



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Policy and Strategy Committee

10-YEAR WORKFORCE DIVERSITY PLANNING

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 26 April 2024

Purpose of Report:

To provide Members with an update on the Service's progress in developing a 10-Year Workforce Diversity Plan.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Members:

- Endorse a long-term commitment to workforce diversity via a 10-year diversity plan.
- Note the contents of the report.
- Agree to receive future updates via the Human Resources Committee.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Service's work to improve the diversity of its workforce has been ongoing for nearly two decades. Numerous reports produced by Central Government have been highly critical of the slow pace of change within the sector.
- 1.2 During 2021, Sir Tom Winsor – Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Fire and Rescue Services – published the annual assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 'State of Fire' report. This report again brought into sharp focus, the work that needs to be done to improve inclusion and diversity in the sector, saying that 'diversity and race equality in the fire sector continues to be woeful.'
- 1.3 The London Fire Brigade cultural review and subsequent HMICFRS Spotlight Report continued to highlight problems in this area that all fire and rescue services need to improve upon.
- 1.4 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) is very aware of this national context and has clear commitments within its CRMP to make lasting improvements to its workplace culture, development of leaders and workforce diversity.
- 1.5 The Service commissioned its own review of equality, diversity and inclusion practice during 2021-22 and a revisit was undertaken at the end of last year.

One of the recommendations was that:

Resources to match aspiration: shift from expecting EDI service delivery excellence and workforce diversity to reflect the population whilst under-resourcing the work that it takes to achieve this, to a longer-term approach, with more courageous proactive positive action and engagement enabled by stable staffing and budget commitment to achieve success.

- 1.6 This was echoed by employees in focus groups calling for "more ambitious, resourced, positive action as the current pace of workforce diversity improvements is slow and 'doing the same things' won't get us where we want to be'."
- 1.7 Whilst the pace of change has been slow, some encouraging progress has been made over the years, particularly in improving the numbers of female firefighters and employees who are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (Table 1 below). However, progress in attracting racially marginalised groups to the Service is not where the organisation would want it to be. In particular, attraction rates of women of colour to employment at the Service remain low and this needs to be addressed as part of this work.

Group	2013	2023
Female Firefighters (excluding crew manager, watch manager and above)	5%	10.5%
Staff from Ethnic Minority Backgrounds	3.2%	5.6%
Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual Staff	1.8%	4.1%
Disabled Staff	5.9%	4.4%

Table 1 - NFRS Workforce Diversity

- 1.8 At a meeting of the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) and employee network members on 6 November 2023, it was agreed that a longer-term, resourced plan to increase the pace of change relating to workforce diversity was required; this approach was supported by the Strategic Inclusion Board on 17 November 2023.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 To improve performance in this area it is proposed that the Service develops a 10-Year Plan. To do this in a methodical way, it is recommended that the following phases are used:

- Analysis;
- Plan;
- Do;
- Review.

ANALYSIS PHASE - GATHERING DATA

- 2.2 The analysis phase consists of three separate workstreams, the first of which involves analysis and insight of the most recent Census data commissioned via Nottingham Trent University (NTU). This work will support the Service's understanding of Nottinghamshire's changing communities and will inform both this programme of work relating to the attraction and recruitment of diverse talent, as well as supporting wider community engagement initiatives across the Service. This work started in March 2024 and will last approximately six months.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT – UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS IN NOTTINGHAM

- 2.3 Whilst the quantitative work undertaken by NTU is important, the qualitative insights to be gained from talking to community members is as valuable. A second piece of work starting this month will enable NFRS to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of under-represented groups in Nottingham who may face barriers in accessing employment opportunities or services. The Service has data demonstrating that City residents are under-represented in its workforce and so the focus will be on this geographical

area and those groups who are under-represented in the workforce, including women and ethnic minorities.

- 2.4 A third party with expertise in this area will be delivering this work between April and July. They will present their findings and recommendations to the Strategic Leadership Team at the end of their field work. This work, alongside the work that NTU is supporting, will enable NFRS to build its diversity plan based on firm foundations. The final part of this work is a desktop review of the research papers and sector-based reports which are in the public domain. This will also be used to inform the planning process.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION

- 2.5 Socio-economic deprivation will also be a key area of focus for the Service during the analysis phase. As a result of independent EDI review this has now been added to the Service's equality impact assessment process and template.

WORKFORCE PLANNING

- 2.6 The Service is in the process of developing a Workforce Plan for 2024-26 and the development of this 10-year approach is integral to this given that progress on workforce diversity is dependent on turnover and recruitment needs.

DEFINING THE AMBITION

- 2.7 Part of this work is going to include the development of more informed and intelligent objective setting. This will be done based on the above analysis work and will be specific to each staff cohort in the Service – wholetime firefighters workforce, on-call workforce and support staff workforce.
- 2.8 As an example, in the past when thinking about the diversity of the workforce, the Service has simply used the broad demographics of the county to set targets. This work will enable the Service to be much more nuanced and data-led, particularly for the on-call cohort whose recruitment is very localised to the station area.
- 2.9 To illustrate this, the data below demonstrates the differences between different staff groups:

	Support Staff	On-Call Workforce	Wholetime Workforce
Ethnic Minority Backgrounds	10%	2%	6%
Women/Female Firefighters	50%	5%	10%
Disability	10%	2%	4%
LGBT	6%	1%	5%

NEXT STEPS

- 2.10 Whilst it is not possible to develop a fully formed plan prior to receiving the results of the analysis, it is understood that Members will want to have an understanding of what the next steps will be.
- 2.11 By July 2024, the Service will have a better understanding of what conclusions have been drawn by the quantitative and qualitative studies and Members will be briefed via the Strategic Inclusion Board and the Human Resources Committee.
- 2.12 The outcomes of the analysis phase will also start to inform a short-term workplan for the newly established Community Engagement Team which will sit in the Fire Prevention Department. The Community Engagement Team will include both uniformed and non-uniformed colleagues, with a focus on community safety and positive action activities, including youth engagement. The Service's positive action offering will become more comprehensive and consistent than it has been previously with a focus on a regular presence in communities, not just during firefighter recruitment campaigns.
- 2.13 Defining the ambition and setting smarter targets will happen post analysis phase. By the autumn of this year, the Service will have undertaken the analysis and insight necessary to formulate meaningful and measurable objectives as part of the 10-year plan. Members are a key stakeholder in this work and regular feedback will be sought.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The work outlined in Paragraphs 2.2 – 2.4 above has been financed from the Futures 25 earmarked reserve.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

This work is likely to have an impact on the Service's approach to recruitment and selection policies, including positive action and community engagement activity.

5. EQUALITIES AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An equality impact assessment is in development and it will feed into workforce planning, recruitment and selection policies as well as the Corporate Communications Strategy.
- 5.2 The work outlined in this report will help the Service to continue its journey to embed the national Core Code of Ethics and promote an inclusive workplace and Service.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental or sustainability implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

This report contributes to the Service's commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

This work does help the Service to mitigate some of the Service's risks identified in the Corporate Risk Register. These include – Risk 4: employee engagement, Risk 5: workforce sustainability and Risk 15: corporate reputation.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 10.1 Endorse a long-term commitment to workforce diversity via a 10-year diversity plan.
- 10.2 Note the content of the report.
- 10.3 Agree to receive future updates via the Human Resources Committee.

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

None.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER