



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Human Resources Committee

IN2PEOPLE REPORT: UNDERSTANDING OUR COMMUNITIES

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 08 November 2024

Purpose of Report:

To present Members with the findings of research commissioned to measure the perceptions of minoritised groups in Nottingham City towards Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Members:

- Note the findings of the research conducted by In2People;
- Endorse the use of the findings to inform the development of the People and Culture Strategy 2025-28 and subsequent workforce planning activities.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) is committed to becoming an employer of choice for all the communities it serves. One of the historical challenges for fire and rescue services nationally is the lack of diversity within their workforces. This issue is well documented within several national reports relating to culture, inclusion and diversity within the sector.
- 1.2 NFRS's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) outlines the Service's aspiration within Strategic Goal 4 to 'continue to diversify our workforce to enable us to better serve our communities, through engagement in positive action.' There is also the acknowledgement that the Service needs to develop a better understanding of its communities, and the potential barriers faced by under-represented groups.
- 1.3 This lack of representation, coupled with low levels of NFRS employees or job applicants residing in the City of Nottingham, led to the commissioning of a listening and learning exercise with racially minoritised groups. This work was undertaken by an organisation called In2People during May and June of this year.
- 1.4 This report sets out the key findings from the research and next steps to ensure that the learning is incorporated into strategy planning and delivery activities.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The focus of the research was on women and racially minoritised groups in Nottingham City, although learning can be extrapolated to similar communities living in other areas of the county. The field work used questionnaires, focus groups and one to one meetings to inform the findings.
- 2.2 Over 35 groups and 400 people participated in the research and the work explored key themes of perception, barriers, accessibility and engagement with NFRS. The groups were drawn from youth clubs, sports clubs, community projects, education establishments, external staff networks and groups relating to faith, women, LGBTQ+ and older people.
- 2.3 A large range of nationalities and ethnic backgrounds were represented. 64% of respondents were women, 39% were 16-24 year olds and the largest religious group represented was Christian.
- 2.4 The qualitative data drawn from the extensive listening and learning exercise has been analysed and used by In2People to inform a number of recommendations, which were presented to both the Service and to the wider sector as part of the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) conference, hosted by NFRS in July 2024.

2.5 Insights drawn from the findings of the research will be used to inform the People and Culture Strategy 2025-28 and associated workforce planning activities. As an example, findings from Gen Z participants (born mid 1990s – mid 2020s) indicated:

- A lack of knowledge of the different roles available within NFRS;
- Graduates do not understand how their skills and qualifications can be used and about opportunities for career advancement;
- Those who knew a firefighter were more likely to be attracted to the role;
- There is a lack of visibility of NFRS at schools/colleges;
- There are concerns about negative media portrayals of the fire service;
- There is a perceived stigma regarding the suitability of certain religions or cultures for roles in the fire service.

2.6 The recommendations from the report can be summarised into the following key themes:

LEADERSHIP

2.7 These recommendations relate to the need for strong and consistent leadership and collective narrative about benefits of diversifying the workforce. For this reason, the Service is opting to incorporate the wider learning from the research into strategy and planning activities to ensure consistency of approach over the medium term.

ORGANISATIONAL AND CULTURAL CHANGE

2.8 These recommendations relate to building and engaging the understanding of the wider workforce, as well as harnessing the capabilities and potential of internal support departments including the Community Engagement Team, Corporate Communications and Human Resources teams.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING

2.9 The research indicated that style and breadth of some of the Service's current communications activities are failing to reach prominence within minoritised communities, and that the Service would benefit from having a more prominent marketing and public relations approach to its communications activities.

RECRUITMENT PROCESS AND POLICY

2.10 These recommendations relate to recruitment practices and how well the Service actively promotes available opportunities, as well as demonstrating that the Service is a welcoming and progressive environment where individuals can grow, thrive and progress on merit.

TARGETS AND GOVERNANCE

2.11 These recommendations relate to the measuring and reporting of progress, as well as maximising opportunities to learn from the experience of

community organisations who have extensive experience of working with Nottinghamshire Police in support of their positive action activities.

NEXT STEPS

- 2.12 The report has now been published internally for NFRS staff and externally on the [Service's website](#). An initial workshop with the Service's Strategic Leadership Team has been undertaken and proposals are being formulated to progress the recommendations made as part of the People and Culture Strategy development underpinning the next CRMP.
- 2.13 Following the engagement with In2People, 53% of respondents expressed an interest in visiting the Service to view life as a firefighter. The Service is currently arranging a number of 'have a go' days to support this aspiration.
- 2.14 A partnership event will be taking place later this month, to enable SLT to meet with partner organisations who participated in the research to develop relationships and ideas further.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

Whilst there will be human resources and potentially learning and development implications for some of this work, these will be addressed by the relevant departments at the appropriate time.

5. EQUALITIES AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This work supports the Service's equality, diversity and inclusion aspirations as well as the national fire service's Core Code of Ethics.
- 5.2 An equality impact assessment is not required for this work, but the findings within the report will be used to support future equality impact assessments relating to employment, communications and recruitment.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

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

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

This work helps the Service to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010). In particular, the aim to advance equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There is a risk that the public will lose confidence in NFRS if the organisation fails to address under-representation in its workforce or respond to national media reporting. This is outlined in the Service's Corporate Risk Register.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are opportunities to learn from the successes of similar organisations including Nottinghamshire Police, these will be investigated as part of the Service's strategy development activities.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 10.1 Note the findings of the research conducted by In2People.
- 10.2 Endorse the use of the findings to inform the development of the People and Culture Strategy 2025-28 and subsequent workforce planning activities.

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

None.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER