



# EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

*Strategy*

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**2025-2028**



County Durham and Darlington  
**Fire and Rescue Service**

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# CFO Foreword

The vision of the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) is to achieve "Safest People, Safest Places." This vision is not just a statement but a commitment that drives every aspect of our work. Our strength lies in our people: dedicated professionals who are deeply connected with the communities we serve and genuinely committed to changing and saving lives.

In recent years, we have made significant progress in embedding Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) within our Service. However, we acknowledge that the journey of improvement has no final destination. We recognise the importance of ensuring that our workforce is representative of our communities and understands their varied needs. This commitment is crucial, not just for compliance with legislation such as the Public Sector Equality Duty, but also because it is the right thing to do for our people and the communities we serve.

Our EDI Strategy forms a key component of our broader strategic framework, which includes our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), People Strategy and other strategic documents. Together, these documents outline the interventions and actions we will take to ensure we remain a Service that is effective in its mission.

We have made progress in developing a workforce that is more reflective of our communities with strong ties with the people we serve, supported by collaboration with key partners and community groups which we see as vital. As we move forward, we will continue to prioritise engagement with our communities, seeking their input and ensuring our services are accessible and relevant to all.

The Government's fire reform agenda and the oversight provided by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) highlight the need for fire and rescue services to be efficient, accountable, transparent, and reflective of the diverse communities they serve. Our EDI Strategy aligns with these expectations, setting out clear priorities and actions that will help us to meet these goals.

We are committed to fostering a culture of inclusion where every member of staff feels they can bring their whole selves to work. This is essential not only for the wellbeing of our workforce but also for the effectiveness of our service delivery. By embracing and promoting EDI, we strengthen our ability to deliver high-quality services that meet the needs of everyone in County Durham and Darlington.

As we look to the future, our focus will remain on ensuring that EDI is embedded in everything we do. This is not just about compliance; it is about making a real difference in the lives of our staff and the communities we serve. We will continue to strive towards our vision of "Safest People, Safest Places" through our fantastic staff who make up CDDFRS.

*Steve Helps*

Chief Fire Officer



# EDI Legislation

## Equality Act 2010

As a public body CDDFRS is required by law to comply with the Act, specifically in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duty and the associated Specific Duties.

### General Duty

**The General Equality Duty requires CDDFRS to give proper consideration to the need to:**

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between individuals 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.

**To have "due regard" in advancing equality, CDDFRS must:**

- Remove or minimise disadvantages experienced by individuals due to their protected characteristics.
- Take steps to address specific needs of people from protected groups, particularly when these needs differ from those of other individuals.
- Encourage participation of people from protected groups in public life and other activities, especially where their involvement is disproportionately low.

### Specific Duty

**The Specific Duties requires CDDFRS, in addition to fulfilling the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty, to:**

- Publish relevant and proportionate information that demonstrates compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Establish specific and measurable equality objectives at least every four years.

**To ensure compliance with the above legislative requirements, CDDFRS will publish the following:**

- Annual Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Report.
- Annual Workforce Diversity Profile.
- Annual Gender Pay Gap Report.

# OUR COMMUNITIES

## County Durham

Area - 2,226km<sup>2</sup>



### Population

522,100



### Age Profile

16.5% aged 0-15 / 61.8% aged 16-64 / 21.7% aged 65+



### Disability

10.4% of County Durham residents self-identified as being disabled and limited 'a lot,' while 12.0% were disabled and limited 'a little.'



### Religion

Christian: 54.6%

No religion: 38.6%

Muslim: 0.6%

Other religion: 0.9%

Not stated: 5.1%



### Race

White: 96.8%

Asian, Asian British, or Asian Welsh: 1.5%

Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean, or African: 0.3%

Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: 0.9%

Other: 0.6%



### Sex

48.8% Male

51.2% Female

Source: Office for National Statistics' 2021 Census data.

Understanding our communities is fundamental to providing inclusive and effective services. CDDFRS covers two unitary authority areas: County Durham and Darlington, each with unique demographic profiles.

By recognising the demographic characteristics of County Durham and Darlington, the Fire and Rescue Service can tailor its programs and outreach efforts to meet the needs of all residents, ensuring inclusivity and effectiveness.

# OUR VALUES *and* ETHICAL BEHAVIOURS

**PIE** represents our values and describes the service our customers should expect. This element of 'being the best' is the external key message about the service we provide.

The 4 C's communicates the behaviours we expect all our people to display at work. Delivery of the 4 C's across the service will lead to an organisation which displays the PIE values and fulfils the organisations aim of 'being the best'.



*Professional*



*Innovative*



*Effective*

## THE 4 C's

### **How We Approach Challenges**

Our people should approach challenges with flexibility, enthusiasm, motivation, passion, determination and resilience.

### **How We Conduct Ourselves**

Our people should conduct themselves in an honest, trustworthy, reliable, accountable, consistent and respectful manner.

### **How We Collaborate**

Our people should be approachable, supportive, encouraging, inclusive and show that they value their own development and the development of others when working collaboratively with others.

### **How We Drive Change Across the Organisation to Make a Difference**

Our people should drive change by being creative, resourceful, courageous, original, clear and focused.

## OUR ETHICAL PRINCIPLES ARE:

Putting our communities first – we put the interests of the public, the community, and the service users first.

Integrity – we act with integrity including being open, honest and consistent in everything we do.

Dignity and Respect – we treat people with dignity and respect, making decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.

Leadership – we are all positive role models, always demonstrating flexible and resilient leadership.

Equality, diversity and inclusion – we continually recognise and promote the value of EDI, both within the FRS and the wider communities in which we serve. We stand against all forms of discrimination, create equal opportunities, promote quality, foster good relations and celebrate difference.

# EDI Governance

To ensure our success, we actively manage, monitor, and oversee our ongoing progress in Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) through the following:





# OUR People

CDDFRS understands that a diverse workforce is key to providing exceptional service to our varied and ever-changing communities. Research shows that organisations with diverse teams are more innovative, adaptable, and better able to address complex challenges. By fostering an inclusive environment that values diverse skills, knowledge, and experiences, we are better equipped to meet community needs and mitigate risks effectively.

\*At the time of publication, the total number of employees within CDDFRS is 555.

## Our people are:

### Sex

Male - 432 Female - 116 Not stated - 7

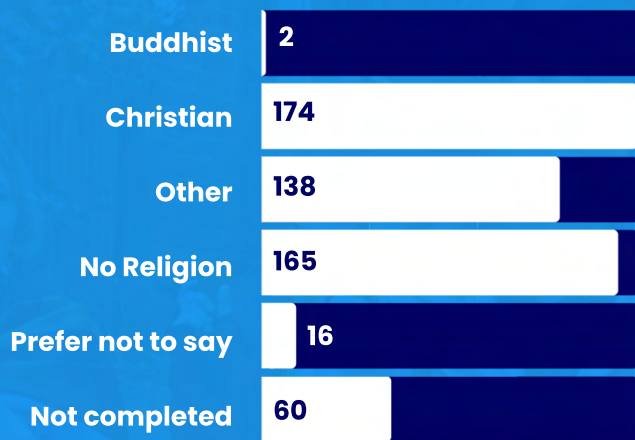


### Disability

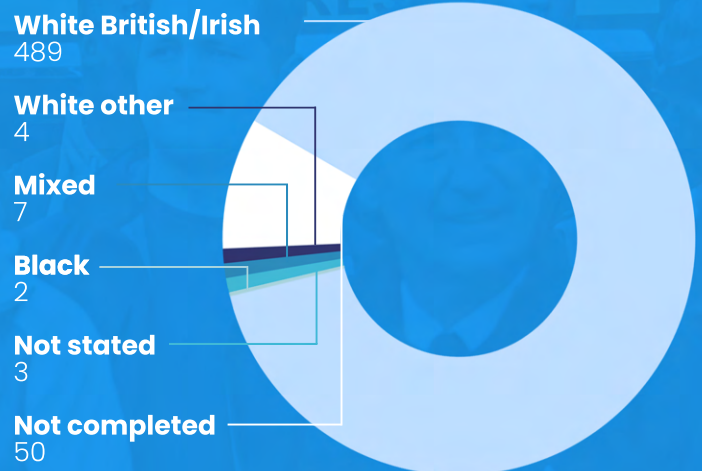
No - 437 Yes - 13 Not stated - 105



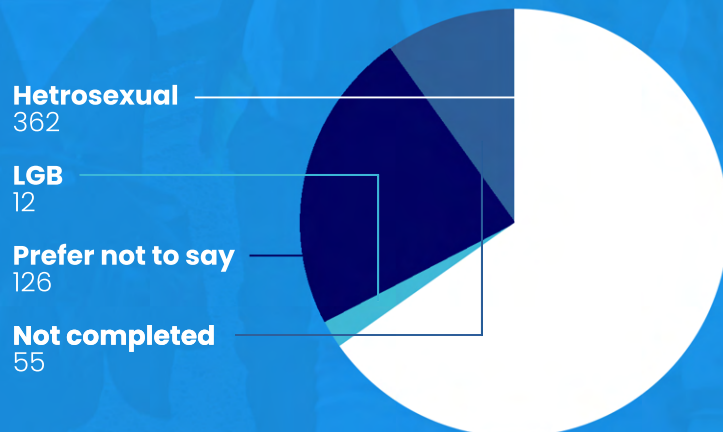
### Faith & Belief



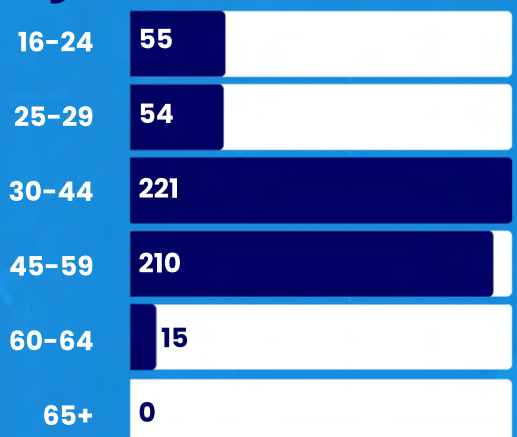
### Race



### Sexual Orientation



### Age



# Our PRIORITIES

This strategy is structured around a set of key priorities, each accompanied by a comprehensive delivery action plan designed to guide our efforts effectively. The action plan outlines specific objectives, initiatives, and measures to ensure progress in achieving our strategic goals.

To remain responsive to the needs of our communities and the evolving landscape in which we operate, the action plan will be reviewed and updated annually. This process will allow us to reassess and realign our priorities, incorporate new insights, and address emerging challenges, ensuring that our approach remains dynamic, relevant, and impactful.

- 1. Make sure everyone feels safe, included, and welcome.**
- 2. Include fairness and diversity in how we hire, develop talent, and grow leaders.**
- 3. Set clear rules and responsibility for keeping our EDI efforts strong.**
- 4. Keep learning, celebrating success, and ensure everyone embodies EDI.**
- 5. Use different ideas and information to help everyone feel included and make the team work better.**





# PRIORITY 1

## Make Sure Everyone Feels Safe, Included, and Welcome

At CDDFRS, we are deeply committed to creating an environment where safety, inclusivity, and accessibility are at the forefront of our culture. Our pledge to foster a safe, inclusive, and accessible environment reflects our dedication to ensuring that every individual, whether they are a visitor, a staff member, or a community member, feels valued, respected, and supported.

Safety is a fundamental priority for us, and we strive to ensure that all aspects of our facilities and services meet the highest standards of safety and inclusivity. This includes providing essential amenities and ensuring that our online resources and physical spaces are accessible to everyone. We recognise that a truly inclusive environment must accommodate diverse needs and perspectives, and we are committed to making thoughtful adjustments to our facilities and processes to reflect this understanding.

Inclusivity goes beyond physical accessibility; it encompasses creating a culture where every person feels welcomed and respected. We are dedicated to integrating inclusivity into every aspect of our operations, from our daily interactions to our strategic planning. By actively considering the diverse needs of our community and workforce, we aim to foster a culture of respect and belonging.

Accessibility is integral to our mission, and we continuously seek ways to remove barriers that may impede participation or engagement. We are committed to reviewing and enhancing our systems and practices to ensure they are accessible to all, thereby supporting full and meaningful participation in our services and activities.

Through this commitment, we aim to build an environment that not only meets the needs of today but also anticipates and adapts to future requirements. Our goal is to create a workplace environment where everyone feels secure, included, and empowered to contribute to our collective success.

### To achieve this, we commit to:

- 1.1 Make sure our estate is inclusive and shows that we care about everyone.
- 1.2 Fully review our website to ensure that it contains clear information that meets the needs of our communities.
- 1.3 Ensure everyone understands the importance of helping to create a workplace where everyone feels like they belong.
- 1.4 Use tools to ensure we understand and support what each person needs to do to be their best.

# PRIORITY 2

## **Include Fairness and Diversity in How we Hire, Develop Talent, and Grow Leaders**

At CDDFRS, we recognise that embedding EDI into our recruitment, talent management, and leadership development processes is essential to building a dynamic and effective organisation. Our commitment to these practices reflects our dedication to fostering a workplace where diverse talents and perspectives are not only welcomed but actively sought and nurtured.

We are committed to creating a recruitment process that attracts a broad range of candidates from diverse backgrounds. By implementing inclusive hiring practices and promoting equitable opportunities, we aim to build a workforce that reflects the rich diversity of the communities we serve. This includes designing job descriptions that are accessible and appealing to a wide audience and ensuring our recruitment strategies are free from bias.

Our approach to talent management is designed to support and develop all employees fairly and equitably. We are dedicated to embedding EDI into performance management, career development, and succession planning. By recognising and valuing diverse contributions, we ensure that every employee has the opportunity to grow and excel within our Service.

We believe that effective leadership is critical to driving our commitment to diversity and inclusion. Our leadership development programs are tailored to cultivate diverse leadership talent and equip our leaders with the skills needed to champion inclusivity. By investing in the development of current and future leaders, we ensure that our leadership reflects and promotes the value of EDI throughout the Service.

By embedding EDI into every stage of talent management, we not only enhance our organisational effectiveness but also strengthen our commitment to reflecting the diverse needs of our community.

### **To achieve this, we commit to:**

- 2.1 Ensure our recruitment and promotion processes are diverse and inclusive.
- 2.2 Give everyone equal opportunities from the moment they join, to their growth and potential as leaders, always keeping fairness in mind.
- 2.3 Introduce fair work rules to ensure all employees feel treated equally.

# PRIORITY 3

## Set Clear Rules and Responsibility for Keeping our EDI Efforts Strong

At CDDFRS, we understand that establishing robust governance and accountability is fundamental to the success of our EDI initiatives. Our commitment to these principles reflects our dedication to creating a transparent, accountable, and effective approach to advancing EDI throughout our Service.

We are dedicated to implementing a structured governance framework that oversees our EDI efforts. This framework ensures that our initiatives are strategically aligned with our organisational goals and are effectively managed and monitored. By establishing clear roles, responsibilities, and processes, we create a strong foundation for guiding and evaluating our EDI strategies.

Accountability is at the heart of our commitment to meaningful change. We will integrate accountability measures into all aspects of our EDI initiatives, ensuring that progress is tracked, goals are met, and areas for improvement are identified and addressed. This includes setting measurable objectives, regularly reviewing performance, and holding ourselves and our teams accountable for achieving our EDI goals.

Our approach to governance and accountability is dynamic and responsive. We will continuously review and refine our practices based on feedback, data, and emerging best practices. By fostering a culture of transparency and openness, we encourage ongoing dialogue and learning, which helps us adapt and enhance our initiatives to better meet the needs of our diverse workforce and community.

Our goal is to ensure that our EDI initiatives are effectively implemented and sustained, creating a workplace where everyone is valued and supported.

### To achieve this, we commit to:

- 3.1 Keep teaching our team through lessons and workshops to help us stay fair and make the workplace better for everyone.
- 3.2 Make sure our leaders understand the importance of including everyone, and regularly check how we're doing to ensure it's working.
- 3.3 Review our choices and how we work to ensure we're always being fair and kind to everyone.

# PRIORITY 4

## Keep Learning, Celebrating Success and Making Sure Everyone Embodies EDI

At CDDFRS, we are committed to fostering a culture where continuous learning, recognition, and engagement in EDI are integral to our organisational ethos. Our dedication to these principles reflects our belief that ongoing education and active engagement are key to creating an inclusive and equitable workplace.

We recognise that EDI is a dynamic field that requires ongoing education and awareness. To support this, we are committed to providing continuous learning opportunities for our employees. This includes offering training, CPD sessions, and resources that address evolving best practices and emerging issues in EDI. By promoting a culture of continuous learning, we empower our team members to grow in their understanding and application of inclusive practices.

Celebrating and recognising efforts and achievements in EDI is crucial to reinforcing our values and encouraging a culture of excellence. We will implement systems to acknowledge and reward individuals and teams who demonstrate outstanding commitment to fostering an inclusive environment. By highlighting and celebrating these contributions, we not only motivate others but also affirm the importance of EDI within our Service.

Engaging our employees in EDI initiatives is essential to creating a sense of belonging and shared purpose. We will actively involve staff in conversations, feedback mechanisms, and decision-making processes related to diversity and inclusion. Through meaningful engagement, we ensure that our initiatives are responsive to the needs and perspectives of our workforce, fostering a collaborative and supportive work environment.

Through this commitment, we aim to create a vibrant and inclusive workplace where continuous learning, recognition, and active engagement drive our collective success. Our goal is to cultivate an environment where every employee feels empowered to contribute to and benefit from our EDI efforts, ultimately enhancing our organisational culture and effectiveness.

### To achieve this, we commit to:

- 4.1 Train our team so they can learn how to care for all kinds of people and make sure we do things the right way for everyone.
- 4.2 Show off the people who are really good at making everyone feel included, so more people can see how to do it.
- 4.3 Let our teams share their ideas to help us make good changes and make sure everyone's voice is heard.
- 4.4 Help our staff groups share ideas to improve our workplace, so everyone feels included and works together to make things better.

# PRIORITY 5

## Use Lots of Different Ideas and Information to Help Everyone Feel Included and Make the Team Work Better

At CDDFRS, we believe that true progress in inclusion and organisational excellence is driven by both data and diverse perspectives. Our commitment to leveraging data and embracing a wide range of viewpoints is fundamental to our strategy for creating an inclusive and effective FRS.

In today's rapidly evolving environment, the ability to make informed decisions based on comprehensive analytics is crucial. By systematically analysing data and trends, we gain valuable insights into our operations, identify areas for improvement, and proactively address potential challenges. This data-driven approach allows us to make decisions that are not only evidence-based but also aligned with our goal of fostering an inclusive workplace.

Equally important is our dedication to valuing diversity of thought. We understand that diverse perspectives enhance creativity, drive innovation, and lead to more effective problem-solving. By actively seeking out and integrating diverse viewpoints, we ensure that our strategies and solutions reflect the needs and experiences of all stakeholders. This inclusive mindset helps us build a work culture where everyone feels heard and valued, ultimately contributing to our overall success.

Through this commitment, we aim to create a dynamic and responsive organisation that leverages the power of data and diverse perspectives to enhance our service delivery, support our team members, and meet the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

### To achieve this, we commit to:

- 5.1 Look at the information and find patterns to help our leaders make smart decisions that make our team work even better.
- 5.2 Ask for new ideas because they make us more creative and help everyone do a great job together.
- 5.3 Make our workplace a fun and welcoming place where people feel part of the team and excited to work.



# MEASURING Success

We will monitor progress of this strategy in the following ways:



## Role of the Combined Fire Authority and Service Leadership Team (SLT)

Both members of the Combined Fire Authority and SLT believe in this strategy and that it will help to deliver the service's vision in respect of EDI. Leading by example, our members and SLT will set the standard for what is expected of all staff in enabling this strategy to be delivered.



## Role of our Staff

This strategy will only be successful if all staff within CDDFRS support it, making the vision for EDI a reality. In supporting this strategy, employees will not only assist in enabling the actions outlined but they will also demonstrate their support through their behaviours.



## Performance Indicators

We will continue to develop our suite of performance indicators to help measure the progress of this strategy.



## Staff Survey

Our culture survey will assist us in having insight into the motivations, attitudes and behaviours of our staff and assist in identifying interventions required. Progress will be measured against key indicators and shared with the workforce.



## Measuring Perceptions/ Sense Checking

Scrutiny of progress against the strategy and action plan will be undertaken by the EDI group and the HR Committee of the Combined Fire Authority who will receive regular reports from the Chair of the EDI Group in their role as strategic lead for EDI.



## Keeping it current

We will provide a progress report to the relevant committees and update the action plan annually to ensure it remains current.



COUNTY DURHAM & DARLINGTON FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE



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