



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

28 March 2023

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Report of Director of Emergency Response

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) over the last year.

Background

2. As part of the approach to developing 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 the Director of Emergency Response 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 EDIG monitors progress against the action plan.
6. At the Authority meeting in February 2023, the Director of People and Organisation Development presented a paper on the recently published Culture Review of London Fire Brigade and the internal review of CDDFRS practices against the recommendations made. As reported, there were no urgent actions identified however as the Service strives to continuously improve, key actions identified will be captured in the People Strategy and cross mapped with the EDI Strategy and action plan.
7. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Code of Ethics (CoE) has been implemented in the Service. A paper was previously presented to the Combined Fire Authority (CFA)

explaining the CoE and the expectations placed on Members as outlined in the Code. The Director of Emergency Response recently presented our implementation journey which was highlighted as best practice at the LGA Fire Conference on 7 March 2023.

8. In line with the requirements of section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Service published its [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) (PSED) report on our website. This report shows how CDDFRS complies with the PSED in relation to its diversity and inclusion, as an employer and in the community. Although compliance with the general equality duty is a legal obligation, CDDFRS recognises that it also makes good business sense. We believe that if we are able to provide appropriate services to meet the diverse needs of our communities, we will undertake our core business more efficiently and effectively. Furthermore, a workforce that has a supportive working environment is a more productive one.
9. Our [Gender Pay Gap](#) report was published on our website. The GPG identifies the difference between the average earnings of male and female employees, comparing hourly rates of pay and any bonuses staff may receive. The aim of the report is to identify any imbalance in pay between genders and encourages organisations to consider positive steps to address any identified gaps. Our GPG has reduced from 6.15% to 5.1% demonstrating a positive direction of travel.
10. As part of their ongoing process, we were selected at random by the Cabinet Office's Government Digital Service who conducted an audit of our website with regard to our compliance with the Public Sector Accessibility Regulations. The issues identified were addressed and an updated Accessibility Statement incorporating the Disproportionate Burden Statement has been posted to the website.
11. All Service strategies and premises received an Equality Impact Analysis (EqIA). EqIA is a process of systematically assessing the effects that a policy, project or decision is likely to have on different people within the Service and the community we serve. It helps to make sure they do not discriminate or disadvantage people and helps towards improving or promoting equality. EqIA is an integral component of our document management process.
12. The Service submitted to the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (WEI) 2022. The WEI demonstrates an organisation's commitment to making workplaces, services and products LGBT inclusive. The Service was placed 124 out of 403 organisations submitting to the WEI, the Service also achieved a Silver Award for commitment to LGBT+ inclusion work. Areas identified for improvement are incorporated into the EDI action plan.
13. A project named 'Understanding our Communities' has been undertaken, its aim being to create a central database of key contacts / networks for the whole of County Durham and Darlington, this is so that as a Service we have a greater understanding of individuals and groups within our communities to help inform Service delivery, community engagement and recruitment strategies.
14. The Equality Champion for Disability has undertaken a significant amount of work on our Disability Confident journey to enable the Service to be recognised as a Disability Confident Leader. Disability Confident can help to recruit, retain and develop disabled

people and show disabled people that the Service recognises the value that they can bring to our organisation and help it succeed.

15. The Director of Emergency Response represented the Service at poignant ceremonies of remembrance on 27 January 2023 to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. The event in Durham took place at the Gala Theatre with operational crews from Durham also attending. The ceremony in Darlington took place at St Aiden's Academy and was held in conjunction with the Darlington Hebrew Congregation.
16. The Service attended both Durham Pride in May and Darlington Pride in August. On duty staff, volunteers and the Fire Fighters Charity attended the events along with the Pride fire appliance to promote our support to the LGBT community. The Chief Fire Officer delivered a speech of support at Durham Pride and we were supported at both events by our colleagues from Cleveland Fire Brigade. We further demonstrated support to our regional colleagues and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service, attending UK Pride which took place in Newcastle.
17. Internally, the Service supported 'Pride' month with Service crested flags flown at Service premises throughout the month of June. The Comms Team developed Pride themed backgrounds for Microsoft Teams which staff adopted for both internal and external meetings, the Service Vision was adapted for the month to 'Safest People, Safest Places....With Pride' and the EDIG also designed new rainbow lanyards to demonstrate and promote our visible support as allies and as an inclusive employer to our LGBT staff and communities.
18. The Equality Champion for Sexual Orientation represents the Service at the newly formed North East England Rainbow Alliance (NEERA) with the aim to highlight and share positive work in support of our LGBT+ communities and demonstrate that we are an inclusive employer and organisation.
19. The Equality Champion for Religion and Belief is a member of the Durham Faith Network and hosted a meeting at Durham Fire Station. He attended the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) Pastoral, Spiritual and Religious Summit to gather best practice, build a network of contacts and help support his development in role and the development of a 'Chaplaincy' role as an additional support mechanism for the Service.
20. The Equality Champion for Gender has established a 'Women in the Fire Service' Group with cross Service representation, the aim of this network is to identify the barriers that women face and recommend changes that will enable all potential and current employees to reach their full potential. The Champion is also a member of the National Menopause Action Group to gather best practice to inform our Service interventions to help support and educate our staff.
21. To demonstrate the Service as an inclusive and supportive organisation and employer, the Service promoted awareness of key dates and events across the strands of equality with information and activities some of which included International Womens Day, Neurodiversity Week, Black History Month, Ramadan, Hannukah, White Ribbon

Day and International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHoBiT).

22. To increase staff knowledge and awareness of our diverse communities, the EDIG has produced a suite of information sheets which cover the nine strands of equality in addition to topics including sheltered housing, hoarding, deprivation/child poverty, domestic abuse, homelessness, lone parents, safeguarding, mental health, asylum seekers/refugees, gypsy/traveller communities, new arrived communities, students, anti-social behaviour, drugs and alcohol and hate/mate crime.
23. Cohort 6 of Firefighter (FF) Apprentices commenced their career in the Service on 16 May 2022 and completed their initial training with a Pass Out Parade on 10 February 2023, the diversity of the cohort was 60% female and 20% BAME representation. The Service has commenced the recruitment process for Cohort 7 FF Apprentices. A positive action programme commenced in February to assist the Service in encouraging people from groups that are currently underrepresented in the sector to apply. His Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) identified the service's apprenticeship programme as an innovative practice.

Conclusion

24. A significant amount of work has been undertaken by the EDIG and from staff across the Service which has contributed to a positive direction of travel and the achievement of a 'Good' grading in the People Pillar in our latest inspection by HMICFRS.

Recommendation

25. Members are requested to:
 - a) **Note** the content of the report.

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