

Meeting of Equalities Network (Virtual)

Tuesday 14 July 2020

Attendees

Durham County Council – Claire Holt (Chair), Mary Gallagher
Cleveland FRS – Ruth Anderson
Hartlepool Borough Council – Catherine Grimwood
Darlington Borough Council – Eleanor Walker
Gateshead Council – Rachel Mason
Durham FRS - Sarah Litt
Middlesbrough Council – Rebecca Thompson
Sunderland City Council - Kirsty McNally
Hartlepool Council - Catherine Grimwood

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

North Tyneside – Anne Foreman (catch up meeting 15 July)
Cleveland FRS - Bev Parker
Cleveland FRS - Ruth Anderson
Darlington – Helen Whiting
South Tyneside Council – Jen Sandy

Update on group membership:

Keith Thompson (Northumberland Council/Trust) will now be replaced by Patrick Price.
Satnam Singh has left Stockton Council

2. Minutes of the last meeting held on 22 October 2019

Minutes were agreed.

3. Matters arising

Outstanding actions from the previous meeting:

- a) Regional framework for translation and interpretation- presentation circulated after the meeting. Approval documents to be circulated to the group - to check this with Laura Kyle (although some members have already received this due to their involvement in the procurement process). Once we have received the documents to add them onto the NEREO Teams site.
- b) Integrated Care Scheme - Helen is the contact link between the groups. Continue for updates to be a standard item on our agenda. Helen to circulate baseline charter, guidance document and toolkit.
- c) Equality benchmarking – agenda item.
- d) LGA event - Ruth circulated presentation information.
- e) Equality monitoring – all authorities to add any useful documents into the NEREO Teams site.

4. Discussion re where other authorities are in developing/refreshing Equality Objectives – Rachel Mason, Gateshead Council

Rachel queried the approach other councils are taking in development of their equality objectives.

Darlington have their objectives in place until 2022, these are embedded within the work of the council, both staff and members understand these objectives.

Sunderland's objectives are in place until 2021, they have established one overall objective 'to use equality data and intelligence better' within this objective there are several actions associated. This also links in with their health objectives.

Within Durham County Council, objectives needed to be reviewed, these were linked to the refresh of the council plan and vision. The council plan will be in place until 2035, it contains three objectives linked to inclusive staff culture, improved employment opportunities for disabled people and build connected communities. Consultation with groups was carried out as part of the overall consultation as part of the Council plan.

In Hartlepool, equality objectives are within the council plan, which was agreed in March 2020. Consultation is now starting on the COVID recovery plan, as COVID has drawn out many new equality and diversity issues (elderly food and fuel poverty).

5. Equality Impact Assessments and Recovery Work – Claire Holt, Durham CC

Claire asked the approach councils were taking in relation to EIAs and recovery work. Due to the fast-paced nature of having to implement some process and systems, within Durham, EIAs were conducted on an ad-hoc basis. The following EIAs were carried out – Community Hubs, changes to pathways/cycle ways, furlough of some employees.

Gateshead carried out HR /Covid related EIAs. An EIA will also be conducted when seeking approval for the recovery plan.

Sunderland are currently developing the new City plan, which will have a health and social impact focus, this will help inform the health inequalities strategies, and also link to the City plan. There will also be links to the economy plan in relation to COVID recovery.

In Hartlepool lots of actions were taken and decisions were made quickly. Going forward they are going to review the impact of the decisions that were made. Within Darlington, services are responsible for their own EIAs (such as street furniture removal, introduction of scooters). They are currently looking at the predicted impacts of COVID on the borough across all the protected characteristics.

Gateshead Council are currently undertaking an economic review on households across the borough, looking at jobs, spending, also includes questions on mental health and social isolation.

Action: Gateshead and Durham to share survey- to post in the NEREO Teams site

6. Benchmarking tools – Kirsty McNally – Sunderland City Council

Prior to the meeting Kirsty circulated the benchmarking tools Sunderland use or are involved in. Kirsty was interested to find out some of the pros and cons of certain benchmarking tools, such as Stonewall. Obviously Stonewall is LGBT focused but can be a useful tool to help imbed practices, policies and procedures. Kirsty explained that they have also recently joined ENEI (Employers Network for Equality Inclusion), Kirsty found this to be very helpful as it has a broader approach and is a simpler mechanism to apply. It also has 'TIDE marks' a benchmarking tool, that organisations can apply for to help audit their diversity performance. The cost of this is £1,500 which is an evaluation/feedback report, whereas the full package (report and support) is £4,000. Kirsty to keep the group updated on progress.

Action: All councils to populate the spreadsheet in the NEREO Teams site.

7. NHS Representation on Group – Kirsty McNally, Sunderland City Council and Claire Holt, Durham County Council

Discussion took place on the proposal to allow the NHS to attend the group. It was agreed that due to the number of Trusts within the region, it may be an option for the Chair of the North East NHS Equality lead group (Chris Rowlands) to be invited to our group, Kirsty also happy to attend the NHS group to act as the link representative.

Action: To contact Chris and invite him to our next group and Kirsty to attend theirs. Check if Ruth (Cleveland Fire and Rescue Service) may have contact details.

8. ICS Update re Equalities

Item postponed to next meeting as Helen not present at meeting.

9. General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

No issues.

10. Any Other Business

All agreed that the format of the meeting worked well on Teams. The next meeting will also take place on Teams. Also reminded to add useful material and documents into the Teams site to share good practice with others. Need to organise the folders into a system within the Team site.

11. Date of Next Meeting

Next meeting to be held September/October, date to be confirmed.