

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]
Cc:
Subject: Complaints re Yammer posts
Date: 18 November 2022 13:37:38

Hi both,

Draft text for responses to complaints – would welcome your views before circulating to the wider moderation group. I'm conscious today is [REDACTED] non working day and this afternoon is [REDACTED] non working afternoon – but if you could get back to me on Monday it would be good to get it out to the group then.

I have not included a route for follow-up in the first, because I don't want to invite lengthy discussions as to whether or not the network has a right to exist and to promote itself; I have included the offer in the second because these are people whose complaint is that the tenor of the conversation has made them feel unsafe – so I think we should leave the door open for further conversation/reassurance.

Complaints that the SEEN network should not be promoted in Defra

Thank you for your email of (date)

The Sex Equality & Equity Network (SEEN) is a new cross government network, recognised by the Civil Service Inclusive Practice Team, based in Cabinet Office. The network will focus on the protected characteristic of sex, and equality between men and women, from the perspective of the protected characteristic of what are often termed 'gender critical beliefs'. Defra organisations recognise the right of all groups of staff who share a protected belief to form networks.

Gender critical beliefs were recently found by an Employment Appeal Tribunal to fall into the protected characteristic of religion or belief under the Equality Act 2010. This means that people who hold gender critical beliefs are protected against discrimination, and that Defra's Public Sector Equality Duty applies to people who hold gender critical beliefs in the same way it applies to people who share the protected characteristic of gender reassignment.

Defra organisations are committed to creating and maintaining a diverse and inclusive working environment for all our staff. This includes valuing difference and diversity of thought. We are also committed to providing working

environments which are safe for all our staff – this applies to trans staff and equally to staff who hold gender critical beliefs. The SEEN network has stated its aims “to encourage a diversity of voices and open and respectful dialogue and tolerance between those with differing beliefs and experiences”. There is nothing to suggest that the network poses a threat to the safety of trans colleagues, and the network has not attacked trans colleagues.

We therefore do not see any grounds to remove the post which provides information about the network, and we do not see this as inconsistent with our commitment to provide a safe and inclusive working environment for trans colleagues.

Complaints about the tenor of the conversation on Yammer

Thank you for your email of (date)

We are aware of the Yammer conversation to which you refer, and have removed some of the posts which clearly breach relevant codes for yammer use and codes of conduct. We have now issued Communications Principles to amplify and underline our expectation that communications in all Defra platforms should be conducted in a professional and respectful manner. A copy is attached for your information (*attach copy for relevant organisation*). Future moderation of yammer posts, and indeed all communications channels in Defra group, will be conducted against these principles.

Recognising that the subject matter of this conversation is emotive, our HR Director issued [this post](#) in an effort to remind staff that communications must be respectful, professional and appropriate for the workplace. However, the conversation on yammer continued to escalate and so we closed down the thread. *[if relevant by the time the emails go out: Having reflected further, and in your light of the concerns raised by you and others, we have now decided to remove the entire thread]*

Please rest assured that all Defra organisations strive to create a diverse and inclusive workplace, that values difference and diversity of thought. We are committed to ensuring that all our staff feel safe in the workplace, and will continue our work to promote respect at work.

If you would like to discuss this further please do get in touch with me or

alternatively contact (*escalation route*).

[REDACTED] ([REDACTED]) | [REDACTED] | HR EDI Team | Defra
group HR | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

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Annual Leave:

For resources and information see [EDI Sharepoint](#)

To stay connected [Defra Diversity Twitter](#)

Please feedback any ideas for improvement to [REDACTED] [@defra.gov.uk](#)