

# Meeting of NEREO Equalities Network (Virtual)

**Tuesday 20 April 2021**

## **Attendees**

Darlington Council: Eleanor Walker  
Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service: Carrie Sherwen  
Durham County Council: Claire Holt (Chair) and Mary Gallagher  
Gateshead Council: Rachel Mason  
Hartlepool Council: Catherine Grimwood  
Newcastle City Council: Louise Crosby  
NEREO: Stephen McCurry  
NHS: Sarah Kilner  
North Tyneside Council: Anne Foreman and Alison Burford  
Redcar and Cleveland Council: Rob Mitchell  
Sunderland City Council: Kirsty McNally  
Together for Children: Gavin Duncan

## **Apologies**

Cleveland FRS: Ruth Anderson  
Durham County Council: Joanne Kelley  
Middlesbrough Council: Nicola Finnegan and Rebecca Thompson  
Northumberland County Council: Patrick Price  
South Tyneside Council: Julie Young  
Stockton Council: Liz Purdy

### **1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

Attendee introductions.

### **2. Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 12 January 2021**

Minutes agreed.

### **3. Matters Arising from the Minutes**

- Invite Stephen McCurry (NEREO) to meeting to discuss NE Jobs portal. How can we use the page to attract a more diverse workforce? Standardising equality monitoring forms to make regional benchmarking easier. Agenda item at this meeting.
- Complete Staff network tracker form and return to Sarah Kilner.
- Consider establishing regional network group for staff network chairs. Agenda item at this meeting.
- Training – continue to share useful training resources.

#### 4. North East Jobs – Equality Monitoring Information, Stephen McCurry, NEREO

Stephen provided an overview of the current anonymised data held from 2012 with the NE Jobs portal which can be disaggregated geographically by postcode areas, also by job category and protected characteristic.

It was noted that analysing job applicants by postcode would be useful, also by hard to fill job category such as social worker roles. This would allow organisations to see impact of targeted recruitment to such posts.

An illustration of the job application journey from application to appointment would be useful in identifying gaps. Stephen confirmed that shortlisting data was available which would help to identify those applications that did not meet minimum person spec/qualifications as this would help to identify if certain groups were less likely to be shortlisted, which could explain some of the barriers experienced by some applicants.

The issue of standardised equality monitoring would help with comparative analysis, Stephen confirmed there is no standardisation as each Jobs NE organisation uses their own equality monitoring framework, although NEREO would prefer standardisation. Although not impossible, there would be issues on agreeing this as it depends how collected data translates into individual organisational HR systems. There would be GDPR implications for organisations who use data collected at application stage to upload directly onto own systems for appointed applicants (where this is expressly stated in the privacy statement) if there is not an exact match of data categories.

It was noted that the portal could be improved to encourage applicants from a more diverse background. Also, to address sectional issues such as attracting more women/men into currently gender biased roles (technical, engineering, caring etc). Stephen screen shared how a more coherent page could work (Into Social Care North East). This showed a joined-up statement which included individual logos of the organisations 'signing up' to this statement/information at the bottom of the page. The page could also include links to additional information, blog articles or spotlighting particular jobs. Stephen explained that the main issue was Jobs NE having a central representative contact who would ensure that the page content was regularly reviewed and kept up-to-date.

#### **Actions:**

- Inform Stephen McCurry (NE Jobs Portal) of any data or analysis requirement using the current anonymised data held – [smccurry@nereo.gov.uk](mailto:smccurry@nereo.gov.uk)
- Consider scoping how we could approach/achieve:
  - standardisation of equality monitoring for Jobs NE
  - a coherent one stop point for equality, and inclusion information for the portal, and
  - making the portal more attractive to applicants from diverse backgrounds
  - designing a joined-up statement/commitment page in relation to equality and diversity

## 5. Regional Equality Staff Network Group

The previous meeting suggested the establishment of a regional Chairs of Staff Networks meeting. NEREO liaised with HR Directors across all authorities in the region for feedback. It was agreed that this would be a useful regional network. A meeting was held with a few nominated officers. At the meeting it was agreed to draft aims and objectives of the group, Louise Crosby (Newcastle) and Kirsty McNally (Sunderland) kindly agreed to Chair the group, until a local authority staff network Chair takes over the position. Meetings to be held quarterly. A Team site will also be established, all those nominated will be included in the site and invited to meetings. It is hoped that the group will help to support Equality Staff Network Chairs, as well as best practice from each other. To help strengthen the role and voice of Equality Staff Networks so they can positively influence equality, diversity, and inclusion within our respective organisations.

**Action:** All local authorities, to speak to their Network Chairs to raise awareness and gather expression of interest. Nominations for the regional group - forward details to Brenda Conlon (NEREO) ([bconlon@nereo.gov.uk](mailto:bconlon@nereo.gov.uk)) and cc Louise Crosby ([louise.crosby@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:louise.crosby@newcastle.gov.uk)) and Kirsty McNally ([kirsty.mcnally@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:kirsty.mcnally@sunderland.gov.uk)).

## 6. Equality Benchmarking

The template is still available in the Team site for updates. Sunderland also looking to use the Equality Standard for Local Government for benchmarking. This seemed to be the case with several other local authorities, many are referring to the standard as a benchmark to help provide baseline assessment.

## 7. ICS Update re Equalities

Regionally there seems to be a number of groups establishing. Kirsty and Claire will remain in contact with Sarah to keep updated of what is happening with NHS, ICS on a regional basis. There also seems to be something similar for Northumbria Police (Community Safety Board) in relation to a joined-up approach for a regional corporate commitment.

## 8. GDPR

No issues.

## 9. Any Other Business

A reminder - if all authorities could complete the staff network tracker circulated with previous minutes. This is to be sent to Sarah. The form will be re-circulated with minutes. This will also help us with an initial assessment for the newly formed regional staff network meeting.

## 10. Date of Next Meeting

Next meeting to take place on Tuesday 13 July 2021 (1.30pm-2.30pm), Microsoft Teams