

# **Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service**

## **Equality and Diversity Annual Report April 2016 to March 2017**

## Alternative Formats

We are committed to ensuring that all our information is fully accessible for all communities across Merseyside, we have included this document on our website which can be accessed from our Webpage <http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk/equality & diversity>

We also provide a free speech, reading and translation service using Browse Aloud to help people who require online reading support access our documents, this can be located on the front page, top left of our website by clicking the button called “listen with Browse aloud”

If you would like a copy in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French or Somali please contact us at Diversity Team, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters, Bridle Road , Bootle, Liverpool L30 4YD. Telephone 0151 296 4422 or email [diversityteam@merseyfire.gov.uk](mailto:diversityteam@merseyfire.gov.uk).

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## Foreword

**Deputy Chief Fire Officer Phil Garrigan,  
Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service**

### **Photograph 1 – Deputy Chief Fire Officer Phil Garrigan**

Welcome to our fourth Equality and Diversity Annual report.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority has developed a culture that recognises, supports and celebrates diversity and equality. Through achievement of our Equality & Diversity Objectives 2012 – 2017 we have been able to focus equality and diversity activity on five key priority areas and the outcomes of those priorities will be shared with you in this report.

As the Chair of the Strategic Equality Group and senior sponsor for Diversity, it is an exciting time to be involved in driving the equalities agenda. In 2017 will see the organisation set new Equality Objectives, implement a new equality and diversity policy and the delivery of bespoke E learning package to all staff.

The importance of Diversity, Equality and Inclusion is embedded within our Functional and Integrated Risk Management Planning process.

The past year has seen Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority participate and support a number of high profile events to raise awareness and to celebrate our commitment to diversity both within the workplace and within our communities.

With a highly visible presence at Liverpool Pride, events to mark World Mental Health Day , campaigns for Older Persons day and support for Inter faith week we have been able to show our commitment to diversity across Merseyside.

A “Knowing our Communities” approach has helped us to understand our diversity in more detail, this has helped enormously in using our much reduced resources in a targeted way to reduce arson and hate crime and deliver business and home fire safety campaigns. This helps us to direct our services to those diverse groups who can often be overlooked or seen as hard to reach.

The “blue light services” collaboration agenda has also been important in terms of community engagement, it enables us to do more with less and avoid duplication. We are happy to be working closely with Merseyside Police and Health partners, to develop closer relationships that enable us to share information and intelligence in order to target the most vulnerable communities of Merseyside.

This year has also provided a great opportunity to influence the makeup of our organisation through the recruitment of operational firefighters, business safety staff, community risk management staff and volunteers. Our Positive Action strategy has enabled us to increase representation from some underrepresented groups and this will continue to be a significant priority going forward to assist with creating a diverse pool of talent for us to recruit from.

We look forward to responding to the challenges within the sector, not least the imminent launch the Home Office Inspection regime around workforce and diversity, which will help all fire and rescue services to focus on improving diversity and inclusion outcomes for our staff and our diverse communities.

This organisation has a lot to be proud of and we will continue to build on our successes and strive to further improve in this important area of work. I’d like to take this opportunity to thank staff, our forums and the representative bodies for their support and ongoing contributions in valuing inclusion and ensuring diversity is at the heart of what we do every day.

**Deputy Chief Fire Officer**

**Phil Garrigan**

**Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service**

## **Welcome**

As Lead Member for the Strategy and Performance department, I have responsibility for supporting and scrutinising equality related work throughout the Service.

As a result I am incredibly proud to champion the work that we do as an Authority and the impact that we are having every day through this inclusive approach.

This Authority continues to drive change through an exceptionally progressive Equality and Diversity Action Plan.

In order to demonstrate this I would like to highlight some of the remarkable work that Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority does with young people that you might not expect.

Earlier in the year, I was privileged to attend a presentation for the Princes Trust Huyton Team 39. As part of their development programme challenge they had raised money and decorated St Albert the Great youth club for the local dance troupe who practise there. Surely it is the best kind of community cohesion when young people are setting such a good example and helping other young people achieve their dreams.

In March, I was delighted to attend the launch of a collaboration with Liverpool Football Club on a new Kicks Football Plus programme at the Toxteth Fire Fit Hub. The initiative will provide wrap around support services to young people. The activities and engagement at the many taster sessions provided by the youth outreach workers was outstanding. It is great to know so many agencies are working to guide our young people to positive choices and wonderful as always to hear the views of the young people.

Finally, over the last three years Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority has made a commitment to improve their engagement with staff across the organisation.

Alongside posters, articles in the Hot News staff magazine and a series of station visits, as an Authority we have actively created opportunities to talk with staff. I was personally impressed by the Fire control visit and the efficiency and kindness of staff when talking to the public.

Authority Members have really enjoyed the “World Café” staff engagement sessions. These conversations with staff from all departments have improved our knowledge of the functions behind operational response and given us a chance to listen to staff issues first hand. The feedback with regard to these sessions has been positive and as a result staff satisfaction with Authority engagement has risen by an unprecedented 19 percentage points. However, for me, the overriding impression is the obvious pride staff take in their work to provide the best service possible, without discrimination, to the people of Merseyside.

I do hope you find this report useful. We would welcome any feedback with respect to the report and we are keen to develop further partnerships with organisations to improve outcomes for the people of Merseyside with respect to fire, safety and rescue. For more information or to initiate talks please do not hesitate to contact me at [Barbara.Murray@liverpool.gov.uk](mailto:Barbara.Murray@liverpool.gov.uk)

**Councillor Barbara Murray**  
**Authority Lead Member for Equality and Diversity 2016/17**  
**Photograph of Cllr Barbara Murray**



## Introduction

The Fire and Rescue Authority endorses this report as a reflection on the work delivered across the organisation in pursuit of Equality and Diversity excellence. This report provides the public with the opportunity to see many examples of success stories in relation to the work we do on a day to day basis to ensure that the services we deliver provide our diverse communities with confidence that we are addressing their needs.

This year's report sees the completion of our Equality Objectives 2012/17 and provides an overview of the final position against the targets set for those objectives. It also introduces the new Objectives for 2017- 2020 which will be reported for the first time in our next Annual report 2017/18

This report also demonstrates our commitment to meeting the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in relation to:

1. Publishing, at least annually, information to demonstrate our compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the PSED.
2. Prepare and Publish one or more specific and measurable objectives that helps to achieve the Aims set out in the PSED.
3. Publish equality information and the objectives in a manner that is accessible to the public.

Equality and Diversity is well embedded throughout the organisation and is closely linked to our organisational aims. It is driven by a comprehensive and well monitored Equality and Diversity Action Plan, underpinned by an Equality and Diversity Policy. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are carried out on policy and strategic documents and published on our website [www.merseyfire.gov.uk](http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk) with Authority papers.

Each Function also develops E&D priorities in relation to their Function plans and this ensures that E&D is consistently considered at the start of any new year.

This report provides an internal reflection on the Diversity work that has been delivered. As an employer it is important that we are embedding Equality and Diversity to achieve fairer outcomes for our employees and that we work towards reflecting the diverse communities we serve.

## **Governance and Performance Management**

The governance of the Equality and Diversity Action Plan has remained unchanged over the last four years and is led by the Diversity and Consultation Manager and co-ordinated through our Departmental and Senior Managers and our Diversity Action Group (DAG). The DAG is made up of departmental representatives (and is supported by the Authority Lead Member for Equality and Diversity) meeting quarterly to discuss and monitor progress against the action plan objectives. The DAG is also critical in reviewing equality impacts in relation to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority's services, policies, and projects through a robust Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process.

The Diversity and Consultation Manager also holds regular Equalities engagement meetings with the Representative Bodies (trade unions and staff associations), to ensure that they are aware of the Equality and Diversity developments and have an opportunity to contribute to the consideration of the ways in which Equality and Diversity influences the provision of fire and rescue services.

Performance against the Equality and Diversity Action Plan is scrutinised at two levels. The first is through the Strategic Equality Group (SEG), which is chaired by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and made up of senior managers representing all departments of the organisation. It meets on a quarterly basis to review progress made and provide assurances to the Authority on that progress. The second level of scrutiny is through the Authority's committee structure with Elected Members reviewing Equality and Diversity progress on a six-monthly basis.

Authority Members have received EIA training to support their scrutiny role and help with approving significant decisions on changes to services provided by the Authority.

Equality and Diversity reports scrutinised by Authority committees are made public via the MFRA website:

[www.merseyfire.gov.uk/aspx/pages/fire\\_auth/authorityContent.aspx](http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk/aspx/pages/fire_auth/authorityContent.aspx)

# Our Equality Objectives

## Equality Objectives 2016/17

MFRA has five Equality Objectives which were developed in 2012 to run for five years to 2017. This section of the report provides information about our achievements around those objectives now that they have come to their conclusion.

### Equality Objective 1

**Target:** To reduce accidental fires in the home and the deaths and injuries they cause on Merseyside by a further 5% by 2017.

**How this impacts on Equality and Diversity: Protected Characteristic – Age and Disability:** We know through extensive research that some of the people at highest risk from fire are also covered by the nine protected characteristics that form part of the Equality Act 2010, for example elderly and disabled people. Our activity focuses on reducing risk for vulnerable people.

### **Final Position as at March 2017**

A total of 988 Accidental Dwelling Fires took place during 2016/17. This was a reduction of 100 incidents on 2015/16. In terms of the achievement for the overall objective for Accidental Dwelling Fires has been achieved. The baseline year for the 5% reduction was 2011/12 where 1196 Accidental Dwelling Fire incidents took place, when applying a 5% reduction on this, the target at the end of the plan was 1136. Taking performance for 2016/17 into account the target has been achieved by 145 or -12.8%.

## **Equality Objective 2**

We will reduce risk for people who live in rented properties across Merseyside.

**Target:** To cut accidental kitchen fires in social housing by 5% by 2017.

**How this impacts on Equality and Diversity: Protected Characteristics – Age and Disability, Socio-Economic Disadvantage:** We know that people who live in rented properties often have other needs and fall within the protected characteristics. We've worked well with Registered Social Landlords to protect their residents, but some of the higher risk people live in privately rented accommodation and we want to help them too.

### **Final Position as at March 2017**

At the end of 2016/17, there were a total of 166 Accidental Kitchen Fires in properties owned by Registered Providers of Social Housing, was is a reduction of 41 Accidental Kitchen Fires on 2015/16. In terms of the overall equality objective for Accidental Kitchen Fires in Social Housing has been achieved. The baseline year for the 5% reduction was 2012/13 (the first year this data was available) where 249 incidents took place, when applying a 5% reduction on this, the target at the end of the plan was 237. Taking performance for 2016/17 into account the target has been achieved by 71 or -30%.

### **Equality Objective 3**

We will continue to engage with young people in vulnerable areas.

**Target:** Reducing deliberate anti-social behaviour (ASB) fire setting by 5% by 2017.

**How this impacts on Equality and Diversity: Protected Characteristics – Age, Socio-Economic Disadvantage:** The anti-social behaviour of a minority of young people can impact most on the elderly and on other young people too. We want to help young people become good role models for others in their area and help older people feel safer in their homes

#### **Final Position**

At the end of 2016/17 there were a total of 4138 deliberate secondary fires. This was a minor increase in incidents when compared to previous years, however when compared to the overall target for the E&D objective, this has been achieved for the 5 year period. The equality objective for reducing deliberate secondary fires has been achieved. The baseline year for the 5% reduction was 2011/12 where 6093 incidents took place, when applying a 5% reduction on this, the target at the end of the plan was 5788. Taking performance for 2016/17 into account the target has been achieved by 1634 or -28.2%.

## **Equality Objective 4**

We will work with at-risk groups and local partners to contribute to the reduction in the number and severity of road traffic collisions (RTC) across Merseyside.

**Target:** Reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions by 37.5% by 2020.

### **How this impacts on Equality and Diversity: Protected Characteristic – Age:**

Young people are at a particularly high risk of being killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions. We want to have a positive impact on this group and help to keep them safe on the roads, whilst also monitoring road traffic collision risks in relation to young and old across all five districts and responding accordingly.

### **Final position**

There has been a gradual increase in road traffic collisions attended by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority year on year. Due to the nature of RTC's there are a wide range of circumstances that contribute, regardless of the skill level of the driver. To address this upward trend we will work with partner agencies and provide education through our road safety education packages and campaigns.

The equality objective for reducing Road Traffic Collisions has been partially achieved, this Equality Objective is based on partner organisations reduction targets. The baseline of 888 incidents is based on an average of incidents attended between 2004/05 to 2007/08, applying the 37.5% reduction on this, the target at the end of the plan was 555. Taking performance for 2016/17 into account the target has been missed by 50 or 9%. However for the years between 2011/12 to 2013/14, the ambitious target had been achieved.

**Injuries in Road Traffic Collisions:** The equality objective for reducing Injuries as a result of Road Traffic Collisions has been missed, this Equality Objective is based on partner organisations reduction targets. The baseline of 485 incidents is based on an average of incidents attended between 2004/05 to 2007/08, applying the 37.5%

reduction on this, the target at the end of the plan was 303. Taking performance for 2016/17 into account the target has been missed by 69 or 22.8%.



## **Equality Objective 5**

Our aim is to create a strong cohesive organisation which is positive about rising to the future challenges we face.

**Target:** To increase the diversity of our workforce and volunteers in order to reflect the local community we serve and increase applications for roles within the organisation (including volunteering) for those protected groups under-represented currently within our workforce.

**How this impacts on Equality and Diversity: Protected Characteristic – Gender and Ethnic Origin:** We'd like our workforce to better represent the make-up of our communities and will work to encourage applications from under-represented groups when we carry out any recruitment.

### **Current progress**

Since the recruitment in 2014/15 we have carried out a further recruitment programme for both Fire-fighters and Apprentices.

<b><i>Firefighter Recruitment</i></b>			
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Where we want to be</b>	<b>Q4 2016/17</b>
Female Firefighter Recruitment	3/16 (19%)	Increase in female recruitment	30%
BME Firefighter Recruitment	1/16 (6.25%)	Increase in BME recruitment	0%
<b>17 Recruited - Gender 12 Male (70%) and 5 Female (30%) Ethnicity: 17 White British</b>			
<b><i>Apprenticeship Recruitment</i></b>			
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Where we want to be</b>	<b>Q4 2016/17</b>
Female Apprenticeship Recruitment	5/12 (42%)	Increase in female recruitment	57%
BME Apprenticeship Recruitment	1/12 (8%)	Increase in BME recruitment	0%

<b>14 recruited - Gender 6 Males (43%) and 8 Female (57%), Ethnicity: 14 White British</b>			
<b><i>Business Safety Advisors</i></b>			
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Where we want to be</b>	<b>Q4 2016/17</b>
Female Business Safety Recruitment	0 (0%)	Increase in female recruitment	57%
BME Business Safety Recruitment	0 (0%)	Increase in BME recruitment	0%
<b>7 Recruited - Gender: 3 Male (43%) and 4 Female (57%) Ethnicity: 7 White British</b>			
<i>Please note baseline based on 2014/15 data</i>			

In all cases we have exceeded our baseline figure for Gender. Significantly, female apprentices have increased by 15 percentage point and firefighters by 11 percentage points. In terms of our Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) recruitment baseline figures, we are disappointed not to have made more progress on this and further work needs to be done to focus on Positive Action and the part it can play in relation to recruiting BME candidates for both apprenticeship and firefighter roles.

Note: The overall target for this objective is to increase applications for each of those minority groups above year on year. We are satisfied that progress has been made and will continue to use this as one of our E and D objectives for 2017-20

### **Picture of new Business Safety Advisors**

## **Equality Objectives 2017-2020**

As part of our commitment to delivering services and employing staff in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, and in line with the responsibilities placed on the Authority by the Act, we have established five new Equality Objectives that are both inward looking (staff related) and outward looking (community and service delivery related)

From April 2017 these will replace the Objectives that we have been reporting against since 2012. The new Objectives below have been reviewed and updated to better demonstrate how we show due regard to eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations:

1. Create a strong cohesive organisation that is positive to rising to the future challenges we face.
2. Ensure that people from diverse communities receive equitable services that meet their needs.
3. Reducing fires and other incidents amongst the vulnerable protected groups
4. To ensure that staff are better equipped to deliver their roles whilst showing due regard to the need to: “eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don’t.”
5. To continue to aspire to achieving excellence, or equivalent in a Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework

## **Part One – Equality and Diversity Activity 2016/17**

## **Equality and Diversity Activity and Outcomes 2016- 2017**

This section of the report provides examples of achievements and case studies to demonstrate the progress made in relation to our Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2013-17 and Equality Objectives. Our Action Plan contains key objectives and actions designed to ensure that we continuously improve against our diversity agenda and deliver against our Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirements and Equality Objectives.

The Action Plan is a living document which is monitored on six-monthly basis. Having the Action Plan in place ensures that we have a transparent means by which we can demonstrate our commitment to Equality and Diversity (in relation to our staff and our communities), in a way that allows interested parties to hold us to account and measure our progress in relation to:

- The extent to which our services meet differing customer needs.
- The extent to which we are able to attract, retain and develop a talented workforce from across all sections of the community.

# Knowing Our Communities

## Diverse Community profiles

England has become more ethnically diverse with rising numbers of people identifying themselves as belonging to minority ethnic groups in the 2011 Census. In Merseyside, there has been an increase in the number of people that identify themselves as being ethnically and culturally diverse and this diversity can bring different fire safety needs and vulnerabilities.

The Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority Knowing our Communities project has been very successful in developing a diversity community profile data tool which enables staff to understand the makeup of their communities when carrying out community engagement activities and planning for the future campaigns. The tool that we have developed uses the community demographic profiles to enable staff to identify (using maps) where different diverse communities are located across Merseyside. The profiles we include are:

- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Disability
- Health

Since the tool was launched in November 2016 it has been used to support work to monitor community tension; which supports our Fire Control, identify key areas for Business Safety Week activities, preparation for Ramadan and planning around our Arson Reduction Strategy. The tool was developed through joint working by the Strategy and Performance (Business Intelligence and the Diversity and Consultation Manager) and Community Risk Management Functions and input from colleagues across the organisation.

## First National Business Safety Week Campaign (Business Safety Week)

Our Protection and Prevention Officers, together with firefighters, visited approximately 165 businesses in diverse communities across Merseyside in the first National Business Safety Week held in September 2016. Specialist fire officers gave arson prevention advice to business owners, including how they can protect their business premises from deliberate fires and they were offered guidance on their legal responsibility as employers.

Many of the visits took place in the Smithdown Road and Lodge Lane areas of Liverpool and our staff spoke to landlords and business owners specifically about the benefits of business safety, and how it can support economic growth and provide a safe environment for employees, customers and stock. Architectural Liaison/Crime Prevention Officers from Merseyside Police also took part in the week long campaign giving out crime prevention advice and guidance about planning for emergencies in the event of a flood or fire.

Protection Compliance Manager, Karen Hughes who led the community engagement campaign for Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority said:

**“Fire can cause major disruption for businesses and we want to help owners look at the way they can protect themselves from fire hazards. A fire in a commercial building can put the lives of staff and customers at risk and can damage valuable stock as well as the business premises.”**

“Business Safety Week was a great opportunity for us to visit diverse communities in Merseyside and offer advice and support to vendors about how they can keep their premises and their employees safe from fire.”

## **Arson Awareness Week**

Arson Awareness week (Monday 20 to Friday 24 March) saw the launch of the monthly Arson Awareness Campaigns, whereby, Arson Officers join forces with partner agencies to highlight the dangers of deliberately setting fires to our community.

The Arson Awareness Campaigns run once a month in each of the districts across Merseyside. Each campaign works with partners such as Merseyside Police, local authorities and housing providers to highlight the consequences of setting fires.

Teams of staff, Advocates, volunteers, PCSOs, housing providers and local authority teams visit homes and businesses in high priority Wards where we are experiencing Arson/ASB throughout the month to carry out Home Fire Safety Checks. During these visits they distribute information leaflets and identify residents who may be vulnerable to arson attacks.

Our partners also provide skips during these days to remove fly-tipped rubbish from communities, give advice to business owners about waste management, engage with homeless people to raise awareness of the dangers of fires and provide support to residents concerned about anti-social fire setting in their neighbourhoods.

The Campaigns have seen the completion of 1136 Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC's), 90 Businesses engaged with, 38 Small Operational Fire Safety Assessments (SOFSA) visits completed by Business Safety Advisors, 30 High Risk people identified and referred to high risk Advocates, 33 fly tipping sites reported, 4752 homes leafleted and 79 businesses leafleted.

The use of Community Profiles and Community Intelligence helped to target our resources in the areas at most risk of arson.



## Community Tension Monitoring

As an emergency service provider we have a responsibility to monitor tensions around our communities and respond where appropriate to prevent an increase in emergency incident and build community cohesion. To assist with this we have developed a procedure that enables the organisation to respond quickly and dynamically to types of tensions and unrest that may arise following national hate /terror events.

The procedure brings all parts of the organisation together to deliver a robust response that considers all levels of intelligence both internally, externally whilst also considering community profiles to ensure that are helping and targeting the right areas and members of our communities in reassurance or safety campaigns.

The community tension procedure has been used for the monitoring of hate crime across Merseyside following terrorist attacks in London and Manchester, it has enabled the organisation to provide support to those communities that may face an increase in hate crime or attack as a result (Picture of the Knowing your community data – Merseyside front cover)

## Working in Partnership

### Syrian Refugee Project (Photo from the hotnews – Oct/Nov page 4)

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority have entered a new partnership with Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council in support of the governments Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. Suzanne Hazza from MFRS is working on the project to assist with translation services for the Syrian Refugee families who have come to live in Knowsley. Suzanne, who speaks fluent Arabic, is facilitating vital conversations between five families and key services in Knowsley, helping them to overcome language barriers, settle into their new homes and provide fire safety advice.

Group Manager Gary Oakford said:

**“These families are the first in Merseyside from the Resettlement Scheme who have arrived from refugee camps in Turkey, Northern Iraq or Jordan and who have been displaced from their homes for many years. We were approached by Knowsley Council to see if we could lend support as they were aware of the specialist skills some of our advocates hold. We will continue to offer support and advice to neighbouring authorities as more families are rehoused”.**

Suzanne said:

**“This is a fantastic opportunity for me, and one which I am thoroughly enjoying. It has given me the chance to use my language skills to help families and professionals connect, which I am finding very rewarding”.**

### Collaboration with partner organisations

For many years Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority has worked closely with other organisations to share best practice, and make the most effective use of resources to improve the services we provide to the people of Merseyside. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 introduced a new duty for Fire and Rescue Authorities and Polices Forces to keep opportunities for collaboration under review; but MFRS and

Merseyside Police are already actively collaborating in relation to the work that they are doing to engage with local communities and promote the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion in both organisations.

Our joint collaboration commitments are around four key areas of:

- Sharing community data and intelligence to support better outcomes for diverse communities
- Delivering joint community engagement with diverse and vulnerable groups
- Joint approaches for working on local and national campaigns
- Sharing training, knowledge and resources around community engagement and cohesion.

Outcomes from the work to date include:

1. Sharing of national threat and counter terrorism intelligence
2. Sharing of community cohesion intelligence
3. Attendance of regular share and learn meetings
4. Agenda items for the Fire and Rescue Service are to be included on the Police Community Action Groups to enable a joined up approach to consultation and engagement
5. Joint working for Business Safety and Arson Awareness weeks

## **Involving Our Communities**

The following section includes a selection of the events our operational staff have been engaged with across our stations to support vulnerable people.

### **Visit to a Community Fire Station**

A visit was arranged to Bootle & Netherton Community Fire Station for a group of young people from the 'Can Do' Leonard Cheshire Disability Group. This group of young people with various learning difficulties were very enthusiastic, with all of them engaging and asking our staff lots of questions.

Co-incidentally the Mounted Section of Merseyside Police were attending Bootle and Netherton Community Fire station on the evening of the visit and officers on duty agreed that the group could meet the horses; Major and Phoebe A although the visitors appeared to be tentative at first, their confidence increased as they got used to the horses.

The group then met with the crew and CM Gary Lythgoe discussed various types of rescue and the group were given the opportunity to try out some of the equipment and sit in the fire appliance. They thoroughly enjoyed their time visiting the station and the organisers told us that even the members of the group that do not normally engage well in activities had been involved in the visit.

### **Charity Car Wash in Eccleston**

Crews from Eccleston Community Fire Station held a car wash to raise funds for the Fire Fighters Charity and the 'Melissa Smile Fund' a charity set up by the parent of Melissa Adams, from Eccleston who was diagnosed with Angelman Syndrome in 2006. Melissa's condition means she is unable to speak, has poor mobility skills, suffers from epilepsy and needs 24 hour care. The event raised over £600 which was split between the two charities. The money donated to the 'Melissa Smile Fund' will help her family create a sensory room for Melissa. **(Photo from Hotnews)**

### **Fire Firefighter Charity**

Andrew Dane, a 10 year old boy from Portsmouth, has made it his mission to visit every fire station in the country to raise money for the Firefighters Charity. Andrew started his journey in February 2015 and has visited almost a thousand stations.

Andrew was able to visit all 25 Merseyside community fire stations And his trip included a tour of our Marine Fire Unit, a demonstration by our Search and Rescue Team and a meeting with Chief Fire Officer Dan Stephens and Deputy Chief Fire Officer Phil Garrigan. (photograph from Hotnews)

### **Blooming Lovely**

Our Search and Rescue Team assisted the manager of supported housing development Dene Court in Fazakerley to assemble six garden benches for the residents.

The benches had been in storage for 3 months and the SRT team stepped in to put them together so the residents could sit outside and enjoy the sunshine. The team at Croxteth Community Fire Station have developed a good working relationship with the staff and residents at Dene Court after highlighting a communication issue with one of the residents, who is Deaf and blind and working with him and his carers to resolve this. The Team are particularly proud that a relationship which began with an emergency response has developed into something more sustainable with a long term benefit to the community. (photo from Hotnews)

## **Our Youth Engagement teams and our diverse communities**

### **Prince's Trust.**

Our five Prince's Trust teams continue to deliver their 12 week development programmes with an increasingly diverse range of young people across Merseyside. During 2016/17 our teams were based at our Training and Development Academy in Croxteth, Bootle and Netherton, Toxteth and Huyton Community Fire Stations and the Wirral Metropolitan College team were based at our Bromborough Community

Fire Station. All the teams have been successful at recruiting young people from diverse backgrounds and minority groups including:

- Students with physical disabilities (Cerebral Palsy, Hemiplegia, partially sighted)
- Students with learning disabilities (including Asperger's, ADHD, Dyspraxia, Dyslexia and Dyscalculia,)
- Students with mental health disorders (personality disorders, depression and psychosis)
- Asylum seekers and refugees
- Students from the LGBT community
- Students from minority religions (Pagan and Muslim)
- And eight students whose ethnicity is defined as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic

Two young people who took part in the courses in 2016/17 have been nominated for a Prince's Trust Award, for the North West.

## **Breakthrough Award – John**

### **Before the Prince's Trust**

Our team first met John in a local shopping centre close to the team rooms. He was with his mum at the time and our team approached them for a little chat and explained to them what our 12 week programme was about. They knew about the Princes Trust Course run by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service as a family member had already completed one of our courses and had spoken highly about her experience. Although they were aware of the course but were unsure if it was something John would be able to do or if he could get the support he would need as he has Down Syndrome. John and his mum were invited to visit the team room and have a chat about the course and how the team could best support John on the programme. The only concern was how John would manage on the residential section on the course, as he might not be able to do some of the more physical activities. It was agreed that the activities would be taken slowly to ensure that John

was able to do them and be happy, and the team would provide regular update to his mum. John left the meeting feeling very excited to get started.

### **During his time with the Prince's Trust**

From the very first day John had a smile on his face from the minute he walked in until the left. He broke down a lot of barriers with the other 11 people on the team with his positive attitude. He encouraged discussions and once he knew everyone's name he would come in each morning and personally greet everyone. Although he was looking forward to the residential he still displayed nervous behaviour when discussing some of the activities the team would have the opportunity to do. The team leader assured him that he wouldn't be forced to do anything he wasn't comfortable with and this seemed to put him at ease.

John had to overcome a lot of new and sometimes difficult things while on residential, being away from his family with new friends seemed daunting and taking him out of his daily routines could be stressful, but he surprised himself with how independent he could be. During the more strenuous activities like gorge walking and rock climbing John expressed that he would like to give it a go. After discussing with the activities providers who assured him and his mum of his safety, John tried them all. During the rock climb he managed to reach the top and this inspired the rest of the team to do the same. Even the team members who refused at first watched John and changed their minds. After each activity John could not wait to call his mum and tell her what he had achieved as he was extremely proud of himself. On one of the evenings John told us he liked to cook and his dream career would be a chef. When it was his turn to cook he held a cooking lesson in the kitchen and showed everyone how to wash their hands properly and which chopping boards to use.

During the community project he struggled a little with his co-ordination and found painting difficult, but he didn't let it show; he kept smiling and decided he would help the team in other ways like cleaning up washing paint brushes and taking pictures for the team presentation.

During the team challenge John really excelled himself. The team organised and planned a talent show at a local community centre that hosted an after school club. John was day leader of the group that day and entered the activity with lots of enthusiasm and energy. The children really responded to this and the applause, encouragement and praise John gave each act after they had finished encouraged the more reserved children to take part and get up on stage.

One day during a station tour John disclosed to the firefighters that he would like to be a chef one day. As the conversation developed John offered to cook the firefighters their dinner one afternoon. The next day John went onto the station and met all the firefighters and sat down with them to write a shopping list of ingredients. That evening John and the team leader went on to station where John prepared and cooked a chicken and vegetable curry for the entire watch. Although the team leader offered to help, John said he didn't need it and he made it all himself. The firefighters came in the next day to thank John and said it was the best curry they had ever tasted.

By the end of the 12 weeks, John had completed the unit work for an entry level 3 which was John's first ever qualification. It might have taken him a bit longer than the rest of the team, but he didn't mind and he never stopped smiling.

From this experience, John found the confidence to pursue his dream career and study food preparation in college. He was accepted on to a Steady Chefs cooking course in Bootle where he started 3 weeks after leaving the team programme.

### **Now, in the future and the impact of achievements**

Since leaving the team programme, John has maintained his place in college studying cookery. He really enjoys it and feels as though he is learning new things very day. He is aiming to find employment in a cafe once he finishes the 12 month course with Steady Chefs. He expresses that he misses the team and the team leaders, but he is thankful for the opportunities and experience.

John said "My favourite part of the 12 weeks was cooking for the firefighters and climbing the mountain. I loved being part of a team. The whole thing was brilliant!"



His team leaders were asked to sum up the nominees as a newspaper headline. They decided that John's would be, "He is a pinch of enthusiasm, a dash of motivation and a big sprinkle of smiles".

## **Young Achiever of the year – Sadaldin (Saad)**

### **Before the Princes Trust**

Saad grew up with a very supportive family, and had a happy childhood however everything rapidly changed when the uprisings began in Syria, resulting in the civil war.

Saad left Syria in 2014 due to the lack of safety in his country and the constant worry of being forced to join the army. He managed to escape and illegally crossed borders to make it to Turkey, where he stayed for just under a year working and saving to continue his journey. Saad's journey from his hometown Homs was terrifying; he had to leave his family behind and it was a very painful time saying goodbye and not knowing whether he would ever see them again. From Turkey, Saad crossed the Mediterranean to Greece on a boat along with many other asylum seekers. Once on mainland Europe, Saad started an epic journey by foot and train, passing through Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, Austria, Germany and France. Saad finally made it to 'The Jungle' in Calais and realised it wasn't somewhere he wanted to spend a long time, after only 5 days there, he managed to conceal himself in a lorry crossing the English Channel, and made it to the UK.

In the October 2015 Saad arrived in the UK, and was detained by police, he then spent 25 days in temporary accommodation in London, Manchester and Wigan before finally being given more permanent housing in Liverpool. Once in Liverpool, he was put in contact with Asylum Link, which amongst other support, provided him with an English teacher. Eamon, his English teacher, spoke to Saad about the Team programme run by Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority in Toxteth.

### **During his time with Princes Trust**

When Saad first joined the Team programme, he was worried what other people on the Team would think about him and where he came from because of the language barrier and cultural differences. In spite of this he was excited to get involved with other young people in the local area. The first week and meeting new people was difficult for Saad, but he felt confident that he had made friends, and also felt happy and safe. The second week going away on residential helped him to feel more confident and he became friendlier with his fellow Team members and Team leaders.

His English was quite poor but he really wanted to improve it as soon as possible. Saad threw himself into the Team programme, and got involved with all aspects of it, including a residential in North Wales, a Community Project rejuvenating and creating an outdoor sensory garden for elderly people with dementia, a work placement at a riding stables and Team challenges with homeless and elderly people.

Towards the end of the Team, Saad was absolutely delighted to receive the news he had been waiting for, that he had been granted his refugee status in the UK. He had built such a bond with the rest of the Team and the staff that he wanted to celebrate with them all, and went out and purchased a special cake to share with them all.

One of Saad's best moments during Team was on the Army day when he won on the bleep test. The Team members and leaders were so happy with his victory; he had done it for the Team. Saad is so happy and grateful for what he has done and achieved through the course. The qualification and skills he has got are really important to him. As Saad was new to this country he did not expect to get on as easily as he did, but through this experience he feels as though he has been here for a lot longer, maybe even as if he was born here. His continued communication with friends on the course, (not in his own language) has helped him to develop considerably and made him feel included in the Team.

There are so many aspects of Saad's life that he felt improved by being on the Team programme, and skills that he developed. Possibly the most outwardly obvious would be the improvement in his English; by the end of the Team he was speaking,

reading and writing confidently, though some would say he has learnt to speak Scouse rather than English! Being more confident in his communication skills meant that Saad's confidence increased a lot and his ability to work with others who he might not normally have encountered was also a real boost.

Saad felt that during his time on the Team programme he really increased his ability to manage his own feelings, and was given lots of support and advice for how to do so. He loved finding out about opportunities to volunteer, and above all else, really relished the opportunity to integrate into his local community and Liverpool as a whole.

### **Now, in the future and the impact of achievements**

After Saad completed Team, he applied to college for a Level 3 Access to Engineering course, starting in September 2016. In the mean time until his course started, he applied for work, and secured a job at KFC. Having received his refugee status, he also had to move house, as he was previously in asylum seeker accommodation.

In September 2016 Saad started his Access to Engineering course. Whilst discussing his future plans to go to university after completing the access course, he spoke to two local universities who stated he would also need an English GCSE to be offered a place on engineering degrees. As a result he signed up to complete an English GCSE as well, starting the course in November 2016.

A little while into the course, Saad left his job at KFC after securing a new, more flexible job with Deliveroo. He enjoys keeping active whilst working, and is able to work hours that fit around his studies, and at times when he needs to spend longer studying, doesn't work to focus on revision.

Saad has received two conditional offers, from The University of Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores University, to study Electric & Electronic Engineering starting in September 2018. He is on track to achieve the required grades in both his Access to Engineering course and English GCSE. Saad will be completing his final exams in June, then awaiting his results in August 2017.

Saad is committed to completing a degree, then securing employment as an electrical engineer. This has been his long term dream since he was a child, however the upheaval of leaving his home and family made him worry whether this was possible. The boost he received during his time on The Prince's Trust Team Programme reaffirmed his passion and gave him the inspiration to move forward with his dreams. With an Electrical Engineering degree behind him, Saad will always be able to support himself in the future and is looking forward to a long and prosperous life in Liverpool ahead of him.

Saad said "The Prince's Trust Team Programme gave me so many personal skills I needed and made the route easier to achieve my dreams. The Prince's Trust Certificate in Employment, Teamwork and Community Skills helped me with my follow on steps as I was able to show the college I had achieved a UK based qualifications. Liverpool is my home now, I never want to leave. I wouldn't be where I am now without the Team programme." Sadaldin Habab

"Saad made amazing progress while on Team, not just with improving his English (and knowledge of Scouse!) But also by integrating himself into Liverpool life and making new friends. He's then gone on to find himself work (initially in KFC and then Deliveroo) and then achieved his goal of going to City of Liverpool College to do his Access course for engineering. He keeps in touch with his Team Leaders and still has so much enthusiasm about life." Alison Caulfield, Team Leader

For the newspaper headline which best summed up Saad the team choose, '3000 mile journey through hell and high water leads inspirational young person to his dreams in engineering'.

## **Fire Cadets**

The main ethos of our fire cadet units is for cadets to be involved in Social Action activities that specifically support their local communities and encourage personal development. Over the last year, the cadets have taken part in numerous Social Action activities which have included:

- Supporting fire crews with charity car washes,
- Performing at the MFRS Carol Service,
- Participating in Remembrance Day ceremonies,
- Becoming Dementia Friends

The biggest social action activity this year was for cadets units to take part in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Battle of the Somme Centenary. All cadet units researched their local war graves – by visiting churches, taking part in grave rubbing, photographing war graves. Research was then done on specific soldiers and memorial booklets/displays were produced.

### **Dementia Friends**

MFRA Fire Cadet Units have received Dementia Awareness training from Watch Manager Steve Bousfield, as part of the Alzheimer's Society initiative called Dementia Friends. The initiative is aimed at helping to change people's perceptions of dementia and to get people talking about the condition. As a Dementia Friend people learn a little bit more about what it's like to live with dementia and they can then turn that understanding into actions. Dementia Friends is about learning more about dementia and the small ways in which people can help. From telling friends about Dementia Friends to visiting someone living with dementia, every action counts.

As part of their commitment of turning understanding into action, the Fire Cadets from Archbishop Blanch visited a local dementia care home to play bingo with local residents. Many of the residents had dementia and the cadets displayed lots of compassion and were able to understand their condition and adapt the session so that everyone taking part was able to enjoy the activity.

**PHOTO**

## Responsive services and customer care

### Home Safety

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority continues to provide extensive fire prevention services to our communities, with a particularly focus on fires in the home. We use the knowledge about our communities that we have gathered from numerous sources, to target our prevention activity on those most at risk. This has resulted in a Home Safety Strategy that focuses on reducing fires, deaths and injuries amongst the over 65s.

In 2016/17:

- 49,000 Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSCs) were delivered by fire crews (60% to over 65s)
- Fire Safety Advocate performance was up by 45% .
- Prevention teams and operational crews delivered over 40 prevention campaigns e.g. in areas where there had been a serious fire
- Wider use of social media **has enabled us to.....**
- Tragically, there were seven fatalities in accidental fires in the home – but this was over 50% fewer than in 2015/16 and the lowest number for four years.
- There were fewer than 1000 accidental fires in the home, for the first time ever

### Vulnerable People Safeguarding

Our prevention teams across Merseyside regularly receive referrals from partners such as local neighbourhood policing teams, and Registered Social Housing Providers. In August our St Helens Prevention Team attended a MASH (multi agency safeguarding hub) meeting to deliver a presentation aimed at carers and people responsible for vulnerable people. Following this presentation our staff received a referral stating that a property was in extremely poor condition and the

occupants living conditions were a concern alongside their mental health and wellbeing.

On our Prevention team's first visit to the property the occupier was not at home, but it was very clear that the living conditions were extremely poor and the occupant was extremely vulnerable. The front door to the property had been left open and it was apparent from the small area of the home which was visible that there was some major fire risks due to the amount of combustible material and poorly discarded cigarettes.

Our Prevention staff subsequently organised an essential multi-agency visit with two environmental health officers, and the local neighbourhood policing team. Again the occupant was not home, but however due the concerns, the police entered the property and requested that the Prevention staff also enter to inspect the condition of the property. The condition of the property was a major concern - the floor was not visible through rubbish, combustibles and poorly discarded cigarettes, there was no lighting in the property and it was infested with flies due to rotting food. There were numerous fire concerns within the property, such as very poor cooking habits, the poorly discarded cigarettes, a small fan heater placed on top of a pile of clothes, and numerous other electrical items in a poor state of repair. There was also no working smoke alarms in the property. The decision was made to fit smoke alarms so as to reduce the possible risk to the occupant.

During the following weeks our Prevention staff liaised with Social Services, Environmental Health, and health professionals to arrange temporary accommodation and for the property to be cleared so that it was safe to live in. Unfortunately only six weeks after the property had been cleared it was back in an extremely poor condition and the smoke alarms had been removed.

Although in this case further extensive work was needed with numerous partner agencies in order to ensure the vulnerable adult received all the support required and that their home environment was safe and suitable our main priority is to reduce the risk of fire. We strive to ensure we are doing all we can to help vulnerable people within our communities, ensuring people with disabilities and mental health problems

do not go unnoticed and without the help they require to live a healthy and fulfilled life.

## **Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service Volunteers**

October saw the introduction of a Merseyside-wide volunteer recruitment campaign to enable people to gain a number of key skills and knowledge about fire prevention and assist Community Risk Management staff deliver a wide range of community engagement activities and events during the year.

We now have a team of 14 volunteers from diverse backgrounds, including male and female, people with a disability, and people from a BME background. Their diversity helps to assist us in all aspects of work across the districts including:

- Providing awareness about home fire safety to communities through campaigns and home visits.
- Attending community fun days, supermarkets, community events and other public places to engage with members community to provide key healthy living advice and information about the services we offer
- Contributing to safe and well visits and community reassurance campaigns.
- Delivering safety presentations in primary and secondary schools especially seasonal presentations about firework safety, grass fire prevention in summer months.

The volunteers have assisted with numerous campaigns across Merseyside including arson campaigns in deprived wards where there has been issues relating to arson, antisocial behaviour and c crime. They have also engaged with residents alongside with Community Risk Management staff to complete Home Fire Safety Checks.

Two of our Volunteers are registered disabled and require additional support from a carer/support worker whilst volunteering for us. We worked closely with the volunteer and the carer to ensure that the carer /support worker receives a briefing before any event to enable them to assist the volunteer to perform to their full ability for each



event. We are keen to ensure that all volunteers are learning valuable life and work skills to assist them with any future chosen careers and life choices.

The volunteers have also attended a women's recruitment conference along with our District Prevention Manager Jen Taylor. The conference aimed to promote work and voluntary opportunities within the city to help women improve their skills and confidence so that they can get back into employment.

## **A Skilled and committed workforce**

As well as the normal activities you would associate with firefighters; attending and preventing fires and other emergencies, our staff are also keen to focus on ensuring that those services are delivered in an equitable way and to support local people, and charities, including the Firefighters Charity with fund raising events. As an organisation, we have also worked hard to focus on the way that we engage with our biggest single group of employees, our operational firefighters.

### **STAFF ENGAGEMENT**

Following the release of the results of the second staff survey in 2016, Station Managers met with their Watch Manager teams to hold open discussion forums to gain a greater insight into how staff felt about the results. This was done in a consistent manner to ensure everyone received the same messages. Each of the Watch Managers then held a similar feedback session, with their own teams using the same approach.

The information was brought together centrally and a small group discussed the responses and categorised the feedback into the following themes.

- What are the most positive changes?
- What are your concerns and how to address them?
- What our priorities should be.

The feedback for each specific location was used by the Station Managers as the cornerstone of engagement in the upcoming station planning process for 2016/17.

The discussions highlighted some positive feedback showing that the survey had provided them with a platform to be listened to in relation to changes around:

- Shift system and family friendly arrangements.
- Management of the work routine – firefighters have noticed and commented positively that Watch Managers are more able to plan the day and have the autonomy to manage the work routine.

- Station Managers have more time to engage and are more approachable, listen more and communicate better with their station staff.
- Improved communication has had a positive impact across all stations and the importance of consistent Principal Officer Briefings contributed to these improvements.

### **Flexible Working Requests**

During 2016/17 our Flexible Working Panel has met regularly to review and evaluate requests. Each request is dealt with individually, taking into account the employee's personal circumstances, the effects that the proposed changes to working hours or place of work are likely to have on the Authority, and the impact on their colleagues and departmental objectives.

A total of 17 flexible working requests were considered by the panel during 2016-17; 29% of applications were from male staff, 71% from female. All except three of those applications were accepted and the remaining three were either withdrawn or an alternative option taken.

"I have applied flexible working in May this year, to reduce my working hours to 30 hours due to a change in child minding arrangements. I have been granted the request and will be starting 1<sup>st</sup> September this year. If MFRS didn't have this Policy it would be challenging for me to balance work life and family. It's excellent that I am working for an organisation that provides this and looks after their employee welfare."

*Sagal Jama, Community Fire Protection Arson Officer – Liverpool South*

### **Supporting our Female Firefighters**

MF&RS are aware that female firefighters' careers may go through different transitions and that they may face challenges if and when they choose to have a family and later in their career in terms of the impact of their age and the menopause. Over the last two years we have invested time in engaging with female staff to understand how we can best support staff at different important stages of their careers and help them achieve a suitable work life balance.

We have used that feedback to focus on two particular areas; women returning to work after having a baby and the impact on breastfeeding; and the impact that the menopause can have on operational staff. Operational guidance has been developed for both of these areas and has been used across the country as an example of best.

The guidance for supporting employees returning from maternity leave and in particular those who may still be breastfeeding, has been developed to provide staff and managers with information on how manage the mother's return to work. It sets out how women returning from maternity leave can request changes to their working conditions and how those requests should be considered. The guidance provides a clear plan to ensure that the appropriate risk assessments are carried out and if necessary temporary maternity adjustments and facilities for breastfeeding (provisions of a private, healthy and safe environment to express and store milk) can be put in place ahead of them returning to work.

The breast feeding guidance introduced a three month transition from maternity to fully operational duty to enable our staff to adjust and still allow them to express milk.

The menopause guidance provides practical assistance to managers in terms of understanding how this may impact women in terms of fitness and wellbeing. The Supporting the Menopause in the Workplace guide has been designed to outline to staff and managers the ways in which we can support female employees during the menopause. The guide includes useful background information about the menopause, what it is, the wide range of symptoms a woman may experience, what the organisation can do to help, including suggested working adjustments.

The guide also includes information for managers on how to support a member of their staff, with regular informal conversations between manager and employee enabling discussion of changes to health. It is considered valuable to acknowledge that this is a normal stage of life and that adjustments can easily be made.

Finally the guide offers useful information for women on coping with the menopause and provides external links to more information

Both guidance documents have been developed to support all female staff who work for Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority but in particular to provide advice to our operational staff who work in very physical and demanding roles.

The use of both documents will be monitored during 2017/18 as they are used more widely to enable us to keep the areas under review and we will update them based on our female employees' experience and feedback.

We also have a comprehensive maternity and pregnancy policy, policies for adoption, fostering, and IVF.

We also understand that in the UK we are all being expected to work longer with pension ages increasing and staff may develop long term health issues, which require regular medication such as insulin, or anticoagulants. This is why during 2016/17 we have written and implemented a number of new guidance documents created to provide information for staff and managers on a wide variety of subjects.

## **Equality and Procurement**

As part of our aim for excellent Operational Preparedness, we ensure that our firefighters are provided with the training information, procedures and equipment that they need to resolve all emergency incidents safely and effectively, our Operational Equipment Team continue to improve on the provision of well-fitting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for all. All new PPE tenders are put through wearer trials and we engage volunteers to carry out testing who represent both men and women and a broad range of ages, and we also take into account other factors which may be important e.g. Those who wear glasses, or those of a smaller or larger than average build.

Clauses are written into the procurement documents outlining the need to cater for a diverse workforce and always cover every eventuality by including a request that

suppliers provide a 'special measure' service in the event of their existing sizing range not meeting our requirements for all.

We continue to promise that we will supply everyone with suitable PPE. On occasion we have issued alternative items e.g. a quick release firefighting boot rather than a pull on where individuals cannot be accommodated in the contracted footwear. We have invited suppliers in to measure people for bespoke items and to assist in the correct fitting and adjustment of the items. This includes drysuits and water rescue helmets.

We have options available to us and we follow a process from regular off the shelf items down to special measure with alternatives in between. There are high costs involved with special measure, so we will exhaust other options first but special measure should always enable us to reach a suitable conclusion for our diverse workforce.

## **Think People, Staff Survey 2016 (Think People Logo)**

### **Your Service - Your Voice**

This year we held our second staff survey, facilitated by People Insight, as part of the Authority's commitment to carry out the survey every two years. The results were very pleasing, showing that our work around engagement and inclusive communication had made a difference to staff views since the last survey in June 2014. With a response rate of 51%, the survey resulted in an engagement score of 74%.

People insight, the organisation that hosts our survey commented

"This is an unprecedented 19 percentage point increase on the 2014 engagement score and is an excellent result, especially for an organisation that is only on its second staff survey."

The greatest improvements against the 2014 survey were in the following areas:

- 76% of respondents felt that they enjoyed their work , up 25 percentage points from the v2014 survey

- 75% of the respondents did not “feel they have been bullied, harassed or discriminated against in the last 12 months”, an increase of 27 percentage points
- “Morale in my immediate team/watch/section is generally high”, up 26 percentage points to 58%
- “MFRA is a better place to work than it was 3 years ago”, up 27 percentage points to 42%
- “I feel supported in my role”, up 24 percentage points to 58%
- “Bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated at MFRA” – up 22 percentage points to 67%

The response to one question did not show an improvement; “We are good at sharing ideas to make things work better”. This is an area that has been focused on during the year and will be reviewed as part of our ongoing engagement work.

The survey recognised the good work around extending Principle Officer briefings to non-uniformed staff, Authority Member engagement with all staff, increased communication and recognition of employee’s work across all functions.

## **Staff & Authority Member Engagement**

The results of the 2014 Staff Engagement Survey highlighted an issue for the Authority in relation to their engagement with all groups of staff. In response to the statement “**Fire Authority Members engage well with staff at MFRA**” only 7% of staff completing the survey responded positively. 21% stated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, whilst 72% responded negatively.

As a result, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority made a commitment to improve their engagement with all staff groups across the organisation.

Since then, a raft of engagement events and activity between Authority Members and employees, has taken place.

A series of station visits were scheduled to provide Authority Members with an opportunity to have meaningful engagement with operational, station based staff, who may not ordinarily come into contact with Authority Members.

A number of “Staff Engagement Sessions” have also taken place. These have provided non –operational staff across each function, with the opportunity to engage with Authority Members and provide information regarding their various roles, and to ask Members questions regarding theirs.

Engagement sessions have also been held with Fire Control Staff, Operational and Non-Operational staff based at the Training and Development Academy and recruit firefighters.

Several days dedicated to such engagement events, are now included within the schedule of meeting dates and events agreed by the Authority each year.

The Authority are also continually reviewing their engagement activity to identify where improvements can be made and any additional opportunities for engagement.

For example, a poster has recently been produced and distributed to all Authority premises which includes pictures of all Authority Members and directs employees to where they can find more information regarding Members and the role of the Authority.

Also, articles focusing on Authority Members are to be incorporated within each edition of the “Hot News”. The aim of which is to enable employees to learn more about Authority Members as individuals and provide an insight into what motivates them and what they do to promote the work of MFRS.

The second Staff Survey undertaken in 2016, highlighted that the number of positive responses to the above statement had increased from 7% in 2014 to 24% in 2016, whilst the number of negative responses reduced from 72% in 2014 to 36% in 2016. Although this statement remains in the bottom 10 responses and there is still some



way to go, the improvements observed in responses to the statement are substantial and reflect the positive engagement activity undertaken by the Authority since 2014.

## **Equality and Diversity staff training delivery 2016/17**

### **Diversity awareness sessions**

Equality and Diversity training sessions are delivered to new staff to provide an overview of how E&D is delivered across the organisation, to help them understand their role in ensuring that services are delivered fairly and that people have due regard to the needs of different staff. The training also provides a good overview of the legal requirements and responsibilities of the Authority with regards to The Equality Act 2010. The sessions are interactive and provide an opportunity to raise awareness of the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority Ground Rules and an introduction to our policies

This year we have trained 18 new Firefighter recruits and 8 Community Safety Apprentices. We have asked each of the attendees to make a commitment to Equality and Diversity, this could be anything from becoming a FireProud Ally or attending Liverpool Pride, to supporting events and campaigns such as International Women's Day, Older Person's Day, or supporting charity work.

### **Autism Charter (Autism Together Logo)**

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority have become **Autism Champions** thanks to the work being carried out by our Youth Engagement teams and in particular our Prince's Trust Staff. Early this year Autism Together delivered training for our Prince's Trust Staff and Community Risk Management Apprentice to provide staff with a better awareness of autism and the challenges people face. The charter was written by people on the autism spectrum and asks organisations to train their staff and make venues more autism-friendly. Other prominent Liverpool organisations who have also signed the Charter include, NatWest Bank, Tate Liverpool and Remploy. The Autism together team has delivered over 1,200 hours of training, including Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority, in a bid to make Liverpool one of

the UK's first autism-friendly cities.

Tony Canavan said: "I approached Autism Together for training for our Princes Trust staff and Community Risk Management Apprentices as many had said they would benefit from knowing more about autism. The training carried out by Autism Together was extremely useful as we work directly with the public and often encounter people with autism"

The Prince's Trust teams have always been inclusive of individuals with autism when recruiting. However the training delivered by Autism Together further underpinned everyone's understanding of the condition.

Everyone who attended the course said they found it very interesting and useful and the feedback from the Autism Together trainers was that they were a great group to deliver to, and very interactive.

Speaking at the charter signing ceremony, Chief Executive of Autism Together Robin Bush said: "It's a real credit to this city that organisations of all shapes and sizes are supporting our project. In the end it's all about people, and the difference we can make"

## **Photo from Hotnews**

### **Disability Awareness training**

New recruit firefighters receive a significant amount of operational fire fighter training before they start their role and this year we have expanded it to include disability awareness training and education. The training, delivered by Daisy Inclusive UK representative Dave Kelly, who became blind at the age of 30, provided an innovative training session to the recruits which gave them an opportunity to experience what it feels like to lose their sight and have to rely on someone else to see and get around. This training also provided the firefighters with input to developing sensory skills, an important part of the firefighter role when tackling fires. The recruits found the course really helped them to prepare for their breathing

apparatus training which is carried out in the dark, in a smoke house as part of a team. The training has also assisted them in confidently carrying out community engagement activities with people with a disability in a fully inclusive way.

“The training provided allowed us to experience sensory deprivation in the safe environment of the classroom prior to us experiencing it during the Breathing Apparatus phase of the course. It further developed trust amongst colleagues as we guided each other blindfolded up and down stairs, much as we do during BA” Chris Kench, Development Firefighter, Kensington.

### **Equality and Diversity e-learning training package**

This year the Equality and Diversity team, with support from staff at our Training & Development Academy and an operational firefighter, have been working together to develop a bespoke in-house on line training package. The package which is due to enter its testing phase in 2017, has been developed using a suite of packages from our current e-learning training package provider Learn-pro.

The new software package has allowed us to develop e-learning content bespoke to Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority with increased interactivity, video content and links to our own policies and procedures. This has enabled us to produce a very cost effective learning module which can be delivered to all staff using our e-learning platform.

## Key employment-related information – as at 31.3.17

- There were 991 staff employed at MFRA, as at the end of 2016/17, of which 65.4% were uniformed/operational<sup>1</sup> and 31.2% were support staff and 3.4% were fire control staff
- 76.1% of staff were male and 23.9% were female
- Support staff have a 50% split between male and female
- Uniformed/operational staff had a gender split of 93.1% Male and 6.9% Female
- 59.9% of the total staff employed at MFRA are aged 46 and over
- 4.2% of staff had declared a disability (lower than the UK average population at 20%)
- 94.3% of the total staff population at MFRA were White British/White other , 4.3% of staff are Black Minority Ethnic (BME) –lower than the Merseyside average at 5.5%

Our Annual Workforce Equality Analysis report, which can be found on our website, provides a more detailed breakdown on staff diversity. We produce this data annual to help us monitor the trends around the number of staff in different protected groups across all groups and levels of the organisation.

The information also assists senior officers when developing Positive Action exercises, to encourage more diverse groups to apply for roles where they are most under represented. The data also assists the organisation with completing its duty to have due regard to the needs of different groups when developing employment practices and fire and rescue services, this is done through our Equality Impact Assessment process.

More information on recruitment can be found on page 17, where we have provided diversity information on recruitment to support Equality Objective 5.

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<sup>1</sup> Includes Fire Control Staff

## **Gender Pay Gap**

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 came into force on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. The regulation stipulates that organisations who employ more than 250 people must publish a report of their gender pay gap. There is a slight difference in the regulation for Public Sector organisations, in so much as we must publish an annual “snapshot” of our gender pay as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March each year to include in our Annual Public sector reporting. A copy of our full Annual Workforce Equality Analysis report can be found on our website [www.merseyfire.gov.uk/Aboutus/EqualityandDiversity/XXXXXXX](http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk/Aboutus/EqualityandDiversity/XXXXXXX)

## **Equality and Diversity policy refresh**

As part of our Annual policy refresh we have developed a wide range of information to help and support our staff with delivering inclusive services. Part of this process has been to update and refresh our policies and service instructions. The Equality and Diversity Policy has been renewed and in doing so we have ensured we have consulted with key partners, staff representative bodies, our Diversity Action Group and our Strategic Equality Group to enable us to build their views into the Policy using the Equality Impact Assessment process.

The response to the newly refreshed policy was very positive, and we received feedback from across the organisation, and from external partners. Feedback was received from the organisations below that demonstrated a wide endorsement for the policy saying that the policy was easy to read and very thorough. There were some suggestions for minor changes which helped to improve the policy:

- Employers Forum for Equality and Inclusion ,
- Asian Fire Service Association
- Fire Proud and LGBT Fire Brigades Union rep
- Fire Brigades Union
- Diversity Action Group members

## **Part 2 – Equality and Diversity Benchmarks and Events**

## **Equality and Diversity Events and Awards 2016/17**

This section of the report focuses on the events and awards that MF&RS has been involved in to celebrate and support diversity over the year. We have an active diversity calendar which is issued to all staff to encourage them to celebrate and commemorate different events throughout the year and to also understand when there may be times we adapt our services to meet the needs of diverse community's e.g. During the month of Ramadan.

### **Equality and Diversity Events in 2015/16**

**MF&RS hosts and promotes a variety of services, events and special days throughout the year which are aimed at improving outcomes for vulnerable people and relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not. Examples of some of the specific community-focused initiatives carried out during 2016/17 and the outcomes which have benefitted people with protected characteristics and other vulnerable groups are outlined below:**

#### **IDAHO Day and Launch of LGBT FireProud Network**

This year as part of our celebration for IDAHO Day Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority launched a new Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender network for all staff. Taking the name 'FireProud', the network will seek to provide a safe, confidential and supportive environment for all Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority staff who identifies as LGBT and others who identify under the LGBT umbrella. It will exist for anyone in the organisation to offer help, information, support, advice or just a better understanding of LGBT issues. The FireProud network will also establish a calendar of events where staff can meet and socialise.

Firefighter and chair of the FireProud network, Lorraine Lowe, said: "It's vital for us to have a work environment where everyone has a chance to achieve their potential, free from barriers, prejudice and discrimination. FireProud will help every member of staff who identify under the LGBT umbrella feel supported and empowered,

providing peer support and confidential advice. We are looking forward to FireProud becoming a valuable resource to all our LGBT staff.”

Equality & Diversity Manager, Wendy Kenyon, said: “FireProud will be available for anyone in the organisation to access help, information, support and advice or just gain a better understanding of LGBT issues. Any member of staff experiencing difficulty due to their gender identity or sexuality will be supported in confidence and FireProud will provide a safe forum for LGBT Staff to network”

### **Photograph – FireProud Launch**

Firefighter Lorraine Lowe, DCFO Phil Garrigan and Community Risk Management Officer Cheryl McGrath

### **Liverpool Pride 2016 – “Liverpool Icons”**

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority staff, apprentices and Authority Members, along with family, friends (and a few family pets) attended the Liverpool Pride event on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> July. All those attending started the day with breakfast at our Liverpool City Community Fire Station, before walking to St Georges Plateau to join the main march. The breakfast event was hosted by our new FireProud LGBT Staff Network, and we used Pride 2016 to mark the launch of our FireProud Allies Programme. Allies are individuals who do not themselves identify as LGBT but believe that lesbian, gay, bi and transgender people should be free to be themselves and reach their full potential. Allies have a critical role to play in creating inclusive environments and they are key to advancing fair treatment for LGBT people in their work, at home and in their communities. To date we have 70 members of staff who have volunteered to be FireProud Allies.

### **(Pride Photo)**



## **Macmillan Coffee morning**

**(photo from Hotnews)**

Each September our Occupation Health Team organise and host a Macmillan Coffee Morning and cake sale, with a Great British Bake-off show stopper challenge. This year's sale raised over £360 for the Cancer Charity. **(Photo Hotnews with Ruth Baller-Willson)**

## **Ageing Safely Week 2016,**

Firefighters, Advocates, Prevention teams and support staff joined forces to deliver Home Fire Safety Checks to elderly and vulnerable people across Merseyside on Older Persons day in October 2016. The focus of the day was to ensure that people aged 65 and over were safe in their homes, particularly those who may have difficulty escaping their property in the event of fire.

Checks were also carried out to make sure residents had working smoke alarms and teams advised people about the importance of being proactive if they hear a neighbours smoke alarm bleeping.

Altogether, 1032 Home Fire Safety Checks were delivered on the day and 1057 safety leaflets were handed out. Oil-filled radiators were also installed in a number of properties, door handles were fixed and a gentleman was even referred for help with his overgrown garden.

During the day staff were also shadowed by representatives from Liverpool Mutual Homes recording a short film on the work carried out by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority to highlight the work we do for Older People across Merseyside.

## **Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority awarded for 'Outstanding' Work with Older People**

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority was recognised for its proactive work with older members of the community at an awards ceremony hosted by Liverpool Mutual

Homes.

The Liverpool Older People's Awards was held at The Devonshire House Hotel in Liverpool and compered by actor Ricky Tomlinson.

MFRS was presented with the Outstanding Agency Award due to its fire safety prevention work with over 65s in Merseyside. The initiative launched by Liverpool Older Housing and Wellbeing Forum and has seen partner agencies working together to help Liverpool become an 'Age-Friendly City for Older People.' Members of Staff from the Community Risk Management Team from Service Headquarters and Belle Vale Community Fire Station attended the awards ceremony, where they were presented with a framed certificate and £500 prize money, which was donated to the Whitechapel Centre, a charity that supports homeless people in Liverpool.

**(Photos from Hotnews- HFSC's)**

## **Youth Engagement and Princes Trust team raise Autism Awareness**

As part of their twelve week Princes Trust programme each team must identify, fund raise and deliver a community project. Team 38 based at our Huyton Community Fire Station, visited a number of local charities and decided that they would decorate a room at a local community centre which was used by local community groups including one which supports young people with Autism.

Part of the project is that the team must developed a plan, work out what they can do in the two week period, and raise money for materials. They did this by doing a bag pack at a local Sainsbury's and raised £208. The team were ready to start the project when the team leader received a phone call to say it would not be possible for them to do the agreed work. This meant team needed to develop an alternative community project.

As it was Mental Health Awareness Week it was suggested to the team that they produce a film about mental health issues for young people. The group liked the idea but decided that they would like to still raise awareness about autism and do a documentary about mental health issues for people with autism. The team decided to create a short documentary highlighting autism and the mental health issues which can be experienced by someone with autism and decided to interview people with autism and organisations who help and support young people with autism.

The team interviewed a former Princes Trust member Amaris Thomas, and a friend of two of this current team, Hal Yorke, who are both autistic. They explained their personal experience about being autistic, and what they have experienced. They also interviewed a number of people including:

- Yvonne Smith from Autism Together, a charity based on the Wirral, that supports up to 450 people each day with services which include residential care, homecare and supported living, community and vocational services and the Step into Work programme.
- Sarah McKenzie who runs the Shetland centre, a charity based in Hale, Knowsley. The animal sanctuary, which relies on volunteers and a number of those who help out regularly at the centre are autistic. Amaris explained how helping at the centre has helped with her confidence and communication skills.
- Steve Johnson the Disability Manager for Everton in the Community. Everton in the Community offer help and support to young people, with various activities including football training (which helps with team building), communication skills, confidence building, work experience, volunteering opportunities and coaching accreditation and qualifications.
- Finally they spoke to two mums Diane Ryder and Michelle Cunningham who both have young children with Autism. They were finding it difficult to find support as mums of pre-school children, so started the group Little Stars Knowsley to offer support to mums and families of early years children. The

group offers monthly stay and plays, summer clubs, family support, days out for families, siblings and parents to give them a break from the day to day challenges. They group also hire the local soft play centre for a private group session, which allows mums and carers the chance to experience a 'normal' day out with other children and mums who are all experiencing similar problems and where their child's behaviour is expected and seen as normal.

Challenges faced by the Prince's Trust Team were the need to develop a new project quickly that would be inclusive to all members of the team. The team was a very diverse group, from a wide range of backgrounds, someone who was wearing a tag, people who were gender fluid, transgender, with mental health issues and different levels of education. It was decided that roles would be assigned to play on people's strengths while still allowing them to develop new skills. One member of the team who was not confident academically was given the opportunity to film the documentary. Throughout the project the team developed new skills from learning to use cameras, light and sound, how to structure an interview, carrying out research and editing.

The time scale was short (a total of 9 days) and getting people on board to talk about something so personnel on film, was a challenge but everyone approached was happy to be involved.

The film produced by the team can be found on Youtube, by searching for Autism & Mental Health Documentary - Huyton Team 38.

## **Employee Engagement Awards 2016 (Finalist Logo)**

Following on from our successful second staff survey in 2016, People Insight (our survey facilitators) nominated Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority for the Engagement Awards 2016 in the category of Employee Engagement Public Sector Company of the Year. MFRA was selected as one of five finalists in that category with Derbyshire Fire & Rescue, Ashford Borough Council, Sandwell Council (winner) and British Business Bank (highly commended). The awards event was held in the

26<sup>th</sup> January at Wembley Stadium where the winners were announced for the 17 categories.

Despite not winning the top award, the nomination was a great endorsement for the involvement in staff engagement that we have seen since the first survey in 2014.

## **Mental Health and Well-Being (Photo from hotnews)**

As we continue to work hard to support the mental health and well-being of our staff, our Occupational Health team have been nominated for a number of awards this year, to recognise the outstanding work they are doing. The Service achieved 'Highly Commended' in the category of 'Mental Health, the Emergency Services and the Criminal Justice System' at the National Practice Mental Health Awards. We were shortlisted from eight entrants in this category and recognised by the judges, for our mental health and well-being support programmes

Judge Claire Andre, clinical policy liaison lead at Northumberland Tyne and Wear Foundation NHS Trust said "The work being undertaken by Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority to support the mental health of their employees and community is nothing short of outstanding, which is why they were selected as one of the final three in their group from so many nominations. I had the privilege to meet some of the team on the awards evening and was overwhelmed to hear how positive and enthusiastic they are about the work. Theirs is fantastic initiative from a forward-thinking organisation. I look forward to continuing to work with Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority to share its positive practice."

The Occupational Health Team also won 'Best Employee Health and Wellbeing Strategy' category at the Annual Engagement Awards Programme. The event was attended by representatives from Barclays, Marks and Spencer, Nationwide Building Society, Virgin Money and The Tate Group. We were recognised for our 'effective, sustainable and successful 'health and wellbeing strategy' and for introducing it into the Service for the benefit of all staff and their working lives. The strategy was commended for the positive contribution it has made to the productivity of the organisation.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority were also named as a runner-up in the 'Health and Wellbeing' category at the Personnel Today Awards 2016, where judges commended the Occupational Health Team for its 'well-considered programme and well-managed solutions that are delivering good results for the organisation and the individuals.

## **Our continuing work with Staff Representative Bodies**

### **Fire Officers Association (FOA)**

"The Fire Officers Association (FOA) are an active partner with other representative body colleagues, working with Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority to support and assist the work of the Service Equality and Diversity team ensuring that we promote the values of the Service and our Association. FOA support the various forums within the service and at national level to ensure we are fully engaged with all protected groups. In fact we have appointed representatives to advise the National Executive on both Equality and Diversity issues and they attend all Board meetings. We are confident in the approach the service and that it is Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority a place where all can feel valued and supported in the workplace. We are confident in the knowledge that the service is actively monitoring and responding to issues that arise and prioritises this work, enshrining equality within its policies".

**Rob Pritchard**

**Merseyside Chair and National Vice President Fire Officer Association**

### **Fire Brigades Union (FBU)**

"The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) have historically championed equality and diversity in the workplace and dignity and respect for all and fairness at work policies are enshrined within our Rule Book.

We welcome and embrace the ongoing hard work that is being done by the Equality and Diversity team and we attend regular meetings and take an active role in all

areas of E&D. It is our belief that through this positive and constructive engagement we can not only address our existing members concerns but also make Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority a better place to work for all.

Through the hard work of the Equality and Diversity team and the support of the FBU we believe we have made a significant difference in achieving those goals and whilst there is much still to be done we look forward to working together in the future."

**Kev Hughes**

**Merseyside FBU Brigade Secretary**

## Conclusion

It's really pleasing to see the outcomes from our equality and diversity priorities and the impact they have on our staff and the diverse communities of Merseyside. I hope that you have enjoyed reading this report and will be able to understand a bit more about how we ensure that we are considering the needs of different groups, fostering good relations between different equality groups and ensuring that there is equality for all in our services and employment practices.

We are feeling proud of our work around Equality and Diversity but also recognise there is still much more to be done, especially around diversity within the workforce. We will continue to strive to deliver against our Equality Objectives in the coming year

If you would like to learn more about our work, or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our Diversity and Consultation Manager:

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**Phil Garrigan,  
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Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service.**