

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Overview Details			
Function /Department	POD	Date Of analysis	21.05.2025
Title and overview of what is being assessed / considered	Implementation of High Potential Programme	Review Date	
Who will be affected by this activity? (Please tick) All staff		Staff ☒	Public ☐
Author of Equality Impact Analysis	Jo Woods	Equality Analysis quality assured by (Member of the POD team)	

The purpose of undertaking an equality impact analysis and assessment is to understand the potential and/or actual impact that a service or policy may have on protected groups within the Equality Act (2010). The protected groups are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and / or belief
- Sex (gender)
- Sexual orientation
- Socio-economic disadvantage (Although not one of the 9 protected groups MFRA recognise that Socio-economic disadvantage affects many deprived communities within Merseyside.)

People who are protected from discrimination on the basis of any of these characteristics are described in this document as belonging to one or other “protected group”. In addition, equality analysis can be applied to groups of people not afforded protection by the Equality Act, but who often face disadvantage and stigma in life in general and when trying to access services & employment opportunities. Such groups include homeless people, sex workers, people who misuse drugs and other groups who experience socio economic disadvantage & others. This template has been developed following consultation with staff and other external stakeholders including reference to the National Fire Chiefs

Councils (NFCC) equality impact assessment toolkit as well as the Maturity Models and Workforce Good Practice Frameworks developed by the NFCC which MFRS will use to underpin EIAs as wider work on improvement.

MFRS have also created the ED&I Assurance Checklist, which is a useful outline of ED&I factors that staff need to consider helping demonstrate minimum legal compliance, making the most of ED&O opportunities and minimising risk for the organisation. This checklist can be used when preparing plans, discussing new services and organisational change.

Impact Analysis		
1	What evidence have you used to think about any potential impact on particular groups? (Please highlight any evidence that you have considered to help you address what the potential impact may be) Also include an introduction here giving background the purpose of the Policy, SI etc. that is being assessed. (A good place to start is the introduction and purpose of the document) Example evidence: • ONS Census data • Regional or local demographic information • MFRS reports & data • NFCC Reports/Guidance • Home office/Local government Reports • Risk Assessments • Staff survey results • Research / epidemiology studies • Updates to legislation • Engagement records or analysis <u>NFCC Equality of Access documents</u> – We encourage you to click on the following link to access a series of 'equality of access documents',	Purpose of the Equality Analysis This report assesses the High Potential Development Programme against the nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 to identify equality considerations and ensure inclusivity and fairness across all participant demographics. The analysis also aligns with the Cultural Action Plan and the organisation's commitment to Positive Action, ensuring that the programme supports diverse talent development in line with organisational values. Programme Overview The High Potential Development Programme has been running for as a pilot for the past 18 months, designed to identify, develop, talented individuals. Eligibility is based through Line Manager endorsement in displaying the Leadership values and behaviours. With 148 staff currently participating, including 48% women and 9% BAME members. This analysis evaluates if the programme supports an equitable experience and promotes inclusivity for all protected groups. We have cannot compare data over the pilot period and aim to ensure that the same categories will be used to facilitate more detailed analysis annually. We are continually engaging with all Staff Networks to encourage wider participation. We have developed a full comms plan to improve awareness of the aims and outcomes for all staff. The High Potential Programme (HPP) sets out how Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MFRS) supports the development of its staff to facilitate them in maximising their potential. Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) have committed to supporting this to compliment a wider package of development programmes. It aims to add value to all participants to feel more empowered in developing their own potential. It aims to raise awareness of formal promotion pathways and how to access them. Improving staff's skills, knowledge and understanding will improve our service to partnership agencies and

developed by the National Fire Service Council (NFCC) & reference the data and information highlighted. Some aspects of these documents will help you provide information, awareness, and data to support: • Community Risk Management Plans • Service delivery strategies • Positive action and recruitment plans • Workforce improvement plans • Community engagement activities • and will prompt conversations within the workplace. Each document provides a significant amount of data and information, including research undertaken and risk-based evidence, and then goes into some ideas for actions which Services can use based on the information and their individual circumstances	our communities. Ultimately facilitating the staff to be the best version of themselves, will support our vision to be the best Fire & Rescue Service (FRS) in the Country. The nominations process allows every person to be nominated, regardless of position. This is a more inclusive approach than other public sector and FRS HPP programmes that include prescriptive criteria. Criteria for nominees is based on how they demonstrate the leadership behaviours and values in practice. This enables us in working towards overcoming issues raised in Section 4 of <u>Pathways and barriers to leadership in fire and rescue services - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</u> The programme allows participant's access to a core suite of Masterclasses designed to raise their awareness of positive leadership styles and enhance their understanding of our own leadership message. Further development is assigned via a Personalised Development Plan (PDP), devised with a Talent Advisor. This outlines all development opportunities bespoke to the individual participant. An annual review of the PDP will take place to examine progress. Bespoke provision is designed to enhance participation and remove traditional access barriers for participants. Ensuring learning styles can be applied throughout all programme activity. Coaching and Mentoring provision may form part of this plan; both are significant means of supporting and developing others in line with our values and behaviours. It is also acknowledged that a coaching style of leadership is a leadership behaviour promoted by the Service. HPP actively supports a learning Leadership culture placing the individual at the heart of their own learning, creating a greater sense of responsibility and accountability for their own and organisational outcomes. It nurtures our organisational capability as a Service to our communities. Research across the NFCC, FRS's and the Public Sector suggest that most high potential programmes are direct entry routes to middle/senior management roles. They typically have a prescriptive criterion and some form of assessment process. The majority of data provided by the NFCC Equality of Access suggest that this is in direct contravention of facilitating inclusion of underrepresented groups in accessing promotion opportunities.
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		The Civil Service have taken significant steps to be more inclusive in their high potential programmes although there is limited data on participation translating to promotion for underrepresented groups (Civil Service , 2024). Whilst our HPP is not a route to promotion it is designed to develop those with leadership potential. It complements our promotion processes and as such, the only criteria to be nominated, is based on your ability to demonstrate the leadership values and behaviours in all that you do. Significantly removing traditional barriers to development will increase the diversity of our participants. As research by the Government suggests “the business case for equality and diversity suggests that diversity of people brings diversity of skills and experience, which in turn can deliver richer creativity, better problem solving and greater flexibility to environmental changes” (McGregor-Smith, 2016). We aim to support the delivery of the ED&I objectives outlined in the CRMP 24-27 and the EDI Annual Report 2023/4; by improving the leadership skills of participants, providing them with the understanding skills and knowledge to deliver on these objectives within their role. The report outlines the need to see more representation across the Service from underrepresented groups. Similarly, this needs to be reflected in our Management Structures. HPP aims to enhance Leadership skills, develops knowledge and understanding of progress toward promotion. Similarly, the HPP aims to deliver on the actions within the People Plan 24-27 by developing exceptional people and leaders, embedding ED&I in all our organisational development delivery. We will ensure that we hear feedback from the full range of diverse voices on our programme, ensuring their contribution is embedded in all future developments of the programme. In turn this will assist us as a Service in meeting the HMI inspection areas for development. We will be able to demonstrate our Core Code of Ethics and uphold out statutory duties within the EA2010 and PSED 2011.	
2	Do you have all the evidence you need in order to make an informed decisions about the potential impact? (Please tick)	Yes ☒	No ☐

		If you feel that you have enough evidence, then you will not need to undertake any engagement activity	If you feel that you do not have enough evidence to make an informed decision, then you will need to undertake engagement activity with the staff or members of the public as applicable
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3	What engagement is taking place or has already been undertaken to understand any potential impact on staff or members of the public? Examples include: <u>Public</u> • Interviews • Focus groups • Public Forums • Complaints, comments, compliments <u>Staff</u> • Staff events / workshop • Existing staff meetings / committees • Staff Networks • Representative Bodies • Annual Staff Survey questions	It was the view of the SLT at the inception of the pilot that we remove barriers to participants to increase inclusion. This was to be achieved by removing prescribed criteria which typically reduces accessibility for underrepresented groups. Allowing staff at all levels of the organisation to be nominated based on their demonstration of the Leadership Values and Behaviours. The long-term goal will be a significant group of staff that are truly representative, leading the organisation from whatever role they work in. HPP will be giving them the skills to continually to develop themselves and others. Ultimately providing positive role models for the Service and its communities. Evaluation and Staff consultation has taken place following the pilot of the programme which began in 2022. We have undertaken surveys, in addition we have conducted interviews with Principal Officers, SLT, Senior Stakeholders, Participants and individuals that declined to take part in the programme. We held focus groups of those surveyed in the initial round of feedback to gain more qualitative data to inform the rollout of the programme. Equally we are holding focus groups with those surveyed who didn't respond to ensure validity of the qualitative data by engaging those who did not respond to reduce confirmation bias in reporting. The policy has been consulted on in the formal process across staff networks, trade unions and will be presented to the Authority. We have discussed access issues with the Principal Officer Sponsor for the ND network. Meetings scheduled with our Staff Networks will provide further advice in relation to barriers to accessing development programmes. Initial feedback from participants around time management skills, will be addressed as a workshop. This will assist those who have issues around executive function. Changes have been made to the programme following the feedback from the pilot and will continue to be evaluated post-programme. Blended learning resources to be created on an ongoing basis to be facilitate better inclusion for our neurodiverse participants, shift workers and those with caring responsibilities. Ensuring that we deliver activities using methods that include a variety of learning styles will improve participation and outcomes for all learners. The PDP element of the programme allows each participant to decide how and when they access their development
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		activities, this will increase participation and improve engagement across all groups. We are working with the E-Learning team and Portal Design Team to develop a range of accessible resources that met the needs of all learning styles. Surveys highlighted that the timing of sessions for participants needs to facilitate better access for those who have caring responsibilities. Feedback has highlighted these barriers to access that we are actively working to reduce by introducing different styles of learning activity and different delivery approaches. This will improve access for some underrepresented groups. We will continue to use Equality Monitoring Data to ensure we are providing equitable opportunities for development. A rolling programme of evaluation will continue to inform best practice and reporting.	
4	Will there be an impact against the protected groups as described in the Equality Act (2010)? Summarise what impact there may be against each of the protected groups. Embed or provide a hyperlink to any reports or electronic files to which you are referring. Please remember when considering any possible impacts, these may be positive or negative and that there may be different impacts for our own staff when compared to those possible impacts on members of the community. Please detail clearly if the impacts are for staff or the wider community. It is also important to note that there may not be an impact on some of the protected groups if this should be the case, please tick the not applicable box.	What is the actual or potential impact on age? We will review eligibility and selection criteria to ensure no age-related biases, making programme language and opportunities accessible for all career stages. Age range and experience of participants in the initial pilot is broad ranging and is anticipated to continue. Some reverse mentoring has facilitated a reciprocal arrangement of experience staff with less experience staff in the initial pilot and is expected to continue. The programme has the potential to add value to their potential of any participant regardless of their age in allowing them to seek their own development activities suited to their needs. Facilitation of blended learning allows participants to progress at their own pace by their own learning methods and styles. This reduces the potential for age related barriers to access learning methods. Participants will discuss their individual needs with their talent advisor to outline any potential barrier at the outset. Talent advisors will seek support from POD if required to assist individuals.	Not applicable ☐

	If there is no impact , please state that there is no impact.	What is the actual or potential impact on disability? Implement reasonable adjustments in training, and materials for accessibility, including digital formats. Looking ahead we will be including blended learning as allows participants to progress at their own pace by their own learning methods and styles. A range of methods will be used to deliver all of the programme and choice of activities will meet a broad range of needs. This reduces the potential for disability related barriers to access learning methods. Participants will discuss their individual needs with their talent advisor to outline any potential barrier at the outset. Talent advisors will seek support from POD if required to assist individuals. Following feedback from the initial pilot, the decision to remove the issuing of Leadership Development Books to all as standard is under consideration. The resources on Leadership should be accessible to all, a diverse range of podcasts, videos etc is being developed with the participants of a focus group.	Not applicable ☐
		What is the actual or potential impact on gender reassignment? As above, in addition we will ensure enhanced privacy protections in participant records and data handling.	Not applicable ☐
		What is the actual or potential impact on marriage and civil partnership? Ensure scheduling and eligibility are balanced and do not inadvertently favour specific marital statuses.	Not applicable ☐
		What is the actual or potential impact on pregnancy and maternity? We will create clear deferral guidance for pregnant participants or those on maternity leave, for those that wish to defer the programme. In the initial pilot some pregnant staff has chosen to defer their participation. The changes made to the programme following feedback will mean that	Not applicable ☐

		participants can still access the programme via KIT days if they wish and still access e- learning opportunities at their own pace. Consideration has been given to the timing of session for those with childcare responsibilities following feedback from the initial pilot. We recognise that this also impacts all carers, parents and those with other caring responsibilities. The aim is to make session and development opportunities as accessible as possible.	
		What is the actual or potential impact on race? Conduct a bias review in selection and promotion processes to support equal opportunity across racial backgrounds. Increase cultural competence in coaching and mentoring with specific training on race inclusivity. Commit to regular diversity audits and integrate feedback from BAME participants and staff networks to enhance programme inclusivity. As detailed in Pathways and barriers to leadership in fire and rescue services 2022 - <i>“for all roles, there is a lack of diversity in applicants for leadership positions; therefore, FRSs could do more to attract applications from diverse backgrounds into leadership roles; the most recent applications to leadership positions show that the great majority of applicants are white men, while there is a paucity of applications from women and ethnic minority groups, reflecting wider trends in FRS workforces; FRSs could therefore do more to attract talent from underrepresented backgrounds into leadership roles.”</i> HPP seeks to attract talent and develop them to be able to access Leadership roles, thus providing more diverse representation at Leadership levels. Providing positive roles models for our diverse communities in relation to recruitment and becoming an employer of choice. We aim to provide a range of Masterclasses from a broad spectrum of representative	Not applicable ☐

	people who can role model how they have overcome their diversity related barriers to Leadership progression.	
	What is the actual or potential impact on religion and / or belief? As above - In addition, provide reasonable adjustments for religious observances in scheduling and ensure cultural sensitivity in programme materials; with a view to making the programme fully accessible.	Not applicable ☐
	What is the actual or potential impact on sex (gender)? As above - In addition evaluate gender representation in the programme to address any imbalances. Single gender above station manager level needs to be addressed. Confidence to apply for role. Coaching & mentoring around processes. External coaching from NFCC will be accessible to ensure participants can access a wider range of representative Coaches and Mentors.	Not applicable ☐
	What is the actual or potential impact on sexual orientation? As above – In addition we will identify and address any potential barriers based on sexual orientation.	Not applicable ☐
	What is the actual or potential impact on Socio-economic disadvantage? As above - In addition, the programme will facilitate access to Further Education opportunities such as CMI courses for professional development to those who have typically been unsuccessful in accessing FE in traditional education settings.	Not applicable ☐

ACTION PLAN

What actions need to be taken in order to mitigate the impacts identified in sections 3,4 and 5?				
Impact	Action Required	Integrated existing work (yes/no) outline	Target Date	Responsibility
Age	In line with the actions above Integrated into future work	yes	9 - 12 months	J Woods
Disability -	In line with the actions above Integrated into future work	Yes	9 - 12 months	J Woods
Pregnancy and Maternity -	In line with the actions above Integrated into future work	Yes	9 - 12 months	J Woods
Race	In line with the actions above Integrated into future work	Yes	9 - 12 months	J Woods
Gender reassignment	In line with the actions above Integrated into future work	Yes	9 - 12 months	J Woods
Marriage and civil partnership	In line with the actions above Integrated into future work	Yes	9 - 12 months	J Woods
Religion and / or belief	In line with the actions above Integrated into future work	Yes	9 - 12 months	J Woods
Sex (gender)	In line with the actions above Integrated into future work	Yes	9 - 12 months	J Woods
Sexual orientation	In line with the actions above Integrated into future work	Yes	9 - 12 months	J Woods
Other	In line with the actions above Integrated into future work	Yes	9 - 12 months	J Woods
Deprived communities/socio economic	In line with the actions above Integrated into future work	Yes	9 - 12 months	J Woods
How will these actions be monitored and where will the outcomes be reported? (Please describe below)				
General Equality Framework				

- **Inclusive Language and Communication**
Regularly review all programme materials for inclusive language, ensuring no implicit bias or discrimination across communication and training.
- **Data Collection and Monitoring**
Collect demographic data (with consent) to evaluate programme access, progression, and any disparities in outcomes across protected characteristics.
- **Feedback Mechanisms and Ongoing Consultation**
Establish anonymous feedback channels and ongoing consultation with staff networks, particularly those representing BAME and female employees. This will provide insights into participant experiences and help align the programme with evolving equality needs and the Cultural Action Plan.

Completed by (Please print name /Designation)	Jo Woods	Signature Date	Jo Woods 21 st May 2025
Quality Assured by (Please print name /Designation)	Vicky Campbell	Signature Date	Vicky Campbell 26 th May 2025

Name of responsible SLT member (Please print name /Designation)	Nick Mernock	Signature Date	Nick Mernock 17 th June 2025
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Bibliography and Guidance documents

This bibliography provides details of all the documents and reports included within this EIA or the EIA guidance. The bibliography will also include Hyperlinks to other useful documents, reports, data, and webinars on our portal page or links direct to the websites which you may find helpful when completing your EIA. **Please note, that this is a live document, do not use an old copy of this form to complete a new EIA. Please ensure that you download a new copy from the portal, as the bibliography and links will be updated regularly to ensure you have access to the most recent data, articles and training.**

Documents referenced and hyperlinked within the form

National Fire Chiefs Councils (NFCC) [equality impact assessment template](#)

National Fire Chiefs Councils (NFCC) [Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit](#)

National Fire Chiefs Councils (NFCC) [Maturity Models and Workforce Good Practice Frameworks](#)

This document provides insight into the NFCC Maturity model and provides guidance on the following areas:

- Leadership Development
- Recruitment
- Learning Organisation
- Blended Learning
- Performance Management
- Employee Recognition
- Talent Management
- EDI
- Well, Being
- HR Analytics

Equality Diversity & Inclusion Resource Library

The ED&I resources Library is located on the ED&I portal page and provides a suite of documents (detailed below) from a wide variety of sources, they may be internally produced reports or guidance, toolkits or data produced by the NFCC or partners. A list of the documents can be found below, or you can access the complete library [here](#).

Disability related support including:

- [AFSA - Lets talk workplace disability](#)

Gender Related Resources including:



- Fast Facts for patients – Menopause

Pregnancy and Maternity Related Resources

Religion and Belief related resources including:

- AFSA – 2021 Workforce Religion and belief Toolkit

Sexual Orientation Related Resources

AFSA Workforce Positive Action Toolkit

Dementia Friendly Emergency Services Guidance

Home office

Equality Impact Assessment – Smart Questions - This document has been produced by the Home Office to support HMICFRS and is a Summary of foreseeable impacts of policy proposal, guidance or operational activity on people who share protected characteristics

NFCC Equality of Access to Services and Employment which includes:

- NFCC Equality of Access to Services and Actions for the Vulnerable Rehoused Homeless
- NFCC Equality of Access to Services and Employment for Black Communities
- NFCC Equality of Access to Services and Employment for Neurodiversity
- NFCC Equality of Access to Services and Employment for LGBT Communities
- NFCC Equality of Access to Services and Employment for People from Asian Communities
- NFCC Equality of Access to Services and Employment for the Roma Communities
- NFCC Equality of Access to Services and Employment for People Living with Dementia
- NFCC Equality of Access to Services and Employment for People Living in Rural Communities
- NFCC Equality of Access to Services and Employment for Emerging Migrant Communities
- NFCC Community Risk – CRMP Equality Impact Assessment

These can also be found on the NFCC website

NFCC Toolkits



The NFCC have also created a number of toolkits to provide help and guidance these can be found here on the [NFCC website](#) or via the links below in the ED&I Resource Library

The toolkits currently available include:

- [Collecting and Disseminating of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Data Toolkit](#)
- [Gender Diversity Toolkit](#)
- [Neurodiversity Toolkit](#)
- [Undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit](#)
- [Staff Networks Toolkit](#)

Webinars

[NFCC Lunch and Learns](#) which include

- Neurodiversity
- Trans Visibility in FRS
- Racial Equality
- Bite Size techniques to avoid burnout
- Being part of the LGBT Community

NFCC Listen and learn recordings can also be found on the [Listen and Learn YouTube](#)

Other useful Links and documents

ED&I Annual Report this report included our Staffing data, Gender and BAME Pay Gap analysis and recent reporting against our 5 Equality Objectives

Diversity Events Calendar the diversity calendar is helpful to understand what key dates are taking place throughout the year to assist with community engagement

Knowing our Communities Data this is a suite of documents, which provides data within each of the local Authorities, by different protected groups which include Age, Disability, Religion and Ethnicity.

Service Instruction 0877 Resources to support managers and staff to implement the Equality & Diversity Policy

- [Appendix 1 - Disability in the workplace information for staff and managers](#)
- [Appendix 2 - Reasonable Adjustments Support for staff & managers in the workplace](#)
- [Appendix 3 - Access to Work Support for staff and managers in the workplace](#)
- [Appendix 4 - Supporting people with Dyslexia in the workplace](#)

- Appendix 5 - Supporting Staff during the Menopause
- Appendix 6 - Guidance for supporting employees returning from maternity; breastfeeding in the workplace Operational Firefighters
- Appendix 7 - Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) staff in the Workplace
- Appendix 8 - Supporting Transgender staff in the Workplace
- Appendix 9 - Neurodiversity in the workplace

2021/22 Fire Statistics this includes workforce data published by the government