



Bedfordshire
Fire and Rescue Service

SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME

2016 REPORT

“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”

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INTRODUCTION

To support the Service in meeting its legal duties within the Equalities Act 2010, Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) produced a Single Equality Scheme and Action Plan to cover the period 2012 to 2016.

The four-year scheme set out:

- How the Service would promote equality & diversity and eliminate harassment & unlawful discrimination in the workplace and across the services we provide.
- The actions the Service would take to improve its equality and diversity performance and outcomes.
- How the Service intended to meet the legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and other legislation.

This report is in two parts:

- Part 1:** Retrospective - looking back over the four years at what we said we would do and whether the work was done or not.
- Part 2:** Forward focused - identifying the approach for the next four years (2016-2020) and sets out a further set of objectives together with actions for the service as a whole to embrace.

SUMMARY

Over the past four years, 23 of the 25 areas of work that the service said that it would focus on have been completed. The two incomplete areas of work were looked at but require further attention i.e. website accessibility and procurement have been merged into the following six objectives:

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

Consultation

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service will consult with staff, representative bodies and interested external stakeholders before publishing the Equality Scheme. We will ensure that feedback received from the consultation exercise is fully documented, considered and incorporated into the Equality Scheme where appropriate.

Review

The Equalities Scheme will be reviewed annually and the review will be co-ordinated by the Corporate Equalities Group. The review will be based on the objectives and associated action plans. In addition, the review will also include the key corporate equality indicators shown on page 10.

Publication

The Equality Scheme will be published on our website at www.bedfordshirefire.com

Copies will be made available to all sections, stations, partners and local equality organisations and to all interested parties on request either as a one-off or an on-going basis.

Copies of the Equality Scheme and equalities annual reports will be made available in other languages, large print, Braille, audio, etc. on request.

Part 1

What we said we would do

did we do it?

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

1. Each function has a proportional number of evidenced based equality objectives in place to meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and the objectives are regularly monitored

YES

Equality objectives were set within the 2012 Single Equality Scheme action plan, monitoring has been through the Corporate Equality Group.

2. The Service demonstrates significant year on year improvements for employees and 'at risk' communities

YES

Improvements are monitored and captured via the employee staff survey which is conducted and reported on every two years, alongside progress reports and community safety/prevention work aimed at reducing the number of incidents – yearly equality reports are published.

3. Functional related Equality Analysis is completed for all relevant activity and reviewed in line with service policy

YES

Equality Assessments remain current and are regularly reviewed in accordance with good practice and Service policy.

HUMAN RESOURCES

4. Ensure that a robust Equality Analysis process is operating effectively

YES

A new robust approach to Equality Assessments has been introduced, consequently leading to a reduction in policies and documents requiring an assessment (EA), whilst improving the quality of those policies/documents that do require an EA. This new system continues to be monitored by the Corporate Equalities Group, the aim of which is to ensure that all assessments achieve a top quality rating by the end of 2017.

5. Collect data across HR processes to enable appropriate actions and remedies to be implemented if issues are identified

YES

Monitoring and reporting systems are in place and remedial actions are taken where appropriate.

6. A Positive Action Plan is developed to drive forward the service in respect of developing and retaining a diverse workforce YES

The Positive Action plan for recruitment to the Service was developed in 2005. It set clear targets aimed at addressing the under-representation of Women and Black and Minority Ethnic staff across the service. The plan has already had a positive impact in the 2016 recruitment of fire officers to the service and continues to be monitored by the Corporate Equality Group.

STRATEGIC SUPPORT

7. Develop a consultation and engagement process to support the development of the Community Risk Management Plan and other business changes YES

The consultation and engagement process has been developed with the service using a community messaging system alongside social media, traditional media outlets and established consultation methods. This multi-layered approach is proving to be effective in helping the service to engage with a large and diverse audience across Bedfordshire.

The new approach is currently being used for consulting around FRS budgets, the Community Risk Management Plan and to keep communities rapidly informed about events, incidents and fire prevention work.

8. All papers/reports are accompanied with a written or verbal account of equality implications and documented in minutes YES

Report cover sheets and records of meetings ensure that equality implications are routinely discussed, considered and reported on. Documents which impact on staff and community are required to be Equality Assessed.

9. The service to apply for Peer Assessment under the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework Underway

A clear project plan to guide this work has been produced, costed and the assessment process budgeted for.

There are 3 stages to the process:

- Stage 1 Evidencing our work
- Stage 2 Self-Assessment
- Stage 3 External Assessment

All of which will be completed in 2017.

AREA SUPPORT

10. A robust functional plan is in place that utilises information and data to identify vulnerable groups in its operation

YES

The Community Safety Strategy and the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) outlines our approach in identifying vulnerable groups. A summarised and more accessible version of the CRMP has been produced and will be distributed amongst communities.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND SAFETY

11. Ensure training and development is accessible, opportunities are accessed fairly and take up is proportionate to all staff

YES

A report regarding access to training and development has been completed and reported to the Service's Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group. The review of requests for external training has also been completed and shows that the majority of external training requests were approved, clear operational reasons led to a few requests not being approved and take up of training is accessible and fair across the Service.

12. Professional Standards and Equality & Diversity is embedded in the training program for all staff groups and supported by robust Training Needs Assessment

YES

The equality and diversity training programme is available to all staff and incorporates a set of professional standards that staff must adhere to. The training includes an on-line assessment and adherence to the standards is monitored via the appraisal system. A Training Needs Analysis was completed in 2015 and gaps identified have been addressed within the Services training programme.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

13. Undertake positive action initiatives to encourage and drive recruitment in the service that reflects the local community

YES

A Positive Action toolkit has been developed which lists a number of actions that staff must do to address the under-representation of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority staff and Women across all communities when they are recruiting. Alongside this toolkit the Service has a database of people attracted to the Service through Positive Action events and targeted recruitment campaigns who have indicated an interest in working for the Service. Each Retained Duty System station with vacancies are required to run at least one positive action event per year.

14. Consultation data will be used to review service delivery and ensure services provided remains equitable and risk focused YES

The service routinely consults with community groups and, where appropriate, focus groups as well as social media forums ensuring that the work we do is equitable and risk focused.

PREVENTION AND PROTECTION

15. Develop robust functional and station plans that utilises relevant information and data to identify vulnerable groups YES

Station plans are now in place and are linked to the Community Risk Management Plan. The report 'Knowing our communities' is being developed along with Equality Assessment guidelines. This work which will be completed in 2016 will further strengthen station plans, ensuring that equality issues are fully incorporated.

16. Review all partnership arrangements with a view to clarify objectives and outcomes linked to the PSED General Duties YES

Partnership arrangements and related working meet the requirements of the Service Partnership Policy, the Public Sector Equality Duty and Service Governance arrangements

17. The Community Safety evaluation toolkit is utilised for all community initiatives ensuring equitable outcomes and alignment with Service aims Yes

The Community Safety evaluation toolkit is used to ensure community initiatives are aligned with service aims and outcomes are equitable. The toolkit is currently being reviewed and all community initiatives are to include an Equality Analysis to strengthen its impact/effectiveness. This work is on track to be completed in 2016.

18. Fire Safety Enforcement processes and measures are fair and proportionate across local businesses YES

The Service has run a number of local business action days and staff have been proactive to ensure that Fire Safety Enforcement processes are equitable for local business across Bedfordshire, This includes the running of Asian business days where fire safety advice is targeted toward small - medium enterprises.

19. The Community Risk Management Plan is a public facing document that details where the risks are in the home, at work, in public places and our roads, which is based on robust data and evidence YES

The consultation and engagement system based on 'community alerts' is now in place and is proving to be effective in helping

the service to engage with a large and diverse audience. The Community Risk Management Plan has been revised into an easy read summarised leaflet making it more accessible it will be distributed later in the year.

FINANCE AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

20. Savings and efficiencies that are part of the medium term financial plan/budget, where appropriate, should be Equality Assessed to ensure due regard that matters of equality have been taken into account during decision making processes

YES

Where relevant and appropriate, elements of the savings and efficiency plan have been subject to an Equality Analysis process; this has been reported to and monitored through the Corporate Equalities Group.

21. The Service can demonstrate that procurement processes are contributing to equality-related priorities

YES

The Supplier Information document was internally reviewed which showed that within section 6 we are compliant with equality legislation. However it is acknowledged that we can progress further on this significant area of work.

22. Property/Capital Strategy ensures BFRS provides adequate facilities that are fully accessible to community and staff

YES

A service wide assessment was completed with required works captured within the 2015/16 Property Asset Management Plan and also as part of the rolling cycle of building condition works. Buildings have been brought up-to-date with regards to separate gender facilities and where feasible, disability access. This is an on-going process.

23. Report annually the findings of Equality Analysis to the service

YES

The Corporate Equality Group receives quarterly and annual reports on the Equality Analysis system in use across the service.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

24. Ensure that access to Services Information and Communication Technology is available to all staff

YES

Technology Systems and Applications used by the Service to deliver its aims and objectives are available to and accessible by all staff

25. To ensure the content contained within the website meets or exceeds the requirements for accessibility contained within the World Wide Web Consortium

Underway

The limitations of current website have meant that although some work to improve access was achieved, the whole system needed a rebuild as such funding has been secured and this work will be completed in 2016/17

Part 2

Rolling on... the next 4 years

Introduction:

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.

What next?

- We aim to consult **internally** with staff and the trade unions and **externally** with community groups to get approval for the areas of work listed.
- Once we get the approval from our stakeholders, we will publish on our website
- We will continue to monitor this work through the Corporate Equality Group, and will produce and publish an annual progress reports.

Equality Objectives for 2016 - 2020

Objective One: Measuring Performance against Equality Framework(s)

Action	Due Date	Responsible	Groups to benefit
Undertake a desktop self-assessment exercise against the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework (FRS Equality Framework)	May 2017	CMT	All equality groups
Invite Peer Assessors to complete an external assessment against the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework (FRS Equality Framework)	2017	CMT	All equality groups
Conduct the ENEI (Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion) Workforce assessment	Sep 2016	DA	All equality groups

Objective Two: Improve public access

Action	Due Date	Responsible	Groups to benefit
Use social media to share BFRS news and information	On-going	HSS	All equality groups
To develop an accessible website with translation / audio and large print facilities. Where images are reflective of the communities and it is easy to navigate	Apr 2017	HSS, HPP	All equality groups
Prepare and publish relevant equality information each year (by September) reflecting staff and community activities	Annually	HCS, HHR, DA, HSS	All equality groups

Objective Three: Equality and diversity training for all staff

Actions	Due Date	Responsible	Groups to benefit
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	On-going from 2016	HTD	All equality groups
To improve awareness and understanding of LGBT issues; Providing guidance, training and where appropriate policies	On-going from 2016	DA	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans
To establish a staff equalities network that can support staff with their understanding, training and development	On-going from 2018	DA	

Objective Four: Improve equality monitoring

Actions	Due Date	Responsible	Groups to benefit
Ensure that our Community Safety and Risk Reduction activities are measured against all of the equality strands	Annually	HCS	All equality groups
Where we are offering a service to a particular 'At Risk group', we are able to ensure that the service reaches all communities within that group	Annually	HOS HCS	All equality groups

Objective Five: Embed equality in commissioning and procurement activity

Actions	Due Date	Responsible	Groups to benefit
Monitor SME contracts to ensure they are compliant with the Equal Opportunities statement within BFRS contract Terms and Conditions	September 2017 and then annually	HFAM	All equality groups
Provide access to BFRS equality and diversity training for suppliers and commissioned contractors (with 1 - 50 employees)	Annually	HFAM DA	All equality groups
Develop marketing material for contract finder to raise awareness and access for our diverse communities	April 2017	HFAM DA	All equality groups

Objective Six: Improving standards and develop new partnerships

Actions	Due Date	Responsible	Groups to benefit
To undertake an equal pay audit across the Service and implement any necessary actions resulting from this	2017	HHR	Gender
To ensure that all Equality Assessments are in place and that they have achieved an amber or green quality rating	September 2016	CEG	All equality groups
To develop partnership arrangements with disability groups. In particular Learning disability/Mental Health/Hearing/Sight and Mobility impairments	On-going	DA	Disability

Key Corporate Equality Indicators (EQ1 – 4)

Current target's	Proposed changes	Due Date	Responsible	Groups to benefit
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)	Review to see what can be done to stretch this target	2016/18	CFO	Gender
Retention of Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic leavers not to exceed 16%	No Change	2016/18	CFO	Gender
8% of new entrants to roles across the Service to be people from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic groups	Review to see what can be done to stretch this target	2016/18	CFO	Race
Retention of women firefighters: leavers not to exceed 4%	No Change	2016/18	CFO	Race

Abbreviations Used

E&D - Equality and Diversity	BFRS - Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service
FRS - Fire and Rescue Service	ENEI - Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion
LGBT - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans	DA - Diversity Advisor
CEG - Corporate Equality Group	CMT - Corporate Management Team
CFO - Chief Fire Officer	HFAM - Head of Finance and Asset Management
HHR - Head of Human Resources	HTD - Head of Training and Development
HCS - Head of Community Safety	HSS - Head of Strategic Support
HPP - Head of Prevention/Protection	HOS - Head of Operational Support

All Equality Groups: Refers to groups based on Race, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Religion/Beliefs, Disability, Age, Marriage/Civil Partnerships and Trans.