



THE CHIEF
FIRE OFFICERS
ASSOCIATION

I&DeA
improvement and development agency

An achieving fire and rescue authority developing better outcomes



ACHIEVING FIRE &
RESCUE
SERVICE
EQUALITY
FRAMEWORK

An achieving fire and rescue authority has the following characteristics:

- Fire authority members and senior service leaders ensure that equality is included in prevention, promotion and response activities. They take direct and personal responsibility for promoting greater equality, testing themselves on progress by the outcomes they achieve.
- It is making use of equality mapping and has a good understanding of its communities, including the extent of inequality and disadvantage, and has used the information to inform corporate and service priorities.
- It has set stretching equality priorities in consultation with partners and these are reflected in its service plan and other relevant strategies, local area agreements and local targets.
- It works with partners in the public, voluntary and community sectors to develop joint equality strategies.
- It regularly conducts service and employment assessments of equality impacts, or similar processes, to review all major changes in service policy.
- It has set appropriate objectives to address persistent socio-economic inequalities and to narrow the gap related to race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion and belief, or other areas of inequality (such as those relating to vulnerable people) for service delivery. These objectives are based on impact assessments and consultation with internal and external stakeholders and partners.
- It has set appropriate employment and pay related objectives for race, gender, disability and age, religion and belief and sexual orientation.
- Equality objectives are integrated into the fire authority's business and service planning processes.
- All relevant data on service access is monitored against the equality strands.
- There are examples of good practice across service delivery with few adverse outcomes found in impact assessments. Where adverse impacts have been found these have been addressed.
- Key stakeholders and community members, including those who are vulnerable and marginalised, are able to scrutinise and challenge performance on equalities issues.
- It has developed information and monitoring systems that allow it to disaggregate data where appropriate and to assess progress in achieving objectives and targets. It reviews them in the light of changing needs, when necessary.

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1. Not in place
2. Currently being established
3. In place, but needs improving
4. In place and effective

Leadership and promoting inclusion	1	2	3	4	How was this done and what is the evidence? Questions or issues services might consider.	Where relevant, what do stakeholders and community members say about how this indicator is being met?	What difference will this make?
<p>2.1</p> <p>Clear organisation and partnership equality and diversity priorities have been set and are owned and understood by all key stakeholders, including the voluntary and community sector.</p>					<p>Is there evidence of a link between equality schemes, equality objectives, corporate and service plans and the corporate performance management system? Are equality objectives integrated into partnership strategies? What evidence exists to demonstrate challenge by all stakeholders? Does this challenge contribute directly to the development of the service's targets and objectives?</p>		
<p>2.2</p> <p>Members and senior service leaders demonstrate personal leadership and understand the relevance of equality and diversity to their local communities.</p>					<p>In what ways do members and the service's leadership demonstrate that they continuously monitor, review and evaluate the performance of equality objectives? Is equality integrated into performance?</p>		

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<p>2.3</p> <p>The service communicates effectively regarding its equality and diversity priorities, how it is responding to local communities' needs and promoting good relations.</p>					How are equality and diversity priorities communicated? How is 'equality' success defined and communicated? What methods are used? How does the service promote good relations across the whole community?	
<p>2.4</p> <p>The service ensures that the procurement process is regularly monitored and reviewed.</p>					How are equality issues addressed in the stages of the tendering process, for example when preparing the specification, pre-qualification and tender assessment? Are there monitoring requirements built into contracts to ensure equality issues are addressed? How do managers ensure that suppliers have an understanding and commitment to the principles and practice of equality in what they do?	
<p>2.5</p> <p>The service's equality action plan is being implemented and regularly monitored by the senior leadership, and delivering some outcomes.</p>					How is the action plan implemented? How often is it monitored? What outcomes are delivered?	
<p>2.6</p> <p>Representative bodies are enabled to deliver on equality and diversity objectives.</p>					What arrangements are in place to involve representative bodies?	

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Accountability	1	2	3	4	How was this done and what is the evidence? Questions or issues services might consider.	Where relevant, what do stakeholders and community members say about how this indicator is being met?	What difference will this make?
Action is being taken to implement the commitments within the statutory equality duties, which are regularly monitored by senior leadership.					How are the public duties monitored and reviewed? How often? What steps are taken if deficiencies are identified? Is the community involved in the monitoring? How?		
Bullying and harassment information is regularly monitored and analysed.					What data is available? Are harassment and bullying incidents monitored? What information/support is available to employees? How frequently is it analysed and acted upon? Have there been any changes in management arrangements and/or employee behaviour?		
The service reports annually to members and the CLG on equality and diversity progress.					Has the service provided an annual report to the fire authority and CLG?		
Appropriate action has been taken to enable managers to understand the process of assessment of equality impacts.					What is the quality of the assessments of equality impacts? Are they meaningful? Do the corporate and financial plans and strategies of the authority take account of equalities issues?		

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Effective service delivery and community engagement	1	2	3	4	How was this done and what is the evidence? Questions or issues services might consider.	Where relevant, what do stakeholders and community members say about how this indicator is being met?	What difference will this make?
<p>2.11 Appropriate resources have been allocated and action has been taken to mitigate adverse impact and improve equality outcomes where shortfalls have been identified.</p>					<p>Have resource implications been properly assessed? Are the outcomes of all assessments of equality impacts fed into service planning processes? Are there targets with specific accountabilities and timescales? Are there indicators of how success will eventually be measured? How have targets been integrated into service plans?</p>		
<p>2.12 A set of equality outcomes, objectives and goals has been produced to meet the needs of identified target groups.</p>					<p>How does community engagement take place on an ongoing basis? How is its effectiveness monitored? Are there inclusive, open, and participative forums where community groups can participate?</p>		
<p>2.13 Adequate arrangements are in place to review implementation of the integrated risk management plan.</p>					<p>What review arrangements are in place? How does the service scrutinise equality issues? How are communities involved in this process? How challenging is the scrutiny? How is information communicated?</p>		

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<p>2.14</p> <p>The service can demonstrate that significant improvements and equality outcomes are being delivered and are regularly monitored, reviewed and updated.</p>					<p>What significant improvements and equality outcomes have been delivered? Are they regularly reviewed and monitored? How does the service demonstrate that it continuously monitors, reviews and evaluates access to services?</p>	
<p>2.15</p> <p>The needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups have been identified and addressed.</p>					<p>Are there processes and plans to ensure equality stakeholders and representatives of vulnerable and marginalised groups are involved in the planning and delivery of services? How are the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups taken into account? What specific initiatives have been taken?</p>	
<p>2.16</p> <p>The service monitors and takes action on community perceptions and satisfaction, identified through surveys, complaints, procedures, and other means.</p>					<p>How does the service gather information on the perceptions and satisfaction of the community? How are complaints dealt with?</p>	

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<p>2.17</p> <p>Consultation influences and informs equality priorities and feedback is given to those consulted.</p>					<p>Are there processes and plans throughout the authority to ensure stakeholder and voluntary and community sector involvement in informing equality priorities? How is feedback given? How often? How are people in the community able to challenge? How are their views taken into account?</p>	
<p>2.18</p> <p>The service, and its partners, work together using equality mapping to address local community needs.</p>					<p>How does the service demonstrate partnership working? What evidence is there of addressing community needs?</p>	

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Employment and training	1	2	3	4	How was this done and what is the evidence? Questions or issues services might consider.	Where relevant, what do stakeholders and community members say about how this indicator is being met?	What difference will this make?
2.19 The equality aspects of the service's workforce strategy are implemented and monitored.					How are the equality aspects of the service's employment strategy being implemented and monitored? Have specific actions been taken? How are processes changing?		
2.20 Employment objectives have been set based on minimum recruitment targets and the assessment of the local labour market and barriers.					What objectives have been set? Where workforce data indicates that targets or objectives are not being met, are there appropriate examples of positive action? Where there is evidence of disproportionality, what action is being taken to reverse the trend?		
2.21 The service undertakes awareness campaigns and positive action programmes to support and encourage applications from currently under-represented groups.					What awareness campaigns and positive action programmes are being undertaken?		
2.22 The service can demonstrate a range of improvements to the working environment.					What improvements have been made to the working environment?		

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<p>2.23</p> <p>The service regularly monitors, analyses and publishes employment data to fulfil its statutory duties.</p>					<p>Is there evidence that workforce data is analysed and published to help establish targets and objectives? What information is published and where? Are trends identified? What action has been taken as a result of the monitoring?</p>		
<p>2.24</p> <p>All employment procedures have been assessed for equality impact. Action has been taken to address impact and promote equality outcomes.</p>					<p>Have employment policies been impact assessed against all the equality strands? What action has been taken to ensure equality outcomes?</p>		
<p>2.25</p> <p>The service has an action plan in place on equal pay and consulted with recognised trade unions.</p>					<p>Does the service have an action plan in place for equal pay? Has the service consulted with recognised trade unions?</p>		
<p>2.26</p> <p>The service provides all employees with training and development on equality, diversity and fairness issues.</p>					<p>Is equality and diversity part of employee training and development? Are different methods used to promote learning?</p>		

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<p>2.27</p> <p>The service provides all employees with appropriate training and development to build skills and confidence in delivering a service which is effective in meeting the needs of all local communities and is in accordance with legal requirements.</p>					<p>What evidence is there that equality issues are mainstreamed into training and development? What changes have come about as a result of any equalities training and development? Do employees feel their skills have improved? Are employees able to deal effectively with a range of issues?</p>	
<p>2.28</p> <p>The service provides training for all managers on handling grievances and disciplinary cases, tackling bullying, harassment, unfair discrimination and unacceptable behaviours.</p>					<p>What evidence is there of training for managers and members?</p>	
<p>2.29</p> <p>All employees are delivering improvements on equality and diversity objectives based on individual annual performance reviews.</p>					<p>Are managers and employees accountable for ensuring equality outcomes? Is good performance being recognised?</p>	
<p>2.30</p> <p>Employees are engaged positively in service transformation and in developing new roles and ways of working.</p>					<p>What evidence is there that employees have been proactively engaged? Are there any improvements arising from employee engagement?</p>	

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Evaluation and sharing good practice	1	2	3	4	How was this done and what is the evidence? Questions or issues authorities might consider	Where relevant, what do stakeholders and community members say about how this indicator is being met?	What difference will this make?
<p>The service collects and submits a wide range of equalities information to CLG, in accordance with the national 'Fire and rescue service: Equality and diversity Strategy 2008 - 2018'.</p>					<p>What information is collected? What does it include? Is it reported in a timely manner? Does equality information include progress against employment targets and does it encompass all equality strands?</p>		
<p>The service is informed by good practice and has made changes to its practices as a result of learning from others.</p>					<p>What examples of good practice are used? How has it learned from others?</p>		

Achieving – Improvement action plan			
We have identified the following areas for improvement	Priority 1–10 (1 is high)	Who?	Resources needed

Potential barriers	Potential solutions	If appropriate, how are we planning to involve stakeholders and community members?

An achieving fire and rescue authority illustration

This illustration provides an example of what a metropolitan fire authority at the achieving stage might look like.

It has been drawn together by combining the experiences of a number of authorities at the achieving stage.

Context

Tameshire Fire and Rescue Authority (TFRA) is a metropolitan authority formed in 1974 and comprises 27 members from each Tameshire region. The authority has appointed a lead member for equality and diversity. The fire service is managed directly by the chief fire officer and other executive members who together form the corporate board. The senior management team, along with the chief fire officer (CFO), consists of a deputy CFO and departmental heads who have responsibilities across the following areas:

- Director of technical and operational support
- Director of fire and community safety
- Director of corporate services
- Director of finance and procurement
- Director of human resources

Tameshire Fire and Rescue Authority serves an area of 91,276 hectares and a population of 2,591,305 people. The conurbation includes the major cities of Castleford, Westgate and Riverside with the metropolitan districts of Hightrees and Woodside.

Tameshire Fire and Rescue Service (TFRS) has a total of 40 fire stations and six fire safety stations. The service realigned its structure to the seven city and metropolitan areas in order to ensure that the operational commands reflect local authority boundaries.

The service employs approximately 2,800 members of staff which includes operational firefighters, fire control and non-operational staff.

Manufacturing remains an important element in the economy and accounts for 20 per cent of all regional employment. This economy is accompanied by a range of commercial, high technology, retail and service industries.

The city regions have a working age population of 1.55 million. There are also pockets of long term unemployment within the city region. Unemployment and inactivity rates are highest in the deprived urban areas and among groups such as older people and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities.

People from BAME communities made up just over 9 per cent of the population in 2008, with the largest

groups being of Asian or Asian British origin (6.4 per cent), with particular concentrations in Castleford and Woodside. Among white minority groups there are significant communities of Irish and Eastern European origin, as well as groups of Gypsies and Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers. Migration out of Castleford, together with the arrival of economic migrants, is leading to more diverse communities.

The age structure of the population is similar to the national and regional averages; 21 per cent of residents are under 16 years, 64 per cent are of working age and 15 per cent are over 65 years. However, the proportion of people aged over 50 is projected to increase to 38 per cent by 2011 and 41 per cent by 2016. Life expectancy is above the national average, placing the area in top quartiles nationally for both males and females.

Background

The equality section within TFRS has been established since 1996, in order to respond to the increasing statutory duties placed on public sector bodies.

In 2001, the authority progressed its work on improving physical access to buildings in response to the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), and drew up a race equality scheme in response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2002. An equality forum was set up

consisting of representatives from each of the seven command areas to enable the development of the equalities agenda.

Following the adoption of the Equality Standard for Local Government in 2002 TFRS appointed an equalities officer to continue making progress on this agenda. A corporate equality steering group (CESG) was also established and chaired by the director of human resources.

The CESG, under the leadership of the director of human resources, was instrumental in introducing a clear equality impact assessment (EqIA) methodology and putting in place a realistic and prioritised timetable to ensure that EqIAs were undertaken across the authority.

A mechanism for ensuring that the quality of EqIAs was tested at CESG meetings was introduced to ensure consistency across the organisation, but this did not happen on a regular basis due to the heavy agenda. However, whenever EqIAs were assessed it was obvious that their quality was variable and that not everyone was clear about their purpose.

The ad hoc assessments of EqIAs at CESG showed that the good quality assessments were being used to improve new and existing policies and functions, and clear and meaningful targets were being set as a result. However, the process of using EqIAs to improve

decision making was not being replicated consistently across TFRS. Moreover, although the EqIA methodology required managers to consider all six equality strands, it was clear that officers tended to only look at issues related to race and disability.

In response, EqIA training was given to 65 managers across the authority who were identified as being responsible for carrying out EqIAs. This resulted in some improvements.

Another major weakness identified by the CESG in taking the equality work forward, particularly in terms of assessing the communities' needs, was the lack of detailed research on the specific needs of all sections of the community. TFRS was not making effective use of community mapping information to understand the extent of inequality and disadvantage in the area.

In 2007, TFRS developed a combined equality scheme that detailed generic actions for all equality strands including the specific requirements from the gender and disability legislation. The scheme included individual action plans for each equality strand. The scheme, together with the corporate equality action plan, details the TFRS equality and diversity agenda.

Also, in 2007, the director for fire and community safety became the corporate lead for equalities with a vision for improved, high service standards.

The director felt that what was lacking was the provision of leadership and co-ordination of efforts strategically, so that key equality outcomes could be shown from across the service.

An achieving authority

Following a comprehensive performance assessment in 2005, the Audit Commission said that:

“the fire authority is not well placed to deliver consistent services to all groups within its communities. The fire authority has made slow progress in implementing some parts of the equality and diversity agenda”.

In response to this the director of fire and community safety was given the mandate to “do whatever’s necessary to get us there before the next assessment”.

As a starting point a joint briefing was arranged on the current strengths and weaknesses, as identified by the CESG, for the chair of authority’s corporate board and chief officers. The briefing consisted of three presentations by:

- the equalities officer on performance management of the equality and diversity agenda
- the director of operations on the authority's strengths and weaknesses
- a voluntary and community sector representative from their perspective.

The following priorities were then identified for action and progressed as described:

- Undertake a needs assessment exercise of vulnerable and marginalised groups using information based on equality mapping and risk analysis. This will include utilising a range of consultation and engagement methods to develop and monitor programmes and prioritise activities.**

TFRA's integrated risk management plan emphasises the need for up-to-date risk information that takes full account of its local community. Each of the command areas within the TFRA are distinct, with different community groups presenting different home, road and personal safety issues. Each command area assesses their own local demographics and intelligence to determine where to focus their activities.

The authority also works with local partners and community engagement projects to obtain information on vulnerable groups in the different areas. The community safety information gained on each area is broken down into equality areas and appropriate interventions are planned and arrangements are made to review these plans and interventions regularly.

For example, through working with the local authority and its knowledge of vulnerable groups, TFRS has managed to offer these groups free home safety checks. The local authority has agreed to include information on home safety checks when communicating with local people as part of the information they get with their benefit claims.

- Ensure EqlAs are being undertaken consistently and are published regularly, using them to review all major strategic documents and service changes to policies, with no policy being signed off or strategic document being published unless accompanied by an EqlA.**

A sub-group of the CESG was set up to meet on a quarterly basis to monitor the fact that EqlAs were taking place corporately and to challenge their quality. As a result all six equality strands are

now addressed. The membership of the group was widened to include trade union representatives and representatives from the disability and BAME staff networks. Summaries of EqlAs are now published annually on TFRA website.

- c. **Ensure equalities issues and objectives are clearly integrated into service planning and performance management frameworks with measurable objectives to address persistent inequalities.**

Equalities issues were explicitly considered when drawing up the local area agreement, with each target or indicator being screened to ensure that any action plan specifically looked at how services would need to take account of the six strands. The TFRA service planning framework was reviewed and more detailed and explicit guidance was issued about setting high-level equality targets in all the service and financial plans and strategies, and also how actions arising from EqlAs should be integrated. Moreover, equalities monitoring has been integrated into the corporate performance management system.

- d. **Streamline and audit the effectiveness of consultation processes, using a range of mechanisms including focus groups, e-consultation, joint-consultation exercises and staff audit.**

Corporate consultation guidelines have been drawn-up outlining consultation standards, with clear objectives, principles and standards for consultation and engagement for all services. In addition a diary of all consultations taking place throughout TFRA is now being maintained. This enables employees to assess whether they can combine consultations where the aim is to consult with similar groups over similar timescales. This diary holds the results of previous consultations and, therefore, enables staff to use these results to inform their EqlAs.

- e. **Improve community involvement in taking the equality agenda forward.**

The Tameshire Community Forum was set up to improve community involvement. This was advertised as a way for people from BAME, lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB), transgender communities, disabled and older people to be involved in the development of local services provided by TFRS, the primary care trust and the police. It is managed by

the local authority. A separate youth parliament is being considered. Although it is called a 'forum', meetings and events take place twice a year and it is possible for members to be involved without coming to meetings. Forum members are able to provide input into any major forthcoming changes to services and provide challenge. Through the forum, TFRS is able to learn of any fire specific issues of concern for individual groups and communities. The service is also able to discuss any new initiatives that are being planned in conjunction with partners, such as the police. For example, community events (Diwali, Eid and bonfire night celebrations) where both TFRS and the police will be involved. TFRS is able to inform community groups on the dangers and risks of fire, both in and around the home, and will be able to arrange smoke alarms to be fitted and can organise for home fire safety checks to take place.

- f. **Review the workforce strategy and human resources (HR) policies to ensure they promote best practice. This includes the implementation of an equal pay strategy and the development of a work-life balance strategy that includes a range of part time working options for all staff.**

A training session specifically aimed at HR policy

managers on equalities resulted in the workforce strategy being reviewed, together with all the TFRS HR policies. Employment objectives have been set based on minimum recruitment targets as set out in the national 'Fire and rescue: Equality and diversity strategy 2008 - 2018'. The recruitment targets are aimed at increasing the presence of women and BAME people in the fire service. TFRS has gone beyond simply raising awareness of employment opportunities in the fire service and is working with positive action initiatives to try to attract more women and BAME people to the service. The initiatives include coaching for potential candidates (supplied by officers of TFRS), working with gyms in the area to enable potential candidates to increase their fitness levels. TFRS also works with external agencies, such as the local college, to enable potential candidates to develop their written skills.

Following the upgrade of the HR management information systems, there is a good corporate workforce monitoring framework in place and high quality information is available about corporate targets and how these are being achieved. TFRS has put in place a plan for an equal pay review to take place and is currently consulting with its trade unions regarding this plan.

TFRSA has a 'dignity at work' policy advising employees about attitudes and behaviours towards colleagues and the public. Although the service has systems in place to identify, prevent and deal with bullying and harassment, the HR policy manager, who sits on the CESG, realised while carrying out an impact assessment of their dignity at work policy, that information collected had not previously been monitored and analysed. As a result regular monitoring and analysis of bullying and harassment data will be reported at CESG meetings.

It was agreed that a six-monthly report would be presented to the corporate board outlining progress against these priorities. In addition they would ask to see EqlAs related to the area or function under scrutiny.

Conclusion

Since the last comprehensive performance assessment both the corporate board and senior officers feel that significant progress has been made over the last two years. The service is confident that it will meet the requirements of the achieving stage. It is in no doubt that, as a result of the work undertaken, it will be able to show that it has a broad understanding of the make-up and needs of its community and targets its services efficiently; and that consultation and engagement with all sections of the community

are effective. The recent staff survey shows that staff think the service's performance on equalities issues has improved significantly, both in the way that it delivers its services and in the way it employs people, particularly citing the new flexible working policy.

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