

Meeting of Chairs of Equality Staff Networks (via Teams)

Tuesday 13 September 2022 (10.00am)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Attending:

Stockton Council	Roisin McKenzie, Ian Tranter and Kimberley Edwards
Sunderland Council	Jane Hibberd
Together for Children	Lynn Stoneley (Chair)
Newcastle City Council	Lee Cawkwell (left early)
South Tyneside Council	Susan Clennell
Middlesbrough Council	Saadia Azam
North Tyneside Council	Jessica Madden and Debbie Lydon
Hartlepool Council	Catherine Grimwood (Note taker)
Durham CC	Mark Colman, Michael Shannon and Joanne Veitch
Cleveland Fire	Katie Love

Apologies:

Stockton Council	Yvonne Cheung
Newcastle City Council	Sarah Carter and Louise Crosby
Durham CC	Claire Holt
NEREO	Mick Brodie
Newcastle City Council	Peter Scott
NHCT	Patrick Price
Together for Children	Millie Roberts
Northumberland CC	Victoria Perkins
Redcar & Cleveland BC	Jane Garnett

2. Minutes & Actions – last meeting : 12 July 2022 (attached)

Cleveland Fire Women's Network – Alison Farndale shared their powerpoint presentation on women's experience in the workplace. CG has checked where it is and shared with the group in MS Teams. Katie Love happy to answer questions on this work as she wrote the presentation and has been involved in delivering it.

Stockton Borough Council – to share information about the culture panel where candidates receive cultural interviews alongside skills interviews. Ian Tranter and Roisin McKenzie provided a brief outline of the involvement of staff forums in the recruitment process for a new Managing Director and Corporate Director. Predominantly, the culture panel is used where there are member appointment panels (senior appointments). For each interviewee there was an hour long discussion with members of the staff networks so that they could get a feel for their

culture and values and whether these individuals were the right fit for the organisation. Interestingly every candidate gave a different response. The group then fed their views into the member appointment panel. This approach is part of the Shaping a brighter future – cultural change programme. A new Managing Director Mike Green was appointed and starts in November.

Jessica Madden outlined that they have something similar in North Tyneside where engagement posts and social workers get interviewed by the youth council and there are resident panel interviews for other engagement posts.

Menopause resources - Jessica Madden confirmed that she has shared North Tyneside's menopause resources.

ICS training for network chairs – Jessica Madden noted that she had spoken to them and that this training was on the table but that they were waiting for the new lead officer to start in post.

Patrick Price's outstanding actions - Jessica Madden has spoken to Victoria Perkins in Northumberland about these and was told that there were some new people in post who should be able to update at the next meeting.

Jane Garnett to circulate slides from the Daisy Chain training – Update: still outstanding, Jane to follow up.

3. General information sharing / networking

Stockton – Ian Tranter / Roisin McKenzie – Show racism the red card activity has been planned and is ready to deliver with the programme developed focussing on health and wellbeing and working with competitive sports. Event planned for October 21st and all the Forums are contributing towards it. There has been good general employee reaction to it especially the rounders competition which has gotten quite competitive. The Disabilities Forum are in the final stages of preparing their submission for their re-accreditation of Disability Confident Leader status. Additional work has been undertaken in terms of their flexible working project and they are working through building it into normal everyday activity. The equality forums are pivotal in ensuring the new approach (New administrative building location, hybrid model preparation) meets the culture of organisation and their equality requirements. BME Staff Forum have been taking the opportunity to engage senior managers during the senior management review. Directors are being invited to the BME Staff Forum to hear about role of the Forum and what they can offer.

North Tyneside – Debbie Lydon – Noted that tea and talks have been arranged for each network group with an external speaker invited into that meeting to offer a different perspective and undertake a Q&A session. Looking to tie these activities into wider events going forward taking into consideration the equality calendar. A health and wellbeing survey has been undertaken with responses direct from the groups and this is now moving on to action. Networks are involved in the review of guidance policies and procedures (e.g. carers policy including carers leave) and their first-hand experience has fed into the new policies/approaches.

South Tyneside – Susan Clennell – South Tyneside are just starting their EDI journey and have established an EDI collab group (includes Cllrs) and networks are due to commence. Focus is on enabling staff to bring their authentic self to work. Looking at menopause policy and carer's policy. Currently undertaking an EDI staff survey to get robust data about their workforce and how it compares to their community so that they can try to increase unrepresented groups in the workforce and make sure the door is open to everyone. Susan Clennell noted that a recruitment, selection, retention group had been pulled together and there was a NEREO led event being held at Durham on Friday.

Hartlepool – Catherine Grimwood – Noted that the new staff equality network as agreed before the summer by the Corporate Management Team was getting ready to launch in October. Those staff who have previously expressed an interest in getting involved have been approached and most are still keen to be involved.

Cleveland Fire – Katie Love – Outlined that the female workplace experience sessions were still taking place with every department/station to be covered. The presentation talks through issues that females have faced on the job and about respecting people in the workplace. There has been really positive feedback on the sessions and younger members of staff recognised the behaviours identified. Anyone who wants further information or has any queries can contact Katie by email to klove@clevelandfire.gov.uk. It was noted that world menopause day was to be marked by the Brigade with a coffee and chat session on 18th October. The plan is to have staff talking about living with the menopause and sharing their personal experiences. Katie Love noted that the Brigade were launching a recruitment drive in December and that in the run up they were planning some positive action days as they are struggling to recruit from network groups (women, BME). They will be holding a series of open days in October / November where people can have a go at the fitness tests. It was noted that those from the under-represented groups who do come forward aren't passing the physical tests. Ruth Anderson to share details of sessions so that the LA's in the Brigade area can promote the events. Katie Love also requested that if anyone had anything on menopause (key facts / figures etc) could they please send it through to her to help her prepare for the menopause day event. Michael Shannon advised that he would ask his colleagues who should be able to share some information.

Durham – Michael Shannon / Mark Colman – LGBT network have a focus on allyship and recently had representatives from Surrey County Council attend for a peer learning session. Durham County Council staff across the organisation had an increased involvement at Durham Pride event this year. This was good for residents to see but also gave them an opportunity to promote the Council as an employer. The Council continue to work with stonewall for training. All of the network chairs met with the extended management team and are attempting to get champions for the networks. Networks are starting to do vlogs and posters for those not online etc. The disability network are using their wider networks in the organisation to identify ways in which existing processes could be utilised for staff rather than reinventing the wheel for example access to work and direct payment / day care package. They are also working with digital services colleagues about accessibility issues and are delivering some e-learning on accessibility across the council. They are also building a virtual training session on general neurodiversity

session and are looking ahead at having a reduced budget and coming up with a plan for future. They are looking to introduce a mandatory session for all managers on what does reasonable adjustment look like including examples of what is already in place for others in the Council. The aim is to ensure that managers understand what they can do and what they have to do. The network are also working to develop a bookshelf of short resources which link to more detailed information and sketch out a set of e-learning. They want staff to think about the type of people they may encounter and get some background learning in about different disabilities etc.

Sunderland – Jane Hibberd – Confirmed that they had recruited to their EDI policy lead role and that the focus was still on health and wellbeing and the reviewing of a number of policies and practice. They are revisiting some of their campaigns and are coming together more corporately about the approach and the agenda. Additional staff are being recruited as wellbeing mentors and a health and wellbeing survey is being put out. Trying to engage with staff without access to email is difficult and they have identified inequalities in the workforce due to access and literacy issues. Recognise that policies need to be accessible for all workforce and community and therefore need to be as simple as possible for people. A number of policies are under review with the staff network involved including breastfeeding and family friendly.

Middlesbrough – Saadia Azam – Created a diversity calendar with ICT which is integrated into outlook diaries for staff with explanation of each entry. Recently completed the inclusive employers' accreditation submission with the outcome due at the end of this month. The report will identify their strengths and weaknesses and cost £2,500 to do. Saadia Azam will share the report. Recently the Council has signed a Race at Work charter which has 7 principles and this was led by the Race, Religion and Belief group (formerly BAME). Previously, none of networks had support from senior management but now each Director sits on a network to provide sponsorship from the top. They now have a £15,000 a year budget for events etc. In February the Council launched a carer's passport which provides an in-house digital tool to help employees open a conversation with their managers about their caring responsibilities and the support they need. They are planning to mark National Inclusion week (26th September) and are looking at allyship. Saadia Azam is currently creating a cultural diversity awareness training session covering the major religions of the world. An inclusive language guide is also being developed. In recognition that senior management in Middlesbrough is mainly male there are also plans for career progression talks with inspirational / motivational speakers sharing their experience and giving tips. Middlesbrough have just launched a mentoring programme and they'll be using the event to promote this scheme. Katie Love noted that there was lots of research out there about why women are not going for promotion and identified that it was a problem in the Fire Service too.

Together for Children – Lynn Stoneley – Have introduced menopause ambassadors providing a safe space for staff to share and get information. They have Black history month events planned. In terms of accessibility there is lots of work happening that is linking in with the health and wellbeing agenda including world mental health day as there is lots of crossover. They are doing an EDI survey update to understand their workforce. Working with HR, similar to Mark in Durham, to

provide information to managers as recognise that they can't be experts at everything. Continue to look at policies and network membership is growing. Now have an hour long meeting for new starters on networks etc. and preparing presentation to the autumn session.

4. Any Other Business

No other business raised.

5. Date of Next Meeting - TBC

Agreed the following:

Chair for next meeting – Saadia Azam

Note taker – Susan Clennell