

Appendix 1 – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Service is committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). There are a range of workstreams across the Service to achieve the EDI objectives. In early 2023 the EDI group discussed and reviewed the EDI objectives to continue the strong focused approach, they have revised them to align with the overarching EDI objectives.

Change 100 Internship

The programme is paid summer work placements and mentoring for talented university students and recent graduates with a disability or long-term condition; they are matched with suitable employers. Change 100 allows access to a unique candidate not accessed before. The Service secured an internship working within the Resource Management Team and the candidate started on the 10 July 2023.

EDI Champions training

53 employees (Watch Commander and Support Services equivalent) were given bespoke face-to-face EDI training by an external consultant. This provided EDI information, legislation, and best practice to ensure they are confident and consistent in their promotion of EDI matters. The aim is to effectively cascade the EDI information and role-model the expected behaviours to their employees.

Equality impact Assessments

One of the 2021 HMICFRS recommendations was that “The service should ensure it has robust processes in place to undertake equality impact assessments (EIA), implement and review any actions required”. The guidance and template for these have been reviewed and consulted on to ensure they reflect current best practice and embedding equalities throughout everything. These are now embedded and part of the business as usual governance process. Over thirty EIA’s have been completed to date, and these are stored centrally for record keeping whilst also offering the opportunity to show best practice.

Individual training toolkits

The HEAT eLearning packages are continuing to evolve and develop for example Equality impact assessments and Deaf awareness, Bullying v’s Banter, Hidden Disabilities, Equality and Diversity in the workplace. Following review, the overall response to EDI packages was not where the Service would like it to be. The review demonstrated this was due to how the packages were set up on the system. Each package has been re-assigned to engage with the entire workforce.

Create interest groups

A women’s network has been established; the first meeting was held on 18 September. It is expected this will enable female employees to raise concerns around facilities, welfare, uniform, etc.

A neurodiversity group has been established to raise awareness of neurodiversity; and how the Service can support the neurodivergent employees and the members of the community.

Work is ongoing to create a Black, and LGBT network, whilst the Service has representatives for national support networks for these groups, to enable sharing of information and best practice.

EDI calendar

There is an established EDI calendar which enables the Service to share information about EDI dates and events via the “Valuing Our Diversity” section of the Intranet.

They signpost employees to linked Service activities such as Islamic calendar events or Pride, providing employees with the opportunity to support the planning process and/or to attend and support.

The EDI calendar is reviewed monthly as part of the EDI meeting. This includes reviewing articles to identify good practice and the areas where engagement has been most effective by reviewing interaction data.

Community engagement to increase the diversity of the Service

The Service delivers a range of positive action events to support recruitment and community engagement activities. There have been targeted On-Call familiarisation events, “have a go” days and public engagement sessions to promote both Wholetime and On-Call vacancies within the Service.

Careers events are supported by the Service’s recruitment team; this is supplemented by other opportunities including stands at the Bucks County Show, National Apprenticeship Show and Fire Station open days.

The Service’s current focus is to continue with the ongoing engagement within the South Asian community to advance the Services presence in the community and promoting careers opportunities in the Fire & Rescue Service. This has so far proved a significant success promoting community engagement, gathering data about what may affect someone’s interest in applying to work for the Service. These activities, alongside local school visits and further follow up activities at local mosques, should help to further raise the profile within the community. A range of Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) events are attended by the EDI group and learning, and resources are shared with employees across the service.

The Service continues to support the LGBTQ+ community and attended the Milton Keynes Pride Festival in September 2023 with an estimated attendance of 20,000 people. Employees support and attend other Pride events in the region and the

Service has invested in promotional materials to ensure the Services presence is visible whilst encouraging effective engagement at these events.

Employers Network for equality and inclusion (ENEI) Talent Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation (TIDE)

The Service was previously awarded bronze accreditation in 2020, 2021 and 2022. The ENEI TIDE survey was completed by the Head of Human Resources in collaboration with the EDI group and stakeholders from across the Service. The Service has received confirmation it has been awarded silver accreditation for 2023.

Addressing Inequalities Five Shires collaboration

The collaboration Buckinghamshire continues to work collaboratively with the other four Fire Services - Royal Berkshire, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, and Warwickshire working together to demonstrate the commitment to drive the initiatives forward. The Chief Fire Officers from each service have a strong commitment to improve awareness and understanding of racial equality issues in each Fire and Rescue Service.

The aims of this project are that the services across all five counties:

- are better educated in the issues regarding race inequality and injustice.
- are safe spaces where people can have respectful and constructive dialogue about racism and all the other prejudices present in society
- will have action plans that support continuous and sustainable improvement that makes the service more diverse and inclusive.

Gender Pay Gap

There continues to be progress made regarding addressing inequalities, the 2022 gender pay gap report presented to the Executive Committee in March 2023 was approved for publication. Data was appropriately published by the annual deadline date of 30 March. This was the sixth year of undertaking gender pay gap reporting, and for 2022 the gap decreased by 0.4 percentage points to 13.4% (from 13.8% in 2021) and 6% from first year of reporting in 2017. This is positive and takes the Service 1.5 percentage points below the UK average pay gap of 14.9% for 2022. However, the median (mid-point) gender pay gap has increased for 2022 from 9% to 11.7%. This is largely due to the highest paid employees within the Service being male.

Armed Forces Covenant

The Service is proud to have signed the Armed Forces Covenant, which is its pledge to recognise the value serving personnel, reservists, veterans, and military families can bring to the organisation. The Service was awarded the Defence Employer Recognition Gold Award in October 2022. It is the Services commitment to forces

friendly initiatives such as employing veterans, supporting individuals transitioning out of the armed forces into a new career, and providing flexibility for reservists.

The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme encourages employers to support defence and inspire others to do the same. The scheme encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards for employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.

The service is currently supporting two cadet training programmes based at Aylesbury and High Wycombe, and further engagement will lead to a programme based at West Ashland.

EDI group work

These issues have been addressed following them being raised into the EDI group.

- High Wycombe – improved air conditioning / redecorated / repairs made
- West Ashland – improvements have been made to the female firefighter's locker area and communal shower area
- Service Headquarters - installed an automated front door
- £25k has been made available each year in the Property capital budget to support identified EDI related adjustments to make these improvements – The Property Manager attends the EDI Group meetings this helps in identifying and utilises the £25k to the most appropriate areas.
- Toilet facilities and welfare at incidents – pop up toilet – awaiting tent to pilot, West Ashland and Aylesbury Fires Stations feedback sought on them at station
- Collection of EDI data, the collection of equality data from the workforce is essential to help identify where to focus the Services resources. It allows the Service to assess the value of diversity strategies, measuring progress and maintaining transparency. A review was undertaken, benchmarking against what other organisation collect and best practice the data fields were consulted on, amendments made and agreed. The data is used to ensure a diverse and fair organisation, to understand employees better.