

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objectives 2016-20, Review of Year 1 progress

Introduction

Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA) is fully committed to Equality and Diversity. The Authority recognises that we must make fairness and inclusion fundamental to everything we do in order to achieve our vision of making Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes the safest areas in England in which to live work and travel.

The Authority believes that a workforce which better reflects the diversity of the local working population will create a stronger, more enriched and well informed organisation, able to meet the expectations for a modern Fire and Rescue Service. This is a key aspect of our People Strategy. The Authority's philosophy is to embed Equality and Diversity in everything we do internally and externally.

The Authority recognises that having a diverse flexible workforce which better reflects the community it serves can enhance performance and understanding of these diverse communities and improve our services to those communities.

Under the Equality Act 2010, Public Sector organisations are expected to use this understanding to demonstrate 'due regard' to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by, or under, the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

The aim of the PSED is to embed equality considerations into the day to day work of public authorities so that they tackle discrimination and inequality and contribute to making society fairer.

The Equality duty covers the following protected characteristics: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex and Sexual orientation.

The duty applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.

The Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework (FRSEF) provides a structured approach to best practice EDI nationally and we are benchmarking ourselves against this framework.

Executive Summary

The Authority is subject to the specific duties as laid out in the Equality Act (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011. This is in addition to the general equality duty as laid out in the Equality Act 2010. These duties together are commonly known as the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), the aim of which is to ensure that fairness is at the heart of public bodies' work and that public services meet the needs of different groups.

The PSED requires public bodies to publish, at least annually, data on equality in the workforce and to set objectives to further one or more of the aims set out in the general equality duty. This paper aims to comply with this duty by publishing the data and to update on the progress of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) objectives set in 2016.

The Authority approved the four yearly objectives at the Fire Authority Meeting of 8 June 2016. The main aim of year one has been to improve our data and planning and to put in place the infrastructure to support and embed EDI in to all management practices. Progress against the objectives is reported via the normal internal governance boards. In January 2017 the way forward was determined; the main decisions taken were:

The Performance Management Board (PMB) are monitoring the progress of the Authority's EDI Objectives and progress towards achieving 'Excellent' status in the Fire and Rescue Services Equality Framework (FRSEF) six monthly and onwards annually to the Strategic Management Board (SMB) and Fire Authority (CFA). A key aspect of this is that our performance management tool 'Viper' is in the final stages of development to capture evidence towards meeting the various organisation wide elements of the FRSEF. This evidence will then be used for audit and future inspection purposes.

To ensure that there is stakeholder scrutiny an EDI Advisory Group has been set up and convened. This group has direct access to Strategic Management Board (SMB) members and therefore have real voice and influence in EDI for the organisation.

The Advisory Group is made up of people with particular interest and understanding and supports and promotes inclusion and employee engagement within Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service. The group and its members are liaising with all colleagues to develop a working environment where individual diversity is valued, creating an inclusive workplace free from discrimination. The group and its members support delivery of the Authority's agreed objectives in Equality and Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

EDI remains on the agenda for every meeting of the Joint Consultation Forum attended by all representative bodies and continue to be a key aspect of all Authority reports.

Annex B displays the workforce diversity in the form of charts and tables in comparison to the 2011 census data for the population of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

This report contains an update on the key internal performance areas as follows: Workforce Strategy, Workforce Monitoring, Equality Analysis/Impact assessment, Employee Engagement, Promoting an Inclusive Working Environment, Equal Pay, Anti- Harassment and Bullying, Appraisal and Training Learning and Development.

The report also contains an update on the key external performance areas working with our Communities as follows:

Knowing Communities, Involving Communities, Responsive Services and Customer Care.

For the purpose of consistency this paper follows the same structure and headings as the paper submitted to the Fire Authority on 8 June 2016 entitled **Equality and Diversity (E&D) Objectives 2016-20, Public Sector Equality Duty and Review of 2012 -16 Objectives** and this paper should be read for background.

Workforce Diversity

In order to comply with the PSED, following the Fire Authority meeting, the intention is to publish the information contained in **Annex B**.

The latest public data available is from the Buckinghamshire County Council and Milton Keynes Council Census Profiles from 2011. The charts in **Annex B** provide a comparison of the diversity within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA) in August 2017 to the census data of the communities it serves within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. The key aspects in the comparison are highlighted below:

Ethnicity census data compared to BMKFA employees (Annex B, Charts 1 & 5)

Proportionally Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) employees remain under-represented within BMKFA compared to the population ethnicity of both Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire.

Black and ethnic minority community employees are under-represented within Support employees, On Call and Whole-time employees.

There is no significant change in the number of BME's employed. More work is being undertaken to tackle this with a new recruitment plan, the EDI Advisory Group BME action sub group and the work of the National Joint Council for Fire and Rescue Services Inclusive Fire Services Group planned national diversity marketing campaign are aimed to reach out to help with improving this.

Age census data compared to BMKFA employees (Annex B, Charts 2 & 6)

86 per cent of BMKFA employees are between 30 and 59 years of age in comparison to 43 per cent of the Milton Keynes population and less for Buckinghamshire.

Under 30 year olds are under-represented within Support employees, On Call and Whole-time employees.

The recruitment of 22 new Apprentices are all under 29 years, this bodes well for changes in the age profile of Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) when they begin filling any vacancies that arise in future.

Religion and belief (Annex B, Chart 3 & 7)

The predominant religion in both Buckinghamshire (60 per cent) and Milton Keynes (52 per cent) is Christian.

'Other religions' Muslim: Milton Keynes (4.8 per cent) and Buckinghamshire (5.1 percent). Hindu: Milton Keynes (2.8 per cent) and Buckinghamshire (1.2 per cent).

The number of unknowns and no religion (58 per cent) within the workforce data makes objective setting problematic in this area. Again, as part of phase 2 of the implementation of the new HR Information system efforts will be made to encourage those that have not declared to do so.

Gender census data compared to BMKFA employees (Annex B, Chart 4 & 8)

Our workforce now has 2 per cent more females than a year ago (17 per cent in 2016; 15 per cent in 2016) compared with 49 and 51 per cent of Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire respectively.

Females account for 56 per cent of Support employees, remaining the same as 2016.

Females are still under represented within On Call employees (6.8 per cent) and Whole-time employees (3.4 per cent). However, there has been a .5 per cent increase in female Whole time staff and a 4 per cent increase in female On Call staff.

Sexual orientation and gender reassignment

Data around sexual orientation (heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual) and gender reassignment was not collected as part of the Census 2011. However, there are a number of national pieces of research which can help understand potential population statistics:

The Integrated Household Survey data collected from January 2012 – December 2012 indicated that 1.1 per cent of those that were surveyed identified themselves as Gay or Lesbian with 0.4 per cent as Bisexual.

GIRES (the Gender Identity Research and Education Society) puts the number of people living with some form of 'gender variance' in the UK as approximately 13 per cent.

Many employees at BMKFA have not provided equality information which has resulted in a high percentage of unknowns. However as part of phase 2 of the implementation of the new HR Information system efforts will be made to encourage those that have not declared to do so confidentially.

People Strategy

Our aim is to maintain a skilled and committed workforce and to have a diversity of employees to more closely reflect the diverse communities we serve.

Our overall strategic objective is to employ the best people. We will do this by:

- Recruiting, engaging and retaining the most high-performing, highly motivated people regardless of race, age, sex, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity and marriage/civil partnership.
- Aiming, over time, to employ a workforce that is more representative of the County's working-age population.

We recognise much more is needed to attract women and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) employees into our service so station based employees have commenced a pilot project in Milton Keynes to engage these communities to promote the service as an employer of choice. The learns from this project will be fed back through our engagement forums with an aim of spreading good practice throughout Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

In support of our workforce strategy we are developing a Recruitment Plan with a particular priority to attract and retain a diverse workforce by encouraging and actively promoting employment applications from all groups in the community. As part of this plan our aims are as follows;

- Review recruitment and selection practices to attract and appoint from a diverse applicant pool, ensuring we reach candidates regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability or socioeconomic background.

- Concentrate on improving community engagement, offering role models to positively market careers in the Fire service.
- Implement a modern recruitment process to allow easier access to information about the service, the roles available and a modern candidate experience, which reduces time and is efficient and cost effective.
- Improve our diversity data (declarations) across all parts of the existing workforce.

The responsibility for this work falls across the whole organisation, not with any single directorate. We will need to work together to achieve successful outcomes, and undertake new initiatives to achieve different results.

Achieving diversity at senior levels is generally more challenging than sourcing diverse candidates for less senior positions. This highlights the importance of creating a talent pipeline which is inclusive.

Our local strategy is supported by national initiatives which we are fully engaged with. Example initiatives such as the National Fire and Rescue Service People Strategy is being finalised with the full input of our People and Organisational Development Director and the National Joint Council for Fire and Rescue Services. Inclusive fire service initiative has been supported and contributed to fully with the local Fire Bridges Union and our Equality Lead participation.

Workforce Monitoring

A data cleansing exercise is part of the introduction of Phase 2 of the HR System in 2017 and this will happen in conjunction with an employee census. It is expected to result in a number of changes to equality self-declarations.

We understand that we have a duty under the Equality Act and PSED to monitor our workforce. To do this effectively we plan to develop and improve monitoring systems for race, gender (including sex, marital status and gender reassignment), age, disability, sexuality and religion or belief.

In order to meet our legislative requirements and ensure that no group is disadvantaged in applying and undertaking employment, we currently monitor:

- Recruitment and selection
- Numbers of employees in post
- Training
- Promotions
- Harassment and discrimination complaints and other grievances
- Disciplinary proceedings
- Starters and leavers
- Performance management

Our new Human Resources information System will enhance our reporting capabilities in this area in 2018.

Equality Analysis/Impact assessment

People Impact Assessment (PIA) are an essential criteria (i.e. added to meeting paper template) for all papers submitted to management board meetings.

A PIA is a systemic way of finding out whether any of the Authority's policy, procedure or activities, or proposed policy, procedure or activities affects different groups of people in different ways.

PIAs look at both service delivery and workforce matters and will be undertaken for:

- Services we provide
- Policy we implement
- Strategy we write
- Procedure we follow

The aim of the PIA process is to ensure that any negative consequences for a particular group or sector of the community are identified early and eliminated, minimised or counterbalanced by other measures.

Impact assessments can also be used to establish good practices as a result of positive consequences and can be the starting point for establishing equality objectives and measures.

Our target is to achieve 100 per cent PIA compliance for change programmes, management board papers and procedural implementation or amendment. We have updated the PIA procedure as required to reflect up to date best practice and this will be held under review. We are currently setting up monitoring procedures and to review this area and action as required.

Employee Engagement

We carry out on going communication and consultation with employee groups and Trade Union representatives. We will use the views and experiences of employees and respond sensitively to employees needs and to inform policy development.

We actively oppose all forms of discrimination in the workplace and seek to promote best practice initiatives wherever possible.

Engagement with the trade unions occurs on a regular basis via informal meetings and discussions and more formal meetings including the Joint Consultation Forum. EDI is a standing item at the Joint Consultation Forum and

Trade unions and Employee Representatives are regularly consulted on new and updated policies and projects and engaged in equality analysis.

We are undertaking an Employee Engagement and culture Survey in September 2017, the results of which will be examined and initiatives developed based on the findings.

Promoting an Inclusive Working Environment

Our Code of Conduct clearly sets out Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority's required standards as a publicly accountable body which manages Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service on behalf of the communities it serves.

The Authority aims to;

- Ensure that all employees are aware of the vision, values and behaviours expected within the workplace;
- Improve the Authority's performance through building the skills of a diverse workforce that reflect the community;
- Ensure employees have an understanding of how the Service operates, in order to be as effective as possible within their role.

We aim to provide a safe and accessible working environment that values and respects the identity and culture of each person. We insist on a culture and working environment that is free from discrimination, harassment and violence.

We challenge behaviours that are not consistent with the Authority's values and take appropriate action in line with internal procedures, such as the Anti-Bullying and Harassment Procedure when inappropriate behaviours are identified. Analysis of Grievance and Discipline cases that arise are reported to the Performance Management Board routinely.

We are promoting EDI by recognising exceptional contribution to positive values as a category award for employees in the annual SAFE Awards process.

We have set up an EDI Advisory Group chaired by Lynne Swift, Director of People and Organisational Development and attended by Councillor Steven Lambert, Lead Member for People and Equality and Diversity. The EDI Group is made up of a balance inclusivity with members who have an active interest in EDI. The group's terms of reference include challenging the Authority to strive for future improvements in EDI and developing networks to enable the sharing of best practice.

It is early days for the EDI Group, having three meetings so far however a number of priorities have been identified for the group:

- Cultural survey – communication, implementation and outcomes.

- Improve Networks to increase awareness of the diversity needs of the communities we serve.
- Recruitment and induction – Increasing the number of Females and BME's employed and ensuring an inclusive culture.

Positive outcomes arising from the EDI Group include improvements in LGBT Networking and events and consensus on Service priorities and BME promotional activities mentioned earlier in the paper.

The EDI Lead for BFRS also represents all three of the Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services at the National Fire Chiefs Council EDI Professionals Group where best practice EDI is discussed and initiatives undertaken. These learns and the associated support is available to the BFRS EDI Advisory Group such as the networks of other Fire and Rescue Services and best practice support materials that have been developed by the group of EDI professionals.

Ageing Workforce

Our new physical fitness testing procedure has become embedded throughout the service and this provides support to maintain fitness in all workers along with new gym equipment and physical training time. Supporting injured employees with arranged Physiotherapy is proving helpful in maintaining the operational availability of firefighters.

Through more developed stress audits, risk assessments and wellness action plans this year we have focussed on psychological wellbeing. A key focus has been to mitigate the impact of our employee's exposure to traumatic events through Critical Incident Stress Debriefing and support with funded specialist counselling through our Employee Assistance Programme. A key aspect of our new Occupational Health contract contains mental wellbeing initiatives being implemented during 2017.

We have set up a focus group to examine and implement support through the menopause, particularly for operational employees.

Our policies and procedures support employees with responsibilities for both children and elderly parents with increased flexible working arrangements.

We will consider the outcomes of ageing workforce research which will shape the content of future policies and procedures.

Developing and engaging younger employees.

Having an ageing operational workforce is an emerging concept for us, as traditionally firefighters and officers have been financially tied to leave the Service after 30 years. The introduction of an Authority wide Apprenticeship Scheme has led to the recruitment of 22 Apprentices. The age profile of these are all below 30 years. This bodes well for the talent pipeline as vacancies arise in the future.

Equal Pay

An Equal Pay Audit of support employees was completed in 2013. The outcome was not a risk to the Authority. We will publish the gender pay gap reporting requirements within BMKFA in line with the outcome of the Government Equality Office, Consultation on Mandatory Gender Pay Gap Reporting for the public sector. It is planned to carry out a pilot on the new legislation and prepare a draft report in December 2017, so that any issues can be identified in advance of the requirement to publish from April 2018.

The support staff pay and grading system is also currently under review, in line with best practice as it has been three years since its introduction. This will include examination to ensure that it is equality compliant.

Harassment and Bullying

We have embedded Anti-Bullying and Harassment, Whistleblowing and Code of Conduct procedures which set out how to deal with grievances and discipline cases that may arise from time to time.

We monitor cases relating to the Discipline, Dignity at Work and Grievance procedures to ensure that the full abilities and attributes of all employees are recognised based on their competence, not who they are and to ensure that we tackle discrimination and inequality. The Authority's policies and procedures make it clear that discrimination is totally unacceptable and must be eliminated.

Appraisal

To develop and support employees, recognise achievement and as part of the process, encourage them to become role models across the organisation, all employees are required to undergo an annual appraisal where their commitment to E&D is an essential element. The appraisal process contains an evaluation to ensure employees are delivering an improvement on equality and diversity, based on individual annual performance reviews. Individual and specific EDI objectives are now a requirement for all employees and we expect to see positive results when end of year reviews take place in Quarter 4 2017/18.

Training Learning and Development

Our approach is to mainstream equality and diversity issues into all training programmes, including management development activities. For employees undertaking reviews and impact assessments of policies, specific training and support will be offered.

Current training programmes include:

- A range of self-managed E learning resources such as workbook and computer-based learning resources and the testing of knowledge following the use of such resources.

- Unconscious bias workshops for the leadership group delivered by Adrian Thomas who is the author of The Independent Review of Conditions of Service for Fire and Rescue staff, published in November 2016.
- Interview training for HR staff including unconscious bias awareness.

We strive to eliminate all forms of discrimination taking place during any development opportunity and:

- Ensure that any alternative access needs are identified before the individual arrives for training.
- Ensure that training material does not contain any biased assumptions.
- Ensure that language used is not racist, sexist, homophobic, or offensive to anybody.
- Take responsibility to positively promote equal opportunities in all situations.
- Provide alternative language training materials if appropriate.
- Challenge discriminatory language or behaviour during training events.
- Implement any reasonable adjustments required through the identification and assessment of disability.

All training courses are evaluated using feedback from attendees, and this is used to inform future training and development programmes.

The start and finish times of courses are selected to enable the fullest amount of training to take place in the time available. We appreciate the course programme times can sometimes cause problems for participants, particularly those with care responsibilities. We will however provide advance notice of course arrangements to allow employees to make alternative plans for the duration of the course.

We ensure all line managers complete performance management training in appropriate procedures and best practice in; Discipline, Anti Bullying and Harassment, Grievance and Capability.

Working with our Communities

Knowing communities

We are increasing our understanding of our communities and use this knowledge to inform our decision making, strategy and procedures.

We are building the necessary infrastructure to help us identify where we can best deliver services to improve inequalities and mitigate risk from fire. On a routine basis we are increasingly sharing data with partners to improve general and specific knowledge gaps across the communities. All of this is aimed at supporting local delivery of appropriate services to the most vulnerable people.

The tragic Grenfell Tower incident has forced us to question how well we know our communities and how well we balance the enforcement of fire safety legislation whilst supporting businesses which want our support and guidance.

'Knowing your communities' includes three elements within the framework. These are:

- *Collecting information*
We have been collecting data from Home Fire Risk Checks, operational incidents and other initiatives which helps understand our communities and their needs. We are developing a new database which will enable the Service to store all relevant information in one place so trend analysis will be much more straight-forward.
To improve our support for businesses we have purchased a commercial database which gives us far greater data on all commercial premises within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. This allows us to create a more informed risk assessed approach on how best to support businesses; whether that might be delivering advice and guidance or targeting where best to ensure compliance through enforcement processes.
- *Analysing and using information*
The information we have gathered is used to target our resources most in need of our support. The Home Fire Risk Check approach has enabled the Service to improve the fire safety of thousands of households but now we need to access those people who would not actively request our help. We appreciate that we can help beyond delivering fire safety advice; to support those at risks and our partners we have developed a Safe & Well visit which will identify those at risk from falls, those with unhealthy living choices and also those carers who may need support. Although these areas are not traditionally core fire service work areas, we appreciate that these factors can increase an individual's risk from fire, whilst supporting partners in achieving wider community safety objectives. As we progress we will be able to analyse more data to inform and develop our processes.
- *Sharing information between partners*
We know that vulnerability to fire comprises a number of complex and inter-connected factors e.g. social isolation, smoking, use of alcohol and drugs, mobility, etc. and whilst we hold a great deal of information, we need to share information with partners to gain as full a picture as possible. This is a reciprocal process where the information we share with others helps ameliorate wider health inequalities. The Safe & Well visits will enable us to share information with partners. As this process grows and our crews become more skilled in its delivery, we will look to expand into other causes of health inequality, where there is a demonstrable link back to increased risk from fire. We are working closely with partners to ensure we are not setting unrealistic expectations for the communities,

our staff or partner organisations. Working with partners to prevent people falling in their homes has led to further discussions around how the fire service might best support other areas e.g. consideration for the fire service to conduct home visits so patients can be discharged from hospital earlier than might otherwise be the case.

Involving communities

We appreciate that in the past we delivered services to the communities without always asking for their views or their feedback. We are developing processes and links to ensure that the views of our communities are considered throughout our service delivery. Service users are represented on the Bucks Safeguarding Adults Board and we host their meetings on fire service premises. This allows our teams to interact with service users and establish how best we can play our part in supporting them.

We have positioned ourselves to work with partners and involve the public to help us understand community needs and the best methods for service delivery. The Fire Service is a trusted 'brand' and this allows us privileged access to our communities and we accept that we have to maximize these opportunities, to mitigate fire risk as well as support our partners in the wider public sector.

'Community engagement and satisfaction' comprises three main elements within the framework:

- *Engagement structures*
We are developing appropriate methods to capture the views of the public. Whilst we have always gained feedback through surveys and 'after the fire' questionnaires, we have never established ongoing discussions with the public. We are creating a framework to support this approach in Milton Keynes, working with MK Community Action and the Open University. We want to be able to demonstrably evaluate levels of community engagement currently and measure progress over time. The 'Blue Light Hub' presents an excellent opportunity to measure community engagement and allows us to consider how best we can engage in an ongoing basis. We have recognised this and are starting to capture data and information now to create a 'base level'.
- *Effective engagement*
We ensure communities are actively participating in and influencing decision making. We have worked with Bucks Community Impact to deliver a 'Handy Helper' scheme, supporting people to live well in their own homes. We will use this as a trial to see if the scheme could prosper elsewhere and use the opportunity to engage with communities on how the fire service can best support them. We have hosted meetings for the young people who act as representatives on the MK Safeguarding Children's Board and listened to their views.

- *Participation in public life*
We are starting to ensure people feel they have been listened to. We are delivering programmes with people and not merely delivering them to people. This area is a priority for the Prevention team and we are creating a structure and processes to gather the feedback from the various projects we are involved with across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Responsive services and customer care

We appreciate that communities and their needs are dynamic and we know that we need to have a flexible approach mixing short, medium and long-term objectives. The tragic fire at Grenfell Tower has brought this issue into sharp focus; we need to better understand how to best support our varied communities.

We feel we always treat our communities with dignity and respect and we are establishing methods to ensure this is actually the case. Our station based employees are key in building positive and pro-active relationships with our communities and our partners so that lessons learned can be fed back into the organisation. It is for this reason that station open days now involve our partners. These are opportunities for us to engage differently with our communities.

'Responsive services and customer care' within the framework comprises the following main elements:

- *Equality analysis/impact assessment*
In delivering the Safe & Well visits we will gather information on the people we visit to ensure we support all communities equally, dependent on their level of risk. The targeting approach takes account of actual fire data so we can match our interventions to those people most at risk. We are developing a database which will capture ethnicity data for the first time.
- *Integration into business planning and delivery*
The use of integrated impact assessments will ensure that our planning and delivery have considered and evaluated equality issues before we start a programme. This is a cultural change for an organisation which traditionally focused more on delivery rather than evaluating demonstrable outcomes.
- *Accessible services*
In the past we have delivered services to the public, whereas in the future we will listen so that communities can better access our services in ways that better suit their needs. Our youth intervention programmes mean that by working with schools and colleges, young people who would never

have previously attended fire service courses will do so. The intention is that this will lead to those people accessing further programmes with us or appropriate programmes led by partner organisations.

- *Human rights*
We work closely with our Information Manager to ensure we hold and share data appropriately and lawfully. We will only gather data that supports our approach and helps make communities safer.