

Public Sector Equality Duty Report 2023



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1. Introduction

Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) believes equality, diversity and inclusion are integral to how we serve the people of Northamptonshire and our staff, treating everyone with respect.

The communities within Northamptonshire are growing and changing, and at Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service we must engage with and understand the communities we serve.

To provide the best service we must understand the needs of the individuals and businesses within the county. This way we can deliver the most effective means of reducing risk and protecting lives and livelihoods. Being able to provide these things with sensitivity and respect are a key factor in building trust and allowing open communication.

Acknowledging that our work is never done in isolation, we strive to work in collaboration with all our stakeholders and partner agencies, putting the people of Northamptonshire and safety first.

The following report has been collated in response to the public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Act 2010 requires public sector bodies have a duty to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act. In other words, to consider how different people will be affected by our activities.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. That is to deliver services which, while efficient and effective, are accessible to all and meet diverse needs.



- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Fulfil our requirements to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster goods relations between people (both employees and others) who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

The protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy & Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation



2. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy

2.1 Equality, Diversity, & Inclusion Plan 2021-2023 Plan

Public bodies are required to publish one or more specific and measurable equality objective which will help them to further the aims of the Equality Duty. The current Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2025 objectives are arranged into four themes which are:

2.1.1 Knowing our staff

We will ensure there are mechanisms in place to get to know our staff and show we care for and value everyone. We will:

- Engage with our staff to increase levels of disclosure in relation to equality monitoring data.
- 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 groups and networks.
- Provide opportunity for equality networks, internal and external, to speak directly to our Senior Leadership Team
- Support diverse thinking through cross organisational working enabling fire stations to be utilised by all staff groups.

2.1.2 Inclusive leadership and organisational commitment

We will 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 Office of Police Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) and senior leaders to endorse activity that is inclusive and which promotes the service as an equal opportunity employer.
- Enlist an OPFCC member with portfolio for EDI.
- 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 leaders are visible across the workforce and engage with staff about the culture and environment at NFRS.
- 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 inclusive behaviour and positive role models, supporting managers to manage their teams and challenging behaviours that are contrary to this.

2.1.3 Knowing and involving our communities

Making every contact count with our communities is essential to our success. Diversity is about valuing differences in people within different communities. Inclusion is ensuring members of our communities feel involved in the decisions made regarding our work. We will:

- Develop and deliver inclusion activities with partner organisations.
- Foster good relations across communities of Northamptonshire, developing our relationships with representatives of minority groups.
- Undertake effective social reconnaissance across the county to ensure our front-line staff are aware of support networks and arrangements that exist to support people and ensure we support them.
- Create regular engagement forums with underrepresented communities to seek their views on any proposals for change.
- Ensure that as far as possible our services and premises are equally accessible by everyone in the community.



- Celebrate our equality, diversity, and inclusion activity across our communities.

2.1.4 Attracting, maintaining and developing a skilled and committed workforce.

We will encourage people from different communities to join our service and we will encourage and develop our staff to fulfil their aspirations and to be the best they can be. We will:

- Adopt recruitment practices that remove any unnecessary or perceived barriers to careers in the fire service and that allow anyone who meets the criteria to apply and have a fair chance of joining us.
- Embrace positive action to support and encourage those from underrepresented groups to apply for the service and develop within the service.
- Provide opportunities for staff to access development at all levels and within all areas of the service.
- Value talent and identified potential of individuals. We will be honest and transparent about the opportunities offered to these people.
- Embed the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Code of Ethics, service values and behaviours in our training and in our business-as-usual activities.
- Encourage staff that are leaving us to complete exit interviews to understand reasons for leaving and identify areas for improvement or change.
- Develop powerful internal and external communications promoting diversity by showcasing personal stories highlighting positive contributions by role models and celebrating the progression of staff.



2.2 Our aim

Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service aims to respect the diversity of the communities we serve. We will ensure an inclusive focus in our work with partner agencies and the public to build a service which is accessible and welcoming to all.

We aim to be an organisation which is free from discrimination and does not tolerate harassment or bullying. An organisation in which all staff and members of the wider community are treated fairly, with dignity, respect and in line with the NFCC Code of Ethics.

2.3 Our strategy

Our EDI Plan works alongside the Culture and People Strategy which describes the way we will continue to attract, develop, value, involve and care for our colleagues, so we have a safe and diverse workforce who we can perform well and who have access to excellent and progressive training.



3. Responsibilities and governance

The production and monitoring of responsibilities and governance are overseen by the People and Culture Board, chaired by the Chief Fire Officer. The board ensures all equality, diversity and inclusion activity and priorities are embedded across the service and within the communities we serve.

Analysis of the information within this document, and other appropriate sources, ensures that any issues arising are addressed in a timely manner through the most appropriate route.

The People & Culture Board is supported by dedicated equality, diversity and inclusion support staff, representatives from different departments, staff associations and staff networks.

Consultation and engagement with communities is made through a variety of channels to ensure inclusivity to both inform objectives and develop strategy.

Our EDI Plan is in place to cover the period of 2021 to 2023. The plan is currently being reviewed for renewal for the beginning of 2024.

3.1 Progress

Action	Progress
EDI Strategy 2021-2023	In order to further progress the key themes of the plan as outlined in section 2.1 there is now a joint team leading Culture and EDI, sharing best practice across Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service, Northamptonshire Police and OPFCC.



	A full review of the plan is currently underway.
Resourcing EDI	A full-time position has been recruited to lead on EDI activity supported by a seconded operational position within NFRS to deliver and develop the EDI plan going forward.
Reporting Lines for behaviours of concern	We will be introducing an internal “FlagIt” email confidential reporting system, to report behaviours of concern. This has given staff a method of raising concerns without having to go to their line managers. This is in the future after the timeline of the report
Training	We have procured an external specialist training provider who will provide equality, diversity, and inclusion training to all members of staff in EDI, focusing on subjects that staff say they are unfamiliar with or need further guidance on.
Culture and Insight Team	Formation of a new joint team briefed to understand feedback and experiences of communities and our own staff with the aim of developing improved service delivery and cultural change within NFRS, Northamptonshire Police and the OPFCC.
Performance Development Reviews	All staff performance development reviews now have Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives embedded in them. The exact objectives can be chosen to suit the needs of the individual through discussion with their line manager.



<p>Equality Impact Analysis/Assessment (EqIA) for Policies</p>	<p>All new and existing policy documents going through review will not be signed off unless they have a completed Equality Impact Analysis/Assessment proving the policy has been properly assessed. By the next review cycle, all policies will have an EqIA attached to them.</p>
<p>Recruitment and Promotion Processes</p>	<p>Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion questions now form a compulsory part of the recruitment and promotion process. In addition to this, where possible, we will provide a diverse interview panel.</p>

3.2 Plans for the remainder of 2023

- Review the achievements of EDI Strategy 2021-2023
- Renew the EDI Strategy for 2024-2026 with themes appropriate to current and future needs of the service and communities of Northamptonshire.
- Review feedback of the ‘Serving with Pride’ Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training and utilise results to build ongoing mandatory EDI training modules.
- Assess current level of EqIA knowledge and training to ensure adequate assistance is in place for staff with policy responsibilities.
- In person EDI staff visibility across Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service estate for informal discussion and reporting opportunities, building trust and developing knowledge.
- Research best practise framework models available within the National Fire Chiefs Council and with other Fire and Rescue Services.

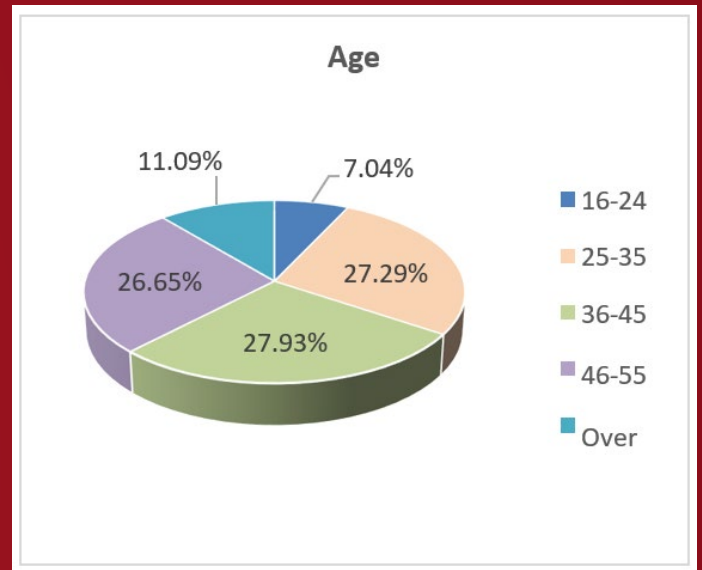


4. Workforce Data

This data identifies the NFRS employment profiles as of 31 March 2023. NFRS capture equality and diversity data via an online self-service portal which allows personnel to confidentially record their personal data.

Ethnicity:

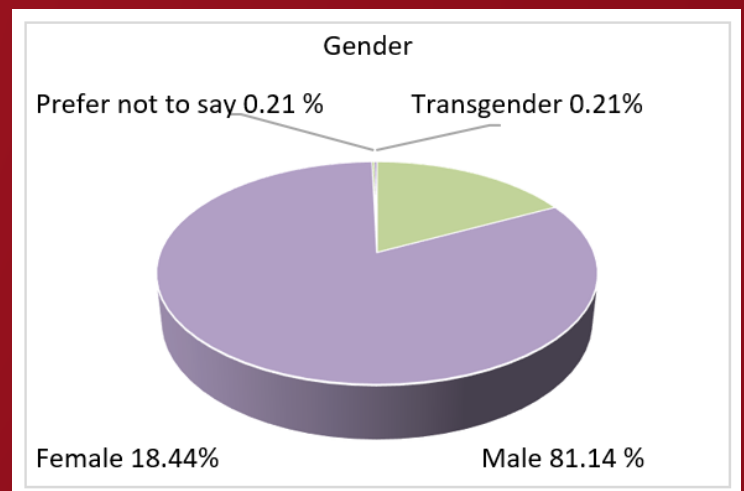
Ethnicity	Percentage
White British/Irish	54.80%
Other White background	1.92%
Black – African / Caribbean / British	0.21%
Black – Other	0.21%
Mixed – Caribbean	0.43%
Mixed – Other	0.85%
Other	0.64%
Prefer not to state	0.43%
Not stated	40.51%



Religion:

Religion	Percentage
Christian	10.02%
Sikh	0.21%
Muslim	0.21%
Other	0.85%
None	8.74%
Prefer not to say	1.28%
Not stated	78.69%

Gender:



5. Gender Pay Gap

The Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service is required by law to carry out Gender Pay Reporting under the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017. This involves carrying out calculations that show the difference between the average earnings of men and women in our organisation; it does not involve publishing individual employees' data. The data used for the calculations is the Fire & Rescue Service's pay data as of 31 March 2022.

We are required to publish the results on a government gender pay gap website, and in addition it is advisable to publish the high-level results on the Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Services website alongside pay and transparency data.

Gender pay reporting is used to assess:

- the levels of gender equality in the workplace
- the balance of male and female employees at different levels

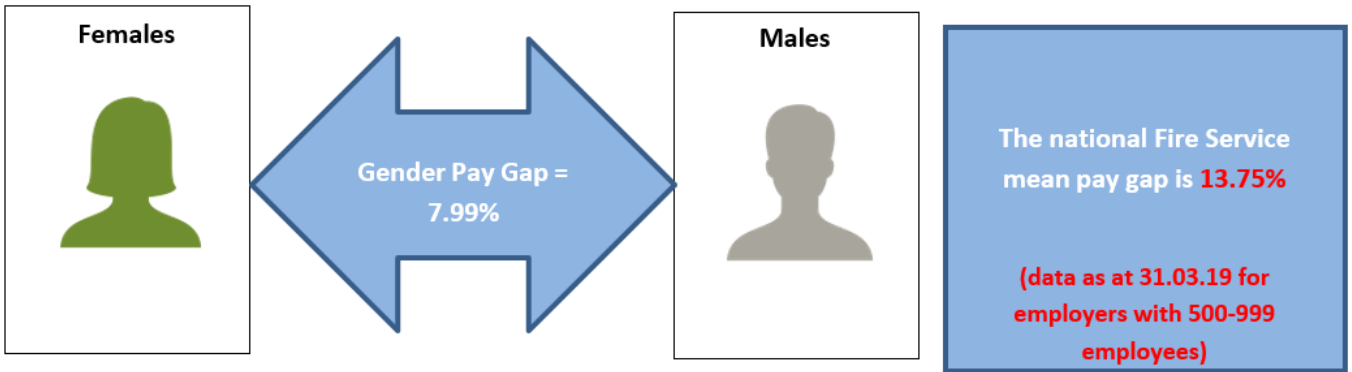
Workforce Profile

Total headcount as of the 31 March 2022 was 525 with 18.44% of these employees being female in post as of 31 March 2022.

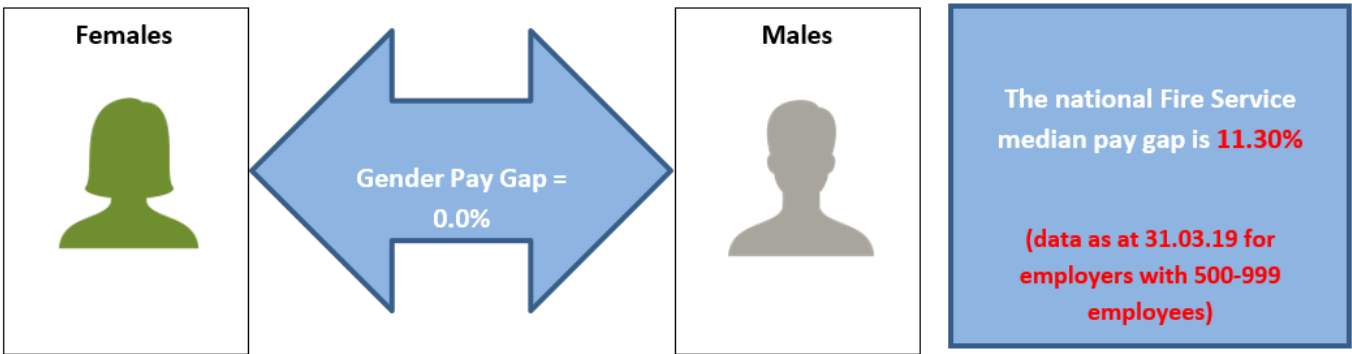
The pay gap is a snapshot in time, reflecting organisational structure and individuals



Mean Gender Pay Gap in Hourly Pay



Median Gender Pay Gap in Hourly Pay



The national data is taken as an average of Fire & Rescue Services with 500-999 employees covering fifteen authorities, it shows that the mean and median gender pay gap is currently lower than the national average.



6. Report Conclusion

Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service is committed to reducing inequality within the service and we will continue to work towards our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives as set out in our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Plan.

This report sets out our current progress and we will be updating this on an annual basis while continuously monitoring our progress against our objectives.

The current Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan 2021-2023 is currently being reviewed and a new plan will be in place for 2024.

This report will be measured against the objectives of the 2021-2023 Plan.

