

**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**Item No. 8**

**HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE: 8 JULY 2013**

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**SUBJECT: 2013 CIPD AWARDS**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND THE PERSONNEL ADVISOR**

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## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the Authority's recent success at the prestigious CIPD North East of England HR&D Awards.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The CIPD NE awards is the largest of its kind in the region and allow organisations the opportunity to showcase the impact innovative HR initiatives have had on their employees and business success. This year the event was an extra special celebration where the CIPD celebrated their centenary.
- 1.1 The Authority has supported the CIPD Awards by participating annually since the Awards were launched seven years ago, and have been finalists each year of entry. In addition, the opportunity was taken to sponsor the Change Management of the Year Award for the second consecutive year.
- 2.2 Winners were presented with their awards in front of over 400 people from a range of organisations at the awards ceremony on 18<sup>th</sup> April. Categories included:
- Excellence in Developing People
  - Innovation in Social Media and Technology
  - Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace
  - HR&D Team of the Year
  - Engagement and Well-being
  - Change Management Project of the Year
  - Talent Attraction and Management
  - SME Excellence in HR&D

## **3. FINALISTS**

- 3.1 The Authority's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (lgbt) network group was entered into the Diversity and Inclusion Award Category and the Judges deemed the nomination worthy to be entered into the final selection stage. The reasons for the nomination is attached at Appendix A for the information of Members.

- 3.2 The Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace Award is for organisations who can demonstrate how they value and have developed equality and/or a diverse workforce. Entrants were required to demonstrate how initiatives have engaged employees and delivered positive results.
- 3.3 Our lgbt network group were up against some very strong competition, pitched against Convergys UK Limited (a global leader in customer management), and The Cyrenians (an £8.4m multi-service charity).

#### **4. AWARD WINNERS**

- 4.1 The Chief Fire Officer is pleased to announce that the Authority was successful in achieving the Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace Award for the second year running, recognised once again for outstanding practice by leading organisations and HR professionals alike.
- 4.2 Members of the group were presented with the winning trophy and certificate on stage by Mark Henderson, Chief Executive of Home Group, who sponsored the Award and praised the Authority for their outstanding contribution to the diversity and inclusion agenda.
- 4.3 Judges had been especially impressed by the achievements of the lgbt network group and how engagement activities they have been involved in have resulted in promoting equality and ensuring services meet the needs of lgbt communities for example via Pride and International Day Against Homophobia, increasing HSC referrals.
- 4.4 Members of the network group have clearly demonstrated their commitment to diversity and inclusion. Winning the award further recognises the work they do to promote lgbt inclusion in the workplace following the Authority's achievement of 28<sup>th</sup> place in the Workplace Equality Index this year.
- 4.5 A 16 page commercial supplement covering the CIPD 2013 CIPD Awards was included in the Journal on 29<sup>th</sup> April. The piece included a photograph of the group and details of all award sponsors, generating positive press coverage for the Authority.

#### **5. FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

- 5.1 There are minimal financial implications in respect of this report which are contained within existing budgetary headings.

#### **6. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Participating in the CIPD HR&D awards has many benefits including the opportunity to learn about best practice in the field, to network and develop helpful links with other organisations.
- 6.2 Winning this award has a positive implication for equality in the workplace. It demonstrates that the organisation effectively engages with its employees by listening and responding to them leading to improvements for the wider workforce and local community.

6.3 The lgbt network group will no doubt go from strength to strength and continue to make a real difference for in terms of promoting lgbt equality as well as contributing to the overall equality agenda.

## **7. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 The Authority is recommended to:

- a) Note the content of this report;
- b) Receive further reports as appropriate.

## Appendix A

### Reasons for Nomination:

#### Company's activities and background (max 250 words)

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) provides the 999 response service across Tyne and Wear to put out fires, rescue people from road traffic collisions/other incidents, and deal with major flooding. Our prevention and education, and fire safety teams provide information/advice to help keep our communities safe.

Our vision: 'Creating the Safest Community' will be achieved by providing the people of Tyne and Wear with the services they need, to the highest possible standard. To enable us to secure this vision, we have a mission: 'To save life, reduce risk, provide humanitarian services and protect the environment'.

In order to ensure success, we focus our efforts on four corporate goals (underpinned by key priorities) that form the framework through which our service delivery and excellence will be secured:

1. To prevent loss of life and injury from fires and other emergencies and promote community wellbeing;
2. To respond appropriately to the risk;
3. To plan and prepare for exceptional events; and
4. To deliver a modern effective service, ensuring value for money with staff who reflect the communities we serve.

We are committed to ensuring equality and diversity principles and strive to ensure they are embedded across the organisation. Our aim is to deliver 'An accessible and inclusive service that does not discriminate and meets the needs of all members of our local community', and we set out in our Equality Strategy 2012-2016 how we intend to achieve our vision for the communities of Tyne and Wear.

#### What activity has taken place? (max 1000 words)

TWFRS has driven a number of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (lgbt) related engagement activities in order to promote lgbt equality and increase our understanding of issues faced by the lgbt community to ensure our services are meeting their needs. This has involved working with and supporting our partners in achieving similar goals in respect of keeping our communities safe.

Our lgbt network group has carried out a wide range of work aimed at improving outcomes for lgbt people and as a result we have achieved significant improvements in the level and quality of engagement activity both internally and externally. The group is made up of lgbt employees and straight allies who work over and above their day to day roles, to drive key areas of work including:

**Lgbt network** - Members of the group have established and maintained an lgbt network within TWFRS and an e-network to provide information and support for all employees on lgbt issues; advertise social and other networking events for lgbt staff; raise awareness for non lgbt staff and managers; provide links to other lgbt employee network groups and support mechanisms; provide contacts for lgbt staff to support them with work related matters; and provide a confidential discussion forum.

### *Creating the Safest Community*

**Supporting Pride** (an annual national celebration where lgbt people come together to celebrate their individuality). For a number of years we have hosted satellite events for the lgbt community to meet prior to the Pride march and main events in Newcastle and more recently in Sunderland, providing a 'pride breakfast'.

Each year the lgbt network group review the findings of evaluation to suggest and implement improvements for the following year's event and members also provide support by organising and assisting at events. Due to their involvement, we have seen improvements each year including increased participation from the lgbt community and an increase in the number of referrals for Home Safety Checks (carried out to raise awareness of fire safety in the home) assisting us in achieving our vision of 'creating the safest community'. In 2012 we engaged with over 1,500 members of the lgbt community as part of our Pride celebrations.

**IDAHO (International Day Against Homophobia)** - This is an engagement event on an evening at the weekend where we engage directly with the lgbt community within the gay scene in Newcastle delivering fire safety messages. Members of the group volunteered to attend and assist. We conducted a survey to measure attitude and risk in relation to fire and staying safe in the home.

In addition, this allowed an opportunity to encourage individuals to engage with and utilise reporting mechanisms including the ARCH homophobic incident reporting service which supports the human right of being free from discrimination. The feedback that we received from the event was extremely positive and this grows stronger with each event that we participate in with the lgbt community.

**Unique LGBT Conferences** - In the past two years members of the lgbt network group have developed and hosted two major lgbt conferences, attended by hundreds of people. We established a partnership with lgbt groups from a range of organisations to create two unique learning events. One event focused on celebrating lgbt equality within the emergency services, marking lgbt history month and the second was a cross network multi-agency conference focusing on engagement with the lgbt community. Both events attracted high profile speakers including the Leader of Newcastle City Council and the Director of the lgbt charity Stonewall.

**Commissioned lgbt research** - To ensure that we are meeting the needs of lgbt people in relation to the delivery of services, the group recommended lgbt specific research and developed a research proposal and questions. We commissioned a research project with a local Doctor of Social Research. This was specifically to:

- Gain a more in-depth understanding of the attitudes and perceptions of the lgbt community towards engaging with and working for TWFRS;
- Evaluate the lgbt community's experiences with TWFRS; and
- Establish ways for TWFRS to be a more attractive and inclusive employer.

**Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (WEI)** - As longstanding members of Stonewall we proactively seek to improve year on year in our approach to lgbt equality to achieve better equality outcomes for lgbt people. As part of our commitment we enter the annual Stonewall WEI. Each year we create an improvement action plan following feedback from Stonewall to help us to improve even further. The lgbt network group members analyse the feedback, divide up the improvement actions and progress these during the year to improve lgbt equality and inclusion.

### ***Creating the Safest Community***

Stonewall have been so impressed by our approaches and initiatives that members of the group were invited to speak at Stonewall WEI launch in Scotland, the national conference in London in 2011, and the national conference in Scotland in 2012, in addition to sharing examples of good practice at satellite development events with local organisations looking to improve their WEI rating.

All of the above would not be possible without the valuable contribution of our employees. Although relatively newly established, our LGBT network group have developed and significantly enhanced our approach to engaging with LGBT employees and members of our local community and many positive results are evident in our evaluations and feedback received from our staff, members of the community and other stakeholders.

One group member was recently interviewed on Spark FM radio station about LGBT equality and our results in the Stonewall WEI. This further demonstrates how the positive work of the group can impact on a wider scale getting clear messages out to our local communities about our approach and support for LGBT equality.

Over the past 18-24 months the network group have gone from strength to strength, this level of on-going engagement and commitment from the group has resulted in excellent performance which has had a positive impact on our employees and the wider LGBT community, receiving external recognition and praise.

**Why was it needed? (max 500 words)**

Research has shown that the LGBT community can be vulnerable and more at risk of fire or incidents. They can be excluded from services and victims of hate crime which is highlighted in the media.

Our organisation exists to keep communities safe from fire and we work in partnership with strategic partners on projects/initiatives aimed at keeping our communities safe. It is vital that we effectively engage with LGBT communities and employees to help us achieve our aim.

From a fire and rescue service perspective, it is vital that we know our local communities so we can provide the right education and support to keep people safe, and we must ensure that our services are meeting everyone's different needs.

Our community engagement staff and teams have engaged with the LGBT community for a number of years. Historically, this particular group has been hard to engage with and we needed a fresh approach to enhance our engagement further. In addition, our proactive work with Stonewall to improve LGBT inclusion has enabled us to identify areas for improvement internally and as a result we set out to improve engagement with our LGBT employees.

It is essential that we understand how best to support our LGBT employees to enable them to reach their full potential to drive LGBT equality. We firmly believe that everyone has a right to the same opportunities and we want to ensure all employees are encouraged to take up opportunities should they wish.

Collating and analysing our internal equality data for the Public Sector Equality Duty and Stonewall WEI reinforced for us that our LGBT employees could be underrepresented in management development programmes. 1% of LGBT staff undertook supervisory management development, and the same percentage accessed middle manager development during 2012.

***Creating the Safest Community***

Just over two years ago our Equality Committee agreed that we needed a new approach to improve internal and external engagement with the LGBT community. As a result our LGBT support network was established which includes volunteer employees. The network group shares experience and learning to further improve our approach to engaging with LGBT people from a service delivery and employment perspective.

The main focus of the group has always been to improve engagement with LGBT employees and communities. The work required was extensive and we needed a separate dedicated group of staff to undertake this and feed back into the Equality Committee to progress LGBT equality improvements.

We are proud of our approach and what our LGBT network group have achieved to benefit our workforce and the people to whom we provide a service. Their work will enable us to continue to increase the number of LGBT people we engage with to help us to protect all members of society from the dangers of fire and to continue to promote ourselves as an employer of choice to LGBT people to further diversify and enrich our workforce.

**How has this activity added value/been successful?** (include any statistical data, max 500 words)

We have achieved significant success through our LGBT network group who have demonstrated a real commitment to equality through their actions. The outcomes they have achieved have had a major impact on our goals and priorities (see our Equality Strategy attached).

The group developed a blue light approach where TWFRS has taken a lead in working with the Police/Ambulance Service with one overarching shared aim – to keep the public safe. This involves extensive liaison, planning and an on-going commitment to resources. Successful collaboration includes Pride/IDAHO, resulting in cost savings through pooling resources, improved employee engagement and service delivery.

Our approach is recognised as cutting edge by Stonewall; our Equality Advisor was invited to present at the Stonewall Scotland Conference in November 2012 regarding our multi-agency approach to learning and sharing best practice in equality.

Feedback has shown that users of our LGBT e-network find it a more efficient method of communication, compared to for example telephone calls/emails and allows the sharing of initiatives, ideas and common obstacles, and sharing of best practice. In the first six months the site had over 200 hits and is continually used as a source of information.

Our Pride events have generated a number of outcomes. The evaluation shows service user feedback as 98% happy with the service they receive from TWFRS and over 90% commenting that TWFRS is considered a LGBT friendly organisation. The perceptions survey indicated over 90% of those who engaged with us, trusted us and believed TWFRS is committed to LGBT equality.

Our IDAHO event identified a number of high risk referrals which we responded to as a priority. The event also helped us to further enhance our partnership work with key partners in the Newcastle District.

Our conferences have been a major success and reported in local and LGBT specific media. Conference evaluations resulted in 95% return rate on completed feedback forms, with 100% positive feedback, which is extremely rare.

The LGBT external research provided us with valuable information regarding the perceptions of the LGBT community. We included a question about Human Rights, asking participants to comment on the statement 'I believe that I have been treated fairly by TWFRS and that my human rights have been respected'. 100% of our LGBT service users who have had direct contact with us believe they have been treated with respect. This is a strong endorsement of our approach to supporting our communities.

Our LGBT engagement work has contributed significantly to our success in the Stonewall Top 100 list of gay friendly employers as being ranked 60<sup>th</sup> in Britain for two consecutive years (from 101<sup>st</sup> position in 2010). In 2013 we were awarded 28<sup>th</sup> place and recognised as the top fire and rescue service in the country – a prestigious title that we have held for the last 3 years. We are now building on our success and further celebrating and promoting LGBT equality by planning and hosting the first ever North East LGBT Awards due to take place in 2013.

#### **Additional supporting information** (max 250 words)

The achievements of our LGBT network group have provided us with an opportunity to promote equality messages to our local community and others through a number of external magazines and publications, providing a clear message to the community that we are proud of our reputation for equality.

Their work has led to achieving better outcomes for at risk communities, enhanced partnership working to deliver outcomes, and improved engagement with at risk communities and relationships with different communities.

The network have also had to remain self-driven, focused and motivated through difficult and challenging times with a backdrop of uncertainty through back office reviews and limited resources, neither has phased them in their aim to improve LGBT equality.

*'Being part of the fire and rescue service is like being part of a big extended family. And I know how difficult it can be for gay people to come out in such a close-knit environment. I am very proud of the work that we have done to encourage and support gay people in the fire service'. Cllr. Nick Forbes, Vice-chair of Tyne and Wear Fire Authority and Champion of the LGBT network group.*

*'I am so pleased that all of the work we have done has been recognised and glad to be part of the group. It feels like what we do is worthwhile and making a difference for LGBT people'. LGBT network group member.*

Please see attached further evidence of the success of our LGBT network group:

- Equality Strategy 2012-16
- Quotes
- Photographs
- LGBT Research findings
- LGBT related article - [http://www.outnortheast.com/?utm\\_source=out!\\_northeast\\_-\\_new\\_issue&utm\\_campaign=bf778f37a3-out\\_301\\_27\\_2012&utm\\_medium=email](http://www.outnortheast.com/?utm_source=out!_northeast_-_new_issue&utm_campaign=bf778f37a3-out_301_27_2012&utm_medium=email)