

Equalities Assembly Newsletter

ISSUE 1

SUMMER 2011

“Equality is about treating people fairly and ensuring that we do not unfairly discriminate against particular individuals or communities.”

“Diversity is about understanding that each individual is unique and will have different experiences, expectations and needs”

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1. Introduction

Welcome to the first Equalities Assembly's Newsletter. A lot has happened since the first hub meetings took place in February 2008. The hubs continue to grow in size and the hub representatives, on behalf of their hubs, meet regularly with senior council officers to discuss issues which have the greatest impact on Leeds residents.



Hub Representative for the Disability Hub—Alan Oldroyd

The meetings are generally well attended and the database of people who have asked to receive information about the hubs is increasing all

the time.

We know that there is still a lot more work to be done and the Equality Team is looking at ways to encourage representation in the hubs.

We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and would like to thank you for your continued support and commitment to the Equalities Assembly.

2. What's the Equalities Assembly all about and why is it different?

The Equalities Assembly is made up of Equality Hubs who meet every few months to talk about issues which are important to them. The hubs provide a welcoming and friendly environment where members of Leeds' diverse communities or organisations who represent them can meet with council officers to discuss themes and issues

which affect their quality of life. This means that the council can have a better understanding of local people's views, which will help to lead to an improvement in council services.

The council's Equality Team support the running of the hub meetings and organise practical issues, such as sending out information to hub members, arrange British Sign Language Interpreters, palantypists,

translators and taxis (for disabled members where appropriate). For more information about the Equalities Assembly and how to get involved with the Hubs, please contact us on:

Telephone: 0113 2474190 – **voice only**
Email: equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk
Textdirect (Typetalk): 18002 0113 247 4190

3. Hub Representatives Network



Hub Representative for the Age Hub—Susan Chesters

“The best community meeting I’ve attended in 20 years” – was what James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Policy, Planning and

Improvement) said when he chaired the first Hub Representatives Network meeting last Summer. These quarterly meetings bring together hub representatives and senior council officers. The representatives feed back from their individual hubs meetings and agree how to take forward the cross cutting issues which have an

impact on each hub. They also attend additional meetings with other services on behalf of their hub and provide an update at the next hub meetings. Some of the issues which have recently been discussed at hub representatives meetings include refuse collections, and how the council is addressing the Government’s national

spending cuts.

The hub representatives have also been busy making sure that all hub members have the opportunity to assist the council with giving due regard to equality and diversity when a new or amended strategy or service is introduced.

4. Meet your Hub Representatives

Until recently, the Hub Representatives were acting on a temporary basis. In March 2011 a formal nomination process took place, and hub members were able to nominate themselves to take on these roles on a permanent basis. Each hub can have a maximum of 5 representatives. It was agreed that they would rotate their roles to attend Hub Representatives Network Meetings and other meetings on behalf of their hub.

No hub received more than 5 nominees. As a result of this, every nominee was automatically elected. These are:

Age Hub

Susan Chesters is an older person herself, and is involved in a number of older people’s organisations. These include playing a very active role in Leeds Older People’s Forum, Leeds Older People’s Reference Group and Carers UK Leeds Branch. She is able to represent the views and experiences of a wide range of older people.

Jackie Bolland is a senior manager at Age UK Leeds and works

across many services including Older Carers, Mental Health, Advocacy and Elder Abuse. Jackie is able to feedback to the Hub Representatives Network on the issues which are directly affecting older people at the present time in Leeds.

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Hub

Jazmin Shah and **Tony Stanley** both work for Leeds Racial Equality Council (Leeds REC). Jazmin is a Caseworker and Tony is the Director. Between them, they have a wealth of knowledge around Race Equality in both the statutory and voluntary, community and faith sector, and

work with a wide network of BME communities on a daily basis.



Hub Representative for the Age Hub—Jackie Bolland

Annette Morris and **David Odunukwe** both work for Leeds Voice as BME Network Co-ordinators. Their direct contact with local BME communities means that they are in constant touch with the grassroots issues that are affecting them, and this can be fed back to the BME Hub.



Hub Representative for the BME Hub—Annette Morris



Hub Representative for the Carers Hub—Eileen Hallas

Nahid Rasool is a Project Director of Shantona Women's Centre and works to make sure that BME women and their families are represented, such as at the BME Network meetings. Nahid also represents the voluntary, community and faith sector on the Leeds Leadership Team for North-East and East Leeds, and has worked on projects based around gender equality policy.

Carers Hub

Eileen Hallas is very active in her community and is a school governor and a Board Member of the Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation (BITMO). She is very interested in improving living conditions for people of all ages and recognises that as a group, carers can be under-represented.

Disability Hub

Tim McSharry has a lifetime experience in representing and promoting equality, inclusion and independence for disabled people. As a disabled person, family

carer and disability advocate, he is an active volunteer and believes that life experiences, and a clear understanding of disabled people are critical to informing and developing council services.

Alan Oldroyd has been a registered blind person since the age of 10 years. Since his retirement, he devotes most of his time helping other disabled people to be included into society and to get what is best for them out of life. He is involved with many community organisations, including Leeds Involving People (LIP) and the Independent Disability Council.

Kath Lindley manages Tenfold (previously known as Leeds Learning Disability Forum), which represents disabled organisations from the voluntary, community and faith sector. Tenfold's main aims are Representation, Communication and Supporting and Driving Positive Change, and Kath achieves this by liaising with key partners, such as NHS



Hub Representative for the Disability Hub—Victor Jackson

Leeds, Leeds Teaching Hospitals and Leeds City Council.

Victor Jackson is involved with many organisations that campaign for disability rights. These include the National Federation of the Blind, Alliance of Service Users and Access Committee for Leeds. As a member of Leeds Hospitals Trust's Blind and Partially Sighted Advisory Group, he contributed to the design of facilities at St James' Hospital for the needs of Blind, Partially sighted and other disabled users.



Hub Representative for the BME Hub—Tony Stanley

Philip Gleeson works with the Access Committee for Leeds and is a Trustee for the Independent Disability Council. As a wheelchair user, he is aware of the problems disabled people in Leeds encounter and how to efficiently overcome them. He believes that through the hubs, we can achieve a city to be proud of and one that looks after its citizens equally.

Religion or Belief Hub

Jay Simpson is a Trustee of a Buddhist Charity, the Hon.



Hub Representative for the Disability Hub—Phil Gleeson

Buddhist Chaplain for Leeds NHS Trust and has sat on the Leeds Buddhist Council. He has been involved with and organised interfaith events in the city and is very keen to bring people of different faiths, beliefs and secular groups together; to dispell ignorance, educate, highlight the common ground and bring harmony within the communities of Leeds.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Hub

Tracey Ross is familiar with some of the issues which the LGBT community in Leeds can come across. As a member of several organisations, such as Leeds Involving People, Tracey is able to use her networking skills to promote the LGBT Hub and bring back to the hub meetings any issues which her colleagues have raised.



Hub Representative for the Religion or Belief Hub—Jay Simpson

5. Giving due regard to Equality and Diversity



The council wants and has to make sure that due regard to equality and diversity is given whenever it is introducing or amending a strategy, policy, function or service. The way the council gives due regard is by using an equality impact assessment (EIA) process. An EIA highlights any equality gaps and makes sure that there is as little negative impact as possible on equality groups. The hubs expressed an interest in getting involved with the process but weren't sure how to go about it. As a result, information

and briefing sessions have taken place, where the Equality Team explained how the council gives due regard to all equality communities. Hub members discussed how they could make sure that due regard was always given to equality and diversity. It was agreed that there a several ways this could happen, and these include:

- Acting as an equality assurance body, so that hub members can highlight any gaps where not enough due regard has been given.
- Becoming an important group with which council services can consult with so that equality issues are addressed.

- Being able to signpost council services to the most relevant equality groups (such as specialist community organisations) so that the most suitable people are being involved with the process.

The hubs played an important role in ensuring that due regard was given to equality and diversity in the design of the Leeds Arena. Their contributions have helped to secure the following facilities which will be included in the development:

- Taxi drop off/pick up area directly next to the Arena.

- Disabled seats being integrated with the rest of the seating arrangement.

Work is ongoing to keep hub members informed of up and coming equality impact assessments and how they can get involved. An update will be given in the next Equalities Assembly newsletter.



6. Equalities Assembly Conference 2011



This year's Equalities Assembly Conference will take place on Wednesday 9th November and will be held again at the Civic Hall. The First Equalities Assembly Conference was held in November 2010 and around 80 people attended. A discussion

asked hub members how they would like the city to look like in the future. Members were asked the open-ended question "What if Leeds...?" and their responses contributed to the Vision for Leeds Strategy for 2011-2030.

Each hub has been asked for their ideas to develop the conference agenda and some are involved in a separate group to help plan the event. This years conference will focus on the impact that city centre development has on equality groups.

7. Hub updates

These are just a few of the ways the hubs have been involved with promoting equality and diversity:

- Every hub has had a huge influence in the equality impact assessment process for the Leeds Arena and the project proved to be an excellent example of partnership working.
- The Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Hub is busy organising an event to celebrate Black History Month.
- The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Hub highlighted that there is currently no meeting area where members of the LGBT community can get together, access information and speak to services (such as health professionals) in a welcoming, safe and confidential environment. As a result of this, they have formed a project team and are working on a business case for such a place.
- The Religion or Belief Hub are working hard on updating and improving the council's Religion and Faith Guide. Besides being a useful and interesting insight into different faith communities, the guide will also help to influence equality impact assessments and give council officers a better insight about the religions or beliefs practised in the city. We're hoping the guide will be available from November and anyone can access it via the council's website or by contacting the Equality Team for alternative formats.
- A British Sign Language (BSL) sub-group has been formed after some members of the Disability Hub wanted to have a bigger say in the way the council provides BSL services. One of the sub-group's major achievements is that they are now currently working with Children's Services' Deaf and Hearing Impaired Team on their new publicity material.
- Useful conversations have taken place between officers from the council's Parking Services and the Carers Hub to discuss issues carers come across when trying to park in the city centre. This included problems they have when they are waiting to collect or are dropping off the person they are caring for. Parking Services listened to the comments and agreed to discuss them with their team so that there is a better understanding of the problems carers often encounter.
- Adult Social Care's ongoing involvement with Age Hub members will contribute to the Equality Impact Assessment that addresses the potential impacts of the revised Blue Badge Holder Application Process.



8. We're Excellent!



In May 2011, members of the Equalities Assembly took part in a focus group as part of an external assessment for the Equality Framework for Local Government. The Equality Framework is being used by councils to manage, promote and celebrate equality and diversity. We are delighted to say that they awarded the council 'excellent'

status against the Equality Framework for Local Government. 'Excellent' is the highest possible rating, making Leeds City Council one of the best local authorities in the country for managing, promoting and celebrating equality and diversity. Leeds is the largest authority to be awarded the status, which has only been achieved by a handful of other local councils. The expert panel of assessors from Local Government Improvement and Development looked at a number of areas, including how well the council understands and engages with local communities and its residents. Customer satisfaction and the diversity of the

authority's workforce were also considered. The council was commended for its Equalities Assembly and the Migrant Access Project, which supports new migrants arriving in the city. They also thought the Leeds Disability Sport Youth Panel was another excellent example of promoting equality and diversity. This is made up of young people between 16-25 from different backgrounds, with or

without a disability. However, we are not complacent and know that in order to stay "excellent", we need to continue embedding equality and diversity in everything we do. And we need you to help us to do this! Working in partnership with equality hubs is one way the council can work towards making sure that due regard to equality and diversity is considered in delivering council services.



9. Future Hub Meetings

Dates for the next hub meetings are:

Carers Hub

Date: Tuesday 16th August 2011
Time: 11am to 1pm
Venue: Committee Room 3, Civic Hall

Disability Hub

Date: Wednesday 17th August 2011
Time: 10.30am to 12.30pm
Venue: Safety Central, Stanningley

Road, Bramley, LS12 3PL

Age Hub

Date: Wednesday 24th August 2011
Time: 2.30pm to 4.30pm
Venue: Committee Room 1, Civic Hall

BME Hub

Date: Thursday 8th September 2011
Time: 6.30pm to 7.30pm

Venue: Committee Room 2, Civic Hall

Religion or Belief Hub

Date: Thursday 8th September 2011
Time: 6pm to 8pm
Venue: Committee Room 2,

LGBT Hub

Date: Thursday 29th September 2011
Time: 5pm to 7pm
Venue: Committee Room 2, Civic Hall

Equalities Assembly Conference

Date: Wednesday 9th November 2011
Time: 10.15am to 1pm
Venue: Banqueting Suite, Civic Hall

Dates for Hub meetings in 2012 will be confirmed shortly. For more information, please contact the Equality Team.

10. Dates for your diary

Here is a list of just some of the many festivals and events that are taking place for the rest of the year:



August

Monday 1st
Start of Ramadan
(Islam)

Monday 1st
Yorkshire Day

Sunday 7th
Leeds Pride

Tuesday 9th
Tisha 'Av (Judaism)

Wednesday 31st
Eid-UI Fitr (Islam)

Wednesday 31st
Harvest Festival
(Christianity)

September

Sunday 11th
Ethiopian New
Year's Day
(Rastafarian)

Monday 12th
Chung Ch'iu
(Chinese)

Tuesday 20th
Higan (Shinto)

Friday 23rd
Autumn Equinox
(Pagan)

Thursday 29th
Rosh Hashanah
(Judaism)

Thursday 29th
Navaratri (Hinduism)

October

*(October is Black
History Month)*

Sunday 1st
International Day
of Older People

Saturday 8th
Yom Kippur
(Judaism)

Wednesday 12th
Pavarana
(Buddhism)

Wednesday 26th
Divali (Hinduism,
Sikhism and
Jainism)

Saturday 22nd
Events to be held
at Leeds Museum
to celebrate Black
History Month

November

Tuesday 1st
All Saints' Day
(Christianity)

Tuesday 1st
Samhain (Pagan)

Wednesday 2nd
All Souls' Day
(Christianity)

Wednesday 2nd
Anniversary of the
Crowning of Haile
Selassie

Saturday 5th
Bonfire Night

Thursday 10th
Anapasati Day
(Buddhism)

Sunday 13th
Remembrance
Sunday

Monday 21st
Birthday of Guru
Nanak (Sikhism)

Friday 25th
International Day
to End Violence
Against Women &
Children

Friday 25th
The start of 16
Days of Action
Campaign which is
an international
campaign to end
violence against
women. The 16
days are a
symbolic link
between
International Day to
End Violence
Against Women &

Children and
International
Human Rights Day

Sunday 27th
Advent Sunday
(Christianity)

December

Thursday 1st
World Aids Day

Saturday 3rd
International Day
of Disabled People

Saturday 10th
International
Human Rights Day

Tuesday 20th
Lama
Tsongkhapa Day
(Buddhism)

Wednesday 21st
Hanukah
(Judaism)

Thursday 22nd
Winter Solstice
(Pagan)

Sunday 25th
Christmas Day
(Christianity)

Monday 26th
Boxing Day