Hello.

The Education Authority would like to introduce you to EA LINK.

EA LINK is a disability and carers staff network within EA. Any member of staff can join the network, whether you have a disability, care for someone who has a disability or are just interested in supporting people with disabilities.

**Our network exists to...**

* Raise awareness
* Provide Peer Support
* Promote a positive work place culture
* Advise and support EA
* Enable staff to connect and network

**What is disability by definition?**

A physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

**Which of these are classed as a disability?**

Anxiety, Cancer, Partial Deafness, Multiple Sclerosis, HIV – all of them.

1 in 5 people have a disability here in Northern Ireland.

Only 6.75% of EA staff have declared their disability.

This shows there is still a stigma attached to being open about your disability. We should all be striving to eradicate this stigma.

Discrimination in EA will not be tolerated, whether it be direct, indirect, or associative

**We did a survey with our network members:**

* 63% did not have their disability and/or carer duty when they began at EA/
* 83% had a negative experience when seeking a Reasonable Adjustment

**We asked our members what would have made their experience better...It boiled to management practising K.I.N.D:**

* K - Knowledge. Awareness of the The Disability Discrimination Act 1995, their statutory duty as a manager and availing of the support and guidance of EA's Disability Employment Support Service.
* I - Implement. Taking the next steps to ensure advice and guidance becomes action, which work towards making a Reasonable Adjustment happen in a timely manner.
* N - Note. The Reasonable Adjustment Passport will be a live document in which a manager is responsible for logging notes. Detailing which adjustments worked, which did not and which need revisited after a trial period.
* D - Determination. A commitment and genuine effort to make a member of staff comfortable and able to continue working within the Education Authority.

Kindness is a key theme in LINK's feedback from the survey. As the issues surrounding disability and caring responsibilities are deeply personal and private, a little kindness goes a long way.

* Members wished that managers had let their team know about their Reasonable Adjustments in a tactful way, to explain why they could not do certain tasks, this could have avoided tension.
* Members were pleased and extremely relieved when flexible working requests were granted and compassion was shown. This helped them do their job better.
* Members stated the tone of their initial meeting and/or their return to work meeting was sometimes a bit unpleasant, with a simple 'how are you?' going amiss at times.
* Members were very grateful to managers who were proactive on their behalf. They have no doubts that their manager at the time was detrimental to keeping them in the workplace.
* Members wished Access To Work were consulted for funding before lack of budget was mentioned.

EA is working to make the organisation a great place to work, for everyone. Our staff networks help us to deliver a new, engaging and open culture. The network helps our staff connect, with each other and with the EA. If you would like to join the network… get in touch with xxxx