



# Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

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**Meeting and date:** Fire Authority, 16 June 2021

**Report title:** Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objectives 2020–2025 – Year one update

**Lead Member:** Councillor Steven Lambert, People, Equality and Diversity and Assurance

**Report sponsor:** Mick Osborne, Chief Operating Officer (Deputy Chief Fire Officer)

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**Action:** Noting and Decision

**Recommendations:** It is recommended that:

1. the contents of the report, EDI objectives for 2020–2025 in Appendix 1 and EDI workforce data in Appendix 3 be noted;
  2. the revised six, twelve and eighteen to twenty-four month objectives in Appendix 2 be approved.
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## **Executive summary:**

The Authority's objective is to embed Equality and Diversity into everything it does, both internally and externally.

In late 2019, it was recognised that a refresh of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) objectives was necessary; EDI group members from across the Service met to review progress and set tangible objectives, which aligned with the Public Safety Plan and would give the opportunity to developed EDI further.

Work was undertaken to review the overarching objectives. The June 2020 Fire Authority approved the EDI Objectives 2020 to 2025 which are set out against elements of the Authority's core values – Diversity, Service to the Community, Improvement and People.

Our vision and values align to the National Fire Chief Council's (NFCC) Code of Ethics which members of the EDI group contributed to during consultation.

The objectives were further broken down into six, twelve and eighteen month objectives. These objectives are regularly reviewed for progress and additions made to support the EDI work. (Appendix 2)

In the 2019 HMICFRS report, the People pillar where EDI is assessed was deemed good. In the 2021 HMICFRS Covid-19 report "staff wellbeing was a clear priority". In the forthcoming inspection EDI will be a key area; the EDI group welcome the

external review and will ensure EDI development areas will be worked on, to drive improvement.

This report is to update on progress made on EDI and the EDI objectives. The objectives have been amended to ensure the refreshed Corporate Plan priorities and the HMICFRS report recommendations and learning are aligned with it. The action plan has been extended to span twenty-four months, to ensure the strong focus and direction on EDI continues.

Appendix 1 provides an introduction to the statutory duties outlined by the prevailing legislation, the overarching objectives and a summary of EDI headlines.

Appendix 2 shows the six, twelve and eighteen to twenty-four month objectives, where progress has been made, what has been completed and where objective timescales have been reviewed.

Appendix 3 illustrates EDI workforce data in the form of charts in comparison to the latest census data (2011) for the population of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. We have reported the current data set for a number of years and are refreshing the way we collect and present data.

### **Financial implications:**

The EDI objectives for 2020-2025 will continue to be delivered from within existing budgets and will help to move the provision of equality and diversity to a more integrated provision within public safety work.

The Change 100 internship programme may incur a cost. Any costs associated, if not fully externally funded, will be sourced through the budget challenge process.

The Authority's objective is to embed EDI into everything it does internally and externally, and to work in partnership to ensure a consistent approach to delivering equality and diversity - where possible reducing and sharing the cost of activities.

### **Risk management:**

A significant identified risk is the Authority's ability to deliver a more diverse workforce within the funding and recruitment constraints against a background of changing demographics.

This report and the objectives contained within the appendices and proposed monitoring aim to mitigate these risks.

Discrimination in the workplace may give rise to a claim through the employment tribunal. In general, failure to comply with the statutory duties may give rise to a claim for compensation for injury to feelings and costs may be awarded on such a claim if it is successful. There is also a risk to reputational damage.

Any new or revised processes or procedures which deal with equality data or personally identifiable information are subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA).

The Authority's People Strategy and well-developed policies and procedures aim to mitigate these risks wherever possible.

Monitoring arrangements include updates to the Performance Management Board, and annual reports to the Strategic Management Board and Fire Authority.

### **Legal implications:**

The Fire Authority is subject to the general and specific duties set out in the Equality Act 2010. The general duty requires the Authority, when carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- 1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; and
- 2) advance equality of opportunity between different groups and foster good relations between different groups.

Specific duties are set out in regulations made under Equality Act 2010, which related to the following "protected characteristics": age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 (SI 2017/353) requires the Authority to:

- 1) publish information to demonstrate compliance with the duty imposed by the Act, which must include information relating to persons who share a "protected characteristic" (see above) who are a) employees; and b) other persons affected by its policies and practices; and
- 2) to prepare and publish one or more specific and measurable equality objectives that should achieve any of the aims set out in the Act at least every four years.

Guidance on how and what to publish is provided in the "Equality information and the equality duty: A guide for Public Authorities" (ECHR Revised (fourth) edition, July 2014).

### **Privacy and security implications:**

All statistical data used to evaluate diverse groups are suitably pseudonymised to ensure individuals cannot be identified.

Following this Fire Authority meeting, relevant EDI workforce data as outlined within this report will be published on the external website in line with the PSED.

### **Duty to collaborate:**

The [Policing and Crime Act 2017](#) requires the Authority to keep opportunities for collaboration with the police and ambulance services under review.

The three Thames Valley Fire Services are progressing common approaches to operational On Call Firefighter recruitment. Joint working to promote fire service careers and raise awareness across community groups with the aim of improving employee diversity.

Collaboration with Thames Valley Police (TVP) on apprenticeships and promoting careers for young people is well established.

The Service fully participated in the National Joint Council Inclusive Fire Service Initiative, which recommended improvement strategies for Fire and Rescue Services to use. The Authority confirmed support for these improvement strategies.

Members of the EDI group have been active participants of the five shires Addressing Inequalities collaboration which was originally set up following the Black Lives Matter movement. They have contributed to workshops and are lead members of working groups on a collaborative video, planning webinars and a resource hub.

The Head of Human Resources attends virtual Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) South East region events. A range of AFSA events are attended by the EDI group and learning and resources are shared with across the service.

EDI members have collaborated on NFCC consultations on a range of EDI subjects and attend the NFCC EDI Forum.

**Health and safety implications:** There are no implications with regard to health and safety.

**Environmental implications:** There are no environmental implications.

**Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:**

The Service has a statutory obligation under equality legislation to eliminate unlawful discrimination. The Authority's People Strategy, policies, and procedures aim to support it in meeting these requirements. Diversity is one of our core values.

If we have greater representation of our diverse communities, then we will be able to find solutions to barriers in relation to employment and accessing services.

Staff are encouraged to disclose their protected characteristics; the data is used to inform our EDI strategies. The EDI workforce data in Appendix 3, is presented to ensure it is inclusive and can be viewed by individuals who find it hard to distinguish between different colours. This approach will be used in all future papers.

Recruitment Strategies are in place to improve the diversity of the workforce. The Authority continues to support the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network (ADCN). This network is proving helpful in sourcing and sharing best practice to improve workforce diversity.

The Authority's innovative Apprenticeship programme provides an excellent opportunity to improve the diversity make-up of the Authority.

**Consultation and communication:**

A comprehensive communication and consultation programme is in position to ensure the Authority is best placed to move the EDI agenda forward in a positive and co-ordinated way. For example, EDI is an agenda item at the Joint Consultation Forum, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee and the Performance Management Board.

The EDI Group is jointly chaired by the Head of Human Resources and Deputy Director of Finance and Assets, and attended by the Lead Member for People, Equality and Diversity and Assurance. The group's terms of reference include supporting the Authority to strive for future improvements in EDI and developing networks to enable the sharing of best practice.

This report promotes Equality and Diversity and is intended to comply with the PSED.

This report fulfils the Authority's legislative requirements under the Equality Act (Specific Duties) Regulations 2017 and complements the Authority's strategic objectives.

This paper has been discussed at the 22 April 2021 Joint Consultation Forum and reviewed and approved at the March and April 2021 EDI Group monthly meetings, at Performance Management Board on 6 May 2021, and Strategic Management Board on 18 May 2021.

### **Background papers:**

#### **March 2021 Executive Committee – Gender Pay Gap Report (Item 6)**

[Executive Committee March 2021 Gender Pay Gap report](#)

#### **January 2021 Covid-19 Inspection report**

[COVID-19 inspection: Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](#)

#### **October 2020 Fire Authority - People Strategy**

[BMKFA October 2020 People Strategy](#)

#### **June 2020 Fire Authority – EDI Objectives 2020 – 2025**

[BMKFA, 10 June 2020 EDI Objectives](#)

#### **HMICFRS report 17 December 2019**

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/frs-assessment/frs-2018/buckinghamshire/>

#### **The Equality Act 2010**

#### **The Equalities Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017**

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/353/contents/made>

#### **The Equalities Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017**

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/172/contents/made>

#### **“Equality information and the equality duty: A guide for public authorities” (ECHR, Revised (fourth) edition, July 2014):**

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/essential-guide-public-sector-equality-duty>

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Introduction; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Objectives 2020 – 2025	
2	EDI Objectives 2020 – 2025	
3	EDI workforce data	