

Equality COUNTS

Newsletter Issue 1 - November 2018

WELCOME

Welcome to the first edition of the Equality Unit's Newsletter.

This has been a busy year for us so far. We drafted and agreed with Board an EA Audit of Inequalities, we engaged staff to develop and issued for consultation new Equality & Disability Action Plans. These Plans commit us to a programme of equality work over the next four years. We have delivered a wide range of training across equality, rural needs and disability.

We are also keen that we live our corporate values and are proud to say we have signed up to a number of initiatives which aims to develop better working environments for all our staff, so that we can deliver the best service possible for our children and young people.

We have signed up to the NI Mental Health Charter and are developing a range of initiatives to make this real, such as appointing Mental Health First Aiders. We have signed up to Stonewall Diversity Champions and are baselining ourselves and developing improvement and engagement plans. We have also signed up to Employers for Disability, setting ourselves very high standards which we are aiming to achieve to make us an employer of choice.

Matthew McDermott, Head of Equality & Human Rights

Meet the Team

Matthew McDermott
Head of Equality and Human Rights

Matthew is Head of Equality and Human Rights in EA, joining the organisation in June 2017. He has worked for 10 years in diversity and inclusion across the public, private and community and voluntary sector. His interests are in maximising the diversity of organisations to unlock transformational potential and develop inclusive cultures. Matthew is a member of the HRLS Directorate Management Team.



Cathy Lavery - Equality Manager

Cathy is Equality Manager and has over 17 years' experience working in Education across Communications, Corporate Development and for the last 6 years within Equality. Cathy was involved in the development of the EA 10 year Strategic Plan and many other wide spread consultations such as the Equality and Disability Action Plans. She believes understanding the needs of users is key to service development and supporting her colleagues in making EA a 'great place to work' for all employees.



Emma Patterson-Bennett - Equality Business Partner

Emma is one of the Equality Business Partners for the EA, joining the organisation in May 2018. Emma has been working in human rights and equality for the last 10 years recently in the community and voluntary sector and before that at the Commissioner for Children and Young People and Older People's Advocate. As a feminist Emma has a keen interest in gender equality, she has represented NI at the United Nations and developed tools for gender equality in a post conflict society.



Claire McKeown - Equality Business Partner

Claire started with the Education Authority as Equality Business Partner in May 2018. Prior to joining the organisation, she worked for 10 years as a policy advisor for the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, specialising in racial equality and legislative reform. Before joining the Commission, Claire developed policy and legislation for both the Legal Services Agency Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service.



Alan Simpson - Equal Opportunities Officer

Alan is the Equal Opportunities Officer and has over 28 years' experience within an Equal Opportunities function in Education. Alan was involved in setting up one of the first Equal Opportunities Unit's with an early PC and thrives on the use of IT to reveal the compositional picture within the organisation, being keenly interested in fair practices and opportunities.



Bert Traylen - Equal Opportunities Support Officer

Bert is the Equal Opportunities Support Officer and has worked in the HR function of Education for 30 years, the last five of which have been in Equal Opportunities. He has a background in Psychology and Human Resources and he likes to understand what supports people to work together.



Janelle Russell - Business Support Officer

Janelle is the Business Support Officer for the Equality Unit and joined EA in March 2018. Prior to joining EA and equality Janelle worked in Human Resources in the childcare sector. She has a degree in Social Anthropology. Janelle is the first point of contact in the Equality Unit and administrative support, and her role is to support the main functions of the unit on a day-to-day basis.



Disability Champion

Oliver McMullan

The EA recently appointed a Disability Champion at Board level; Oliver McMullan. This was a key commitment from the EA Disability Action Plan. Oliver's role as Disability Champion involves championing Disability Equality at Board level in EA and promoting good practice across Special Educational Needs and Disability.

As part of his role Oliver has met with a number of relevant organisations to get a firm understanding of the issues facing children and young people with disabilities, accessing EA services.

Oliver has a disabled child and has a long interest in the area of disability equality. He brings vast experience to the role, from local and central government.

On his appointment, Oliver said, *'I am delighted and honoured to be appointed as the first EA Disability Champion. I aim to use this platform and role to promote the good work going on across many of EAs services as well as highlight some of the key challenges to Board colleagues that we can collectively tackle as a Board'*.



Oliver McMullan & Matthew McDermott with the Equality Commission



Oliver McMullan & Cathy Lavery with MENCAP



Oliver McMullan with Disability Sports NI



Oliver McMullan with Autism NI

Equality Action Plan/ Disability Action Plan

Following the development of the Audit of Inequalities, EA Equality Unit produced an Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan (2018-2022). Both plans were issued for public consultation on 9 April with a closing date of 2 July 2018.

A wide range of stakeholders were consulted as part of the process, including those from the community/ voluntary sector via the Joint Consultative Forum, School Principals, young people in schools and youth service and engagement with EA staff.

Feedback received from consultees for both plans has been largely positive and encouraging. The post consultation feedback report is currently being finalised and will be issued to all consultees and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland by December 2018.

Education Authority
@Frl_Authority

EA Equality Unit has been engaging with staff around the Draft EA Equality and Disability Action Plans 2018-22. Some very good feedback.



Recent Sign Ups

Joint Declaration of Protection for Dignity at Work

In June 2018 the EA along with Trade Union Colleagues formally signed the Joint Declaration of Protection for Dignity at Work and Inclusive Working Environment.

The Joint Declaration of Protection declares that everyone has the right to equality of opportunity in employment and the right to work in a harmonious and inclusive environment. As a major employer in Northern Ireland EA is committed to encouraging and enabling staff to apply their diverse talents and ensuring that no member of staff experiences discrimination or harassment. We are committed to developing an inclusive culture and working environment where all staff feel welcome.



Mental Health Charter

In June 2018 EA signed up to Northern Ireland's Mental Health Charter highlighting our commitment to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.



The Charter, which is a joint initiative between the Equality Commission, Action Mental Health, Change Your Mind, Disability Action, the Mental Health Foundation, MindWise and Inspire, sets out five commitments that the EA will work to deliver. Charter commitments include creating an open and inclusive workplace culture; promoting equality of opportunity and challenging discrimination in the workplace; ensuring equality of opportunity in recruitment and selection; identifying and providing sources of information and support; and adopting Every Customer Counts recommendations.



EA have signed up to become a Diversity Champion with Stonewall. Stonewall work with over 750 of the UK's leading organisations to create fully inclusive environments for staff, services users and the wider community.

The Diversity Champions Programme is a leading employers' programme for ensuring all Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) staff are accepted without exception in the workplace. This is one part of EA's diversity and inclusion approach, helping us to deliver focused interventions that support and enhance diversity in the workplace, particularly for our LGBT colleagues. We believe that no one should have to 'edit' themselves when they come to work.

LGBT colleagues who say they can be themselves in work, are more than twice as likely to be satisfied with their sense of achievement compared with those who hide their identity; when people can be themselves, they enjoy coming to work and they perform better.



Gender Action Plan

EA have recently committed to develop a gender action plan (GAP) as part of the overarching Equality Action Plan (2018 - 2022). The initial GAP will run for 3 years. This plan will target under represented gender identities who work for EA, including transgender employees.



It is the aim that the delivery of the plan will result in positive outcomes on gender equality for EA and support the promotion of diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

3 key themes have been identified for taking forward the development of the GAP:

1. Developing Leaders
2. Engaging Staff
3. Supporting and Enhancing Staff Experiences

As part of the development phase, the Equality Unit are engaging directly with EA staff in various locations during the month of November. This engagement is important for staff to give their views and highlight possible actions for inclusion in the action plan.

Rural Needs Act



On the 1 June 2018 the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 introduced new duties on the EA including having due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services. We must therefore assess and consider the impact of all of our policies and decisions for people living in rural areas.

Ensuring that we consider the needs of people living and working in rural areas now forms a key part of EA's policy development framework.

The Equality Unit provides advice, guidance, training and support to EA officers on meeting the rural needs obligations.

The next meeting of the EA Joint Consultative Forum on 22 November will be focused on Rural Needs, following the implementation of the Act.

Transgender Guidance

In October, the Equality Unit hosted the first meeting of the Transgender Guidance Steering Group. The group will be assisting the Equality Unit with Phase 1 of the project, developing guidance to support transgender children and young people in schools and youth settings.



Dates for Your Diary

Anti-Bullying Week 12th - 16th November

Anti-Bullying Week is an annual UK event which aims to raise awareness of bullying of children and young people, in schools and elsewhere, and to highlight ways of preventing and responding to it. The theme for Anti-Bullying Week 2018 is: 'Choose Respect'

Transgender Awareness Week 13th - 17th November

A week dedicated to raising the visibility of trans people and addressing the issues trans people face.

International Men's Day 19th November

International Men's Day is a day dedicated to - men's and boy's health, improving gender relations, promoting gender equality, and highlighting positive male role models. It is an occasion for men to celebrate their achievements and contributions to society and family.

UK Disability History Month 22nd Nov - 22nd Dec

UK Disability History Month (UKDHM) is an annual event creating a platform to focus on the history the struggle for equality and human rights for people with disabilities.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities 3rd Dec

This annual event aims to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and development, and to increase awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of life.

Human Rights Day 10th December

Human Rights Day is observed every year on 10 December - the day in 1948 when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - a key document that proclaimed the rights which everyone is entitled to as a human being.