

**REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR – CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND  
EMPLOYEES****DISABILITY CONFIDENT LEADER ACCREDITATION****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Elected Members with updated information on the Council's work towards gaining Disability Confident Leader accreditation and to seek their support and agreement to the content provided in the attached appendix Disability Confident Leader Validation template.

**Information**

2. Members received a report to Personnel Committee in May 2019 advising of the Council's accreditation as a Disability Confident Employer, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) employer standard relating to the employment of people with disabilities. It was agreed that we would continue to work towards the highest level of accreditation, Disability Confident Leader. This was due to be submitted within the two year period following accreditation to Disability Confident, however this was extended by the DWP due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
3. It is considered important to demonstrate active commitment to becoming a recognised Disability Confident Leader to provide a focus for further development of the existing range of activities, procedures, provisions and guidance available to support the Council's managers to recruit, develop and retain people with disabilities. This level of accreditation also requires the Council to demonstrate leadership to external communities, partners and businesses and the attached submission seeks to reflect this commitment.
4. Members have previously provided their support for the work towards accreditation which is an important part of our submission as it demonstrates that the political leadership of the Council is fully supportive of the actions being taken.
5. In drafting the validation submission, consultation has taken part with the Disabled Employee Support Network, the recognised trade unions and their comments have been incorporated into the document. In addition, we have shared the information with Leonard Cheshire to consider the content and to act as an external "critical friend". Members will recall that the Council takes part in the annual Change 100 programme sponsored by Leonard Cheshire to provide four paid internships for graduates with disabilities and which has led to some of those interns gaining permanent employment with the Council when they have graduated.
6. To further support our work towards accreditation, we have joined the Business Disability Forum (BDF), a not-for-profit registered charity. Membership provides the Council with pragmatic support, expertise, advice and training and networking opportunities. The BDF

promotes best practice and work with organisations to set and influence policy so that it benefits both organisations and disabled people. Members include many of the UK's largest businesses and public sector employers.

#### 7. Our membership benefits include:

- Access to the Forum's Advice Service via email and telephone: answering strategic and day-to-day questions.
- A Disability Business Partner to help make full use of our Business Disability Forum membership.
- Department for Work and Pensions 'Disability Confident' Level 3 (DCL3) review and validation: validation document plus best practice advice; one-hour consultative phone call; recommendations to help inform and plan. We have shared our submission with our Business Partner for further validation.
- Online access to the Disability Smart Benchmark self-assessment tool, designed to help build our strategy around getting it right on disability as it affects our organisation.
- Access to the Global Business Disability Framework, a global tool to enable disability inclusion around the world.
- Introductory pack of customer communication guides, people manager guides and briefings (circa 28 publications), plus discounted licencing for use of all content resources on our intranet. We are creating a Disability Hub on our intranet to enable employees and managers to access this extensive information.
- Policy review service, focusing on disability-smart best practice – up to five policies reviewed annually. This will further assist with our ongoing work on making Equality Impact assessments more effective.
- Wide-ranging programme of training and events – some free as part of membership, including networking events, the Disability Smart Awards ceremony and Technology Taskforce events; and others discounted, including professional development courses and seminars.
- Mental health e-guidance module 1 for our intranet, plus discounted access to modules 2 & 3.
- Advice on our annual workforce surveys, including question and language review.
- Unlimited access to the Knowledge Hub offering resources that include information sheets, toolkits and case studies to support you to deliver disability-smart business.
- Monthly communications such as a Member newsletter, legal updates and Technology Taskforce newsletter.

- Networking: one-to-one connections, events, and via social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, etc.).
- Use of the Business Disability Forum logo on our email signature, job adverts, public website and intranet.
- Further opportunities to share our experiences by hosting (with free places given in exchange) and speaking at BDF events.
- Branding and sponsorship opportunities across BDF websites, communication channels, publications and social media.
- Signposting to other specialist services, including site audits, web development, consumer research and mystery shopping.

Membership and access to the resources highlighted above will significantly enhance our existing provision.

8. Members have continued to question the support we provide for employees with mental health issues. To further extend our offer in relation to this, we have also recently engaged with a local organisation Bipolar Lift to provide additional support to colleagues with a bipolar diagnosis to enable them to continue to work and manage their condition effectively. Engagement with Bipolar Lift will also raise awareness for managers and colleagues about this condition.

### **Other Options Considered**

9. The Disability Confident standard is a nationally recognised accreditation which allows employers to demonstrate their commitment to becoming fully inclusive and which goes beyond the basic statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010. As such, no other options were considered. The Council wants to demonstrate to our current and future workforce our achievement of the Disability Confident Leader standard and ensure we continue to undertake meaningful actions to remove any barriers to employment with the Council.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

10. The Council seeks to support and enable its workforce and the active pursuit of Disability Confident Leader accreditation demonstrates real commitment to our existing workforce in attracting and retaining talented individuals and highlights the Council's community leadership role as being an exemplar employer in relation to the employment of people with disabilities.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

11. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Data Protection and Information Governance**

12. There are no data protection or GDPR issues arising from this report as all the information contained is generic and cannot be attributed to individual employees.

## **Financial Implications**

13. There are no direct financial implications arising from the content of this report as there is no charge made for Disability Confident Leader accreditation and any costs arising from completing the identified actions will be met from existing service budgets.

## **Human Resources Implications**

14. The Council recognises that its most valuable asset is its employees and seeks to demonstrate its commitment to attracting and retaining people from all communities. We want to provide opportunities to support and enable people with disabilities to access employment with the Council and show that we are committed to genuine inclusivity through a range of identified actions contained in the attached validation template.

## **Public Sector Equality Duty implications**

15. The attainment of Disability Confident Leader accreditation will demonstrate our ongoing commitment to meeting and wherever possible exceeding the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 1) Agree to renew their support for the Council's application to become a Disability Confident Leader.
- 2) Acknowledge the content of the attached validation template submitted to the Department of Work and Pensions to be considered as part of the accreditation process.
- 3) Agree to receive a further report to a later Committee providing the outcome of our submission and outlining any further actions required in support of our ongoing commitment to providing a fully inclusive workforce.

**Marjorie Toward**  
**Service Director – Customers, Governance and Employees**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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#### **Constitutional Comments (KK 25/08/21)**

16. The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Personnel Committee.

#### **Financial Comments (SES 24.8.21)**

17. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

#### **HR Comments (JP 31/08/21)**

18. The actions set out within the report and validation template demonstrate the Authority's ongoing commitment in supporting people with disabilities.

#### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

#### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All