

Title: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Summary: This policy applies to all staff working for the Service and includes employees, workers, contractors, volunteers, apprentices, and any other individuals involved in the Service’s interactions and activities. It relates to the Service’s approach to the delivery of our services and the recruitment, selection, and promotion of our staff.

Further Information: All policies are available on SharePoint.

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1 Policy Statement

The Service is proud to serve one of the most diverse counties in England. By fostering an inclusive culture, it will enable us to make the most of a wider range of different perspectives, experience, and skills. This also supports employee wellbeing, provides a greater sense of belonging and enables a more productive working environment for all. Our aim is to embed positive practices that value all communities and staff.

The Service Values alongside the NFCC Core Code of Ethics set out the principles and positive behaviours that we seek to instil and expect from everyone who works for us.

2 Organisational Responsibility

2.1 The Chief Fire Officer holds overall accountability for equality, diversity and inclusion within the Service. Management Responsibilities

The Principal Officer team and Corporate Management Team are responsible for the implementation and management of equality, diversity and inclusion within their functions.

Managers and Supervisors are responsible for:

- Consistently demonstrating and role modelling the Service’s values and positive behaviours.

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- Creating an environment and culture where the diversity within their teams is managed to its full potential ensuring everyone is treated with dignity and respect.
- Applying policies and practices in a fair, consistent and equitable manner.
- Addressing any concerns relating to prejudice or discriminatory behaviour promptly and appropriately in accordance with Service policies and procedures.
- Carrying out People Impact Assessments on policies, procedures, and changes in service delivery, where appropriate, ensuring that any adverse outcomes are identified and addressed.

2.2 Human Resources and other policy owners are responsible for:

- Ensuring their policies and procedures comply with up-to-date legislation and statutory requirements.
- Regularly monitoring the impact and outcomes of policies, procedures, and practices to ensure they are free of discrimination.
- Developing positive action initiatives designed to reduce the disadvantages faced by people who share a protected characteristic, thereby increasing the diversity of our workforce.
- Providing best practice guidance and support to managers and supervisors in making decisions in a fair and consistent manner.

Human Resources and Other Policy Owners

2.3 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager is responsible for:

- Providing specialist advice and support in relation to People Impact Assessments, equalities legislation, equality monitoring, policy development and community and staff engagement.
- Monitoring and reporting on how the Service is meeting its Equality Duties.
- Providing specialist and confidential advice on all aspects of equality, diversity and inclusion to staff and managers.
- Assisting in the development of positive action initiatives to increase the diversity of our workforce.

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- Working with partners, other public bodies, staff networks, Trade Unions and charities supporting equality, diversity and inclusion within our communities and workplace.

2.4 All Employees and everyone working on behalf of the Service are responsible for: All Staff

- Upholding, promoting, and applying this policy and other related policies, and our values in every interaction with colleagues, third parties and members of the communities we serve to ensure that each is recognised as an individual and is equally valued and treated with dignity and respect.
- Supporting and implementing any measures introduced to deliver equality in service delivery, training, and employment.
- Constructively challenging inappropriate comments, conduct or ways of working.
- Bringing incidents of discrimination, bullying or harassment to the attention of their manager so that it can be dealt with promptly and effectively.
- Understanding that this Service will not tolerate bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination and any member of staff who is found to have committed an act of unlawful discrimination or behaved in a way that breaches this policy will face disciplinary action.

3 Policy Text

3.1 Equality

Equality is not about treating everyone the same but about fairness, respect and ensuring every individual has equal opportunity regardless of their background, identity or experience. It is the creation of a level playing field. It is supported by the Equality Act 2010 which is designed to address unfair discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity, and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. There are nine protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex

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- Gender reassignment
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity.

3.2 Diversity

Diversity is about recognising, valuing and taking account of people's different backgrounds, knowledge, skills and experiences. In the context of this policy, it also means encouraging and using these different views and perspectives to create a productive workforce that can meet the needs of the diverse communities that we serve.

3.3 Inclusion

Inclusion is where everyone feels valued, individual contributions are welcomed and recognised, and there is a sense of belonging. It is about positively striving to meet the needs of different people and taking deliberate action to create an environment where everyone feels respected and able to achieve their full potential.

3.4 The Service's Commitment

We value differences but recognise that there is still progress to be made and we are committed to improving the representation of our workforce. We are committed to promoting a working environment based on dignity, trust and respect, and one that is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation.

Under the Equality Act 2010 and specifically the Public Sector Equality Duty we recognise our legal responsibilities to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

However, the Service want to go beyond statutory compliance by treating everyone with dignity and respect, no matter what their background, characteristics, or personal situations. By embracing our differences, we enrich our working lives and find new, more effective ways to deliver our services across Bedfordshire.

To do this we must make sure that equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is embedded in all that we do from day-to-day activities through to longer term decision making. We will regularly review and evaluate our approach and invite feedback from staff, our communities and our partners and benchmark our work against comparable organisations. This will help us to ensure that:

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- All members of staff have equality of opportunity and are treated consistently within the policies of the Service.
- Managers make decisions about recruitment and selection, performance management, training, development and progression based on individual ability, job requirements and in line with the relevant policies.
- Our employment policies and practices are transparent and have been assessed for equality impact, are clearly understood and are consistently and fairly applied.
- All staff treat all members of the public with dignity and respect.
- Everyone is aware of their individual responsibilities as an employee and/or manager.
- Training and guidance on different aspects of EDI is available for all employees.
- Managers take responsibility for ensuring that all reasonable adjustments or supportive measures are considered to enable staff to perform to the best of their abilities.
- We assess the impact of our services on different groups and respond to their varied needs on a risk basis, engaging with them and providing services that are appropriate to them.
- We attract, recruit, develop and retain a more diverse workforce that will help us to improve service delivery.
- All members of staff feel confident in raising concerns with their line manager using the appropriate procedure.
- Concerns raised by members of the public will be handled quickly and sensitively.
- We have a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, harassment, victimisation, and discrimination.

4 People Impact Assessment

A People Impact Assessment (PIA also may be referred to as an Equality Impact Assessment) is a risk assessment to help examine whether groups of people with shared protected characteristics are, or could be, disadvantaged by the decisions made by the Service. New and revised policies, practices, and service functions (such as procurement, projects, etc) must have a PIA undertaken to help address any potential disproportionate negative impact. It also enables us to demonstrate how our policies and practices meet our legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010 to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a certain protected characteristic and those who do not. Guidance on People Impact Assessments is available on the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion page on SharePoint or from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager.

5 **Review**

This Service Order will be subject to review at 2 yearly intervals or following significant change to organisational structure, personnel, procedures or legislation etc.

To measure the impact and effectiveness of our policies, procedures, guidance and practice, we regularly review and monitor data relating to employment activities and service delivery. Under the Public Sector Equality Duty, we have a duty to annually report and publish data on staff, apprentices, applicants, and appointments this includes information on promotions and leavers. It will also help us to ensure that those most at risk have access to appropriate services; that they are delivered in a way that has greatest impact and so helps reduce preventable deaths and injuries in fires or other emergencies.



Bedfordshire
Fire & Rescue Service

Service Information System Policies and Procedures

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