



Safest People, Safest Places

Human Resources Committee

21 November 2023

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Report of Director of Emergency Response

Purpose of Report

1. To update members on the work carried out by the Service's Equality Diversity and Inclusion Group (EDIG).

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. Since the last update provided to members, Councillor S Quinn has replaced Councillor Batey as the EDI Member Champion.

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 June 2023, the Director of People and Organisation Development presented a paper on His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) spotlight report on "Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services" 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. An update on progress of the action plan was presented to the Authority at the October meeting. A presentation was delivered to the EDIG in June.

7. The staff survey was hosted during September and October to support the Service to continue to seek the views of our staff on key areas of work anonymously without fear of reprisal. The findings of the survey were fed back to the Leadership Forums in November. The outcomes from the survey feed into the overall People Strategy action plan so our achievements and areas of focus are transparent. It is also an area which is explored by HMICFRS during their inspection process. A presentation was delivered to the EDIG in June.
8. The project named 'Understanding our Communities' has been rebranded as 'CONNECT' and will continue to be embedded across the organisation. The aim of *CONNECT* is 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.
9. In May, the EDIG took part in a workshop led by our National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Implementation Manager to conduct an assessment of the Service against the EDI Maturity Model. The maturity model allows the FRS to assess current practice, by using a self-assessment tool enabling an unbiased and balanced view in order to build a better picture of the Service at this current time. The outcomes from the workshop have formulated an action plan which will feed into the EDI Strategy Action Plan to drive improvement with progress monitored by the EDIG.
10. 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 by our colleagues from Cleveland Fire Brigade. We further demonstrated support to our regional colleagues and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service, attending Northern Pride in Newcastle.
11. 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 rainbow lanyards to demonstrate and promote our visible support as allies and as an inclusive employer to our LGBT staff and communities.
12. The Equality Champion for Gender has established a Gender Network which has been branded as 'IGNITE'. Members of IGNITE organised and hosted an interactive session with Miss Menopause. The session was attended by a cross section of staff with the aim to raise awareness of menopause and provide education to enable staff to support

their colleagues, partners, friends and family. The Equality Champion for Gender 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.

13. To demonstrate the Service as an inclusive and supportive organisation and employer, the EDIG has developed an EDI Communication Plan to promote awareness of key dates and events across the strands of equality with information and activities some of which included Firefighter Memorial Day, International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHoBiT), SANDS Awareness Month, Suicide Prevention Week, Dyslexia Week, Black History Month, Ramadan and International Pronouns Day.
14. To increase staff knowledge and awareness of our diverse communities, the EDIG has produced a suite of information sheets hosted on the Service Intranet 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.
15. Cohort 7 of Firefighter (FF) Apprentices commenced their career in the Service on 7 August 2023 and will complete their initial training with a Pass Out Parade on 17 May 2024, the cohort has 36% female representation. A positive action programme commenced in February 2023 to assist the Service in encouraging people from groups that are currently underrepresented in the sector to apply. HMICFRS identified the Service's apprenticeship programme as an innovative practice.

Conclusion

16. 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 last inspection by HMICFRS.

Recommendation

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

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