



COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

17 MARCH 2020

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION GROUP UPDATE

REPORT OF EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION CHAMPION

Purpose of Report

1. To provide members with an overview of the work carried out by the Service's Equality Diversity and Inclusion Group (EDIG).

Background

2. As part of the approach to developing the Authority's services and improving engagement with stakeholders, the Authority has sought to 'champion' particular areas of work through the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) Member Champion roles.
3. The Member Champion roles provide the Service with an opportunity to work closely with individual members to help develop the services provided and to engage with local communities, staff, councillors and other stakeholders through a closely aligned officer and member relationship.
4. Since appointment to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Member Champion role, Councillor Batey has been supported by Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO): Service Support in her capacity as strategic lead for the development of EDI across the organisation.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group Update

5. County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) has an EDI Strategy and action plan. The EDI Working Group is a subgroup of the EDIG and is responsible for delivering the objectives of the action plan. The EDIG monitors progress against the action plan.
6. At the last meeting of the EDIG in January, an update was received from Area Manager Training, Assets and Assurance on Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service's (HMICFRS) report, in particular the 'People Pillar' and the areas that required improvement. The Service was disappointed with some of the findings reported in the 'People Pillar' of our inspection, in particular the attitudes of some staff towards EDI and the Firefighter Apprenticeship programme. In response an action plan has been developed to drive improvement in these areas which are outlined in section 21 of this report.
7. Following submission, the Service achieved 280th place out of 503 submissions on the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (WEI) after achieving 174th place out of 445 submissions last year. Although disappointing that we regressed in our position, the Service did encounter issues when completing the online submission meaning the full evidence was not available for marking. Feedback from Stonewall has been received with the actions recorded in the EDI strategy action plan. Stonewall made comment in our feedback session that due to the

problems with the submission our result did not reflect the amount of positive work the Service has undertaken.

8. The Equality Act 2010 lists 9 protected characteristics and protects people against discrimination. Each protected characteristic is assigned a member of the Service Leadership Team (SLT) and a member of the EDIG in the role of Equality Champions outlined in Table 1 below. The Equality Champions take responsibility to promote and support the work of the Service in their allocated strand. An apprentice from Cohort 3 has been assigned to each strand of equality to assist in the design and development of initiatives in support of the Equality Champions.

Table 1

Protected Characteristic	Equality Champions
Age	Keith Lazzari & Sarah Litt
Disability	Steve Wharton, Mandy Dixon & Vanessa Davies
Gender Reassignment	Keith Carruthers & Lindsay Blake
Marriage & Civil Partnership	Tony Hope & Steve Smith
Pregnancy and Maternity	Rob Cherrie & Tracy Ridley
Race	Sarah Nattrass & Gavin Meisuria
Religion or Belief	Keith Wanley & Lee Brown
Gender	Robin Turnbull & Sharon Lewin
Sexual Orientation	Stuart Errington & Sue Dolding

9. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) sessions are to be introduced at each EDIG meeting. Each Equality Champion will deliver an educational session to refresh the knowledge and understanding of the members of the EDIG.
10. The Service's website contains business and home fire safety information in various languages. Videos have been produced in English, Polish, Arabic and with sign language and all video content intended to deliver specific messaging is designed to be easy to understand without the need for language or noise.
11. Members of the EDIG attended the Ability not Disability and the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) conferences hosted by Tyne and Wear FRS and the Asian Fire Services Association (AFSA) Annual Conference hosted by South Yorkshire FRS entitled 'Diversity is a reality, inclusion is a choice for the fire and rescue service'.
12. ACFO: Service Delivery, Cllr Batey and members of the EDIG and Service Football Team attended the 'Tackling Homophobia in North East Football 2019 Conference at the Stadium of Light, Sunderland. The conference was jointly organised by Durham Football Association and Durham Pride UK with the aim of improving opportunities for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community to take an active part in grassroots football and also to raise awareness for those already participating.
13. The Equality Champions for Disability hosted the first meeting of the Autism Support Network in January and are currently exploring training to increase autism awareness across the Service.
14. Darlington ARQ was a community-based organisation which provided a support network for the LGBT community. They notified the Service that the organisation was ceasing to exist in February and thanked us for the support we have given them through attendance at events such as Transgender Day of Remembrance, Pride and Young People of Pride (YPOP).

15. The Service has registered to become a corporate member of 'Women in the Fire Service (WFS) UK'. Membership of the organisation gives a clear indication to our employees that we value the women within our organisation, and we have made a commitment to support them. WFS can provide training and development opportunities and support mechanisms.
16. The SLT Equality Champion for Gender attended the #HeForShe conference at Humberside FRS. The Service is already accredited to the movement to create a gender equal world and will use social media to further promote this. The Service is progressing accreditation to the White Ribbon campaign to support ending domestic violence against women.
17. The Equality Champions for LGBT and Gender Reassignment are currently involved in the consultation and planning for Durham and Darlington Pride events to be held later this year.
18. ACFO: Service Support represented the Service at a poignant ceremony of remembrance to mark Holocaust Memorial Day at the Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College, Darlington. The ceremony was held in conjunction with the Darlington Hebrew Congregation and Celebrating Communities Darlington.
19. ACFO: Service Support attended two focus groups in January hosted by LGA research on behalf of the NJC led Inclusive Fire Service Group (IFSG), to capture the experiences of employees working within the FRS and from underrepresented groups. The first was a female firefighter focus group and the second was for EDI leads to review the IFSG strategies and progress made.
20. The Service will promote International Womens Day on 8 March via social media, the theme for 2020 is 'An equal world is an enabled world'.

Next Steps

21. The EDIG will continue to drive EDI across the organisation and in our communities with the aim to assist in the improvement of our performance in the 'People Pillar' of the HMICFRS framework. Specific actions to be taken include:
 - A strategy will be developed to provide clarity, improve understanding and the action that is to be taken with regard to positive action. We will continue to undertake positive action initiatives to increase the diversity of the workforce and to promote CDDFRS as an employer of choice. The Service has recently undertaken a regional recruitment process for wholtime firefighters which delivered 27 candidates for CDDFRS, 2 of which are female. A Trainee Course will commence on 6 April 2020 with a fourth cohort of apprentices beginning their careers with the Service in September.
 - In collaboration with Durham University Business School, our third culture survey will be launched in May. The survey will gather responses from staff on the impact of workplace factors on employees, in particular perceptions of fairness and how this affects service delivery to the public. The aim of the survey is to ascertain how key measures used have changed since the last survey in 2018 and to investigate factors that are having an impact on our staff and which were identified in the HMICFRS report, to identify priorities for action. The survey will expand the demographic information collected on respondents with the aim of increasing the understanding of the results to enable the implementation of targeted improvements. A communications plan will be developed prior to the launch to increase confidence and understanding of the survey.

- Employee relations procedures will be reviewed to ensure they remain fit for purpose and are viewed as open, transparent and fair to increase staff confidence in their application.
- Training will be delivered to all personnel in a leadership capacity at the Leadership Forums in March on the recently implemented appraisal process to provide clarity on what the process is trying to achieve. The appraisal process is based on the Service's values and behaviours framework and provides the foundation for effective performance management and career progression. Providing leaders with the skills to conduct an honest and robust appraisal will help develop a positive culture in line with our expected values and behaviours.

Recommendation

22. Members are requested to:

- a) **Note** the content of the report.

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