

Policy Team Overview & Scrutiny Update- 10th January 2017

LGB&T Task Group recommendations

Several of the recommendations that arose from the LGB&T Task Group fell to the Policy Team to deliver.

LGB&T History Month 2016 was really positive and delivered an event at the Palace Theatre as per the recommendations, which culminated in a wonderful performance by the Rainbow Voices Choir. Emily Payne, Redditch Borough Council's Engagement & Equalities Advisor, coordinated much of the event, despite only having been with the Council for a couple of months. To follow on last year, Emily has been working with the Palace Theatre again and there is a comedy night scheduled for LGB&T History Month 2017 in February, at which we will also put up displays of relevant information.

The recommendation we have not been able to conclude yet is participation in the Stonewall Index. After some initial confusion, we discovered that Stonewall representatives only provide support for submissions if you take part in their Diversity Champions initiative, which costs £2500 per year. After some research, we found that it is a demanding submission which will require a significant investment of officer time. Despite the team being committed to delivering on the recommendation, the Policy Team has not been at full strength this year due to ongoing surgeries I have required and as such we could not develop the submission during 2016. We have, however, started the plan for our submission in 2017. We have:

- Gone through the most recent submission document (appendix 1) and rated what we have already achieved, what can be achieved before the deadline of September 2017 and which actions are not currently possible (most of these are within the 'Best Practice' level and would challenge most Councils, regardless of size).
- Had several meetings with HR colleagues to ensure that we can meet the requirements of the submission in regards of HR policies (The HR policies are due to be reviewed during 2017, so the timing worked out well).
- Contacted the West Midlands Local Authority Equalities Network of which we are a member to understand if any of our West Midlands colleagues are planned on submitting. We found that none of the Councils were planning on doing so, but they did provide useful insight into how we could deliver some of the required elements within a local authority setting (the submission form is for *all* businesses and organisations).
- Met with a contact at Worcester University, who do submit and pay to be part of the Diversity Champions group. This meeting was incredibly helpful, providing us with possible links to a staff network (something which no longer exists with the Worcestershire Councils) and guidance on how we could approach preparing for submission.

- Started preparation for delivering equalities training to all employees in early 2017, of which the training requirements of the submission will be covered.

Next steps

- As part of our review of the submission requirements, we realised that for many of the elements it would make sense to apply questions relating to all the protected characteristic under the Equality Act, and as such utilising this opportunity to embed equalities across our organisation. This additional review will not form part of our submission to Stonewall but will provide the Policy Team and the wider organisation with useful insight and essential further evidence under the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- We will ensure that every HR Policy which is reviewed covers the required elements around LGB&T, including specific reference to non-binary.
- The first session of training will be delivered during the first quarter of 2017; we will then review these to ensure they are meeting the requirements of the submission.
- We will be an active partner in the delivery of LGB&T History Month 2017, which we also produce the promotional material for.
- We will produce a calendar of messages to send out across the organisation from senior figures, reinforcing our commitment to inclusion, providing links to support and further information and how discriminatory behaviour will not be tolerated.
- We will proceed with our initial discussions with Worcester University, specifically around their staff network.

Rebecca Dunne

Policy Manager