# Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Equality & Diversity Statement

## January 2022

The Lancashire Enterprise Partnership is committed to supporting a fully inclusive culture and promoting equality and diversity across its operations. This statement sets out how we meet relevant legislation, and go above and beyond, to ensure that we do as much as we can, to promote equality and diversity – recognising our important role in doing so as a publicly accountable body promoting diverse geography and communities.

**Discrimination – Our Commitment**

Nobody should face discrimination because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. These nine characteristics are known as the protected characteristics, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

To discriminate against a person because of any of the above characteristics would contravene the legislation and see an individual treated unfairly. The LEP is strongly opposed to all forms of unlawful, unfair, harmful and inappropriate discrimination.

As part of our responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, we will also work towards eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by law; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who do and do not share protected characteristics.

We are committed to ensuring that these and related legislation are upheld throughout our operations, and that the promotion of equality and diversity is a key consideration in our activities.

**Delivering Our Commitment**

We take multiple steps as an organisation to meet our commitment on diversity and equality, as detailed below. We take steps so that we will:

* ensure that inclusive language and imagery is used in all communication, both internal and external
* work to understand the factors that prevent inclusion and diversity and take proactive steps to address these factors
* proactively celebrate diversity within our communities and businesses and seek to identify, inspire and empower potential leaders of the future from all backgrounds
* recognise that traditional structures and models of working can lead to underrepresentation from certain groups, and we will innovate to ensure the broadest possible representation across our Boards and staff team
* ensure that everyone who represents the LEP has a good understanding of inclusion and diversity through training, development and sharing information
* recruit, select, train and promote staff fairly and have clear systems for staff to complain if they are treated unfairly
* ensure that all our policies, procedures and actions are based on a foundation of treating people with dignity, respect, and honouring diversity
* ensure that all staff are effectively trained in our Equality Policy and that this adhered to at all times
* collect information about protected characteristics and use this to improve our services and support our commitment to broadening representation
* take proactive steps to ensure fair representation on all our Boards
* ensure that equality issues are embedded in the appraisal of projects seeking our support and will not support projects that contravene our principles
* make it easy for our stakeholders and staff to complain if they believe they have been treated unfairly and respond quickly and appropriately
* ensure that anyone who provides a service for us also treats people fairly
* act as an agent of change by using our influential platforms to share the LEP’s ambitions to promote diversity in business and public sector organisations
* monitor our equality actions through our reporting systems

**Employment**

It is our policy to select people for employment opportunities on the basis of their suitability for the role in our objective opinion, which will reference the post's job description and person specification.

Where vacancies are available, we will advertise them externally and follow both internal recruitment policies and related legislation to ensure that processes are fair and non-discriminatory. Where possible, we will encourage applications from a range of diverse backgrounds to help ensure that our organisation can successfully represent the diverse populations we serve.

We are an equal opportunities employer and will ensure that decisions relating to training, promotion, working arrangements and other employment matters do not result in unfair discrimination. We will also ensure that the pay of employees is consistent with the latest legislation, which prohibits any less favourable treatment between men and women in terms of pay and employment conditions.

As part of our current operating structure, employees are seconded to the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership from either Lancashire County Council or Blackpool Council. As part of this, staff will be subject to and be able to benefit from the HR policies of the respective organisations. As an organisation, we will seek to follow these related policies, in addition to our own.

As well as measures we take collectively as an organisation, it is also of critical importance that each member of our organisation enacts and complies with the principles of this policy and challenges any unfair discrimination. Staff will receive training and information on equality and diversity during their onboarding to the organisation, and we will strive to maintain open and regular communication with our employees on such matters to ensure that any concerns are quickly and effectively resolved.

**Board, Sub-groups and Committees**

We will seek to ensure, using available data and understanding of local communities, that the compositions of our board and any sub-groups and committees reflect the diversity of Lancashire's business community. Both internal recruitment and appointment policies and relevant legislation will be followed when making board appointments to ensure processes are inclusive and do not lead to unfair discrimination.

The Company Members are responsible for appointment of LEP Directors, following recommendations made by the LEP Board. All Board appointments are made on merit, in the context of the skills and experience that the Board as a whole requires to be effective, have a fully inclusive debate, and a capacity for rapid decisions. In identifying suitable candidates for appointment to the Board, candidates will be considered on merit against objective criteria and with due regard to the benefits of diversity on the Board. No more than one-third of the Board is comprised of elected members of Lancashire County Council, Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen unitary authorities and representatives of all the Districts, selected by Local Government themselves.

Our board is fully compliant with Government requirements for at least one third of our board members to be female, and we are committed to ensuring that there is proportional representation on our Board.

Board members, like staff across our organisation, have an important role in promoting diversity and equality, complying with, and enacting this policy. In addition, the board is to appoint an Equality and Diversity Champion to ensure best practice in this field; this post is currently held by LEP Director, Khalid Saifullah.

**Engagement**

The LEP is a strategic collaboration between businesses, universities, colleges and local councils. We will strive to engage with all stakeholders in a collaborative, inclusive manner, compatible with this policy and expect our partners and suppliers to uphold similar standards and principles which will be monitored via relevant contracts and agreements.

**Approval & Review**

This policy will be reviewed as necessary in accordance with the release of new legislation and/or guidance, and any significant changes to our operations.