

Introduction

Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA) is fully committed to Equality and Diversity. The Authority recognises that fairness and inclusion is fundamental to everything it does, to achieve its 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 that better reflects the diversity of the local working population will create a stronger, more enriched and well-informed organisation, able to meet the expectations of a modern Fire and Rescue Service. This is a key aspect of our People Strategy. The Authority's objective is to embed Equality and Diversity in everything it does internally and externally.

The Authority recognises that having a diverse flexible workforce, which better reflects the community it serves, can enhance performance as well as improve its service to the community.

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, 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 Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 that came into effect in 2017 require public sector organisations employing over 250 staff to carry out gender pay gap reporting. In accordance with the Regulations, the Authority is required to annually publish six pieces of prescribed

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data about the pay and bonuses of male and female workers within the organisation:

1. Mean gender pay gap in hourly pay
2. Median gender pay gap in hourly pay
3. Mean bonus gender pay gap
4. Median bonus gender pay gap
5. Proportion of males and females receiving a bonus payment
6. Proportion of males and females in each pay quartile

This data must be published 'within the period of 12 months beginning with the snapshot date' (Regulation 2(2)). The snapshot date for public sector employers is 31 March each year.

EDI Objectives 2020 - 2025

The proposed Authority's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objectives 2020 to 2025 are set out against elements of the Authority's core values:

- **Diversity** - Our culture will engage and value diversity and difference to enhance our service offering to the public.
- **Service to the Community** - We will provide a more diverse range of services to better protect the communities we serve.
- **Improvement** - Our employment offer will be inclusive and embrace flexibility to support improved diversity representation across the service.
- **People** - We aim to be an employer of choice, attracting, recruiting, retaining and developing staff from diverse backgrounds, to reflect the communities we serve.

Progress against objectives has been reported to the Fire Authority on a regular basis. Regular updates are planned against the six, 12 and 18 month specific objectives detailed in Annex B. For progress to date, please see the Annex B.

BMKFA Headlines

- The 2020 Culture survey showed that Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service values and promotes employee diversity with 78% of the respondents in favour, this is a marked increase of 17% on the 2017 Culture Survey. Another directly related question identified that 79% of the 377 respondents were happy that they are treated with respect as an individual. Both responses demonstrate a continued commitment to our EDI vision and strategy. 206 open question responses were received and will help shape and inform future actions as identified within our EDI objectives.

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- In the 2019 HMICFRS report, the People pillar, where EDI is assessed was deemed “Good”. An improvement plan has been written to ensure further sustained improvements are made.
- The People Strategy is being refreshed to ensure it is fully reflective of the 2020 – 2025 Corporate Plan.
- Staff across the organisation attend community events, promoting employment opportunities, communicating important fire safety messages and highlighting the diverse work the Service carries out for example:
 - Art at the Lake festival (28/29 June 2019)
 - Health and Wellbeing Education Day (5 October 2019)
 - Recruitment Fairs – nationally and at local schools (throughout the year)
 - Community Safety Co-ordinators deliver talks to a range of community groups (throughout the year)
 - Fire and Wellness visits (throughout the year)
 - Milton Keynes College, supporting the Cut it out! campaign
 - Talk for Sport, improving mental and physical wellbeing
 - Members of the EDI group attended the Pride event in Milton Keynes (14 September 2019)
 - Work with the local Muslim communities focusing on community safety activities, women’s groups, and attending a celebration evening with Wycombe Islamic Society (throughout the year)
 - Fire station open days, across the county (throughout the year)
- Service policies and procedures are under regular review to ensure they reflect the community we service and support employees for example – EDI policy, Recruitment and Selection Procedure and Maternity, Adoption and Parental entitlements procedure
- The mean gender pay gap is 15.10 per cent, an improvement from the previous year (16.64 per cent) and the year before that (19.39 per cent). The median gender pay gap is 10.39 per cent, an improvement from the previous year (11.75 per cent). Whilst both gender pay and equal pay deal with the disparity of pay within the workplace, it is important to note that the gender pay gap is different from equal pay. Action plans are in place to reduce the gap further.
- 67 per cent of all current Apprentices are under the age of 30. For Operational Apprentices, this equates to 68 per cent. (Appendix 1)
- 15 per cent of all apprentices are female. Overall females account for 19 per cent of the workforce (Appendix 1)