



Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham  
Fire and Rescue Authority  
Community Safety Committee

# **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – WORKING WITH ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES UPDATE**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

**Date:** 07 October 2022

**Purpose of Report:**

To provide Members with an update on the community engagement plan specifically working with BAME communities.

**Recommendations:**

That Members note the content of the report.

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## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's (NFRS) commitment to equality, diversity and inclusive service delivery is maintained in a variety of ways. The last Integrated Risk Management Plan (2019-22) and current Community Risk Management Plan (2022-25) (CRMP) both ensure a clear strategic direction for this work.
- 1.2 Whilst the Service has worked hard to promote race equality in the past, it recognises it still has work to do, both internally from an employment perspective and externally in engaging with ethnic minority communities. During 2020, the Service gained agreement to temporarily fund a Community Engagement Manager post to drive improvement.
- 1.3 This role is essential in helping the Service to reach out to ethnic minority communities and understanding the fire risks faced which may vary due to faith, background, culture, or personal circumstances.

## 2. REPORT

- 2.1 The Community Engagement Plan agreed in June 2021 aims to improve a range of aspects of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) community engagement via better involvement and dialogue with community groups and assists with tailoring initiatives to the needs of different communities. The key workstreams include:
  - **Understanding our Community** – improvement of data collection for prevention and protection activities including benchmarking this with 2021's Census data.
  - **Inclusive Services and Communications** – improving consultation and involvement of black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in the development and delivery of services – this includes the take-up of safe and well visits and other fire prevention/protection activities.
  - **Inclusive Workforce** – improving NFRS's reputation as an employer of choice across all job roles, as well as the training offered to employees.
- 2.2 The above workstreams all have activities sitting within them and progress has been made in pushing this agenda forwards. The following provides a synopsis of some the work delivered locally by the Community Engagement Manager and colleagues.

### BERRIDGE WARD SAFE AND WELL VISIT PILOT

- 2.3 This initiative was delivered over eight days by the Community Engagement Manager, local Councillor, and personnel from the Service's Persons at Risk Team. Analysing the data on the Service's Community Fire Risk Management Information System (CFRMIS), a gap was identified in service delivery, specifically low uptake of safe and well visits (SWV) within BAME

households in Berridge ward. A total of 120 SWVs were completed as part of this pilot.

- 2.4 The qualitative evidence gathered as part of this pilot highlighted a change in trend within these communities, for example, older people in some south Asian families have started to live on their own compared to 5-6 years ago, when they lived in an extended family. During this pilot, some communities, demonstrated a lack of trust in uniformed services. This can be a barrier when trying to generate community dialogue or attracting applicants to recruitment campaigns.
- 2.5 It was also apparent that the use of Shisha in certain households is more prevalent than the use of traditional smoking materials. The use of Shisha coals can smoulder over a long period of time so care must be taken that they do not reignite. Whilst it is recognised that businesses like Shisha bars exist in Nottingham, the prevalence of Shisha use in the home is less well understood. This targeted work helped in understanding these changes and establish a baseline for future targeted prevention work. More work is needed to identify vulnerable people from BAME households, using the Service's well-established CHARLIE matrix. The Service will be developing further links with third sector partners

## RADIO INITIATIVES

- 2.6 During the last 18 months, stronger relationships with community radio stations, like Radio Kemet and Radio Dawn, have been developed establishing a schedule of regular programmes covering a range of topics relating to services and employment through live and pre-recorded material for all service sections of NFRS. This has included shows covering the work undertaken by NFRS to protect businesses from fire and what business owners need to do to be compliant with legislation as well as the home fire safety element of fire prevention.
- 2.7 All the shows on Radio Dawn were delivered in Punjabi/Urdu/Mirpuri to reach out to wider South Asian communities in the City and County. One of the aims is to be an employer of choice within these communities.

## MULTI-FAITH CHAPLAINCY

- 2.8 The Service has worked with the Anglican church for a long time to provide chaplaincy services to employees. As the Service works to become a more inclusive employer and service provider, it is necessary to develop a more inclusive chaplaincy which serves those with faith and those without.
- 2.9 NFRS staff and service users are from a range of backgrounds and so it is important that the organisation reflects this diversity within its Chaplaincy. The Community Engagement Manager is working with the Service's current chaplain to expand the offering for staff and communities. The Service is beginning to talk to community and faith groups about this change and will be ready to recruit more Chaplains from different faiths before the end of the year.

## **WOMEN'S GROUP**

- 2.10 The Community Engagement Manager is working with a wide range of diverse women's groups (underrepresented) like Kurdish, Sikh, Hindu, Arab and Pakistani, with the aim to build relationships and raise the profile of the fire and rescue service, ultimately promoting NFRS as an employer of choice. Currently the Service finds it difficult to attract women from black and south Asian backgrounds to apply as firefighters and so forging these links and working with these groups will assist in increasing representation. It is hoped that building trust within different groups will enable more ethnic minority women to engage with the Service as a provider of essential services as well as an employer.

## **WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE**

- 2.11 Part of the Service's commitment to engagement with BAME communities is more targeted work with children and young people. A key driver for this work is to drive aspiration within BAME communities to see a career in the fire service as a positive option in the future. Relationships with the statutory (including schools) and third sectors are important in developing this interest.
- 2.12 The recent success of delivering a six-week pilot fire education programme at Stockhill Fire Station in partnership with the Pythian Club demonstrates the value of this engagement. Two of the young people who took part in the programme wanted to do a more intensive fire education programme and join the Service, while one of them wanted to be a Community Fire Ambassador for his community (Roma- Romanian) and raise the profile of the Service. It is envisaged that this type of educational engagement can eventually lead to work experience or an apprenticeship within the Service

## **WORKING WITH REFUGEES AND EMERGING COMMUNITIES**

- 2.13 As the face of communities in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire continues to change, NFRS is working closely with the Refugee Forum, Community Cohesion Teams (in the City and County) and other third sector groups to raise awareness of NFRS, ensure services are inclusive and address the needs of each community.
- 2.14 This targeted work is essential in ensuring that families from Syria, Afghanistan and the Ukraine have equal access to, and awareness of, NFRS services. In many cases, refugees and other new arrivals have low expectations of uniformed and emergency services and so may fail to use them in an emergency. This work ensures that those expectations are raised and that all reasonable fire prevention measures are put in place to ensure safety in the home.

## **NEXT STEPS**

2.15 The Service's CRMP 2022-25 maintains the Service's commitment to equality, diversity, inclusion and community engagement. Over the next 12 months, the Service will work hard to:

- Gain a better understanding of BAME communities via a review of the new Census 2021 data and use this to work more effectively;
- Develop the multi-faith chaplaincy;
- Build better relationships with the third sector to build engagement opportunities and service uptake with ethnic minorities across the city and county;
- Work with schools and community groups to improve engagement with young people;
- Increase awareness and understanding of fire service careers within black, Asian and minority ethnic communities;
- Enhance the Service's profile across all comms channels to build greater engagement;
- Build on the Service's excellent EDI training provision to ensure BAME communities and multi-faith awareness have better coverage.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

### **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

The work carried out helps the Service to meet its EDI objectives and promote the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010).

### **6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

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

### **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The advancement of equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it is a key element of the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010).

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

A failure to represent the community being served can impact upon trust and confidence in public services. Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is cognisant of this as a risk to its reputation and ability to engage with its communities and service users.

## **9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS**

The Service attends community engagement events in collaboration with Nottinghamshire Police and various statutory and voluntary organisations.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Members note the content of the report.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)**

None.

Craig Parkin  
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**