



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority, 15 June 2022

Report title: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objectives 2020-2025 – Year two 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 2020–2025 in Appendix 1, EDI Workforce Data in Appendix 3 and BMKFA EDI Headlines in Appendix 4 be noted.
 2. The revised EDI objectives 2022/2023 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.

The objectives were further broken down into six, twelve and eighteen month objectives. In 2021, they were reviewed and revised to include twenty-four months. These were approved at the June 2021 Fire Authority. The objectives are regularly reviewed for progress and additions made to support the EDI work. The EDI group have discussed the EDI objectives and to ensure continuation of the strong focused approach, they have revised them, which can be seen in Appendix 2.

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.

Appendix 1 provides an introduction to the statutory duties outlined by the prevailing legislation and the overarching objectives.

Appendix 2 shows the revised EDI objectives 2022/2023, with actions, resources and timescales.

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.

Appendix 4 provides a summary of BMKFA EDI headlines.

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 incurs a cost. These have been agreed through the budget setting process for 2022/2023.

The proposed EDI Champions training incurs a cost, it has been submitted to the Training Strategy Group for review and is subject to approval.

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 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, and how to comply with the general and the specific duties, is provided in the “The Essential Guide to the Public Sector Equality Duty” (Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) 7 Jan 2014, updated March 2022).

Privacy and security implications:

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

Following this 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.

Members of the EDI group have been active participants of the Five Shires Addressing Inequalities collaboration (Buckinghamshire, Royal Berkshire,

Gloucestershire, Warwickshire and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Services) 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 sharing best practice.

The Head of Human Resources attends 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:

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. It was launched nationally and communicated through our internal channels. Our current vision and values are planned to be reviewed in late 2022 / early 2023.

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.

The 2021 HMICFRS Pandemic report stated "The service communicated well with its staff throughout the pandemic and provided guidance and support on wellbeing. Extra wellbeing services were put in place for those at higher risk of COVID-19 including black, Asian and minority ethnic staff. The service also provided coronavirus testing to staff and their families who were showing symptoms of the virus. The service made sure all staff had the resources they needed to do their jobs effectively, including extra IT and new flexible working arrangements. It has continued to collaborate with its partners, and has supported the Thames Valley LRF effectively" In the December 2021 HMICFRS report a Cause of Concern was reported for the People Pillar. The Service has met with them regularly to show the progress made and future plans.

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. Employee engagement workshops have been undertaken across the Service by the Station Commander - HR Projects to raise awareness of the People strategy and aid discussion.

The culture survey took place in January 2022, 75 per cent of employees completed it. The results were analysed by the Employee Engagement Group and Listening workshops undertaken throughout April and May 2022.

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.

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 Recruitment Oversight Board and Workforce Planning Group meet regularly to review progress on our recruitment strategy, community engagement and future plans.

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 Head of Human Resources attends Senior Management Team on a weekly basis and gives formal updates at the monthly formal Senior Management Board meetings.

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 and Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive. 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 6 April 2022 Joint Consultation Forum and reviewed and approved at the monthly EDI Group meetings, at Performance Management Board on 28 April 2022, and Strategic Management Board on 17 May 2022.

Background papers:

March 2022 Executive Committee – Gender Pay Gap Report

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[Gender Pay Gap report](#)

HMICFRS report December 2021

[Buckinghamshire - HMICFRS \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](#)

October 2021 Fire Authority - People Strategy

[People Strategy October 2021](#)

June 2021 Fire Authority – EDI objectives 2020 – 2025 – Year one update

[BMKFA June 2021 EDI Objectives](#)

January 2021 Covid-19 Inspection report

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

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/ukxi/2017/353/contents/made>

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

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

The Essential Guide to the Public Sector Equality Duty (EHRC 7 Jan 2014, updated March 2022:

[The Essential Guide to the Public Sector Equality Duty](#)

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Introduction; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Objectives 2020 – 2025	
2	EDI Objectives 2022/2023	
3	EDI workforce data	
4	BMKFA EDI Headlines	