

Minutes NEREO Equalities Network

Tuesday 30 January 2024 - Teams meeting (virtual)

Attendees

Durham CC	Claire Holt
	Mary Gallagher
Hartlepool Council	Catherine Grimwood
Gateshead Council	Rachel Mason, Stephanie McGuiggan
South Tyneside Council	Susan Clennell, Aisling Crane
Together for Children, Sunderland	Ola Tony-Obot
North Tyneside Council	Anne Foreman, Lesley Plant
Sunderland City Council	Gail D'Arcy
Northeast and North Cumbria ICB	Hamid Motraghi
Northumberland CC	Julie Stewart

Apologies

Ruth Anderson	Cleveland FRS
Joanne Sanderson	Durham & Darlington FRS
Louise Deer	Stockton-on-Tees Council
Estelle White	Northumberland CC
Louise Crosby	Newcastle City Council
Saadia Azam	Middlesbrough Council
Holly Bainbridge	South Tyneside Council

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Attendee introductions.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on Tuesday 21 November 2024

Previous minutes agreed.

3. Matters Arising from Minutes

Ola Tony-Obot mentioned that she had attended the Inclusion by Default conference on Thursday 25 January at Kingston Park. The main message is that inclusion is the responsibility of everyone and, in the region, we need to support one another as we are stronger collectively.

4. Reasonable Adjustments

Susan Clennell talked about South Tyneside's reasonable adjustment policy. Also the jobs and careers events they hold targeted at people with disabilities. Steph McGuiggan offered to share, via Maureen O'Keefe, some examples of positive action which Northumbria Police use. Durham will upload their reasonable adjustment passport onto the shared Teams site.

North Tyneside also have a reasonable adjustment passport. They also have a fund to put adjustments in place before access to work (A2W) claims are agreed as these can take a very long time. There is a government website which is helpful in providing information on a range of disabilities and health conditions as it is not possible to refer to all conditions and possible adjustments within a policy. The website is:

[Support with employee health and disability – GOV.UK \(www.dwp.gov.uk\)](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)

Advice and support for employing people with disabilities is available here:

[Employing disabled people and people with health conditions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Durham is currently working with their staff disability network to set up a buddy system open to any disabled employee, but in particular new employees, who may need additional support in the workplace including support in navigating the access to work process. Ola Tony-Obot advised that at Sunderland they have had issues with A2W recommendations on IT solutions being incompatible with their systems, e.g. in terms of security. There was a discussion on how it is helpful to work with IT support services and staff currently using accessible IT solutions to understand what already works to be able to quickly replicate and deploy support where appropriate.

5. Public Sector Equality Duty Guidance from Government

Rachel Mason discussed the refreshed PSED non-statutory guidance published on 18 December:

[Public Sector Equality Duty: guidance for public authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

The update mainly involves update to terminology, e.g. 'single sex' has changed to 'women only'. Not using 'gender' and 'gender identity', and guidance to consider individuals and not groups of protected characteristics. There was a discussion on other changes such as not 'gold plating' compliance or imposing measures on private sector, however, we would expect a level of compliance based on EDI requirements as part of agreements and contracts with partners and/or suppliers.

North Tyneside noted that they are clear in the EIA guidance on 'non-legal' protected characteristics such as carers and socio-economic status.

It is noted that this guidance is non-statutory as it is concerning that some of the changes may not be in line with our legal duties or present case law interpretation. Gateshead will seek comment on the changes from LGA and CIPD.

Hamid Motraghi asked if there is any collaboration with the HR/Recruitment and Selection group. Regular agenda item to be added on Work of the Recruitment and Selection group in order to provide an update on the work of this group.

The best way to share information is to upload onto the shared NEREO Teams site where we have several resources such examples of our EIA templates, also contact NEREO who will email out to contact lists.

6. Any Other Business

None.

7. Regional updates

- Gateshead are currently consulting on their EDI policy.
- North Tyneside – improvement grant spend.

8. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 26 March 2024, 1.30pm, MS Teams