

# North of Tyne Equalities Assemblies

## Policymaking from the heart

Emma Patterson and Rachel Edwards

# The Combined Authority

Formed in May covering Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear (we were formerly the North of Tyne Combined Authority).

Follows a devolution deal agreed by the 7 councils in December 2022 that passed through Parliament in March.

Hands powers and funding from government to the region for transport, skills, housing and regeneration.



# Vision

Our purpose is to champion the full potential of our region. Collaborating with our partners and local authorities, we'll create a better way of life by connecting communities, giving people the skills to succeed, and improving wellbeing for all, so that the North East is recognised as an outstanding place to live, work, visit and invest.



## Mayor, Cabinet and Governance

Kim McGuinness was elected as North East Mayor (1<sup>st</sup> week of May '24, replacing Jamie Driscoll, who had been mayor for the previous 5 years.

The mayor leads the CA as part of a Cabinet model with each Council Leader leading a portfolio.

The Inclusive Economy Team focuses on policy and projects that intentionally include those who may otherwise be left behind by economic growth – heavy focus on equality, diversity and inclusion as a priority for the NE.







# The North of Tyne Equalities Assemblies – with a focus on barriers to good work

In November 2022, the Combined Authority ran its first Equalities Assembly, where almost 60 residents with lived experience of inequality gathered with the mayor, to talk about their experiences of barriers to good work.

The purpose of this, was to gather insights which could be used for inclusive policy development and targeted interventions, as well as to build better and more informed relationships with our residents.





# Thoughtful approaches to inclusion

## Arrival

There are no steps to enter the building.



When you arrive, you will be greeted at the front door by a member of our team. They will show you where to go. There will also be signposting.

## Our room

The main event will be held upstairs on the second floor.



There will be small tables with seats for 4 or 5 people.

No more than 50 people will attend and there will be around 10 staff from ReCoCo, VONNE and the combined authority.

- Partnership working
- The venue
- Accessibility
- Pre-event materials
- Communication needs
- Invites
- Facilitator briefing
- Format
- Art and poetry submissions



## A memorable day – our key takeaways

- Meaningful engagement is hard work and takes time but there is value in taking the time to do this
- Lived experience provides valuable and rich insights and can help to fill some of the gaps that quantitative data can leave
- Attention to small details makes all the difference
- Working with academics added value to the approach and credibility to our findings

*“This was the most inclusive event I have ever attended. The attention to detail was excellent.”* Attendee.



## After the assemblies..

- We worked with Durham university colleagues on a thematic analysis
- We ran a similar event for employers to gain their perspectives on the same issue
- We wrote and published a report entitled ‘Open the door a little wider’
- We have been showcased by the LGA as an example of best practice
- We ran a debrief with our partners and received great feedback from partners and attendees.
- We have kept attendees up to date with the progress.







## Next steps

- We have been using insights from the equalities assemblies to inform existing employability and skills programmes, and to inform our new equalities objectives
- We are considering new interventions, such as a fund for employers to trial innovative recruitment processes.
- We are considering options for more targeted equalities assemblies, per portfolio area.
- We are creating an equalities toolkit which will include inclusive event guidance and inclusive comms guidance, based on the learning from these events.
- We also made the report available in easy read.



# Inclusive communication: The context for easy read reports

- Key to the assemblies was understanding the lived experience of residents in the NE.
- Access is fundamental to how people experience their environment
- Access also takes the form of engaging with the report



# Inclusive communication: The process for developing easy read reports

- We had a go and then went to local specialists. The skills, specialty and expertise of this work was highlighted.
- A core consideration for the specialists was how to tell the story of the report in a way that was logical and clear
- Another element of their work that really appealed was their frequent meetings with the user participation group who would provide feedback on the report.
- As we develop our role within the region, we are keen for inclusive communication to become a broader consideration within NECA so we can engage with all residents.



It is against the law to treat people unfairly or differently because of their protected characteristics



Having lots of people with different characteristics makes a better workplace.



This is called having a **diverse** work place.

**Diverse** or **Diversity** means a mix of different kinds of people such



Everyone has their own **protected characteristics** and they help make a person who they are

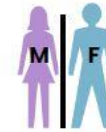
These could be...



How old they are



If they have a disability



What their gender or sex is



What their sexual orientation is



If they are married



If they are pregnant



What race or ethnicity they belong to



Their religion or beliefs

Thanks for listening, feel free to  
contact us with any questions!

Emma Patterson and Rach Edwards