

Minutes NEREO Equalities Network

Tuesday 11 June 2024 - Teams meeting (virtual)

Attendees

Durham CC	Claire Holt
	Mary Gallagher
Hartlepool Council	Catherine Grimwood
Gateshead Council	Rachel Mason
South Tyneside Council	Aisling Crane
Together for Children Sunderland	Ola Tony-Obot
North Tyneside	Anne Foreman, Leslie Plant
Northumberland CC	Julie Stewart
Northumberland CC	Evie Dominigue
Newcastle City Council	Louise Crosby
Sunderland City Council	Gail D'arcy
NECA	Robin Fry
Sunderland City Council	Yvonne Cheung

Apologies

Gateshead Council	Stephanie McGuiggan
South Tyneside Council	Susan Clennell
Stockton Council	Louise Deer

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Attendee introductions.

2. Minutes of previous meeting – 26 March 2024

Previous minutes agreed.

3. Matters arising from minutes

N/A.

4. Best Practice in relation to Access to Work Process- Gateshead Council

Request for information, do other authorities have in place guidance documents, or flowchart to outline processes to access support from Access to Work?

Durham: the application needs to be requested by the employee. We have added information into conditional offer letter, to help raise awareness of Access to Work funding in order to try and alert new employees about the funding.

North Tyneside: there is currently 6-month lag. North Tyneside established a central budget to help fund any adjustments whilst Access to Work request was pending. The HR team have also pulled together all useful information into a Learning Pool site, and set up an ED Hub and this is available for all new starters prior to commencement.

Action: All councils to share any processes, flow charts they have on Access to Work funding, to send onto Maureen (NEREO) or post in the Teams file.

5. DLUHC – Productivity Plan – Gateshead Council

All councils have received this request to produce a productivity plan, which should be published on website, deadline 19 July 2024. The questions on EDI, specifically mentioned EDI within wasteful spends, and wanted to understand the amount of time and money spent on training, networks, and how do we assess, log and report on this.

At the moment. most councils are busy finalising drafts for approval. Most are referencing EDI but keeping it brief and outlining benefits/positives, in relation to meeting public sector duties. No detail of costs included.

6. Hearing Loops- North Tyneside Council

Query/information sharing - in relation to hearing loops and new technology. Recent advice received to North Tyneside, that the traditional loop systems with a 'T' position are becoming outdated and that new Bluetooth systems should be implemented.

The consensus of the group, that some service users probably still have hearing aids, which have 'T' position, not everyone will have a new hearing aid which can use Bluetooth, so better to keep these in place. Gateshead Council still have traditional hearing loops in place, and still asked as part of the room booking process.

7. LGA Peer Reviews- North Tyneside Council

Advice sought in relation to alternative providers for a peer review of EDI. Given the cost of an equality peer review by LGA, are there any other organisations or possible options for an objective external review.

Durham will be having a corporate peer review, which although will be cross cutting across functions, will have aspects of EDI built in. Durham also use evidence from inspection reports such as Ofsted.

Newcastle had a peer review last year; it did help raise the profile of EDI. Newcastle completed EFLG self-assessment toolkit.

Difficult to find organisations who can focus on service as well as employment aspects.

Possible [Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion - The Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion \(enei\)](#) or Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

8. Work of Recruitment and Retention Network

To provide update at next meeting.

9. Regional Update/Any Other Business

Together for Children Sunderland – have held a number of events, Pride month - family picnic, IDAHOBIT day awareness event. Menopause launch. D-Day celebrations, joint event with Sunderland Council. Future events - Southeast Heritage Month and Black History Month. Also, implementation of Fair Treatment policy, ambassadors are ACAS trained, posters include QR code so can report anonymously.

Northumberland Council – Pride network- what do others do to promote Pride allies? Durham to send contact details to Julie to discuss further outside of meeting. Barnardo's have 'safe zone' allies [Positive Identities - Safe Zone \(LGBTQ+ Training\) | Barnardo's \(barnardos.org.uk\)](#). North Tyneside 'allyship' is across all network groups not just LGBT+, links in with dignity and respect policies and incident reporting mechanism – within HR.

Any Other Business

- * Duty around sexual harassment to be implemented later this year.
- * Social housing regulation toolkit [230705-Social-housing-regulation-toolkit-introduction-1.pdf \(hqnetwork.co.uk\)](#) tenants satisfaction. A number of questions are related to diverse needs. A requirement that housing providers complete this.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 10 September 2024, 1.30-3pm, MS Teams