

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group Update

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Simon Hardiman Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201 or Natalie Parkinson, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer on 01743 260236.

1 Purpose of Report

This report provides an update on the work of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Steering Group from January 2024 to October 2024.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the report.

3 Background

The aims of The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group are:

- To provide a fair service to all our communities and service users.
- To ensure all employees understand their responsibilities with regard to EDI.
- To create a fully inclusive place of work
- To increase diversity in the Service
- To ensure the Service complies with the Public Sector Equality Duty
- To promote excellence in EDI practice.
- To implement recommendations from national reports and enquiries.

4 Main areas of work

The Steering Group has overseen a wide range of work since January 2024, major elements of which are summarised below, the last steering group meeting was held on 25th July 2024 and meets quarterly.

External Activities and Events

The Service attends and supports the following events:

- Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) National Conference
- Dyslexia Information Day
- Using social media to promote local and international events eg World Mental Health Day, Holocaust Memorial Day, Time to Talk day, Black History Month
- Interfaith Community basketball
- LGBT Conferences
- LGBT Pride event in Bridgnorth
- LGBT Pride event in Shrewsbury
- Police Café for Black History Month with 12 different countries from the local community
- SAND (Safe and Ageing No Discrimination)
- Telford Equality and Diversity Partnership



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Training

During the past year the Service has attended or undertaken a range of training:

- Core Code of Ethics online training has been developed.
- Dyslexia awareness training has been commissioned and delivered.
- Equality Impact Assessment training
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion induction training has been given to non-uniformed, apprentices, on-call and wholetime firefighters.
- Mental Health First Aid Aware training and refreshers Mental Health First Aider courses.
- Women in the Fire Service development weekend.
- Women's Development programme
- Suicide Prevention has been offered to all employees.
- A range of information on different issues has been acquired or developed and is available for employees.
- A host of EDI webinars have been offered to all staff in the Service.
- NFCC lunch and learn sessions offered.

Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

The Service promotes national events internally and uses social media externally. SFRS supported World Mental Health Day in October 2024.

The Service is continuing its work on the Mental Health at Work Commitment Action Plan, which is now incorporated into the Equality Action Plan.

The Service has now trained:

- 61 people as Mental Health First Aiders (2 day course)
- 66 people in Mental Health Awareness (1/2 day course)
- 42 people in Suicide Prevention
- 16 people in Suicide Safety Planning.

National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Equality, Diversity & Inclusion meetings and documents

The EDI Officer attends the National EDI meetings including menopause, fireworks national staff networking forum and LGBT+ groups. The Service responds to consultation documents and share information with other Services.

Equality Monitoring Data

The Service continue to monitor and report on gaps in data and provide reports. The EDI Officer has sent targeted requests to stations to improve equality data.

Reasonable adjustments

The Service continue to support employees with their reasonable adjustments, this includes all aspects of neurodiversity in particular dyslexia, ADHD, physical disabilities, bad backs and use access to work to provide funding towards some of these adjustments.

We provide training to managers on dyslexia awareness and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) along with offering online courses to other appropriate employees.

Case Load:

- 44 Current cases
- 7 new cases since last steering group, 0 reopened
- 9 closed

Further work has been initiated to promote workplace adjustments passports for our employees.

Equality Action Plan

The action plan is monitored and reported to the EDI steering group, it details progress on a wide range of EDI initiatives and projects.

The Equality Action Plan will be reported on annually and is available at each steering group meeting.

Subscriptions and Memberships

Subscriptions have been renewed for:

- Networking Women in the Fire Service,
- The Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA).
- SAND Covenant (Safe and Ageing No Discrimination)

Taster Sessions for On Call firefighters

A session was held on 24 February in Tweedale, and 3 further sessions are planned for later in the year:

Saturday 16th November 2024 - Tweedale
1x Open to All Session, 1x Women's Session

Saturday 23rd November 2024 - Shrewsbury
1x Open to All Session, 1x Women's Session
Job related tests taster



Voices group

The Voices group is now embedded since its launch in 2021. Each of the Voices reps meet with the EDI officer to discuss ideas and a workplan for the following 12 months is created.

Voices full meetings are held 3 times per year, giving all the Voices reps the opportunity to get together, share ideas and consider intersectionality for their events and activities. Voices reps also attend the EDI steering group to provide their feedback.

The Service sends out Voices Newsletters which have been developed with the reps to share the group's work with all employees or to use this as a platform for education or gain feedback from employees.

The group have also decided to recruit a new voices representative for ADHD/Autism and this is currently being promoted.

Many activities have taken place, given below are some of these:

Health and Wellbeing Day held on 23 October 2024

The voices representatives decided to create a health and wellbeing day to promote key national dates in October for Global Diversity Month, World Menopause Day, World Mental Health Day and Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

The Service arranged to have guest speakers and sessions on:

- Building Resilience by the firefighters charity
- Reiki – information session on the health and wellbeing benefits
- Menopause Workshop – by MBACE for employees needing support or advice
- Firefighters Charity information on services available to all employees.
- Kettlebell class at Shrewsbury
- Circuit Session at Telford

In addition to this there were stalls available with information on:

- Mental Health
- Menopause – including the library
- Dyslexia
- Firefighters Charity
- Cancer Support Services
- Lajina Masala

Employee could also access a free taster Massage and Reiki sessions.



BAME

- Ongoing connection with the West Mercia BAME group
- Rep has been attending the newly created National Black Firefighters Network.
- Ongoing discussions with employees
- Information on Black History Month going out in the newsletter
- Rep attended Caribbean Festival event in Hadley in July.
- Rep attended the Police Cafe in October.

Disability – Mental Health

- Mental Health Awareness Week – information put on the pink and social media to support this
- Mental Health Awareness Month in May – created a range of ‘moving more events’ for employees, this included introduction to jogging, circuits and lunchtime walks. These have continued throughout the year and now form ongoing wellbeing activities.
- World Mental Health Day – October information on social media, resilience session held by the firefighters charity on the health and wellbeing day.
- Promoted mental health internal training courses.

Disability - Dyslexia

- Attendance at the Dyslexia Information Day in Ketley in October, with a number of employees representing the Service
- Purchased a number of dyslexia books for the new library.
- EDI officer has shared advice on Dyslexia to several other Services throughout the year.

LGBT+

- Bridgnorth PRIDE attended by several employees in June.
- Shrewsbury PRIDE attended in September with several employees representing the Service.
- Attendance at the SAND conference in October.
- National Fire networking group

Menopause Group

- Menopause coach attended the health and wellbeing day
- Stand at the Health and Wellbeing day with a number of resources.
- Perimenopause / Menopause Books available for all staff to borrow
- Information put in the newsletter for international menopause day
- Menopause Champions attended the national menopause conference in September
- Closed teams area where all members post advice and articles/information
- Monthly lunchtime walks – ongoing

Women's

International Women's Day 2024, the Service embraced the theme of inspiring inclusion with 2 guest speakers:

- Jenny Blackhurst – crime author and former employee
- Pam Hardy – employee and team GB gold medal winner

Both of these shared their unique and inspiring stories to all our employees.

All women received an envelope with a postcard promoting the networking day in March



Women's Networking Day in Market Drayton

Held the second Women's Networking Event at Market Drayton Fire Station in April, with the following:

- Heartmath session
- Circuit session
- Menopause information

Women's rep is creating a women's networking group and ongoing fitness sessions are available for employees

The purpose of the Voices group is to:

- Be a point of contact for that group
- Provide support to employees
- Raise any issues
- Make improvements
- Attend events to support inclusion
- Initiative meetings
- Provide advice to SFRS
- Create an action plan
- Assist with recruitment initiatives

These representatives will work closely with the EDI team and report back to the Steering Group.

5 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7 Reputation

The work around EDI promotes the Service as being inclusive and give a positive impact to the Service's reputation, supporting areas and events such as Black History Month, Dyslexia, LGBT+ events, Mental Health Awareness.

8 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

9 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.