MINUTES

IfATE Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education
Shaping skills training

IFATE EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

Meeting title:	IfATE Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee
Meeting date:	04 October 2023
Protective marking:	Official
Members present:	Robin Millar (RM) (the Chair); Dayle Bayliss (DB); Mark McClennon (independent member) (MM).
IfATE officials present:	Beth Chaudhary, Strategy Director (BC); Avril Cooper, HR Director (AC); Head of Priority Projects (CW); Head of Business Services Route Group (NM); Senior HR Manager (CL); Head of Research and Analysis (MW); Data Analyst, Research and Analysis Team (JW); EDI Team (JS); Governance Manager (Secretariat).
Other stakeholders present:	DfE representatives (PR, IT).
Apologies:	John Cope, board member; Rachel Cooper, Strategy Director

Item 1. Welcome and introductions

1. The Chair welcomed members and officials to the meeting, and asked members whether they had any new declarations of interest to make. No declarations were made, and members recognised that they should declare any potential or actual conflict that may arise by virtue of their other interests.

2. The Chair outlined the objectives for the meeting; these were to:

    i. Hear from the HR team about the work IfATE has done so far to increase the number of applications it receives from people self-declaring disabilities;

    ii. Update on the impact of the EDI toolkit;

    iii. Report on the key findings from a deep dive into the experiences of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities;

    iv. To discuss recommendations for what should be included in an EDI impact tracker going forward;

    v. To discuss what IfATE should prioritise its efforts on influencing in the bigger picture that has a bearing on technical education for all.

Item 2. Minutes and actions from the last meeting

3. The draft minutes of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) meeting of 05 July 2023 were approved without amendment.

Item 3. Recruitment of staff with disabilities

4. Avril Cooper introduced the item and provided an overview of the progress made so far toward IfATE's two-year commitment, within the EDI strategy, to increase the percentage of job applications from people who self-declare as having a disability to be as closely aligned as possible to the 20% of the UK working-age population who are classed as disabled.

5. Since the publication of the EDI strategy, IfATE had standardised the wording used in recruitment campaigns to simplify the terminology used and improve accessibility. IfATE's candidate packs had been refreshed to ensure they were accessible, including via assistive

technology, and the use of the candidate packs had been widened to all external recruitment. The HR team had undertaken a review of where IfATE job roles were advertised. Previously this was only on Civil Service Jobs, but all IfATE vacancies were now included in the Department for Work and Pension's (DWP) 'Find a Job' directory, and additional options are being explored to ensure job adverts reach as diverse of a range of potential applicants as possible. The internal expression of interest system, enabling existing IfATE officials to express an interest in temporary promotions or changes to their substantive role, is now managed through the Civil Service Jobs site to ensure that diversity monitoring data can be collected.

6. Improvements had also been made to IfATE's interview panels. Panels had been gender-diverse for some time, but now (in addition) at least one member of each panel is now from an under-represented group, including those with disabilities. Unconscious bias training is mandatory for all people on interview panels, as well as other Civil Service interviewer training.

7. Members thanked the HR team for the update and praised the progress made so far. The committee requested that board, committee and panel members should have access to unconscious bias training.

Item 4.   Impact of EDI Toolkit

8. The Head of the Business Services Route Group introduced the item and provided an update on the use of the EDI toolkit across all routes. Technical issues had previously prevented accurate reporting of the numbers of submissions using the toolkit's knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) and validation questions. Some issues had already been resolved and the remaining outstanding issue was expected to be resolved in the near future.

9. Further work to promote the use of the toolkit was planned in late 2023 and early 2024.

Item 5.   Deep dive: learners with learning difficulties or disabilities

10. The Research and Analysis Team introduced the item and presented key findings on the deep dive into the experiences of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, based on a review of existing research and supplemented with analysis of public data.

11. The analysis found that there were difficulties in comparing data from different sources, as there were differences in the way in which the data was categorised within the apprenticeships system and at population level. Members noted that even within more specific categorisation of the data, there would still be considerable variation in the individuals represented by that data and how employers might unlock their potential.

12. The Research and Analysis Team, part of the data and analytical services division, advised that broad comparisons with population data showed that although some progress had been made, a lower proportion of people with self-declared learning difficulties and disabilities were accessing apprenticeships in comparison to the overall population. It was suggested that this may reflect the broader disadvantage experienced by disabled people in employment and education, of which people with some conditions experience greater barriers.

13. The evidence showed significant variation in participation between different routes and between different levels. It highlighted that some individuals did not communicate their

needs to their employers; one potential explanation was that they were concerned that they may experience workplace discrimination as a result, but seemed to find it easier to inform their training provider.

14. Members thanked the Research and Analysis Team for their presentation and suggested that case studies could help emphasise successes in recruiting and retaining learners with learning difficulties or disabilities, and how businesses benefit from having a more diverse workforce. This may encourage employers to broaden their recruitment and feel more confident that they can effectively support the needs of employees with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Item 6.   Impact tracker recommendations

15. The Head of Priority Projects led the item, outlining proposed topics for an impact tracker to provide committee members with assurance about outcomes and improvements as a result of IfATE's EDI-related work to improve the technical education landscape.. Members approved the proposals and requested that consideration should be given to tracking perceptions in addition to objectively-measurable changes.

16. Members asked for a summary of IfATE's obligations in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and requested that future board member inductions included key EDI metrics, including IfATE's Gender Pay Gap that is now reported publicly.

Item 7.   Prioritisation of areas of interest

17. Beth Chaudhary introduced the item and reminded the committee that its purpose is to review, challenge and provide expertise in fulfilling the Board's ambition to: embed EDI as a mainstream of all IfATE business and internal operations; and to influence the wider apprenticeship and technical skills landscape to maintain equity, diversity and inclusion.

18. Members discussed how the committee might prioritise areas of interest, building upon previous work. Members agreed that the committee had been successful in helping to embed EDI considerations within IfATE business, and commended officials for their work in this area.

19. It was agreed that the future focus for the committee should be: to review and advise on improving EDI considerations within major projects and programmes; conduct deep dives to examine data to better measure outcomes and identify any data gaps; and to support route groups in identifying, understanding and addressing sector-specific challenges.

Item 8.   Any Other Business

20. In response to a query raised out of committee about whether any Health and Safety Executive (HSE) regulations might inadvertently present barriers to employment in certain sectors, specific occupations or respective duties for people with disabilities, members were informed that HSE publish specific guidance for 51 industries, with 91 topic areas (such as First Aid). This is in addition to guidance to support workers with long-term health conditions or disabilities. The chair asked that this information was passed to the Chair of the Approvals Policy and Assurance Committee.

21. The Chair noted that this was the last EDIC meeting that would include Dayle Bayliss as a member. He praised both Dayle and Jessica Leigh Jones, who have recently resigned from the IfATE board, for the support shown to him as Chair and for their enormous contributions to the committee's work.

22. The Chair thanked members and officials for their participation and confirmed that the next EDIC meeting would take place on 17 January 2024.