



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES EQUALITY FRAMEWORK PEER CHALLENGE

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda No:

Date: 17 December 2010

Purpose of Report:

To notify the Fire Authority of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's progress in obtaining the 'achieving' level of the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Equality and diversity performance was measured within the Fire and Rescue Service up until 2010 via the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG). This had been a requirement under the provisions of best value and also the Fire and Rescue Services National Framework which set recruitment and retention targets for all Fire and Rescue Services. It was later reinforced by the Fire and Rescue Service National Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018.
- 1.2 As the ESLG was devised primarily for local government, the FRS nationally had sought a sector specific framework so that its own performance could be measured accurately. With the ESLG being superseded by the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG), the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) in partnership with the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) have produced the new Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework (FRS EF). This Framework recognises and addresses the equality and diversity objectives which are a priority for the FRS. Copies of the Framework have previously been circulated to all Members of the Authority.
- 1.3 The FRS EF works upon the principles of the ESLG, but introduces three levels of achievement. These are:
 - Developing.
 - Achieving.
 - Excellent.

Having previously been at level two of the ESLG, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service was automatically placed within the 'developing' category.
- 1.4 In July 2010 the Minister for Fire and Rescue Services announced that Communities and Local Government would no longer be enforcing the equalities targets contained within the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy, amongst a number of issues contained within the Fire and Rescue Services National Framework. However, following a presentation to the Strategic Equalities Board, both Officers and Members felt that Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service should continue its drive to reach the 'achieving' level of the FRS EF and strive to meet excellence by 2013.
- 1.5 As a consequence, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service undertook a peer challenge over the week commencing 29 November 2010, to determine its progress against the 'achieving level of the FRS EF.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework Peer Challenge was undertaken during the week commencing 29 November 2010 and was led by a representative of the Local Government Improvement Department (LGID) – formerly the IDeA. The peer review team also consisted of a human resources specialist from another Fire and Rescue Service, an Elected Member and an equality and diversity specialist familiar with the Fire and Rescue sector.
- 2.2 In all, approximately 50 individuals including Elected Members, Officers, representative bodies and other stakeholders were interviewed as part of the process. To support this, a narrative report was sent to the peer review team in advance of the review (see Appendix A).
- 2.3 As part of the challenge, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service had to demonstrate a level of performance against five key priority areas. These were:
- Leadership and promoting inclusion.
 - Accountability.
 - Effective service delivery and community engagement.
 - Employment and training.
 - Evaluation and sharing good practice.
- 2.4 Within the Equality Framework the examples of performance against the ‘achieving’ level were such criteria as Member engagement, equality impact assessments, joint equality strategies, pay and employment objectives, and data monitoring. Although not exhaustive this gives some indication of the level of work required by the Service to progress.
- 2.5 Following on-site informal feedback on 1 December 2010, the Service received confirmation on 7 December 2010 that the peer team and LGID had approved that Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service be awarded ‘achieving’ status for its equality and diversity work.
- 2.6 The elevation to ‘achieving’ status represents the outcome of considerable hard work by all concerned with Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service over the last two years. In a simple summary this award shows that Fire Authority Members and senior Service leaders are ensuring that equality is included in its prevention, promotion and response activities. It shows that they take direct and personal responsibility for promoting equality, and testing themselves on progress by the outcomes they achieve.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 'achieving' peer assessment process was undertaken at a cost of £1400 which was met from existing budget provision.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

Human resources and learning and development implications form part of the Equality Framework within the employment and training section. Through this the Service has been required to demonstrate performance against its workforce strategy, local labour markets, recruitment and retention, equal pay audits and a range of other outcomes.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The FRS EF is the measure by which the Service can measure how it meets its obligations, both moral and legal obligations, with regard to the equalities agenda. By progressing against this Framework, the Service will be ensuring that it delivers its service equally to all sections of the community, as well as being an employer of choice for all.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has specific legal obligations under the Equality Act with regard to disability, race, gender, sexuality, religion and age, as well as protecting the most vulnerable in our society. Progressing against the Framework demonstrates the long term commitment of the Service to the equality agenda.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

As a public body Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has both general and specific legal duties to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination for service users and employees. Failure to comply with such requirements may not only lead to prosecution but could also:

- Reduce the Service's ability to protect and serve the community because of a poor understanding of its needs;

- Cause detriment to employees who may not have the equality of opportunity to develop their potential; and
- Damage the standing and reputation of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 9.1 Note the achievement of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service in obtaining the 'achieving' level of the Fire and Rescue Services Equality Framework.
- 9.2 Endorse the long term commitment of the Service to reach the 'excellent' level by 2013.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
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Narrative Report for Achieving Level of the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework



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Introduction

Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) is working extremely hard in all areas of the organisation to promote equality in both employment and in the delivery of services to the public and this hard work is reaping rewards.

The Service's Principal Officers have all demonstrated their commitment to the equalities agenda in different ways over the last few years. They remain steadfast in their support for this agenda and have helped cascade this support through their own departments.

NFRS's corporate governance structure for equalities, revised in 2008, is embedded and ensures that departments are fulfilling their objectives within the Single Equality Scheme 2009-2013, 'Equal Life Chances for All'. It also enables Elected Members to scrutinise the Service's equalities agenda and provides a platform for the Service to directly engage with the unions and employees on equalities matters.

In terms of service delivery, NFRS has district-based Community Safety Advocates who work with fire crews in order to reduce risk to vulnerable groups in their local areas. This work is carried out through the development of District Risk Profiles using equality mapping and fire data. This prevention work involves engaging with different communities in different ways. For instance, due to the numbers of fires relating to anti-social behaviour in Ashfield and Mansfield, the Service is concentrating its efforts on working with those young people who are engaging in this activity, whereas, in Broxtowe, fire is more prevalent amongst older people and therefore different methods of service delivery are applied.

The Service's commitment to equality in employment is also high within the list of priorities in the IRMP. The development of corporate HR policy and process, delivery of HR operational services and learning and development are all responsible for the mainstreaming of equalities into everyday life at NFRS.

Setting the Scene

The Service is governed by a Combined Fire Authority, comprising 18 elected councillors from Nottingham City Council (6) and Nottinghamshire County Council (12), working on committees including finance and resources, community safety, human resources and performance monitoring.

Fire and rescue services are provided by firefighters based at 24 stations which are strategically located across the county. Eight stations are supported by both Wholetime and retained crews, a further three stations are Wholetime only and the remaining 13 stations are retained only. There is also a Specialist Rescue Team based at three locations, providing expert support at incidents such as rescues from height, water, transport incidents or building collapse.

Other assets include Headquarters based in Arnold, a Service Development Centre for staff training in Ollerton and a Community Safety Centre based in Clifton.

NFRS employs around 1,200 people working to provide services to the public, including firefighters, fire control operators, IT professionals, estates managers, accountants, HR professionals and safety advisors.

In 2009/10 NFRS attended a total of 14,528 incidents, of these 6,150 were fires, 5,977 were false alarms and 2,401 responses were to other emergency incidents (Special Service incidents).

- 816 house fires
- 340 fires in other buildings
- 4 deaths in house fires
- 66 casualties in house fires
- 968 vehicle fires
- 3,659 other fires (e.g. rubbish bins, grassland, skips)
- 2,401 non-fire emergencies (e.g. road accidents, water rescues)

Our Vision and Objectives

The Service's vision is:

'A safer Nottinghamshire by putting safety at the heart of the community'

Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has one very clear and simple aim – “to make Nottinghamshire a safer place to live and work”. This may sound straightforward, but achieving this aim relies on a great many people and organisations working together with the same goal in mind.

Fortunately colleagues in local authorities, police, health, education and the third sector are also striving to achieve similar improvements. By working in close partnership with others to pool efforts and resources, NFRS makes a greater difference than what could possibly be achieved by working alone.

This overall aim is supported by six objectives, which highlight the work needed in order to achieve the Service aim.

Our objectives

The following six objectives underpin all our activities during the life of the 2010-2013 Service Plan. We have identified the areas of work we believe will help us to achieve our aim and make a positive difference to people's lives, which gives us a very clear focus on our priorities for the future.

Everything we do over the next three years links into one or more of these objectives, so that our efforts are strengthened and we maximise our opportunities to make improvements.

Objective 1: Prevention

We will:

- work with young people to reduce arson, accidental fires and road traffic collisions (RTCs).
- focus on those most at risk from fires and other avoidable injuries.
- work with partners to make our communities safer.
- use and share data to identify those most at risk.

Objective 2: Protection

We will:

- maintain a risk-based approach to enforce our statutory responsibilities.
- assist and support those responsible for fire safety within business.
- work to reduce the economic cost of fire.

Objective 3: Response

We will:

- use our resources to meet the risks within our community.
- gather and use risk-based information to inform our response.
- provide the highest standards of training, PPE, appliances and equipment that we can, to keep our employees safe.

Objective 4: Resilience

We will:

- respond to growing risks from the environment.
- work with our partners to ensure an effective response and recovery to major events.

Objective 5: Diversity and Workforce

We will:

- recruit a workforce that reflects our community.
- recruit and develop our employees to the highest standards to maintain and promote high standards of health, safety and wellbeing for all our employees.

Objective 6: Governance and Improvement

We will:

- strive to become an excellent Authority.
- use our resources efficiently and effectively to provide value-for-money.

The Service also has a set of Core Values which include:

- Community
- Employees/People
- Diversity
- Improvement

These are detailed further within our leaflet, The Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service Plan 2010-13, A Guide to our objectives.

Geography

Nottinghamshire lies in the heart of England and covers an area of 805 sq miles, with a population of just over one million people and a working population of 360,000.

Population

The largest concentration of people is found in the Greater Nottingham conurbation, the suburbs of which lie mostly in the county. In total, including Nottingham city (292,400) Greater Nottingham has a population in excess of 656,900. The other main county towns are Mansfield (87,500), Kirkby-in-Ashfield (27,000), Sutton-in-Ashfield (45,400), Newark (26,700), Worksop (43,500) and Retford (21,700).

Demographics

Nottingham itself is a city of contrasts. It has the highest rate of employment growth of any major UK city, and an attractive and successful city centre. It is a leading city in the East Midlands region; its shopping facilities are ranked as amongst the best in England outside London and it has a vibrant and growing leisure and cultural scene. However, it also has some of the worst areas of deprivation and under-achievement in the country.

Greater Nottingham is a big conurbation – one of the 10 largest in the country – but only half the population live within the city boundaries. Deprivation in Nottinghamshire is above the national average, with a deprivation score of 113 (GB as a whole = 100) and health, education and crime above the national average. Nottingham city has the highest level of deprivation.

Despite its wealth and commercial success, many Nottingham city residents live in areas of deprivation. In fact, over 60% of Nottingham's population lives in an area of deprivation and 13 of the 20 city wards are within the 10% most deprived nationally, with pockets of deprivation in other wards.

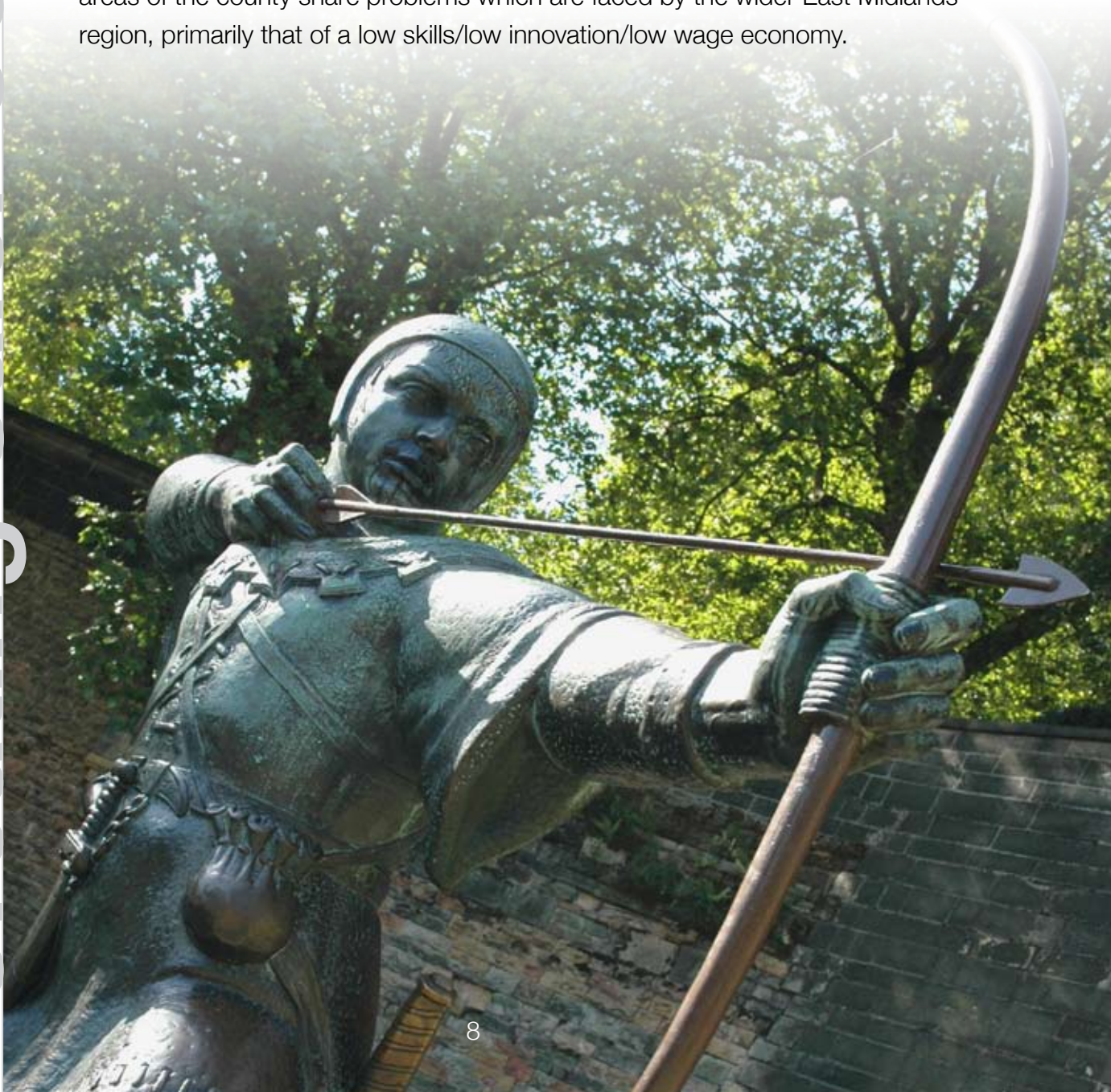
This presents a problem for NFRS and similar authorities when comparing performance with Authorities which are more affluent. Many of the incidences of fire are manifestations of deep social problems which exist in more deprived areas. The Service is working hard to develop links and partnerships at district level to deal with these issues. Although the performance indicators used are primarily an output measure, NFRS invests a substantial amount of resources in prevention work. Due to the socio- economic and deprivation factors, the performance indicators are only a crude measure and do not fully represent the preventative work that goes into solving the problems of these areas.

NFRS has therefore embarked upon a Knowledge Transfer Partnership with Nottingham Trent University to evaluate the impact of community safety initiatives. This will attempt to identify the relationship between inputs and outcomes in this complex area of inter-dependencies. This is the first such initiative in the country.

Economy

Nottinghamshire has successfully managed the changes forced upon it during the last 20 years. These changes have had a major influence upon mining and some manufacturing industries, and the communities they supported. Overall, unemployment has been relatively low. However, labour market disparities remain, with qualification and skills levels causing concern. In 2008 the recession began to impact upon the local economy and employment, and substantial numbers of job losses were reported.

Nottinghamshire has become economically diverse and innovative however, some areas of the county share problems which are faced by the wider East Midlands region, primarily that of a low skills/low innovation/low wage economy.



External/Peer Scrutiny

The Service has been peer reviewed twice in the last two years. Below are comments that were made in relation to the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework.

2009 Peer Assessment report

- The FRA uses a data software package “Mosaic” to identify social economic groups and fire investigation intelligence from a secondee from Nottinghamshire Police. This approach to intelligence gathering forms part of mainstream budget arrangements and leads to the more targeted approach to the delivery of prevention based activities;
- There is an evident link between the FRA activities to improve staff welfare and the organisation’s Equality and Diversity objectives;
- There is a real and evident management commitment to equality and diversity but the commitment to embed the principles into all operational and managerial programmes has yet to be realised;
- There is evidence of arrangements in place to deal with callers whose first language is not English;

2010 Peer Assessment Report

- There is excellent provision of socio-economic, demographic and activity data to stations.

The introduction of an information technology based analysis tool allows district and station-based personnel to query socio-demographic data and match this against incident data for comparative purposes. Using data in this way provides staff with the opportunity to develop tailored community safety responses based on need.

- Across the work of the Service there are examples of strong and effective work with young people.

The Service is working well to reduce the number of Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs). Engagement with children and young people using the presentation known as Danger Zone is increasing road safety awareness among young people and addressing the safety issues of being a pedestrian, passenger and cyclist on the county’s roads.

- Existing initiatives should be evaluated to ensure they are targeting the right groups i.e. target the elderly.

Service personnel could benefit from a greater understanding of the needs of both the Prevention and Response roles in the Service of the community. There are differing and sometimes opposing views over the importance of one strand or another that can lead to inconsistencies in delivery. The benefits of a focussed coordinated approach are easily identifiable, for example the Service's involvement in the Nottingham Youth Crime Strategy as the anti social behaviour lead from the Service has led to benefits for a number of agencies and young people. Successes like this provide opportunities to restate the Service's commitment at all levels and provide a clear and consistent message of the importance of all aspects of Prevention and Response working.

- There is a consistent approach to delivering equality and diversity training.

Following the introduction of a Single Equalities Scheme the Service has maintained focus and momentum by delivering equalities training to circa 200 managers. The lead for equality and diversity has a good grasp of the complexity of the area and a clear view of how to move the Service towards embedding the concepts into the practice of the organisation



Leadership and Promoting Inclusion

The Service has worked particularly hard over the last three years to put in place the building blocks on which to build its equalities agenda. This involved reviewing and changing the governance arrangements to ensure that they allowed the Service to promote change and make decisions in an informed and efficient manner. This included the introduction of:

- The Strategic Equalities Board (Chair of CFA chairing the group of councillors and principal officers)
- The Equalities Steering Group (ACFO leading middle management group)
- The Equalities Forum (management and representative bodies' equalities reps)
- The Employee Equality Network.

This structure has been instrumental in guiding the Service to where it is today. Our Single Equality Scheme recognises "People at Risk" (vulnerable people) as another strand of equality. This is in addition to the others covered by equalities legislation and has been in place over a year now. Its action plan is delivered by the Steering Group and scrutinised by the Strategic Board. The Member Equalities Champion and Principal Officers demonstrate personal leadership through attendance at, and involvement in, equalities activities and events. For instance, the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers have opened and attended Nottingham Pride respectively over the last two years. Through the Equalities Forum, and through less formal means, the representative bodies have been key partners in moving along the agenda in agreeing the Joint Commitment on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and through their participation in equality impact assessments.

In relation to procurement the Service has some great examples of promoting equality through the purchasing of goods and services. These examples include:

- Incident Support Unit to ensure dignity for all at incidents
- Maternity clothing and alterations services for employees
- Fixed and portable hearing loops at new builds and headquarters
- Amendments to provision of fire kit and duty rig to accommodate the needs of different groups of staff.

Areas for improvement

- Although the Service has made a great deal of progress in terms of the way in which goods and services are procured, there is still room for improvement. An EIA of the Procurement Strategy has taken place and a new policy and procedure is due by the end of 2010.

Accountability

Through the self-assessment the Service demonstrates how it continues to promote equality across the different strands in a range of ways. For instance work on equal pay, positive action and procurement of clothing and bolstering maternity guidance and allowances has demonstrated commitment to promote gender and pregnancy/maternity equality. The Service also demonstrates how this is monitored and reviewed by senior leadership.

When asked during the last Staff Survey (2010) whether or not they felt that the Service has 'a positive commitment to eliminate, and act upon instances of bullying and harassment and discrimination in the workplace' 75% of respondents (49% return rate) agreed that the Service has a positive commitment in this area.

The Service's commitment to providing the tools for managers to identify and deal with issues of this nature at work, and the support it provides to managers and employees if relations do break down at some point, have all led to this positive (but not yet perfect) result.

The Service has ensured that managers understand the importance of equality impact assessments through promotion of the process at Principal Officer level (a section for EIAs is included in all Corporate Management Board and Committee reports) and through training which has taken place over the last 2 and a half years. NFRS has used the EIA process to quality-assure policies (including Fitness, Standards of Dress, Harassment and Bullying, the design of shower and changing facilities on new stations) and has begun to focus EIAs more on functions. During Summer 2010 the Learning and Development Department undertook an EIA on access to L+D courses, physical access to training venues and materials, arrangements for training delegates and course content.

Areas for improvement

- The Service is currently undertaking a review of the equalities function and the implications the new Act will have upon the Service's work.
- The HR Department has an action plan for improving the way in which NFRS monitors and reviews instances of harassment and bullying.

Effective Service Delivery and Community Engagement

Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's key objective is to deliver effective services through active engagement with target groups. The approach to identifying and tackling risk through intelligent equality mapping and production of 'District Risk Profiles' enables NFRS to know its communities and work with partners to reduce risk at a local level. Commissioning work in the city with the Alcohol Problems Advice Service (APAS) and Age UK demonstrates clear understanding that different groups of people need to receive services in a different way.

Use of different equality and risk mapping tools enable NFRS to target risk effectively and to deliver appropriate interventions to areas with different needs. District Risk Profiles and case studies provided by Community Safety Advocates demonstrate this intelligent use of data and extensive knowledge of the community.

This requires an allocation of resources to match the equalities strategies. This takes place at both a corporate and district level. For instance, the positive action strategy has required some investment in order to market the Service to target communities in an appropriate manner. Investment in 'dignity for all' facilities on fire stations is also a strategic priority which has received significant time and financial investment.

These case studies describe the risk reduction interventions which take place with various groups:

- older people in the Broxtowe area to reduce accidental fires in the home
- young people in Meden Vale aimed at deliberate fires linked to anti social behaviour
- gypsy/traveller communities in Newark and Sherwood: improving caravan and site safety related to fire and carbon monoxide poisoning.

The work described above is carried out by NFRS employees but the Service also acknowledges that, due to the vulnerability of certain groups, employees will not always have the means to access and deliver services to some people. Therefore, through engagement and data sharing with LSPs and the third sector NFRS deliver services through, and alongside partners, to gain maximum effect. Our submission provides further detail on our partnership arrangements.

In addition to the district-based work with vulnerable groups, NFRS has a central Vulnerable Persons team which provides training to local strategic partners and the third sector on identifying fire risk in the home and how they should refer cases to the Service. This team also takes on high risk cases which need to be dealt with as a matter of urgency and cannot be dealt with at a district level.

The Service demonstrates a commitment to ongoing engagement and consultation with communities wherever relevant and appropriate at both a corporate and district level. Corporately, consultation is undertaken on the Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), Single Equality Scheme, budget and council tax proposals and the building of fire stations etc. At a local level, Community Safety Advocates and Watch, Station and Group Managers engage with the community and representatives of the community at different levels for different reasons. One of the examples provided in the submission relates to the production of a 'Keeping Safe from Fire' booklet aimed at people with learning difficulties. This piece of work involved extensive consultation with the target group which led to greater involvement and participation by the group in the final document.

Areas for improvement

- The Service has commissioned a Knowledge Transfer Partnership in order to improve the way in which evaluation of prevention work is undertaken.
- In order to improve the Service's approach to consultation at both a corporate and local level, a consultation tool kit is being produced by the Corporate Services Team in order to ensure consistency of process, ensure that there is some form of follow-up and ensure that it is an inclusive process.



Employment and Training

Human Resources

The Service's Human Resources (HR) and Learning and Development (L&D) functions are led by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer who actively promotes the equalities agenda.

This commitment to the agenda has been cascaded through departments across the organisation and HR and L&D are no exceptions to this. The HR department continues to embed equalities through its development of policy and through its service delivery 'operational' arm. The strategic documents for both departments including the Workforce Plan, HR Strategy, L&D Strategy, as well as their business plans have equalities commitments embedded within them. These documents are linked to the Service's Single Equality Scheme 2009-2013 and Equalities Action Plan.

The HR Manager (Corporate), who is also a member of the Equalities Steering Group, has been instrumental in developing policies which not only consider and mitigate unjustifiable adverse impact upon groups with protected characteristics, but which also seek to promote equality for those groups of people as well. For instance, the inclusion of specific examples of homophobic bullying in the new Harassment and Bullying Policy seek to demonstrate to employees and managers the types of behaviour which are not acceptable under legislation. The equality impact assessments of the Standards of Dress Policy and Fitness policies, for example, also enable HR and representative bodies to ensure that the needs of different groups of employees are fulfilled wherever possible.

The Service's approach to pay and grading is also governed and scrutinised through Corporate HR. The Service uses the NJC Job Evaluation Scheme to assess support roles. This scheme was developed by the national employers through consultation with the Equal Opportunities Commission and Commission for Racial Equality in 2002. The pay structure applied to uniformed personnel is that of the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services. A job analysis scheme is being developed at a local level to evaluate uniformed roles.

In 2009, the Corporate Management Board commissioned an Equal Pay Review which, at the time of writing, is partially completed. It should be completed by the end of 2010.

The Service also has in place a set of local performance indicators which replaced the BVPIs. These relate to recruitment levels of under-represented groups in line with CLG's National E+D Strategy 2008-2018 but also include indicators relating to levels of confidence in declaring a disability and sexual orientation. The HR Department also has a set of objectives held within the Equalities Action Plan. Progress against this is provided to the Equalities Steering Group on a quarterly basis.

During the last 3 years the Service has engaged in a range of activities in order to address under-representation of different groups in the workplace. These activities include:

- Sponsorship of the Nottingham Outlaws Women's Rugby League Team kit
- Sponsorship and attendance at the Victoria Trophy, a national women's and girls' football tournament
- Numerous 'Firefighter for a Day' events with target groups. 215 people attended these events between October 2009 and July 2010, 58% were from BME backgrounds and 52% were women.
- Running mentoring sessions with target groups prior to the firefighter recruitment process.
- Firefighter Fitness events aimed at women
- Attendance at numerous festivals and career events including Mela, Pride, Schools, Colleges, Caribbean Carnival, job fairs.

During the last firefighter recruitment process (08/09), the Service was successful in recruiting 5 women out of 30 firefighters taken from the holding list. The Service was unsuccessful in recruiting anybody from a BME background. This led the Regional Management Board to commission a research project to look at low success rates of BME applicants. These recommendations have been fed in to the new process which will be trialled during the new recruitment campaign scheduled to take place early 2011.

Learning and Development

In the Autumn of 2008 the Service revised the content and style of delivery of its Introduction to Equality and Diversity Course and expects to have trained over 90% of the workforce by March 2011. Once this has been completed, the Service will be able to provide refresher training through its online learning tool, Learnpro. This will enable NFRS to concentrate on providing more role-specific training for employees in the future.

During 2009-10 the Service provided over 200 managers with training on Managing Reasonable Adjustments and a separate session on sexual orientation equality delivered by Stonewall. This was extremely successful with an evaluation exercise demonstrating that high proportions of attendees had increased their understanding

and knowledge in these areas of work. The Service has also provided selected managers with training on equality impact assessments.

Equalities 'injects' have been utilised within operational training scenarios, and the recent Crew/Watch Manager selection process included an equalities element. This is something which will be rolled out further in the coming months.

The Equalities Steering Group made the decision earlier in the year to rationalise the prioritised list of EIAs identified in the Single Equality Scheme to a more relevant, manageable list. The group agreed to undertake 'themed' EIAs on different areas and functions in the organisation. One of these functions was L&D which has been completed and informs the current and future L&D business plans.

Working Environment

The Service continues to undertake an extensive 'capital programme' across its building stock in order to ensure that all work locations have appropriate facilities for men and women and are accessible to disabled people.

The Service has equality impact assessed its approach to changing and shower facilities on station in order to ensure that dignity and respect can be afforded for a diverse workforce now and in the future. The non-gender specific 'Pods' system has allowed the Service to meet current needs and remain agile to meet the expectations of future employees.

In addition to the above and through consultation with the workforce, in particular female firefighters, the Service has also undertaken the following:

- The inclusion of hearing loops for deaf people
- Contrasting colours on materials in lifts, flooring, stairs, toilet facilities, door furniture, furniture and the like in accessible toilets and showers
- Rooms identified or set aside for Prayer Rooms / Quiet Rooms
- Incident Support Unit to ensure dignity for all at incidents. This work was developed through the Equalities Steering Group's engagement with female firefighters.
- Access audit of the new intranet site and current website along with recommendations for changes.

Areas for Improvement

- Amending the PDR process to clarify alignment between organisational equalities objectives and individual development plans.
- A more formal monitoring structure for harassment and bullying instances through the Equalities Steering Group.

Evaluation and Sharing Good Practice

NFRS recognises the need to share knowledge in order to improve the way in which it provides best value to the public. Therefore we are keen to share any good practice which we may be able to pass on to others and likewise we are always willing to learn from those who have developed further in other areas.

For instance, the Service recently received a visit from Kent Fire and Rescue to view the current 'self-rostering' programme to see if they can implement something similar. On the same day, equalities and learning and development managers from NFRS visited Kent FRS to observe incident command training and their approach to mainstreaming equalities into operational training scenarios. This is now informing NFRS's approach to the mainstreaming of equalities into learning and development practises.

Nottinghamshire has developed an 'English as a Second Language' package which gives vulnerable groups basic fire safety awareness information on what to do in the event of a fire and how to make a 999 call. This information is being shared amongst other fire and rescue services in the region.

The National Partnership and Funding network exchange information and good practice and hold a meeting every 6 months where 'case studies for good practice' is the main topic. Examples so far to be integrated into NFRS working practices are Partnership Mapping and Risk Based Evidence Profiles.

The Service's Joint Commitment on Sexual Orientation had been developed by a council in the East Midlands and they were good enough to share this document with NFRS.

Conclusion

This narrative report and accompanying self assessment report (submitted via the EFFECT online tool) demonstrate that Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is an organisation which is embedding and promoting equality in both the delivery of its services to the public and in the way it recruits, retains, develops and employs its staff.

This approach to equality has been achieved through a commitment by our employees to deliver excellent services and through strong leadership and governance arrangements. The Chair of the Fire Authority, who is also the Chair of the Strategic Equalities Board and our Strategic Management Team have ensured that equality remains at the heart of the organisation's values and objectives.

The Service has developed its equality impact assessment process and is generating equalities objectives and outcomes from this work. This process has led to improvements to the way in which the Service does business.

This organisation feels that it is ready to be Peer Challenged against the 'Achieving' level because it is achieving outcomes both internally, in terms of workplace culture and employment policy and process, and externally, in terms of the way in which the Service reduces risk in Nottinghamshire's most vulnerable communities through direct engagement with those groups and through more effective partnership working. Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has worked hard to embrace this new framework and has set itself a target of reaching the Excellent level by 2013. Within our 'Achieving' submission we have highlighted our 'Areas for Improvement' and recognise that there is still much to do.

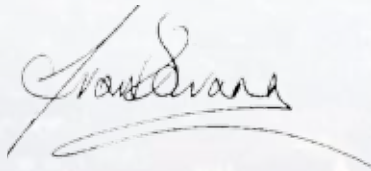
It is our hope that you will agree with our self assessment and that we are a self aware and forward-thinking organisation.

Creating Safer Communities

“At Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service we are working as an organisation to ensure that we provide the best service possible.

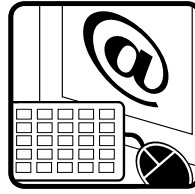
“We want the citizens of Nottinghamshire to judge how well we deliver that service to them. It’s citizens living in the communities we serve who, when in partnership with us locally, will tell us how well we are performing.

“We will continue to develop our high quality response service and reduce the risk right across the community at work, at leisure, at home, and as people travel around our city and county. Finally, we will continue providing an excellent service and value for money to residents and visitors in the heart of the East Midlands.”



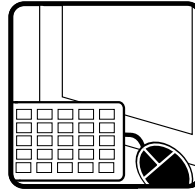
Frank Swann
Chief Fire Officer

Contact details:



Send us an email

equalities@notts-fire.gov.uk



Look at our website

www.notts-fire.gov.uk

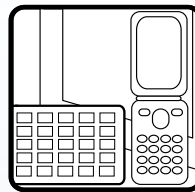


Give us a ring

0115 9675 937.

Send us a SMS text

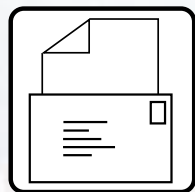
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Write a letter

Please write to us at Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, Freepost, NAT 21811, Nottingham, NG5 8ZA.



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service



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