

Equalities Network Meeting - Minutes

Tuesday 12 September 2023 - Teams meeting (virtual)

Attendees

Durham CC	Claire Holt
	Mary Gallagher
Hartlepool Council	Catherine Grimwood
North Tyneside Council	Anne Foreman
Gateshead Council	Rachel Mason
South Tyneside Council	Susan Clennell
Bethany Wake	NEPO

1. **Welcome and apologies for absence**

Attendee introductions.

2. **Minutes of previous meeting**

Previous minutes agreed.

3. **Matters arising from minutes**

No actions from previous meeting.

4. **BSL and Interpreting – Beth Wake, NEPO**

Beth supports all local authorities in the region. NEPO deal with over 70 solutions. Beth is responsible for BSL, Interpretation, agency staff, legal, executive recruitment and EDI training. This involves monitoring and managing contracts. Services procured are both at a regional and nationwide level, allowing a high quality interpretation service. BSL is a separate lot, as different service users and needs. Translation has 27 suppliers, offering 131 languages. BSL has 15 suppliers, offering face-to-face, video link, and specialist services.

They work closely with NUBSLI (National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters) to ensure transparency with fee structures and pricing.

Access for new suppliers is open all the time for interpreters, for BSL opens every year.

The supplier list was recently extended until May 2025, with pricing fixed for both.

They have also recently produced a BSL Best Practice Guide (see attached). They would be interested in feedback, comments on this from users.

There have been difficulties experienced by some services in securing face-to-face appointments.

5. Regional Update / A.O.B

Discussion took place in relation to key areas of work by each authority.

North Tyneside- agreement from Deputy Mayor to formally adopt socio-economic duty. Also launching new Dignity at Work policy.

Action: Anne to share Dignity at Work policy once published.

Hartlepool – working on Respect campaign.

South Tyneside – working on development of membership of staff networks, especially Armed Forces and Race Equality group. South Tyneside also developed a specific Reasonable Adjustment policy.

Action: Mary to send contact details of Durham Armed Forces main contact.

6. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 21 November 2023, 1.30pm – MS Teams - NEREO associate, Lucy Ord, attending to talk about career empowerment programme for minorities staff.