



Equality & Diversity
in Local Councils

Equality and Diversity Group

Draft Strategy and Action Plan

2019 - 2021

July 2019

1. Background

The purpose of the Equality & Diversity Group is to prioritise and influence equality and diversity initiatives across local government. The Group attempts to bring together the equality and diversity practices across the sector and in so doing, seeks to integrate the priorities of the Group with the ongoing work of individual councils.

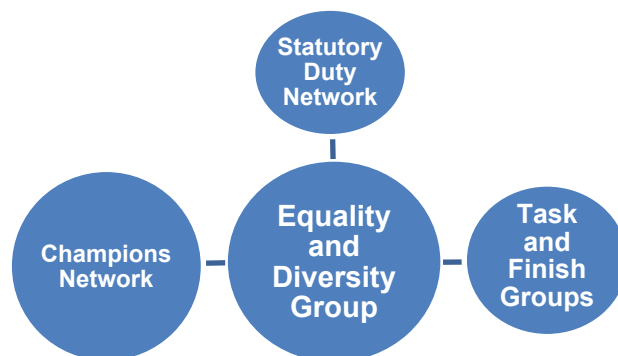
The Group has responsibility for:

- the development of the overall strategic direction for equality and diversity initiatives in local government
- determining priorities and setting objectives
- monitoring progress and reporting to the Local Government Staff Commission on a regular basis

The Group was first constituted in 2011 and was re-constituted in 2015 in the light of the reform of local government. A new Chair, who is the Chief Executive of one of the 11 councils, was appointed by Solace in 2019.

A key feature of the work of the Equality and Diversity Group is the Diversity Champions' Network which is made up of the elected member(s) and officer(s) Champions in each council. The role of the Diversity Champion is to champion equality and diversity in individual councils and to act as first point of contact for enquiries and provide advice, guidance and support on equality and diversity issues within the organisation. The Network provides a forum of support and networking for the Diversity Champions and meets quarterly to provide training and development opportunities for the Champions.

Sub groups such as the Statutory Duty Network continue to meet, together with specific task and finish groups which will be established as required.



2. Membership

The membership of the Equality and Diversity Working Group is drawn from stakeholder bodies across the local government sector and includes Chief Executives, Diversity Champions, Equality Officers and HR Officers in councils, trade union officers and Staff Commission members, as well as representatives from external stakeholder groups.

The current membership comprises:

Chair (Solace)	Anne Donaghy, Chief Executive, Mid and East Antrim BC
LGSC	Lindsay Boal, Commission Member Monica Burns, Commission Member Willie Francey, Commission Member Bernie Kelly, Commission Member Helen Hall, Director of Corporate Services
Disability Action	TBC
Diversity Champions	Cllr Michael Goodman, Antrim and Newtownabbey BC Cllr Cáthal Mallaghan, Mid Ulster DC
Community Relations Council	Jacqueline Irwin, Chief Executive
Equality Commission for NI	Patrice Hardy, Equality Manager Kevin Oakes, Equality Officer
NIPSA	Geraldine Alexander, Assistant Secretary
PPMA NI	Paula Donnelly, Head of HR, Derry City and Strabane DC
Statutory Duty Network	Mary Hanna, Policy & Diversity Officer, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon BC
DemocraShe	Bronagh Hinds
Equality Coalition	Robyn Scott

3. Purpose of the Strategy and Action Plan

This document has been developed to guide the work of the Equality and Diversity Group in the longer term, and to focus on the action plan for 2019 - 2021. It was developed following consultation with members of the Equality and Diversity Group, the groups which the members represent, and other stakeholders.

In focussing on these activities, continuing to work with our stakeholders and responding to their needs, the Equality and Diversity Group aims to support and assist councils to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations as an Employer, a Service Provider and a Civic Leader.

This will be done by working in partnership with councils:

- to address equality and diversity issues
- to ensure continuity of the ongoing equality and diversity activities
- to support cross-sectoral initiatives
- to involve and inform external stakeholders
- to pilot new equality and diversity initiatives
- to provide training and development initiatives
- to showcase best practice

4. Reporting Mechanisms

Progress on meeting the activities detailed in the action plan will be:

- reported to members of the Equality and Diversity Group at their meetings
- a copy of the minutes of the Equality and Diversity Group meetings will be included on the Staff Commission meeting agendas for information
- a copy of the minutes of the Equality and Diversity Group meetings will be included on the Solace meeting agendas for information
- periodic reports will be sent to councils through the Local Government Staff Commission E-zine, including updates from external stakeholders
- members will report back to the stakeholder group they represent:
 - Solace
 - LGSC
 - PPMA NI
 - Statutory Duty Network
 - Diversity Champions' Network
 - Disability Action
 - Community Relations Council
 - ECNI
 - NIPSA
 - Equality Coalition

5. Equality and Diversity Framework

This strategy and action plan supports the Equality and Diversity Framework which details each Council's

- statement of intent
- approach to meeting their equality and diversity obligations
- demonstrates their compliance with them.

The Framework covers everyone who uses council services, facilities and accesses information.

6. Outcomes/Outputs

Our priorities include actions to help achieve some of the Draft Programme for Government 2016 – 2021 targets:

Outcome 3: We have a more equal society

Outcome 8: We care for others and help those in need

Outcome 9: We are a shared society that respects diversity

Outcome 10: We are a confident, welcoming, outward looking society

The Strategy and Action Plan will result in the following benefits for the local government sector:

- officers and members will be well informed on equality and diversity issues
- councils will be representative of the communities which they serve
- local government will be recognised for best practice in equality and diversity
- officers and members will be supported and developed through a coaching and mentoring network
- external stakeholders will have a mechanism to share their views and information with councils
- councils will benefit from cross-sectoral working and initiatives
- councils will be able to demonstrate to their citizens that they are committed to equality and diversity in the development of policy and the delivery of services to the whole community which they serve

Strategy and Action Plan

2019 - 2021

Key Strategic Objective: By working with our stakeholders and responding to their needs, we aim to support and assist councils to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations as an Employer, a Service Provider and a Civic Leader

Equality and Diversity Group	
Develop partnerships with other equality groups and networks	Ongoing
Review the membership of the Group to include other equality groups and networks	August 19 and ongoing
Revise the Equality and Diversity Framework and relaunch it at an event for Councils	Sept 19
Establish sub-groups:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to develop a strategy on data including council statistics, NISRA, community planning and ECNI 	Oct 19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to identify training required to mainstream equality, good relations and DAPs 	Jan 20
Diversity Champions	
Review the role of Diversity Champion and provide guidance on how the role should be carried out and how it should link with senior leaders in the council	Aug 19
Provide regular training events, for example on the role of Diversity Champions, ethics, dealing with uncomfortable issues/contentious areas	Ongoing – 2 per year
Leadership	
Work in partnership with the ECNI to implement the ECNI S75 Demonstrating Effective Leadership Guidance in councils.	Sept 19
Provide a seminar on civic leadership for Diversity Champions and Equality Officers	Feb 20

<p>Disability</p> <p>Build links with the Solace Disability Champion and develop ways to work in partnership</p> <p>Work with the ECNI to implement the Mental Health Charter across local government</p>	<p>Sept 19</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Good Practice Examples</p> <p>Develop a mechanism to share best practice examples between councils and the wider public sector.</p> <p>Hold an annual seminar to showcase best practice examples</p> <p>Hold an awards event for diversity and inclusion initiatives in councils</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>24 Sept 19 and annually</p> <p>Launch in Sept 19 for event in 2020</p>
<p>Consultation</p> <p>Develop a mechanism to facilitate consultation events across councils.</p>	<p>Feb 2020</p>