Meeting of Equalities Network

Wednesday 20th September 2017, County Hall, Durham

Attendees

Durham County Council: Claire Holt (Chair) and Mary Gallagher
Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service: Michelle Robson
Cleveland Fire and Rescue Service: Carly Poole
Gateshead Council: Jane Bench
Darlington Borough Council: David Sharp
Northumberland Healthcare Trust/CC: Keith Thompson
Sunderland City Council: Kirsty McNally
EHRC: Mark Wright
North Tyneside Council: Anne Foreman
Middlesbrough Council: Barbara Vallance
Stockton Council: Satnam Singh
Hartlepool Borough Council: Catherine Grimwood

1. **Welcome, introductions and apologies for absence**

Apologies from: Pip Schofield, Middlesbrough Council and Julie Young South Tyneside Council.

2. **Previous minutes and matters arising**

Nothing to report.

3. **Identity based bullying in schools – Mark Wright EHRC**

Mark Wright is the education policy lead for the EHRC and is currently looking at the issues of identity based bullying in schools and would like to tap into good practice in order to influence policy makers. The EHRC are looking to add value as although there is currently a lot of guidance on this subject there is very little focus on practical actions that schools have taken to address the problem. The EHRC are checking that schools are meeting their duties and listening to the issues raised – schools are looking for peer-to-peer influencing. The EHRC are looking to produce case studies for education providers (schools) – a web based resource on their web site later in year. They have gone out to tender for a short animated video for anti-bully week in Nov – especially looking at the lasting detrimental impact of bullying both physical and mental and how this can have a lifelong impact, for example, in employment opportunities.

Collecting data on bullying is still at schools' discretion in England and Wales although Scotland has just agreed to a legislative duty on this. It is difficult for schools to monitor if not collecting information. All collected data requires effective analysis.

Questions/Discussion:

Definition of prejudice based incident/bullying would be helpful – EHRC will provide more guidance on the difference between prejudice and bullying.

This policy work is welcomed support for schools to get started in monitoring and dealing with the issues. Any feedback from the EHRC on hate incident policies for schools would be welcome. Highlighted that there is some shocking data in the Stonewall school report. Schools need to encompass dealing with parents/carers e.g. transitioning children and young people, as part of their approach.

<mark>Action for all:</mark> Please send any positive examples of dealing with identity based bullying in schools to: Mark.Wright@equalityhumanrights.com

4. Mandatory Gender Pay Gap Reporting – Mary Gallagher, Durham CC

Mary provided an overview of Durham CC mandatory gender pay gap data: Mean hourly rate is 3.4% lower and the median hourly rate is 4.3% lower for women than men. A slight improvement is expected for the next reporting year. Some recent positives include a 50/50 gender split at director and head of service level however this is still not a reflection of the overall workforce profile where 64% of staff are female. Work life balance initiatives are helping to narrow the gap and it is encouraging to see a steady increase in men taking greater advantage of such initiatives. Durham are currently preparing the narrative prior to submitting data on the government portal. Currently 4 councils have published their data.

Questions/Discussion:

Most said they expect to harmonise publication of their GPG data with publication of PSED data. Some already disclose pay gap data within their published workforce data. Linking PSED objectives to GPG would provide a focus for organisations.

Mark sent the following EHRC information:

Our mind the pay gaps web page sets out a series of resources in relation to gender, race and disability pay gaps. These include our strategy, a video animation, infographics and research on each of the pay gaps. This might be helpful in shaping narratives and also informing conversations with internal colleagues.

5. Equality training, employee and elected members – Claire Holt, Durham CC

Claire explained that Durham use learning nexus online equality training. There has been a reduction overall in the amount of training offered and Durham do not currently provide face to face equality training. The online training is not ideal. Durham's elected members have recently received face to face equality training and a few have also undertaken the e-learning modules available to staff. Member training has focussed on behaviours and the importance of the PSED in decision making.

Questions/Discussion:

Stockton delivers in-house understanding communities training for all members, staff receive in-house induction training at a high level. DDFire deliver unconscious bias training sourced via the apprenticeship levy through Equality North East. They aim to specialise a few staff in order to roll out on a wider scale. EHRC use the civil service online training.

Northumberland use learning pool which provides a suite of short videos which is useful as a reaction to something where specific teams require training. North Tyneside make equality training mandatory with an opportunity to book on face to face where required. Management training is face to face as is their member training as sourced through Ioda. Focusing on British values was useful to members with scenario based training linked to workplace behaviours for staff.

Gateshead said EIA training is embedded in managers training. Community safety – hate crime awareness sessions are delivered in conjunction with partners. Middlesbrough are developing resources in-house which they are happy to share, also found free online ACAS courses very useful as baseline training although face to face is still better. Hartlepool use Orange box training. Darlington said e-learning on their Equalities Policy is mandatory and they currently have a 92% completion rate. Where there are specific issues external trainers are used and this is rolled out as a train the trainer.

6. Equality Governance

Durham no longer have equality steering groups etc. There is a portfolio holder (Cabinet member) but no specific staff groups. From a risk perspective there is a tight process around financial planning and equality impact assessment of this. Feedback sought on how other organisations manage equality governance.

Questions/Discussion:

North Tyneside have a group chaired by a senior manager predominately used for coordinating the PSED review. Northumberland still have a steering group but find it difficult to get buy in, there is a union rep on the group. Staff need to better understand equality, its importance in decision making and understanding published PSED. Challenge from the EHRC towards the public sector could help to raise awareness of the importance of equality and shift priorities and gain a better focus on equality issues within organisations.

Sunderland have some employee networks. Gateshead have one overarching employee group. Use of twitter and blogs can help. UNISON keen on a disability staff network. Staff survey – when disseminating information to networks someone at hand from HR helps to resolve queries and understand issues first hand.

Mark (EHRC) said the Government are due to publish the race disparity audit – housing, crime etc. Making information accessible – all publically available data in one place – demonstrating gaps/outcomes. Will be published this autumn by the Cabinet office – gov.uk. Where possible data will be available at a local level. It should prove useful in providing context and comparisons.

7. **Stonewall and Staff Networks – Durham CC and Keith Thompson, Northumberland CC**

Durham CC propose to work with Stonewall to improve inclusivity for LGB & T people and sought discussion on experiences of the network on working with Stonewall.

Northumberland have being doing it for several years – you can manipulate how you appear in the index depending on how you answer questions. Can become too focussed on LGBT at the expense of other characteristics. Must have a 12 months comms plan. Board level info/buy in – Stonewall now accept Cabinet as board level for councils. Having a look at current questions (cycle of 3 years for framework/questions) is helpful in preparing submission. Have found there were a lot of positive comments for organisations working with Stonewall via social media. Some criticism from local groups where there is not a 100% following for Stonewall. It is instrumental to get steer/support from Stonewall reps. Education champion route is cheaper and helpful – something to consider.

Middlesbrough – can be done but needs a lot of resource. Engagement tips from local groups were helpful. Sunderland – justifying cost – need to emphasise that lessons learnt will be shared and used across other protected groups.

8. **AOB**

Asylum seekers and access to health care services (EHRC):

<mark>Action for all:</mark> Suzanne Devlin (EHRC) would be really interested to hear from people about some of the problems you are encountering in your area (re: above), as well as some of the initiatives that are making a positive difference. Suzanne's focus this year is access to mental health care but this is likely to broaden next year. Suzanne's email is suzanne.devlin@equalityhumanrights.com if you would like to learn more.

Current activity/events:

Tees Valley group will share details of activity via NEREO network - World mental health day. All members encouraged to share via NEREO network.

Staff surveys:

HSE package on stress and wellbeing – also used for staff surveys. HIVE – staff survey, 2 questions at a time. <mark>Action for all:</mark> Please send any good examples of staff survey questions to the network.

Virtual Equality Network:

<mark>Action for all:</mark> Share any news, events, questions etc. with Maureen O'Keefe at: mokeefe@nereo.gov.uk for wider circulation to the network.

Date of next meeting – Spring 2018 – to be held at Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue HQ, Belmont, Durham – details to follow via NEREO