

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group Update

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Simon Hardiman
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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 October 2022 to December 2023.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the report

3 Background

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

- 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 October 2022, major elements of which are summarised below, the last steering group meeting was held on 13 September 2023 and meets quarterly.

National awards and nominations:

National Dyslexia Awards (Oct 23) – shortlisted in the final 3 for the ‘most supportive employer’ award.

External Activities and Events

The Service attends and supports the following events:

- Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) National Conference
- Attended the Safety Forum for Community Leaders arranged by Shropshire European Organisation CIC.
- Attended the Shropshire Disability Network AGM (Sept)
- Using social media to promote local and international events eg World Mental Health Day, Holocaust Memorial Day, Time to Talk day, Black History Month
- LGBT Conferences
- LGBT Rainbow Film Festival and Pride event in Ludlow
- SAND (Safe and Ageing No Discrimination)
- Telford Equality and Diversity Partnership - new group created end of 2023.

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, Diversity & Inclusion induction training has been given to non-uniformed, apprentices, on-call and wholetime firefighters.
- Internal EDI refresher training continued and has been delivered to all wholetime watches and the majority on call stations to date.
- Mental Health First Aid Aware training and refreshers Mental Health First Aider courses.
- Women in the Fire Service development weekend.
- 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.

Equality Impact Assessments (EIA)

The Service have updated the policy, training is being provided to managers along with ongoing support and advice from the EDI Officer. The EDI officer has delivered practical group sessions for managers.

Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

The Service promotes national events internally and uses social media externally. SFRS supported World Mental Health Day in October 2023 and held its first Chomp and Chat event to start a conversation.

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:

72 people as Mental Health First Aiders (2 day course)
75 people in Mental Health Awareness (1/2 day course)
48 people in Suicide Prevention
17 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, networking and LGBT+ groups. The Service responds to consultation documents and share information with other Services.

Operational Secondment

This ended in February 2023 with all wholetime training completed and the majority of on call stations.

Equality Monitoring Data

The Service is continuing to monitor and report on gaps in data and provide reports. Regular reminders are sent to employees to update their data along with information explaining why we need this and how we use this.

Reasonable adjustments

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

We provide training to managers on dyslexia awareness and have recently had a training session on ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) for our training and development teams along with offering online courses to other appropriate employees.

Case Load

- 37 Current cases
- 2 new cases since last steering group, 3 reopened
- 7 closed

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)
- White Ribbon Accreditation

Taster Sessions for On Call firefighters

The following sessions were held:

18/2/23 - Much Wenlock
10/06/23 - Market Drayton
17/06/23 - Ludlow

The Service held the following Wholetime Taster Sessions:

Friday 10 November
2 x Open to All Sessions, 1 x Women's Session

Saturday 11 November
2 x Open to All Sessions, 1 x Women's Session



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.

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.

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

BAME

- Ongoing connection with the West Mercia BAME group
- Rep has been attending the newly created National Black Firefighters Network.
- Held its first networking meeting.
- Ongoing discussions with employees
- Information sent out in the newsletter and social media for Black History Month 2023

Disability – Mental Health

- Mental Health Awareness Week – information put on the pink and social media to support this
- World Mental Health Day – October information put on the newsletter. Chomp and Chat event to discuss Mental Health issues was held at HQ.
- Reviews taking place for other events outside of the Service to encourage more employees to get involved.

Disability - Dyslexia

- Attendance at the Dyslexia Awards
- Closed Neurodiversity teams area has been created.
- EDI officer has shared advice on Dyslexia to several other Services throughout the year.

LGBT+

- Attendance at the LGBTG+ National conference with feedback shared at EDI steering Group
- Attendance at the LGBT+ History Month Event
- Attendance at Birmingham Pride

Menopause Group

- Menopause speaker at the Women's event
- Perimenopause / Menopause Books available for all staff to borrow
- Information put in the newsletter for international menopause day
- Chomp and Chat Meetings held to discuss symptoms, medication exercise and experiences
- Closed teams area where all members post advice and articles/information
- Monthly lunchtime walks - ongoing
- Review/trial of uniform - ongoing

Women's

Women's Safety Survey

Further to this survey an action plan was created and agreed at SMT, this is now incorporate into the Equality Action Plan as ongoing work.

Independent Confidential Reporting line hosted by 'Say So' was introduced in May 2023, further to the recommendations in the Women's Safety Survey and subsequent Values and Culture report, briefings to all staff are ongoing.

Women's Networking Day was held on 24 October, the first the Service has held. It was a great success, with a range of speakers and information including:

- Life Skills Coaching
- Menopause Talk
- Yoga Session
- Self Defence Session
- Occupational Health Advice – blood pressure/cholesterol/advice
- Mental Health information

Ongoing work:

- White Ribbon Accreditation has now been agreed signed and a steering group and action plan has been developed.
- Review/trial of uniform – ongoing

The purpose of this 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 Fire Alliance / Collaboration / Partnership Working

The EDI team share best practice with other Services.

6 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

7 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8 Equality Impact Assessment

EQIA's are completed for individual projects contained in this report, this report is a historical report therefore an EQIA of this is not required.

9 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.

10 Appendix

There are no appendices attached to this report.

11 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.