Nottinghamshire County Council

Report to Corporate Equality Group

23 January 2019

Agenda Item:

REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR, CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE & EMPLOYEES

ASSESSMENT OF APPLYING STONEWALL WORKPLACE EQUALITY INDEX CRITERIA ACROSS ALL THE PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

Purpose of the Report

1. To assess whether the criteria used in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index is relevant and useful in improving equality and inclusion in employment and service delivery across all the protected characteristics.*

Background

2. The Stonewall Workplace Equality Index is used annually as a benchmarking and improvement tool to improve Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) equality and inclusion in employment and service delivery. This particularly applies to improvements for the protected characteristics of sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership and to some extent sex in the way in which the Index affects trans people. It is a nationally acclaimed accreditation and has, over the last 5 years, influenced a culture change within the County Council and has helped us improve our ranking from 307th to 22nd in the country. Although the Index is primarily aimed at improving equality for LGBT people, wherever possible, improvements have been applied across all the protected characteristics.

3. In March 2018 the Authority decided to commit to the national Disability Confident employer standard to improve the recruitment, development and retention of employees with disabilities.

4. Currently we do not use any national assessments to improve our performance in relation to the other protected characteristics of race, religion, age or sex/gender (excluding those identities that would fall under the trans umbrella).

5. The Chair of the BME network has asked for a formal assessment to be made of the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index criteria to see if there are areas that might have been missed that could be applied across all the other protected characteristics.

*Protected characteristics are Age, Sex, Disability, Race, Religion, Sexual Orientation, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity.

Assessment of Stonewall Workplace Equality Index

6. The attached **appendix** shows each question in the Index and gives a detailed assessment of whether it is appropriate and relevant to apply current practice across all the other protected characteristics.

7. In most cases, any improvements have already been applied across all the protected characteristics particularly in the areas of employment policies and benefits; recruitment, induction, training and development; monitoring and procurement. However there are certain questions and sections which are specific to either sexual orientation or gender identity and are not relevant to the other protected characteristics.

8. The assessment has identified some areas where improvements can be made and these are marked on the appendix for 'action' and are summarised below:

   i) **Internal Communications and Engagement of all Employees:**

   The LGBT staff network supports several events throughout the year and these are regularly publicised on the Intranet, in Team Talk and on social media. The BME and Disabled networks could consider a more proactive approach to using the Intranet and Team Talk to regularly engage all employees in their activities and events and to promote their network to new members.

   ii) **Career Development Opportunities:**

   The Council publicises career development opportunities, including vacancies, secondments and coaching, to all employees and does not target specific groups of staff. The BME and Disabled networks could consider using their network OneSpace to publicise career opportunities directly to their members.

   iii) **Staff Network Groups:**

   The Disabled Employees Support Network supports employees with both physical and mental disabilities but there might be benefits in considering a separate network or separate sessions for employees with poor mental health where employees can talk openly and safely about their mental health and gain support.

   Currently the Council does not have employee support networks representing age, sex or religion. Consideration could be given to whether there is a demand amongst employees with these protected characteristics.

   iv) **Recognising Multiple Identities:**

   The staff networks could consider working together on events in the Diversity calendar to recognise that employees can have multiple protected characteristics. Relevant events might be Disability, LGBT, Black History Months, Mental Health Awareness Week or International Women's Day.

   The networks could consider whether they currently promote themselves as being inclusive of other identities and protected characteristics and consider having

specific representatives, eg the BME network could have a specific representative for BME LGBT members or for BME female members.

v)   Allies:

The current Proud Allies initiative has a specific image related to LGBT equality and a main aim of supporting LGBT employees who might not be out in the workplace. In its current format it is not relevant to other protected characteristics. In the future, there might be an opportunity to consider allies programmes for other protected groups or a more general allies programme. Consideration could also be given to having mental health allies/first aiders.

vi)   Role Models:

There is a lack of senior visible role models for all protected characteristics. Corporate Equality Group could consider ways to encourage and to promote senior role models from Elected Members and at Director and Group Manager level.

The LGBT staff network regularly has displays featuring well known LGBT role models and ask their members to put them up in several offices around the County to recognise LGBT History Month, Bivisibility Day and Trans Awareness Week. The Disabled and BME staff networks could consider profiling well known role models representing different ethnic groups/disabilities and also with multiple identities during Disability and Black History Months at all the main sites around the County.

vii)   Senior Leadership & Elected Member Engagement:

The LGBT staff network regularly invites the Chairman of the County Council and members of the Corporate Leadership Team to their events (eg IDAHOT Day, Pride, LGBT History Month conference) and, in doing so, regularly engages them in their activities. The Disabled and BME networks could consider their calendar of events and make sure they are engaging Members and senior management at every opportunity.

Currently equality training is not included in the induction training for Elected Members. Consideration could be given to extending the mandatory equality training for employees to Elected Members and involving the three staff networks.

The LGBT staff network quarterly newsletter is sent directly to members of Corporate Equality Group and Proud Allies to keep them up to date on current issues and events. Recently the BME network has started to produce a newsletter and this could be publicised to all staff via Team Talk or on the Intranet. The Disabled Employees Support Network could consider this approach.

viii)   Community Engagement:

The BME and Disabled networks could consider greater use of the Council's social media, with the help of the Communications team, to publicise their events such as Black/Disability History Month.

Further work could be undertaken to explore whether specific services have promoted equality for other protected characteristics in the wider community.

ix) **Clients, Customers and Service Users:**

Consider whether Stonewall's guidance on making services more LGBT-inclusive could be applied to improve the experience for service users with other protected characteristics.

The Council's annual survey on satisfaction with council services monitors by ethnic origin and disability but not sexual orientation and religion. In terms of gender, it only monitors male or female. Consideration could be given to monitoring by all the protected characteristics.

Recommendations

9. It is recommended that Corporate Equality Group consider and discuss the areas where improvements can be made, as outlined in section 8 above, and agree a course of action.

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