



THE CHIEF
FIRE OFFICERS
ASSOCIATION

I&DeA
improvement and development agency

A developing fire and rescue authority understanding the importance of equality



DEVELOPING FIRE &
RESCUE
SERVICE
EQUALITY
FRAMEWORK

A developing fire and rescue authority has the following characteristics:

- Fire authority members and senior service leaders understand the significance of the equality agenda. They provide clear and visible leadership in building partnerships to address inequalities.
- It has demonstrated involvement with partners in equality mapping and understands the profile and needs of communities within its locality.
- It is publicly committed to and is developing an action plan to improve equality outcomes and the elimination of discrimination in both service delivery and employment based on race, gender, disability, age, religion and belief, sexual orientation and other areas of disadvantage.
- It is compliant with all legal requirements, including all the statutory duties.
- It has systems in place at corporate and departmental levels to ensure the delivery, review and scrutiny of its equality and diversity priorities.
- Key internal and external stakeholders and community members are involved in and consulted on equalities issues.
- It has earmarked specific resources for improving equality practice.
- It is carrying out both retrospective and prospective assessments of equality impacts.
- It is clear about its workforce profile and has plans to ensure equal pay and to improve representation where appropriate.

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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 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>1.1</p> <p>The chief fire officer and members commit publicly to the service's core values, to developing an organisation which is fair to everyone and which values and supports equality and diversity.</p>					<p>What public statements have been made? Are they meaningful? What documentation details the service's commitment to equality and diversity? How is the 'equality story' integrated into corporate documents? Who is responsible for delivering the agenda at fire authority and service leader level? Is there a corporate equalities group?</p>		
<p>1.2</p> <p>The chief fire officer, senior managers and members undertake appropriate training and development in order to effectively perform their roles in promoting equality, diversity and fairness and providing leadership to others.</p>					<p>Are there plans in place for the training and development of members and service leaders?</p>		

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<p>1.3</p> <p>The service's internal and external communication strategies are designed to promote good relations across all local communities.</p>					<p>How does the service's communication strategy take account of equalities? Do the service's publications and press releases reflect a diverse community and workforce, in terms of both content and images? Is the service's website accessible and informative? What is done to promote good relations across communities?</p>	
<p>1.4</p> <p>Equality and diversity matters are fully considered during the procurement of goods and services.</p>					<p>Is there corporate guidance on the equality and diversity requirements for the procurement function? Are there standard equality clauses for contracts and suppliers? How do specifications take account of different needs? Are assessments of equality impacts undertaken when procuring services? Are the outcomes reflected in the specifications for the service and in the procurement process? Does the specification set measurable criteria for contractors or suppliers?</p>	

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1.5 The service has developed an equality action plan which is reviewed annually					How does the service progress its equality agenda? What arrangements are in place? What resources have been committed to the plan?	
1.6 The service fully consults with representative bodies with regard to all equality, diversity and fairness issues, in order to develop a partnership approach.					What arrangements are in place to consult with all representative bodies?	

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Accountability	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>1.7</p> <p>The service is compliant with the statutory duties, and equality schemes are in place.</p>					Do the equality schemes meet statutory requirements, including involving the relevant target groups with clear action plans relating to both employment and service delivery?		
<p>1.8</p> <p>The service has systems in place to effectively identify, prevent and deal with bullying and harassment.</p>					Is there a 'dignity at work' or harassment and bullying policy? Are there any support structures for employees?		
<p>1.9</p> <p>The service can demonstrate that robust performance management arrangements are in place to deliver equality outcomes.</p>					What systems are in place for monitoring, auditing, reporting and reviewing?		
<p>1.10</p> <p>Managers across the service, as part of the process of carrying out assessments of equality, are aware of their role in relation to any fire and rescue service function.</p>					Is there a list of functions and priorities or an action plan with a timetable which sets out which assessments for equality impact will be undertaken and by when? Is there a corporate framework and guidance for these assessments? Are assessments of equality impact available publicly?		

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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 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>1.11</p> <p>The service's plans, strategies, policies and procedures are assessed for equality impact as part of a prioritised programme.</p>					Are there arrangements for publishing the assessment of equality impacts? What evidence is there of stakeholder consultation in the process?		
<p>1.12</p> <p>The service ensures that local communities are consulted and/or engaged appropriately on service planning and delivery.</p>					What engagement structures are in place? How are marginalised and vulnerable people included? What mechanisms are used to engage different groups, including communities of interest?		
<p>1.13</p> <p>The service is committed to developing an integrated risk management plan (IRMP) that takes full account of the needs of the community.</p>					Is the service clear about what sources of information (both local and national) might be relevant and useful? How are local people's needs identified? Is the service able to gauge how its communities might be changing?		
<p>1.14</p> <p>Structures are in place to ensure equality outcomes are integrated into the service's objectives and targets.</p>					What structures are in place? Are equality objectives integrated into service plans?		

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<p>1.15</p> <p>Appropriate measures are put in place to ensure the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups are identified through the planning process.</p>					Do service delivery policies highlight the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups? How are complaints dealt with? What information is available from user surveys?	
<p>1.16</p> <p>The service consistently communicates progress on service delivery to all local communities, including targeted communication.</p>					How does the service communicate progress on service delivery? Is it widely accessible to local communities? Does it include targeted communication where appropriate?	
<p>1.17</p> <p>The service is aware of and consults with equality stakeholders and representatives of vulnerable and marginalised groups to ensure their views are taken account of.</p>					What evidence is there that consultation, involvement and inclusion are integral to the way the service prioritises and plans its outcomes? Does the service engage with organisations which represent vulnerable and marginalised groups and equality groups? How does it ensure that mechanisms and events are inclusive?	
<p>1.18</p> <p>Partners share information regarding local community needs.</p>					What arrangements are in place to obtain relevant information from partners? What arrangements does the service have in place to share relevant information that it holds with partners?	

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Employment and training	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?
1.19 The service's workforce strategy incorporates key equality issues as identified within the national 'Fire and rescue: Equality and diversity strategy 2008 - 2018'.					Are there a range of employment strategies and policies? Do they include the priorities identified within the national 'Fire and rescue: Equality and diversity strategy 2008 – 2018'?		
1.20 The service understands its local labour market, the barriers equality groups face and the impact this has on achieving a diverse workforce.					Is the service clear about its local labour market? Was any equality mapping data used as part of the analysis? Has it begun to identify the steps it needs to take to achieve a diverse workforce across all equality groups?		
1.21 The service uses effective processes for recruitment, development and promotion of a diverse workforce.					What processes are in place? What progress has been made with recruitment, development and promotion?		
1.22 The service has assessed all aspects of the working environment.					Has the service carried out an assessment of its working environment for all employees?		
1.23 The service ensures that all employment procedures comply with equality legislation and employment codes of practice.					Are all employment policies regularly reviewed to ensure they are compliant with the latest developments?		

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<p>1.24</p> <p>The service reviews and carries out assessments of equality impact on its employment policies, practices and procedures.</p>					Are assessments of equality impacts being carried out for major employment policies and new policies and procedures?	
<p>1.25</p> <p>The service has undertaken an equal pay audit as required by the Equal Pay Act 1970 (Amended).</p>					Has the service developed an equal pay policy and set out a timetable for carrying out its pay review?	
<p>1.26</p> <p>The service has completed individual training needs assessment of the development required by employees to deliver equality outcomes.</p>					Have the appropriate competencies been identified? How? Has an assessment been made as to what training, learning or development will be required? Does the learning and development plan take account of equalities issues?	
<p>1.27</p> <p>The service communicates clearly and consistently with employees to raise awareness and understanding of local community issues and the actions needed to address them.</p>					What action plans are in place to raise the awareness and understanding that employees have of their local community?	
<p>1.28</p> <p>The service has appropriate policies and procedures in place to manage grievances and unacceptable behaviours.</p>					What policies and procedures are in place to manage grievances and unacceptable behaviour?	

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1.29						
Annual individual performance reviews, based on the relevant role for all employees (upto and including chief fire officer), include equality and diversity objectives.					How do appraisal processes ensure employees and managers are aware of their responsibilities and accountabilities? How are employees made aware of equality objectives or any changes or improvements?	
1.30						
The service communicates regularly with employees to raise awareness and understanding of workplace equality and diversity issues and the actions needed to address them.					What employee engagement structures are there? Are there any employee support networks?	

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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>1.31</p> <p>The service has secure provisions for the collection and storage of personal information. It encourages and supports employees to disclose personal equality data.</p>					<p>What are the arrangements for the collection of equality data? What provisions are in place for the safe storage of personal data? How does the service encourage employees to disclose equality data?</p>		
<p>1.32</p> <p>The service is aware of good practice and is learning from others.</p>					<p>How does the service become aware of good practice? What best practice has been considered?</p>		

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

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

A developing fire and rescue authority illustration

This illustration provides an example of what a county council fire authority at the developing stage might look like.

It has been drawn together by combining the experiences of a number of fire and rescues services and authorities at the developing stage.

Context

Wigfield Fire and Rescue Authority consists of the county council's 77 members and has ultimate responsibility for the efficient provision of fire and rescue services across Wigfield. It provides fire and rescue services across the 5,726 square kilometres of Wigfield. It operates from 38 fire stations across the county, two of which are crewed 24 hours a day, six are crewed during the day and the remainder crewed by firefighters on a retained duty system who provide 24 hour cover on call.

Wigfield Fire and Rescue Service (WFRS) has four district offices based in Wigfield South, Brampton, Granfield and Lonsborough. The service headquarters is in Wigfield.

The population of Wigfield is constantly changing. Currently this stands at 626,700 and is one of the fastest growing populations in the country with a projected increase of a further 10 per cent by 2014. It is growing fastest in rural areas and more slowly in the city of Wigfield. Even though the population has increased substantially, Wigfield still has a low population density and is therefore classed as one of the most rural counties in England with only one of the seven local authorities being categorised as urban.

This, combined with relatively low income levels, has resulted in pockets of high levels of deprivation. It has above the regional and national average for claimants of incapacity benefit and severe disablement allowance.

The population is also getting older. In 2005 almost 20 per cent of the population was aged 65 and over, and this figure is projected to rise to 22 per cent by 2011.

The makeup of communities in some areas has also changed rapidly due to migrating workers and expanding EU membership. The largest increases are in the number of people from Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. The extent of Wigfield's national and ethnic diversity is reflected in the fact that there are now over 60 different languages spoken by children in the schools across the county.

Previously, the service worked with the county council on its corporate equality scheme in order to deliver against the Equality Standard for Local Government. However, WFRS found that some of the requirements of the Equality Standard that were relevant to a local authority and with which the county council could work with, were not relevant to a fire and rescue service. This made it difficult for the service to demonstrate progress against the Equality Standard. After discussions, held at fire authority meetings, the county council made a decision that the FRS could work separately to the county council by working with the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework. This would contribute to the overall progress made by the county council against its equality and diversity agenda.

WFRS's senior management team consists of the chief fire officer and three assistant chief fire officers. Together they have the overall responsibility for providing an efficient service to the communities of Wigfield and for delivering on the service's mission of "making Wigfield a safer place to live, work and visit". The team consists of the chief fire officer and assistant chiefs who have responsibility for the following areas:

Assistant chief fire officer 1
community protection and risk management

Assistant chief fire officer 2
organisational development and resources

Assistant chief fire officer 3
policy, planning and performance

WFRS employs 1,005 staff. Of the 775 operational members of staff 53 are female. The overall distribution is 14 per cent female employees and 86 per cent male. The black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) profile of WFRS's workforce is 0.89 per cent, against the county profile of 1.3 per cent. Less than 1 per cent of WFRS employees declare themselves to be disabled against the county profile of 14 per cent. Currently WFRS is not collecting data on the sexual orientation of the workforce.

WFRS's vision is:

"a Wigfield which is safe and in which fire and rescue plays a key role in helping everyone to find and enjoy the lifestyle that suits them".

Its strategic objectives are to:

- deliver a professional and resilient emergency response service to the diverse community
- deliver a proactive community fire safety and well-being programme
- provide a competent, skilled, safe and diverse workforce
- provide effective ethical governance and efficient environmental sustainable resources management.

The authority received a comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) score of 'good' in 2004 and in April 2007 the Audit Commission gave it a 'positive direction of travel' statement.

Background

Given its commitment to providing a high quality service to all its communities, the authority has tried hard to meet the requirements of the equalities legislation since the introduction of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. It has had a race equality scheme since 2002. Given the small BAME community in the area it has tended to use the local (county-wide) Racial Equality Council (REC) to carry out its consultations. It has published an annual review, which is available on its website. Following complaints

from the REC it reviewed its language provision and has started using Language Line to provide interpretation services.

As a starting point in the autumn of 2007, the chief fire officer nominated one of the assistant chief fire officers to take forward the work on trying to meet the requirements of the Equality Standard for Local Government and the newer strands of equalities legislation. However, officers had difficulty making real connections between the broader requirements of the Equality Standard and their day-to-day work. Moreover, diversity was seen only to be a race issue. Neither officers nor members made the connections with regard to the wider issues relating to age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, and religion or belief, despite having such a large population of retired people.

An equality and diversity steering group (EDSG) was set up with a remit to meet every three months to drive this agenda. This group reports monthly to the overall county council equality and diversity steering group (CCEDSG) on which each directorate was invited to nominate an officer to attend. The CCEDSG was committed but given that they could not see how this related to day-to-day service provision, and that many of their colleagues and members saw this

as 'yet another initiative', work was carried out in a mechanistic way, rather than in a way that made a real difference to service outcomes. Progress on meeting the requirements of the equalities agenda progressed in an unfocused way over several months. Recognising this, the fire service's EDSG, after discussions with the CCEDSG, decided that it would develop its equalities agenda by working with the FRS EF. The CCEDSG agreed to let the fire service continue this way of working so long as the steering group reported back to the county's steering group.

Statements of commitment were included in the fire service's overarching documents (for example the community safety strategy and corporate plan) and there appeared to be a good theoretical framework for taking the equality agenda forward. The fire service had an equality impact assessment (EqIA) toolkit in place and a significant number of EqIAs had been carried out. However, except in a few exceptional cases, the EqIA process was not being used as a way of testing or challenging proposed and current policies or services, nor for improving service delivery outcomes. Managers struggled to understand the purpose or relevance of an EqIA.

The service had started to put together a consultation strategy which would be based on the county council

strategy. The county council's strategy did not take account of the national 'Fire and rescue service: Equality and diversity strategy 2008-2018', which was at the time the subject of much widespread consultation. However, the fire service recognised that it would need to work with the county and other partners in order to access the information that had been collected and that may already be available. But the information that was available was not always analysed effectively, nor was it always able to be disaggregated demographically.

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Following an inspection in early 2007, the Audit Commission commented that:

“despite having established prevention, protection and response priorities, the FRS needs to introduce a systematic approach that would ensure that local communities including new communities within the county are consulted and / or engaged appropriately on service planning and delivery issues.”

The FRS decided to appoint a community engagement manager with specific responsibility to work with internal and external stakeholders and community members; this gave a new impetus to the equality and diversity agenda.

The manager, who had come from an excellent service, began working with the EDSG to refocus their thinking around why the equality agenda was relevant. In particular, he was able to get the group to see that race was not the only issue that needed addressing, but that given the information provided by the county council's 'annual residents' survey' and other forms of community feedback, migrant workers, older and younger residents and people with disabilities had specific areas of concern.

Connecting the work of the group with the mainstream business of both the fire service and the county council enabled the assistant chief fire officer to provide clear and visible leadership. The group began to meet more frequently, every two months, and began to use these meetings to assess and audit the fire service's performance with regard to equalities, and act as a forum for cross organisational challenge, support and learning. The membership of the group was reviewed and it was agreed that a member of staff working in community fire safety be included. She was able to inform the group about changes on the 'front-line' in

terms of the enquiries coming in, particularly from Polish people around fire safety in the home.

The assistant chief fire officer put together a report recommending that the fire service would benefit from a lead member attending EDSG meetings. It was put to the fire authority that members would gain by having some training in diversity. A county council equality champion was appointed who also began to attend the fire service's EDSG meetings. This was in order to ensure that he was kept abreast of developments, but also so that he could provide any member feedback or concerns (which had been picked up by members during surgeries and visits) into the process. Some of the issues raised included the lack of knowledge of some older disabled people about fire safety in the home and a need for fire escape plans.

As a result of changes to the EDSG and the information coming in, it was agreed that Wigfield FRS would work with the local authority to carry out a 'mapping' exercise to collate all the 'informal' intelligence, identify gaps, and ensure that any consultation strategy involved the recently-arrived communities and older disabled people; groups that had been overlooked previously.

Working with the officer responsible for putting together the consultation strategy, they reviewed:

- what and how information had been collated to date
- what methodologies had been used to engage with local communities
- how information was analysed and used to set organisational priorities or improve service delivery outcomes.

They also reviewed what types of information were available nationally or regionally and considered whether information could be disaggregated demographically to reflect the different communities locally. It became clear that this work would need to be done in conjunction with other partners. A discussion took place at a local strategic partnership (LSP) meeting to consider the best way forward.

As a result of member training, the discussions around consultation, and the need to work more effectively with partners, it became clear to the assistant chief fire officer that it would be beneficial if all those working on the equality agenda across the public sector in the county met every six months to learn from each other. As a result of this initiative, Wigfield FRS, the county council and other agencies developed a more streamlined and simpler EqlA framework which they all committed to use.

The EDSG also decided to devise a clear timetable for carrying out EqlAs – both prospective as well as retrospective – which was prioritised. The programme was developed in conjunction with the county council covering directorates and specifically included human resources policies. This enabled proper resources to be allocated and enabled the fire service to ensure that EqlAs were meaningful and involved the appropriate community and stakeholders as necessary. Rather than training a lot of managers on how to carry out EqlAs, it was decided that members of the EDSG would be trained and would act as ‘mentors’ and support other officers. This, it was felt, would ensure consistency of quality.

Feedback from both officers and community groups suggests that using the EqlAs framework in this way has led to better decisions and improved policy making. Officers have thought about the specific needs of different groups in a way they have not done before. The overview and scrutiny committee of the county council has now asked that any policy or initiative being scrutinised by them must be accompanied by an EqlA.

At the same time the performance team began to consider how targets or objectives arising from EqlAs could be integrated into the main organisational performance management framework, especially the service planning process.

A major challenge for the fire service has been engaging with 'hard-to-reach' groups, one of the reasons for this being due to limited resources. Again the fire service decided to work with its partners and in devising its disability and gender equality schemes in 2006 and 2007, they decided to consult with the community on a joint basis. This approach was welcomed by the voluntary and community sector as it enabled them to marshal their resources effectively. Face-to-face meetings were supplemented with an online questionnaire and the consultation process was run by a local academic institution on behalf of all the partners. As a result the fire service was able to involve a wide range of the community and ensure that the resulting action plans for both schemes were relevant. This also ensured that each partner was able to deal with and pick up on issues which related specifically to them.

The authority carried out a job evaluation exercise. Although this goes some way to show that equal pay issues have been addressed, the fire service recognises the need to continue monitoring to ensure there is parity between men and women's pay levels. Also the pay issues relating to uniformed and non-uniformed staff have been considered

It regularly monitors the performance of workforce targets. Results show that they are performing well with regard to women in senior management positions.

A recruitment strategy has been developed to address recruitment, retention and progression in-line with the national 'Fire and rescue: Equality and diversity strategy 2008 – 2018' and plans are in place to report to the authority and CLG annually.

An appraisal system is in place but will be reviewed to support the service's learning and development plan. Although this is applicable to all staff it is recognised that more effective monitoring needs to be introduced to capture this data.

Conclusion

Wigfield Fire and Rescue Service now feels that since refocusing its agenda and working with the requirements of the FRS EF, it recognises that equality is a mainstream issue. The fire service, county council officers and members have all worked hard to enable the fire service to achieve the **developing** stage of the FRS EF. There is clear evidence that the FRS has started to mainstream equalities into its service delivery and employment processes and if the present momentum is maintained it will continue to make real progress in this area. It is also recognised that making meaningful progress takes time and so they are being much more realistic about how quickly they will reach the achieving stage.

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