

# Council Staff Network Groups:

ACHIEVEMENTS | CHALLENGES | ASPIRATIONS

2017 – 2018 ANNUAL REPORT





Image: Preparation for Staff Network Celebration event 2018

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# Executive summary

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## The state of the networks - 4 years of growth

The networks held their 3rd annual staff networks celebration on 23 April 2018. The ambition demonstrated by this year's programme and the excellent attendance levels are a good indicator of the current strength of the networks.

- **Network celebration day:** 100+ visitors. Responses very positive.
- **Significant outside recognition:** the Council is ranked 124th in the Stonewall Workplace Index 2018, a leap up 95 places from 2016-17.
- At time of writing this report the organisation was shortlisted for 3 diversity awards by the Employer Network for Equality and Inclusion (ENEI).
- **Points of note following the 2018 Staff Survey:** the Council has to keep focussed on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and there is still work to be done to achieve maturity.
- Members across networks are growing increasingly confident that they can directly influence this organisational growth towards maturity, and this is what the networks are about.
- **Some key challenges remain:** staff chairs have highlighted challenges in connection with their respective networks, which require ongoing attention:
  - Disability network: low engagement levels, in spite of significant positive outcomes achieved this year.
  - Carers network: estimated high numbers of undeclared carers; low membership of male staff.



It was a pleasure to be part of such a joyful event

**Andrew Slegg**  
Person-Centred Planning Co-ordinator and compere  
at the staff networks celebration

# Headlines

- **1,000+** staff are members of a staff network – **that's 35% of council employees (↑ 12% since 2016-17)**
- Staff networks continue to shape the big decisions which affect everyone at Croydon Council.

## Including:

- Staff development
- Mental health at work
- Guidance for managers (LGBT, Disability, Menopause)
- 2018 staff survey
- Each staff network held **many open events** throughout 2017-18, thus providing more opportunities for all staff to benefit.
- Networks now work in **closer collaboration** with one another and with the community, **addressing intersectional issues** e.g. highlighting the links between staff mental health and disability, caring responsibilities, race and/or gender issues.

Image: International Women's Day event, BOXPARK

# 2012-2018: The culture journey so far

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2012

Croydon Council begins transformational journey to change the organisational culture by embedding values - **'grass roots' networks\*** established.



2014

**Culture Board is established.**

Sharpened focus on the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion agenda leads to the creation of **staff network groups**.



2016

Croydon Council's culture vision is revised & endorsed by Culture Board:

**"To create a collaborative, inclusive and creative environment which allows talent to flourish."**



2017

Top 10 Culture Plan priorities are established for 2017 - 20

**Council awarded the ENEI\*\* Silver Standard award as recognition for its ED&I work.**



2018

Aim is for every department to take ownership of delivering Culture Plan priorities so that the workforce drives the Council's culture transformation.

**Getting back to basics i.e. to make a clear difference to the lives of individual staff and to Croydon Council's overall culture**

**Staff networks remain central to achieving this transformation**

\* LOV (Living Our Values) network and the WEN (Workforce Engagement Network) | \*\* Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion

## 2014: What were the challenges?

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- Lack of engagement from staff
- Lack of awareness/knowledge/interest around diversity (mainly) from staff
- Mostly lack of professional or personal support or learning for staff from peers
- Limited promotion of diversity issues from senior management
- Limited promotion of diversity events/campaigns throughout the year
- High rates of non-disclosure from staff of diversity characteristics



## What's happened since then (last 4 years)

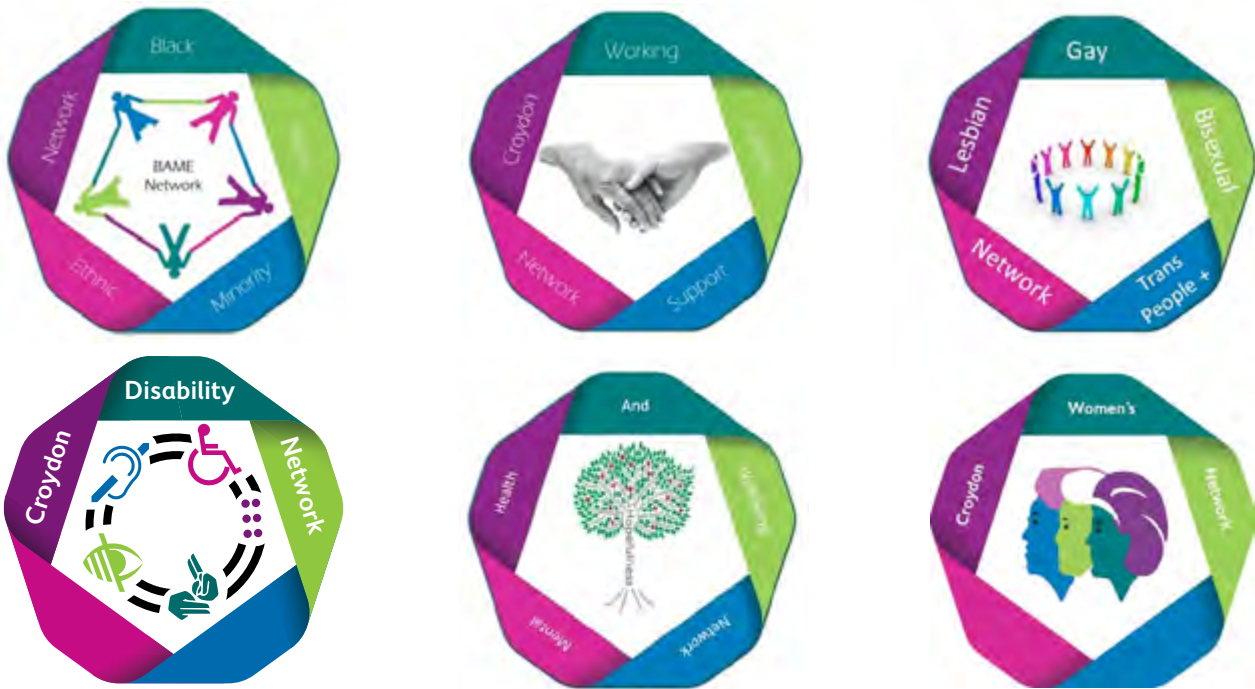
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- All groups give personal, professional and social support to their members
- Supporting career development of members now encouraged through development programmes and mentoring
- Promotion of diversity issues at the top of the organisation working with Culture Board, HR, L&OD and senior sponsors
- Raised everyday visibility of staff diversity and its implications through awareness-raising events, communications campaigns and role modelling
- Cross collaboration with other networks to bring learning across all aspects of diversity
- Each group now advises on policy issues affecting staff and our communities
- Engaging non-members and 'allies' in events and learning activities is on the increase





# Breakdown by network



# BAME



## 375 MEMBERS (↑88% THIS YEAR)

By far the largest among the networks, the BAME network provide signposting, raise awareness and provide information on issues facing BAME staff within the organisation.

Hold bi-monthly network meetings and have included speakers from Victim Support raising Hate crime awareness, School exclusions, volunteering and apprenticeships.

Collaborate regularly with other staff networks including Women's, Health and Wellbeing and LGBT+ when programming events.

## NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2017-18:

- Realising Your Potential Development Course for BME Aspiring Managers: all cohorts have been oversubscribed.
- Upon completing the course a number of applicants have applied for other jobs and 1 in 5 have successfully gained higher positions within the Council
- Cultural Lunch – get to know each other and celebrations of the many cultures that exist in the organisation
- Black History Month celebration
- Input in the organisation's unconscious bias training programme



The network connects staff members from diverse BAME backgrounds to tackle discrimination or the potential for it in the workplace. I've felt able to raise issues I've faced or witnessed to contribute to solutions for the positive action plan. Attending the network meetings and steering group has helped me feel like I have a voice that matters.

# LGBT+Allies



## 127 MEMBERS (↑59% THIS YEAR)

The LGBT + Allies network comprises of staff who identify as LGBT+ or heterosexual/straight (also known as ‘allies’ who want to show their support for the LGBT+ community). They provide advice and signposting to members and colleagues throughout the Council about the needs of LGBT+ employees as well as a confidential support service.

## NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2017-18:

- Enabled the Council to leap up 95 places from 2016-17 and to rank 124th in the Stonewall Workplace Index 2018
- Participation in London Pride and Croydon PrideFest parades in 2017
- Extended reach to Croydon’s LGBT Communities through joint networking and social events e.g. Transgender Day of Remembrance with TransPals
- #comeoutcroydonforlgbt Boxpark event, partnering with LGBT staff networks from Optivo, HMRC, HM Land Registry and Mott MacDonald



As a manager I joined the LGBT network to better understand the issues faced by LGBT staff in our organisation. Having heard people’s stories and experiences first hand, it has strongly influenced how I shape the culture of teams I manage and how important it is to build teams where everyone can be themselves and talk about big stuff - whether that is sexuality, mental health issues or anything else. I am proud to call myself an ally.

# Women



## 270 MEMBERS (↑80% THIS YEAR)

The Women's Network Meet bi-monthly; they invite local, regional and national female guest speakers to share their inspiring stories and advice.

The network provides development/ leadership opportunities for female staff.

Making a difference within our community - raising funds for local charities;

Menopause guidance, bite size training for managers and support group.

## NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2017 - 18:

- Women's Leadership Offer - supporting the organisation's aim to develop internal female talent - 80+ participants in total to-date. 15 out of 38 participants from the first 2 cohorts have successfully gained higher positions internally.
- Menopause Initiative shortlisted in "Impact through Innovation" category at 2018 ENEI Awards – group is composed of cross-network members (including Mental Health and Well-being, the Women's Network Group and Public Health).
- #IWD2018 held at Boxpark; this open event attracted a large audience and reached out to Croydon women's communities and creative artists.
- Provided leadership/development opportunities for women aspiring to gain experience in project and events management (12 roles).
- Raised £520 for Breast Cancer Care (Bake Sale).



It shows that the Council is taking the topic of the menopause seriously in a way in which it has never been thought or talked about before. Any guidance for managers is vital to the progression of their mind-set.

# Mental Health and Wellbeing



## 140 MEMBERS (↑ 40% THIS YEAR)

Members of the Mental Health and Wellbeing network are dedicated and passionate about reducing stigma and discrimination along with promoting positive wellbeing for all employees, especially through challenging times.

The MH&W network utilizes various media and resources to influence the culture of the organization on all levels to improve the understanding of holistic wellbeing. This is facilitated through meetings, events, health assessments, treatments, workshops, information sharing, posters, training and a supportive group.



## NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2017-18:

- 76 Managers trained in 'Supporting Staff through Mental Ill-health'
- 100+ Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAS) across all council sites. MHFASs supported over 100 members of staff in 2017.
- Evidence of impact through 827 fewer days lost to sickness absence due to stress, depression and anxiety from 2016 to 2017
- Shortlisted in the ENEI "Employee Network Group 2018" awards category



I have gained a great deal of resilience from my experiences and want to use them to challenge the stigma and discrimination of mental ill-health, something I have experienced in the workplace in my younger days, such as being threatened with dismissal and being barred from joining a workplace pension scheme in case I took my own life. Having a Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing network shows how far we have come and I am proud to be a part of such enlightened organisation.

# Disability

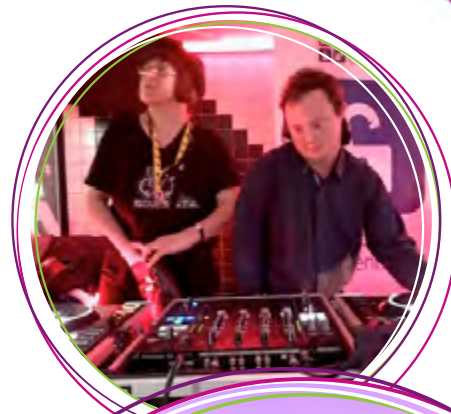


## 45 MEMBERS

The Disability network support all staff with disabilities and provide support and guidance to all Council staff and managers. The network raises awareness that a disability is not always visible or obvious and that it may either be a physical or mental impairment. They provides a safe and positive environment for staff to raise their concerns and build a greater awareness of issues that some are facing.

## NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2017-18:

- Disability Confident employer since November 2016. Looking to strengthen this to Leader level.
- Significant improvements to the employee on-boarding process to ensure digital and physical accessibility is prioritised for new starters and employees who have a disability
- Better, more visible guidance for managers e.g. Guidance for Supporting Disabled Employees, FAQs and Workplace Adjustment Passports
- First and highly successful “Don’t Dis-Ability” event held at Boxpark – a celebration of disability, ‘promoting the ability behind someone’s disability.’
- Improved facilities: radar key in accessible toilets, room signage, lift lighting and pillar wraps



I've worked in a number of surrounding boroughs including Merton, Sutton and Lambeth and I have never had such a positive experience compared to Croydon around my access issues.

# Working Carers



## 104 MEMBERS (↑ 39% THIS YEAR)

The Working Carers' staff network group provides continual emotional and practical support to staff who have caring responsibilities.

The group works in partnership with Croydon Carers and has held events to promote Carers' Rights Day and Carers week, raising awareness of caring and highlighting the challenges faced by working carers.

The network has also joined The Croydon Carers Partnership Group, influencing policy and practices across the Croydon Borough.

## NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2017-18:

- The Carers staff network continued informal 'coffee and catch up' sessions throughout the year. This gave an opportunity for colleagues to support each other, to talk about their caring challenges.
- Created a vision for the network to aspire towards: "a Croydon where the role of all unpaid carers is recognised, supported and valued."
- Supporting Dementia awareness in the Council by promoting Dementia Friends training events for staff



Caring for anyone who is older or with mental health difficulties can be very stressful and demanding. As a carer for my mother with Alzheimer's and one of my children (who is living at home) who has psychosis, I have found that the Carers Staff Network has provided me with a safe place to talk to others who are in a similar situation.

# Impact of 2018 activities on our Culture Plan

Impact of 2018 activities on our Culture Plan		
Network Activities	Culture Plan Priority	Outcome
<p>LGBT + Allies drive forward the Stonewall Diversity Champion initiative.</p>	<p>Develop and nurture the right leadership capabilities and behaviours for now and the future at all levels.</p>	<p>Croydon Council leaps up 95 places to rank 124th in the Stonewall Workplace Index 2018.</p>
<p>Mental Health First Aiders supported over 100 members of staff in 2017.</p>	<p>Building and further developing a valued, engaged and motivated workforce.</p>	<p>MHFA training: 827 fewer days lost to sickness absence due to stress, depression and anxiety from 2016 to 2017.</p> <p>Croydon wide staff survey Jan 2018: "86% of staff +ve about their mental health".</p>
<p>Development Course for BME Aspiring Managers: all cohorts have been oversubscribed.</p>	<p>Address over / under representations of all types aligned to our organisational aspirations.</p>	<p>BAME Development 1 in 5 BAME staff on the programme have successfully gained higher positions internally.</p>
<p>Women's Leadership Development Programme: four successful programmes to-date.</p>		<p>Women's Development: 15 out of 38 participants from the first 2 cohorts have successfully gained higher positions internally</p>



## Impact of 2018 activities on our Culture Plan

Network Activities	Culture Plan Priority	Outcome
<p>Disability Confident employer since November 2016.</p>	<p>Implement a fair and inclusive recruitment strategy and processes</p>	<p><b>Significant improvements to the employee on-boarding process for staff with disabilities</b></p>
<p>Disability network worked together with ICT partners and Facilities Management to address accessibility issues</p>	<p>Building and further developing a valued, engaged and motivated workforce</p>	<p><b>Significantly improved facilities re. digital accessibility and work-place accessibility</b></p>
<p>Disability network members worked with HR Policy team to support the creation of guidance for managers</p>	<p>Develop and nurture the right leadership capabilities and behaviours for now and the future at all levels.</p>	<p><b>Better, more visible guidance for managers e.g. Guidance for Supporting Disabled Employees, FAQs and Workplace Adjustment Passports</b></p>



# Achievements, aspirations, challenges

Achievements	Aspirations	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good collaboration, across networks and communities, with a rich programme of events throughout the year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase partnership working between network group sponsors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the disclosure rate re. all diversity groups</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directly influencing policies e.g. Health and Wellbeing, Menopause Guidance, LGBT Guidance, Disability Guidance, Equal Opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting opportunities for all staff to collaborate and volunteer: members, allies, participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove barriers to staff participation in network activities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BAME and Women's leadership development programmes</li> <li>• 31 participants successfully achieved promotions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase positive storytelling from staff for whom network groups are making a positive difference</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase membership of male staff who are carers</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ranked 125th in the Stonewall Equality Index 2018</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a consistent and transparent way of monitoring the impacts of diversity network activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase recognition of individual contribution to staff network activities in appraisals</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability network worked together with ICT partners and Facilities Management to address accessibility issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building and further developing a valued, engaged and motivated workforce</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networks are recruiting more Members, including Allies</li> </ul>		



## **Council Staff Network Groups:**

ACHIEVEMENTS | CHALLENGES | ASPIRATIONS

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