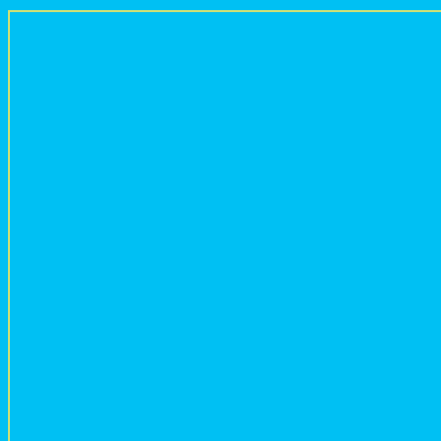# Staff Networks

A guide to setting up sustainable and effective employee network groups in higher education institutes

Preview

Staff networks have become an accepted feature of organisational life in both private and public sectors, where they are increasingly recognised as good practice.

This resource guide will be particularly useful for members of staff and diversity practitioners who have recently established, or are considering setting-up a network group. It also includes some information that will be relevant to senior managers. The guide contains background information on the motivations for setting up a network, guidance on establishing a group, as well as advice on developing a network into a sustainable and effective forum.

Our involvement in staff networks at the University of Manchester came about by chance. We knew we had to consult with staff groups under the requirements of the Race Relations Amendment Act, the Disability Discrimination Act and the Equality Act but we had no formal mechanisms to do this. We probably did what most employers would do - we advertised the consultation and invited staff to come along and give us their views. We were surprised how readily staff became involved and by the contribution they could make. Staff input transformed the development of our policies from words written on paper to a process where they felt ownership and became stakeholders in what we were trying to achieve. Recognising the value of this we have now formalised the role that the networks play in the development and implementation of key University policies.

Networks don't replace traditional consultation processes with trade unions and other academic bodies - the trade unions were great supporters of the staff networks in Manchester and in some cases played a crucial role in setting them up. The development of staff networks are a recognition of the fact that people come together in many different ways and that they can contribute to development of policies and working practices without having to be part of established groups. Everyone benefits when staff feel that they are listened to and can have a role to play. Staff networks help you open the door to changing the culture of the organisation.

The publication of this document by the Higher Education Funding Council for England 'Leadership, Governance and Management' project means that institutions no longer have to leave it to chance to learn the benefits of staff networks. Here in one easily readable book is practical advice on how to set up networks, how to involve them in institutional programmes and how to ensure that they become part of the fabric of institutions. It brings together examples of good practice from a range of organisations and provides signposting to valuable resources. The nature of Higher Education Institutions means that staff networks have the potential to transcend the traditional academic and administration divide and engage all staff in an agenda around equality and diversity which can be transformational for an organisation.

It is no longer necessary to stumble across the value of staff networks by chance!

Aneez Esmail
Associate Vice-President (Equality & Diversity)
University of Manchester

Acknowledgements

What does the guide include?

The guide provides information and advice on setting up sustainable and effective staff networks, incorporating resources, case studies, reflective questions and other practical information in a user-friendly format.

Section one

This section will look at what staff networks are, highlight some common rationales and drivers for setting them up, outline their benefits, as well as consider success criteria that determine what a sustainable and effective network looks like.

Section two

The second section concerns the practical matter of how to set up a staff network. Some of the main considerations in setting up and sustaining a network group will be outlined and explored.

Further information

What are staff networks?

"Employee networks - forums for staff who share one or more aspects of their identity - are becoming more popular. Increasingly, they are funded and promoted by employers, rather than operating informally, as employers appreciate the benefits they can bring to the whole organisation."

(Stonewall Diversity Toolkit)

At best, definitions are useful pointers and at their worst, messy generalisations. Sliding towards the former, we can say that staff networks bring together people who personally identify with a minority group and/or have an interest in matters relating to the various strands of diversity.

Networks are often established using the principles of self-organisation and are usually supported and resourced to some extent, by the employer. They are set up in response to different needs and fulfil various functions, ranging from peer support through to professional development. More often than not, a network will assume the role of a critical friend to the organisation, acting in an advisory capacity, supplementing and supporting traditional staff consultation and representation channels of the trade unions for example.

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact origins of staff networks. Their emergence can be understood as a response to changes in the landscape of industrial relations and the relationships formed between employers, employees and service users. Employee groups have been present in some shape or form since the late 1970s. One of the features that set apart more recent initiatives is the recognition they have been given by employers, who are increasingly using networks to inform governance and decision making processes and to help fulfil their legal duties. Since the 1990s, staff networks have become an accepted part of the fabric of work-life in private and public sector organisations, where they are often badged as an equal opportunities initiative, aligned to an organisation's diversity agenda.

The Lancashire County Council 'Forum for Asian & Black Employees' was established in 1995 as the result of an internal review, which highlighted that black staff wanted more opportunities to network, and to be better supported in accessing professional development and career progression opportunities. The forum has approximately 100 members and meets bi-monthly, offering seminars, practical workshops and mentoring opportunities, as well as a safe space for people to share sensitive information.
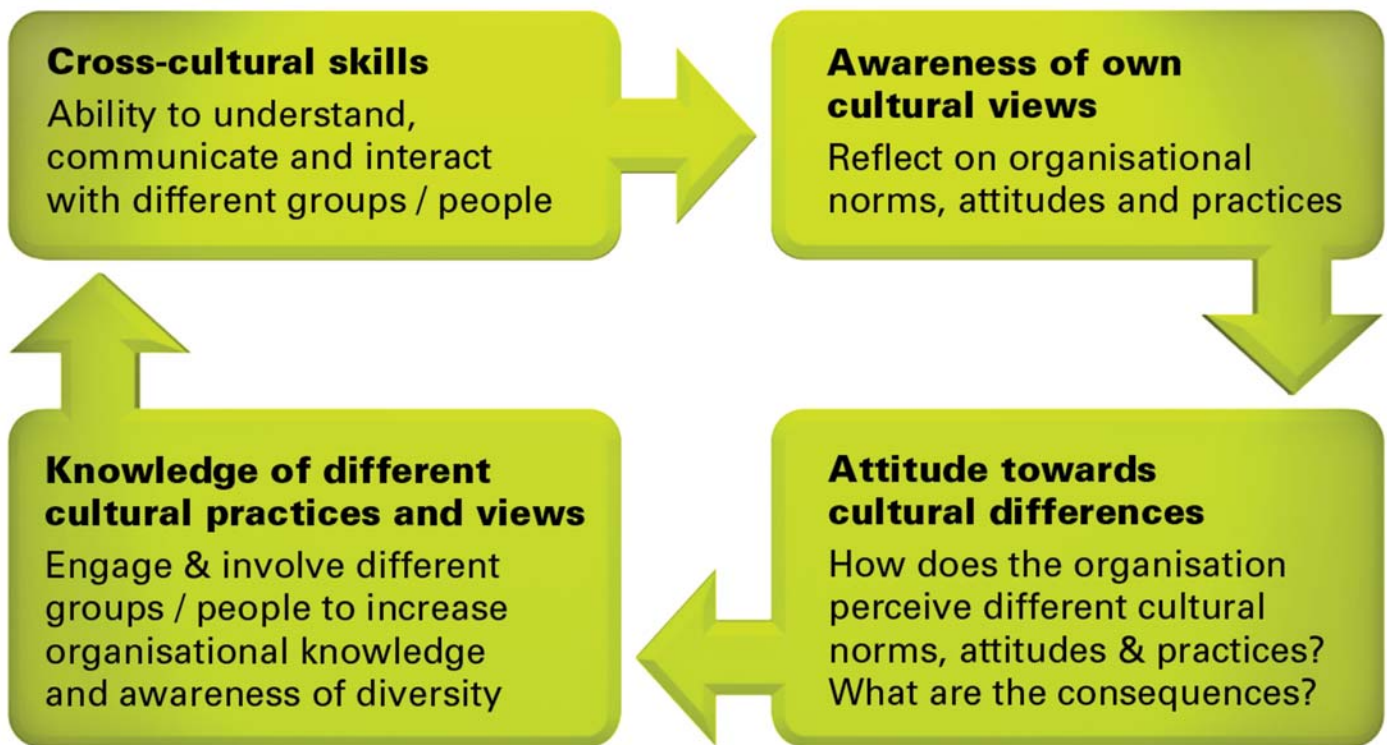
The group has a clearly defined advisory role, supporting the authority in developing culturally sensitive services for BME people and advising on employee issues. Since its inception, the network has regularly reviewed its remit and objectives, so as to remain relevant to the changing needs of its members and the authority, which has contributed to its longevity.

Why set up a staff network?

"It's getting them (the organisation) to appreciate that the mainstream and everyday way of working IS equality and diversity but that, where there's gaps in (their) knowledge these groups can help you deliver on these things."

(Diversity Manager, Local Government Authority)

Organisational culture: To be a relevant and effective HEI, it's vital that the diversity found in the organisation is reflected in the make up of the workforce and in the institute's provision of services. Students and staff should have appropriate role models with whom they can identify, and have access to services that are sensitive to, and reflect, different cultural realities.

Cross-cultural skills
Ability to understand, communicate and interact with different groups / people

Awareness of own cultural views
Reflect on organisational norms, attitudes and practices

Knowledge of different cultural practices and views
Engage & involve different groups / people to increase organisational knowledge and awareness of diversity

Attitude towards cultural differences
How does the organisation perceive different cultural norms, attitudes & practices? What are the consequences?

Corporate social responsibility: As public sector bodies, HEIs have a legal and moral responsibility to ensure that staff are treated fairly, equitably and with dignity. Investing in staff network shows that your organisation is committed to these ideals for different groups of people.

Business Imperative: If staff can feel comfortable being themselves in the workplace, they are more likely to perform better and develop their potential. Tribunals can be both costly and damaging to a HEI's reputation.

Legislation: There is now considerable legislation, which prohibits discrimination and harassment in HEIs on the grounds of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief and disability.

Legislation also acknowledges that there are institutional causes of discrimination. HEIs have a duty to identify these causes, and to take steps to eliminate discrimination and promote equality. This includes specific duties, such as developing and implementing equality schemes in consultation with (race and gender) and involving (disability) staff, trade unions and service users. Staff networks provide opportunities for HEIs to fulfil their legal obligations. (see 'Overview of Legislation' p.32)

Employment Tribunal: Whitfield Vs Cleanaway, 2005

A gay office manager, nicknamed Sebastian (after a character in the show 'Little Britain') by senior colleagues, was awarded £35,000 after becoming the first employee to win a case under the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, banning discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Richard Whitfield sued the waste management company for breach of contract, unfair dismissal and victimisation, after being subjected to a campaign of homophobic abuse.

Some reflections: Your organisation

■ What does the staff profile of your organisation look like?

■ How does it compare with the national picture and benchmarked against local organisations?

■ What policies are in place which cater for different groups?

■ What provisions are there to support under-represented staff?

■ What are representational bodies (e.g. Trade Unions) doing to engage staff, from different identify groups? What can be learnt from their experiences?

■ Does your organisation attempt to capture the experiences and feedback of employees (e.g. staff survey)? If so, what is being said about the experiences of staff from minority groups?

■ In what ways has your organisation consulted and involved staff in developing policies and equality schemes?

Outreach and impact of staff networks

"...nothing should be outside the remit of these sorts of groups."

(Chair of Black & Minority Ethnic Network, Police Force)

Network groups have been shown to benefit staff, service users and employers in a number of ways.
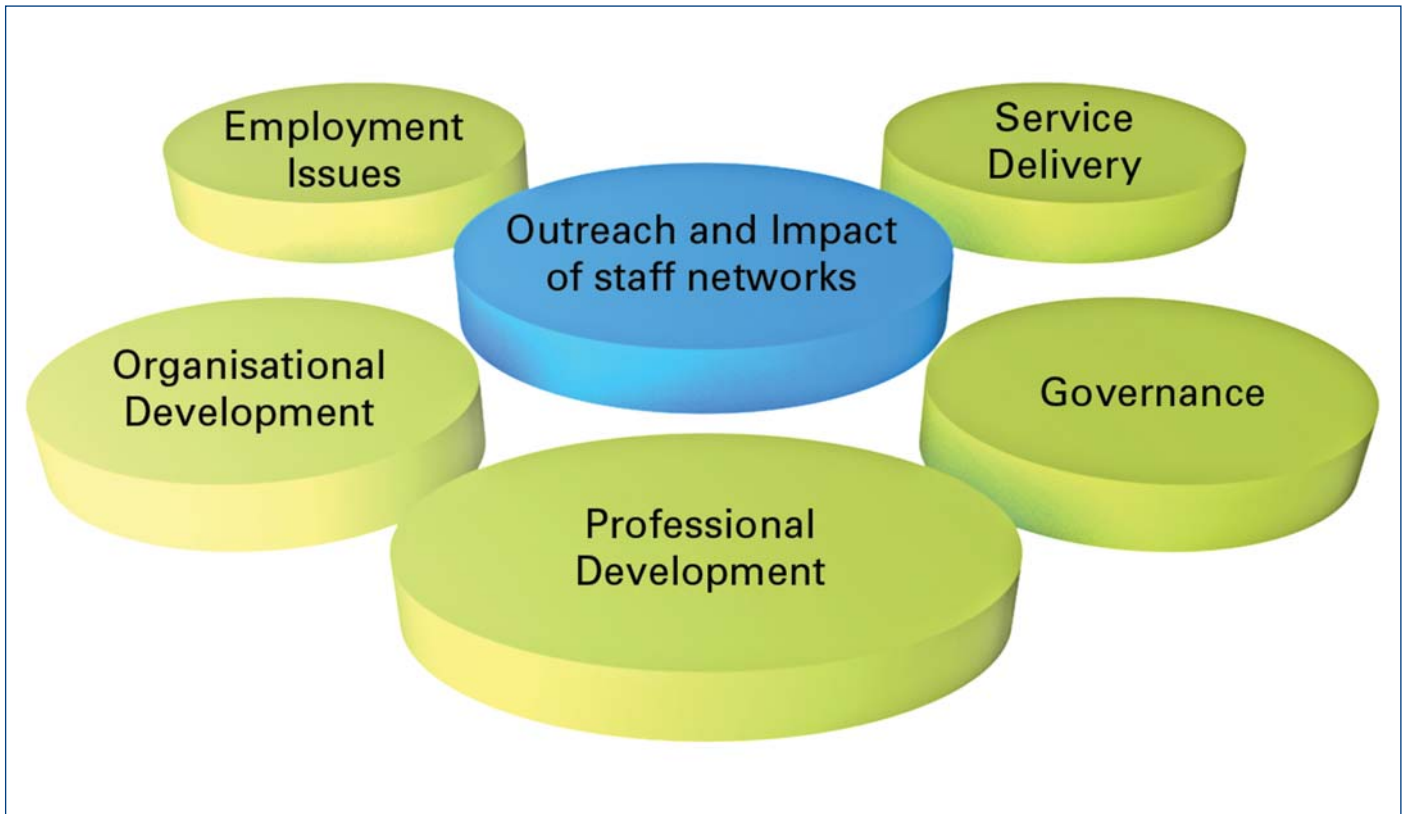
Employment issues

At Manchester City Council, the corporate Black & Minority Ethnic network have participated in recruitment fairs and advised the authority on developing marketing and advertising campaigns to recruit minority ethnic candidates.

At the University of Salford, members of the various network groups have received mediation training or are institutional anti bullying and harassment officers. This enables the groups to function as specialist 'first contact points' to support staff that may have experienced difficulties in the workplace. The networks work in conjunction with trade unions, to support the representational process.

Professional Development

Members of the BME network at the University of Manchester were instrumental in the establishment of a BME Managers Mentoring Programme. One of the biggest challenges highlighted has been convincing the wider University community that this positive action scheme is a legitimate way to level the playing field and is not a form of discrimination towards other staff.

The Women's staff group at Anglia Ruskin University have hosted seminars and workshops for its members on subjects such as neuro-linguistic skills and assertive management techniques. They also host an annual conference with a themed focus.

Governance

The network groups at The University of Manchester have a representative who sits on the organisation's Equality & Diversity Forum. The forum is chaired by the Vice-President and deals with operational and strategic matters, feeding directly into the Senate.

Service Delivery

The Disability Action Network at Leeds Metropolitan University has worked alongside their Estates Department, which has involved the group reviewing and advising on the development of the University's accessibility procedures and policies.

The Forum for Asian and Black Employees at Lancashire County Council has worked with the authority's Counselling service, advising them on cultural diversity issues. The group have developed working partnerships with key departments and service areas, in order to support the authority in developing more relevant and effective services for BME residents and members of staff.

Organisational Development

The LGB network at Merseyside Police work in collaboration with their local Police Federation (akin to a trade union) to deliver LGB-awareness training sessions as part of the staff induction process. The Chair of the local Police Federation believes that the support offered by the group has been invaluable in supporting and representing LGBT employees' interests and issues.

The Disabled Staff Network at the University of Liverpool has helped their organisation to develop an employment related disability training programme for HR managers, which focuses on the admission, recruitment and retention of disabled staff.

Individual and organisational benefits

For the individual

- Network with peers across the organisation

- Share experiences and explore ways of overcoming barriers

- Find out, share information and reflect on issues that affect you

- Develop your knowledge of the organisation

- Participate in professional development activities

- Input into your organisation's decision making processes

For the organisation

- Demonstrates commitment to the diversity agenda

- People will feel more valued and better motivated

- Provides additional support and development mechanisms for staff

- Creates a platform for dialogue and consultation on diversity issues

- Better informed about the real impact of policies and practices on people

- Helps to fulfil legal and moral obligations

Towards a sustainable and effective network

Why sustainable and effective?

If you've opened this page, there's a good chance you're thinking about setting up a network. Before making your decision consider if you will these two lists of words. What do they relate to?

…to support… bear the weight of… endure without giving way… to keep going… to uphold as valid or just… keep in existence… encourage… to keep up competently…

…adequate to accomplish a purpose… producing the intended or expected result… producing a deep or vivid impression… striking…

These are definitions of the words SUSTAIN-ABLE and EFFECTIVE.

Would you really want to set up a network that is ineffective and unsustainable?

Nonetheless networks are set up that aren't successful in delivering intended objectives and that do flounder and perish.

Attributes of an effective and sustainable network

From the research we've undertaken in different public sectors, we have identified a number of factors that contribute and help to determine whether a network will grow to be successful and effective.

In section two, the attributes of a successful network and how to develop them will be explored in more detail. For now attributes have been listed to give you an idea of what a successful and effective network looks like.

These criteria aren't meant to deter you and your organisation from setting up a network group or groups. It is an assessment of what a good network looks like and how it functions. No network begins with all these boxes ticked. However, those that are successful and effective, over time, have been shown to develop all or most of these attributes.

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Success Criteria

- Active championing by senior management

- Time-off to participate in meetings and activities

- Allocation of a reasonable budget

- Roles and work shared amongst group members, which is formally recognised and rewarded by the employer

- Realistic and achievable objectives, reviewed periodically

- Transparent reporting structures and feedback mechanisms and opportunities to inform the change process

- Using varied strategies to inform and involve staff and raise awareness of a network within the organisation

- Support from those areas that deal with people matters (i.e. Personnel, Equality & Diversity, Trade Unions, Staff Development, Human Resources)

- Situated in an organisation with a well developed culture of staff consultation and involvement

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Risks and pitfalls

"…a lot of people can argue that these groups have been set up to fail… And some cynics might argue, and indeed this has happened in some places, that they've (the organisation) wanted to tick the box, as it's now recognised as good practice wherever you go, and in whatever organisation."

(Diversity Manager, Local Government Authority)

If a group is set up with little or no real commitment from the organisation there is a real risk of alienating staff and creating a climate of scepticism and mistrust. It won't take long for members to see through such an initiative and assume that it is merely a window dressing exercise with little real substance. This is likely to create frustration amongst members and set back an organisation's efforts to gain the trust of under-represented sections of staff.

Another risk in setting up a group has to do with the possible backlash and negative reaction it could create in the wider organisation. Evidence shows that staff networks can be perceived by some as giving members an 'unfair advantage'. If an organisation doesn't take responsibility for publicising a network as a legitimate initiative, with the objective of redressing the historical causes of discrimination, then a network and its members could be subject to unfair criticism and resentment from within the organisation.

An ineffective network could

- Put back the organisation's efforts to gain the trust of staff from minority groups

- Play into the hand of cynics
  - "… I told you these people couldn't organise themselves!"

- Proves to doubters that there was no real need for it anyway

- Create frustration and disillusionment amongst staff

The more successful staff networks would seem to be supported by different people across the organisation, and at various levels in the institutional hierarchy. Depending upon your role and position, it would be useful to discuss the idea with others in key positions to gauge their enthusiasm and likely support. These should include: trade union representatives, equality, human resource and staff development specialists, senior management diversity champions, staff and students from under-represented groups.

Deciding whether or not to establish a network group will require you and whoever else is involved to make a judgement call. The 'success criteria' outlined in the previous page will provide some food for thought and it will be beneficial to reflect on these attributes within the context of your organisation. Likewise, it would be useful to gauge the thoughts of staff by way of some preliminary research (e.g. focus group or survey), to help inform the decision making process.

However, it needs to be re-iterated that HEIs have specific legal duties to consult (on the grounds of race, gender) and involve staff (on the grounds of disability). If your organisation decides not to support the setting up of staff networks, they need to have in place alternative robust consultation procedures, to involve staff and fulfil their legal duties.

Setting up a network

This section looks at the setting up process in more detail, offering practical information and advice, as well as flagging up challenges that you may encounter along the way and looking at how organisations have dealt with these.

The following should not be viewed as sequential steps in setting up a group but rather as considerations that inform one another.

Membership, focus and remit

"It takes a while to work through all these issues...this is really important in terms of people buying in...and feeling as individuals they can contribute to the group. If you don't you'll never develop an environment of trust, you'll never get agreement or consensus on anything."

(Diversity Manager, Local Government Authority)

Deciding upon the membership of your network and its purpose is one of the first tasks you'll embark upon. There is no 'correct' way to go about this. The task will present you with options and possibilities depending upon, amongst other things, where the impetus for the network originated, the composition and experiences of the group, as well as the history and culture of the organisation.

Membership

The distinction between open and closed, inclusive and exclusive membership helps to determine whom the network is primarily open to. It shapes the attitudes and behaviours (that can be) displayed and the types of information people can and will exchange, as well as impacting upon the perception of the group within the wider organisation.

Exclusive Vs Inclusive Membership	
Exclusive	**Inclusive**
Provides a dedicated space to support an under-represented group.	Might hinder the potential of a network to become a supportive space to disclose and share sensitive information.
Could be perceived within the organisation as insular and reinforce divisions.	Could increase people's understanding and recognition of discrimination within an organisation.
Encourage people who may not feel comfortable with aspects of their identity (i.e. Not out, hidden impairment) to participate.	Some people might feel put off and disinclined to participate for fear of "Outing" themselves.
Experiences and issues could remain 'in' the group, without the means to do anything about them.	People with an interest in or specialist knowledge could make valuable contributions in supporting the work of the group.

The above table is not meant to be definitive, but a tool to promote discussion. There are likely to be several contradictory and counter arguments for each of the points raised in the table.

In practice, it's also possible to have a membership that is both inclusive and exclusive. Deciding upon the criteria is a judgement call that has to be made and some discussion will help your group work through this matter.

What is vitally important is that the decisions made about membership need to come from members themselves. If this isn't the case, it is unlikely that staff will invest trust in such an initiative or feel they have ownership of the group and where it's headed.

When setting up the Women's Network at the University of Salford staff acknowledged that there were wider gender issues that needed to be recognised, but opted for women only membership. It was felt that there weren't sufficient spaces and opportunities to support female staff in the University, and that the Network could help to fill this gap.

At Leeds Metropolitan University two parallel and related BME networks have been set up. The race forum is 'issue' based and open to all staff. The BME support group is only for staff from minority ethnic backgrounds. This mixed membership approach has been adopted to ensure that BME employees have access to a safe and confidential space, whilst also fostering an inclusive approach in dealing with race related matters.

The LGBT group at Knowsley Borough Council has a semi-open membership. The first part of every meeting provides opportunities for all staff to find out more about the group and seek advice on how to support LGB colleagues or develop LGB friendly practices in their department, for example. The second half of meetings are for LGBT members of staff only.

Rather like the chicken and egg debate, you and colleagues will be better placed to decide upon these criteria whilst also discussing and working through the network's focus and remit.

Focus and remit

- **What is the purpose of your network?**
- **What are its aims and objectives?**

Answering these questions will furnish your group with its reasons for existence and give it some focus and direction. Decisions about a network's purpose could legitimately be shaped by input from a number of sources.

Input to shape a network's focus could come from

- Experiences of staff and their identified needs
- The organisation's diversity / human resource strategy
- Corporate objectives
- Trade Union advice and input

However you choose to make decisions about your network's purpose and its intended remit, the process should be informed through consultation.

The process of consultation should

- Give opportunities for people to discuss their experiences and their motivations for involvement
- Enable members to contribute to the decision-making process
- Unearth real and genuine needs
- Identify benefits at the individual and organisational level

Without engaging in in-depth consultation it is likely that people will not have confidence in the stated purposes of the network, nor trust that best interests are being served by it. This holds equally true for members of staff as well as getting the buy-in from other key people and role holders (e.g. Trade Unions, Management, HR, Equality & Diversity) across the organisation.

"If the functions of a group don't overlap with the organisation's business objectives, how can I sell the group to my colleagues?"

(Chief Constable, Police Force)

Ideas for getting buy-in and ownership from your organisation

- Identify relevant objectives from the corporate values and mission statement
- Circulate draft terms of reference to management to raise awareness
- Encourage management to contribute to the terms of reference
- Invite a senior manager to attend one of the initial meetings
- If not already involved, notify key people from HR, E&D, Staff Development, Trade Unions and the Board of Governors about your proposed network group

Possible discussion points for initial meetings

- Experiences and motivations for involvement with the group
- The current provision of support for colleagues
- Perception of the institution in the wider community
- In what ways a network could be of benefit and how
- How it could operate and whom it would be open to
- Ground rules and responsibilities
- The group's name

Terms of Reference: Example 1

In the first meeting staff in this group discussed membership criteria and decided to include LGBT 'supporters' as well as staff with an interest or knowledge of issues, in order to harness the collective expertise and support from across the HEI. After the initial meeting, members were asked to indicate the three most important things they wanted to get out of the group, which formed the basis of the aims and objectives. The motivation for setting up this network came directly from members of staff, which influenced their decision to remain supportive, yet independent of their HEI.

University of Salford, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Staff Group

1. Introduction

1.1.   The name of the Group will be the University of Salford, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Staff Group.

1.2.   The Group shall be independent from the University but shall act on the University's behalf in some matters relating to LGBT issues and shall receive funding from the University to this end.

2. Aims

2.1.   To work towards improving the quality of life for LGBT staff and students.

2.2.   To promote consultation and development on LGBT issues.

2.3.   To act as a social network for LGBT staff.

3. Objectives

3.1.   To act in a consultative role in all areas of policy and procedure, curricula activity and service delivery and its development where it would have an impact on LGBT staff or students.

3.2.   To have clearly defined routes to channel into the existing university structure to achieve the above.

3.3.   To provide a visible support mechanism for LGBT members of staff. This could include advocacy, support and a resource 'centre' for relevant information. It is important that the entire life cycle of staff member's or student's time at Salford from recruitment to leaving is considered.

3.4.   To challenge all types of homophobia within the university community.

3.5.   A visible LGBT presence at the University of Salford and to ensure all staff are aware of the relevant legislation and internal policies in the area and to market that presence outside the University.

3.6.   To ensure that the University of Salford is an inclusive place for everyone. To this end, work with other relevant groups collaboratively.

3.7.   To create a mechanism by which LGBT members of staff have an opportunity to meet and socialise with one another.

4. Membership

4.1.   Membership is open to anyone working for, or at, the University who identifies themselves as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, or feels allied with, or supportive of, these groups of people.

4.2.   Membership of officer roles is open only to those who identify themselves as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered.

4.3.   Membership of officer roles is determined by election at an Annual General Meeting.

Terms of Reference: Example 2

The E&D Manager at this HEI decided not to re-invent the wheel when facilitating the setting up of this network. As a starting point they used the terms of reference of the Leeds City Council Disability Network and distributed it to the group. Members found this useful in structuring their initial thoughts and spent some time amending the document to reflect their own expectations, needs and intentions for the network.

Leeds Metropolitan University Disability Action

Terms of Reference

1. To provide a safe and supportive environment in which to discuss issues relating to disability

2. To provide support and networking

3. To share best practice

4. To contribute to policy development across the University

5. To contribute to staff development and awareness raising in relation to equality and diversity

6. To ensure the group has a credible presence for the disabled community through the membership and participation of disabled people.

Mode of Operation

1. The forum will meet 4-6 times each year

2. The forum will report to the Disability Strategy Group (subject to terms of ref)

3. The forum will provide a spokesperson to attend the Disability Strategy Group

4. The forum will be self-determining and self-managing

Membership

The Forum will be open to all staff and students of Leeds Metropolitan University who are willing to make a commitment to the group and the role and responsibilities of membership.

Role and Responsibilities of Membership

1. To take a proactive role in the Group

2. To contribute to projects, initiatives or activities agreed by the forum

3. To regularly attend meetings

4. To respect confidentiality

Resources

Serious consideration needs to be given to securing resources for your network. Put bluntly, they constitute a network's 'life-blood' and without them your group will not be able to breathe and grow.

Resources relate to people, time, financial and other material needs.

Finding time to participate

"I've always insisted that when these groups meet they do so in work time, because they are an asset and shouldn't be giving their own personal time... It's not a test of commitment. We are asking for some very important work...so we shouldn't abuse them."

(Equality & Diversity Manager, Local Government Authority)

Networks in higher education are more likely to hold meetings during lunch and after work. When they are held in core work hours, securing time off is usually arranged locally and at the discretion of a line manager.

In other public sectors, such as local government and the police, employers are more pro-active in endorsing and allowing people time to attend meetings in work hours.

If your institution is serious about investing in a network, they should allow staff time off to attend meetings.

Allowing people time off to attend meetings

- Demonstrates to managers and staff that networks are part of the organisation's core business

- Helps to legitimise and give credibility to network activities

- Enables more people to access meetings (not only those that have responsibility for managing their time)

- Supports your organisation's commitment to provide developmental opportunities for staff

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At Knowsley Borough Council the Chief Executive Officer is actively involved in promoting the involvement of staff in network groups. She sends out emails to all staff and managers encouraging attendance at meetings as a means of helping the organisation fulfil their legal equality responsibilities and as a core development activity for staff. People are encouraged to report managers who don't allow them to attend with reasonable notice.

Time to undertake network business

"So there is that whole issue of timing and ultimately the only way to deal with it is if we as senior officers give it importance and say "Yeah we are prepared to let you go and work on issue X and Y." If we think it is important we should be making time available."

(Deputy Chief Executive, Local Government Authority)

You also need to consider how people in the group are going to find the time to work on network related business. In some organisations little or no provision of time is offered. This means that group work has to be juggled with paid work commitments. Experiences from those involved in managing networks suggest that it's important to:

- Discuss workload implications with your manager and come to some agreement
- Be able to demonstrate to your manager how the network helps develop you professionally
- Be realistic about what you can contribute
- Keep a record of the time you spend working on group matters
- Try and plan network commitments in advance

Nonetheless, more forward-thinking employers do understand the importance of giving members some time to manage group affairs and network related business. In these organisations involvement is often recognised in an employee's professional development review.

Organisational commitment in allocating time to progress work

- Acknowledges the links between network and corporate goals
- Is often formally recognised as a professional development activity
- Creates the conditions to enable networks to achieve
- Means they will expect the network to achieve results

At the University of Salford representatives of the network groups met with the Director of Personnel to discuss the need to provide support to members wishing to work on network business. It was agreed that each group would be allocated 100 hours each year for this purpose. All network groups are also given an annual budget of £5000.

Financial and material

"(You) need a modest budget, you've got to be able to give people the ability to meet, the ability to have tea and coffee, produce leaflets, the ability to book a room, the ability to communicate with the wider group with some modest faculty time."

(Deputy Chief Executive, Local Government Authority)

Material resources and costs could include

- Venue hire
- Refreshments and catering
- Network launch
- Advertising and publicity materials (e.g. flyers and posters)
- Printing costs
- Administration support
- Travel expenses (to other networks / events / conference)
- Guest speakers
- Team development & capacity building activities
- AGM

As with finding time for people to access networks and contribute to their effective running, material resources are also needed if over time your network is to sustain itself. Having a budget empowers a network to manage its business and to take responsibility in planning and decision making about its future.

There are a number of ways in which networks have secured a budget. Personnel, Human Resources, Staff Development as well as Equality & Diversity will provide appropriate starting points.

The Equality & Diversity Unit at the University of Bradford provide some administrative support for their network groups. This includes booking rooms, writing and distributing minutes and publicity. Each group is also allocated an annual budget of £500.

When setting up four staff networks at Knowsley Borough Council, their Equality and Diversity manager developed a business case, which highlighted the importance of providing a modest annual budget to sustain the groups, year on year. This request was submitted to the senior management team and an agreed budget of £5000 has been allocated to each network.

Network management

Roles and responsibilities

WARNING: **Attempting to manage a network by yourself is bad for your health and unsustainable!**

The backbone of any successful network group is an effective structure, good management and clear accountability.

It is likely that your group will contain a small, and let's hope, committed bunch of people who will take on a large chunk of responsibility for managing the network's affairs. There are a number of ways in which your network could organise and manage itself. For some networks, a more traditional structure is favoured in which designated roles are distributed amongst the group (i.e. Chair, Secretary, Treasurer etc). In other networks, a 'core group' organise themselves, by sharing tasks and responsibilities in a more flexible manner.

Try and find a way of working that suits the group but also stretches you. You'll get a feel for this after the first few meetings. Whatever approach you decide upon, there needs to be accountability and those involved will have to make a clear commitment, with some agreed understanding of what this will actually involve.

Common tasks and skills

- Chairing and facilitating

- Agenda and Minute taking

- Report writing

- Communicating information

- Arranging and attending meetings

- Team development

- Planning and managing projects and activities

- Researching issues

- Liaising with colleagues (internal and external)

- Representing the group (internal and external)

Purpose and description of common tasks and skills

Tasks / skills	Purpose	Involves
Agenda & minute taking	Helps attendees plan and prepare	Clearly state the meeting's purpose; Sequential items in logical order; Circulate prior to meeting
	Provides a permanent record and communicates agreed actions and timescales	Accuracy, brevity and clarity; Written in the past tense and third person; Use three columns (speaker, item, action); Be prepared to summarise; Post meeting, check comments with Chair / speaker(s); Circulate; Notify persons not present on the decisions affecting them
Chairing	Steers discussion to ensure the purposes of a meeting are fulfilled	Impartiality; Assertiveness (ensure all people can contribute views & that no one person dominates); Active listening & summarising; Keeping discussion on course; Time-keeping (give appropriate weighting & consideration to all items)
Facilitating	Helps group to understand common objectives and to work towards achieving them, without taking on a particular position or viewpoint in the process	Help establish ground rules, purpose, scope & outcomes of activities; Uses various listening skills (paraphrase, balance participation, make room for all people to contribute); Creating a safe environment where people feel comfortable contributing ideas & opinions; Use of open-ended questions; Bringing to the surface implicit & unspoken questions and issues that might be challenging the group; Evaluating activities to assist in improving & developing

Tasks / skills	Purpose	Involves
Researching	Enables a grounded under-standing (based on evidence) of an issue and / or provides a solution	Gathering, interpreting information; Identifying key people, departments & finding out what they do; Evaluating how others have dealt with similar issues & challenges
Reporting, raising awareness etc.	Communicates information which has been compiled as a result of consideration of a matter	Knowing audience and pitching accordingly (What do they know already? What do they need to know? What do they want to know?); Framing issues; Using appropriate format and style
Influencing & negotiating	Persuade others and search for solutions rather than problems	Understanding different types of power (knowledge, expertise, personality and charisma, networks, stories, resources, energy etc.); Being clear about the objective to be achieved; Knowing how people operate and adapting accordingly; Understanding your impact on others; Framing matters & challenges positively; Developing trust & rapport (truthful, reliable, dependable, consistent, considerate); Willingness to acknowledge & consider other peoples' views & opinions
Project management	Organising and managing resources in order for a task to be completed within a defined scope and meeting particular objectives	Planning objectives, work undertaken & defining the outcomes; Estimation of resources & assessment of risks; Acquisition of resources & support; Co-ordination & delegation of tasks; Monitoring & reporting on progress and issues; Communicating with stakeholders.

Action planning

Having established the purpose of your network, at some point you'll need to work out how you're going to plan and achieve your goals. This will involve taking a wide-angle view of your organisation to identify your objectives, before zooming in and planning the specific details you'll need to take to achieve them.

Planning objectives

- Your terms of reference will provide a good starting point
- Build motivation - look for some quick wins
- Be realistic about what can be achieved
- Don't be afraid to ask for assistance from outside the group

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Taking time to action plan is a vital development activity for a network and should inspire members, bringing into focus where you're headed and the steps you'll need to take to get you there. One of the most common approaches to action planning objectives is underpinned by the **SMART** principle.

	Description	Diagnostic questions
Specific	Objectives should be concrete, detailed and well defined. You should set out clearly what you want to achieve, emphasizing actions (use action verbs) and intended results	- What are we going to do? - Why is this important for us to do? - Who is going to do what? - Who else needs to be involved? - How are we going to do this? - Will this objective lead to the desired result?
Measurable	You should be able to measure whether you're meeting objectives and track progress	- How will we know that the change has occurred? - Can measurements be obtained?
Achievable	Objectives need to realistic and attainable	- Can we get it done in the timeframe? - Do we understand the limitations and constraints? - Can we do this with the resources we have? - Has anyone else done this? - Is this possible?
Realistic	There needs to be an assessment of whether objectives are realistic	- Do we have the resources available to achieve this objective? - Do we need to revisit priorities to make this happen? - Is it possible to achieve this objective?
Time-bound	Setting timeframes creates the necessary urgency to prompt actions, but they also need to be realistic	- When will this objective be accomplished? - Is there a stated deadline?

In 2005 the Knowsley Borough Council Disabled Workers Group held an Away Day. They invited a colleague with expertise in organisational development to run a workshop to assist them in developing their first action plan. After this, responsibility for actions was divided between core group members. They then set about locating and developing lines of communication with key personnel within the wider organisation who could support the specific actions and help them to be realised. This involved inviting these people to group meetings to talk about their work and explore opportunities for collaboration.

Communication matters

Publicising and raising awareness

Efforts to publicise and market your network are crucial. Those involved in existing networks have highlighted several reasons for this.

Common reasons for publicising a network

- Gives visibility and aids transparency

- Helps dispel myths and cynicism

- Can help to develop new partnerships across the organisation (and externally)

- Keeps management informed and in the loop

- Aids recruitment of new members

Using different methods and media to communicate and raise awareness will be more effective than relying upon any single approach.

Face-to-face communication	
Activities	**Likely impact**
Launch Event Open Meetings / Away Days Social Events Departmental Briefings Staff Induction Annual Conference Word of mouth	■ Interactive ■ Promotes discussion ■ People can 'find out for themselves' ■ Personalises network ■ Challenge (mis)perceptions about the network ■ Opportunities to gain feedback and ideas

The University of Manchester hosted a lunchtime event to launch the LGBT staff network in 2006. A representative from Stonewall was invited to speak and a member of the Equality & Diversity Unit answered questions about the University's LGBT policy. In the evening, a follow-up social event took place in the city's gay village.

As part of the staff induction process, the Equality & Diversity manager at Knowsley Borough Council gives out basic information about the authority's network groups. This includes details about their purpose and the organisation's policy on allowing staff to attend in work time, as well as contact details.

When establishing the LGB Staff Group at Merseyside Police, members ran a series of Road Shows and distributed publicity to colleagues to promote the group and help dispel myths and rumours about its purpose. The initiative was sponsored by the Chief Constable.

The corporate BME network at Manchester City Council host an annual conference to promote the work of the group, run professional development workshops, invite speakers and enable non-members to find out more about the network.

Other communication strategies

"When the (organisation) send out new applications for jobs, we send out a leaflet about the group, which is updated."

(Chair of BME Network, Local Government Authority)

Other communication strategies	
Strategies	**Likely impact**
Posters **Flyers** **Business cards** **Payslips**	▪ Raises group profile in built environment ▪ Reaches people who haven't access to net ▪ Communicates basic information (e.g. purpose, meetings dates, contact details) ▪ Effective memory joggers
Newsletters **Staff Magazine** **E-bulletins** **Reports**	▪ Communicates successes and achievements ▪ Keeps non-members and others updated ▪ Disseminates information more widely ▪ Opportunities to reflect ▪ Helps to legitimise a network
Intranet site **External web**	▪ Useful access point and interface ▪ Creates a group specific space ▪ Provides information and links ▪ People can feedback and ask questions

The Respect Sexual Orientation network at the University of Bradford used some of their budget to produce an A4 colour poster. It gives detail on 'Who are we?' 'Our aims are to' and 'How can I get involved?' Contact details are given at the bottom along with a link to find out when the next meeting is.

The Merseyside Black Police Association produced a colour publicity leaflet, which includes basic information about 'Who are we?' 'What we do?' and 'Why are we here?' On the cover is a picture of members, along with the network's logo and that of the Merseyside Police. On the back, contact details are given.

The University of Liverpool Disabled Staff Network recognised that some members of staff would be reluctant to come forward and participate in the network's activities. Therefore they set up an intranet site to support these people and provide other members of staff with a summary of network activities. Their intranet includes information on the purposes of the network and their activities (e.g. Terms of reference, Meeting dates and Minutes of meetings.). The site also provides general resources and information on disability employment issues, as well as providing contact details for the network.

Screenshots from the University of Liverpool '**Disabled Staff Network**' Intranet site

Keeping members informed and involved

Not everyone will be able to attend all meetings and attending meetings won't be the only reason people join a network. Providing alternative ways to keep members informed and 'in the loop' will help to maintain interest, and for some might be the only realistic way they can stay in-touch and involved.

Email groups and social networking

Email is the accepted form of communicating in multi-site organisational settings, nowadays. Many staff networks set up network specific addresses, such as:
BME_STAFF@Universityname.ac.uk

This provides a common contact point, which allows people to communicate with the whole group. You should be able to set up an account with the IT people in your organisation. You could also provide an individual contact address, as some people might not want to use the group address.

In this digital world we inhabit, email is just one means of communicating in hyperspace. The recent proliferation of social networking tools (e.g. Blogs, Message Boards, Wikis) and Virtual Learning Environments (VLE), have done much to supplement and support the potential for people to meet, work and recreate remotely, from different physical locations. They shouldn't be seen as a replacement for face-to-face meetings, but they could help to enlarge the opportunities for members to engage and participate in the network, given the complex realities of peoples' work-life. (For further information, see p.40)

> The E&D Unit at Sutton Coldfield FE College has set up an online community for staff groups. They have used the institution's VLE platform (called Moodle), which provides members with a discussion forum, as well as an environment that allows people to participate in 'time-bound' meetings. Users have the option to log in under their staff username or, anonymously.

Maintaining interest

Sustaining members' interest is often flagged up as one of the most difficult tasks for those involved in running a network.

Whilst there is no easy remedy or quick-fix solution, some common sense principles could be applied and built into how your network functions. There are going to be a range of reasons for people joining the group. Members will make decisions about whether or not to invest their time, based upon their experiences and perceptions of what is on offer. Whilst it is neither achievable nor desirable to attempt to please everyone all the time, a little variety goes a long way and will help to demonstrate that your network can reach out and be relevant to staff in various ways and on different levels.

Groups have attempted to maintain interest by

- Varying content of meetings (e.g. formal alongside practical)

- Organising 'issue' based workshops and sessions

- Inviting guest speakers

- Encouraging members to suggest activities

- Host 'get-togethers' in less formal surroundings

- Team development activities (particularly useful when initiating a group)

- Varying the timing and location of meetings /activities

- Not holding meetings for meetings sake

The more effective networks are better at monitoring and reviewing their progress over time and exploring ways in which they can remain relevant to members and the wider organisation.

Ideas on how to remain relevant

- Periodically review your terms of reference

- Survey members' experiences of the group - invite constructive criticism and suggestions

- Invite feedback from non-members and the wider organisation

- Get other people involved in managing the group - bring in new ideas and perspectives

The Anglia Ruskin University Women's Network was originally set up in the 1990s to help more women progress into senior management, and developed into a more general forum to support all female staff. By 2004, the network was still widely perceived as a forum for senior women and membership had remained static for some years. In order to challenge this perception and reflect more generally on the relevance and purpose of the group, a major survey was conducted (exploring the focus of the network; timing and planning of events; the need for a steering group; whether to open network to men). Responses were collected from approximately 20% of all female employees, over half of whom were not already a member of the group. The survey revealed that the most valued role for the network should be to identify gaps between policy and practice but that all roles were valued. As a result of the findings, a steering group consisting of representatives from a wider range of women was set up, and men were allowed to attend certain 'open meetings'. Due in part to the publicity generated by the survey, membership had risen to 200 by 2006. Events are also now held on each of the University's sites to increase participation (and publicised in the staff journal and a dedicated e-mail list) and an annual conference is held each spring.

Recognition and influence

In order to achieve objectives and fulfil their purposes, networks need to gain recognition from within their organisation.

The rationale for setting up groups is often prefaced on the back of various cases, such as legal, business, moral etc. Effective networks are able to successfully convey the consequences of these rationales to others (specifically those who can help influence and make changes), so they 'see for themselves.'

Potential barriers and challenges

- Poor knowledge (of what groups do), within the organisation

- The perceived credibility of E&D related initiatives

- Non-representation on influencing committees / forums

- Poor working relationships with mainstreaming agents (e.g. Human Resources, Personnel, Staff Development)

- Access to change makers

- Lack of network advocates at a senior level

Partnership approaches

Being pro-active in developing partnerships is something that your network should be engaged in. This will help develop the group's knowledge and capacity, increase recognition of the network within (and outside) the institution, and present opportunities to advise and work alongside and support departments and services, in order to inform change.

Strategies for developing partnerships could involve

- Mapping out key areas that the group need to work with

- Inviting colleagues from these areas to attend meetings

- Hosting 'open' awareness raising events

- Collaborating with other networks (internal and external) and representational bodies (such as Trade Unions)

- Partnership work with wider Equality & Diversity initiatives

- Disseminating information about the group widely

- Conducting briefing sessions at departmental meetings

Formal representation

Another way in which networks should look to gain recognition and influence is through involvement on organisational committees, working groups and forums. It's widespread practice for members of staff networks to be offered places on Equality and Diversity committees and other organisational forums affording valuable involvement and consultation channels and opportunities to inform decision making processes.

Following a review of the diversity governance processes, the Disabled Staff Network at the University of Liverpool were invited to sit on the institution's Equality & Diversity Committee. The network has been actively involved in assisting in the development of the University's Disability Equality Scheme.

Representatives from the staff networks at the University of Salford are members of the Vice-Chancellor's Impact Assessment working group. The networks are also given seats on the University's Equality & Diversity Forum.

Senior advocates

"So for me, the first step...the most important of them all is the visible buy in of the most important person in the organisation. Now, for a big University it might not have to be the Vice Chancellor but it has to be at the top level where senior management are seen to buy in, I think."

(Assistant Chief Executive, Local Government Authority)

An important defining characteristic of an effective staff network is the presence of a committed internal advocate or 'Champion' who is part of the senior management team. If there is no tangible 'buy-in' at this level, there is much scope for networks to be dismissed as peripheral, and of little real importance.

In 2006, the University of Manchester created a new position of Associate Vice-President (responsible for Equality and Diversity). The role holder has identified staff networks as playing a fundamental role in assisting the organisation to develop a more inclusive work environment, and is developing involvement channels to ensure their input is recognised and helps to inform change. In the future, it is the intention of the role holder to align each of the four networks with senior manager sponsors.

Only a very small number of higher education institutions that have adopted the staff network concept would seem to have active, visible and vocal support at the most senior level. In comparison, senior advocates are more common in the network models espoused in other public sectors.

At Wigan Borough Council, a senior manager (at Director level or above) is assigned to each of the authority's three network groups. Their remit involves holding scheduled meetings with core group members, participating in some group development activities, as well as feeding back identified issues to the management team.

At Manchester City Council, the Assistant Chief Executive Officer has been an ardent supporter of staff networks since the mid 1990s when he was involved in supporting the establishment of a departmental BME network. He holds regular meetings with representatives of the three network groups at the authority and understands the importance of senior management endorsement in lending credibility to the work the groups do, as well as ensuring that issues fed upwards are articulated at the executive level and responded to in the organisational change process.

Evidence from different sector organisations indicates that without the active involvement and support of senior management, the potential outreach and impact of a staff network, in informing change, will be severely restricted.

If your HEI is serious about investing in staff networks to help fulfil its legal and moral duties, it should recognise that senior management involvement and endorsement will play a key and decisive role.

Active Senior management involvement could involve

- Participating in a launch event
- Visibly endorsing participation (citing networks as 'Positive action' initiatives)
- Holding scheduled meetings with network representatives
- Participating in some network activities
- Championing the group amongst peers (internal & external)
- Briefing management team on issues arising
- Helping to align a network with mainstream functions / services

Potential benefits for Senior Champions

- Useful insights of staff perceptions of what is happening 'on the ground'
- Grounded awareness of how policies and practices impact
- Better positioned to pro-actively respond to changes
- Increased knowledge and capacity of diversity issues
- A valuable conduit to source innovative solutions to identified corporate challenges

Overview of Legislation

Religion and Belief

The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations (2003)

Prohibits direct and indirect discrimination, victimisation and harassment on the grounds of religion or belief in the area of employment, and also protects students.

The Racial and Religious Hatred Act (2006)

An amendment of the Public Order Act (1986), which makes it illegal to stir up hatred against people on the grounds of belief or religion.

Sexual Orientation

Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2003)

Makes it illegal to discriminate against, victimise or harass anyone on the grounds of Sexual Orientation in employment and education.

Civil Partnership Act (2004)

This extends the benefits available to married couples to same sex couples (including entitlement of pension rights)

The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2007)

This extends the powers of the Employment Equality
(Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2003) by prohibiting discrimination, victimisation and harassment in the provision of goods, services and facilities.

Age

Age Discrimination Act or Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (2006)

This prohibits age discrimination (to both younger and older people) in employment and vocational training (including Higher Education).

Race

Race Relations Act (1976)

Prohibits discrimination, directly or indirectly, on racial grounds in employment, education, housing and the provision of goods, facilities and services.

Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000)

(For a summary of General and Specific duties, see p.34)
The Act requires all public authorities (including HEIs) to be pro-active in promoting Race Equality to help overcome institutional discrimination.

Further information

Disability

Disability Discrimination Act (1995)

Prohibits discrimination and harassment against disabled people in employment, education (see Special Educational Needs & Disability Act (2001)) and the provisions of goods, facilities, services and transport.
- Ensure 'reasonable adjustments' are put in place
- Ensure full and equal participation in learning and public life.

Special Educational Needs & Disability Act (2001)

Unlawful for HEIs to discriminate against disabled enquirers, applicants or students. Covers admissions, enrolment, exclusion processes and all student services. Requires HEIs to make reasonable adjustments where applicants or students are placed at a substantial disadvantage.

Disability Discrimination Act (2006)

(For a summary of General and Specific duties, see p.34)
This extends the powers of the 1995 Act. It places a positive duty on all public authorities (including Higher Education Institutions) to actively promote Disability Equality, so as to help break down barriers before they affect the individual.

Gender

The Sex Discrimination Act (1975)

Prohibits discrimination on the grounds of marital status and gender re-assignment.

Equal Pay Act (1970)

Applies to both men and women.

The Gender Recognition Act (2004)

This Act provides transsexual people with all the rights and responsibilities appropriate to their acquired gender. For example, the right to marry in their acquired gender, birth certificates that recognise their acquired gender, and benefits and state pension of their acquired gender.

The Employment Equality (Sexual Discrimination) Regulations (2005)

These regulations bring The Sex Discrimination Act (1975) in line with other legislation and amongst other things:
- Prohibit harassment (of a sexual nature) on grounds of sex
- Prohibit refusal to offer a job to someone undergoing gender re-assignment

Equality Act (Gender Equality Duty) (2006)

(For a summary of General and Specific duties, see p.34)
This places a proactive responsibility upon all public authorities (including Higher Education Institutes) to ensure that services, practices and policies are developed with the different needs of women and men in mind

General and Specific Duties

Relate specifically to:

- Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000)

- Disability Discrimination Act (2006)

- Equality Act (Gender Equality Duty) (2006)

General Duties		
Race	**Disability**	**Gender**
Due regard to the need to:	Due regard to the need to:	Due regard to the need to:
Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination	Promote equality of opportunity between disabled and other people	Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
Promote equality of opportunity	Eliminate discrimination and harassment	To promote equality of opportunity between men and women
Promote good relations between people of different racial groups	Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people	
	Encourage participation of disabled people in public life	
	Take steps to take account of disabled peoples' disabilities; even where this involves treating disabled people more favourably	

Further information

Specific Duties		
Race	**Disability**	**Gender**
Produce a Race Equality Policy	Produce a Disability Equality Scheme	Produce a Gender Equality Scheme
Consulting BME staff and students in developing and implementing strategies to fulfill general and specific duties	Involving disabled people in development of the Scheme	Include consideration of the need to include objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap
Monitoring the admission and progress of students and staff recruitment and career progression by racial group	Make clear arrangements for gathering and using information	Gather and use information on how the policies and practices affect gender equality
Assessing the impact of all institutional functions and policies for their impact on different racial groups	Make clear the method(s) used to assess and monitor impact	Consulting stakeholders and taking account of information to determine objectives.
Arrange to publish the results of all work carried out on Race Equality	Produce an Action Plan and show how information gathered will be used, in particular to review its effectiveness	To assess the impact of policies and practices on gender equality.
Train employees on race equality issues	Training staff	Review every three years and report annually on progress
	Review every three years and report annually on progress	Ensure the actions and steps in the Scheme are implemented within three years
	Ensure the actions and steps in the Scheme are implemented within three years	

The case for staff networks: Slideshow template

This slideshow is not a finished product, it is a generic outline designed to stimulate and get you to think about how to introduce the idea of staff networks and make the case for groups in your HEI. It is suggested that you familiarise yourself with the information found in the guide, as well as collect data and evidence about your organisation, to tailor the presentation and make it relevant to your audience.

Slide 1:
What are staff networks

- For people who identify with a minority group or / and who

- have interest-knowledge in issues relating to specific diversity strands

- From Peer support to influencing strategy

- Recognised good practice in public and private sectors

Slide 1: This opening slide would be used to describe what staff networks are. It should be made clear that they offer opportunities to support individuals and the organisation, which vary across settings and in response to different needs. It might be useful to contact businesses and public bodies within your locality to find out where groups have been established. Citing these would demonstrate that networks are an accepted feature of work-life within your local community.

Slide 2: This requires you to demonstrate the business case for network groups. You should stress that they provide a platform to actively support, involve and consult staff, to ensure that policies and practices reflect different cultural realities. This could then be linked to specific legal (i.e. pro-active in promoting equality; involving staff in the consultation process) and moral duties (i.e. all people should be treated fairly and with dignity; remain sensitive to individual and group differences). Making these links would help to stimulate discussion about possible business benefits (improve morale and productivity, reduce likelihood of grievances) and to explore with the audience how networks could support the HEIs objective to remain relevant and competitive.

Slide 3: The third slide requires you to reflect on your institution's culture, in respect to the questions cited. You might want to refer to the staff involvement opportunities you currently provide (and highlight any gaps), and collect data and information to help build a profile of the identity groups in your HEI (e.g. staff survey feedback and monitoring data) as well as source information from local organisations to benchmark your HEI against.

Slide 4:
Benefits for the organisation

- Network with peers

- Explore ways of overcoming barriers

- Find out information about issues that affects you

- Develop knowledge of organisation

- Professional development activities

Slide 5:
Benefits for the organisation

- Demonstrates commitment to diversity / difference

- People feel more valued and better motivated

- Additional support and staff development opportunities

- Platform for consultation on diversity issues

- Better informed about the impact of policies and practices

Slide 6:
Key attributes of a successful network

- Active championing by senior management
- Time-off to participate
- Work recognised and rewarded
- Realistic and achievable objectives reviewed periodically
- Official feedback and involvement mechanisms
- Varied strategies to involve staff & promote group across organisation
- Support from functions that support staff (e.g. HR, E&D, Trade Unions)
- A well developed culture of consultation within the organisation

Slide 4 / 5: The titles used in slides four and five "Benefits for individuals" "Benefits for the organisation" could be given to the audience to discuss amongst themselves. If you are presenting to a group that meet periodically (e.g. Diversity Committee, Management meeting), you could ask them to reflect on their own involvement with this particular group. This would help to highlight the more generic benefits of staff networking across the organisation, and provide an appropriate platform for the audience to begin exploring some of the specific benefits of staff networks.

Slide 6: This slide highlights a number of key success criteria, which could be used to inform your audience about the 'nuts and bolts' of an effective and sustainable network. It might be useful to invite the audience to offer their thoughts on what they think the key attributes and factors are, and use this as a platform to aid discussion.

Useful websites

- Equality Challenge Unit **http://www.ecu.ac.uk**

- Higher Education Equal Opportunities Network **http://www.heeon.ac.uk**

- Commission for Equalities and Human Rights
  http://www.cehropportunities.org.uk/About.asp

- Stonewall **http://www.stonewall.org.uk**

- UNISON **http://www.unison.org.uk**

- University and College Union **http://www.ucu.org.uk**

Staff network guides and resources

Vinnicombe, S., Singh, V. & Kumra, S. (2004). *Making good connections: Best practice for Women's corporate networks.* London: Cranfield School of Management / Opportunity Now. **http://www.opportunitynow.org.uk**

Cowan, K. (2005). *Network groups: Setting up networks for lesbian, gay and bi-sexual employees.* London: Stonewall Workforce Guides. **http://www.stonewall.org.uk/workplace**

Department of Health (2001). *Improving working lives: Black and Minority Ethnic staff networks: Guidance.* London: Department of Health. **http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/ PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4010407**

UNISON (June 2006). *Organising for equality: UNISON guidelines on self organisation.* **http://unison.org.uk/equality/organising.asp**

UNISON network groups
http://www.unison.org.uk/active/groups.asp

University and College Union: Equality section (with links to Black, Women, LGBT and Disabled members areas) **http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1868**

Further reading and information

Network management

Belbin, R.M. (2003). *Management teams: Why they succeed or fail.* London: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Gutmann, J. (2001). *Taking Minutes of Meetings.* London: Kogan Page.

Schwarz, R. (2002). *The skilled facilitator.* San-Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kraybill, R. (2005). *Group facilitation: Skills to facilitate meetings and training exercises to learn them.* Riverhouse E press. **http://www.riverhouseepress.com/**

Gillen, T. (1995). *Positive influencing skills (Developing Skills).* London: Institute of Personnel and Development.

Nokes, S. (2003). *The definitive guide to project management.* London: Prentice Hall.

Communication and involvement

List of social networking sites
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_networking_websites

- Blog and Wiki software

- Blogger: **https://www.blogger.com/start**

- Wordpress: **http://wordpress.org**

- TikiWiki: **http://info.tikiwiki.org/tiki-index.php**

- MediaWiki: **http://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/MediaWiki**

Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) software

It is likely that your higher education institute will have subscribed to a VLE platform. They usually offer a suite of services, including discussion forums, blogs and wikis, document archives and file sharing.

- Blackboard: **http://www.blackboard.com/uki/**

- Moodle: **http://moodle.org**

Appendicies

Appendix A

Project steering group

Prof Michael Brown (Chair)	Liverpool John Moores University
Dr Scott Gaule (Project Facilitator)	Liverpool John Moores University
Meriel Box (Project Leader)	Liverpool John Moores University
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Jane Thompson	University and College Union
Prof Uduak Archibong	University of Bradford
Erica Halvorsen	Equality Challenge Unit
Saheema Rawat	Equality Challenge Unit
Anne Sibbald	Leadership Foundation for Higher Education
Prof Bob Thackwray	Leadership Foundation for Higher Education
Pramod Philip	Higher Education Funding Council for England

Appendix B

Consortium of partner HEIs

The following institutes formed the consortium of partner HEIs in the project

University of Bradford
University of Central Lancashire
University of Chester
Edge Hill University
Leeds Metropolitan University
University of Leeds
Liverpool John Moores University
University of Manchester
Royal Northern College of Music
University of Salford
University of Cumbria

Thanks also to Anglia Ruskin University and Sutton Coldfield College of Further Education.

Appendix C

Consulted public sector organisations

The following organisations were consulted during the project

Bolton Town Council
Greater Manchester Police
Knowsley Borough Council
Lancashire County Constabulary
Leeds City Council
Manchester City Council
Merseyside Police
Merseyside Probation Service
NHS Employers
Oldham Borough Council
Wigan Borough Council

Glossary of terms

BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
E&D	Equality and Diversity
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HR	Human Resources
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender

dream

plan

achieve