



CIPD in Northern England: Regional Insights

Welcome

to the Summer issue of Regional Insights - our quarterly update for our Northern CIPD members – and happy LGBT+ Pride Month!



We recognise there are still key barriers that LGBT+ people face in the workplace, so we'll be sharing our range of free inclusion resources across the month to encourage employers to create safe, accepting and inclusive environments for all LGBT+ employees.

Inspiring interviews and regional networks

In this issue, inspiring HR and people professionals tackle a range of topics including how to create more neurodiversity-smart workplaces, and how to improve the financial wellbeing of your people to create a happier, healthier workforce.

You'll also find out more about our new Independent Consultants Network, along with our other regional forums and networks, and their upcoming activities, to help you connect with your peers, share knowledge and support your development.

Championing good and fair Northern employers

As organisations continue to adapt to new ways of working, my team and I are enjoying connecting with forward-thinking employers - including Leeds City Council, Durham University, Damart and Mersey Care – to deliver sessions on professional development, membership, and insights on the future of work.

We were delighted to celebrate more employer excellence in our region at the Good Employment Awards 2023 – hosted by the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter. As a proud sponsor, we presented Ingeus with the 'Partner of the Year' accolade. Find out more about the winners on our news page.

Engage with our latest work, activities and team

Later this month we are launching our first ever Northern Good Work Index report – a benchmark of job quality in the North – so look out for that on our [new-look homepage](#). The report will provide a range of insight on which sectors and occupations have the best work-life balance, health and wellbeing and job security, amongst other factors.

Daphne Doody-Green,
Head of CIPD in Northern England



News around the region



Pilot to recruit ex-prisoners

Over 100 people professionals have signed up to find out more and lend their support to a new six-month pilot that will see the CIPD Trust help ex-prisoners re-enter the workplace and sustain roles.

Delegates found out more about the pilot during an online session - hosted by our Northern Policy Forum - which explored how the CIPD Trust is working with the people profession to create a more diverse and fairer world of work, where under-represented groups have equal opportunities.

Watch the Northern Policy Forum session [here](#).



Supporting black and ethnic minority women at work

A unique session – hosted by our Senior People Professionals Network (SPPN) in collaboration with She Leads for Legacy - addressed the crucial role the people profession has to play in helping to support more black minority ethnic women to progress at work.

This comes after research by the TUC body found that almost one third (31 per cent) of black minority ethnic women have been unfairly denied a promotion at work, rising to nearly half of those same women should they also have a disability (45 per cent).

Sharon Amesu, Co-Founder of She Leads for Legacy said: "The people profession must be able to recognise workplace bias and discrimination in order to help stamp it out so that all individuals, and particularly black women, can reach their potential at work."

Watch the session [here](#).



Championing good work with Northern Metro Mayors

We held an inspiring Good Employment Summit with senior political leaders to explore how employers can improve their working practices to make Northern England the 'go-to' place to live and work in.

In collaboration with Acas, the virtual summit addressed how businesses can be more productive, reduce costs, and tackle social and economic issues, with support from 'good work' charters that we helped create.

The Metro Mayors from Greater Manchester (Andy Burnham), Liverpool City Region (Steve Rotheram), and West Yorkshire (Tracy Brabin) were joined by the Deputy Leader of Newcastle City Council (Karen Kilgour) to highlight how their respective local charters are supporting employers to improve their employment standards.

Read more and watch the session [here](#).



New Independent Consultants Network

We have launched an Independent Consultants Network – exclusively for Northern independent consultants – after listening to feedback.

This new network will address the needs of this specific group more, with virtual knowledge exchange sessions, and networking opportunities, tailored to enable independent consultants to share ideas and best practice in a safe and closed place.

Kay Thompson-Barker, Managing Director, Sea Light Development Ltd said: “I am incredibly excited about this new network. There are so many benefits of working independently, but it can also be isolating. I’m delighted CIPD North are committed to helping professionals like me to network, develop and support one another.”

Register to join the Independent Consultants Network [here](#).

Barriers to work faced by traveller community

The barriers to employment that the Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boaters (GTRSB) community face were addressed in a unique workshop hosted by the CIPD in Merseyside and Cheshire Branch.

During the interactive evening – held in Liverpool – the GTRSB community shared their experience of what it’s like to be one of the most persecuted and discriminated against groups in the labour market. Despite this, the community shared their unique contribution to work, community-based skill hubs, and the arts.

Among the key learnings was that employers often overlook the ‘ideal’ employee when talent and skills are right on our doorstep.

Find out more about the CIPD Northern Branch Network and upcoming events [here](#).

Celebrating Employer Excellence

As a proud sponsor of the annual Good Employment Awards - hosted by the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter – we were delighted to celebrate and recognise employers in Greater Manchester going above and beyond for their people.

The winners, recognised for improving employment standards across the region, included Howarth Air Technology, Ingeus, Southway Housing Trust, Persona Care and Support, and Wigan and Leigh College.

The Mayor’s esteemed ‘Employer of the Year’ accolade, was given to Anchor Removals, a small family run firm with a fleet of six vehicles and ten members of staff.

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, said: “These awards celebrate the efforts of employers who are leading the movement for good employment across the city-region. Well done to all the winners!”

Read more [here](#).

Volunteer Hotseat

The CIPD Cumbria Branch may be the smallest CIPD Branch (with just over 500 members), yet its strong committee of 12 people professionals deliver a diverse range of networking opportunities and events to suit people professionals at all stages of their career.

Committee member and HR Consultant, Helen Dawson FCIPD, tells us more about the vibrant group of volunteers and its support for students and the Cumbrian HR community.

We refer to ourselves as 'small but mighty' and this is good reflection of our committee. We are inclusive and supportive, and whilst we talk CIPD business, we're a sociable bunch too!

Our committee is genuinely committed to supporting the Cumbrian HR community and our work with the wider CIPD network to shape the future HR landscape.

Helen Dawson FCIPD,
from the CIPD Cumbria Branch



Engaging and entertaining learning

Our events are designed around both continuing professional development and networking opportunities, and are free to both members and non-members to help support the wider community.

Our most popular events include our themed Employment Law Updates, in partnership with local employment solicitors. Delivered in an engaging and entertaining way, these sessions have provided great entertainment for our members alongside valuable learning. Who'd have thought a Pink Panther costume would ever be worn by an Employment Lawyer at an update event?

Other recent events have included a Mock Tribunal and we are hosting an Organisation Development Masterclass in Penrith on 8 June.

This will require members to draw on experiences and knowledge of others and develop ideas that can be taken back to the workplace. This is particularly important post-covid, where flexible working and the culture of organisations is radically changing the world of work.

Support for all people professionals

Our activities support people professionals at all stages of their career, including our online HR Forum which usually has a main topic or theme – such as Menopause in the Workplace –but it also gives members the opportunity to discuss other issues.

We recognise that it's easy to be isolated in a stand-alone HR role if you've not got a network and that most HR people need a bit of peer-to-peer therapy or reassurance at times.



Helping students develop

We have a Student Engagement Lead, Megan Armstrong, who liaises with all the students across the region as well as the colleges and universities delivering the CIPD courses.

The CIPD Cumbria Branch proactively encourages and supports students to develop their career through networking at Branch events which count as part of their continuous professional development.

We also promote different aspects of the HR Professional map to ensure standards and core behaviours are understood by members, as well as signposting and showcasing the wealth of resources available to both members and non-members via the CIPD website.

Diversity and expertise

Our committee members are from different backgrounds and are at different stages in their career. This diversity in the team provides a level of expertise and in-depth knowledge of the challenges people professionals are facing, and an opportunity to discuss possible solutions. Our knowledge and expertise is shared with participants at all our events.



Find out more about the CIPD Cumbria Branch [here](#).

Empowering neurodiversity in the workplace

Award-winning coaching leader, Mike Bedford MCIPD is the Founder and CEO of Bee-Brilliant People Development in Leeds which helps organisations attract, develop and retain neurodivergent talent.

As a proud neurodivergent, and one of the Top 80 Neurodivergent Leaders in the UK to follow (2023), Mike tells us about his passion – and magic formula – for creating a neuro-inclusive workforce.

I come from a very neurodivergent family; ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) all flow through our veins, and in my experience the workplace hasn't always been the most 'neurodiversity-friendly' of places.

Mike Bedford MCIPD,
Founder and CEO of
Bee-Brilliant People
Development



Creating a neurodiverse workplace

The magic formula for creating a neurodiverse workforce comes down to building a culture of trust and this can only be achieved through open, honest and authentic conversations, and by proxy psychological safety. Here's five ways to do this:

1. Awareness raising – from people with lived experience who have an understanding and experience of neurodiversity.
2. Gain the 'buy-in' of the HR and leadership team – change needs to happen from the top down, and HR can set the benchmark that everyone can aspire to achieve. Leaders set the vision and that vision must include neurodiversity in the workplace.
3. Build line management capabilities – people managers are the enablers and the beating heart of any organisation. They must have the right skillset, toolkit and mindset to lead neurodivergent people.
4. Revisit and refresh your Talent, Learning and Recruitment approach – ensure these areas are neuro-inclusive by involving neurodivergent people at every step of the process.
5. Scrutinise your existing HR policies and procedures - are they really neuro-inclusive?

Neuro-inclusive recruitment

To create more neuro-inclusive recruitment practices start by asking "what aren't we doing?" Then sense check and test with neurodivergent candidates and your existing neurodivergent people.

Other neuro-inclusive recruitment practices include:

- Have at least one neurodivergent panel member sifting and on the interview panel.
- Provide clear and unambiguous language in job descriptions.
- Provide interview questions in advance to all candidates.
- Get rid of old fashioned expectations of candidate behaviours, for example; eye contact, firm handshakes, no notes, no fidgeting, no playing with your pen. Normalise these behaviours and invite candidates to be themselves.
- Do not use psychometric testing on neurodivergent candidates - it's a sure fire way to weed out neurodivergent talent.

The future is neurodiverse

It is critical for employers to be neuro-inclusive because 25% of their workforce is likely to be neurodivergent, and attracting diversity of thought to any business is good for business.

Leaders should not be afraid to make mistakes and get things wrong; instead, be afraid to have not tried at all, and be led by assumptions.

Neurodivergent people are disruptive thinkers and entrepreneurial mindsets of this world. Who wouldn't want to attract, develop and retain this type of talent in the workplace? The future is Neurodivergent thinking!



Learn more about how to support neurodivergent employees in the CIPD Neurodiversity at Work guide [here](#).

Cost of living: creating a happier, healthier workforce

Absenteeism, due to financial distress, is estimated to cost UK employers up to £2.5 billion per year, according to research by the Money & Pension Services (MaPS) – an organisation established to help the government with matters relating to finance.

Karleen Dowden, Regional Partnerships Manager at MaPS tells us how employers can create a healthier and more productive workforce by following a few simple steps to improve the financial wellbeing of their people.

Everyday money worries are at the top of employees agendas. Of the UK population today 22% have less than £100 in savings and 52% do not have a plan for their finances in retirement.

Money worries can affect worker productivity and prevent people from performing at their best. But there are simple steps that employers can take to improve the financial wellbeing of staff. These include:

1. Encourage your employees to break the taboo and become comfortable talking about money. Understand their concerns and needs via polls, surveys and discussion groups.

2. Assess what financial wellbeing support you already offer. Audit existing financial wellbeing benefits and understand how well they respond to your employees' needs.
3. Design your financial wellbeing approach - think holistically. Consider how to target and prioritise your activity, based on your workforce needs and available resources. Build a strong case for support to secure buy-in at senior levels of your business.
4. Make support accessible. Offer guidance when employees are most receptive or in need of support, such as when they first join you or are promoted, or at key life stages, like buying a house. Consider whether digital, face to face, on-site, or a blended approach of support is most appropriate.
5. Test and learn. Knowing that something you're doing works for your employees is important. Build regular learning reviews and evaluation into your approach.

Useful resources and support

The Money & Pensions Service (MaPS) offer free and independent support to businesses to help them on their financial wellbeing journey.

Our [cost of living campaign](#) has brought together a range of useful tools, calculators and guides to help employees keep on top of their money. Employers can communicate the campaign through a range of [assets](#) created for businesses to use including newsletters and intranet content, social media posts and template text, and printed materials.



Money Helper is MaPS consumer-facing service, providing free and impartial money and pensions guidance for people across the UK. From annuities to universal credit, [MoneyHelper resources](#) offer financial education and guidance spanning all money issues, pensions and debt.

Happier, healthier, productive workers

Financial stress doesn't just impact those on a low income. The whole workforce will benefit from a supportive approach to financial wellbeing, which is likely to result in happier, healthier and more productive workers, with staff feeling valued from a responsible employer.

Providing financial wellbeing support is good for business and can encourage better talent attraction and retention, a more sustainable and socially responsible business, as well as bringing economic benefits for the country.

Karleen Dowden, Regional Partnerships Manager at MaPS



Gain more financial wellbeing guidance from our range of resources [here](#).

Pride in equality for everyone

Having a diverse, inclusive and equal workplace is at the top of the 'business agenda' for organisations such as Bruntwood, Salford Foundation and AutoTrader, members of Manchester Pride's All Equals Charter.

Dr Christopher Owen, Inclusivity Development Manager, Manchester Pride tells us more about the modern Pride movement and how the Charter is supporting businesses to make the workplace inclusive, diverse and equal for everyone.

People are tired of 'tick box exercises' and actions that appear to be about inclusion but do little to make genuine change for marginalised communities. The All Equals Charter provides an opportunity to be more authentic.

Through accreditation, members receive bespoke feedback on their practices, with assurances on their successes and a clear framework for developing practical action plans to make improvements.

Dr Christopher Owen, Inclusivity Development Manager at Manchester Pride



Fair and inclusive policies and procedures

In order to best support LGBTQ+ people, and indeed all marginalised groups in the workplace, it is worth having an understanding of the systemic causes of exclusion and inequality, and then address these in concrete terms.

For example, does your organisation have the right policies and procedures in place to best support employees who 'come out of the closet' at work, or who begin the transitioning process as a trans or non-binary person while in your employ?

Our 'Getting Started Programme' provides an opportunity for organisations to identify what inclusive policies and procedures they are missing, prior to assessing these for accreditation.

Overcoming barriers and creating meaningful change

We have researched common barriers to improving workplace inclusion and designed innovative approaches and resources to support organisations with creating meaningful change. For example, in April 2023 alone our consultations supported over 2,800 employees and our talks and workshops improved inclusion across 20 organisations.

Our priority is to work with members to create positive change, offering a supportive experience for development and growth no matter where they may be in their inclusion journey.

Pride in a future without prejudice

As the landscape of LGBTQ+ rights and issues evolves, so too does the Pride movement's approaches and tactics. The inclusion endeavours of those who wave Pride flags, march in Pride parades or call themselves allies to LGBTQ+ communities should also evolve with the movement accordingly.

Pride has always been about bringing people together to create change. For the Charter, we're about to launch some exciting new initiatives that will bring our members together, creating a community of knowledge sharing and support. Only by working together can we create a world where everyone can be free to live and love without prejudice.



Jen Atkins People Director at Bruntwood – commercial property specialists - said:
"The All Equals Charter provides a framework through which we can hold ourselves accountable in making the workplace as inclusive and diverse as possible. It also sends a clear message to colleagues, customers and other businesses that we're serious about supporting LGBTQ+ people across the business and beyond."



Download CIPD guidance on how to create inclusive workplaces [here](#).

Networks and Events

Senior People Professional Network (SPPN)



The Senior People Professionals (SPPN) Network connects like-minded peers through virtual and face-to-face sessions to discuss key topics and share challenges.

Members of the network can now also join our new Guild platform – an app exclusively for senior HR professionals – to connect and share experiences

Become a member [here](#) and join the SPPN upcoming online SPPN sessions:

Wed 19 July – 12.00 – 13.00 – **Open Discussion Forum.**

Independent Consultants Network



This new network will address the needs of independent consultants - who work in the people profession in the North of England - with virtual knowledge exchange sessions, and networking opportunities to allow the sharing of ideas and best practice, in a confidential space.

Register to join the Independent Consultants Network and future online sessions [here](#).

Good Employment Week – 19-24 June



As a proud partner to the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter, we are supporting its **Good Employment Week** (19-24 June) to raise awareness of good employers, and employment standards, across Greater Manchester.

Get involved in various events and activities across the week [here](#).

CIPD Northern Policy Forum



If you have a keen interest in policy and want to find out more about the CIPD's policy influencing work, join the CIPD Northern Policy Forum to help shape and recommend vital changes to public policy to improve the future world of work.

Register to become a member of the forum [here](#) and join upcoming online sessions:

Tues 4 July – 12:00- 13:00 – Essential Skills in the Workplace Roundtable - Register your interest e: kayleigh.tobbell@cipd.co.uk

Thurs 28 Sept – 12:00- 13:00 – **Health and Wellbeing in the Workforce.**

CIPD Northern Branches



The CIPD Northern Branch Network is made up of volunteers who deliver a range of activities and events designed to help you network and learn with likeminded HR and L&D peers in your area.

Find out more about your local CIPD Branch – run by a vibrant community of people professionals – and its upcoming activities [here](#).