

Hull & East Yorkshire LEP Board Report
Paper D – Discussion Paper: Equality, Diversity & Inclusion



Jon Brunton, Growth Hub Manager & Chris Howell, Employment & Skills Manager in conjunction with Catherine Bishop, HEY LEP EDI Champion
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1. Summary

- 1.1. This paper gives details of work done by the HEY LEP Growth Hub Manager and Employment & Skills Manager on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) in conjunction with the HEY LEP ED&I Champion, and sets out some considerations for the LEP Board.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Board notes the content of the report and progress made to date.

3. Report

- 3.1. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) are core cross-cutting themes that sit at the heart of any publicly funded organisation, with implications for governance, decision making, service design and service delivery, as well as monitoring and evaluation. This is enshrined in the Public Sector Equality Duty; a piece of government legislation which states that public authorities are required, in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to:
 - A) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
 - B) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - C) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 3.2. HEY LEP appointed board member Catherine Bishop as ED&I champion to support the HEY LEP to develop its activity in regard to ED&I, as well as to champion the importance of EDI within LEP activities.
- 3.3. ED&I principles are actively championed by the LEP's Employment & Skills team and feature strongly in the HEY LEP's Employment & Skills Strategy. Employment opportunities created by economic growth must be open and accessible to all and everyone should be given the chance to fulfil their potential. A positive approach to ED&I is not merely a moral imperative but is also widely accepted to bring business benefits to employers across all sectors. Moreover, it is increasingly the case that employers are recognising that individuals with unique talents often carry some form of categorisation that carries an association with these principles.
- 3.4. In relation to business support, from the year 2022/23, the HEY Growth Hub has been contractually obligated by funders at BEIS and latterly DBT to gather anonymised "protected characteristics" data from service users. This

is gathered from business owners that engage with the Growth Hub, and records data on 4 of the 9 protected characteristics classifications:

- 1) Gender
- 2) Age
- 3) Ethnicity
- 4) Disability Status

This data is gathered to ensure that the Growth Hub service is accessible to all service users, regardless of their protected characteristics.

- 3.5. Given the activity being undertaken across the LEP on ED&I it was felt appropriate to discuss this with the LEP's ED&I champion in order to brief and to also discuss how the LEP could better coordinate its ED&I activity. To this end, the Growth Hub Manager and the Employment & Skills Manager initially met with Catherine Bishop on 29 November 2022 to initially discuss this.
- 3.6. The meeting explored potential approaches to coordinating and improving ED&I work within the LEP, the sharing of good practice and organisational approaches. It was felt that the most appropriate way of advancing this within the LEP was to create an ED&I framework to be owned, monitored and reviewed by the LEP Board.
- 3.7. The Growth Hub Manager and Employment and Skills Manager subsequently drafted a HEY LEP ED&I action plan (see *attached as appendix 1*). This action plan 'framework' reflects the various services and work streams of the LEP and also acknowledges the governance functions that require support from the LEP Board. This was shared with the EDI Champion in the summer of 2023.
- 3.8. Further discussions were held between the EDI Champion and LEP colleagues on 15 August 2023. The initial draft of the LEP ED&I action plan was reviewed and it was felt that a more substantial ED&I framework for the HEY LEP would be desirable, however given the closedown of the LEP at the end of March 2024, it was questioned whether this was an appropriate use of time and resources. It was also discussed whether this would be better positioned as a piece of preparatory work for the prospective HEY Mayoral Combined Authority. It was agreed that further research was needed to better understand the ED&I approaches of the two HEY local authorities, in order to inform LEP planning and activities around ED&I.
- 3.9. The Growth Hub Manager and Employment & Skills Manager met with ED&I colleagues at Hull City Council on 13 September 2023, and with ED&I colleagues at East Riding of Yorkshire Council on 24 October 2024. These meetings confirmed that whilst both local authorities had ED&I mechanisms within their decision making and governance processes, that this was not consistent across different council service areas and that it did not make provision for devolved arrangements.

- 3.10. The Growth Hub Manager met with the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Officer at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) on 07 November 2023, in order to understand how ED&I is managed within an MCA. This meeting underlined how proactive WYCA are in the integration of ED&I across governance, decision making, service design and delivery, and monitoring and evaluation. WYCA have taken a number of steps to more thoroughly integrate ED&I across the organisation and have committed resource in order to do this. The colleague from WYCA offered their support and advice to the HEY LEP and/or prospective HEY MCA as and when a new approach to ED&I was agreed.
- 3.11. LEP colleagues are therefore now in the position of having completed this “task and finish” research and require guidance from the Board as to most appropriate course of action and next steps. There are a number of options available. These are:
- 3.11.1. Continue to develop the draft HEY LEP ED&I framework.
 - 3.11.2. Maintain the current draft of the HEY LEP ED&I framework until the closedown of the HEY LEP, taking no further action with a view to this being adopted by the Combined Authority.
 - 3.11.3. Engage with local authority colleagues to develop a new draft strategy/framework for ED&I under the prospective HEY MCA.
 - 3.11.4. Take no further action.
- 3.12. We would welcome the feedback and comments of the LEP board to inform choice of next steps.

4. Resource Implications

- 4.1. Should the Board advise further work be done on the subject, resource will need to be identified and would need to be borne by the HEY LEP or successor organisation.