

## **Meeting of Equalities Network (Virtual)**

**Tuesday 12 January 2021**

### **Attendees**

Durham County Council - Claire Holt (Chair), Mary Gallagher  
Darlington Borough Council - Eleanor Walker  
Gateshead Council - Rachel Mason  
Sunderland City Council - Kirsty McNally  
Newcastle City Council - Louise Crosby  
Northumberland County Council - Irene Fisher  
Northumberland County Council/NHS - Patrick Price  
North Tyneside Council - Anne Foreman, Jess Madden  
Middlesbrough Council - Nicola Finnigan  
Cleveland FRS - Ruth Anderson  
Hartlepool Council - Catherine Grimwood  
NHS - Sarah Kilner

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

Apologies tendered by Helen Whiting (Darlington Council), Jennifer Sandy (South Tyneside Council) and Liz Purdy (Stockton Council).

Update on group membership:

Sarah Kilner will now be attending the group to provide link to ICS.

### **2. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 6 October 2020**

Minutes were agreed.

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

**ICS** - Kirsty to attend ICS group to provide link between both groups. Sarah now also attending NEREO Equality Officer network.

**Covid Recovery Survey** - Rachel to share the results/report of Gateshead's survey on Teams site. Rachel send to Claire or Maureen to circulate to group, as difficulties with Teams site.

**EHRC Guidance** - to post the draft EHRC guidance in the Teams site – complete.

**Health inequalities EIA** - Kirsty to keep group updated going forward with this work.

**EIA toolkits** - All to share copy of their current EIA toolkits - if having difficulty posting in Teams to send to Claire or Maureen who will upload files.

**Training** - Reminder of any useful links for training, training providers to add into the Teams site.

**Guidance Information** – Irene posted the following information in the Teams site (Government Consultation on Proposed Accessible Housing Standards, Valuable 500, School Safe).

**Census 2021** - Mary circulated the new approved categories.

#### 4. **ICS - Collective Promise**

Sarah provided an explanation of the ICS (Integrated Care System), the purpose, and geographical areas covered by the different Trusts, from the North of the Tyne, to Tees and Cumbria. 'Great place to work' programme was also discussed, which aims to ensure that all those employed across the range of organisations have the same opportunities, and this will also benefit NHS partners. Important to develop links with LAs in the region to develop and work together on this initiative - see presentation provided by Sarah (previously circulated). Aim to ensure that no matter the regional and national operational demands, employees have the same workplace benefits. Within the Workforce and People Plan, there are 5 pillar - see presentation (previously circulated). Also explained the Collective Promise, helped developed by local BME ethnic communities, and developed by E&D leads. Agreed by Chief Executives and NHS Foundation Trusts. LAs are key stakeholders.

See information in NHS folder in Teams.

#### 5. **Staff Networks**

Sarah updated the group, aiming to provide core network of networks. Based on the National Ambulance BME Forum, a tracker/checklist for staff networks has been developed - see document previously circulated by NEREO and posted in Teams. This will be a useful tool to use with current or newly developing networks. Looking to find how we better support Chairs of the networks, and how can we do better. Proposals for network Chairs to meet with Leaders, - how do we link with LAs, and voluntary service? Selling the benefits of staff networks. Opportunities for working together, E&D events in future collaborating and focusing on events. Lisa Creighton-Jones (Gateshead Health) is the Workforce Leader for Equality and Diversity workstream. Funding in place for session 'Power of Staff Networks', also links with the Leadership Academy. Perhaps consider regional approach to developing networks. Ruth also has useful contact at London Fire Brigade, in relation to development of women's staff networks. Patrick happy to share Northumberland network experience. They have separate networks for the Council and NHS. They have noticed that Covid has had a positive impact on membership of their networks, started to increase membership, perhaps due to working from home, and lack of distance to travel to a meeting. It would be useful to do something virtually throughout the region.

**Action:** All to complete the staff network tracker form and to complete contact details for our own authority area for relevant contact person. Maureen to circulate, completed forms to be returned to Sarah - [Sarah.Kilner@cntw.nhs.uk](mailto:Sarah.Kilner@cntw.nhs.uk)

**Action:** SK to share the staff network checklist.

**Action:** To consider the possibility of virtual regional staff network group - Chairs of groups to meet up. Further discussion as how we could take this work forward at future meetings.

## 6. Elected Member Training

Discussion took place in relation to providing E&D training as part of Member induction process. At Northumberland, NHS member training is online. There are also a number of learning sessions around different subjects, such as Trans issues. North Tyneside, EDI training is completed within 3 months, a refresher training module is also available for longer serving members. Eleanor explained that Darlington have online training for members, happy to share. PP also highlighted that they are looking to implement reverse mentoring programme, will provide further updates to group as this progress. This is something that Sunderland have tried; success based on willing people to be involved. Again, perhaps this is something we could look to provide regionally throughout our workforces. Difficult sometimes due to makeup of our workforces and might be useful if any employee can receive mentoring in another council.

Irene explained that the EHRC produce a useful guidance document for Members. It is a compulsory part of their induction, and before getting paid their allowance, they must have completed EDI training.

**Action:** to share any useful training resources for Member training. (EHRC document and EHRC Scotland have useful material)

**Action:** Claire to provide update after LGA meeting.

**Action:** Raise issue with NEREO - Reverse Mentoring - something that the HR group could perhaps investigate, a joined up regional approach.

**Action:** Eleanor to circulate slides.

## 7. Opportunities for Shared Profile Sharing

How can we use the North East Jobs page to attract a more diverse workforce, work with NEREO to help achieve this across the region? Updates to North East Jobs page to try and attract more diverse applicants. Also look at our own webpages. This would be a good opportunity to agree a similar approach to standardise equality monitoring form to make benchmarking easier, to then be able to make comparisons. Sarah suggested using staff networks to help develop this work.

**Action:** Invite Stephen McCurry to meeting to explain about the capacity of the North East Jobs page and data received through this 'what we collect and what we get other end'.

**Action:** link up with the NEREO HR group.

**Action:** All to look at our individual recruitment page on North East Jobs - how can we make this more attractive to diverse communities?

**8. Equality Benchmarking**

Document in Teams file to update.

**9. ICS Update re Equalities**

See agenda items 4/5. Kirsty and Sarah to be the link between the groups, alongside Helen Whiting.

**10. General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)**

No issues.

**11. Any Other Business**

EHRC advised that they suspended compliance activity on the specific duties for 2020. However, public bodies should publish their equality information by 30 March 2021. Also, should publish equality objectives.

Discussion took place around accurate and reliable data, also how to encourage employees to update their personal information, many have difficulties capturing this information, and lack of reporting especially around disability. Link with access requirements through the appraisal process.

**12. Date of Next Meeting**

To schedule for April 2021.