
Report to: Inclusive Growth and Public Policy Panel

Date: 1 March 2019

Subject: **Learning from Inclusive Growth Best Practice**

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 To consider a presentation on the best practices in Equality and Diversity adopted by Huddersfield New College and how it is reflected in college and learner performance. Also to propose a wider programme of visiting other employers, third sector organisations and partnership networks including those practicing and promoting good work, reducing health inequalities and digital exclusion.
- 1.2 To consider publishing a series of papers which capture the learning from these visits in order to promote inclusive growth best practices so they are more widely adopted in the region.

2. Information

Thematic focus

- 2.1 Leeds City Region is home to a range of organisations that are actively seeking to make economic growth in the region more inclusive. These include public and private sector organisations, third sector organisations and local partnership networks that are improving lives in a tangible way.
- 2.2 The Leeds City Region Inclusive Growth Workshop held in November 2018 provided Panel members and local partners with an insight into a number of best practices, for example Grant Thornton's inclusive approach to recruitment. In the December Panel meeting, members requested further insight into similar practical approaches of inclusive growth in the region and asked for site visits to be arranged.
- 2.3 Holding Panel meetings at organisations that are promoting economic inclusion is a practical way for members to gain first-hand insight into best

practice delivered in the region and help inform the development of a strategic inclusive growth framework which is considered in more detail elsewhere on the agenda.

- 2.4. Examples of best practice delivered by regional organisations that members could gain an insight to could include:
- **Being a good employer** – e.g. paying the living wage, procurement practices that maximise social value, inclusive recruitment practices, offering training opportunities to all staff and ensuring progression opportunities, as well as giving staff opportunities to contribute to wider society including through volunteering. New College, Huddersfield is recognised as an exemplar of equality and diversity.
 - **Digital inclusion** – There are a wide range of (mainly third sector) organisations that are supporting residents in becoming more digitally literate. Digital skills are key in enabling people to access public services and to benefit from being online more generally. Digital inclusion is considered in more detail elsewhere on the Agenda.
 - **Health inequalities** – Learning from regional employers that are making a conscious effort to employ people with disabilities and that ensure a healthy workplace by making the physical and mental health of staff a priority. Health inequalities are increasingly being seen as a barrier to growth. For example, recent research by the Northern Health Science Alliance demonstrates the impact of tackling health inequalities across the North of England. It finds that up to 30% of the productivity gap with the UK average could be reduced by addressing ill health.

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- 2.5 Good practice of Equality and Diversity is an innate part of being a ‘good employer’ by ensuring all people have the same opportunities to access a wide range of jobs and training. Creating an inclusive work culture has also been shown to increase business innovation through harnessing the richest possible mix of skills, ideas perspectives and experiences. In industries with skills shortages, and post-Brexit with more restricted movement of labour in place, tapping into - and recruiting from - the widest local talent pool is increasingly vital for employers.
- 2.6 Through applying its inclusive approach to learners as well as staff, New College is also an enabler of diverse and skilled workforce. This allows a wider range of people access to skills provision and in turn widens the pool of a future workforce.
- 2.7 Holding this Panel meeting at **New College Huddersfield** will provide members with an insight into best practice of Equality and Diversity which has been acknowledged as outstanding by both Ofsted and the National Centre for Diversity (NCD). The College has been named as the UK Organisation of the Year by the NCD for its equality and diversity practices for two years running.

2.8 The National Centre for Diversity acknowledges the work of individual staff members at the College, as well as the broader strategic approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)¹. This includes the contribution of a dedicated Equality and Diversity Manager, members of staff leading a range of EDI initiatives as well as the work of the EDI Steering Group.

2.9 In their 2018 report, Ofsted rate the College as outstanding and particularly welcome the college's approach to Equality and Diversity:

Equality of opportunity is central to the college's mission. Learners are valued for who they are and this in turn results in a respectful and harmonious learner community, in which all members accept each other's differences.

2.10 The College's far-reaching commitment is reflected in its comprehensive Equality Opportunities Policy and the associated Action Plans, including;

- "Staff recruitment and selection, training, promotion and career management, grievance, disciplinary and capability procedures".
- "Student admissions, choice of programme of study, assessment decisions, grievance and disciplinary procedures".

2.11 The College also provides all students with a guide to equality and diversity to illustrate the benefits of such approach and holds events to bring equality and diversity to life.

2.12 During the meeting, the Panel will receive a presentation providing further insight how this best practice at the College benefits staff, as well as improving the performance of both the College and their students.

Further possible site visits

2.13 Further site visits would provide Panel members with a broader insight into best practice in the region which could serve to inform specific future Inclusive Growth interventions and identify learning for wider dissemination. Panel members are asked to consider, and add to, the following initial list of organisations for future site visits:

- **West Yorkshire Fire Service** offers a wide range of skills and work experience programmes for young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- **West Yorkshire Police** has implemented a range of strategies for its workforce to represent the diverse communities it serves.
- **Grant Thornton** have implemented inclusive recruitment practices to broaden their talent pool and to also provide a more non-traditional route into work and work-experience for people from a deprived backgrounds.

¹ The National Centre for Diversity ranked Huddersfield New College first in their 'Top 100' Equality and Diversity index. <https://www.nationalcentrefordiversity.com/home/award-ceremonies/grand-awards-2019/2019-top-100-index/>

- The **LS14 Trust** runs a range of projects to enable communities to make Seacroft, Swarcliffe and Whinmoor better places for residents and bring about “sustain positive social change”. For instance, the Trust’s ‘Digital Lounge’ provides digital skills to support those who are digitally excluded.
- **Kirklees Community Hubs** have been established to create a place based children, family and community infrastructure to improve outcomes around children safeguarding, learning and skills, economic resilience and health.

2.14 Members are asked to consider the benefit of incorporating scheduled Panel meetings into site visits and identifying other learning visits which could be undertaken by a smaller group of members and officers.

3. Financial Implications

3.1 There are no financial implications arising as a direct result of this report.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

5. Staffing Implications

5.1 There are no staffing implications arising as a direct result of this report.

6. External Consultees

6.1 There is currently no requirement for external consultations to be undertaken.

7. Recommendations

7.1 That the Panel:

- Consider and welcome the approach adopted by New College, Huddersfield as an exemplar in equality and diversity practices;
- Instruct officers to develop a best practice note for wider dissemination on the Equality and Diversity based on the New College approach;
- Consider, and add to, the initial list of organisations for future site visits shown at 2.13;
- Consider the benefit of incorporating scheduled Panel meetings into site visits, and identifying other learning visits that could be undertaken by a smaller group of members and officers

8. Background Documents

8.1 None

9. Appendices

9.1 None