



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

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham  
Fire and Rescue Authority

# EXCELLENT LEVEL OF EQUALITY FRAMEWORK

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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**Date:** 28 February 2014

**Purpose of Report:**

To present to the Fire Authority the final Peer Challenge Report following Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's assessment against the Excellent Level of the Equality Framework in December 2013.

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 During 2006, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) had undertaken a self-assessment against the Local Government Equality Standard which ranked NFRS at Level 2 (out of a possible five). At the same time, a cultural audit was undertaken with employees to measure workplace satisfaction and morale. These audits demonstrated that the Service needed to develop its equalities agenda and workforce engagement if it was to improve its service delivery and remain an employer of choice.
- 1.2 In December 2009 a new Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework was launched in order to replace the old standard. Those on level 1 or 2 of the old standard (including NFRS) migrated across to the lowest 'Developing' Level of the Framework. Shortly after this launch, NFRS's Corporate Management Board agreed the objective of meeting the Achieving Level (old level 3) at the end of 2010. A range of initiatives were implemented and in December 2010, the Service reached the Achieving level of the Framework. As part of this process the Service was provided with very useful areas for development by the peer challenge team.
- 1.3 When it was published and adopted by the Fire Authority, the 2010-2013 Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) set the ambitious target of reaching the Excellent level of the Equalities Framework by the end of 2013. As a consequence work commenced on responding to the areas of development identified in the previous peer challenge process and on embedding successful equalities initiatives already in place.

## **2. REPORT**

- 2.1 In late autumn 2013, a self-assessment was produced against each of the 26 criteria of the Excellent level benchmark and a range of case studies, qualitative and quantitative documentary evidence was submitted for consideration. Following the submission of this self-assessment, in December of last year, the Service was subject to a peer challenge by a team from across the public sector co-ordinated by an LGA lead officer. As a consequence of the four day visit the result was that the peer team concluded that NFRS was successful against the highest criteria of 'Excellent' level of the Framework.
- 2.2 In all during the assessment over 110 members of staff, union representatives, colleagues from partner agencies, Prince's Trust team members and Elected Members were interviewed individually and met in focus groups over the three day challenge.
- 2.3 The full report is appended for information, but in summary the following are presented to Fire Authority for consideration.

## **STRENGTHS**

2.4 Initial feedback from the Peer Challenge Team was hugely positive across all areas of the criteria. A selection of strengths identified included:

- Clear structure in place to set the vision and leadership on equality throughout the organisation.
- Elected Members show a good understanding of demographics of their own wards.
- Good use of data (including social housing and registered landlords) in order to understand and target communities.
- Strong evidence of effective partnership working.
- A range of evidence of community engagement on a variety of activities (service delivery, disabled access, SWAN project, consultation, branding project, Pride).
- Lots of examples of effective, responsive services.
- Positive feedback from staff. There is a good welfare programme and support for staff through changing times.
- Examples of direct communication between senior managers and employees (DCFO meeting with trainees, CFO briefings and station visits with Chair of Fire Authority).
- Good opportunities for staff to influence decision-making.
- NFRS positively influencing tri-service control project (in terms of design of working environment and views of staff)
- Safeguarding training and managing diversity training both noted within the report. The former is mentioned by partners as being a very positive development.
- Implementation of reasonable adjustments and effective management by trained staff is also noted.
- Successful positive action was also identified.
- A wide range of notable practice was also found (including procurement, leadership, Employee Equality Network, risk reduction teams, partnerships, managing diversity training).

## **AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION**

2.5 A selection of areas for consideration identified by the Peer Challenge team are as follows:

- Improve communication with community groups to ensure that they understand what data the Service is collecting and why.
- Build upon current information exchange between agencies.
- Good structure for overview and scrutiny, but clarity is required on roles and remit of these groups.
- When engaging with communities, the Service should consider what employment/volunteering opportunities might be available to service users.

- Clarity is required on who owns the personal development review process. Monitoring of quality and value of this process is also required. Improved communication and training is needed.
- Ensure equality impact assessment process is being used within the policy development phase in order to reduce negative impact.
- Consideration should be given to the development of existing talent in the organisation.

## **CONCLUSION**

2.5 This result signifies a significant achievement for the Service. This is the highest level of the Framework and only a handful of Fire and Rescue Services have reached it. The breadth of evidence used to demonstrate excellence across all areas of the Service's functions shows how much the Service has developed over the last few years. This is by no means the end of the process and there are still areas the Service can improve in. The areas for consideration alongside new draft IRMP objectives will all form a plan for the coming years. If the Service wishes to maintain its 'Excellent' level status, it will need to be peer challenged within a three year period.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There is a cost to the peer assessment process which is contained within the normal budgetary cycles of the Fire Authority.

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

Peer challenge processes such as this one are invaluable in assisting the Service in determining its human resources and learning and development strategies in future years. They help with the prioritisation of a range of aspects which all help improve the delivery of service to the community.

### **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because this is not a change to policy, function or service.

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

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 states that "it shall be the duty of each authority to which this section applies to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area". This report does not contain any implications which would affect that duty.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Processes such as the peer challenge on equalities helps the Service measure its compliance against some legislative processes, although there is no legal requirement to undertake such a process.

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

Failure to undertake any kind of external scrutiny can lead to the risk that the Service fails to measure itself against current best practice. Peer assessment processes, although sometimes critical, can help the Service develop and improve as an organisation thus improving the quality of delivery to the community.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Members are asked to formally acknowledge the final peer challenge report and the progress made by the Service in regard of its equalities agenda.

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

None.

Frank Swann  
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**



**CFOA**  
Chief Fire Officers  
Association

Equality Peer Challenge

Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service

4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> December 2013

Report



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# 1. Background

This report is a summary of the findings of an equality peer challenge organised by the Local Government Association (LGA) and carried out by its trained peers. The report satisfies the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework (FRSEF) for an external assessment at the 'excellent' level. The peer challenge is designed to validate a service's own self-assessment at this level by considering documentary evidence and carrying out a series of interviews and focus groups with employees, councillors and other stakeholders.

The basis for the peer challenge is a benchmark against five areas of performance. They are:

- Knowing your communities
- Leadership, partnership and service commitment
- Community engagement and satisfaction
- Responsive services
- A skilled and committed workforce

The peer challenge is not an inspection; rather it offers an external assessment of an organisation's own judgement of itself against the equality framework benchmark, by critical friends who have experience of delivering an equality agenda in their own organisation. The assessment is a reflection of the evidence presented to the peer team, through reading the documentary evidence submitted in advance, and the interviews and focus groups when on site.

The team was:

Lead peer: Daryl Oprey, Humberside Fire and Rescue Service  
Member peer: Cllr Judith Hughes, West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority  
Officer peer: Rex Webb, Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service  
Officer peer: Kirsty Hopkins, Newcastle City Council  
Officer: Donna Hirsch, Local Government Association NGDP officer  
Challenge Manager: Becca Singh, Local Government Association

The team appreciates the welcome and hospitality provided by the service and would like to thank everybody that they met during the process for their time and contributions.



## 2. Executive summary and recommendations

Following this equality peer challenge, we have reached the following conclusion:

**Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has completed a satisfactory self-assessment against the criteria for the 'excellent' level of the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework.**

There is high level commitment driving cultural change across the organisation. The CFO and DCFO have led the equality agenda and enabled Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) to embrace and embed the changes that were necessary to improve how equality was being addressed and diversity managed.

This cultural change has led to a widespread understanding that equality is about everyone, not particularly about minority groups. Structures and processes are in place to continue to maintain the culture change and good relationships which will help NFRS to address all the challenges the Service faces.

There is considerable expertise which is being shared and is embedded throughout the organisation rather than being seen as an extra. The Equality Team is well known and respected across the Service, and by partners and service users.

There are a substantial number of examples of where reasonable adjustments have not only been creatively implemented, but also taken further than expected in order to plan for potential needs of future staff.

NFRS is held in high esteem with partners on a number of fronts, including community development, employment placements, data sharing and risk reduction work.

To help the service improve we have made a number of recommendations. These are:

1. Ensure good internal communications and positive, involved culture continues through the challenging and changing times ahead.
2. Clarify the ownership of the Personal Development Review (PDR) process, and be clear about the quality and value of the reviews for the individuals and the Service.
3. Continue to build on the excellent partnership working that exists.

### **3. Impact of the challenge**

The service made the following observations upon the impact the peer challenge has had:

Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has been using the Equality Framework since its inception in December 2009. During this time it has developed action plans against the Framework criteria and has been successfully peer challenged at both the Achieving (December 2010) and Excellent (December 2013) levels.

This journey has enabled the Service to move from a place where we could only talk about equality in the context of positive action and harassment and bullying to one where equality relates to everything we do in service delivery, estates, procurement, learning and development as well as employment.

The Peer Challenge and communication relating to the equalities agenda is very positive, with an update from the Deputy Chief Fire Officer praising staff on the work they do on a range of areas, to a congratulatory poster recognising the high proportion of home safety checks delivered by our staff to disabled people.

There were over 100 employees, partners, union representatives and elected members involved in the peer challenge. It feels like there has been a real sense of achievement within the organisation with an employee being the first to tweet the news!

Equalities work has become so much more embedded and is now influencing work streams across the organisation. Corporate social responsibility and organisational change are emerging priorities which sit comfortably alongside the equalities agenda. We know that we still have a lot to do in the organisation and we will continue to use the Framework to maintain and improve the quality of our work going forward.

We'd like to take this opportunity to again thank all of the people that have been involved in this process, without whom this would not have been possible.

## **4. Detailed findings**

### **4.1 Knowing your communities and equality mapping**

#### **Strengths:**

1. NFRS demonstrated that it collects and analyses information in a variety of formal and informal ways. This includes through formal partnership project work and collecting information that partners provide in meetings, not just specific data sharing. It then uses this to target services.
2. Elected members show a good understanding of demographics of their own wards.
3. A formal partnership project with Nottingham Trent University has led to the creation of a full time post to understand local communities.
4. Home Safety checks are targeted using social housing data and registered landlord data. NFRS have demonstrated the value in targeting vulnerable communities with a reduction in fires through working with partners. Intelligence on protective characteristics if it affects vulnerability gained from prevention and protection work is fed back to inform response to risks.

#### **Areas for consideration:**

1. Be clear with community groups about why you are collecting data and how it will be used. Feedback from some groups is that agencies gather information but it's not clear what outcomes are being achieved. Although this may be their experience from other agencies, be aware of this view when you collect information.
2. Continue to make use of information from other organisations through a two-way exchange of information.
3. Ensure expectations are managed. When exploring possible actions arising from needs identified through work with communities, be clear of the limitations of your resources to avoid disappointment and reputational damage from unrealised expectations.
4. Where NFRS cannot directly deliver work, endeavour to exploit partnership arrangements, perhaps by pooled resources to deliver necessary work through other organisations that are in contact with communities to address community needs. Be clear with communities about the limitations to your resources in order not to build expectations that will be disappointed and could damage reputation and relationships in the future.

## 4.2. Leadership, partnership and service commitment

*No-one's higher than me... they are just paid more than me*

*(NFRS officer)*

### Strengths:

1. There is a clear structure in place to set the vision and leadership on equality throughout the organisation. This includes the DCFO as the senior officer lead, and the Leader of the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) being the chair of the Strategic Equalities Board (SEB).
2. The SEB comprises four elected members, the principal officers and the Equality Manager. Members link with community organisations and equality groups and networks across the county and the City which keeps NFRS linked into the wider community. The SEB reports to the Performance Committee on the CFA and provides scrutiny on equality work within NFRS.
3. There is a reporting structure within NFRS on equality matters. Senior officers have to report to the Equality Steering Group (ESG) on equality work within their areas of responsibility. The ESG has a championing, scrutiny and monitoring role for equality and diversity. Staff networks such as the Employee Equality Network (EEN) and the corporate management board hold the ESG to account. This demonstrates how equality is embedded in the performance structures of NFRS and ensures a two way flow of information between staff networks and management.
4. Members have been on the 'Managing Diversity' training that NFRS provides. All elected members receive induction and awareness training. Elected members are in contact with different parts of the Service (e.g. Control) which helps them understand their role and have looked at the profiling of vulnerable people to help them in their decision making.
5. NFRS has worked hard to change the culture of the organisation. There is clear recognition by staff that this has been driven from the top, with well supported and trained managers and is a great improvement. There is a high degree of trust in senior management. Staff believe that there are committed managers leading the organisation who have changed the culture for the better. Managers are skilled in the management of change, for example being clear about providing support to staff through occupational health, being transparent about decisions, and using a variety of communication methods to share information.
5. Senior Managers are clearly leading the organisation, including engaging with the workforce by undertaking shifts on stations, delivering good communication, such as the State of the Service address by the CFO twice a year, and driving through changes to procurement and the accessibility of buildings. Staff value the visibility and accessibility of principal officers and feel that they are open to discussion, challenge and suggestions. There is support for staff networks, with attendance encouraged and membership voluntary.
6. Members and officers alike believe that there are good relations between each other: "couldn't speak more highly of them" "they listen to us". The Vision is driven by both members and senior officers. The Chair and the CFO have good relations, with the Chair consulting the CFO before decision making, and for influencing work.
7. NFRS is clearly committed to partnership working. There are several examples of effective partnerships that improve community understanding, share data on vulnerability, involve service users in accessibility audits, provide work placements for young people as well as more regular strategic interaction with partners such as the

Adults Safeguarding Board, the East Midlands Ambulance Service, (EMAS), police, Age UK and social housing organisations. One voluntary sector partner described NFRS as one of their most valuable partners. NFRS provide training for voluntary sector staff so that they can identify fire risks when doing home risk assessments and fit fire reduction items. Care and consideration is given to student placements, including setting up specialist accessible technology whilst giving students experience of a wide variety of work areas. NFRS leads on the City and County partnerships around anti-social behaviour.

**Areas for consideration:**

1. There are some examples of individuals (and individual watches) lacking confidence supporting people with access or other particular needs (including for pregnant women). Ensure that all station managers have the appropriate knowledge and skills, backed up by clear policy guidelines, to take decisions or deal with discipline when appropriate. Although there are merits in localised decisions by station managers, this can lead to differing standards of support and care across the Service where there is not sufficient confidence or competence. As more managers attend the 'Managing Diversity' course, this will diminish. Ensure that policies are up to date, clear and that managers are aware of their responsibilities.
2. Although there are good structures for the oversight and governance of equality in NFRS, clarity is needed on the roles and remit of some of the groups. Terms of reference should be clearer to help improve this. For example, some members of the SEB were not clear how often it meets and their roles and responsibilities on that board, in addition to their role on the CFA or their City or County Council responsibilities.
3. The FBU show elements of leadership in supporting minority groups e.g. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) people, however it does not feature on the EEN but in a separate independent forum, the Equalities Forum. They also have a direct consultation representation with senior managers. These multi-purpose relationships cause confusion with staff which the peer challenge team could also not reconcile. If there was a position on the Network and a single relationship with the SMT for consultation with representative bodies then this may reduce at least one strand causing the confusion.

## 4.3 Community engagement and satisfaction

### Strengths:

1. NFRS is open to, and actively seeks, comments from others. It is keen to get things right involving the perspective of others, particularly where they don't have the employees to ask. Nottingham Disabled People's Movement and representatives from the deaf community reviewed the Equality Scheme and Disability Access policy. Organisations appreciate being involved both in this specific way and being part of broader consultation. Partners believe that NFRS consult well and are good at doing outreach work. For example, there is high visibility on events where you wouldn't normally expect them, such as Mental Health Awareness Week. The Swan Project at Ashfield is another good example. This is an outreach project that introduces different communities to safety issues. The re-branding exercise of this project included a wide consultation, including voluntary sector organisations such as Nottingham Mencap.
2. Consideration and understanding is given to community perceptions of uniforms, particularly for newly arrived communities. There is a balance to be struck, however, in breaking down barriers and NFRS may be in a position to help individuals overcome their fears of uniformed people through the prevention work. There may be some merit in keeping this under consideration, as the team heard mixed opinions about it.
3. There is recognition of the importance of different communication mechanisms. There has been an increase in using social media as a two-way communication mechanism rather than just to broadcast. There is also an increase in the use of video and twitter by frontline staff.
4. There is good engagement with a variety of communities, leading to a wide understanding amongst the Service about varying needs and levels of risk. Engagement is varied through events, visits, research, online, meetings and has a real emphasis on involvement, listening, and taking action, rather than just taking information. There is a specific group engaging with Travellers, engagement with local disability organisations, and a keenness to make sure that NFRS doesn't just talk to the 'usual suspects' in a particular community. The appointment of a research officer specifically to identify risks and the needs of different emerging communities demonstrates NFRS' commitment.
5. There is good representation at the annual Pride event, including members and senior officers. People from a number of different stations are now asking to be included in attending Pride which demonstrates a positive shift in culture towards LGB and T issues.

### Areas for consideration:

1. When engaging with diverse communities to carry out prevention work and intelligence gathering, encourage them to join the service either as employees or in a voluntary capacity. This will help increase the diversity spread and will influence all parts of the service.

## 4.4 Responsive services and customer care

*"I give a lot back because I am supported and valued"*

*(NFRS officer)*

### Strengths:

The team saw many examples of responsive services some of which are detailed below. NFRS has exceptionally high levels of satisfaction from local communities across a number of different criteria. What was noticeable was the demonstration that NFRS learns from its past, acknowledging mistakes and moving on. The team heard this from many places, internally and externally. .

1. NFRS engage with representative groups to improve service delivery and accessibility of buildings. They have worked with an Access Consultant, and continue to do so, on new builds and to audit other buildings. This has led to a standard specification which is used for all new builds. Nottingham Disabled People's Movement have visited a number of fire stations which has led to changes such as grab rails moved and floor mats on gradients being adjusted. Organisations speak highly of the service and that their comments are listened to and would be happy to work with NFRS again. It also means that access issues are taken into account at the design stage of new buildings rather than waiting for the audit after building. There has also been improved signage, including braille signage in areas which are used by communities.
2. Three districts have been established to respond to risks in different parts of the county, North, Central and South. Risk Reduction Teams work together with partners in these districts. Human Resource Business Partners are attached to each district, and they fit within the service delivery structure. The Business Partners discover issues at stations quicker than if acting across the whole county. There has been a positive response from stations to this although uniformed officers indicated that they would like the business partners to have more knowledge of pension issues.
3. NFRS has used community information to increase the safety education work with businesses. This has led to the appointment of a Business Education manager. See 'examples of notable practice' for more detail.
4. NFRS has used the Risk Profiles which identify equality issues locally to help drive the culture change in responsive service. There is a widespread understanding across the Service that equality is about identifying different needs and adapting the work done by NFRS in order to minimise risk by meeting those needs. Examples include increased work in older people's residential homes, increased appropriate use of interpreters in different communities, working with young people in partnerships to help reduce anti-social behaviour, visits by schools to different stations to increase safety awareness and reduce long term risks.

## 4.4 A Skilled and Committed workforce

*"life is generally about making mistakes. We learn from ours and move on."*

*(NFRS officer)*

*"The organisation has changed and it's much better to work for.  
They are honest with us"*

*(NFRS officer)*

### Strengths:

1. Staff like working for NFRS and are enthusiastic about the culture, profile and opportunities it brings. There is a good welfare programme and support for staff through changing times. There are examples of how policies have been changed or introduced to improve fairness to different staff and staff are well aware of, and taking up these options for example discretionary leave, flexible working and reasonable adjustments.
2. The high level commitment to equality from CFO, DCFO and Chair of CFA has helped to drive understanding and openness, good communication and a positive culture in the Service and staff appreciate this. It is demonstrated by the keenness of stations to invite the CFO to their station to work with them rather than in the past where there was a reluctance to do this. Staff also appreciate the value in the DCFO meeting with trainees to discuss education and career opportunities and understand their aspirations.
3. There is good varied communication with staff, including the CFO regularly visiting staff, emails with information and briefings for station managers to cascade. The organisation is seen by staff to be transparent about changes that are coming and support structures are put in place and understood. There is a good general understanding about the importance of positive internal communications. Communication with senior officers is two-way: for example, the EEN reports to the ESG and SMT are expected to deliver on the Staff survey and have to explain why if they can't.
4. There are good opportunities for staff to influence decision making, including widespread staff consultation and engagement and the EEN (see 'examples of notable practice' for more details on the EEN).
5. The Tri-Service project in Control with Derbyshire and Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Services has enabled NFRS to provide an accessible premise for staff to work in. Staff have been involved in the design, and NFRS has influenced the other two Services to ensure that the accessible environment is replicated. This includes adjustable desks, an accessible rest area and an adaptable control mobilising system (adaptable to assist staff with different impairments). This is an example of NFRS seeing the importance of the highest standard not lowest common denominator. There is also the awareness and future-proofing that allows for wheelchair users to work in Control. These measures are examples of understanding across managers that this flexibility to address individuals' needs will give benefit to all current and future staff.
6. All fire fighters receive safeguarding training, as do the Risk Reduction Teams. This is multi-agency, and partners have reported how positive it is to have this training with NFRS.
7. The 'Managing Diversity' training is voluntary. However, it is very popular and very well attended. The session is aimed at managers and uses Forum Theatre and acted scenarios to deliver hard-hitting messages. See 'notable practice' for more details. Although only introduced in 2013, 120 staff had attended by December 2013. All new starters have an equality training course, and equality e-learning training package is



available. E-training is not used as a substitute to face-to-face training, but as a supplement.

8. As a response to an increase in demand, NFRS has hired a dyslexia specialist and wants to be more inclusive. Money has been put aside for equipment and 1:1 coaching. Training is delivered to managers and there is a sense that there is an increased understanding of dyslexia and how to support staff appropriately.
9. There are many examples of reasonable adjustments made for staff with different long-term conditions, impairments or situations. This includes dyslexia, pregnancy, visual impairment and tinnitus. NFRS has taken professional advice and been able to find solutions to a number of access issues previously thought not possible (such as technology to support someone to still use telephones), and have learned from these, understanding that this improves the employment position for everyone, and could expand the recruitment pool when seeking new staff. NFRS then builds this learning into future designs and plans. More information is provided in 'examples of notable practice'.
10. NFRS has learned from previous positive action recruitment initiatives and has recently had more success in attracting target groups (women, people from BME backgrounds and LGBT). These have included targeted community days at stations and work with young people including the Prince's Trust scheme. NFRS also approached the City Council Employer Hub for help with targeted recruitment who helped deliver a positive action campaign and whole recruitment process. NFRS then advised the police to use the City Council Employer Hub because it was such a successful campaign.

#### **Areas for consideration:**

1. Although there is an annual Performance Development Review (PDR) process, with a high take-up, there is no clarity on who owns this process. There is little apparent monitoring of the quality and value of the PDRs, although there is good monitoring of the take up. There is a need for improved communication and training about PDRs to ensure that they are of value to the individual, their team and work area, and the whole service.
2. There have been some examples where communication could be improved, although these are not widespread, particularly when making unpopular or contentious decisions. Minimise the risk of negative perceptions by ensuring that policies are clear, and any changes have gone through a robust impact assessment process, including an equality impact assessment (EIA), and this will help to clarify difficult decisions. Some policies appear to be not adjusted until there is a problem.
3. Recognise the importance of internal consultation; ensure you are listening to all feedback and you respond accordingly, for example, NFRS took on the majority of comments regarding the new uniform policy but did not make it clear why all points were not addressed. This could be done through effectively reviewing EIAs as part of reviewing policies. For example, the Standard of Dress EIA was done in 2010 but not updated to reflect updated policy or new consultation feedback over the policy.
4. There were a few comments made about the lack of internal talent spotting and development. Although the DCFO meets with new recruits early on in their career to discuss their futures, more could be done to bring on talented individuals instead of relying on external appointments at managerial or senior levels.
5. There is a need to ensure some level of consistency in support across watches across different stations. The team heard examples, such as varying levels of pregnancy support for female fire fighters. There may be a risk of individuals' needs slipping through the net if there is not consistency.

## 5. Examples of notable practice

- Leadership –inspiring leadership is found and recognised at varying levels and in varying parts of the organisation. This is led by, but not restricted to Principal Officers.
- Procurement – NFRS is good at getting the right people round the table at the start, including a mixture of people from a public and private background, regardless of the service or product being procured. This includes involving disabled people early in the design process for fire stations and other buildings with community use, and staff with varying needs for equipment and clothing.
- Reasonable adjustments - there are many examples of where reasonable adjustments for individual staff have led to a redesign of policy, thus potentially reaching more people. This includes responding to individual needs around dyslexia leading to managerial training on dyslexia support after taking advice from a dyslexia specialist. Specialist software has been purchased and used to great effect to help support people with tinnitus. Changes to equipment design have been made retrospectively on existing hose reels, which have then been built into all new equipment. Changes to clothing for individuals (for example around pregnancy or after an accident) have resulted in changes being brought in as a matter of course and managers are now more skilled in offering options proactively rather than reacting to individual requests. Changes to existing buildings after involving disabled service users and an Access Consultant have resulted in accessibility being built into future designs of new buildings.
- Managing Diversity Training – NFRS use an external company to deliver training about managing diversity. This is open to all managers and has proved very popular. There are two parts: a Forum theatre session set in an NFRS station and then group work on individual scenarios presented by actors. The use of professional actors and skilled facilitators enables the scenarios to be very believable and for participants to act naturally as if they were faced with the situations in front of them for real. Feedback on the training is excellent, with officers having confidence to respond to situations appropriately where they had not felt able to previously. It provokes discussions, debate and thoughtful deliberations. Officers attending the training recently demonstrated a considerable depth of understanding about the issues presented to them. An interesting observation is that the words ‘equality’ and ‘diversity’ was seldom, if ever, mentioned during the training session, which actually served to improve and embed learning.
- Risk Reduction Teams – These teams are based in the three districts – North, City and South. They comprise uniformed and non-uniformed officers, including station and watch managers. They work with the Research officer to build a business case for risk reduction work in a particular area or community. This is then assessed by the corporate management team and either supported or not. The work is successful in reducing levels of risk as a result of good community knowledge and appropriate engagement, evidence through research and working with partners to assess risk levels. Work is monitored, and time-bound, and the impact of the work is collected and analysed to ensure that resources are continuing to be targeted in the right way. Risk Reduction Officers demonstrate a high level of knowledge, understanding and success in their work, with partners speaking highly of the work done together and by the NFRS. They are empowered to translate service strategy into a tailored strategy to be applied locally.

- Employee Equality Network (EEN) – This is an enthusiastic, well informed, self-motivated employee network, with individuals influencing their own work areas as well as acting as a group. It is employee-led, chaired by a member of the group after being allowed to develop at its own pace. Membership is voluntary, whilst still being supported by managers (e.g. through time to attend meetings and conduct work on its behalf, and also with a small budget). It was originally chaired by the Equality Officer who set it up, but has been allowed to evolve, and become a self-governing body with its own chair, vice-chair and secretary. It has written its own Terms of Reference and Expectation Plan and continues to monitor those to ensure they are appropriate. It is independent of the performance management structures but still feeds into these structures and holds them to account. It recently conducted a diversity survey of its own membership and realised it is a very diverse group from across all areas of the Service, and with a diverse range of needs and experience about equality issues, including age, gender, sexuality, disability and longevity of service. In addition to challenging performance on equality, it provides support and signposting to other staff. This happens face to face, and also through a developing space on the NFRS intranet.
- Partnership working – NFRS really understands that partnership working is more than just working together to achieve a common goal. There is genuine trust, shared understanding and shared resources between partners. This includes co-location, access audits, work placements, data sharing, attending events run by others and in partnership, risk reduction management and assessments for individual needs.
- Pegasus project –NFRS has joined work with the ambulance service and police to ensure appropriate responses for vulnerable people, people with particular impairments or specific access needs. Individuals are registered with a PIN and if / when they ring in, they tell Control their PIN and their access information can immediately be passed on without them having to explain it. The system will be digitised in the near future and could be taken on board by the other services in the tri-service project. In this way, NFRS is influencing other services and raising their standards.
- Service user involvement – this is particularly noticeable in building designs. NFRS has learned from previous experiences and now involves service users from the start rather than at the end. They are consulted on policies and strategies and feel listened to and that their views are taken on board.
- Community engagement - this has improved by making contact with a variety of community experts and leaders who may not be the traditional community leaders. This includes Kurdish financiers offering risk assessment awareness, Somali and Eritrean women as champions for safety in the home. Risk Reduction work is targeted as a result of this good community engagement.
- Protection - Business Education Manager Protection (BEMP) is an effective business education management role which links the Fire Safety Inspectors and local businesses, building links to the Local Enterprise partnerships. One example of success in this area is the work the BEMP has done with the University to train three Chinese Graduates to liaise with the Chinese business community.

## **6. Signposting to areas of good practice**

Using risk profiles to change behaviour of staff – NFRS already undertakes risk profiling of its communities. Humberside FRS use this information to help change the behaviour and actions of staff and the staff of their partners. For example, being able to raise awareness amongst oxygen users who smoke that they are putting their neighbours at risk as well as themselves.

Volunteers – Humberside FRS have a national first by establishing a combined Police / FRS volunteer group. This increases the intelligence of diversity and also the diversity of those that work for both organisations. For example, they are looking currently at increasing the numbers of autistic volunteers.

Information sharing – The North West region has a multi-agency data-sharing protocol which allows good and poor practice to be shared in order to avoid wastage of resources.

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