

**Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service**

**Equality and Diversity Annual Report**

**April 2015 to March 2016**

## 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](http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk/equality%20&%20diversity)

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).

### Arabic

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كبيرة طباعية بحروف أيضًا متوفر.

### Bengali

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আমাদের, MF & আরএস সদর, ব্রশ্চিম রোড, Bootle, লিভারপুল L30 4YD. টেলিফোন এবং মিনি কম

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**Somali**

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Sidoo Kale waxaa heli kartaa iyadoo far waaweyn ah.

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## Foreword

Welcome to our third Equality and Diversity Annual report.

This year's report highlights our progress and achievements against the Equality and Diversity Action Plan, our Equality Objectives and evidences how equality has become integral to the way we deliver our services. The report also seeks to capture how the needs of our diverse communities and our employees have been a key tenant in the decisions we have made.

As such I am particularly pleased to report the outcomes of our award winning positive action campaign for firefighter recruitment and our emerging apprenticeship programme, these innovative approaches have enabled us to increase the number of applications from underrepresented groups to ensure our staff better represent the communities we serve.

We are also making good progress with regards to extending the breadth and focus of our Home Fire Safety Visit through the introduction of safe and well visits, targeted interventions for vulnerable people, with a heightened focus on people factors, health inequality and socio-economic deprivation.

This undertaking reinforces the importance we place our communities and emphasises the impact that our firefighters and community safety staff have on a daily basis.

We believe that fire does discriminate, it discriminates against the old and the infirm and those in socio economically disadvantaged areas and we have developed clear policies and procedures to tackle such inequality, as evidenced within our newly developed Home Safety Strategy.

We also recognise that in the current economic climate, where resources are increasingly under pressure, it can be challenging to constantly deliver high quality services across all areas of the organisation. However, this simply highlights the reason for keeping equality and diversity in the forefront of our minds, to ensure that we continue to look for and deal

with inequality and the potential impact of our decisions in meeting those budget cuts and in doing so that we understand how they affect our businesses, communities and the people who work for us.

To do this we need to continue to engage with partners and communities, and develop our staff to help them understand our diversity and deliver services that address the needs of a wide range of community groups.

Rest assured the service is prioritising resources around equality, ensuring everyone contributes to this important agenda across our service.

I hope you will find the report helpful in explaining how Equality and Diversity is delivered and embedded across our organisation and how we support people from diverse communities to help them succeed in their everyday lives.

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

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

## **Welcome**

As Lead Authority Member for Strategy and Performance, I have responsibility for Equality and Diversity throughout the Service. We have now completed year three of a four year plan and I am pleased to report that we have achieved some major milestones this year in our efforts to continue to display excellence in matters relating to equality and diversity.

Highlights include engaging with diverse businesses fire safety conference hosted by the Service in September. The conference was organised after identifying a need to focus on raising awareness of fire safety and law within the Black Minority Ethnic (BME) communities across the region. This was a well organised and attended event that raised the profile of the Service as innovative and forward thinking. It was particularly gratifying to realise the high regard and respect our Service receives from colleagues nationally.

Yet another highlight this year was the celebration of International Women's Day, with outstanding guest speakers, some of whom work for the Service. As a Member of the Authority, I was proud to take part in this event marking the achievements of inspirational women from many different professions.

I do hope you find this report useful. We would welcome any feedback about to the report and we are keen to develop more 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 2015/16**

**Photograph 2 - of Cllr Barbara Murray**

## Introduction

This report provides us with an opportunity to celebrate some of the many success stories in relation to our achievements around the Equality and Diversity agenda and in support of our diverse communities over the last financial year (April 2015 – March 2016).

The Service has a long established commitment to Equality and Diversity, giving responsibility for its achievement to everyone connected with the organisation. 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 meeting papers.

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 our communities in our workforce.

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, the PSED and the support for the 9 protected groups.<sup>1</sup>
2. Preparing and Publishing one or more specific and measurable objectives that helps to achieve the Aims set out in the PSED.
3. Publishing equality information and the objectives in a manner that is accessible to the public.

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<sup>1</sup> Protected characteristics include: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race (including ethnic or nationality origin and colour), religion and belief (including no religion), sex, sexual orientation. MFRA also includes Socio-economic disadvantage as a vulnerable group.



## Governance and Performance Management

Delivery of the Equality and Diversity Action Plan 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 Lead Authority 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 MFRA'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 Performance and Scrutiny Committee made up of Elected Members who review MFRA's Equality and Diversity progress on a six-monthly basis.

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

Equality and Diversity reports to the Performance and Scrutiny Committee 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 2014/15

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 how we are progressing against those five objectives and what we will do to deliver positive outcomes over the next year.

#### Equality Objective 1

“In the past ten years (to 2012) Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MF&RS) has reduced accidental fires in the home by 37%. “

**Action:** We will continue to build on this work through the use of our Customer Insight (Vulnerable Person Index) modelling and our station planning process to target individuals at risk.

**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.

## Current Progress

At the end of 2015/16 there had been a total of 1083 Accidental Dwelling Fires. Whilst this is an increase on 2014/15; the overall E&D target of 1196 (which is based on performance over five years) been achieved.

For a number of years the Authority has recorded and analysed incident and other data to help us understand who the most vulnerable people are (we call this customer insight). By then working with partner organisations to identify where these vulnerable people live, we can target our prevention services at the most at risk communities and individuals. This has the dual benefit of helping us to make sure that every contact we make makes a real difference, but also allows us to make the best use of resources, which have been declining due to budget cuts. The Authority has secured data from partners to enable HFSC's to be targeted towards those people who are vulnerable or at risk in the home. The most significant was the agreement to receive Exeter Data which identifies all individuals aged over 65 in the Merseyside area.

We believe that the use of Customer Insight and more specifically our 2016 Home Safety Strategy will ensure a more targeted approach to Home Fire Safety Check visits allowing us to identify the most high risk and vulnerable people who have never previously received a visit from Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and are also known to our partner agencies.

Older people are at more risk of dying in an accidental dwelling fire and operational crews, through the use of NHS data will continue to target people aged 65 and over, (particularly those living alone and with associated social care needs), when delivering Home Fire Safety Checks as part of their prevention activities. Additionally, through fire safety awareness training by our prevention staff for domiciliary care workers and other frontline staff from partner agencies, it is our intention to ensure that vulnerable and high risk individuals are identified and referred to the relevant prevention team at the earliest opportunity. This allows MF&RA to deliver appropriate interventions to tackle specific risks.

This approach will ensure that MF&RA staff are engaging with as many high risk and vulnerable individuals as possible and through intervention and education reduce the amount of accidental dwelling fires and deaths in Merseyside.

From 2016, MF&RA will also be piloting a 'Safe and Well' visit that will in addition to identifying risks from fire, contribute to improving health by working with people in respect of falls in the home, health screening, smoking cessation and alcohol reduction. This work will help reduce people's risk whilst supporting their wellbeing.

## **Equality Objective 2**

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

**Action:** By continuing to build productive relationships with Registered Social Landlords.

**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.

### **Current Progress**

At the end of 2015/16 there had been 207 Accidental Kitchen Fires in properties owned by Registered Social Landlords. Though this is an increase on 2014/15, it is still lower than previous years. But we can’t afford to be complacent.

Close working partnerships with Registered Providers of social housing has allowed us to identify high risk and vulnerable tenants and deliver appropriate interventions to reduce the risk of fire in the kitchen and home.

Kitchen fires continue to cause the highest proportion of accidental dwelling fires, particularly in landlord owned properties. The Prevention Team at Service Headquarters are continuing to look at assistive technology solutions that will make people safer in their homes. As such we will be providing heat detectors, Wi-Fi heat detectors that link to a vibrating pad and strobe for hard of hearing individuals and more importantly working in partnership with Registered Providers in respect of cooker shut off systems, these devices

will be fitted to cookers to mitigate risks associated with leaving pans unattended and stop food cooking before ignition occurs.

MF&RA are also engaging with the Private Rented Sector through selective licensing in the whole of Liverpool and 4 areas of Wirral (Seacombe, Wallasey, Tranmere and Birkenhead), delivering weekend campaigns to install government provided smoke and carbon monoxide detectors free of charge.

### **Equality Objective 3**

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

**Action:** Through our award winning youth engagement programmes.

**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

#### **Current progress**

At the end of 2015/16 there had been a total of 4039 deliberate anti-social behaviour fires. This level of performance has meant that the Equality & Diversity target has been achieved.

Through an intelligence led risk management approach, we will continue to identify arson and anti-social behaviour hotspots to reduce these fires through education and engaging with our partner agencies. We will also use our resources efficiently to ensure that our communities receive a quality service delivery to reduce risk in our communities.

MF&RA continues to be an active and engaged partner and supports the five Local Authority Community Safety Partnerships and the Police and Crime Commissioner’s office to reduce anti-social behaviour activity, in particular fires and hate crime related incidents. We continue to plan, develop, monitor and review a wide range of prevention and protection strategies to reduce these risks that often relate to seasonal activity (such as warm weather and the bonfire period).

## **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 across Merseyside.”

**Action:** To work towards achieving the local target of reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions.

**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.

### **Current progress**

In 2015/16 there were reductions in both road traffic collisions (RTC's) and resulting injuries when compared to 2014/15. The Equality and Diversity target of 555 incidents, was achieved (549 incidents). However the resulting injuries were over the target by 61.

MF&RA attended 549 RTC's in 2015/16. This was a 5% reduction from the 2014/15 figure. MF&RA does not attend all road traffic collisions and usually responds to requests to attend; for example, when people are trapped. There were 2561 collisions reported to the police in 2015/16 on Merseyside, MF&RA therefore attended approximately 20% of all RTC's.

The largest single age group involved in RTC's that are attended by MF&RA continues to be 16 to 25 year olds. But MF&RA is increasingly attending incidents involving the over 65's.



This correlates with Merseyside police data which shows a 53% increase in this, people being killed and seriously injured since 2005

In 2015/16, MF&RA has delivered the following interventions to reduce the number of road traffic collisions:

- We have worked with 4865 people in the 15 – 19 age group. This has involved working directly with schools and colleges, but it has also involved delivery to youth offender groups and National Citizenship Programmes.
- 1910 people were engaged with during the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) and Brake road safety weeks.
- 405 people were engaged with at Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) motorcyclist sessions at Southport fire station.
- There were also a further 1925 people engaged with at various events including senior road user events, which have been run collaboratively with partner organisations.

## **Equality Objective 5**

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

**Action:** Our aim is to increase the representation of all minority groups within the communities of Merseyside in the Fire and Rescue Service

**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 currently under-represented 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**

Data has been collated to look at two main characteristics, gender and ethnicity, for two recruitment programmes completed during 2014/15 - Apprenticeships and Firefighter recruitment. The data below is being used as the benchmark to measure performance in the future.

**Apprenticeships: 12 recruited - Gender: 7 male (58%) and 5 Female (42%)**

**Ethnicity: 11 White British (92%) and 1 BME: 1 (8%)**

**Firefighter Recruitment: 16 Recruited - Gender: 13 Male (81%) and 3 Female (19%)**

**Ethnicity: 14 White British (87.5%) and 1 BME (6.25%) and 1 prefer not to say (6.25%).**

We intend to use these figures as our benchmark for future recruitment and will continue to target positive action at those groups in society that are still under represented in our workforce.

MF&RA did not carry out any firefighter recruitment during 2015/16, as the previous candidates were undertaking their recruitment training. Recruitment for firefighters has commenced during 2016/17 and outcomes of the positive action programme will be reported in the next Annual Report, 2016/17

## **Part One – Equality and Diversity Activity 2015/16**

## **Equality and Diversity Activity and Outcomes 2015- 2016**

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 objectives and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirements.

The Action Plan is a living document which is monitored on a 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 and Involving Our Communities

## Business Intelligence

The Authority makes good use of data and information to create business intelligence that helps us identify the people and places most at risk from fires and other emergencies. We produce annual and ten year reports on fatalities occurring in accidental fires in the home so we can target our home safety interventions at the most vulnerable people. We analyse and report on data relating to road traffic collisions, kitchen fires, fires in rented accommodation and many other combinations of incidents, locations and people to tailor our services and make the most efficient and effective use of public money to help us prevent emergencies occurring.

## Home Safety Strategy

The main way we engage with the most vulnerable members of our communities continues to be through Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC's). We know that people who are elderly, in poor physical health, live with mental illness or reside in poor housing are more likely to come to harm. When someone has mobility problems or sensory impairment and has become isolated or lives in fuel poverty, HFSCs enable us to identify those most at risk and visit them in their homes to give them home and fire safety advice to reduce that risk. As well as ensuring that people are protected, remain safe from fire and can escape unharmed, if a fire does occur we can also use these visits to build relationships and make referrals to our partner agencies, such as health and social care, if necessary. During 2015/16 we delivered over 47,918 HFSCs to people who are vulnerable because they live alone, are elderly and/or disabled. Of those, 5249 were new fire safety checks for people who were identified as high risk, these were carried out by our district prevention officers.

## Consultation with our communities

A new Stakeholder Consultation Framework has been developed to ensure that MFRA actively seeks and takes the views of the local public into account as part of the decision-

making process when reviewing its Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMP) and significant changes to Fire and Rescue Services.

The duty to involve the public when making changes to services is a statutory obligation applying to specified bodies, requiring them to consult and involve individuals, groups, businesses or organisations likely to be affected by their actions. The duty to involve was introduced in the 2007 Local Government and Public Health act (section 138). The Localism Act also provides legislation for Best Value authorities in relation to consultation and engagement.

Our consultation is designed to:

- Encourage greater public involvement and interest in local Fire and Rescue Service decisions
- Deliver stronger community relationships
- Plan services and policies based on the needs and views of people
- Identify priorities for the Fire and Rescue Service and improve our strategies to achieve them
- Monitor the performance of our services over time

Our consultation has been developed to be accessible to, and targeted at, those people who are affected by our decisions. The Consultation Framework encourages all aspects of consultation and engagement activity and involvement to take account of cultural and community diversity to ensure that our services are delivered equitably and are accessible. An Equality Impact Assessment is carried out during each significant consultation exercise to enable the Authority to understand the impact their decisions may have on protected groups.

An Internal Audit by Liverpool City Council which reviewed the past year's consultation, has determined that the way in which consultation was planned for, delivered and taken account of in the decision making process provided substantial assurance to the Authority.

## **Eid celebration Wirral Change**

A series of talks focussed around safe cooking messages with diverse community groups (many of whom use traditional cooking methods and are less likely to access mainstream services), took place in partnership with Wirral Change. The first event attended by the Wirral Prevention team was an **Eid Celebration** on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2015.

The team worked closely with staff at Wirral Change to develop stronger ties and to improve Fire & Rescue Service understanding of the differences and similarities in our cultures. We are aware that not all communities have had the same positive experience of a uniformed fire service, and we endeavour to promote a professional and trustworthy approach and make ourselves available and accessible to members of our communities who may, due to a previous experience, be reluctant to engage with us.

The Prevention team had a fire safety stall, providing those attending with fire safety advice leaflets and visual aids. They ran a fire safety themed colouring table for young people and discussed the importance of not playing with fire, matches or lighters and what to do in a fire situation and they offered escape planning advice for all ages.

## **Case Study – Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service Joint Working with Youth Inclusion Programme**

Each year, during the Bonfire Period, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service sees an increase in fire-related anti-social behaviour (ASB). This year, MF&RA worked in partnership with the Wirral Youth Inclusion Programme (Youth Offending Team) to provide targeted educational workshops with young people at increased risk of engaging in such behaviour.

Two members of staff, a Prevention Advocate working within Wirral Arson Reduction Team, and a specialist Youth Engagement Advocate, delivered two sessions in October 2015 at the Solar Campus in Wallasey. The sessions were targeted specifically at young people who were at a higher risk of engaging in fire-related ASB. Most had a history of anti-social



behaviour, and some had taken part in fire setting. Individuals in the groups had proven difficult to engage with in the past, with many demonstrating emotional behavioural problems and/or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

The aim of the sessions was to bring fire safety messages to the young people to help them to realise the implications of their actions. The interactive sessions used a variety of methods including activities, discussion and videos covering topics such as:

- Locations and limited resources of the emergency services
- The effects of being caught lighting fires on their own physical safety and that of others, including emergency services personnel
- The implications of a criminal record for arson on their career prospects in the future
- How quickly fire can spread on clothing and throughout a house
- Bonfire safety messages

Feedback received later from the Restorative Practice Practitioner, showed that the young people actively listened and took on board the messages delivered in the sessions. Both during and in the days/weeks following the sessions, the young people involved showed that they not only enjoyed the sessions, but they learned a lot and changed their attitudes towards fire-related ASB, and ASB generally. Since the sessions were delivered, the young people who attended have carried out incidents of ASB or fire setting and have demonstrated more positive attitudes to the fire and rescue service, and to fire safety generally.

# Working with our Partners

## Community Forum

The Community Forum, which is made up of representatives from the protected groups and/or people who work with those groups, is in its second year and has continued to be a valuable method of engaging with organisations and individuals that support diverse communities across Merseyside. The Forum meets twice a year and has proved a useful way providing partners with information about our services, to encourage joint working and referrals for home safety and other preventative work. We also use the Forum to gather feedback on any major changes to our services as part of our ongoing consultation process, e.g. station closures. This year's Forum meetings have focused on age (in relation to older and younger people), disabilities (in relation to deaf awareness and visual impairments) and the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender (LGBT) communities. The points below describe in more detail what the Forum has delivered over the year.

- Members were provided with a presentation introducing the new Home Fire Safety Strategy. This enabled partners to fully understand how to engage with their own community groups on matters around home fire safety and resulted in a number of referrals to work with vulnerable individuals/groups.
- Tony Griffin from Merseyside In Trust gave a presentation to the group explaining different networks and groups that are available for any member of the LGBT community and their families. This presentation also focused on encouraging more opportunities for people transitioning from one gender to another to have access to employment placements, which is vital to supporting them going through the social transitioning stages, as often those people may not be in full time employment. Offers were made by two organisations to accommodate volunteers in the future.
- Deaf awareness training was delivered by Steven McKenna from Merseyside Society for Deaf People (MSDP). He provided a briefing to the Forum on their services and provided general deaf awareness training.
- MF&RA youth engagement activities were showcased to the Forum to raise their awareness of the work MF&RA is involved with in relation to Fire Cadets and Prince's

Trust to encourage more referrals in future for vulnerable young people, to improve their confidence, skills and prospects.

- A presentation was delivered by Engage Knowsley - who support young people between 10 & 18 years of age with problematic substance misuse. The presentation highlighted the up and coming trends around substance misuse, mainly the use of (at the time) legal highs and the terrible impact it has on the young people's lives. The group discussed how each organisation could raise further awareness amongst their own staff and community groups and how to make referrals in to Engage Knowsley.
- Daisy Inclusive UK provided an overview of their services for people with visual impairments and disabilities in general. They provided Forum members with an overview of what members could gain from receiving disability awareness and disability hate crime training for their organisations. Daisy have also been awarded an international award for their diversity and inclusion.

### Quote

"MF&RA deserve praise for engaging with many hard to reach groups of people in our community including carers and people with long term health conditions....well done MF&RA...!" Eamonn Clabby, Wirral Education for Wellbeing.

## Winter Warm Campaign 2015- Partnership work

On the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2015 MF&RA Community Safety Apprentices Lewis Reid, Afi Khan and Tom Cotton attended Local Solutions Head Office along with 100 volunteers from support agencies across Liverpool to put together over 1,000 Winter Warm packs to be distributed to vulnerable people.

The packs contained various items including blankets, thermos mugs, gloves, fleeces, socks, cold alarms, hot chocolate and tea bags. Liverpool North & South Prevention Teams had five packs each to distribute to those people we felt would benefit most. All packs were distributed in the approach to Christmas with recipients being mainly elderly, but also to those who were homeless, via the Whitechapel Centre.

It is recognised that MF&RA has an excellent reputation in the community and by working in partnership with other support agencies and services across Liverpool we identified people who benefited from the initiative. By 2015 Winter deaths across the UK had reached a 15-year high with growing pressures on NHS services, so any contribution we can make to reduce those growing numbers is valuable.

People living in fuel poverty often resort to using inappropriate heating methods which could lead to an accidental dwelling fire. Indeed, one individual we identified was using her oven to heat the kitchen and living room, by keeping the oven door open all day/night. Through our intervention with the Winter Warm Packs she had another means of keeping warm (blanket, socks, gloves etc.), in addition she was given an oil filled radiator to make sure she had a safe form of heating. Referrals were also made to Healthy Homes and her Social Worker.

## **Pictures Available**

## **Case Study**

### **Safer Smarter Homes**

MF&RA in conjunction with Councils and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) have embarked on an innovative service using smart technology to support elderly vulnerable people to live independently and safely in their homes following discharge from hospital. The project is in its early stages but is expected to have significant benefit to various partner organisations across Merseyside who have a responsibility to keep the elderly and vulnerable safe. The work is being coordinated through Station Manager Mark Jones who is working with Liverpool CCG, Liverpool and Sefton Council and Sprue Ages (private sector partners) to. The project seeks to integrate current technology to provide tailored fire safety monitoring around the diverse needs of the community in their homes. The project is expected to span a number of years.

## **Partnership work 2015/16**

Prevention teams also work closely with other organisations that work within our communities to ensure that they have a knowledge of fire safety and are able to recognise potential hazards to keep their patients and clients safe. This included, home fire awareness training for a number of partners including Community Matrons, Housing Support Officers, Mental Health Works and reciprocal training with Age UK, where our Wirral District Prevention team received Dementia Friends training.

## **Involving our communities**

### **Safety Advice Fire Education (SAFE)**

As part of our Community Safety Plan our priority is to make people safer by working to prevent emergencies. Whether they happen, at home, in school or in the community, intentionally or unintentionally; fires set by children are always a cause for concern as they risk serious injury to themselves and to others.

We have now introduced a Safety Advice Fire Education (SAFE) package designed to engage with young people who have shown an interest in fire setting. Because the root cause of the fire setting may be complex and children in crisis are unpredictable. There is overwhelming evidence that the HFSC service provided by MF&RA, which includes a combination of specific advice on reducing risks, individual and tailored escape plans, considerably reduces the numbers of accidental dwelling fires and where a fire may occur. The fire safety messages delivered to children reinforce that the whole family and all members of the household need to be involved

### **Supporting our Disabled Communities**

The Prince's Trust Team Programme is aimed at young people who are not in education or employment. It is a 12-week programme that develops their skills to develop their confidence and increase their employment opportunities. As well as completing a community project, the young people undertake a week-long residential stay and two weeks of work experience during the programme.

Each Prince's Trust Team is expected to carry out a diversity community project as part of their 12 week programme. During May and June 2015, volunteers on the Prince's Trust Team Programme at Bootle and Netherton Community Fire Station made significant improvements to the gardens at a centre that supports people with disabilities; the Daisy Nucleus Academy in Barnes Street, Everton. The centre is run by the charity Daisy Inclusive UK and offers support for people with disabilities. The team gave the grounds a makeover

with landscape gardening, clearing large areas of over grown climbing plants from the fences and repairing and painting the raised flowerbeds and seating area.

At the special event to mark the completion of the project, the team also celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Prince's Trust. Guests, including representatives from the Prince's Trust, MF&RA and Daisy Inclusive UK centre users, were invited to a special event where the work was unveiled.

Dave Kelly, managing director of Daisy Inclusive UK, said: "It's an incredible thing that the team has done and this is young people putting something back into the community. "It is a long lasting legacy that will help people that come to Daisy Inclusive UK in years to come."

Sandra Parry, Prince's Trust Team leader, added: "The grounds of the Centre look fantastic thanks to the hard work of the Prince's Trust Team. It has been a really valuable opportunity for the team to work together and also work alongside people at the centre. Hopefully the people who use the centre will really benefit from the colourful garden area for a long time to come."

## **Photographs on Page 7 July Hotnews.**

### **Case Study**

#### **E, Bootle and Netherton Team, January 2016**

In 2007 I was diagnosed with a rare brain tumour called an A.V.M. Previously I was getting a lot of headaches and my vision was blurred and I couldn't see properly. I had just turned 13 years old. My mum and dad had to go in the room to speak to the doctor first and then they took me into the room and told me. It really upset me and I thought that I was going to die.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2007 the surgeons removed all of the tumour which was great news. I was going to live. So I don't mind if it has left me with a weakness down my left side of my body because this is a small price to pay for having my life back again.

I have met some lovely people who have supported me by helping me up Moel Famou, doing a 120ft abseil on my own which I slipped, when going over the top but managed to pull myself up and continue on. I am proud to say I competed all the physical activities that were put in front of me. I have definitely pushed myself through barriers which I thought I could never do and realised I still have a lot to offer people.

My work placement was at the TDA, The Training and Development Academy. I worked alongside a lady called Sue, she was amazing and helped me a lot with meeting new people and showing me how to use different chemicals in a safe way.

Recently I have just moved into new accommodation which has made me feel better and not as stressed. I intend to go onto the Fairbridge course because I would like to still continue with improving my social skills.

**There are a further selection of case studies and quotes at the end of the report.**



## Fire Cadets and our Diverse Communities

Following on from the success of our two Fire Cadets School Programme cadet units, the programme has been extended in 2015/16 to now cover five community fire stations: Bootle and Netherton, Wallasey, St Helens, Kirkdale and the existing cadet unit Croxteth. All cadet units follow the National Fire Cadet Framework and all are funded by a uniformed youth organisation called Youth United. In addition, all cadet units are supported by volunteers, who give their time as Fire Cadet Volunteer Instructors.

Our cadets units have been involved with car washes for charity, bingo evenings at residential homes, donated food to a local food bank and raised money to provide toiletries and other essentials to a homeless shelter. The manager from St Nazareth's Nursing Home in Sefton said\_“the residents have talked non-stop today about how nice the cadets were. We can't thank you enough for watching the residents interact with the cadets, it was priceless. The cadets were showing a genuine interest in the residents which is what made them feel special. We would love you to return in the future, you are welcome anytime”. One cadet now volunteers at the home and all have become “Dementia Friends”

During 2015/16 we have had a good level of diverse young people engaging with the programme:

Bootle/Netherton - 15 Cadets, 11 Male and 3 Female

Wallasey - 12 cadets, 7 Male and 5 Female, there are 4 cadets within this group who have a disability

St Helens - 15 cadets 11 Male, 4 Female and 1 member of the team is looked after

The team at Croxteth - 16 cadet, 9 Male, and 7 Female, and 3 members of the group have declared disabilities.

The team at Toxteth which is made up of students from Archbishop Blanch Secondary School has 14 female cadets 10 are White British, 2 black African and 2 are from another ethnic background

## **Responsive services and customer care**

### **Communication in the right way.**

Most people understand the way the fire & rescue service responds to an emergency, but changing the approach risk and vulnerability can lead to a fantastic working partnership, which can in turn lead to benefits for our prevention work, very real community engagement and a deeper understanding of 'at risk' groups.

Mr M, is a resident at Dene Court, Fazakerly, which is self-contained accommodation. He was born profoundly deaf, with sight problems, and was registered blind at the age of 15. He lives alone and, above all else, cherishes his independence.

Some of our crews have met Mr M after attending false alarms at his flat, usually caused by cooking fat from his grill or cigar smoke. These led to visits from numerous agencies including MF&RA and Merseyside Society for Deaf People, when Home Fire Safety Check was carried out with the assistance of a 'Hands on' interpreter. Unfortunately, these interventions left him upset and frustrated. His ability to live independently was being scrutinised and questioned.

Firefighter Faith Gadson met Mr M on a few occasions whilst on duty at Croxteth Community Fire Station and, having learnt Manual British Sign Language as a child, always took the time to sign to him so that he knew what was going on. This seemingly small effort to communicate has grown into a genuine trust that has enabled both herself and Watch Manager Duffy to work with Mr M and reduce the number of fire calls to his home.

In June 2015 Mr M and his sister, agreed to meet with Faith Gadson and Vera Deacon, the Dene Court Scheme Manager. It had a very positive outcome and since then they have sought to protect Mr M.'s independence, been able to ease his anxiety towards MF&RA intervention and dramatically reduced the accidental fire calls to his home. This was achieved by a number of small but effective measures.

A series of Braille cards were created with the help of Daisy Inclusive UK to make communication easier between Mr M and the Firefighters attending. A cleaner was organised to help look after his kitchen and in particular the cooker and grill. A strong relationship between MF&RA and Mr M has been developed which has enabled him to acknowledge his responsibility for his own safety.

### **Pictures being sent by Faith**

## **Providing Home Fire Safety services to vulnerable people**

All prevention teams are trained to support the diverse needs of our communities and are fully aware of their equality and diversity responsibilities, displaying empathy regardless of a person's circumstances. Examples of how this takes place can be evidenced through District Advocates and Arson Reduction teams , who carry out High risk HFSC's and provide tailored services to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and diverse communities. Last year we delivered **34,141** HFSCs and in addition to that the prevention teams on district completed **3529** High Risk interventions. This also provides us with vital information that can assist crews should there be a need to rescue in an event of a fire. A summary of the services we provide to vulnerable people below:

- When disabilities are highlighted during high risk visits, advice is given about home fire safety; escape routes are discussed and agreed upon and fire retardant equipment issued if needed. Fire retardant throws, bedding and metal bins for safe discarding of cigarettes are issued free of charge where required. Our staff will signpost to partners such as Careline/Lifeline, social services, NHS and housing providers, if the occupier is not already known to them and additional support is required.
- When visually impaired occupants are identified or referred to us by partner agencies we can provide enlarged fire safety information leaflets, fire safety information in Braille and where the person is deaf, without speech and visually impaired we have the facility to offer touch alphabet to communicate with them. We

can also make referrals to specialist agencies such as the RNIB and Daisy Inclusive UK.

- When people with hearing impairments are identified or referred to us by partners we can provide a Deaf Advocate with a British Sign Language interpreter. Hard of hearing smoke alarms and vibrating strobe pads (for under the pillow in bed) can be issued if the person lives alone or is left alone for a long period of time. These alarms can alert them in the event of a fire, which will allow them to react accordingly. Advocates may also discuss Careline/Lifeline with the occupier to arrange a direct link from a smoke alarm to these services. Referrals can be made to local authorities for additional devices to be installed (loop systems for TV, doorbell flashing light alerter etc.), and to organisations that work with older people for those who might need additional support.
- When hoarders/high fire loading is identified during a home visit, advice is given to the occupant on the dangers and possible consequences of hoarding. Smoke alarms, extension leads, and fire retardant equipment if necessary can be issued and referrals will be made to social services, housing providers, mental health teams/counselling services and de-clutter services as required.
- When Arson/ Hate Crime issues are identified during a visit, Arson Reduction officers help reduce risk:-
  - Installing Smoke alarms where necessary
  - Installing Letter box bag/plate/lock if there is a threat to occupant(s).
  - Providing Safety advice given and escape routes discussed

Referrals can be made to the Police, housing providers and the local authority for further support if necessary.

- When dealing with members of the community from Black, Ethnic Minority groups with language barriers we provide a free Home Fire Safety Check/ advice using bilingual Advocates and/or Language Line and translations are also available (via our website) in 34 different languages for any of our home safety advice leaflets .

## **Engaging with Diverse Businesses for Fire Safety Compliance**

Our Diversity and Consultation Manager has been working closely with our Protection Team to ensure that staff understand BME businesses to assist them with their role. During recent years Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service has carried out four prosecutions in relation to Fire Safety legislation, three of the four business owners have been from BME backgrounds (Businesses) and this has led us to consider whether the advice and services we provide to business are accessible to and understood by all BME business owners. We found that there was very little national or local data about this, so we set about carrying out our own research.

The data we collected shows that due to the nature of the businesses where inspections and enforcements are being carried out, we believe there are possible connections with some ethnic minority groups and the type of businesses not complying with legal requirements and that perhaps we didn't engage well with those groups..

Conversations with other Fire & Rescue Services showed that we were not the only ones experiencing problems engaging with Ethnic Minority businesses.

The result was the "Engaging with Diverse Businesses for Fire Safety Compliance" conference which was held in September 2015. The conference which was jointly hosted by Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA), the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) and the Institution of Fire Engineers (IFE). It had the aim of drawing together professionals in fire protection and fire and rescue diversity to take on the challenge of engaging with our diverse business communities in order to support and educate all sectors of the business community, irrespective of their ethnicity, to help them prosper and grow and have confidence in those that regulate them that they will be dealt with fairly.

Excellent speakers shared their valuable insights on engaging with diverse businesses, and attendees shared experiences with each other. The delegates were a wide variety of individuals with a strong commitment to overcoming the diversity challenges in business fire

safety, and they took full advantage of the day to engage and to build networks that will help and support them to overcome difficult challenges in their own professional work. Delegates also attended workshops as part of the conference looking at areas including understanding Black and Ethnic Minority business, learning from other sectors and how to support business safety fire legislation practitioners. 92% of attendees said the conference was positive. Following the Seminar a detailed report was produced ([LINK](#)). The report provides details of the day and feedback from those attending. From this we have been able to produce 20 key “things we need to do”; the outcomes, and suggestions moving forward will be presented to the Chief Fire Officers’ Association. It is expected that the Chief Fire Officers’ Association will take this forward with Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service taking the lead with support from partners such as Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service, Institute of Fire Engineers (IFE) and the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA).

The following quotes came from people who attended the conference:

“As fire and rescue services, working day to day in our communities, we fully recognise how important it is to understand the differing risks, needs and aspirations of the people we serve – thereby ensuring that they remain safe from fire.

“This recognition extends to the business community who are on occasion confused or unclear on the role of the fire and rescue service and the expectations we, through legislation, place on them.

“Through this conference we are seeking to better understand the challenges faced by our more ethnically diverse businesses and explore how we could better support them without recourse to enforcement or prosecution.

“We know that for some the language we use is a barrier and as such the way we communicate is key, and we explored this and other concerns over the course of the day, in order to enhance our offer of support and in doing so improve business safety.”

Mehrban Sadiq, AFSA Chairperson, said: “The Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) has consistently encouraged the fire service to communicate and work with business owners from diverse communities within the lens of prevention and protection in contrast to the possible over reliance on sanctions, penalties and, in some cases, closure of businesses”.

“This requires a consistent focus on both behaviour and trust building through appropriate communication formats to help ensure appropriate advice, guidance and support is provided. Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Phil Garrigan

### **Quotes**

“It is also vitally important that fire and rescue services make every effort to employ, develop and support a wide range of high quality employees who have the skills and mind sets to work closely with owners of businesses from diverse communities to help drive business community standards.” Mehrban Sadiq, AFSA Chairperson

“Our vision is to achieve a safer business sector where there are no preventable deaths or injuries in fires, where fire losses are reduced to minimal levels and businesses receive consistent and common advice, information and enforcement practices. Area Manager Billy Myers, the Deputy Chair of the CFOA Business Safety Group

### **Photographs – Hotnews October – Page 3, 12 & 13**

# A skilled and committed workforce

## Training

During 2015-16 we delivered seven bespoke training courses across 15 sessions, to 195 people, which included Equality & Diversity Briefings and specialist training to assist our front line staff show due regard to the needs of different communities and vulnerable groups whilst carrying out their work and delivering services. Below is a summary of the training delivered this year.

- **Dyslexia Awareness Training.**

Staff from a variety of departments including our training staff from the Training and Development Academy, our Human Resources and Professional Development teams and our Princes Trust leaders received training from Dee Caunt, Chief Executive of the Dyslexia Association. The course was designed to give staff a better understanding of what dyslexia is, the signs to look for and the difficulties people with dyslexia may face. The course also highlighted coping strategies, what can help people with dyslexia and the range of assistive technologies available to people, including read aloud software, e-reader pens and Dictaphones which can be used to record actions in. A Dyslexia Guide for staff and managers has been produced by the Diversity Team, and this will be published shortly as part of a suite of guides on issues connected to the nine protected characteristics including Disabilities, Reasonable Adjustments and Access to Work.

- **Transgender awareness training**

Staff from our District Prevention Teams and Human Recourses received training from Tony Griffin Equality & Human Rights practioner. The course was designed to give staff a better understanding of the difficulties faced by members of the Transgender community. Topics discussed included:

- Images stereotypes & myths (including language and terminology)
- Barriers Trans people face
- Equalities legislation: what it means for you



- Prejudice
  - Medical transition & social transition
  - Best practice
  - A case study
- **Deaf Awareness and Disability Awareness Point of Contact training for our Customer Services Teams at SHQ and TDA.**

Our customer services teams from Service Headquarters and the Training and Development Academy including staff from the canteens, reception and some of our training staff attended training sessions about Deaf Awareness delivered by Ian Cockburn from Merseyside Society for Deaf People (MSDP) and Disability Awareness Point of Contact training delivered by Dave Kelly from Daisy Inclusive UK.

The Deaf Awareness training included group exercises to help staff experience the difficulties of communicating when you are deaf. Ian explained the difference in phrasing between English and British Sign Language (BSL). The session also looked at

- Terminology
- Gesture
- Listening exercise
- Rephrasing
- Categories of Deafness
- Fingerspelling

The aims and objectives of the Disability Awareness point of Contact training were:

- To gain confidence engaging with disabled people in the workplace
- To give participants awareness of the needs of disabled people
- To provide support on how best to provide reasonable adjustment to help staff in the workplace. To gain key personal skills, empathy, confidence, self-esteem, motivation and team cohesion
- To help employers realise the potential of disabled people and how to include them in the workplace

- To give employees and employers a greater awareness of what is available to help disabled people access the workplace e.g. adapted equipment, access to work and accessibility
- To increase the numbers of disabled people utilising your services

Dave Kelly Director of Daisy Inclusive UK also used his own experience and the challenges he faced when he became blind 20 years ago as a case study to highlight the difficulties faced by someone who becomes disabled. These included the fear of the unknown, the fear of accepting that you cannot carry on as you had previously and that you might need to ask for help and learn new skills.

Following on from this John Tierney a Breathing Apparatus (BA) trainer from the Training and Development academy has started to investigate how this training and in particular Dave Kelly's experience can be used to develop disability awareness training for our new firefighter recruits. The training is being developed to include Dave Kelly's experience of losing a sense and how this will link with what they will experience when they start their BA training. Point of contact training will also help with firefighters community engagement.

## **Apprentices**

Twelve apprentices have been through their year long programme with excellent results , all apprentices have gone into employment or training with four being successful at securing employment with MF&RA as Community Safety Advocates. A further six community safety apprentices commenced their programme in February 2016 and will be undertaking a community safety qualification and a variety of training and development activity during the coming year. Further work around Positive Action for apprenticeships will take place to make the most of our recruitment process, attracting individuals from under represented communities where possible.

## **PUFFELL**

A new health and wellbeing social networking platform has been launched this year called Puffell. It's the first such platform to be launched in any Fire & Rescue Services. The Puffell MF&RA space has been built with over 60 people from MFRS and is completely bespoke for you based on your need and desires. It is a national partnership and we are leading the way by being the first fire service in the country to use it. Accessed via the MF&RA network, it is designed to promote well-being and self-care and help staff improve their physical and mental health by setting their own targets and supporting each other. A number of groups have already been formed using the site including a men's health support group.

## **Mind - Blue Light**

The Service is committed to developing a workforce educated in mental health matters with an understanding of the support that is required by many of their friends, families and work colleagues. Staff are encouraged to be involved and contribute to a more comfortable and open environment where talking about mental ill health and seeking help when in difficulty is the norm. Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service joins the wide movement of emergency service employers and associations that have pledged to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination through the Mind – Blue light time to change programme.

Wirral MIND has been awarded LIBOR funding to develop the Blue Light Programme, nationally. This is to provide mental health support for emergency services, ambulance services and search and rescue services across England. The programme is being developed in consultation with individuals from across the emergency services.

## **Quote**

“Not only are many of our blue light personnel struggling with their mental health, but they are less likely to seek support or have time off sick than the general workforce. By signing the Blue Light Time to Change pledge, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service is helping to fight stigma and promote positive mental health in emergency services”

(Paul Farmer, Chief Executive of Mind)

Over the next year, work will take place to improve the mental health and wellbeing of emergency service staff, with the leads from each service identifying where the gaps in knowledge and practice are. Wirral MIND are currently looking at various training opportunities for staff, such as Line Managers Mental Health Awareness, General Mental Health Awareness, Resilience Courses and Accredited Peer Support. MF&RA are looking to lead on the development of a mental health strategy for Merseyside blue light services. We are currently in the process of creating an MF&RA MIND working group to drive this forward; working alongside Wirral MIND representatives.

Alongside the MIND Blue Light project we have been delivering Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Training to Service staff; educating employees in the signs and symptoms of psychological ill health and how to seek appropriate support. We now have 4 MHFA Instructors who have successfully trained over 13% (over 140 staff) of the workforce in MHFA. More training courses are planned for this year, with a further four employees planning to undertake the MHFA instructor course later in 2016.

“We are extremely proud of the work that our staff do on a daily basis, under some very challenging and traumatic circumstances, so it is right that we should do everything that we can to support their mental health and wellbeing.

In doing so we will promote an environment where discussion about mental health feels as natural as those about physical wellbeing and any associated stigma is removed.

It is important that we allow our staff easy access to the support that they may require, at a time when they most need it”.

(MF&RA Deputy Chief Phil Garrigan)

## **International Women's Day**

On International Women's Day, in March, staff were invited to attend a coffee & conversation event to mark the occasion and celebrate how women and their achievements have contributed to our society, culture, politics, charity work and the fire and rescue service. A number of guest speakers volunteered to share their experiences with those attending. We also arranged some fun activities, and as the event was coffee and conversation, a staff member from Strategy & Performance also kindly baked beautiful cupcakes for everyone to enjoy with their refreshments. Desk yoga and relaxation was arranged to close the event to help us all manage our busy day to day lives.

The guest speakers were Angela Cholet, CEO - The First Step, Domestic Violence Charity and refuge in Knowsley , Nicola Hobbs – South Yorkshire Fire & Service and Doncaster Rovers Football Club, Superintendent Jennifer Sims, Matrix Uniform Services and Bethany Cammack – Model and Advocate for Against Breast Cancer,

We also had a women from within the organisation who shared their own experiences of working for the Fire and Rescue Service and their careers: Karen Hughes – Protection Compliance Manager, Kirsty Hornby – Firefighter, who also represented Miss Elite and Headway Wirral a charity for people who have brain injuries which can be caused by trauma, from illness, accident or from birth.

This year's theme for the event was Pledge for Parity. As part of our Pledge we provided support to charities within Merseyside who support vulnerable women through staff donating unwanted bras, handbags filled with toiletries and good second hand children's clothes and toys. The response was overwhelming with every one of the 50 attendees providing donations. The bras have been recycled by Against Breast Cancer and for every ton collected £1000 is donated to research for breast cancer and the reusable bras are then sent to places such as Africa. The handbag of toiletries and sanitary products and children's clothes/toys have been sent to homeless and domestic violence refuges including First Steps.

This was the first time that MFRA have run an event to mark International Women's Day. Working towards gender equality is important to the Service and this was a fun way to raise awareness and support vital charities. The event was well attended and the quotes below demonstrate some positive comments about the event as a whole:

## Quotes

"A quick note to say thank you so much for dropping off the toiletries and bags you kindly collected at your International Women's day event. They have been distributed to women/children at the refuge and we have kept some toiletries for women living in the community who are struggling.

On behalf of all here at The First Step and the women and children.....THANK YOU for making a difference in their lives." Angela Cholet Chief Executive, The First Step

## Comments from people who attended the event included:

"Very enjoyable morning, great atmosphere, brilliant speakers and very well organised"

"I thoroughly enjoyed the day, the speakers were all excellent however particular praise should be fed back to Jenny Simms of Merseyside Police, Angela Cholet Knowsley Domestic Violence Support Services and Kirsty Hornby of MF&RA. Very different perspectives and challenges however excellently presented and a credit to their respective agencies"

"I felt the diversity of the speakers was very well thought about. It demonstrated how strong we are and how resourceful we can be when we have to be. Seeing the contrast between having a female fire-fighter who is a Beauty Queen was great and just proves that you don't have to conform to one image to be a female fire-fighter, Kirsty was a great role model to all women and showed that we should and can celebrate our femininity in an appropriate situation and that you can use it in a very positive way. I felt all the speakers were inspirational and I thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience. It was great to see men taking part also."

“It was a very informative day. It was also good to see some male colleagues there too! Hope it will become a feature event.”

“It could even have been longer! I could happily have listened to more guest speakers. The organisers did a fantastic job in bringing such a positive event together. As a new starter, it is very encouraging to know I have joined a workplace where women are supported, encouraged and celebrated and given the opportunity to be heard.”

**3 possible photographs in the folder**

### **World Interfaith Harmony Awareness Week (1<sup>st</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> February)**

As part of World Interfaith Harmony Week (1<sup>st</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> February), staff from Merseyside and Cheshire Fire & Rescue Services were invited by Faith and Fire to visit the Ketumati Buddhist Centre, in Manchester. Those who attended were given the opportunity to meet and talk to the monks who provided an insight into Buddhism and also delivered mindfulness meditation session. The event helped staff to understand more about the faith and how faith groups and the fire and rescue service can work together.

### **Men’s Health Awareness Week 2015 (15th - 21st June),**

The occupational health team arranged for Prostate Cancer UK to attend our Service Headquarters to deliver presentations to staff about Prostate Cancer and the signs and symptoms to look for. Following on from this the team are developing a series of roadshows which will be delivered across the organisation to look at Men’s Health including Prostate and testicular cancer, and one for female staff which will include breast cancer and the menopause. The roadshows are planned to start in summer 2016.

Other health issues which have been highlighted by the team this year include:

- Stroke Action Month

- Migraine awareness week
- Stoptober for smoking cessation
- Breast cancer awareness month
- World mental health day
- Macmillan Coffee Morning for cancer support

## **Equality Engagement with Trade Unions**

All representative bodies have welcomed the work undertaken by the Equality and Diversity department and welcome the transparent and inclusive approach adopted by the service when dealing with inequality, perceived or otherwise.

In reinforcing this understanding Mark Rowe of the Fire Brigades Union stated;

“The FBU (Fire Brigades Union) have embraced the work undertaken by the Equality and Diversity department to listen to, and act upon, the concerns raised as a consequence of the Employee Engagement Survey 2014. The FBU stated at the time that this was a brave undertaking by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MF&RA) to run such a survey and we further stated that to address those findings would take commitment and most importantly a willingness from all within the organisation to make MF&RA a better place to work however difficult that work would be and despite the entrenched beliefs that some may hold.

To this end Merseyside FBU have attended the regular female firefighters forums to discuss the very specific issues that our female firefighters have to face on a daily basis. Work undertaken within the LGBT forums has been considerable and progress has been positive. The E&D manager has also met with representatives from the FBU Officers section and Black Ethnic Asian Minority (BEAM) to discuss and address their specific concerns as well as holding frequent meetings with the FBU Brigade Officials to discuss any matters which fall outside of the equality or trade sections of the FBU. Work is progressing in a positive manner and the FBU are confident that if the honest commitment remains to listen to, to



respect and to act on our concerns over all matters raised then the direction of travel can only continue to be forwards making MF&RA a better place to work.”

## Key employment-related information – as at 31.3.16

- There were 1, 045 staff employed at MFRA, as at the end of 2015/16, of which 66.4% are uniformed/operational, 30.3% are support staff and 3.3% are fire control staff
- 77.8% of staff are male and 22.2% are female
- Support staff have a 50% split between male and female
- Uniformed /operational staff have a gender split of 94.1% Male and 5.9% Female
- 58.9% of the total staff employed at MFRA are aged 46 and over
- 8.4% of staff have declared a disability (lower than the UK average population at 20%)
- 95.8% of the total staff at MFRA are White British/White other, 3.3% of staff are Black Minority Ethnic (BME) –lower than the Merseyside average at 5.5%

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

## Part 2 – Equality and Diversity benchmarks and events

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

Using external benchmarks and advice helps us to assess our performance, our progress against nationally recognised standards and to make good use of best practice. Below is a list of the organisations that MF&RA worked with to help progress its Equality and Diversity agenda during 2015/16

### **Stonewall Champion**

Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme is Britain's leading best-practice employers' forum for sexual orientation and gender identity equality, diversity and inclusion. MF&RA has been a champion for a number of years and continues to use the equality index to develop its policies and practices for all its staff.

### **Business Disability Forum Member**

The Employers' Forum on Disability aims to enable companies to become disability confident by making it easier to recruit and retain disabled employees. The Forum provides MF&RA with a standard to work to when assessing and providing support for disabled staff.

### **Employers network for equality and inclusion (enei)**

#### **Corporate Member**

The Employers' Network for Equality & Inclusion (enei) is the UK's leading employer network covering all aspects of equality and inclusion issues in the workplace. It is a member led organisations which provides organisations with practical advice, training, resources and guides. Over 700 organisations are affiliated with the organisation and this allows a wealth of knowledge to be pooled and resources to be shared when developing the Equality Diversity and Inclusion agenda within MF&RA. There are opportunities for MF&RA to benchmark its performance to other organisations in the future.

## **TWO ticks**

The two ticks scheme is a recognition given by Jobcentre Plus to employers who have agreed to take action to meet five commitments regarding the employment, retention, training and career development of disabled employees. MF&RA continues to meet the two ticks standard and has been provided with further confirmation this year that it is a disability confident employer

## **AFSA**

The Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) is an independent inclusive employer led support group with the desire to raise the profile of Asian staff and associated issues. MF&RA is one of 29 Fire and Rescue services and three non FRS organisations that are members of AFSA. We continue to work with AFSA as a key stakeholder in our work around diversity provision, especially positive action in recruitment. We were nominated for a national award for the work that MF&RA has undertaken on engaging with diverse businesses at an AFSA National Conference 2015.

## **MIND Champion**

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority became the latest organisation to join the growing number of emergency service employers and associations showing their commitment to ending mental health stigma and discrimination in the workplace by signing the Blue Light Time to Change Pledge in January 2016 (more details on pages 42 and 43). The signing ceremony took place at MF&RA headquarters where representatives pledged their support to the Blue Light Programme, promoting a better understanding of mental health problems while offering support and well-being advice to their staff and volunteers.

Our Service currently runs a number of supportive initiatives such as Critical Incident Stress Management, Mental Health First Aid training, Family Liaison training and other well-being working practices such as stress risk assessments.

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

**MF&RA 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 2015/16 and the outcomes which have benefitted people with protected characteristics and other vulnerable groups are outlined below:**

### **Liverpool Pride 2015 – “Love is No Crime”**

In 2015 as in previous years, staff of MF&RA showed their support for LGBT issues, by participating in Liverpool Pride, which took place on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August. The theme for the march was “Love is No Crime”. Although the weather was not at its best, the event was very well supported. Staff, including some of our apprentices and our new Firefighter recruits, along with their families, started the day with breakfast at our Liverpool City Community Fire Station, before joining the march through Liverpool city centre. This year’s march ended at St Georges Hall, where MF&RA had a stall in St Johns Gardens to promote our Positive Action campaign. This year we were also joined by London Fire Brigade’s Deputy Commissioner Wayne Brown and Diane Dunlevey, the Diversity Manager from Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service.

### **Case study M, now a Community Safety Advocate**

“Nearly 2 years ago now I attended an open evening for an apprenticeship within Merseyside Fire and Rescue service. As I sat in a lecture room surrounded by people younger than me all I could think was despite my passion, enthusiasm and interest in the role – am I too old to apply? Being already 24 at the time my worry that was most apprenticeship roles are only open to ages 16-24. For numerous reasons I had not had the opportunity to progress onto higher education previously and therefore did not have access to the type of career I desired which was a career focused on helping people, empathy and making a difference. Although I may not have held any degrees or fancy qualifications, my

life experiences and what I had been through provided me with all the experience required for my dream role (some things cannot be learnt in a book). Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service treated me with the equality and diversity I had hoped and my application was progressed despite my age being over the norm for an apprenticeship. They took into consideration my values, my experiences and my life knowledge instead of judging me on results on paper, I was successful on gaining a place onto the apprenticeship and then gained a permanent role 6 months into the 12 month programme as a district advocate.

My next worry when joining was can I be open with who I really am? Without facing judgement and prejudice. Throughout many of my previous roles I have had to hide my sexuality due to the attitude of management and colleagues and their lack of understanding. It was easier to keep my personal life to one side rather than face the prejudice comments, easier in one sense- extremely tiring in another. My worry was very quickly extinguished as I realised the equality and diversity within Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service is exceptional, not only do they accept all minority groups they celebrate them. Throughout my near two years now of working here I have never once felt uncomfortable about who I am or felt like I had to hide behind a lie. I have always been treated 100% equal to all of my colleagues and I am honoured to be able to support equality and diversity through the Service, continuing to spread the word that this organisation sets an excellent example of how all companies should treat people regardless of age, sexuality, race, religion etc.

If the Service had not exercised their excellent standards of equality and diversity I would have been rejected for either A) being female in a male dominated service, B) being too old for an apprenticeship or C) Sexual orientation. I would not be where I am today if it wasn't for the values and standards of this Service, not only do they treat everybody as equal regardless of personal circumstances, they strive to promote equality and diversity, creating a positive image. I am one of many success stories on how Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service are pioneers in the exceptional delivery of equality and diversity.

## **Ageing Safely Week 2015, (28th September to 4th October)**

More than 1,600 Merseyside homes were visited by our Service on Older People's Day and as part of Home Fire Safety Week. In total, 1,648 homes were visited on Older People's Day on 1<sup>st</sup> October, with 973 receiving fire safety leaflets and 675 receiving Home Fire Safety Checks by Firefighters and Fire Prevention Staff.

During the day of action, the visits focused on people aged 65 and over in Merseyside. Staff from departments across our Service volunteered their time to accompany firefighters and prevention staff on visits to homes. The home safety vehicle was also out in the community throughout the week.

Free smoke alarms were provided to people in Merseyside aged 65 and over and those referred by a care provider or partner organisation. Fire Prevention staff in Liverpool also provided home safety presentations to Registered Social Landlords representatives during this week.

Older members of the community were also invited to visit the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Heritage and Education Centre and received a tour of the museum.

Group Manager Gary Oakford said: "Every day our fire prevention staff and firefighters are out visiting homes, offering Home Fire Safety Checks and giving fire safety advice to people in the community. As part of Home Fire Safety Week and Older People's Day, a great deal of work was carried out to especially target vulnerable and older people

"Elderly people are particularly vulnerable to having a fire in their home and during the week we offered some simple safety measures which can help people to stay safe.

**[Pictures from November Hotnews page 10/11](#)**



## Christmas Day 2015 Events across stations

Staff from across the organisation have helped those who are less fortunate over the Christmas period.

- Staff from the Strategy & Performance department donated money instead of sending Christmas cards this year to support a local event organised by one of their colleague's family members. Cargo Restaurant and Bar organised a free Christmas lunch (in conjunction with Community Christmas <http://communitychristmas.org.uk>) for 80 elderly people who would otherwise have been on their own at Christmas. With the money collected they were able to buy Christmas presents and raffle prizes, which were given out on the day by the crew from White Watch at City Centre Community Fire Station.

### Quote

"We had a great afternoon at Cargo on Christmas Day, having lunch, washing some dishes and hosting the raffle for some lovely people who found themselves alone and the caring people who had given up their family day to help out. The crew and I found it a fulfilling and humbling experience." Watch Manager Nick McCormack, City Centre White Watch.

### Picture available – sent by event organiser

- Staff from Southport, supported by colleagues from North West Ambulance Service organised and hosted a Christmas lunch again this year for 20 – 30 elderly people who would have normally been on their own on Christmas Day. The event was possible thanks to fund raising and sponsorship from local businesses. Following the success of the dinner they hosted in 2014 some of those attending had asked if they could attend again this year as they had enjoyed the day so much.
- WM Pang (Green watch) took delivery of over 50 unused presents from Contacts Sefton child services who were oversubscribed from donations. Using the brand of the Fire and Rescue Service and local knowledge we were able to deliver them to

Southport carers and Sure Line Church who distributed them to families who could not afford toys for their children.

## **Conclusion**

I hope that you have enjoyed reading this report and that it has given you an insight into the work that everyone across MF&RA has carried out during 2015/16 to make the services we provide more inclusive and engaging with the communities we serve. But there is always more we can do, and MF&RA will strive to improve its practices through adopting and benchmarking to the Local Government Authorities National Equality Framework, to maintain our Excellence status. Further work will continue around knowing and understanding our communities and engaging with communities, stakeholders and partners to ensure that fire safety and health and wellbeing issues are at the heart of what we do.

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,  
Deputy Chief Fire Officer,  
Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service.**

## PRINCES TRUST CASE STUDIES

**Intro:**

**N.B. Please note that the following extracts of Prince's Trust Presentations may be used in the final published Annual Report in their entirety or partially in the form of quotes.**

**C**

In my past, I was unable to concentrate for a certain amount of time before getting angry. I was kicked out of school somewhere between the ages of 12 and 13, which looking back has made me realise how much of a fool I was at the time.

The Prince's Trust experience with the Fire Service has helped me to improve my behaviour a lot. I am much more motivated in some of the tasks that have been set and that will be approaching me in my lifetime. I have epilepsy which has in the past meant that many people around me have said that I will not achieve anything in life. But now is my chance to prove them wrong. I have not always been this motivated but it is the support that the team members and team leaders have provided me with that has helped me become the person I am today.

I have been on my apprenticeship with the Highways Maintenance Agency for four weeks now and I enjoy being there. It's strict and forces me to take personal responsibility, something the Prince's Trust has been trying to develop in me for years.

## **B & P**

### **B**

As a result of my journey, I passed through many countries and obstacles. I reached the UK on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2015 and I asked for asylum. I am still an asylum seeker today. When I first came to the UK, it was really difficult to communicate with people and to get to know the culture.

When I came to this programme I was happy and successfully gained many things, such as getting to know people and places, and doing work such as the residential, community project, work experience and so on.

The most essential thing that I gained from this team programme is developing my English, which is communication skills, listening, speaking, writing and reading. One day, I would like to graduate as a Doctor. This is my dream!

### **P**

Before I came to the Prince's Trust team programme, I had nothing to do. Coming along to start the course gave me a lot of chances. For example, language, people, friends, and some work experience. Merseyside Fire Service's Prince's Trust is like a big family and is a lot of different things. It's like a mother, because a mother is a big thing for a family.

I am happy in the UK. I can't explain it, but my body tells me everything - that I'm happy now. I know my situation, and I wasn't happy before, and my body taught me this thing.

I have enjoyed the Prince's Trust Team programme a lot. For example, playing bingo and the mountains in Wales. This was the first time for people like me coming to the UK. It was a really nice time and really enjoyable.

In the future, I'd like to develop my English language skills and go to college. Little by little, of course. Any job would be good after that.

## **F**

I had a long journey to get here. I am from Sudan and was born in Khartoum. In 2008 I had to leave Sudan because of the people demonstrating. The government arrested me and put me in prison. I was unable to work and I had no freedom in my country. I escaped and I lived in Libya for 6 years, doing everything from farming to factory work.

I lived on the streets of London sleeping in door-ways. One man gave me a box so I could sleep in it. I ate fruit that was given out by people outside train stations. I made it to the Home Office who sent me to Croydon. I was given papers and told to give it to a bus driver who would take me. Eventually I was sent to Liverpool where I was given refugee status. One day I met Alison at the Powerhouse where I am living, she told me about this course and I was very excited by it. So I signed up for the course.

It was the best thing I have done. I am so happy to have been on this course. I will be very sad to leave. Talking with these guys has made me so happy. I feel lucky to be here.

It helped me to be ready for an interview and showed me how to look for work. I found doing the interviews fine because everyone was nice.

I want to go to college. I am also working as a volunteer at the stables where I did my work experience. I enjoy working with the horses and I want to do a course in animal care in the future.

Thank you everyone. Thank you a hundred times to the Prince's Trust.

## L

Before joining the team programme I was going through some hard times. I was bullied by a horrible person that saw the nice guy in me as a weakness. This knocked my confidence quite a bit and I found myself self-harming. He was bullying my family as well, so I thought it was best to leave them and I ended up living on the streets.

I'd been sleeping rough for about 2 to 3 weeks when a couple came up to me. The man said "you're not from round here are you?" I replied "no". His wife gave me a bottle of water, a sandwich and some fruit. He then told me "wait here, I will be back". After about an hour he came back for me in his car and he took me to the Y.M.C.A. in Birkenhead. They wouldn't accept me because I was from Liverpool but advised him to take me to a place called Whitechapel in Liverpool.

For obvious reasons, I joined the course to build my confidence and to get help in finding a career path. After twelve weeks on team, both goals have been successfully reached. Before this course, there was no chance that I would ever have stood here in front of a room full of people giving a speech. As for the career path choice, I am finally glad to say that I have found the right career for me in youth work. This is a bit of a shock for me because in school I wanted to work in a zoo or some kind of work with animals. I would never have thought I would want to work in this area.

The residential for me was amazing and it gave us all a chance to get to know one another through some amazing activities such as a night walk, gorge walking, rock climbing and abseiling. There were also a few fun times back at the house. We were all laughing and joking, singing and dancing and played a lot of bingo. Sometimes, others found the residential hard, but we stuck together to pick people up when they were down, and it just made the week that extra bit special.

Therefore, I would like to say that I will be coming back on the next team in January as a volunteer and hopefully this will be the start of a great career choice.

**P**

"For me leadership was about taking the lead to get the job done, telling people how and what to do and providing all the answers. I've learnt through my experiences during the past twelve weeks and that's not exactly right. What I've learnt is that leadership is about giving direction, supporting and taking on other Ideas and allowing people to learn for themselves."

**S**

"Before coming on the course my main job role was a mum... and as much as I love being a mum I have realised that I can now have something for me.

I am more than just an unemployed young mother with no future I have now got the confidence to be myself and believe that I can do anything that I put my mind to".

**S**

S come to this course following a referral from Asylum link, he had been in Britain for approximately six months prior to commencing the course. S took to the course quickly, although he had his reservations about being on the programme for fear of difficulties he may face due to cultural or language difficulties. He was pleasantly surprised and he became a perfect example of a model Team member, he was hard working throughout and embraced all the opportunities available to him. He was always motivating his fellow Team members in his own unique style and his presence was invaluable. He taught his Team mates about other cultures and helped dispel some negative stereotypes concerning migrants from Syria, an important and topical experience for them. Upon completion of the course S is applying to do a CLC Access course in electrical engineering which is something he has always wanted to do. Whilst on the programme he also received his refugee status and secured a bank account both of which a big steps forward towards his future.



## **B**

B came to the course in an attempt to improve her life, she had been a victim of domestic violence and had lost not only her short term memory but also her daughter, who had been taken and put up for adoption. She was talkative and engaged with the programme from the off but it wasn't until the programme started to develop after residential that B started to come into her own. She still had a quick temper on her but was better able to control her feelings and started to focus more in sessions. She has come a long way from the girl who started on day one and this course has helped her to focus and work towards her goal of opening her own business. She is due to start the enterprise programme and will then be on the right path to open her own hair and beauty business.

## **M**

Until the Prince's Trust Team Programme M was not engaging with any type of education or employment due to; having not completed school, lack of confidence and few skills. M took time to settle into the team and was late on quite a few occasions. After the residential M appeared to have made some new friends and his confidence was evidently higher. M got involved with all team activities and pushed himself out of his comfort zone on many occasions. He completed his two week work experience to a very high standard and has now got a permanent voluntary role within his local cinema, to enable him to gain even more experience. M has now completed his log book work in order to gain his very first qualification.