



Public Sector Equality Duty Report

March 2023 to March 2024

Statutory Obligations

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society.

We will continue to meet our core statutory responsibilities by ensuring that we are compliant with the Equality Act.

As a public body, we have obligations under the Equality Act to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and foster good relations between the key equality strands set out in legislation.

This is supported by specific duties that require us to publish through an annual Public Sector Duty Report, relevant proportionate information demonstrating our compliance with the Equality Duty; and to set specific, measurable equality objectives.



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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 require the best possible service from us and in order to provide that we must strive to engage with and understand them. This allows us to deliver the most effective means of reducing risk, protecting lives and livelihoods.
- This work is never done in isolation, so we work in collaboration with stakeholders and partner agencies, putting the people of Northamptonshire and safety first.



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Key Strategies

- Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service has published an overarching People and Culture strategy documents detailing the overall objectives of the service, this is supported by a dedicated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy, which are publicly available.
- These strategies work alongside the public sector equality duty report, forming a qualitative method of review and accountability.
- The following key areas of focus are those being worked on moving forwards, transitioning from the review of the previous People & Culture Strategy, and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.
- There will be no change in data presented in the report following the review, however new deliverables do represent some altered KPIs.



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Strategic Aims and Deliverables

Become an institutionally inclusive organisation

- Promote and develop community relationships and promote understanding of different community needs across the service.
- Collaborate with local partners to ensure our services reach the whole community.
- To be innovative in our EDI activity creating new ways of ensuring greater transparency and involvement of staff and communities.
- Ensure Equality Impact assessment practice is understood and fully embedded across all levels of the service.

Become a truly representative workforce

- To undertake work across the service to systematically remove perceived barriers to selection, recruitment and progression to achieve a diverse and inclusive workforce that reflects the communities we serve.
- Deliver and embed a service wide Positive Action strategy that not only focuses on recruitment into the service but how the service supports those from underrepresented groups throughout their careers.

Creating a culture where people feel engaged and valued

- Establish and embed a greater range of staff Support Networks across the service to increase the voice of people from different backgrounds and protected characteristics.
- Drive an inclusive approach to service improvements, and where possible coproduce activity directly with the workforce so that staff across the service are engaged throughout the process.



Strategic Aims and Deliverables

Building an environment that provides equality of opportunity for everyone

- Ensure our recruitment and promotion processes are fair and supportive to all, transparent and inspire confidence in their outcomes.
- Ensure we understand our people by building trust in disclosure of protected characteristic data.
- Ensure our services and premises are equally accessible by everyone in the community and our workforce.

Developing a workforce that is motivated, ethical and engaged

- Develop a dedicated EDI communications programme to promote and share knowledge.
- Drive a commitment to EDI continual professional development, across the service.
- Creation of an internal ethics committee to debate topical and ethical issues facing NFRS.

Challenging and tackle prejudice and discrimination

- Ensure all colleagues have confidential and trusted routes to raise issues of prejudice and discrimination within the service.
- Develop a programme of 'Brave Space' sessions for anyone to join to discuss, learn and ask questions they may feel uncomfortable asking elsewhere.
- To create an internal programme of allyship, providing tools to challenge misogyny and sexism, and to promote gender balance.



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Progress

- Serving with Pride Culture Consultation completed and whole report released to all staff.
- Mandatory Training 'Serving with Pride' training has been rolled out across the whole service, provided by an external specialist provider focusing on aspects of equality, diversity, and inclusion which earlier consultation work found staff would benefit from further guidance on.
- Review and approval of the new People & Culture Strategy and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy for 2024-2027
- 'FlagIt' reporting email and Application for staff to report behaviours of concerns are now live in addition to an externally provided independent reporting online and phonenumber FRS Speak Up.

Key Priorities

A detailed EDI Action plan is in place for the year ahead, Below are 3 key priorities:

- **Recruitment.** Maintaining an operational workforce requires further recruitment, while understanding and working towards redressing imbalances in the demographics of our workforce.
- **Staff Networks.** Help staff to create support networks they control and benefit from.
- **Brave spaces.** Creates spaces of open dialogue where conversations started in the Serving with Pride sessions are continued, allowing staff the opportunity to ask questions without judgement.



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Serving with Pride Consultation

- All staff were given the opportunity to be heard and just over half chose to complete offered surveys or speak in person in one-to-one interviews or focus groups.
- 85% Strongly Agree or Agree Those that work at Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) put the interests of the public, communities, and service users first.
- 56.7% indicated that there is a positive working culture. Males were more likely to say the culture is positive.
- 64% Strongly Agree or Agree People of all cultures and backgrounds are respected and valued in NFRS.
- 46% Strongly Agree or Agree NFRS manages inclusion and diversity matters appropriately and commits to equal opportunities.

“Feel fire service prioritise operational experience as opposed to also valuing behaviours and values people demonstrate. We have moved on a lot, but we still have a way to go.”

“Dyslexia Champions in service. Roles models – people with dyslexia who have got to high-ranking roles.”

“Don’t feel included. Unless you are male and wearing uniform you aren’t seen as being part of team Northants Fire.”



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IPSOS Employee Research

- The Office of the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) for Northamptonshire commissioned IPSOS UK to carry out research around misogynistic behaviour and general culture within the OPFCC, Northamptonshire Police, and Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- 141 Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) employees responded to an online survey between December 2022 and January 2023.
- 55% of NFRS staff agree their organisation is an inclusive environment.
- 38% of NFRS staff agree their organisation is a diverse environment.

“It is not uncommon for women to feel systematically undermined when giving their professional input. ... This could be exacerbated by the limited number of women currently in senior roles.”

“What participants would like to see...to acknowledge that gender discrimination exists and needs to be addressed.”

“79% said they are likely to still choose to be employed by their organisation in two years' time.”

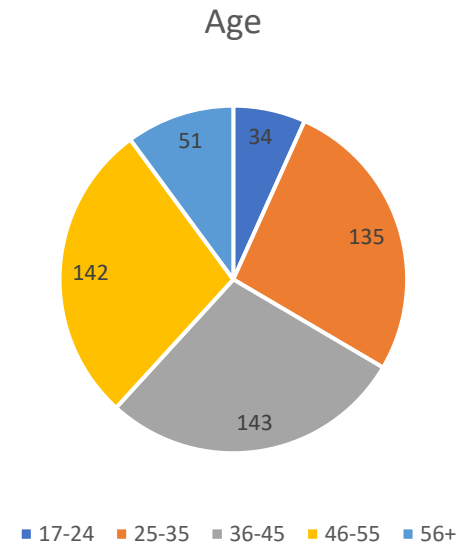
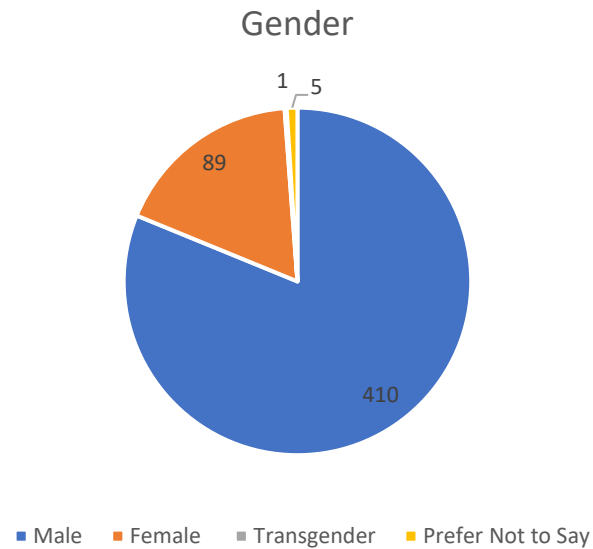


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Workforce Data

- This data is captured via a self-service portal which allows personnel to confidentially record their personal equality and diversity data. The data is a snapshot of all employees of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service as of 31st March 2023.



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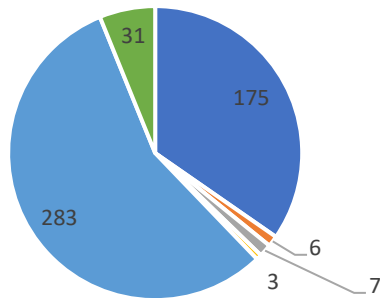
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Workforce Data

Religion	Unknown	311
	Prefer not to say	29
	No religion	82
	Other	3
	Christian	79
	Jewish	0
	Buddhist	0
	Sikh	0
	Hindu	0
	Muslim	1

Ethnicity	Asian - Bangladeshi	0
	Asian - Chinese	0
	Asian - Indian	0
	Asian - Pakistani	0
	Asian - Any other Asian background	0
	Black - African	0
	Black - Caribbean	0
	Black - Other	0
	Mixed - Asian	1
	Mixed - Caribbean	2
	Mixed - African	1
	Mixed - Other	2
	White - English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	322
	White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller	1
	White - Irish	0
	White - Any other White background	7
	Any other	2
	Prefer not to say	11
	Not disclosed	156

Sexual Orientation



- Hetrosexual or Straight
- Prefer to Self Describe
- Bisexual
- Unknown
- Gay or Lesbian
- Prefer not to say

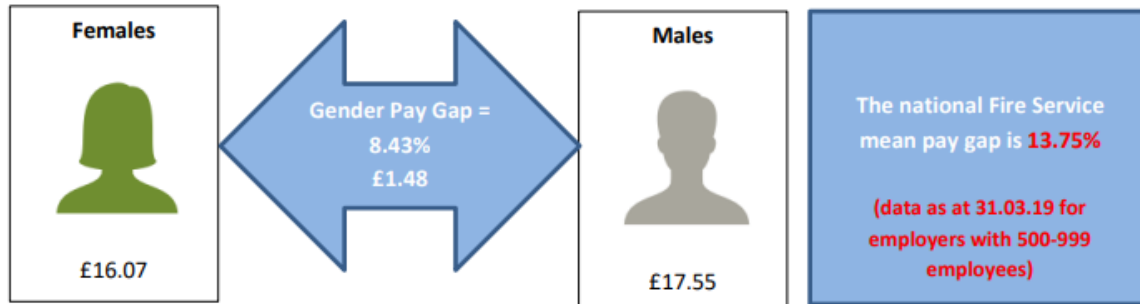


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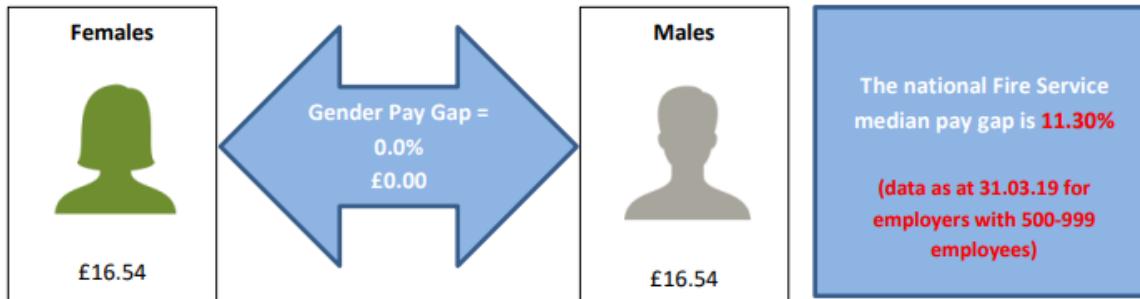
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Gender Pay Gap

Mean Gender Pay Gap in Hourly Pay



Median Gender Pay Gap in Hourly Pay



The pay gap is a snapshot in time, reflecting the organisational structure and individuals in post as of 31 March 2023.

The mean pay gap has increased in the last year from 7.99% to 8.43% but is still well below the national Fire Service mean pay gap of 13.75%.

The national data is taken as an average of Fire & Rescue Services with 500-999 employees covering 15 authorities, it shows that the mean and median gender pay gap is currently lower than the national average.



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Conclusions and 2024

- The workforce data as compared from the previous year is not significantly different. The number of new starters has offset leavers.
- Progress made in training of NFRS personnel is significant with a great deal of investment put into staff wellbeing and cultural improvement.
- Improvements in the recruitment process and our understanding the needs of prospective employees is a continued focus to progressively reflect changes in workforce data to represent the demographics of the population of Northamptonshire.



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