



Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2017- 2020



1 MAKING NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SAFER

Our aim is to make Northamptonshire safer and we know that understanding equality, diversity and inclusion are an integral part of keeping our communities safer and in creating an inclusive and diverse organisation. This strategy is aligned to the aims and objectives within the Community Protection Plan (CPP) 2017-2020 for:

- Keeping our communities safe and well
- Keeping our staff safe and well
- Making the best use of our resources

The strategy also supports the five areas of focus within the draft National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) People Strategy. By aligning this strategy with our IRMP and the draft NFCC People Strategy we are ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of our service and integral to how service is delivered.

2 BEING INCLUSIVE

Inclusion and diversity is important to Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS). We seek to ensure that ownership of our equality practice is devolved across our organisation. We actively support equality and diversity as everyone's responsibility, not only in terms of inclusive behaviour, but also in ensuring that our policies and processes are compliant and fair. Decisions we make about our business must consider the needs of everyone. Our staff use Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) to ensure that the decisions they make are 'risk assessed' and projects and plans cannot be completed without such consideration.

3 OUR EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION THEMES

The recognised structure for the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) is the FRS Equality Framework. This framework, based on Local Government Association's (LGA) framework, has five performance areas in which FRSs can demonstrate activity and set objectives offering a holistic approach to inclusion. Our strategy has been developed with this framework in mind.

3.1 Knowing our communities

Inequality is not always readily apparent to all, so making every contact count with our communities is essential to our success. Inclusion is about hearing everyone's voice. It is therefore vital that we utilise and develop equality information effectively and use it to influence our decisions and complement our community engagement activities.

We will:

- Engage with staff to increase levels of disclosure in relation to equality monitoring data as this will help us to ensure that our processes and policies support the needs of all staff
- Provide regular, transparent information to support the scrutiny of our performance across the business
- Facilitate time for staff to dedicate to the work of equality networks
- Provide opportunity for equality networks, internal and external reference groups to speak directly to our Fire Executive Group (FEG)
- Support diverse thinking through cross organisational working enabling fire stations to

be utilised by all staff groups, and as co-location opportunities with other public services

- Use data about the communities of Northamptonshire from other sources to increase our understanding of the needs and assets in diverse communities

3.2 Inclusive leadership and organisational commitment

At a senior level, visibly inclusive professional and political leaders undoubtedly influence our ability to deliver a workforce that reflects the community we serve. We see leadership as a skill to be developed across our organisation; we therefore actively promote and encourage all staff to have leadership responsibility when it comes to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.

We will:

- Take every opportunity for our Fire Authority and FEG to endorse activity that is inclusive and which promotes the service as an equal opportunities employer
- Enlist a Fire Authority member with portfolio for Inclusion
- Record and publish equality data in accordance with the public sector equality duty so that we can actively utilise this data to influence our decision making processes
- Ensure our senior managers and political leaders visit the workforce and engage with staff about the culture and environment they create and work in
- Look to further develop our external reference group framework, to help support us with our understanding of under-represented groups and optimise partnership opportunities
- Foster professionalism and accountability, by encouraging inclusive behaviour, recognising positive role models and by supporting managers to manage their teams

3.3 Involving our communities

To deliver a diverse workforce and engage with our communities, we must have an inclusive culture - at fire stations, in offices and in the community. Our culture must celebrate and support diversity, promote trusting and accountable relationships, and applaud progression. We know teams and relationships are stronger, safer and more effective when everyone has the opportunity to contribute.

We will:

- Develop and deliver inclusion activities with partner organisations
- Foster good relations across the workforce and within the communities of Northamptonshire, in particular developing our relationships with representatives of minority groups
- Ensure that organisational proposals are considered by a cross section of community, in partnership with other public sector organisations, where appropriate, so the organisation has an inclusive approach to decision making
- Create regular engagement forums with under-represented communities to seek their views on any proposals for change
- Put fire stations at the heart of communities by encouraging an 'open' culture that builds on the public's trust of firefighters and develops fire station resources for community groups, or as places where vulnerable people can go and feel safe
- Celebrate our equality diversity and inclusion activity across our communities

3.4 Responsive Services and Customer Care

We will ensure that equality and fairness are embedded in the delivery of our services to local communities. We will also ensure our services are accessible to all and that they meet the needs of the people we serve. We will:

- Use our local knowledge about risks in the community and learning from community engagement to inform the actions we take to improve safety
- Develop a mechanism utilising equality data in relation to promoting and enhancing community satisfaction in conjunction with service provision
- Embed EqIAs in all of our activities, so that we fully consider the risk to, and needs of those less represented and support an inclusive culture that welcomes diversity
- Provide targeted training and development to all colleagues, with enhanced training for assessors and hiring managers

3.5 Skilled and Committed Workforce

To deliver a diverse workforce, we must have an inclusive culture - at fire stations, in offices and in the community. Ensuring that all our staff are properly inducted and developed must be a core requirement of our Workforce Development Strategy.

We will:

- We will increase our workforce diversity, working towards reflecting the community we serve within Northamptonshire, developing realistic local and representative recruitment-related targets for Community Risk Group (CRG) Managers, who will be accountable for engaging their local communities
- Use induction and training to ensure all our staff understand what behaviours are expected and what they should expect from others
- Establish development pathways for staff, that are flexible and support opportunities to work in different teams, projects and places, enabling a range of career progression options
- Create strong, inclusive teams through the development of management skills and coaching and mentoring opportunities
- Encourage staff that are leaving us to complete exit interviews, to understand reasons for leaving and identify areas for improvement or change
- Invest in apprentice schemes and market our recruitment campaigns in diverse communities proactively to encourage applications from under-represented groups
- Provide “have a go” opportunities and support networks for candidates or potential promotion applicants from under-represented groups
- Support all staff when taking formal or informal action against bullying and harassment
- Establish a network of People Advocates from across the Service; supported by the organisation, individuals will act as role models, celebrants and promoters of our activities and key enablers of inclusion who will be able to offer advice, guidance and support
- Develop powerful internal and external communications promoting diversity by showcasing personal stories; highlighting positive contributions by role models and celebrating the progression of staff
- Engage with staff to provide an inclusive workplace culture, encouraging early action against intolerance, bullying, victimisation and harassment enabling happy environments in which everyone can thrive and reach their full potential

4 COMPLIANCE

This strategy supports the organisation in compliance with the public sector equality duty. We will ensure that information about equalities is transparent and publically available on our service website.

5 MONITORING AND REVIEW

This strategy will be reviewed annually by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) who will provide our FEG and portfolio holder with an update on activity and achievement. The monitoring of equality, diversity and inclusion activity will be monitored through the FEG and Tactical Leadership Team (TLT) management forums and through relevant corporate scrutiny groups to ensure both compliance and to support service development.