Inclusion and Belonging Annual Report

Public Board
26 November 2026

Presented for:	Information and Assurance
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Previous Committees:	The Board has received regular inclusion and belonging reports for each of its public meetings

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Exemption	☐**YES** (restricted from the FOIA) ☒**NO** (available to the public under the FOIA)

Link to Strategic Objective	Support and develop our people
Link to Provider Capability Assessment	People and culture
Link to CQC Well-led Statement	Shared Direction and Culture
Regulatory Impact	Regulation 17: Good governance

Key points	**Purpose**
• Inclusion and belonging has moved from a series of separate initiatives to a more connected programme of organisational change linking the Leeds Way, leadership, colleague voice, Freedom to Speak Up, colleague networks and data. • There has been visible progress over the last 12 months, with stronger Board and Executive engagement, a simplified local champion model, values-based engagement, improved induction and emphasis on colleagues shaping change. • We are increasingly co-designing with colleagues rather than for colleagues, demonstrated through the leadership Design Studio involving 220 colleagues, multi-generational reverse mentoring, the champions event, network involvement and colleague led initiatives such as Fair Chance. • There is positive activity, but the work is not complete. WRES, WDES and colleague experience continue to identify inequalities, so the next phase will focus on translating the strengthened infrastructure and engagement into consistent local practice and measurable improvements in colleague experience and outcomes.	Information and Assurance

Risk Appetite Framework			
Level 1 Risk	Level 2 Risks	(Risk Appetite Scale)	Impact
Workforce Risk	Workforce Retention Risk - We will deliver safe and effective patient care, through supporting the training, development, and H&WB of our staff to retain the appropriate level of resource to continue to meet the patient demand for our clinical services	Cautious	Moving Towards

1. Summary

The purpose of this annual report is to provide clear assurance that inclusion and belonging is becoming embedded across LTHT, to evidence progress over the last 12 months and to set out where inequitable outcomes remain and how they are being addressed.

Over the last 12 months, LTHT has shifted inclusion and belonging from a collection of separate activities towards a connected organisational improvement approach. The work now links leadership accountability, the Leeds Way values, colleague voice, local champions, colleague networks, Freedom to Speak Up, workforce evidence, leadership development and practical action.

The organisation has strengthened the conditions for sustained change and there is early evidence of impact in representation, data quality, senior accountability, local ownership, participation and the visibility of inclusion in everyday organisational life. The work is increasingly designed with colleagues rather than for them, and is moving closer to teams through champions, networks, induction, leadership development and local events.

The position is not one of completion. WRES, WDES and colleague experience continue to show inequality in recruitment, formal people processes, reasonable adjustments, career opportunity and bullying and harassment. The next phase therefore focuses on consistent management practice, stronger CSU level action, transparent use of data and clearer evidence that activity is changing colleague experience and outcomes.

2. The story of the last 12 months: from foundations to visible action

The year has been characterised by a deliberate move through four stages: listening honestly to the evidence, creating a clearer organisational framework, involving colleagues in design, and translating that work into visible activity that reaches teams. This flow is important because it demonstrates that individual initiatives are not isolated events; each contributes to a wider system for strengthening belonging, fairness and accountability.

Listen and acknowledge

The ENEI review identified a compliance led, fragmented and sometimes reactive approach. It highlighted inconsistent local planning, limited evidence of impact, hard to find information, variable network sponsorship, insufficient use of CSU level data and a need for clearer inclusive leadership behaviours.

Simplify

LTHT has consciously moved away from a traditional equality, diversity and inclusion narrative towards a clearer focus on inclusion and belonging, rooted in the Leeds Way and compassionate and effective leadership. This has been supported by stronger governance, greater integration of colleague voice and simpler, more responsive local champion arrangements.

Co-create and mobilise

Networks, champions, Board members, Executive Sponsors and colleagues across the Trust have been invited to shape solutions. This includes the champion event (20 October 2026), Board development day (23 October 2026), the leadership Design Studio and colleague led ideas such as Fair Chance career progression programme.

Embed and measure

The aim going forward is to translate participation into consistent everyday practice, supported by Corporate Induction, leadership development, local champion activity, people metrics, WRES/WDES, Staff Survey insight and stronger CSU level engagement and assurance.

2a Activity, progress and emerging impact

A simpler, effective local champion model

Freedom to Speak Up and Inclusion Champion arrangements have been brought together into one effective and responsive local champion role. The intention is to reduce duplication and confusion, while creating a visible local point of connection who can listen, explain routes, signpost appropriately, support early local resolution and identify themes requiring wider action.

Champions were brought together at a dedicated Champions event on 20 October 2026 to share the new focus, build a common understanding of the role and connect colleagues who had previously operated through separate routes. This marked a move from recruiting champions as an end in itself to developing a coordinated community of practice with clearer purpose, boundaries and accountability.

The Leeds Way values and bringing them to life

Throughout 2026 we have brought colleagues along the journey to develop and launch four simple, easy to understand values. They are:

- Kind
- Responsible
- Open and Honest
- One Team

The values launch has been treated as an opportunity to create shared experience, not simply as a communications exercise. The One Team World Cup event brought colleagues together across backgrounds, professions and services around a genuinely inclusive event. It provided a practical demonstration of One Team by enabling people to connect beyond their usual organisational boundaries.

World kindness day event was held on 13 November 2026 and two more events are planned to promote Responsible, and Open and Honest. Together, these activities will create opportunities to

explore what each value means in daily work, recognise good practice and build connection across the Trust. The emphasis is on translating the values into visible behaviours and practical expectations.

Leadership, belonging and a multigenerational workforce

LTHT's 2026-2029 Organisation Strategy makes inclusion integral to the People priority and describes inclusive leadership, wellbeing and belonging, learning and development, and a sustainable workforce as core components of making LTHT a brilliant place to work and receive care.

Our inaugural LTHT Leadership Conference (22 July 2026) The Future of Work brought senior leaders together to step away from the day-to-day, connect across LTHT and consider how a multi-generational workforce is changing how leaders need to lead, motivate and engage colleagues. It also created space to shape the new Trust values, hear directly from the Executive Team and ask the questions that matter. The conference directly informed the introduction of a multigenerational reverse mentoring scheme. The scheme creates structured, reciprocal learning between colleagues from different generations, giving senior leaders direct insight into contemporary colleague experience while widening participants' understanding of organisational leadership and decision-making

The next conference theme will be Civility Saves Lives and will be held on 16 December 2026 focussing on how we lead when pressure is high. The focus will be on civility, candour and constructive challenge as leadership issues that affect patient care, colleague experience, teamwork and performance, with an emphasis on clear expectations, accountability and practical commitments.

Together, the conferences move from understanding the changing workforce to strengthening how we lead and behave with one another, reinforcing the Leeds Way and creating a senior leadership community that is connected, accountable and able to challenge well and act together.

Co-creating compassionate and effective leadership

LTHT has invited 220 colleagues to a Design Studio to co-create the Compassionate and Effective Leadership Programme. The Design Studio was created to design leadership development with our colleagues, not for them, starting with the real experiences and challenges leaders face every day. It gives colleagues a voice in shaping what they need to lead well, and what they need from their own leaders, so that Leading Leeds Essentials is practical, relevant and rooted in the reality of working at LTHT.

The scale and breadth of the invitation are important: the programme is being shaped with colleagues who understand the realities of leading and being led across clinical and corporate settings.

The programme will connect the Leeds Way, NHS leadership expectations, inclusion, the new LTHT psychological safety framework (Listen, Learn and Improve) and NHS staff standards. Co-creation strengthens credibility and usability, while the future assurance model will focus on application and colleague experience rather than attendance alone. The programme will launch in January 2027.

Education, learning, connection and the 'Leeds Way Inclusion Calendar'

The Leeds Way Inclusion Calendar provides a year round rhythm for learning, reflection and social connection. It uses awareness events and shared activities as opportunities to seek to understand different lived experiences, build relationships and create safer conversations. The approach

intentionally combines education with participation so that inclusion is experienced as part of organisational life rather than a separate specialist programme. Board members will attend and support each Leeds Way event.

During the year, we have also reviewed and strengthened the role of the Learning, Education and Training Committee (LETC), recognising the important contribution that education, development and learning make to colleague experience, belonging and organisational culture. The proposed model retains LETC as an inclusive, cross professional community while giving it clearer authority, sharper priorities and a stronger assurance role, including clearer accountability at CSU and professional-group level. LETC will increasingly use a structured assurance framework to connect learning and development priorities with established improvement conversations and provide a clearer route for escalation and assurance to the People Committee. This strengthens our ability to move beyond providing learning opportunities to understanding their quality, reach and impact across our workforce.

Board engagement and visible sponsorship

Board engagement has shifted towards how we ensure the views and experiences of our diverse workforce are represented and heard at the most senior level.

At the Board development day (23 October 2026), colleague network chairs and Executive Sponsors were invited to share the impact of networks, discuss where sponsorship adds value and identify where stronger organisational support is needed. This gave the Board direct access to colleague voice and strengthened the connection between lived experience, Executive sponsorship and governance.

The Board also considered the new approach to Freedom to Speak Up, reinforcing a model that prioritises patient safety, care and quality, supports early resolution where appropriate and maintains clear routes for concerns that require independent or formal escalation.

Board members each have an inclusion objective within their appraisal and will attend at least one Leeds Way Inclusion event.

Colleague led action: Fair Chance

Fair Chance originated from BME Network colleagues and reflects a commitment to focus on enabling our colleagues to thrive at grass-roots level. The initiative is designed to make progression, opportunity and the realities of career development more transparent, while creating practical support and honest dialogue. Its importance is both the intervention itself and the way it was developed: an idea generated through colleague voice has been recognised and progressed as part of organisational improvement.

Inclusion from day one

The new Corporate Induction has strengthened its focus on inclusion and belonging so that new colleagues encounter the Trust's expectations from the outset. The programme connects the Leeds Way values, belonging, speaking up, colleague networks and shared responsibility for an inclusive workplace. This makes inclusion part of the LTHT welcome from day one, setting clear expectations about our culture, values and commitment to belonging.

De-bias our processes

Our approach is to address bias at three levels: processes, behaviour and targeted action. This is important because awareness training alone will not change unequal outcomes.

- De-bias processes: review recruitment, people policies, formal decision points and workplace-adjustment routes to remove barriers and increase consistency. The new recruitment system provides greater consistency and transparency by enabling blind shortlisting, removing late paper applications and ensuring shortlisting decisions are based solely on the content of each application.
- Embed conscious inclusion: build the ability of leaders and managers to recognise assumptions, listen well, challenge respectfully and make fair decisions in everyday work. The Leading Leeds mandatory programme will include this learning.
- Take positive action: intervene deliberately where WRES, WDES, Staff Survey data or lived experience identifies unequal access, experience or outcomes. From November/December 2026, formal disciplinary and capability cases involving priority groups will be subject to structured review, enabling case level learning to feed back into management practice, decision making and policy. We will also make inequalities and progress more visible through data. Every CSU will have a Staff Survey dashboard, broken down by People Promise element, alongside a high-impact action plan that includes a specific focus on inclusion and belonging. Bringing this together with workforce profile and behavioural impact data will provide clearer Trust and CSU level insight, enabling leaders to identify areas of concern, take targeted action and assess whether interventions are improving colleague experience and reducing unequal outcomes.

Progress since the ENEI review

The ENEI review (Appendix 1) was completed over 16 days in June and July 2025 through a desktop review of more than 850 files and webpages. ENEI recognised that LTHT met mandated requirements and had a wide range of activity but concluded that the overall approach appeared more compliance led than culture led, with inconsistent local application and limited evidence of impact. The last 12 months have therefore focused on the foundations ENEI identified as necessary for a more authentic, person centred approach.

The Inclusion and Belonging priorities were implemented as a result of the ENEI report. The ten Trust priorities create the delivery spine for the improvement programme. Five are recorded as complete and five remain in progress. The next step is to embed and strengthen the outcome measures so the Board can see whether practice and experience are changing.

2b Evidence of measurable progress

Assurance assessment

Assurance area	Progress over the last 12 months	Why this matters / emerging difference
Leadership and governance	Board and Executive inclusion objectives; Board development with network chairs and Executive Sponsors; refreshed governance and clearer senior ownership.	Inclusion is visible in appraisal, governance and direct Board dialogue rather than being held only by a central EDI function.
Colleague voice and local action	One combined local champion model is bringing Inclusion and FTSU champions together; a joint event introduced the new focus, shared learning and clarified local responsibilities.	Colleagues have a simpler, more responsive route for support, listening, signposting and escalation, with stronger local ownership.
Values and belonging	The Leeds Way values were launched through engagement including the One Team World Cup. Three further events will focus on Kind, Responsible, and Open and Honest.	The values are being made practical and social, creating shared experiences across roles, professions, generations and backgrounds.
Leadership capability	Leadership Conference focus on belonging and multigenerational engagement; 220 colleagues invited to a Design Studio to co-create the Compassionate and Effective Leadership Programme.	Leadership development is grounded in colleague experience and is building a consistent management standard rather than a stand-alone training offer.
Fairness and progression	Multigenerational reverse mentoring launched; Fair Chance developed from a BME Network idea to begin progression support at grass-roots level.	Colleague ideas are becoming practical interventions that widen understanding, connection and access to development.
Organisational reach	Inclusion and belonging strengthened in Corporate Induction; Leeds Way Inclusion Calendar combines learning with social engagement.	Expectations are introduced from the outset and reinforced throughout the year through accessible opportunities to learn and connect.

Key People Metrics

Indicator	Position	Assurance interpretation
BME workforce representation	Increased from 29.50% in 2024 to 32.34% in 2026; Bands 8c to	Representation is improving, including at senior levels,

	VSM increased from 3.5% to 9.09%.	although recruitment and progression gaps remain.
Recorded disability representation	Increased from 4.12% to 5.80%; unknown/NULL disability status reduced by 5.37 percentage points.	Improved recording provides a more reliable evidence base, but disability experience and adjustment outcomes remain priorities.
Disabled Board representation	Reached 10.53%.	Board representation has strengthened.
Gender pay gap	Reduced from 16% to 15%.	Direction of travel is positive, with further action required to sustain improvement.
Development and co-creation	1,200 colleagues accessed inclusion and belonging development; approximately 2,000 contributions informed strategy, values and behaviours.	Participation is substantial and colleague voice is increasingly shaping organisational choices.

Where further progress is required

There are continuing gaps shown through WRES, WDES and colleague experience. Transparent reporting is central to credibility.

- White applicants remain 1.97 times more likely to be appointed from shortlist than BME applicants.
- BME colleagues remain 1.74 times more likely to enter formal disciplinary processes, and report lower equality of career opportunity.
- Non-disabled applicants remain 1.29 times more likely to be appointed, while disabled colleagues are 2.15 times more likely to enter formal capability processes.
- The proportion of disabled colleagues reporting adequate reasonable adjustments fell from 74.97% to 70.82%.
- Bullying, harassment, fair access to development and inconsistent local application continue to require focused action and assurance.

WRES/WDES SMART action plans have been developed and will be considered at the People Committee meeting on 10 December 2026.

The immediate challenge is therefore not to add more disconnected initiatives. It is to ensure that the new leadership, champions, colleague networks, induction and engagement infrastructure changes the quality and consistency of everyday decisions.

2c Next phase: converting momentum into sustained impact

Priority for 2026/27	Specific next step	Board assurance measure
Embed the combined champion model	Complete role definition, development and local deployment; establish feedback and escalation routes.	Coverage, training, champion maturity, themes identified, local resolution and appropriate escalation.
Deliver the three values events	Use Kind, Responsible, and Open and Honest events to connect engagement with practical behaviours and local commitments.	Participation, breadth of reach, qualitative learning and actions taken by teams.
Launch compassionate and effective leadership	Complete co-design, test the offer and phase mandatory implementation for managers.	Participation, application evidence, manager confidence, Staff Survey and PIF measures.
Strengthen multigenerational reverse mentoring	Match participants, prepare mentors and mentees, and capture reciprocal learning and agreed actions.	Completion, quality of relationships, leadership actions and participant learning.
Develop Fair Chance transparently	Co-design scope with BME Network colleagues, publish the offer and evaluate access and outcomes.	Participation by band/CSU, development outcomes, progression insight and colleague feedback.
Improve local data-led action	Complete Trust and CSU dashboards and require focused improvement action where inequalities persist.	Recruitment and formal-process ratios, adjustment experience, Staff Survey gaps and CSU action quality.
Evaluate reach and impact	Introduce proportionate evaluation for events, learning, networks, champions and communications.	Who was reached, what changed, what was learned and what will be stopped, adapted or scaled.

2d Our Framework for Sustained Change

LTHT have used the Kandola framework as a practical assurance lens rather than as a standalone initiative. It asks whether the organisation has acknowledged the problem, set a clear vision, demonstrated commitment from the top, provided capacity and resources, translated intent into an action plan, and defined measures of success.

Kandola lens	LTHT evidence	Assurance judgement
Acknowledge the problem	WRES, WDES, Staff Survey, workforce data and colleague voice explicitly identify unequal outcomes, including recruitment, formal processes, harassment, adjustments and career experience.	Improving: problems are visible and reported, not minimised.
Vision	The shared ambition is a great place to work and a great place to receive care, supported by a strategy commitment to make LTHT a brilliant place to work.	Strong: inclusion is connected to organisational purpose, people and patient care.
Commitment from the top	Board and Executive inclusion objectives are embedded in appraisal; Board members support Leeds Way inclusion activity; governance provides oversight.	Strong and increasingly formalised.
Resources and capacity	The Director of Organisational Development and Inclusion role brings OD, leadership and inclusion together to drive implementation, supported by OD business partnering, networks, champions and wider People Function ownership.	Improving: capacity is clearer and delivery is shared.
Action plan	Ten Trust priorities are integrated with WRES and WDES actions.	Improving: priorities are consolidated into one improvement approach.
Measures of success	KPIs include representation, recruitment and formal-process ratios, reasonable-adjustment experience, leadership questions, dashboard data and local metrics.	Improving: stronger outcome measures are now being built into governance.

3. Financial Implications

There are no new financial commitments arising directly from this report. Delivery will be supported through existing People, leadership, inclusion and organisational development resources and programmes. Any additional resource requirements identified as the work develops will be considered through the Trust's usual planning and governance arrangements.

4. Risk

Workforce retention and morale remains a risk (Cautious).

Risk	Control
High activity is mistaken for impact	Report trend data, colleague experience and local variation.

Initiatives become fragmented or compete for attention	Maintain one narrative linking the Leeds Way, Staff Standards, leadership, belonging, speaking up and people improvement.
Local adoption remains inconsistent	Set minimum expectations, provide practical support and use CSU data and self-assessment to identify variation.
Engagement reaches the same colleagues repeatedly	OD Business Partners will report periodically regarding consistency of approach, share best practice and learn from one another
Leadership credibility is weakened by limited follow through	Visible sponsorship, publish progress and transparent reporting

5. Communication and Involvement

Communication and engagement have been central to the work, with a deliberate shift from informing colleagues to involving them in shaping change. Champions, colleague networks, Executive Sponsors and colleagues across LTHT have contributed through co design, Board engagement, reverse mentoring, values events and initiatives such as Fair Chance. The Leeds Way Inclusion Calendar and Corporate Induction provide further opportunities to learn, connect and contribute. Going forward, communications will focus on what colleagues have told us, what we have done and the difference it is making, using a range of channels to reach colleagues across the Trust.

6. Impact on Equality and Health Inequalities

The programme aims to improve fairness, belonging, psychological safety and access to opportunity, with action targeted at inequalities identified through WRES, WDES, Staff Survey data and colleague experience. This includes fairer recruitment and progression, reasonable adjustments, inclusive leadership, speaking up and greater consistency in people processes. Colleague networks, champions and lived experience will continue to shape the work. A more inclusive and supported workforce also strengthens our ability to deliver safe, equitable care for Leeds' diverse communities.

7. Publication Under Freedom of Information Act

This document is accessible in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

8. Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

- Note the programme of work delivered over the last 12 months and the shift from fragmented activity towards a connected organisational improvement approach.
- Recognise the progress made against the ENEI findings, while noting that consistent CSU level action and measurable colleague outcomes remain the principal tests of success.
- Support the next phase of delivery, including the combined local champion model, Leeds Way values events, the new approach to Freedom to Speak Up, the Compassionate and Effective Leadership Programme, multigenerational reverse mentoring and Fair Chance Career Progression Programme.
- Receive quarterly assurance focused on reach, quality, local variation and outcome change, including WRES, WDES, Staff Survey and formal people-process measures.

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Appendix 1 ENEI Review

Appendix 2 Inclusion and Priority Progress Update

Appendix 3 Inclusion and Belonging Framework

Appendix 1

ENEI Review

ENEI finding	Progress since publication	Current assurance / remaining work
Compliance rather than cultural change	One integrated narrative now links belonging, Leeds Way values, leadership expectations, colleague voice and measurable improvement.	Direction is clearer and more visible. Outcome measures now need to show consistent change at CSU level.
Fragmented champion and support routes	FTSU and Inclusion Champions are being merged into one responsive local champion model; champions have been brought together around the new focus.	Simpler local infrastructure is in place. Training, role clarity and maturity measures must now be embedded.
Limited evidence of visible leadership and variable sponsorship	Board and Executive objectives are in appraisal; Board development included network chairs and Executive Sponsors.	Senior accountability and direct colleague voice have strengthened. Sponsor expectations and annual impact review should remain explicit.
Inconsistent inclusive leadership behaviours	Compassionate and Effective Leadership Programme is being co-created through a Design Studio invitation to 220 colleagues to support the design and build.	A consistent management standard is being developed. Impact must be tracked through application, Staff Survey and people metrics.

Data available but not consistently used locally	WRES/WDES analysis, improving data quality and a developing dashboard are creating clearer Trust and CSU insight.	Trust-level insight is stronger. The priority remains disciplined CSU action and evidence that gaps are narrowing.
Communication difficult to find and overly policy-led	Leeds Way Inclusion Calendar, values events, Corporate Induction and a simpler belonging narrative provide more accessible routes to engage.	Reach and visibility have improved. Evaluation should test who is reached, what is learned and what changes.
Networks and allyship need clearer support and impact	Network Chairs Collaborative, Board engagement and colleague-led initiatives such as Fair Chance strengthen the route from voice to action.	Networks have greater connection to governance. Consistent capacity, sponsorship and impact reporting remains important.