“Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service are committed to improving the services we deliver to the people who live, work and travel throughout Bedfordshire. Some of the work detailed within this Single Equality Scheme is what we are required to do lawfully but for the Service it is much more than just a legal obligation”
Contents

FOREWORD .......................................................................................................................... 1
Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 2
Consultation ......................................................................................................................... 3
Objectives ............................................................................................................................. 3
  Objective 1: Measuring Performance against Equality Framework(s) .................................. 4
  Objective 2: Improve Public Access .................................................................................... 4
  Objective 3: Continue to Provide Equality and Diversity Training .................................... 5
  Objective 4: Improve Equality Monitoring ....................................................................... 7
  Objective 5: Embed Equality in Commissioning and Procurement Activity ...................... 8
  Objective 6: Improving Standards and Develop New Partnerships .................................... 9
Action Plan for 2016 - 2020 ............................................................................................... 10
  Objective 1 Measuring Performance against Equality Framework(s) ............................... 10
  Objective 2 Public Access and Recruitment ...................................................................... 10
  Objective 3 Provide Equality and Diversity Training for all Staff ..................................... 11
  Objective 4 Improve Equality Monitoring ...................................................................... 11
  Objective 5 Embed Equality in Commissioning and Procurement ............................... 11
  Objective 6 Improving Standards and Develop New Partnerships .................................... 11
Key Corporate Equality Indicators (EQ1 – 4) .................................................................... 12
FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Single Equality Scheme. This scheme sets out how we will further the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. The scheme covers the period 2016 – 2020 and is supported by a cross functional SMART Action Plan.

At BFRS we recognise that ensuring equality in employment and eliminating workplace discrimination and harassment are essential for developing a diverse workforce, attracting and retaining high calibre employees and maximising service delivery. We see our staff as one of our key strengths, who bring a diverse range of knowledge, skills and experience to work.

Respecting and valuing the diversity of our staff improves communication and understanding both internally and with external stakeholders. This makes us a stronger organisation, capable of effectively communicating safety messages to our community and contributing to our working environment by fostering an inclusive workplace.

BFRS recognises that we work within a complex society that has some inherent inequalities and disadvantages for people. We are committed to developing a culture which recognises difference both in employment and in the delivery of individualised and responsive service. We will work in partnership with our staff and communities to achieve equitable outcomes for all.

We believe that an inclusive workplace where Service users, staff and stakeholders are treated with dignity, and respect is everyone’s responsibility. Our Service ‘Values and Vision’ are intended to help us define who we are and act as a guide for the way we work with each other, the way we serve our community and engage with our stakeholders.

PAUL M FULLER CBE QFSM
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
Introduction

The Single Equality Scheme (SES) is intended to show how Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) will meet its legal duties within the Equalities Act 2010, notably to:

- promote equality & diversity and eliminate harassment & unlawful discrimination in the workplace and across the services we provide; and

- outline actions the Service would take to improve its equality and diversity performance and outcomes over a four year period.

Good progress has been made as a consequence of the actions identified within the previous (2012-16) Single Equality Scheme and also through training on equality & diversity, and as a result of partnership working.


A number of important initiatives have been tried; some have been hugely successful, some have had a certain amount of success, such as the Positive Action recruitment drive and some have been less successful. As a service we are committed to ensuring that we move forward to address all areas of inequalities, scrutinise all of our activities in order to learn lessons and, if necessary, modify our approach.

The following pages identify what the Service believes it should be doing over the next four years in order to move the equality agenda forward.
Consultation

In setting the Equality Objectives for 2016 to 2020 Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service carried out a consultation process. This involved designing questionnaires (one for staff and one for the public) and was hosted on the Services website. We consulted directly with 115 organisations across Bedfordshire, sending details of the questionnaire. Members of the public were contacted by the SMS community message alert system and social media was also used to alert the public to the questionnaire, with a link provided for easy access. All staff were written to and a notice published in Blue Bulletin (the internal staff news forum) as well as running full details on BFRS website.

Objectives

People (staff and members of the public) were asked whether they agreed with the following 6 objectives that the Service had identified and the specific actions detailed within each objective

1. Measuring performance against equality framework(s)
2. Improve public access
3. Equality and diversity training
4. Improve equality monitoring
5. Embed equality in commissioning and procurement activity
6. Improving standards and develop new partnerships

Note Regarding Comments

Please note that comments designated the colour blue were made by members of the public whilst those that are red were made by staff.
Objective 1: Measuring Performance against Equality Framework(s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Response</th>
<th>Staff Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>81% Agreed with objective</td>
<td>90% Agreed with objective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Actions
1. Assess the Service against the Fire & Rescue Service Equality Framework.
2. Assess the Service against the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion Workforce Assessment.

Comments Received
- “Assess the Service against a disability framework, ensuring all staff has training in disability awareness.”
- “In the absence of as yet FRS being under HMI, I think the FRSEF adds a level of consistency for Services.”
- “Consultation with community groups”
- “It’s too much take in need to make it simpler.”

Objective 2: Improve Public Access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Response</th>
<th>Staff Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>81% Agreed with objective</td>
<td>82% Agreed with objective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Actions
1. Review the “positive action” recruitment plan to identify ways that the service can pro-actively address under-representation issues across the workforce.
2. Investigate expansion of social media to share BFRS news and information to reach the widest audience.
3. Develop an accessible, easy to navigate with translation/audio/large print facilities, with images reflective of Bedfordshire communities.
4. Provide information regarding community impact annually, along with workforce data.
Comments Received

- “To ensure all information is provided in easy read format and also with British Sign Language (video format) available on website. “
- “Point 2 - explore social demography to ensure preferred means of communication is specific to the most at risk groups as well as the majority.“
- “Social media can be good, but most channels have limitations; and are time intensive if they are to be effective.”
- “Too much information for public.”
- “That would be a good idea if some important info be published in multiple languages in short version.”
- “Positive action is good until minorities join and then get treated unfairly. “
- “Consult with community to assess perceived effectiveness.”
- “Implement a thorough review of the recruitment application form, which is torturous, not clear, and selectively discriminatory against people for whom English is not their first language. Provide much clearer information on what is required to complete the form.

Objective 3: Continue to Provide Equality and Diversity Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Response</th>
<th>Staff Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>77% Agreed with objective</td>
<td>89% Agreed with objective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Actions

1. Continue to provide Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Training to all new staff and a 3 year refresher programme to all staff with clear targets, measured annually.
2. Improve awareness/understanding of Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Trans issues, providing guidance and training, including policies where appropriate.
3. Establish a Staff Equalities Network to support staff with their understanding, training and development.

Comments Received

- “To include communication requirements for the oldest community including the need for British Sign Language and other communications format.”
• “The service plays lip service to this subject. It ticks a load of boxes but actively seeks to hide issues and give no training and that is from the top.”

• “Not sure what the target is or measures would be or who would have time to collect and evaluate, this sounds very expensive and resource demanding and not value for money.”

• “There is a growing amount of evidence that implies equality training is not outcome focused and is only be a mechanism for implying people understand without being able to measure that they actually do. If E&D training is effective there is an argument which would suggest why does society still to a large extent in a disproportionate discriminatory way i.e. health inequality, underachievement by particular groups in employment and education, over representation of certain groups in the criminal justice system and ill mental health, fatal fire victims being of a identifiable groups etc etc. Staff networks can serve to promote singular objectives and isolate people by a single objective. They can result in serving to maintain inequality as opposed to a collective purpose.”

• “In this instance all 3 to me are relevant”

• “Training per say does not lead to a change in practice.”

• “This should have been there many years age”

• “In my opinion it would be a good idea if new and old staff never demonstrate their religion, or non-religion, their sexual orientation etc. in any work place. People in work places must be trained not to use their differences as a weapon. For example, nobody can say that he/she is not given a job, or promoted just because religion, sexual orientation or colour of the skin, or just colour of hair. There is just only one measurement - knowledge, skills and ability to do this job. If they can’t pass that test, nothing to pretend a victim. The programme to all staff with clear targets.”

• “Consult staff on the effectiveness and the perceived need for this training. This may indicate what the true attitude to these issues is. i.e. how many staff members think that they don't need the training or that it is a waste of time etc. Also identify which areas staff perceive they need training and after the training conduct post training survey to see if their ‘attitude’ has changed.”

• “There has been a Staff Equalities Network or similar in the past which was not given the authority to do or change anything or access to the decision making process, and ended up being a group of hand-picked individuals who did nothing/were not allowed to do anything.”

• “This training to include ALL staff - including senior managers/Principal Officers”
Objective 4: Improve Equality Monitoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Response</th>
<th>Staff Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>88% Agreed with objective</td>
<td>79% Agreed with objective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Actions
1. Ensure our community safety and reduction activities are measured against all the equality strands.
2. Where we are offering a service to a particular “at risk” group, we are able to ensure the service reaches all communities within that group.

Comments Received

- “The identification of risk to is complex and multi-faceted. Resources need to be able to horizon scan and tailor service to need. Exeter data, incident data, mosaic data all contribute but staff on the ground working with the community and individuals and building advocacy is essential to advancing risk profiling.”

- “Ensure knowledge of communication issues within the deaf community and measure accessibility of information to this community.”

- “There should be a scheme how to protect the staff if some communities or individuals don’t want any service or help. They must sign the paper that they refuse that service.”

- “Should be done for all”

- “Due to the limited resources we have, using a blanket approach across all the protected characteristics is not necessarily the most effective us of Community Safety resources. Activity should be targeted to groups most at risk, and this is not necessarily related to a protected characteristic, but more due to socio economics status and location.”
**Objective 5: Embed Equality in Commissioning and Procurement Activity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Response</th>
<th>Staff Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75% Agreed with objective</td>
<td>67% Agreed with objective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Actions**

1. Monitor SME (Small, medium enterprises) contracts to ensure they are complaint with the Equal Opportunities statement within BFRS contract terms and Conditions.
2. Provide access to BFRS Equality and Diversity Training for suppliers and commissioned contractors (with 1 – 50 employees).
3. Develop marketing for contract finder to raise awareness and access for our diverse communities.

**Comments Received**

- “Include information on British Sign Language and how to provide interpreters and translation for the older community.”
- “All that is required for SMEs to provide you with the equality statement/policy. Don't waste rate payers money on education/training at their own firm - it's for the SME to do and quite frankly, insulting to imply they are not capable of equality and fairness without the help of a fire service.”
- “Don't need to know about this issue”
- “Face to face relationships with business is possibly more effective than 'marketing material'. The protect teams will be working around areas which are sensitive i.e. refugees, migrant workers, illegal working, modern day slavery.”
- “Not convinced this will have any impact.”
- “Make this approach more known to the public so that small/medium contractors' awareness of this agenda is considered by them as an effective way of winning contracts and this will eventually be embedded in their practices, i.e. the 'Business case for Diversity'.”
- “Whilst we should ensure that all contractors we use are compliant with our values etc. I do not think that it is our responsibility to provide training and marketing material and is a cost which we as an emergency service should not be bearing.”
- “Not sure what "monitoring to ensure compliance" entails? Its outcomes that are important, not ticking a box to say a company has a policy in place. This could place an unacceptably high admin burden, so common sense has to apply.”
• “We should just get the best deal for Bedfordshire (cost/benefit) and leave these other organisations to deal with their own equality and diversity issues”

• “Many SME’s would not be able to prove compliance in a timely fashion, or may just decline contracts unless they were sure of getting it. Too much bureaucracy for the little man.”

Objective 6: Improving Standards and Develop New Partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Response</th>
<th>Staff Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>88% Agreed with objective</td>
<td>93% Agreed with objective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Actions

1. Undertake an Equal Pay Audit across the Service and implement any necessary actions resulting from this.
2. Ensure that all Equality Assessments are in place and have achieved an amber or green quality rating.
3. Develop partnership arrangements with disability groups, in particular, Learning Disability, Mental Health, Hearing, Sight and Mobility impairments.

Comments Received

• “It's illegal to discriminate in pay on the basis of gender”
  “Should have been done a long time age”

• “I never experienced any pay gap between men and women when I worked. Sometimes I received more money than my colleagues-men, because I worked better than they. Once again, there can't be equality in payment just because something is, or is not between my legs :D Only measurement must be my qualification, my skills and my productivity in this job.”

• “Theoretically this should be done however this is problematic in terms of green and grey book. I would be interested to know how you tackle that.”

• “Essential!”

• “It's not just pay, its access to promotional positions for all staff too.”

• “The necessary actions resulting from an Equal Pay Audit should not be used to reduce pay and allowances and as a cost cutting exercise, as has been done with the new allowances policy.”

• “I think this objective needs to be split out, as measurements for the 3 elements will be different.”
Action Plan for 2016 - 2020

As a result of the comments received from the consultation, we have incorporated changes to the action plans which have been amended accordingly.

**Objective 1**  
Measuring Performance against Equality Framework(s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What we will do</th>
<th>By when</th>
<th>Who will benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undertake a self-assessment exercise against the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework</td>
<td>May 2017</td>
<td>All equality groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invite Assessors to complete an external assessment against the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework</td>
<td>Jul 2017</td>
<td>All equality groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion Workforce assessment</td>
<td>Sep 2017</td>
<td>All equality groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Objective 2**  
Public Access and Recruitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What we will do</th>
<th>By when</th>
<th>Who will benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review the recruitment' positive action plan’ to identify ways in which the service can pro-actively address under-representation issues across the workforce</td>
<td>Sep 2016</td>
<td>All equality groups, in particular Black and Minority Ethnic Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigate the expansion of social media to share BFRS news and information with the widest audience reach</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>All equality groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an accessible website with translation / audio and large print facilities. Where images are reflective of the communities and it is easy to navigate</td>
<td>Apr 2017</td>
<td>All equality groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide equality data on community prevention, enforcement and workforce</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>All equality groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that key Service documents are summarised and available for translation if required</td>
<td>May 2017</td>
<td>Black and Minority Ethnic Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review the recruitment application form and guidance notes</td>
<td>May 2017</td>
<td>All equality groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore the experiences of minority staff working across the Service and report on findings</td>
<td>July 2017</td>
<td>All equality groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Objective 3**  
Provide Equality and Diversity Training for all Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What we will do</th>
<th>By when</th>
<th>Who will benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that all staff are up-to-date with equality, diversity and inclusion requirements and a 3 year a refresher programme is in place with clear targets set and measured annually</td>
<td>On-going from 2016</td>
<td>All equality groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve awareness and understanding of LGBT issues; Providing guidance, training and where appropriate policies</td>
<td>On-going from 2016</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a staff equalities network that can support staff with their understanding, training and development</td>
<td>On-going from 2018</td>
<td>All equality groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Objective 4**  
Improve Equality Monitoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What we will do</th>
<th>By when</th>
<th>Who will benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that our Community Safety and Risk Reduction activities are measured against all equality strands</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>All equality groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where we are offering a service to a particular 'At Risk group', we ensure that the service reaches all communities within that group</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>All equality groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Objective 5**  
Embed Equality in Commissioning and Procurement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What we will do</th>
<th>By when</th>
<th>Who will benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide evidence which shows how the procurement process is contributing to equality related priorities</td>
<td>May 2017</td>
<td>All equality groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide equality information for potential suppliers</td>
<td>April 2017</td>
<td>All equality groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance instructions to tenders clarifying the Services values in promoting equality</td>
<td>April 2017</td>
<td>All equality groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Objective 6**  
Improving Standards and Develop New Partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What we will do</th>
<th>By when</th>
<th>Who will benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undertake a gender pay audit and implement any necessary actions resulting from this</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that all Equality Assessments have achieved a top quality rating</td>
<td>Sep 2016</td>
<td>All equality groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop partnership arrangements with disability groups. In particular Learning Disability/Mental Health/Hearing/Sight and Mobility impairments</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Disability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Key Corporate Equality Indicators (EQ1 – 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Targets</th>
<th>Proposed Changes</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Groups to Benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5% of new entrants to be operational sector to be women (due to budget constraints this will be measured in relation to retained recruitment only)</td>
<td>Review to see what can be done to stretch this target</td>
<td>2016/18</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention of Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic leavers not to exceed 16%</td>
<td>No Change</td>
<td>2016/18</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8% of new entrants to roles across the Service to be people from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic groups</td>
<td>Review to see what can be done to stretch this target</td>
<td>2016/18</td>
<td>Race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention of women firefighters: leavers not to exceed 4%</td>
<td>No Change</td>
<td>2016/18</td>
<td>Race</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>