

Bristol City Council

Staff Led Groups – Terms of Reference

1. What are staff led groups (SLGs)?

Staff led groups, (also known as staff networks) are employee-led groups that seek to foster a diverse, inclusive workplace aligned with organisational mission, values, goals, business practices and objectives.

2. Why Staff Led Groups within Bristol City Council?

The City's diversity is one of its most valued assets. However, to maximise on this in a manner that builds strong, thriving, and prosperous communities - individuals and groups within Bristol should be treated fairly and equitably, with respect to receiving high quality services that meet their specific needs. As stated by our mayor, Marvin Rees... *"We all want to feel included; we all need hope and we all aspire to something."*

Same is true for our staff. The diversity of our workforce is our greatest strength and we are clear that unless we enrich this diversity and tap into the potential that comes from this, we will not truly meet the needs of our diverse communities. Building an inclusive organisation where the workforce reflects the communities' we serve is therefore essential, alongside ensuring a working environment where all our staff feel confident about being their 'true selves' at work.

The Council cannot deliver its ambitious goals unless it is able to tap into the potential of all its diverse staff. Our 'Staff Led Groups' provide a unique insight into the issues based on their lived experience and commitment to change.

3. Bristol City Council's Staff Led Groups

The Council currently works in partnership with the following Staff Led Groups:

- Black and Minority Ethnic Employees Group
- Disabled Employees Group
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender + Group
- Young Employees Voice Group

4. Purpose of the Staff Led Groups

To work in partnership with the Council on issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion. In addition, to provide unique insights and perspectives to the Council from SLG members, staff, Citizens and their champions, who either have lived-experience of, or are committed to addressing issues particular to the SLGs work. Further, the SLGs aim to provide a safe space and welcoming environment for members of SLGs, staff and people of Bristol and their champions, who identify with the aims of the SLGs. All, in order to achieve a happy and contented workforce as well as deliver high quality services to the people of Bristol from all diverse backgrounds.

In all, the SLGs will support the council in fulfilling its obligation to the workforce and Bristol's diverse population. This obligation of the council is reflected in the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG), to which it is a signatory. The purpose of the EFLG *'remains to help organisations, in discussion with local partners including local people, review and improve their performance for people with characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010'*.

The five performance areas of the EFLG are:

- Knowing your communities
- Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Involving your communities
- Responsive services and customer care
- A skilled and committed workforce.

Details about the key outcomes within the EFLG Performance Areas are shown in appendix 1.

In pursuance of the above, the SLGs will:

- As with all staff and committees within the council, adhere to our organisational values and behaviours when carrying out their duties. This includes accepting personal accountability (ownership), treating each other with dignity and respect and being caring and gracious (respect), asking questions and exploring possibilities and believing that there is always opportunities to do things better (curious), striving to make a difference (dedicated) and coming together to reach shared goals, taking personal and collective responsibility for finding the answers, asking for others perspective and respecting different opinions (collaborative)
- Raise awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion issues viewed as key to SLG members, staff and people of Bristol and their champions on matters relating to both the workforce and the Council's service delivery
- Through consultation with SLG members, staff, and Citizens and their champions identify and agree key areas that the Council should address, as part of its aim of ensuring that staff and communities are dealt with in a non-discriminatory manner
- Work in partnership (including acting as a critical friend) with internal stakeholders (e.g. Equalities and Inclusion Team, Human Resources, Organisational Development, Learning and Development, Managers, Supervisors, Team Leaders, etc.) and external stakeholders (champions of Bristol's diverse population). This is in order to ensure that the unique perspectives of SLG members, staff and diverse population of Bristol and their champions are integral to discussions concerning employee relations, organisational improvement and delivery of high quality services
- Participate as well as facilitate champions of Bristol's diverse population to participate on corporate governance bodies, established by the Council, that focus on issues relating to equalities and organisational culture conducive to achieving a happy and contented workforce as well as delivering high quality services
- Seek to ensure that equality and diversity issues become centre-stage and mainstreamed within the policy development and decision-making processes of the Council
- Advise and provide 'challenge and support' to senior managers, as well as facilitate champions of Bristol's diverse population to do so, with guidance from the Equalities and Inclusion Team
- Collaborate and work closely as a group of SLGs to ensure a coherent and unified approach to addressing the issues, conducive to achieving a happy and contented workforce and delivering high quality services
- Develop and implement a realistic work programme that will benefit SLG members, staff and Bristol population and their champions (recognising the voluntary status of participants), based on priorities agreed by the Strategic Diversity Leadership Group and the Directorate Equality Groups

5. Governance Structure and Accountability

The SLG chairs will take it in turns to attend the newly created Strategic Diversity Leadership Board (SDLB) where they will be representing the views of all SLGs. Further information about the steering groups within each SLG is below. The Chairs will have a dotted-line accountability to the Head of Equality and Inclusion (or nominee if needed). This is an important positioning as it ensures that SLG operational / strategic issues are dealt with by an appropriate senior level (in the first instance) in the organisation.

6. Relaunch and transitional period

Following an extensive review, there has been unanimous agreement that the Council's framework for SLGs will be relaunched and that a 15-month transitional period will take place from the date of the launch, which will be during the financial year 2020/21. A review will take place at the 12-month stage and a decision made about the:

- Nature of the selection process for the Chairs of the SLGs
- Benefits of having more than one Chair for each SLG
- Interim provision if a Chair resigns or is no longer able to discharge their duties
- Role of SLG Steering Groups

7. Role of SLG Chairs

Nominations for SLG Chairs will be made by anyone in the Council and a shortlist produced. This will be followed by nominees being interviewed and appointed by joint panel made up of SLG members, staff and 'management', including the Equalities and Inclusion team.

The tenure for SLGs will be for a period of 15 months and all Chairs will be eligible to stand for re-election, if they wish. All Chairs are designated a standard 1 day per week time commitment. A variation of this this time period can only be agreed by the sponsoring directorate in consultation with the Head of Equality and Inclusion (or nominee when needed); and only on occasion that there is deemed to be additional demands or priorities.

The Chairs remain contractually aligned to their substantive posts and will report directly to their line managers or another nominated officer within their directorates. All requests for leave, sickness recording, and other such contractual matters remain the responsibility of the sponsoring directorates.

The Chair's responsibilities are:

- Overall coordination of their Group's activities, in line with the priorities agreed by the Strategic Diversity Leadership Group and the Directorate Equality Groups
- Focal point of reference for the Council on issues relating to their Group
- Chairing of meetings unless other arrangements are made e.g. rotation amongst steering group members
- Attendance (by rotation alongside other Chairs) at the Council's Strategic Diversity Leadership Group, Directorate Equality Groups and any other group considered appropriate by the Head of Equality and Inclusion (or nominee when needed)

Chairs are not responsible for dealing with potential grievances around discrimination, harassment, bullying and such matters brought to their attention. They will not be involved in casework themselves to resolve issues. Instead, they should signpost SLG members, staff or Citizens or their champions to the appropriate policy or manager / department that has formal responsibility for grievances etc within the Council. This is in order for the issue to be resolved speedily and satisfactorily. However, Chairs can (with permission from originator and HR) to liaise with the manager / department in question so that they can check the progress and inform the originator accordingly.

8. SLG Steering Groups

Each SLG will establish a steering group, which should meet on a bi-monthly basis. The role of the steering group is to work with the Chair and to encourage an environment of collective responsibility and accountability for all. In addition, to develop, implement and evaluate a work programme (with support from the Equality & Inclusion Team) that is aligned with Strategic priorities set by the Strategic Diversity Leadership Board and Operational priorities set by the Directorate Equality Groups.

The steering group will consist of SLG Chair and nominated members of the SLG or staff who have the specialist skills or interests. These individuals will have skills and knowledge to champion the rights and needs of Bristol's diverse population, enabling the SLGs to fulfil their mandate of supporting the Council to deliver high quality services.

The steering group will also influence the decision making process of the Strategic Diversity Leadership Board and the Directorate Equality Groups, so that strategic and operational priorities they set reflect the needs of SLG members, staff and people of Bristol and their champions from diverse backgrounds.

The steering groups will undertake specific areas of work as agreed with staff / managers from Directorates.

The steering group members will have a designated time allowance of 2.5 hours for the bi-monthly meetings; or otherwise by agreement with line managers, this time can be allotted for work tasks that arise from the group.

The dates of these meetings should be set well in advance. As a result there is a default position that steering group members have a 'right to attend' if proper notice is given and there are not deemed to be any 'exigency to the service' issues that arise as a result of their attendance. Separate guidance on 'right to attend' is available from the Head of Equality and Inclusion.

For this transition phase, selection of steering group members should be made from the wider membership and those who are eligible to be members. However, the Chair in consultation with Head of Equality and Inclusion (or nominee when needed) can also nominate individuals for this role, if it is viewed that specific expertise or skill sets are required. There should normally be a maximum of 15 people on the steering group. If additional numbers are required, reasons should be set out and presented to the Head of Equality and Inclusion (or their nominee when needed) for discussion and decision.

The Chairs will always send suitable substitutes to meetings which they cannot attend.

9. SLG Membership meetings

SLG Membership meetings are open to any member of staff that identify with the Group's protected characteristics. This should be agreed with the Head of Equality and Inclusion (or their nominee when needed).

Staff should be able to attend a maximum of six meetings per year and can choose between the groups. This is important where individuals identify with more than one group (intersectionality). Staff will be encouraged to register as members if they wish to attend membership meetings and SLGs will retain a list or register of members. Notwithstanding this, there may be circumstances where (for good reasons) staff do not wish to register.

The dates of SLG membership meetings should be set well in advance and published on the Source. As a result, there is a default position of a 'right to attend' if proper notice is given and there are not deemed to be any 'exigency to the service' issues that arise as a result of their attendance. Separate guidance on 'right to attend' is available from the Head of Equality and Inclusion (or their nominee when needed).

10. Joint Meeting of Chairs

The Chairs should meet on a three monthly basis to ensure that there is a coordinated and coherent strategic approach and that there is an awareness of key developments within each Group. The Equality and Inclusion Team will support these meetings. This is also an opportunity to ensure that issues around intersectionality themes and opportunities for joint working remain central to overall SLG thinking and these can be fed in to the Strategic Diversity Leadership Board by whichever Chair is in attendance.

11. SLG Support Group

SLGs should feel that they are supported by the Council in carrying out their mandate. The SLG Support Group is being set up to give additional expertise and skill as well as identify and address any capacity issues. In addition, to identify and resolve difficulties that may arise in SLGs discharging their function as well as carry out forward planning.

The SLG Support Group is made up of SLG Chairs, Heads of Equality and Inclusion Human Resources, Learning and Development, and Organisational Development (or their nominee when needed). The group will meet initially on a monthly basis to help relaunch the SLGs, including finalising the work plan. This will be followed by three monthly meetings.

12. Annual joint Celebration Event

This will involve all SLG members and staff. In addition, any other organisation that SLGs wish to include can be invited. It is envisaged that the annual event will be hosted by Mike Jackson, Mayor.

This should be a celebration of achievements alongside a highlighting of what needs to happen (key challenges and opportunities) going forward. It is also an opportunity to consider inviting external guest speakers.

13. Budget / financial protocols

Budget / financial protocols have been agreed and will be held by the Head of Equality and Inclusion (or their nominee). SLG Chairs will have access to this information as well as work with the Head of Equality and Inclusion (or their nominee) to agree the expenditure