



THE CHIEF
FIRE OFFICERS
ASSOCIATION

I&DeA
improvement and development agency

An excellent fire and rescue authority making a difference



EXCELLENT FIRE &
RESCUE
SERVICE
EQUALITY
FRAMEWORK

An excellent fire and rescue authority has the following characteristics:

- Fire authority members and senior service leaders have a reputation for championing equality issues, ensuring that they are relevant to communities and are embedded in the integrated risk management plan (IRMP) and other relevant documents.
- It works with all strategic partners, including the voluntary and community sector, to achieve defined equality outcomes.
- It has good evidence of the equalities profile, including the socio-economic differences of the community, based on national and local data that is regularly reviewed.
- It is measuring progress on equality outcomes, is able to disaggregate data on relevant performance indicators and can demonstrate real outcomes that have improved equality in service delivery and employment.
- It identifies the changing nature of its communities and their expectations, then prioritises its activities and explains its decisions.
- It provides a good standard of service, delivered by knowledgeable and well-trained employees who understand the needs of their communities.
- It has improving satisfaction and perception indicators from all sections of the community and employees.
- The service is integrally involved in community engagement programmes.
- There are opportunities for a wide range of equality stakeholders to share experiences and evaluate the authority's progress.
- It has implemented action for equal pay outcomes and demonstrates progress on under-representation, flexible working and access to training and development.
- It promotes an inclusive working culture based on respect.
- It reviews its equality strategy and response to the statutory duty requirements every three years and seeks innovative improvement challenges.
- Through its achievements, it is an exemplar of good practice for fire authorities and other public sector organisations. It works with others to share best practice.

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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>3.1</p> <p>The service can demonstrate success in meeting a range of equality and diversity objectives including partnership priorities. Objectives are reviewed on a regular basis.</p>					<p>What evidence is there of improved outcomes? Can employees or the local community give any good examples of improved service outcomes? What review mechanisms are in place?</p>		
<p>3.2</p> <p>Senior service leaders and members demonstrate their commitment to equality and diversity through personal impact and by making resources available to deliver improvements.</p>					<p>How do members and officers demonstrate their commitment? Do they act as ambassadors for the equality agenda? What resources have been made available?</p>		
<p>3.3</p> <p>The service has gained a reputation within the community and among key partners for championing and achieving equality outcomes and promoting good relations.</p>					<p>Is the service approached by others to share information about its achievements? Can employees and the community give any examples of good community relations?</p>		

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<p>3.4</p> <p>The service can demonstrate that procurement is contributing to its equality and diversity objectives.</p>					<p>What evidence is there that procurement processes contribute to the achievement of equality and diversity objectives? How does the service ensure that contractors/suppliers continue to meet changing needs? What is written into the contract? How is the contract managed over time to support good practice and continuing service improvement? Is there evidence that contracts are being monitored using quantitative and qualitative analysis, and the results considered and analysed?</p>		
<p>3.5</p> <p>The service can demonstrate significant progress against its equality action plan.</p>					<p>What significant outcomes have been achieved? Have all or most of the objectives in the action plan been achieved?</p>		
<p>3.6</p> <p>Representative bodies are actively encouraged to fulfil a positive role in delivering a wide range of equality and diversity improvements.</p>					<p>What evidence is there of representative bodies being actively encouraged to fulfil a positive role? What examples are there of positive contributions by representative bodies to deliver equality and diversity improvements?</p>		

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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?
<p>3.7</p> <p>The service can demonstrate improvements and outcomes as a result of its statutory duties.</p>					<p>What evidence is there of improved outcomes? Are the implications of statutory duties regularly reviewed? What information is available to show there has been an improvement?</p>		
<p>3.8</p> <p>Appropriate action is taken to address the issues that have been identified in relation to bullying and harassment.</p>					<p>What issues have been identified? What actions have been taken?</p>		
<p>3.9</p> <p>The service uses regular reporting to review performance across a wide range of equality and diversity matters, creating a cycle of continuous improvement.</p>					<p>What review mechanisms are in place? What aspects of equality have been reviewed? Does the service assess its performance against comparable organisations? Is there a cycle of continuous improvement?</p>		
<p>3.10</p> <p>Evidence can be provided by managers showing outcomes from the assessments of equality impacts.</p>					<p>What evidence is there showing outcomes from assessments of equality impacts?</p>		

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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>3.11</p> <p>The service plans, strategies, policies and procedures take full account of the needs of local communities. All aspects of the planning process have been effectively assessed for impacts on equality strands.</p>					<p>What evidence is there that assessments of equality impacts, or the use of similar processes, have influenced key policy changes? What evidence is there that the service has taken account of local socio-economic differences?</p>		
<p>3.12</p> <p>The service has achieved positive progress across the equality outcome / objectives it set.</p>					<p>What evidence is there of improved or improving outcomes against equality objectives?</p>		
<p>3.13</p> <p>The service has a sophisticated and segmented understanding of its local communities, which informs and influences its intergrated risk management plan (IRMP).</p>					<p>How well does the service know its different communities? Is there a pattern of regular engagement with communities? Are a range of methodologies used? How does knowing the community inform and influence the TRMP?</p>		
<p>3.14</p> <p>There are significant and sustainable year-on-year equality improvements.</p>					<p>What significant year-on-year improvements have been achieved? Are such improvements sustainable?</p>		

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<p>3.15</p> <p>There is an improvement in outcomes for communities, including those who are vulnerable and marginalised.</p>					<p>What improvements in outcomes for communities have been achieved? Do such improvements include vulnerable and marginalised groups?</p>		
<p>3.16</p> <p>The service has achieved measurable improvements arising from community engagement.</p>					<p>What views and needs have been taken into account? What improvements have been delivered? Are they being measured and recorded?</p>		
<p>3.17</p> <p>Effective forums are in place to enable all equality stakeholders, including representatives of vulnerable and marginalised groups, to challenge, scrutinise and evaluate priorities for improving service delivery.</p>					<p>How are people from vulnerable and marginalised groups encouraged and enabled to participate? Have any priorities been changed? What improvements have been achieved?</p>		
<p>3.18</p> <p>The service, and its partners, review priorities regularly in the light of changing community needs and interests.</p>					<p>How is the service working with partners to manage the diverse needs of their communities? How are priorities reviewed? How do they go about negotiating and changing priorities?</p>		

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Employment and training	1	2	3	4	How was this done and what's 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>3.19</p> <p>A range of innovative processes are in place which deliver equality outcomes for the whole workforce.</p>					<p>What strategic, innovative and cross-cutting approaches have been considered to improve outcomes? Is there good use of opportunities for employees that deliver improved equality outcomes, for example flexible working? Are there career pathways for part-time employees?</p>		
<p>3.20</p> <p>The service can demonstrate significant progress towards achieving its minimum recruitment targets, resulting in greater equality in its workforce profile.</p>					<p>Has the service achieved, or is it making significant progress towards, its minimum recruitment targets? Is there greater diversity in the workforce profile?</p>		
<p>3.21</p> <p>The service can demonstrate an improved diversity of applicants for employment, promotion and development.</p>					<p>What evidence is there of the service significantly improving the diversity of applicants for employment, promotion and retention?</p>		

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<p>3.22</p> <p>The service has achieved significant improvements across a wide range of the elements of the working environment.</p>					<p>What significant improvements have been achieved in accordance with the national 'Fire and rescue service: Equality and diversity strategy 2008 - 2018' (including equipment, travel, training, clothing, facilities, food, for example)?</p>		
<p>3.23</p> <p>The service acts promptly upon adverse trends identified from the monitoring and analysis of employment data.</p>					<p>Is the workforce profile updated regularly? Does monitoring and analysis encompass a wide range of equality matters? What action has been taken to reverse adverse trends?</p>		
<p>3.24</p> <p>The implementation of equality objectives is helping to maximise the potential of all employees.</p>					<p>Have positive and tangible outcomes been delivered as a result of the implementation of equality objectives? Is the service maximising the potential of employees? Is there a cycle of continuous improvement?</p>		
<p>3.25</p> <p>Action has been taken to ensure equal pay is fully implemented.</p>					<p>Overall, is there evidence that men and women are receiving equal pay? Is the situation being regularly monitored and audited?</p>		

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<p>3.26</p> <p>The service can demonstrate it has knowledgeable and well trained employees who are better equipped to meet the diverse needs of local communities.</p>					<p>Can the service demonstrate that its employees are knowledgeable and well trained? What evidence is there of employees meeting the diverse needs of local communities?</p>		
<p>3.27</p> <p>Employees behave appropriately and respectfully to members of the public and colleagues. The service's employees are informed, aware, engaging, open and approachable.</p>					<p>Is there evidence that employees behave appropriately and respectfully? Are they able and willing to answer relevant questions from the community and work colleagues?</p>		
<p>3.28</p> <p>Service managers, and where necessary members, understand the importance of equality when managing discipline in the workplace.</p>					<p>What evidence is there to demonstrate that managers and members understand the importance of equality when managing discipline in the workplace? Is there evidence of equality issues being addressed during the management of discipline in the workplace?</p>		

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<p>3.29</p> <p>There is strong evidence of outcomes arising from individual personal development.</p>					<p>What evidence is there of outcomes from individual personal development? What has been achieved?</p>		
<p>3.30</p> <p>The service has high satisfaction and perception indicators across all employee groups.</p>					<p>Do employees feel engaged? Are employee surveys carried out regularly? What are the results of employee surveys? Is there any evidence of how levels of satisfaction have improved over time? Are there any examples of different employee experiences being analysed? Are service improvements being informed by employees?</p>		

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Evaluation and good practice	1	2	3	4	How was this done and what's 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>3.31</p> <p>The service analyses its equalities information and uses it to contribute towards a cycle of continuous improvement.</p>					<p>What analysis has taken place? How has it contributed to service improvement? Is continuous improvement being achieved?</p>		
<p>3.32</p> <p>The service creates and develops good practice. Other organisations look to it for information and advice.</p>					<p>Is the service approached on a regular basis to provide examples of, or to showcase, good practice? Has it been asked to work with others to improve performance on equality and diversity?</p>		

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 excellent fire and rescue authority illustration

This illustration provides an example of how a combined fire authority at the **excellent** stage might look. It is a fictional example, based on the experiences of a number of authorities.

Context

Bedington Fire and Rescue Authority (BFRA) is a combined fire authority covering two relatively affluent counties. It covers a large geographic area and includes within it some very expensive housing as well as towns with severe pockets of social deprivation and rural, isolated communities.

Average household income varies considerably across wards in the two counties, but no wards fall within the most deprived 10 per cent nationally. Compared with national averages, it has a relatively old population. Of the 800,000 people living within the boundaries of BFRA, 30 per cent are above the age of 60. However, the population has been growing considerably in recent years with an increase in single, working age adults, mainly from Europe, to work on the area's farming operations.

Other than this, the black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) population of Bedington is relatively small (2 per cent BAME overall), although it peaks to 5 per cent and 7 per cent in the boroughs of Newtown and Crosstown.

BFRA is a combined fire authority covering the counties of Elmshire and Oakshire. It was established under a combination order in 1996, and the governing body is a fire authority made up of elected members from each county council. The authority employs a management team consisting of a chief fire officer, one deputy chief fire officer, three assistant chief fire officers and a director of finance.

The authority has an active equality member champion, who works well alongside officer equality champions. Principal officers are named champions for each of the strands of equality, and the work of the equality and diversity steering group (EDSG) and sub-groups has been prioritised well in the service. This has led to significant progress on each strand of equality, which includes strong links with special interest groups and services.

Background

The recent comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) in 2007 stated that:

“The authority performs well in how it identifies risk and meets the needs of its at-risk groups. Key at-risk groups include isolated, elderly people, living often in remote, rural areas with limited access to mainstream services. The authority has worked with a range of voluntary and statutory agencies in identifying these individuals and subsequently helping to reduce risk among this particularly vulnerable group.

The authority has expanded this ethos to work with Polish and Portuguese immigrant groups working as day labourers picking fruit, through partnership with the local race equality council and focusing on improving safety in multiple occupation rented housing.

The authority has clearly demonstrated a desire and ambition to respond

effectively to the risks identified through its mapping of the local community, and has been innovative and thoughtful in the range and scope of interventions it has subsequently developed.”

BFRA has a good record of engaging and promoting equalities. It was among the first of the fire authorities to engage in the Commission for Racial Equality's standard and established strong and positive race equality practices in-line with its race equality scheme, whose action plan demonstrates clear achievement in engaging the vulnerable and often excluded BAME groups of Newtown and Crosstown.

The equality and diversity strategy and action plan is well linked within the single equality scheme, with regular reviews and consultation with equalities groups. However, progress on equalities within partner agencies is limited. The work of the authority is well-regarded locally and regionally and the authority is part of two local equality partnerships. BFRS has an active role and has supported the development of equalities partnerships and is a key driver leading on a number of areas, particularly work with the older population and BAME groups.

Getting to excellent

The Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework has provided the authority with a framework to progress equalities. The authority has used this with previous work against a fire service specific action plan (Towards Diversity II) and the single equality scheme to consolidate and mainstream its activity.

Key areas of progress include:

- Strong and effective consultation mechanisms, which include engagement and development of certain groups to improve their capacity as effective consultees.
- The initial and full equality impact assessment (EqIA) process is well developed and embedded. EqIAs are routinely conducted and monitored.
- The authority's IRMP places a great emphasis on ensuring there is up-to-date information on risk information in the locality. This information is broken down into equality areas and appropriate interventions made. The IRMP emphasises and focuses on delivering and developing service delivery based on identified risks.
- The procurement strategy ensures that all tenders are assessed for equality and diversity practices and suppliers have equality objectives as part of their contractual requirements.

- The authority has expanded monitoring arrangements to include workforce and service delivery areas of equality and this is reported quarterly to the principal management board.
- There is clear evidence that monitoring data is used to set targets and focus progress activity. The service has a corporate plan of action and staff within each department can demonstrate an awareness and understanding of how equality impacts on performance.

These good processes aside, the authority can point to some real outcomes for vulnerable and excluded groups, through the application of its equality and diversity action plans.

- In partnership with the local authority and voluntary and community sector support agencies, it has initiated a programme examining the living conditions of European migrants in houses of multiple occupation (HMOs). This has led to improved safety among this group and has included the prosecution of local landlords and re-housing of migrants into more appropriate accommodation.

- The authority has appointed a community outreach and engagement officer in each of the two counties whose role is to engage excluded and vulnerable groups as part of its IRMP. This work has led to the formation of strong links with local community groups and has led to significant levels of community safety activity among target groups. To date, over 200 people have benefited from this service, most notably older people and BAME groups.
- The service has engaged with the local authority, other key agencies and stakeholders across the six strands of equality. They meet on a quarterly basis and provides challenge and scrutiny to the work they are involved in. A significant outcome through equality mapping and data sharing has been a partnership with the lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) community and the introduction of a dedicated referral process for home fire safety risk assessments. Where possible the authority uses its LGB staff to carry out these assessments.
- The authority submitted an entry into the Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index in 2007 and has been listed in the 'Top 100 Employers' at number 84. An action plan is now in place to improve this for next year's entry.
- A full equal pay audit has been conducted, and the authority is now into year two of a three year action plan, designed to deliver parity across all elements of the authority.
- Significant progress has been made in the recruitment of BAME and female firefighters. To date, the authority has allocated significant resources to positive action activity, but where it varies from other fire and rescue authorities is the level of scrutiny and development in the activity that can be demonstrated. This has led to a strong and well developed process that shows a considerable increase in attraction rates of target groups. At the last recruitment campaign, the service showed an increase from 5.5 per cent to 13 per cent for women applying to the operational service, and an increase from 0.95 per cent to 2.5 per cent for BAME groups. Although there is still a while to go until the authority achieves full parity in numbers of BAME and women firefighters actually employed, there is a clear vision and progress is demonstrable.

- The authority has a clear culture of rights and responsibilities throughout the service, embedded through training on equality and diversity, as well as grievance and discipline, delivered in partnership with Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS). Staff reported that they were comfortable that instances of harassment or bullying were dealt with appropriately and effectively by managers at all levels.
- Facilities for dignity of male and female firefighters on station are effective and have been developed in partnership employee staff groups. High levels of satisfaction among staff for these facilities has been reported.

However, BFRA is not complacent, and recognises that there is still more work to be done. The journey of continuous improvement is appreciated in the authority, and its three-yearly IRMP action plan refreshes its risks and proposed activity. Other key areas for improvement include:

- Further activity of the recruitment process to increase final numbers of female and BAME firefighters employed into the service.
- Development of its embryonic activity regarding work with LGB groups in the area.
- Although access audits have been conducted for disabled people, currently the level of activity as a result of these audits has been limited. Further resources need to be set aside for developing work to ensure community fire stations are accessible.

Conclusion

BFRA are rightly proud of the progress they have made since starting their journey eight years ago. It is recognised as a national leader among FRAs, and its achievements in some areas are outstanding. However, BFRA recognises that the journey is not over and has plans in place to review its work as part of the cycle of continuous improvement.

Notes

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