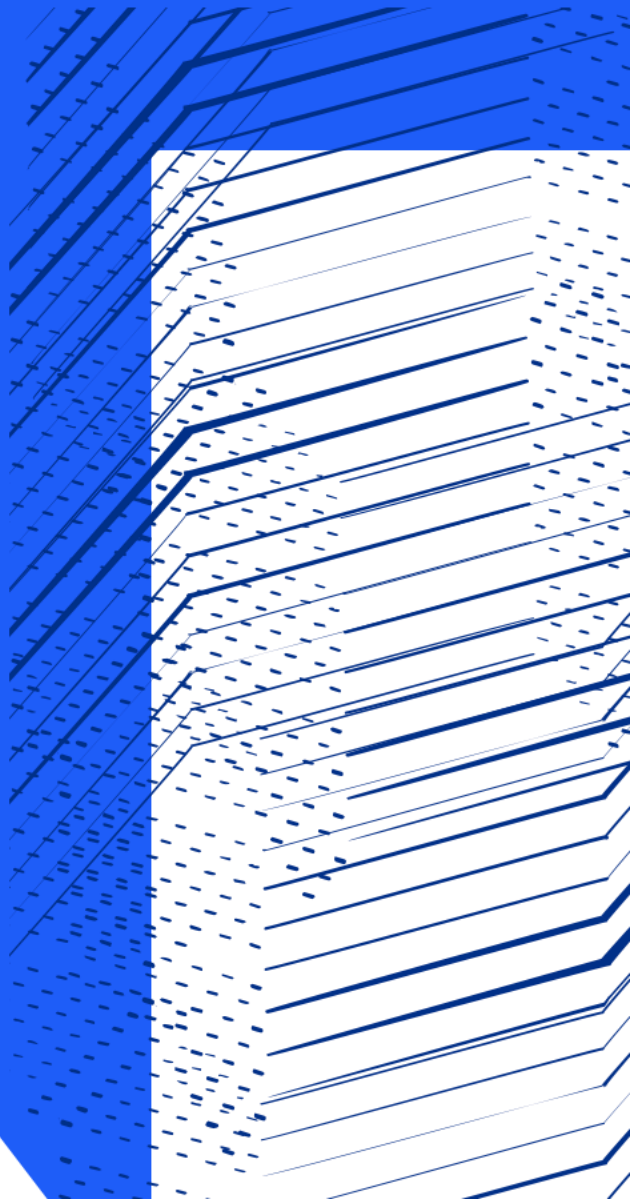
Science and Technology Facilities Council

Scientific Computing

GridPP

UK Computing for Particle Physics



Experiences with DEI @ Scientific Computing

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Introduction

- Around 18 months ago in GridPP49, talked briefly about the importance of the need to protect the right of our staff to live and work as their authentic selves

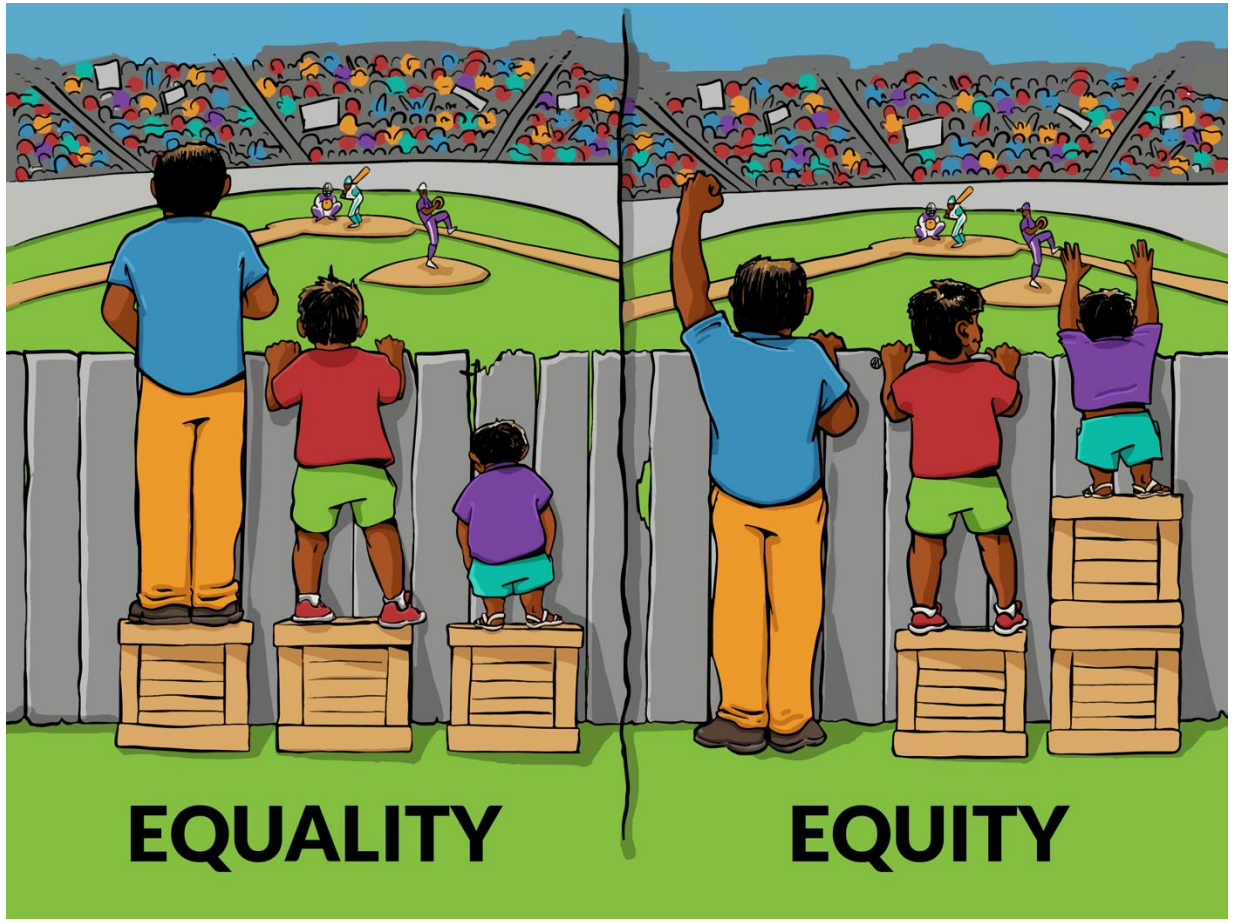
- I am queer, I use he/him pronouns
  - I am in a position of privilege, so I have a responsibility to use that

Introduction

- Now co-chair of Scientific Computing EDI WG, evolving with the rest of department as part of larger transformation
  - Particularly around decision making
- Today take a more focused look into EDI, experiences from Scientific Computing, and where that might take GridPP
- Note: DEI = EDI = Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Motivation

- We must build and maintain diverse and inclusive workplaces, where people are treated equitably



Interaction Institute for Social Change | Artist: Angus Maguire | interactioninstitute.org | madewithangus.com
https://medium.com/@CRA1G/the-evolution-of-an-accidental-meme-ddc4e139e0e4#.pqiclk8pl

General notes

- Why do we need a diverse and inclusive environment?
- Better for our staff who can live and work in a supportive environment as their authentic selves
- Better for the work we do by bringing in a diverse range of viewpoints and experience

General notes

- This work involves everyone
  - Not solely those from underrepresented groups
- Often heard in other discussions – “I am the only representative of [GROUP] in my team/group/area, and ended up having to do all the EDI work”
  - People may well have a desire to do this work, but this should not be an expectation
- A great deal of work by white, cis men will be required ☺
  - Thought experiment for the majority of people in this room; what would it be like if you were suddenly in the distinct minority rather than the clear majority?

Scientific Computing EDI

- EDI Working Group originally started in 2021
  - Barbara Montanari, now Head of Programmes and Strategy
  - Ilian Todorov and I are co-chairs at this moment

- Now has 12 members from across the department

SC EDI Activities

- Some of our specific activities have been drawn from a set, updated annually, developed by the NatLabs EDI group
  - 21 for 21 → 22 for 22 → 23 for 23

- Specific activities we have undertaken:
  - Newsletters: events, interviews
  - Questionnaires (recruitment temperature check, not passed the senior leadership team)
  - Recruitment ads – EDI language
  - Anti-bullying, Harassment and Discrimination stickers and posters at RAL and DL
  - Pronoun badges at RAL and DL
  - Webinar/Workshop (neurodivergence)
  - Anonymised “Where am I from” map
  - Hygiene products in toilets
  - International Womens Day quiz this year
  - Faces of SCD posters at Harwell Open Week

STFC National Laboratories Directorate
Science and Technologies + Facilities

- Accelerator Science and Technology Centre
- Central Laser Facility
- Hartree Centre
- ISIS Neutron and Muon Source
- National Quantum Computing Centre
- **Particle Physics Department**
  - including Boulby Underground Laboratory
- RAL Space
- **Scientific Computing Department**
- Technology Department
- UK Astronomy Technology Centre

SCD EDI evolution

- End of last year
  - Perhaps too much of a focus on individual activities
    - “Why are we doing this?”
  - Need for longer term strategy
    - Also a view shared in other departments
- So, two strands
  - Need for strategy
  - Need for evolution as part of broader transformation
- Two workshops over the summer (June + August)
  - Parallel input from Tom Griffin (Director), will be consulting with other senior staff

SCD EDI evolution

- Two focuses for the work
  - Concrete, “substantive” activities
  - Restructuring of the group using new Terms of Reference as approach
- Problem statement: we currently have a group of dedicated staff who are nevertheless very busy
  - identify how to use this effort effectively to have the right impact
- A small group of people acting on their own can’t achieve the changes we need
  - must be able to have impact at the senior leadership level

Substantive activities [1]

- Think in terms of the current working group preparing to be re-instantiated; putting some activities on the board for the new formation

- EDI survey: useful results from elsewhere in STFC using a 3rd party to perform a survey, could be useful to give targeted views
  - STFC people will be familiar with the People Survey – this would be more focused
  - Use this to build strategy

Substantive activities [2]

- Conferences and workshops
  - SC has identified some key conferences as strategically important
  - SC, ISC, RSEConf, CIUK
  - How can we approach making sure that we are approaching these to support a diverse range of staff attending
    - https://sc24.supercomputing.org/scinet/wins/
- We also run a large range of workshops and conferences (including CIUK)
  - How can we best embed EDI into the culture of these events with the support of our Admin team?
  - Add to checklist for event organisation, make sure that workshops have codes of conduct, etc

Repositioning of EDI working group

- Clear that for the EDI group to have appropriate impact, must improve connectivity to senior leadership
  - This has also been made clear by Tom

- Restructure the Terms of Reference to highlight this
  - An early draft was prepared at the second workshop, initial feedback being completed before broader consultation with leadership
  - Place the newly re-instantiated group to give recommendations and advice at appropriately high level
  - Plan to complete this work by ~end of September

What next for GridPP?

- Clear need to focus on EDI in GridPP – not a terribly diverse community
- Where can/should we focus?
  - As a project, don't have direct access to a key lever, recruitment and retention
- Perhaps a focus on cultural aspects, codes of conduct, etc…
  - Identify current activities in our scope that we could engage with
    - Women in HPC? Others?

What next for GridPP?

- What do we need for GridPP
  - Champions? A working group?
- Our community is built on collaboration
  - We should make sure we extend these values to building diverse and inclusive workplaces
- This is the start of this conversation
  - As always, impactful use of peoples' time will be very important

Next steps

- Propose two concrete next steps:

- GridPP should identify this as an area we want to develop
- We should create a working group to develop appropriate activities
  - Include people interested in taking part and identify key stakeholders
  - Identify existing initiatives we could support and contribute to