

# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Forum terms of reference

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of the Forum is to contribute to the delivery of the ICO's equality objectives. These are:

### **a) Spreading knowledge and taking action**

We will raise awareness of information rights across the community and take action to ensure that organisations fulfil their obligations. We will have particular focus on groups and sectors where knowledge gaps may cause information rights inequalities or vulnerabilities. We will ensure that in our actions as a regulator we do not create inequalities or discriminate.

### **b) Accessible services**

Our services and information will be accessible for users and potential users of our services, and we will provide our staff with the skills and knowledge they need to provide high quality services for all. We will try to anticipate customer needs and we will take action to remove barriers to our services when possible.

### **c) Encouraging others**

We will use our status as a regulator, advisory body and purchaser of services to influence improvements in equality by other organisations and across society.

### **d) Employer**

Our workplaces and practices will be accessible, flexible, fair and inclusive. We will value the diversity, skills, backgrounds and experience of our people, enabling them to perform to their best in a welcoming and supportive environment.

- 1.2. As a public body with office throughout the UK, the ICO has duties and obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. These are set out in the ICO's Northern Ireland Equality Scheme and the standards set by the Welsh Language Commissioner. The Forum will ensure

that the ICO's is positive in fulfilling its duties and obligations under these Acts.

- 1.3. The Forum will also ensure that the ICO fulfils any other statutory obligations in respect of equality and diversity, including the Public Sector and Specific duties.

## 2. Responsibilities

- 2.1. To achieve this purpose, the Forum will:
  - Support progress towards the ICO's equality objectives;
  - Support the development of inclusive practices and integration of equality and diversity issues into all aspects of the ICO's work;
  - Support the development and monitoring progress of strategies and action plans which enable the ICO to provide inclusive and accessible services and a diverse and inclusive workplace;
  - Support equality and diversity training needs;
  - Support the enhancement of EDI through an understanding of patterns of EDI matters which emerge from staff and customers;
  - Communicate with staff to promote equality and diversity; and
  - Support the work of the equality, diversity and inclusion staff networks.
- 2.2. The Forum will receive information regarding the ICO's duties and obligations under the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011
- 2.3. The SLT representatives will be responsible for reporting matters discussed by the Forum to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
- 2.4. In order to deliver these responsibilities, each member of the Forum may be required to take on duties (usually projects or working groups) on behalf of the Forum.

## 3. Authority

- 3.1. The authority for the Forum derives from the Commissioner.

## 4. Composition

- 4.1. The Forum will have joint chairs, who will be Directors.
- 4.2. The Forum comprises:

- a) The joint chairs (up to three Directors).
- b) Chairs from each of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Networks
  - Pride Staff Network
  - Healthy Minds Staff Network
  - Women and Allies Staff Network
  - Network for Access and Inclusion
  - REACH Staff Network (Race, ethnicity and cultural heritage)
- c) Head of HR and Facilities, Head of Workforce Development and Planning, and Head of ICO Regions.
- d) Representatives from Corporate Communications and Trade Unions.

## 5. Quorum

- 5.1. The Forum is quorate with the following members present:
  - Any of the joint chairs (or a member nominated by the joint chairs to act as such).
  - Any of the members referenced at c) above.
  - Any four other members.

## 6. Standing Agenda

- 6.1. The agenda for each meeting will usually include, but is not limited to:
  - Minutes of the previous meeting
  - Outstanding actions from previous meeting
  - Updates on progress towards delivery of the equality objectives
  - Updates on statutory requirements, when necessary
  - Relevant updates from other ICO governance meetings.
  - Updates from the staff networks
  - An opportunity to raise any relevant equality, diversity or inclusion issues.
  - Discussion of communications to staff as a result of the meeting.

- 6.2. Any other matters relevant to the responsibilities and purpose of the group may also be considered as necessary.
- 6.3. The joint chairs are responsible for ensuring that the Forum receives any information which it feels is necessary for it to fulfil its purpose and responsibilities.

## **7. Budget**

- 7.1. The Forum has a budget for consulting support. Any expenditure made from this budget must be authorised by at least one of the joint chairs.

## **8. Secretariat**

- 8.1. Secretariat is provided by the Corporate Governance Team.

## **9. Frequency of meetings**

- 9.1. The Forum should meet every two months.

## **10. Urgency procedures**

- 10.1. In the event that discussion is required on a matter outside of the Forum's agreed schedule of meetings, the joint chairs may arrange for an item to be circulated to members by email for discussion. Any decisions taken in such circumstances must be ratified at the next meeting of the Forum.
- 10.2. In exceptional circumstances, joint chairs may need to make an urgent decision, without time to consult the Forum. Such decisions will be reported to the Forum in writing (by email) without delay and included on the agenda of the next Forum meeting.

## **11. Evaluation**

- 11.1. The Forum will review its outputs, working methods and terms of reference annually. Any matters of concern will be reported to the Senior Leadership Team.
- 11.2. The Forum should ensure that it reviews the handling of any significant Forum projects within three months of the end of the project. Any matters of concern will be reported to the Senior Leadership Team by the joint chairs.

## **12. Links to other forums**

- 12.1. The Forum will report directly to Senior Leadership Team (via the joint chairs) where appropriate.

- 12.2. The Forum will refer issues to the Service Delivery Groups where appropriate.
- 12.3. The Forum may receive issues from any other groups as appropriate. This may include the Joint Committee , People Strategy Board, staff forum, leadership forums, and team or department meetings, among others.

