



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority, 14 June 2023

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

Lead Member: Councillor Gary Hall, Lead Member - People, Equality and Diversity and Assurance

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

Author and contact: Anne Stunell, Head of Human Resources

Action: Noting and Decision

Recommendations: It is recommended that:

1. the contents of the report, Introduction; Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) 2020 – 2025 Appendix 1 the BMKFA Headlines in Appendix 2 and EDI workforce data in Appendix 3 be noted.
 2. the revised EDI objectives in Appendix 4 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, and again in 2022 they were reviewed and revised, these were approved at the June 2021 and June 2022 Fire Authority meetings. In early 2023 the EDI group discussed and reviewed the EDI objectives and to continue the strong focused approach, they have revised them to align with the overarching EDI objectives. The 2023/2024 objectives can be seen in Appendix 4.

This report is to update on progress made on EDI and the EDI objectives. The themes for 2023 are set against our agreed objectives and have been amended to ensure the refreshed Corporate Plan priorities and the HMICFRS report recommendations and learning are aligned with it. In addition, we have cross referenced the

recommendations from both the Independent Culture Review of London Fire Brigade and more recently the HMICFRS Values and culture in Fire and Rescue Services. Separate reports have been presented to the Executive Committee and Fire Authority.

Appendix 1 introduces the statutory duties outlined by the prevailing legislation, the overarching objectives.

Appendix 2 shows a summary of the EDI headlines.

Appendix 3 illustrates EDI workforce data in the form of charts in comparison to the latest census data (2021) for the population of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. The service has reviewed the way we collect and present our data; this has been refreshed and is captured in the latest data report.

Appendix 4 shows EDI objectives, noting the review themes for 2023.

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 costs have been budgeted for and built into the 2023/24 budget.

The proposed continuation of EDI Group members and Watch Commanders and Support Services equivalent training incurs a cost, this has been approved by the Training Strategy Group.

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 Monitoring Board, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee and Strategic Management Board. Annual reports are presented to the 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) and South-Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) on recruitment and apprenticeships, promoting careers for all. Recently taking part in a tri-service recruitment morning at West Ashland Fire station, with over 200 interested candidates over the three services.

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 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.

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. We have recently revised our Code of Conduct. The Authority's Code of Conduct provides employees with an understanding of the standards expected when performing duties as an employee and guides behaviour, placing an obligation on all employees to take responsibility for their own conduct. Our current vision and values are planned to be reviewed in late 2023/2024.

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 presented the reviewed People strategy to the Fire Authority 10 October 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, a project was established to look at the specific categories of characteristics. A consultation took place and new data set was agreed. All staff groups were encouraged to enter the self-service portal to update the data. The data will be 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 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 Strategic Management Board, Joint Consultation Forum, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee and the Performance Monitoring 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 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 20 April 2023 Joint Consultation Forum and reviewed and approved at the monthly EDI Group meetings, at Performance Monitoring Board on 27 April 2023, and Strategic Management Board on 16 May 2023.

Background papers:

March 2023 Executive Committee – Gender Pay Gap Report

[Gender Pay Gap Report](#)

October 2022 Fire Authority - People Strategy

[People Strategy October 2022](#)

June 2022 Fire Authority – EDI objectives 2020 – 2025 – Year two update

[BMKFA June 2022 EDI Objectives](#)

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

[BMKFA June 2021 EDI Objectives](#)

June 2020 Fire Authority – EDI Objectives 2020 – 2025

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

HMICFRS report December 2021

[Buckinghamshire - HMICFRS \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/buckinghamshire/)

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>

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](#)

Independent Culture review of London Fire Brigade

[Independent Culture Review of London Fire Brigade \(london-fire.gov.uk\)](https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/independent-culture-review/)

HMICFRS Report on Values and Culture in the Fire and Rescue Service

[HMICFRS Report on Values and Culture in the Fire and Rescue Service \(firestandards.org\)](https://www.firestandards.org/hmicfrs-report-on-values-and-culture-in-the-fire-and-rescue-service/)

Code of Conduct (V4.0)

[Code Of Conduct](#)

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