**London Anchor Institutions’ Network (LAIN) Hiring & Skills Working Group**

**Minutes**

**14:00 – 16:00 GMT, 06 March 2023**

Meeting convened at London Councils and via Teams

**Co-Chairs:** Janet Gardner (Waltham Forest College) & Karima Khandker (Thames Water).

**Attendees:**

Rosemary Oduntan Oke (London Borough of Barking & Dagenham), Darren De Souza (London Higher), Forogh Rahmani (GLA), Rohan Gupta on behalf of Dianna Neal (London Councils), John Soper (Middlesex University), Alison May (London Borough of Lambeth), Mary Vine-Morris (AoC), David Steeds (DWP), Dr Kate Daubney (University of London), Beth Wheaton (GLA), Souraya Ali (GLA), Shehreen Najam (GLA), Gemma Cook (London City Airport), Camelia Gamee (GLA), David Steeds (DWP), Sophie Cloutterbuck (London Higher Civic Network), Adam Norris (GLA), Hannah Candassamy (GLA), Claire Southwood on behalf of Nina Hemming (NHS), Evelyn Odeyemi (NHS), James Lloyd (TfL), Kelly Losarina (NHS), Urooj Khan (NHS), Diane Lightfoot (Business Disability Forum), Paul Deemer (NHS), Harry Poil (London Chamber), Yolande Burgess, Verity Ayling-Smith (GLA), Nancy Pretty (NHS), Emily Dixon (London Higher), Anna Gunstone (London Higher), Claire Rae (University of London)

**Apologies:**

Michelle Cuomo-Boorer (GLA), Mark Hilton (Business LDN), Paul Marshall (University of East London), Sam Gurney (Trades Union Congress), Alexia Nazarian (Bloomberg Associates), Rebecca Baker (Film London), Bridget Ackeifi (Bloomberg Associates).

**Discussion:**

1. **Welcome & Introduction:**

* Karima (in the chair) and Janet welcomed attendees to the meeting.
* Karima welcomed John Soper (Director of Inclusion and Wellbeing) from Middlesex University. John will be replacing Anna Kyprianou in the working group.
* Karima also welcomed Camelia Gamee (Resourcing & EVP Specialist) who will be replacing Gemma Cullen from the GLA.
* Karima gave a brief re-cap of the previous meeting. Two presentations were made in the last meeting, one by John Lewis Partnership on how we can support young care leavers; the second presentation was made by Mark Hilton from the BusinessLDN on the Local Skills Improvement Plans.
* Karima thanked the member organisations for submitting in their organisational metrics in the last meeting and for signing up for future commitment on the collective metrics.
* Karima introduced the new theme of the meeting for this session: to support disability in the workplace, including how to remove barriers to recruitment and creating inclusive work spaces.
* Members were asked to reflect on the breakout sessions at the LAIN conference.

1. **Disability in the workplace**

* Karima Introduced Diane Lightfoot (CEO of Business Disability Forum) to present. Business Disability Forum works with businesses, the government and disabled people, to improve the life experiences of disabled employees by removing barriers to inclusion.
* Diane gave an overview of some of the key issues relating to disability in the workplace and how to create a more inclusive culture.
* Some of the important points discussed in this presentation include:
* The Business Disability Forum provides a huge range of advice and support to employers in the space of inclusion and disability and is increasingly engaging in policy work. They also provide opportunities for businesses to get together and share what works.
* 83% of disabilities are acquired and the average age of acquiring a disability is 53. It was discussed that diverse teams perform better. 52.7% of disabled people of working age are in employment.
* Over 90% of disabilities are not immediately visible.
* Identity around disability is very personal and complex.
* Most workplace adjustments are not costly, and lots of them are free.
* For more details, please see attached slides which Diane talked through.

1. **Best Practice**

**Case Study – GLA’s lessons learnt on making the workplace more inclusive with Verity**

**Ayling-Smith (Workforce ED&I Advisor at GLA) and Camelia Gamee (Resourcing & EVP**

**Specialist at GLA)**

* Karima invited Verity and Camelia to present on the steps that the GLA has taken to make it more inclusive from a disability perspective and what lessons have been learnt.
* Some of the key points presented by Verity and Camelia include the following:
* 7% GLA staff have shared they have a disability. 13% senior leaders have shared they have a disability. London working age population is 17% and the rate of sharing information is 91%.
* Developing a cohesive EDI strategy was a corporate priority for GLA. The GLA recognises there are still a number of actions that need to be taken and has developed an action plan.
* The GLA has recently launched a hiring manager toolkit. The purpose of the toolkit is to help managers and senior managers through each stage in the recruitment and selection process. It sets out the skills needed to recruit effectively and covers the essential aspects of UK employment law. The GLA has used the toolkit to outline managers’ responsibility in relation to the disability confident scheme, emphasising the importance of a fair and open competition.
* Compulsory inclusive recruitment briefing webinars had been established for managers. They were delivered to ensure diverse candidate pools and interview panels, mitigate bias and learn where to gain further support, for example signposting to the Business Disability Forum.
* The GLA has introduced the Workplace Adjustment Passport (this has been circulated to all attendees). The purpose of the passport is to ensure that everyone has a clear record of what adjustments have been agreed. The passport will travel with the job holder. The GLA is also working with TfL to share the passport with new joiners so they can think about the support that is offered.
* The GLA has achieved Level 1 as part of the Disability Confident scheme and is going through the self-assessment process for Level 2. This scheme helps organisations to improve how they attract, recruit and retain disabled workers.
* The GLA is working on ways to regularly review the data it has available. Data and analysis will allow the GLA to track impact, including on staff progression.
* For more information, please see attached slides.

1. **Sharing learnings and success stories**

Under this agenda item, members shared learning and best practices from their organisations.

First speaker: Disability Pay Gap - James Lloyd (Skills & Employment, Strategy Manager) – TfL

* Karima accordingly invited James Lloyd from TfL to discuss their disability pay gap data. The key points included the following:
* In 2022, TfL published their first disability pay gap data. They had already been publishing their ethnicity and gender pay gap information.
* TfL is a Disability Confident Level 2 employer and runs a programme for adults who are neurodivergent (outlined at previous meeting).
* Issues of declaration rates came out of this exercise. Whilst the published pay gap was between 2.5% to 5%, only just over 50% of TfL colleagues had shared whether they had a disability or not (compared to 91% of GLA staff).
* Sharing information was a key barrier for staff in this sphere. Just over 50% of TfL staff shared information compared to GLA which was 91% of staff sharing information about disability.
* To address this, TfL has been paying a lot of attention to the use of language. They asked colleagues to ‘share’ information, and explained in a campaign why the information was important and how it would help make the workplace more inclusive. A lot of assurance was provided that data would be kept secure.
* TfL’s experience is a good example of how their senior leadership team got behind the campaign. There will be a relaunch of this campaign soon.
* The disability pay gap journey helped TfL to raise the profile of the disability staff network group.. There is a lot more support for this network now and there are action plans in place.
* Due to the campaign that TfL has run, there has been a marked improvement in declarations.
* Building confidence for line managers to have conversations was one of the key components. Line managers need to be more empowered and individuals need to feel psychologically safe to share information.

Second speaker: Disability Confident Level 3 - John Soper (Director of Inclusion and Wellbeing) – Middlesex University

* The key points highlighted by John include the following:
* Middlesex University is a Disability Confident Level 3 employer. They didn’t think about going for Level 3 until they joined up with the Business Disability Forum (BDF). BDF encouraged the university to work towards Level 3 and validated their submission.
* Middlesex University has always offered guaranteed interviews and made reasonable adjustments for their employees. They are one of the largest employers in the London Borough of Barnet.
* 84 out of 16,33 core staff at the University declared a disability, which is 5%. It is a very low percentage, but they are offering adjustments to a greater proportion of staff than this. The low declaration rate is primarily due to the fact that staff don’t have confidence in declaring information.
* They have achieved a number of other accreditations in the past including Athena Swan, Stonewall, and the former Mayor’s Healthy Workplace Award, and now the Mayor’s Good Work Standard (pending). They could use their experience and information from these applications to support their Disability Confident accreditation.
* When Middlesex started working with Business Forum Disability, they were at Level 1 and within a year they were at Level 3. There is very little difference between working towards Level 2 and 3. Their journey was about all the good practice they had, understanding all the processes and policies.
* The key thing highlighted is to work towards Level 2 and ask yourself if you can work towards Level 3.
* John highlighted the importance of working with your HR department to embed support for disabled staff across all processes. This shouldn’t be a tick box exercise but about changing culture. Feedback on progress can be gathered through employee engagement surveys – ultimately staff who feel well supported will be happier and more engaged at work.

Some useful links that were shared by the members are as follows:

* [<https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/publications-and-reports/equality-and-inclusion-publications#on-this-page-2>](https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/publications-and-reports/equality-and-inclusion-publications#on-this-page-2)
* [<https://www.som.org.uk/evaluating-and-supporting-neurodifferences-work>](https://www.som.org.uk/evaluating-and-supporting-neurodifferences-work)
* [<https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/what-we-do/employment/covenant-for-employers>](https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/what-we-do/employment/covenant-for-employers)
* [<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-adjustment-passport>](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-adjustment-passport)
* [<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign>](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign)
* [<https://www.nhsemployers.org/publications/nhs-disabled-staff-experiences-during-covid-19-report>](https://www.nhsemployers.org/publications/nhs-disabled-staff-experiences-during-covid-19-report)

1. **Wrap up and next steps**

* Karima thanked all the members
* One of the members informed the group that London Councils has recently established a new working group to support young people with disabilities accessing work and in the workplace. Yolande agreed to share more details on this.

**Actions:**

* It was agreed that members would assess what their current position is on publishing disability gaps.
* All future meetings will be aimed at being held face to face (in-person).
* Members to come prepared for our next meeting on the 26th of June 2023, to feedback on any action that you have taken as a result of the Hiring and Skills meeting on the 6th of March, around supporting disabled Londoners, for example, if you have made a change or started the process to become a  ‘Disability Confident Employer’. This will help us measure the collective impact of the working group and we can start to capture the collective actions taken by members on our theme areas of focus.
* SN to circulate presentation slides and additional resources, including Workplace Adjustment Passport template from the GLA and Business Disability Forum (Complete with thanks to Cami, Verity and Diane).

**Next meeting:**

In-person meeting on 26 June 2023. Venue: Brixton Town Hall.