

Discussion document for People (Culture & Inclusion) Board



**Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I) Action Plan
2024/2027**

11 High impact areas addressing workforce and service delivery inequalities.

Introduction

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Action plan 2024- 2027 has been developed to target 10 high impact areas, looking at six key themes addressing workforce and service delivery inequalities while ensuring they align the MFRS Leadership Message and assist with the delivery of our five Equality Objectives for 2024-2027.

The action plan has been developed taking into consideration recommendations from the 2021 ED&I Audit conducted by the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA)/ JS associates, 2023 HMICFRS inspection findings, IFSG Improvement Strategies –Culture, Recruitment Progression & Retention and previous actions agreed as part of our functional plans.

This action plan should be viewed in synergy with the organisations People Plan 2024-27 and also the Workforce Cultural Transformation Action Plan 2024-27

Our Objectives

- Objective 1: Create a strong cohesive organisation that is positive to rising to the future challenges we face.
- Objective 2: Ensure that people from diverse communities receive equitable services that meet their needs.
- Objective 3: Reducing fires and other incidents amongst vulnerable people in the protected groups and deprived areas.
- Objective 4: To continue to evolve the Service's cultural competence based on community insight so that all staff can undertake their role recognising the value of difference. This strengthens our approach to Equality, diversity and inclusion, meaning our staff are well equipped to engage with our diverse communities and are sensitive to their needs.
- Objective 5: To continue to aspire for ED&I excellence; measuring ourselves against best practice and benchmarking tools within the Fire & Rescue Service and other sectors.

Our Themes

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Action plan themes are:

- ED&I – Learning and Development
- Inclusive staff voice
- Inclusive Employer
- ED&I and Knowing our communities.
- Inclusive Leadership Development
- ED&I Good Governance and Communications

Reporting

Updates are collated on a bi-monthly basis via one-to-one meetings with the lead officer and the ED&I coordinator and functional updates presented at the Culture and Inclusion Board.

	ED&I Action	Success criteria	Activities to achieve success	Responsible Function/Officer	Contributes to ED&I Objective	Timescale	Brief Progress	RAG Rating
<p>To support the organisation’s delivery against the following five Equality, diversity & inclusion (ED&I) Objectives:</p> <p>Objective 1: Create a strong cohesive organisation that is positive to rising to the future challenges we face. Objective 2: Ensure that people from diverse communities receive equitable services that meet their needs. Objective 3: Reducing fires and other incidents amongst vulnerable people in the protected groups and deprived areas. Objective 4: - To continue to evolve the Service’s cultural competence based on community insight so that all staff can undertake their role recognising the value of difference. This strengthens our approach to Equality, diversity and inclusion, meaning our staff are well equipped to engage with our diverse communities and are sensitive to their needs. Objective 5: To continue to aspire for ED&I excellence; measuring ourselves against best practice and benchmarking tools within the Fire & Rescue Service and other sectors.</p>								
<p>ED&I – Learning and Development</p>								
1	<p>Develop and deliver a comprehensive 3-year ED&I Learning & Development Strategy.</p>	<p>Staff ED&I training from foundation onwards ensures staff awareness and understanding focusing on ED&I has been routinely developed and led to change in behaviour and evidence of practice.</p> <p>Competence and delivery of interventions will focus at three levels:</p> <p>Level 1: Legislation & Policy Relevant</p> <p>Level 2: Valuing diversity</p> <p>Level 3: Integrating inclusion.</p> <p>Level 4: Leading from the front.</p>	<p>Introduce an ED&I training delivery strategy setting out levels of cultural competence taking staff from compliance to competence, ensuring that there are clear and tangible deliverables, for topics, delivery method, timescale and resources.</p> <p>Build on existing development opportunities focusing on race and bystanders and other key topics as identified in the strategy.</p> <p>Introduce development al conversations focusing on disability and gender.</p> <p>Review and evaluate the training throughout the life of the strategy to ensure that the training is having the expected impact? How is the training being received? How is the delivery going – is it on time and hitting the expected targets.</p>	<p>POD/ Nick Mernock</p>	<p>Objective 4</p>	<p>Q1 & 2 2024</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Q4 2024</p>	<p>Progress</p>	
2	<p>Support and empower our staff networks to thrive. Giving people a voice so staff feel valued and that they belong.</p>	<p>Feedback via the staff survey and appraisals and other mechanisms indicate staff feel included, valued and safe and can contribute to the strategic direction of MFRS.</p> <p>Staff networks across MFRS can evidence clear purpose, direction, value and long-term sustainability.</p> <p>Principal Officers and sponsors of staff networks can demonstrate how they have used their role to ensure staff networks have added value and all networks have been sufficiently resourced and supported to carry out their roles.</p> <p>(IFSG Improvement Strategy – Progression)</p>	<p>Build the capacity & empower through support the various staff networks through delivery of an agreed action plan setting out their annual activities, cost analysis through devolved management of a budget, programme management and in-built evaluation.</p> <p>Promote the senior sponsors group to ensure they have the tools and confidence to support the networks.</p> <p>Deliver methods of communication and interaction, such as a e-learning package about the staff networks as a way of capturing the voice/opinions of quieter members of the organisation</p>	<p>POD/Nick Mernock Staff Network Chairs</p> <p>POD/Staff Networks</p> <p>POD/Staff Networks</p>	<p>Objective 1 and 4</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Q2 & Q3</p>		

3	Staff Survey	Regular bi-annual and pulse surveys indicate ongoing improvements in the following areas: being proud to work for MFRS, staff who are highly engaged with a strong intent to remain with the Service, a belief that MFRS treats people equitably irrespective of background and strong evidence to suggest staff would recommend MFRS to friends and family as a good place to work	Regular pulse surveys enhance engagement. The Service effectively assesses levels of staff engagement. Link to the wider work on staff engagement and the Leadership Message	Strategy and Performance/POD	Objective 1	Q4		
---	---------------------	---	--	------------------------------	-------------	----	--	--

Inclusive Employer								
4	Increase the diversity of our workforce through taking a whole organisation approach through positive action strategy/programmes across all occupations/functions.	Increase the diversity of our workforce through taking a whole organisation approach through positive action strategy/programmes across all occupations/functions. (IFSG Improvement Strategy – Recruitment)	Promote and deliver through the Positive Action Attractions team support to the various functions to target key communities, recruitment drives to help achieve a more diverse workforce across all levels and across all functions	POD/Nick Mernock & other functional heads	Objective 1	Ongoing		
			Use, recruitment opportunities such as apprenticeships and cadets to increase diversity in the workforce	POD/Nick Mernock	Objective 1	Q3		
		Communication plan in place to ensure staff understand the purpose of positive action and challenge myths, misconceptions & difference in relation to positive discrimination. (IFSG Improvement Strategy – Recruitment)	Develop an internal communications strategy to explain the difference between positive action and positive discrimination to counteract the view of some that an individual has only been employed/promoted because their protected characteristic. This would be supportive to such individuals and be helpful in terms of encouraging progression.	POD/Nick Mernock	Objective 1	Q3		
		Enhanced understanding of the barriers that underrepresented groups feel they may face working for MFRS. (IFSG Improvement Strategy – Recruitment)	Commissioning work to identify any obstacles that local communities feel there are to applying to work with the service	POD/Nick Mernock	Objective 1	Q3 & Q4		
		Socio economic factors are taken into consideration when addressing recruitment and selection activities but also existing staff and their life journey.	Promote and advance socio-economic factors through targeting postcodes across the region in terms of recruitment and selection and existing staff.	POD/Nick Mernock Staff Networks	Objective 1	Ongoing		
		Increased diversity across the workforce. Improved access to job roles, and development opportunities for people from underrepresented groups.	Deliver and reflect on the impact of the High Potential Programme and other interventions to support the diversification of the workforce	POD/Nick Mernock	Objective 1	Ongoing		
		Visible family friendly policies are in place and reviewed to ensure take up across the organisation. (IFSG Improvement Strategy – Recruitment) (IFSG Improvement Strategy – Progression)	Promote, deliver, and reflect on the visible family friendly working policies supported by a greater use of flexible working arrangements. Reflect and promote flexible working arrangements at SM level	POD/Nick Mernock	Objective 1	Ongoing		
		Recruitment policies and practices have in place robust EIAs in place and the use of maturity models ensure diversity is embedded across practices. (IFSG Improvement Strategy – Recruitment)	Reflect on recruitment policies and practices to ensure that diversity (in the broadest sense) within services can be positively enhanced by the recruitment process.	POD/Nick Mernock	Objective 1	Q3 & Q4		

		Progression policies and practices have an integral consideration for diversity. (IFSG Improvement Strategy – Progression)	Reflect on progression policies and practices to help secure diversity among successful candidates achieving promotion.	POD/Nick Mernock	Objective 1	Ongoing		
		Promotion processes are explained consistently, and feedback provided to ensure processes are seen as fair, transparent, and applied consistently and clearly explained to all employees. (IFSG Improvement Strategy – Progression)	Undertake regular feedback and general communication to staff to ensure that promotion processes which are seen as fair and transparent and that they are applied consistently and clearly explained to all employees.	POD/Nick Mernock	Objective 1	Ongoing		
		The organisations keep under review expectations around fitness levels. They are communicated clearly with relevant support and consideration is consistently given to the potential impact on protected characteristics (noting for example issues such as the menopause) (IFSG Improvement Strategy – Retention)	Develop an equality impact assessment on fitness levels and expectations. In addition, introduce an internal communications strategy to explain the expectation from the service of fitness levels, support provided, and analysis undertaken in line with protected characteristics & other relevant factors	POD/Nick Mernock	Objective 1	Q3		
		Regular exit interviews and relevant analysis is undertaken, themes identified, discussed at senior levels & relevant action undertaken to address. (IFSG Improvement Strategy – Retention)	Promote the importance of ensuring exit interviews are undertaken, relevant themes identified and discussed at senior levels & appropriate action undertaken.	POD/Nick Mernock	Objective 1	Q3		
5	Review and develop a plan to map workforce equality data across the organisation.	Workforce equality information captures the employment lifecycle and demonstrates proportionate/disproportionate impacts and progress/lack of progress at all stages of the employment life cycle including exit interview data and narrative feedback.	Build and reflect equality data available and work with those responsible for workforce data collection to identify possible gaps and use of software to collect and analyse the data to reflect the NFCC ED&I toolkit and Census Data 2021. Deliver six monthly reviews with accompanying communication activities focusing on increasing the staff disclosure rates with a particular focus on disability, religion and belief and sexual orientation.	POD/Nick Mernock	Objective 1	Ongoing		
Knowing our communities								
6	Improve relationships and engagement with diverse communities to help reduce inequalities and deliver equitable services. This is linked to station plans with a strong focus on staff making contact and knowing the communities surrounding their stations through a process of continuous improvement	Station plans are informed by equality analysis and knowledge of local communities and their needs (advised by the Community Engagement Advisor) and MFRS can demonstrate that equality analysis has taken place and that station plans activities are linked to local risk models	Build partnership & associated activities with partner organisations to access their community engagement resources to proactively engage with diverse groups from communities & build cultural competence across the organisation. Provide contacts to connect communities to MFRS staff and provide advice and guidance to staff on how to engage	Deb Appleton /Michelle Kirk	Objective 2 and 4	Ongoing		

	Feedback indicates staff better understand the communities that they serve, and the Service has improved engagement with those communities.	<p>Training needs analysis to be completed and engagement with operational crews and other staff in relation to effective community engagement. Put appropriate interventions in place where required in conjunction with Area Managers.</p> <p>Undertake ED&I E-learning – review and update to provide advice on collecting monitoring data.</p> <p>Deliver additional monitoring questions for Safe and Well CFRMIS Data – led risk and equality analysis. For use by operational and departmental teams to improve services.</p>	Deb Appleton /Michelle Kirk	Objective 2 and 4	Ongoing		
	Innovations and good practice adopted by the Protection/Prevention/Preparedness and Response functions can be tracked back to the use of equality data with inequalities including socioeconomic/duty factors identified and the involvement of diverse groups. These contributions have been recognised and integrated within station plans and aligned to published Fire Standards focusing on the code of ethics, community risk management planning, prevention, protection, safeguarding and others.	<p>Response – Undertake work with Station Managers, Watch Managers and crews to build on the improving ED&I data being collected during HFSC's (, and supporting staff to know their local communities and develop contacts to help understand their needs and developing staff confidence and competence</p> <p>Undertake focused work on mainstreaming considerations focused on socio-economic/duty factors and service delivery</p>	AM Ben Ryder with support from - Strategy and Performance	Objective 2 and 4	Ongoing		
<p>Prevention – Deliver Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC) and Safe and Well visits proportionately to reflect our diverse communities and that staff within the function have the capabilities to deliver a service to diverse communities</p>		AM Mark Thomas with support from - Strategy and Performance	Objective 2 and 4	Ongoing			
<p>Prevention - Undertake focused work on mainstreaming considerations focused on socio-economic/duty factors for both employment service delivery matters</p>		AM Mark Thomas	Objective 2 and 4	Ongoing			
<p>Prevention – We will look to support young people through the delivery of Prince's Trust Team Programmes and other Youth Education Engagement programmes. We will continue to follow an evidence-based approach when choosing children and young people for MFRS initiatives in partnership with our stakeholders and partners.</p>		AM Mark Thomas with support from - Strategy and Performance	Objective 2 and 4	Ongoing			
<p>Protection – Build on previous delivery of Business Fire Safety education events to the diverse communities of Merseyside and ensure staff within the function have the capabilities to deliver a service to diverse communities.</p>		AM Kevin Longshaw with support from - Strategy and Performance	Objective 2 and 4	Ongoing			
<p>Protection – Build on existing work linked to the National NFCC FRS project and recommendations focusing on engaging with diverse business and business safety compliance work and evaluate the impact. In</p>		AM Kevin Longshaw with support from -	Objective 2 and 4	Ongoing			

			addition, undertake focused work on mainstreaming considerations focused on socio-economic/duty factors and service delivery	Strategy and Performance				
			Protection – Reflect & deliver Safeguarding training bespoke to Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking	AM Kevin Longshaw with support from – Strategy and Performance	Objective 2 and 4	Ongoing		
			Operational preparedness – Deliver and & promote equality data available, utilised and reported to help prevent and mitigate risks in line with the community risk register. Build equality impact assessments within local resilience forum plans and exercising. In addition, deliver with fire control greater awareness and understanding of the diverse communities MFRA serves	AM Ged Sheridan with support from - Strategy and Performance	Objective 2 and 4	Ongoing		
			National Resilience –Build ED&I considerations working closely with the national resilience and the urban search and rescue working and user groups and ensure staff within the function have the capabilities to deliver a service to diverse communities	AM Paul Murphy	Objective 2 and 4	Ongoing		

Inclusive leadership development								
7	<p>Embed Inclusive Leadership where leaders embody a leadership approach/behaviour that appreciates diversity, invites and welcomes everyone’s individual contribution and encourages full engagement with the processes of decision making, to shape reality, recognising the overlap with MFRS’s Leadership Message and the Code of Ethics for FRS and the associated five ethical principles and fire standards.</p> <p>Undertake internal positive action and identify and develop future leaders from underrepresented groups within MFRS to reach middle and senior level positions as part of the organisation’s commitment towards positive action and workforce diversity.</p>	<p>Evidence shows leaders across the organisation consistently demonstrate behaviours that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are aligned to the Service Leadership Message, Leadership Behaviours, our Ground Rules and NFCC’s Core Code of Ethics. • Appreciate diversity. Invites and welcomes everyone’s individual contribution and encourages full engagement with the processes of decision-making and shaping reality. • Take conscious steps to break down barriers for people at risk of being excluded from society. • Create, change and innovate whilst balancing everybody’s needs. <hr/> <p>The Service promotes Organisational Learning in its people focussed activities. Creating space for innovation and improvement through active peer support learning interventions.</p> <hr/> <p>Increased diversity across the workforce.</p> <p>Improved access to job roles, applications, and development opportunities for people from underrepresented groups within MFRA and externally.</p> <p>(IFG Improvement Strategy – Progression)</p> <hr/> <p>Through positive action, staff from underrepresented groups are supported to apply for Leadership roles at all levels.</p> <p>Middle and Strategic level positions are representative of wider organisational and community demographics.</p>	<p>Further embed Leadership Behaviours, Values and Core Code of Ethics in Leadership Development programmes and all relevant learning interventions.</p> <p>Promote and ensure access to diverse learning interventions as part of a comprehensive talent management resource.</p> <p>Continue to align all recruitment and selection activities to Leadership Behaviours, Values and Core Code of Ethics.</p> <p>Reflect on the outcomes from the Service’s pilot Middle Manager Cultural Leadership Development Programme. Considering opportunities for further development and roll out.</p> <hr/> <p>Reflect on project outcomes resulting from the Service’s pilot Middle Manager Cultural Leadership Development Programme. Considering opportunities for further development and roll out.</p> <hr/> <p>Promote and ensure access to development interventions such as Coaching and Mentoring.</p> <hr/> <p>Build on the existing Reciprocal Mentoring programme, which currently involves members of the Senior Leadership Team and underrepresented members of the work force.</p> <hr/> <p>Build on existing talent management resources such as the High Potential Programme to identify and support talent in underrepresented groups to achieve their potential.</p> <p>Engage with external partners such as Women in the Fire Service and AFSA to identify and support talent in underrepresented groups to achieve their potential.</p>	POD/Nick Mernock	Objective 1 and 4	ongoing		
ED&I Good governance & Communications								
8	<p>SLT members will set an example by advocating ED&I both internally and externally, holding management accountable and taking concrete measures to embed ED&I throughout MFRS</p>	<p>From a strategic standpoint SLT members can understand and articulate the organisation’s current ED&I environment both at a corporate and Function level for which they have overall responsibility</p>	<p>Through advice and support work with SLT members to take necessary steps to cultivate ED&I into their roles and responsibilities with a focus on: (a) how to articulate the current state of SLT’s approach to ED&I governance (b)</p>	SLT	Objective 2 and 3	Ongoing		

		<p>SLT have invested time and resources to educate themselves on ED&I and ED&I governance and embedding ED&I into all SLT processes including engaging in reciprocal mentoring/coaching relationships with staff.</p> <p>Through integrity, SLT are able to demonstrate consistently how they have worked with management to embed ED&I and what behaviours support it.</p> <p>From a performance perspective, SLT are able to confidently prioritise ED&I as a strategic imperative on the SLT agenda and monitor relevant metrics and standards</p>	<p>assessing the above approach against leading practices (c) identifying what can be done to achieve robust ED&I governance and implement changes to accomplish ED&I goals as SLT members</p>					
9	<p>Quality Assure Equality Impact Assessment process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review process to undertake EIA's and review actions as a result • Integrate and ensure EIAs consider both internal and external data • Engage with internal and external networks • Develop guidance and consider further training 	<p>Feedback indicates staff understand the purpose of EIAs and decision making and can evidence change in practice following completion of an EIA.</p> <p>Staff have considered and used internal and external data as part of decision making.</p> <p>Those with responsibilities for EIAs can demonstrate impact including organisational learning in response to an impact assessment(s) that have been undertaken.</p>	<p>Develop further quality controls with monitoring and reporting.</p> <p>Provide staff with support to ensure robust EIAs are routinely undertaken and recorded and capture and share the EIA experience and impact of policy and practice.</p> <p>Develop long term capacity through learning and development to support staff to undertake robust EIAs.</p>	POD/Nick Mernock	Objective 2 and 3	ongoing		
10	<p>SLT agenda planning ensures ED&I matters are discussed and progress shared with Authority members</p>	<p>An annual report is published and shared with members to demonstrate progress in line with the ED&I objectives.</p> <p>The MFRS annual report confirms all appropriate SLT agenda items have included an EIA endorsed and introduced by a Principal Officer who has ensured SLT members have been furnished with the right information, analysis, and advice including how SLT needs to act on these outputs.</p> <p>SLT and MFRA Authority members have regular discussions about progress on ED&I as part of established feedback mechanism.</p> <p>SLT requests the regular undertaking of external ED&I benchmarking to ensure external scrutiny but also consistently raises the level of reassurance and confidence that not only is MFRS legally compliant in terms of ED&I but also reflecting best practice.</p>	<p>Strategies and policies accepted by SLT include an EIA.</p> <p>EIAs are discussed and key points recorded.</p> <p>Functional and station plans addressed and monitor progress on ED&I</p> <p>Undertake the NFCC Equality Maturity Model Toolkit to help measure progress. Consider undertaking a further ED&I Audit as part of a peer review.</p> <p>Senior sponsors for ED&I networks act as guardians for their area of interest.</p> <p>Authority members are offered both development support and opportunities to engage in ED&I activities.</p> <p>Appropriate benchmarking standards are undertaken to help demonstrate progress and compliance</p>	<p>SLT/Nick Mernock</p> <p>SLT/Deb Appleton and Ben Ryder</p> <p>Nick Mernock</p> <p>All SLT</p> <p>Ria Groves</p> <p>Nick Mernock</p>	<p>Objective 1&2</p> <p>Objective 1&2</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>		

<p>11</p>	<p>Build on existing practice and Integrate equality, diversity and Inclusion into all communications and engagement activity, procurement and finance activities both in terms of service delivery and employment.</p> <p>Finance</p> <p>Procurement</p>	<p>MFRS has robust independent and anonymised staff reporting system in place that allows staff to report concerns.</p> <p>Feedback, both qualitative and quantitative indicates that MFRS listens, responds to, and communicates effectively with diverse communities and the workforce, both in terms of service delivery but also how MFRS markets itself as an employer of choice.</p> <p>Complete the implementation of the findings of the two external reports commissioned to ensure the MFRS external website and communications comply with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. Continue to build on the accessibility of the website and communications in general.</p> <p>When making key financial decisions MFRS is confident the process they follow to assess the impact on equality of financial proposals is robust, and the impact that financial proposals could have on people with protected characteristics is thoroughly considered before any decisions are arrived at and in line with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) guidance. As a procurer, MFRS is confident we meet the EHRC guidance ‘Buying better outcomes: mainstreaming equality considerations in procurement - a guide for public authorities in England’ and therefore are able to demonstrate consistently how equality, diversity and inclusion is considered at all stages of its procurement process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at the preparation stage • at the selection stage; • at the tender stage; • at award stage; • in contract monitoring. <p>In terms of procurement and challenging modern slavery MFRS can demonstrate compliance with the “Tackling modern slavery in government supply chains” guidance. In practice this will mean whoever MFRS procures from, the Service will ask parties to declare that they are not involved in slavery or human trafficking and that they will ensure that they remain slavery and human trafficking free;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take appropriate steps to ensure that there is no slavery or human trafficking in their own supply chains; and • provide a copy of their own Modern Anti-slavery and Human Trafficking Statement where required. 	<p>Undertake a review of the existing anonymised staff reporting system and look at ways of strengthening staff access to independent reporting based on concerns they may have.</p> <p>Use multi-channel communications to send positive and informative signals to employees, future recruits, diverse communities, and Authority Members</p> <p>Stories are collated demonstrating the power of diversity and shared across the organisation and partners</p> <p>EHRC guidance ,“Making Fair Financial Decisions” Guidance for decision-makers is followed together with robust undertaking of EIA</p> <p>Existing practice is reviewed in line with EHRC guidance ‘Buying better outcomes: mainstreaming equality considerations in procurement - a guide for public authorities in England’ and systems and processes are put in place to reflect the above guidance</p> <p>Existing practice is reviewed in line with national guidance Tackling modern slavery in government supply chains guidance and systems and processes are put in place to reflect the above guidance</p>	<p>POD</p> <p>Strategy and Performance</p> <p>Finance and Procurement/ Mike Rea/ Hywyn Pritchard</p> <p>Finance and Procurement/ Mike Rea/ Hywyn Pritchard</p>	<p>Objective 1&2</p>	<p>Q2 2024</p>		
-----------	--	---	---	--	--------------------------	----------------	--	--