley, Hindley and Pemberton
- Improved bus network frequencies and hours
- Development of a unified rail hub in Wigan town centre

We are also exploring longer-term options such as:

- Metrolink to Leigh
- New rail stations in underserved areas
- Strategic road network changes to improve connectivity

These improvements are not just about movement; they are about equity. Better transport means better access to jobs, education, healthcare and community life. It means reducing isolation, supporting active lifestyles, and creating cleaner, safer environments for our children and families.

Through collaborative planning, community engagement, and a focus on data and insight, we are ensuring that our transport system works for everyone, especially those who experience inequalities.

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Caring for Our Borough: Cleaner, Greener, Together

We are proud of our borough and we are working every day to make it cleaner, greener, and more sustainable for everyone who lives, works, and visits here.

We know that a high-quality environment is key to helping our towns and neighbourhoods flourish. That is why our teams whether they are collecting waste, caring for parks, keeping streets clean, or protecting public health are driven by the #TeamWigan ethos. They are not just staff. They are neighbours, volunteers, and active members of our communities. We trust our workforce to do the right thing. They are empowered to listen, respond, and support residents, spotting issues early and helping people before problems grow.

Working With You

We do not do this alone. We work side-by-side with tenants, ward members, residents, and volunteers to run litter picks, plant trees, and

clean up our communities. Together, we are making our neighbourhoods places we can all be proud of.

[Our Keep it Clean](#) campaign is helping tackle litter and fly-tipping and it is shaped by young people, like those from The Deanery High School, who helped design the radio ads.

We are also investing in our beautiful parks and green spaces, which help people stay active, healthy, and connected. From Flashes of Wigan and Leigh being given National Nature Reserve status in 2022, to the five council parks awarded Green Flags, these spaces are a source of pride and wellbeing.

Powered by People

We are one of the most active areas in the country for In Bloom volunteers, ranking in the top 10 nationally. These incredible groups, supported by the council, give their time and energy to make our borough bloom, winning national and regional awards along the way.

Tech

We are also embracing technology to make services smarter and more efficient, from waste collection to fleet management, so we can do more for less and reinvest in what matters most.



Climate

We acknowledge that climate change increases social inequality and hits certain disadvantaged communities harder. We also acknowledge that the increasing impacts of climate change mean that we need to build climate resilience into our communities and neighbourhoods.

We declared a climate emergency in 2019, and we have set the ambitious goal to reach net zero emissions as a council by 2038.

Apprenticeship Programmes

Wigan Council is the only council in the UK listed in the Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers. The borough has been named the best area in the country to be an apprentice. Apprenticeship success rates exceed national averages.

The council supports apprenticeships both internally and by funding local businesses to take on apprentices. Around 40 apprentices are recruited into the council each year. Over 180 staff are currently supported in apprenticeships, including in leadership, social work, and children's services.

The Future Apprentices for Business (FAB) grant programme has approved 150+ grants, committing over £300,000.

Degree apprenticeships are being expanded as an affordable alternative to university.

Supported Employment

The council promotes supported employment through initiatives like:

- Step Into Care: Entry-level training and guaranteed interviews for social care roles.
- Sector-Based Work Academies: In partnership with Jobcentre Plus and DWP.
- Job Ready Programme: In collaboration with Wigan Warriors, offering placements in leisure and fitness.
- Paid Internships: For T Level and university students.
- Social Work Pathways: With strong educator support.

Inclusive Recruitment

Recruitment events are held in the heart of communities to reach underrepresented groups. Support includes visa applications, digital skills, and qualifications.

The council works with the Department for Work and Pensions to support unemployed residents.

Outreach includes school and college engagement, application support, and “Day in the Life” job profiles to demystify roles.

Standing Together Against Racism: Building a Fairer Borough for All

We believe that everyone in Wigan Borough deserves to feel safe, respected, and included, no matter their background. That is why we are committed to being an anti-racist organisation and working together to tackle racial inequality wherever it exists.

This is part of our wider mission to challenge inequality and create a borough where everyone can thrive. It is also aligned with our responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, which means we must actively promote fairness, eliminate discrimination, and foster good relations between communities.

We know this is a journey and we are learning every step of the way. We have listened to people with lived experience of racism and discrimination, and we have worked with staff networks like ‘The Collective’ and individual staff to co-design our Anti-Racist Charter. This charter sets out how we will work with partners to challenge and change the systems, policies, and behaviours that allow racism to persist.

What we are doing

- We have developed a clear action plan and committed to transparent reporting, so we stay accountable.
- We are supporting staff to understand unconscious bias and how it affects decision-making.

- We have launched Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Awareness Sessions, co-designed with local partners like Happy Smiles CIC and Everything Human Rights, with over 800 staff already taking part.
- We have created safe spaces for staff through peer networks, where people can share experiences and support each other.
- We are using national tools like the Local Government Association's Equality Framework and the GM People Inclusion Standards to guide our progress and make sure we are doing things right.

Pride 2024

Held in August 2024, Wigan Pride was a vibrant celebration of equality and diversity.

The event featured:

- A parade with drag queens, LGBTQ+ charities, and community groups.
- Live music performances including Baga Chipz (RuPaul's Drag Race), Kelly Llorenna (N-Trance), and Karen Parry.
- A new outdoor theatre area on Standishgate with dramatic performances.
- The BYOU LGBTQ+ youth group, supported by the council, hosted the Believe Stage with acoustic sets and family-friendly entertainment.

We also celebrated Leigh Pride in July and marked International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia.

These events are used to raise awareness, share stories, and promote visibility of LGBTQ+ communities across the borough.



International Women's Day March 2024 and 2025

For International Women's Day (IWD) 2024, Wigan Council and its partners hosted a vibrant and diverse programme of events across the borough, celebrating the theme #InvestInWomen.

A flagship event on 8 March, this flagship event featured:

- Performances by local poet ****Joy France**** (known as the "rapping granny").
- Comedy by Clementine Bogg-Hargroves.
- Music from Penelope Carpenter and a Northern Soul DJ playing female-only records.
- A panel discussion with influential women from Wigan and beyond

In 2025, the council help promote a series of inclusive events throughout March:

- Girls cycling session: Cycling sessions for 11–18-year-old girls. Bikes and helmets were free to borrow.
- Women in Business meeting.
- This Girl Can Run: Be Well Wigan to run or walk 1.5 - 3 miles in a group setting. For women and girls aged 14+.
- Memories, an evening with author Miriam Gold and BBC DJ Shaun Keaveny: People brought their memories of local inspirational woman.
- Breast and pec examination webinar
- Women for Women showcase hosted by Leigh Soroptimists

- Walk the Wigan Way (approx. 9 miles) was open to everyone.
- Self-defence course designed for women and girls aged 12 and upheld by Black Scorpion Karate CIC.
- Wigan and Leigh College hosted a closed event for their students. –

Disability History Month

Wigan Council actively marks Disability History Month, sharing achievements and voices of disabled people and local groups.

Supporting Communities Fund

In early 2024, Wigan Council reopened its Supporting Communities Fund, offering grants of up to £2,000.

The fund targeted projects that:

- Improve wellbeing.
- Reduce loneliness.
- Promote community cohesion.
- Tackle inequalities and support the “Progress with Unity” plan.

Over 123 local projects were supported in previous rounds, with over £104,000 in funding distributed.

Working with the Faith Sector

A new Interfaith Network was established to effective in bringing new voices together, opening new opportunities for partnership working and understanding and supporting collaborative approaches to inclusion and community cohesion.

The Interfaith Network has endorsed [Greater Manchester Faith, Belief and Interfaith Covenant](#) and has made great strides on their priorities.

The [LGA Peer Review Recommendations and Report](#) highlights that Wigan Council, the community and voluntary sector, and the faith sector are key partners in creating communities that promote health and wellbeing.

It cited that faith groups are actively involved in tackling health inequalities and supporting community-based care. That Faith groups are recognised for their distinctive social capital, including:

- Deep community connections
- Volunteer mobilisation
- Cultural and spiritual support

Promoting Equality: Everyone Has a Role to Play

Creating fair opportunities for all children, families, residents and businesses, is something everyone can be part of. Whether it is through small everyday actions or bigger changes, every step counts. Being open to learning, listening to others, and valuing different experiences helps build stronger, more connected communities.

Tackling inequality remains a key part of **Progress with Unity**. There is a shared commitment to include people who may otherwise be left out or face unfair barriers. This means making sure that everyone—regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, caring responsibilities, care experience, or armed forces personnel, has what they need to live well and reach their potential.

Organisations, businesses, community groups, and individuals all have a part to play. Anyone who wants to learn more or get involved in the borough's work to promote equality can visit the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion webpages](#), which will be updated with news, resources, and opportunities to take part.

For further information and national guidance, visit the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#).