



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**  
**Fire & Rescue Service**  
*Creating Safer Communities*

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

# EQUALITIES PERFORMANCE

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

**Date:** 16 October 2015

**Purpose of Report:**

To provide Members with an overview of recent performance on equalities related work and to outline a revised approach to reporting performance in this area of work.

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## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) has made a lot of progress over the last eight years in developing its approach to equality. The Equality Framework for the Fire and Rescue Service was introduced to replace the Equality Standard for Local Government and the Service was subsequently successfully peer challenged at the middle 'Achieving' level by the Local Government Association and Chief Fire Officers' Association in 2010. Three years later, during December 2013, the Service reached the highest 'Excellent' level of the same performance framework.
- 1.2. During this period, NFRS began focusing on disability and sexual orientation. In order to drive forward the agendas of sexual orientation and transgender, the Service joined Stonewall, the national campaigner for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. NFRS started using their benchmarking performance tool in 2010 and was ranked 303<sup>rd</sup> out of 350 employers nationally. In January 2015 the Service was told that it had reached the coveted top 100 employers. The Service's policies, procedures, monitoring information, procurement practices, learning and development and community engagement were all scrutinised within the submission.
- 1.3. Attracting a diverse workforce has traditionally been a challenge for NFRS (and the fire service nationally) and a great deal of effort has been made in attracting different people to the careers offered by the Service. The main challenges have been attracting more women to fire fighting and more people from black and ethnic minorities to all roles.

## 2. REPORT

### CURRENT WORKFORCE

- 2.1 NFRS has worked hard to develop the diversity of its workforce with success in some areas. Fire fighting remains predominantly a male-dominated role and although some inroads have been made into attracting more women to the role, numbers remain relatively low. The table below provides a breakdown of current workforce diversity. In order to provide some context, NFRS is benchmarked against another local fire and rescue service.

	<b>Nottinghamshire FRS</b>	<b>A Local FRS</b>
Women	15.5%	15.9%
Men	84.5%	84.1%
% of fire fighters that are women	3.7%	3.4%
Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)	4%	4.2%
Disability	4.1% (whole workforce) 7.2% (non-uniformed)	1.4%
Sexual Orientation - LGB	1.5%	0.8%

## **Disability**

- 2.2 The Service has done a lot of work to improve declaration of disability and this compares favourably with the local counterpart. It is estimated that 10% of the national working population is disabled. Whilst this is unlikely to be reflected in an organisation which requires a high level of operational mobility, fitness and strength, this can be reflected in its non-uniformed roles (currently 7.2%).

## **Gender**

- 2.3 The gender balance is nearly identical with the local counterpart with a similar story in the recruitment of female fire fighters. NFRS adopted the national 'stretch' targets for female entrants from the previous national diversity strategy and met them in 2012 when it last recruited to wholetime fire fighter roles. However, the Service has not had similar success during its retained fire fighter recruitment campaigns which are adversely affected by the small numbers of people eligible to apply due to the on-call nature of the role.

## **Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities**

- 2.4 The Service also adopted a target related to data received shortly after the national strategy was launched which estimated that 14.5% of Nottinghamshire was from a BME background (this included migrant communities from Eastern Europe). This was something that NFRS challenged at the time due to the large differences between this and previous estimates. It was also suggested that perhaps migrant workers were not staying in the UK after the 'credit crunch'.
- 2.5 Subsequent census figures suggest that the figure was closer to 12%. The Service's stretch target (related to new entrants to the organisation) for recruitment relating to BME communities was reached during the 2012 wholetime fire fighter recruitment process and 18.4% of 38 new starters were from BME communities in 2013-14. However, these successes have not had a great impact upon BME representation in the wider workforce with numbers of employees from a BME background sitting at 4%.
- 2.6 One of the reasons for this lack of movement is that most of the Service's recruitment taking place is to retained fire fighting roles and the areas in which these fire stations are located have very low numbers of people from BME backgrounds within them. A requirement of the role is to live within five minutes of the station at which you provide fire cover.
- 2.7 As the Service reduces in size, opportunities to recruit new talent from different backgrounds diminishes. The organisation engages in apprenticeships but out of the four employed so far none have been from a BME background. The Service is currently talking to the City Council about their Positive Action Training and Recruitment Agency (PATRA) scheme and NFRS is an active partner in the City Council's Future Leaders Programme which is a multi-agency leadership development programme which aims to

address under-representation at senior levels in organisations across Nottingham.

## **Sexual Orientation and Trans**

- 2.8 NFRS has done a huge amount of work in raising awareness relating to LGBT issues over the last eight years. 74% of the workforce has declared their sexual orientation with 1.4% telling NFRS that they are lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB). It is estimated that 7% of the wider population is LGB so there is likelihood that confidence levels to 'come out' at work remain low.
- 2.9 There are no employees that have identified themselves as being trans male or trans female. Awareness-raising relating to trans issues increased this year with the Service's first Trans Masterclass.
- 2.10 The Service has recently launched its Proud Friends LGBT 'Allies' network which aims to increase the visible support network for people who may be thinking about coming out at work, but do not have the confidence or support networks to do so. This is open to all employees and some members of the Strategic Equalities Board signed up to this at the last meeting in September.

## **Age**

- 2.11 39% of the operational workforce is aged between 46 and 65. The Service is aware of its challenges related to age and disability, particularly where employees need to meet fitness standards until they are 60 years old. The Service analyses its policies and decision-making for impact upon different groups of people and issues which relate to an ageing workforce are no different.

## **Diversity Objectives**

- 2.12 Due to the rate at which the workforce is reducing in size and the associated lack of recruitment taking place, there are fewer opportunities to have a significant impact upon the diversity (in terms of ethnic background) of the organisation. Recruitment to retained fire fighting roles has increased recently but the requirements (living within five minutes of the station) of this recruitment does hold its own challenges. It does reduce the chances of having a diverse group of people apply to these positions.
- 2.13 NFRS will retain its objective to increase declaration of disability from applicants and new and existing employees and will have the same aims relating to trans and sexual orientation. The success of this work lies in the awareness raising and training the organisation provides to its employees, managers and other stakeholders.
- 2.14 The organisation needs to ensure that whilst it may not be able to offer many employment opportunities to new entrants, it needs to ensure that it is providing opportunities to existing employees via coaching, development programmes, apprenticeships, secondments and placements. For instance,

positive action programmes aimed at developing talented employees from under-represented groups can be an effective way of retaining them within the organisation or helping them to move on to a more senior position with another employer.

- 2.15 Although quantitative targets may more ably demonstrate progress in addressing under-representation, they can lose their relevance when recruitment is not taking place.
- 2.16 Further proposals regarding workforce and recruitment targets and objectives will be developed via the Equalities Steering Group and Strategic Equalities Board. Human Resources Committee will receive these proposals prior to April 2016.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Development programmes related to this work will be funded by existing equalities and organisational development budgets

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

The human resources and learning and development implications relating to this work will be addressed by the Equality and Diversity Officer and Head of People and Organisational Development.

### **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because this is not a change to a function, policy or service. This work seeks to ensure that diversity issues remain at the heart of the Service's workforce strategy.

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

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

### **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Under the Equality Act and as a public sector organisation, the Service is expected to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires the organisation to have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

7.2 The second bullet point above is particularly pertinent to this report. The Service's commitment to address under-representation at all levels and in all roles in the organisation by undertaking positive action measures in its recruitment and learning and development practices will help it to meet this duty.

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

If the organisation ceases to maintain this commitment to workforce diversity its ability to meet its legal obligations may be diminished. Furthermore, if it fails to recruit, develop and manage new and existing diverse talent, the Service's ability to deliver excellent services to the people of Nottinghamshire may be reduced.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Members note the report and agree to receive a revised performance framework for equality by April 2016.

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

None.

John Buckley  
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**