

SRA EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION (EDI) COMMITTEE

20 May 2015
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SRA Staff events and staff networks

Purpose

- 1 The purpose of this paper is to update the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee on our internal events programme, how staff have received this and what the uptake has been.
- 2 Update the EDI Committee of the progress and development of the staff networks and next steps.

Recommendation

- 3 The EDI Committee is asked to:
 - a) note the arrangements we have put in place for our internal events programme.
 - b) note the progress made on staff networks and next steps.

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Staff Events

Background

1. Action 3.4 on the equality and diversity action plan states that 'SRA internal events for staff will be held, with internal and external speakers across a broad range of areas to provide an environment of open discussion and build awareness and understanding of a range of diversity and inclusion issues
2. The EDI team and HRD are working closely to deliver against this action with the support of SMT, the Employee Forum, Business Champions and the Internal Communications team.
3. The 2015 events calendar has been designed to proactively engage with staff on equality, diversity and inclusion. It is based around a number of themes which to date have included LGBT History Month, International Women's Day, Mental Health Awareness Week and religion or belief.

LGBT History Month

4. We began with a series of events focusing on the achievements of the LGBT community to promote tolerance and raise awareness of the prejudices faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.
5. These involved a programme of external speakers which included:
 - Interlaw Diversity Forum – an inter-organisational forum for the LGBT networks in law firms. The forum has over 1000 members and aims to encourage LGBT diversity and inclusion within the legal sector.
 - Top Stonewall rated firms – ten of Stonewall's top 100 employers to work for in 2014 were law firms. Representatives from Irwin Mitchell and Pinsent Mason, two of the firms that made this exclusive list, discussed what made them stand out and the difference it has made to their workplace.
 - GIRES – representatives from the Gender Identity Research and Education Society and the trans community spoke openly about the transsexual experience and the importance of effective communication, data recording and fairness when working with trans stakeholders.
6. 27 members of staff attended the Interlaw talk, 35 people attended the top Stonewall rated firms sessions and 35 people attended the GIRES session. Feedback from all three talks was excellent, with 98.7% of delegates rating the sessions as clear and useful. Individual comments included:
 - "Excellent and thought-provoking."

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- “More speeches from firms”

7. This was the first time LGBT History Month had been celebrated in such a way and many of the delegates commented on how pleased they were that LGBT had been given such a focus. All of the events were supported and chaired by SMT.

International Women’s Day

8. In March, we held a series of events to mark International Women’s Day. These involved 3 external speakers and an internal focused event on career development. All of the events had a focus on and discussed issues such as women’s rights, progress within the workplace, the benefits of targets and quotas, equal pay and gender inequality.

9. The programme included:

- NAWO, The National Alliance of Women’s Organisations - an alliance of over 100 organisations and individuals concerned with making equality between women and men a reality.
- The 30% Club –discussion on the 30% club - a group of business leaders committed to achieving better gender balance at all levels of organisations.
- BSWAID, Birmingham and Solihull Women’s Aid – this is the SRA’s charity for 2015/16 and supports women and children affected by domestic violence, rape and sexual assault.
- WMRCC, West Mercia Rape and Crisis Centre - is a free, confidential and non-judgemental support service for survivors who have experienced rape, assault, incest, sexual abuse, sexual harassment or any form of sexual attack
- Speed networking event, career development and progression - female directors and managers from the SRA and Corporate Solutions engaged with colleagues about career development and progression.

10. The events were well attended by individuals from across the SRA and from all levels of management. There were a number of discussions which took place and these centred around flexible working and progression in the workplace, a lack of positive role models and the difference in expectations and expression of ambition between men and women wanting to ‘make it to the top’. For example women were more likely to think that by working harder they would be able to achieve their goal, whereas men were more likely to discuss and share their career experiences with supervisors and managers.

11. The speed networking event was very successful with delegates requesting more of a similar nature. Delegates felt that speaking and engaging with women from a range of management levels provided an opportunity to ask questions about career

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development in a relaxed and open environment. This event was felt to have had the most impact on the individuals participating.

12. 27 members of staff attended the NAWO talk, 44 people attended the talk on the 30% Club, 23 attended the session delivered by BSWAID and 36 WMRCC and 21 the speed networking event. Feedback from all five events was excellent, with 73% of delegates rating the sessions as clear and useful. Individual comments included:
- "Organise a mentoring scheme"
 - "Provide links to further information/events/study"
 - "Longer Q and A session – lets do it again"
 - "Very useful insight and some good advice - more events like this would be useful"

Celebration of religious festivals

13. In April we organised two events to celebrate Jewish Passover, commemorating the emancipation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt and the Sikh festival of Vaisakhi which celebrates the founding of a Sikh community. The programme included:
- Passover – a tour to visit the local synagogue.
 - Vaisakhi – *the Sikh Helpline*, a national charity gave a talk about the significance and importance of the Sikh festival of Vaisakhi. They also spoke about some of the cultural history and background of being a Sikh.
14. 25 members of staff attended the tour at the local synagogue about Jewish beliefs, customs and practices and the history of Jews in Birmingham and the UK. Due to popular demand two more tours have been organised. 30 staff attended the talk on Vaisakhi which included the history of the religion, the five articles of faith that practising Sikhs wear, and the work of the Sikh helpline. The feedback was very positive, with everyone who attended finding the session useful and coming away better informed. Comments from those who attended included:
- "I enjoyed the talk from the Sikh helpline, it was really informative and helped to broaden my understanding of the Sikh religion especially around its inclusiveness."
 - "I thought the speaker was very engaging. I was particularly interested to hear about the role of women within the Jewish community."

Mental Health Awareness week (11 – 17 May)

15. The events booked for Mental Health Awareness week aim to encourage discussion about mental health, fight discrimination and stigma and promote good mental wellbeing. The events include:

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- Mind – a charity working for better mental health believe no-one should have to face a mental health problem alone. This session focuses on raising awareness of, and changing attitudes towards, mental health.
 - Samaritans - a representative from the Samaritans helpline will speak to colleagues about their service, with a particular focus on the concept of the listening wheel which is used to draw out information in an empathetic way.
 - Heal and Grow – interactive sessions focusing on stress relief methods such as mindfulness.
 - Liz Patterson – interactive session to explore five ways to mental health well-being, with some practical hints and tips.
16. In addition to the above events, a working group has been established to facilitate and organise SRA attendance at the Birmingham and London Pride marches taking place in May and June.
17. Future events include but are not limited to:
- June – National Carers Week / Pride London
 - July – Disability Awareness Week
 - September – National work / life week
 - October – Black History Month / Socioeconomic factors
 - December – Cultural Awareness

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Staff networks

Background

1. The focus of developing staff networks sits under objective 1 of the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion action plan; 'research the viability of establishing employee networks both within and external to the organisation, such as LGBT, gender and race, and provide options/recommendations to SMT'.
2. Whilst the objective is to research the viability of establishing such networks, some groups have developed and proceeded organically. These include a Women's, Christian, LGBT, and Disability network. They have formed mainly on the back of the internal staff events.
3. We have been researching (internally and externally) the development of staff networks at the SRA. In addition, we have sought to explore the possibility of setting up networks in collaboration with The Law Society.
4. The staff networks are at different stages of development and are currently being supported by the EDI and HRD team. The aim of the is to encourage collaborative working, knowledge sharing and opportunities for development and social engagement.
5. Staff networks fulfil a range of functions including providing opportunities for social interaction, peer support and personal and career development. They are seen as crucial to the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion.
6. We would like to support these and further networks by:
 - promoting the networks to new and existing employees
 - listening to any employee concerns raised through employee networks
 - taking part in initiatives developed by employee networks.
7. Staff networks provide members with a forum to communicate and exchange ideas and build a network of relationships across the organisation. They can also be an opportunity to feed into policy development.

Initial engagement and research

8. Researching the viability of establishing staff networks gave us an opportunity to actively engage with staff to understand their motivations and willingness to form or participate in such networks.
9. We initially found a lot of hesitation and uncertainty about the benefits a network would give to staff and what they would look like in practice.
10. Although the SRA had organised a range of events, including on the theme of LGBT in previous years, this was the first time a whole month was dedicated to the topic. It was also the very first time that SRA would be participating in Pride.

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11. Following on from this, individuals who had an interest in LGBT began to ask questions about future LGBT events and also more importantly about a possible LGBT network.
12. A similar exposure and interest in a Women's network occurred following the focus around the International Women's Day events held in March.
13. As part of this programme of work we have engaged with:
 - The University of Birmingham
 - West Midlands Police
 - Pinsent Masons
14. We envisage that as the networks develop they will organise opportunities to engage with a range of organisations and networks outside of the SRA.

Staff networks

Women's network

15. An initial meeting took place in February 2015 with two members of staff interested in being part of the Women's network. Following on from the staff events, 27 female staff expressed an interest in joining the network.
16. Feedback from the speed networking event in particular, identified that participants were interested in setting up and being part of a mentoring programme.
17. A visit to Birmingham University to join a meeting of their Win: Win network (primarily for academic and academic related women at the University of Birmingham), showed us how such groups are run and how they work. Win: Win regularly arrange for speakers to attend their network and we were invited to one of their meetings where they had arranged for Shami Chakrabarti, Director of Liberty (The National Council for Civil Liberties) to speak on the theme of women in public and political life. A discussion was held with the Chair of Win: Win to explore the governance arrangements of a women's network and the benefit of such networks to female staff.
18. We are in the process of arranging further meetings and have really welcomed the input and contribution of the senior management team. The following are actions which the network is keen to take forward
 - arrange for internal and external speakers to talk to the group
 - facilitate a sponsorship / mentoring programme
 - establish a post-maternity development programme for women returning to work (there has been an increase in women taking maternity leave; 40 in 2014, from 6, in 2012).
19. Members of SMT and the Leadership Group have also suggested that a women's network could look to embed gender issues into our regulatory approach and it has been proposed that a project board is set up to discuss this work in more detail.

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Christian network

20. A Christian network exploration meeting was held in March 2015.
21. The group suggested they would like to meet fortnightly and support the EDI events running throughout 2015 and particularly at Christmas time. Suggestions included inviting *Saltmine*, a local theatre company to put on a play and possibly arranging a visit to a local Church.
22. The group would like to raise awareness of the Christian faith. They also welcomed the opportunity to use the network as a forum for discussions on bible passages.
23. External research has established that links can be made through Chaplaincy Plus, a Christian resource for the Birmingham business community.

LGBT network

24. On the 7th April, a first meeting was held with staff interested in being part of a LGBT staff network and included within this group were LGBT staff and those identifying as straight allies. A number of subsequent meetings have taken place. Topics currently under discussion include:
 - formulating terms of reference
 - career progression
 - peer support
 - choosing a network name
 - networking with internal and external stakeholders
25. This group is supporting the submission of the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index for September 2016 and is keen to contribute and become key drivers in assisting the SRA's application to Stonewall.
26. West Midlands Police LGBT Network and Pinsent Mason's LGBT Network were invited to speak to the network to share information and advice on best practice. Both of these networks have previous experience of submitting applications to the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index. Arrangements are also being made to shadow West Midlands Police LGBT network.

Disability network

27. A disability network exploration meeting took place in April 2015. This group is keen to feed into the EDI events running throughout 2015 and particularly around Disability Awareness week which takes place in July.
28. The group discussed the issue of disability and reasonable adjustments in the workplace and it was identified that some staff have been hesitant in declaring they have a disability in case this undermines their role and / or progression at work.

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Next steps

29. Individual staff members have been enthusiastic and groups have progressed quickly. What we need to discuss now is whether we need to set out specific governance arrangements for staff networks and / or provide an annual budget for organising speakers / events. IT is also important to identify whether it would be feasible for networks to feed into project and / or policy development.
30. We would like to explore partnerships with staff from The Law Society, Corporate Solutions and with wider regional groups.
31. The development of the LGBT network will feed into the submission for the Stonewall Equality Index.
32. All networking groups can assist in building relationships internally and externally.

End

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Supporting information

Links to the Strategic Plan and / or Business Plan

This is an action sitting under objective one of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion action plan.

How the issues support the principles of better regulation

Staff events and staff networks are not applicable to the subject of better regulation.

How the action will be evaluated

All internal events and sessions held in 2015 allow staff to provide feedback and comments on what has worked and what could work better in the future. Staff networks will be evaluated at the end of the year to identify how successful they have been in contributing to the change agenda and in completing the objectives and targets the networks set for themselves.

What engagement approach has been used to inform the work (and what further communication and engagement is needed)

We have engaged regularly through internal communications to promote the events. We have also engaged with individual staff through email correspondence and meetings to explore interest in forming and becoming a member of a staff network.

What equality and diversity considerations relate to this issue

The events schedule has a specific focus on equality, diversity and inclusion. Staff networks are organising themselves around equality themes such as disability and LGBT.

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Annex 1

2015 events calendar

Internal Events Programme for 2015

Quarter 1	Quarter 2
<p>Theme: LGBT History Month February</p> <p>LGBT History Month celebrates the lives and achievements of the LGBT community throughout February. It also aims to promote tolerance and raise awareness of the prejudices faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.</p> <p>At the SRA, we strive to create an inclusive workplace for our employees. We will be submitting the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index in 2016 and aim to be listed as one of their top 100 employers.</p> <p>Speakers/activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Dickinson-Lilley • Interlaw Diversity Forum • Top Stonewall-rated firms – Irwin Mitchell & Pinsent Mason • GIRES • Rainbow themed bake sale in support of SRA charity of the year • LGBT media quiz 	<p>Theme: Mental Health Awareness May</p> <p>Mental Health Awareness Week is due to take place Monday 11 May – Friday 15 May.</p> <p>Potential speakers/activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MIND • Samaritans • UNUM Lifeworks • Awareness raising around Autism, Aspergers <p>April</p> <p>Celebration for faith festivals:*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jewish Passover; Friday 3 April – Saturday 11 April. Organised visits to the Synagogue for staff over a lunchtime period. • Vaisakhi (Sikh Festival on the 14th April). Birmingham is celebrating, visit http://www.vaisakhibirmingham.org/ for more information.

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<p>Theme: International Women's Day March</p> <p>International Women's Day is a global event held on 8 March each year to celebrate the economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future.</p> <p>Potential speakers/activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jemima Coleman – 30% club • SRA Charity of the Year – Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid • Kerrie Best – West Mercia Rape and Crisis Centre • Speed networking event – SRA female directors and managers speak to SRA colleagues about career and progression 	<p>May Birmingham Pride: Saturday 21st May and Sunday 22nd May is Birmingham Pride. A staff group has been set up to facilitate staff involvement and marketing for this event.</p> <p>Theme: Carers</p> <p>June</p> <p>National Carers Week is due to take place Monday 8 June – Friday 12 June</p> <p>Potential speakers/activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age UK • Carer's Association • Personal story from SRA staff member willing to share their experience of the challenges faced by carers today <p>Pride in London Saturday 27th June is Pride in London*.</p>
<p>Quarter 3</p> <p>Theme: Disability July</p> <p>Disability Awareness Day is due to take place on Sunday 12 July.</p> <p>Potential speakers/activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mencap 	<p>Quarter 4</p> <p>Theme: Black History Month October</p> <p>Potential speakers/activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article to raise awareness • Social event to local theatre production

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope • Lawyers with Disabilities Division • Awareness raising of dyslexia and diabetes • BBC news • Guide Dogs Association <p>Celebration for faith festivals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eid is on Friday 17th July (plus or minus a day) as it is based on the sight of the moon. <p>Theme: Work/life balance September</p> <p>National Work-Life Week is due to take place 21 – 25 September</p> <p>Potential speakers/activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CUBE gym to provide a talk about the benefits of fitness, healthy lifestyle • Win a spa break • Personal story of maintaining good work/life balance, e.g. Rachel Lewis, David Nix • Nuffield Health Centre 	<p>Theme: Socio-economic factors October</p> <p>Potential speakers/activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sutton Trust – Pathways to Law • Mosaic <p>Theme: Cultural Awareness December</p> <p>A series of events/talks to celebrate and raise awareness of different faith groups and celebrations.</p> <p>Potential speakers/activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talks from local faith communities • Talks from SRA staff • Food celebrations <p>Celebration for faith festivals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christmas – a celebration for staff in early December
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