

## **Summary of Equality Hub COVID-19 Lessons Learned Session on 18 November**

This is a summary of the points raised in the session held on 18 November.

### **Redeploying staff externally**

- The first staff to be redeployed were the analysts working on the COVID-19 dashboard, which became the single source of truth and informed the early government daily briefings. This happened quickly and easily and the dashboard made a real difference.
- EH staff made a good impression in other departments. Almost all of the gender team that were redeployed moved on to new roles.
- Going out on redeployment gave EH staff great insights into other departments and helped them establish good networks of contacts.
- Other experiences of redeployment were less positive. For example, DIT did not know the grades of the EH staff coming on redeployment and so did not match them all to appropriate roles. Eventually staff were able to shape decent roles in these departments, but EH could have been clearer on what we were offering.
- Work necessarily involved very long hours including weekends, but staff accepted this in the short term.
- Issues around access to IT etc. meant that some people experienced delays in getting up to speed in other departments.
- It was felt that Cabinet Office over-egged the redeployment process and redeployed too many people overall. Some people were told they were going on emergency redeployment but then had little or nothing to do after they had moved.

### **Redeploying staff internally**

- EH was able to respond in an agile way through, for example, providing additional support to DU, enabling COVID work to become a critical function within the Unit.
- RDU redeployed staff to areas listed as Critical Functions, but when RDU was itself added to the list, no staff were deployed to us, despite completing weekly returns to the centre.
- EH demonstrated resilience and innovation under pressure.
- This included good collaboration between GEO, DU and RDU - such as weekly Covid meetings, collating feedback/input on key documents and speaking to other departments in a single forum or through a single voice.
- RDU worked well together and built a strong relationship with MSE and her Special Adviser.

### **Experience of working with the centre**

- There was too big a focus on presenteeism in the early days of the pandemic regardless of the risks. This meant a number of key people all became infected at the same time.
- Conversely, this approach excluded the No.10 disability SpAd from key decisions. As a result, mistakes were made - e.g. not having a BSL interpreter at the daily briefings.
- It was felt that equalities interests weren't properly represented in early meetings.
- There were mixed views on working with the CO Covid-19 Taskforce.