



Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service

Single Equality Scheme 2009 - 2013



Drawing by: Devon - age 10



Northamptonshire
County Council

Drawings

Ruskin Junior School Wellingborough were approached to illustrate Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Services First Single Equality Scheme.

We wanted to capture our community spirit, so the children were asked to draw their family, friends, hobbies and how they see the Fire and Rescue Service.

Eleven pictures were selected for the document, all participants were awarded with a certificate and the eleven winners given an art set for their contribution.

Ruskin Junior School have enabled the Single Equality Scheme to depict our commitment to Northamptonshire's diverse communities and communicates our fresh, creative and ongoing journey forward.

<i>List of participants:</i>		
<i>Aimee</i>	<i>aged 9</i>	<i>Page 17</i>
<i>Courtney</i>	<i>aged 8</i>	<i>Page 25</i>
<i>Devon</i>	<i>aged 10</i>	<i>Page 1</i>
<i>Hannah</i>	<i>aged 10</i>	<i>Page 4</i>
<i>Joshua</i>	<i>aged 8</i>	<i>Page 12</i>
<i>Katryna</i>	<i>aged 7</i>	<i>Page 15</i>
<i>Keely</i>	<i>aged 9½</i>	<i>Page 19</i>
<i>Lauren</i>	<i>aged 10</i>	<i>Page 10</i>
<i>Millie</i>	<i>aged 8</i>	<i>Page 28</i>
<i>Monir</i>	<i>aged 10</i>	<i>Page 16</i>
<i>Tai</i>	<i>aged 10</i>	<i>Page 8</i>

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Single Equality Scheme

This equality scheme is about getting people to consider the need for equality when planning, delivering or monitoring their services.

The scheme outlines the work that will be needed to develop this common understanding and approach to employment and service provision.



Drawing by: Hannah - age 10

Foreword

We are pleased to introduce Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service's (NFRS) first equality scheme, which will be effective from April 2009. The duty to promote equality places an enormous responsibility on all public authorities, including NFRS and it's a responsibility which we are committed to:

NFRS are already taking positive steps to embrace the duty placed on us, not only as an employer, but as a service provider to the communities of Northamptonshire.

This scheme helps to illustrate our commitment to eliminating discrimination, promoting equal opportunities and developing good relations with our communities.

It will ensure that we develop robust policies and strategies that recognise and respond to the diverse and differing needs of our communities, as we work towards achieving our key priorities as a service.



Chief Fire Officer
Martyn Emberson

There is a legal duty to produce a scheme under race, disability and gender with clear duties highlighted within these strands. The scheme fulfils a legal duty for race, disability and gender, however, the fire and rescue service wish to demonstrate commitment to all strands of diversity so this scheme also covers sexual orientation, religion and age.

We are determined that fairness and equality must be integrated through our service and in the way we deliver our service to the community.

Introduction

NFRS aims to support a society where our origins do not determine our destiny, where the dignity and equal treatment of the individual is unfailing and where the disadvantaged are protected and empowered.

We have developed a single equality scheme which incorporates all the responsibilities that we must meet as both an employer and service provider. This single scheme reflects our obligations under race, disability and gender equality duties as well as the other strands of equality legislation - sexual orientation, religious belief and age.

The equality scheme is about getting people to consider the need for equality when planning, delivering or monitoring their services. Equality means different things to different people. It is important that all staff throughout the service understand and implement the same approach. The scheme outlines the work that will be needed to develop this common understanding and approach to employment and service provision.

Our equality scheme demonstrates not only our commitment to all strands of diversity but also illustrates how we intend to deliver appropriate and accessible services through our three-year action plan. This explains the processes by which we will achieve this in sustainable and embedded ways.

The scheme sets out how the service will meet its obligations under equality legislation, but more than that, how it will make a real and positive difference to the lives of all those who are affected by the services work.

As a fire and rescue service we produce an Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) document which is about improving public safety, reducing the number of fire incidents and saving lives.

Integrated risk management has shifted the focus by putting people first, considering the risks arising from all fires and other emergency incidents, and at the options for reducing and managing them. Our equality scheme is embedded within the IRMP ensuring equality and diversity is overarching and inclusive in all we do.

This equality scheme has a range of drivers:

- Northamptonshire County Council, Equality Scheme
- Fire and Rescue National Framework 2008/2011
- National Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008/2018
- Regional Fire and Rescue Equality and Diversity Strategy
- NFRS Equality and Diversity Strategy
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Equality Act 2006
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005

The Equality and Human Rights Commission shall exercise its functions under this part with a view to encouraging and supporting the development of a society in which:

- People's ability to achieve their potential is not limited by prejudice or discrimination;
- There is respect for and protection of each individual's human rights;
- There is respect for the dignity and worth of each individual;
- Each individual has an equal opportunity to participate in society; and
- There is mutual respect between groups based on understanding and valuing of diversity and on shared respect for equality and human rights.

NFRS are totally committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all staff and the population of Northamptonshire.

An equality scheme is effectively a realistic action plan that outlines a public service approach to:

- Promote inclusion
- Promote good relations between all
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Eliminate discrimination

As a public body, legislation requires us to comply with three duties to promote equality in the areas of disability, gender and race. These duties include the requirement to develop and put into place equality schemes outlining what we will do to promote disability, gender and race equality.

We wanted to go beyond our legal responsibilities and produce a single equality scheme that included all areas of equality covered by our remit. As well as disability, gender and race, our single equality scheme also covers age, religious or belief and sexual orientation. We believe we should aim to apply the same high standards to everything we do.

This is not about increasing paperwork and regulatory burden and it is certainly not about 'tick box' exercises. This is about taking practical steps to promote equality and human rights. It is about our employment practices, how we provide or buy services, how we work in partnership with others and how we include equality in everything we do.

We are currently working towards the 'achieving' level of the equality framework for local government.

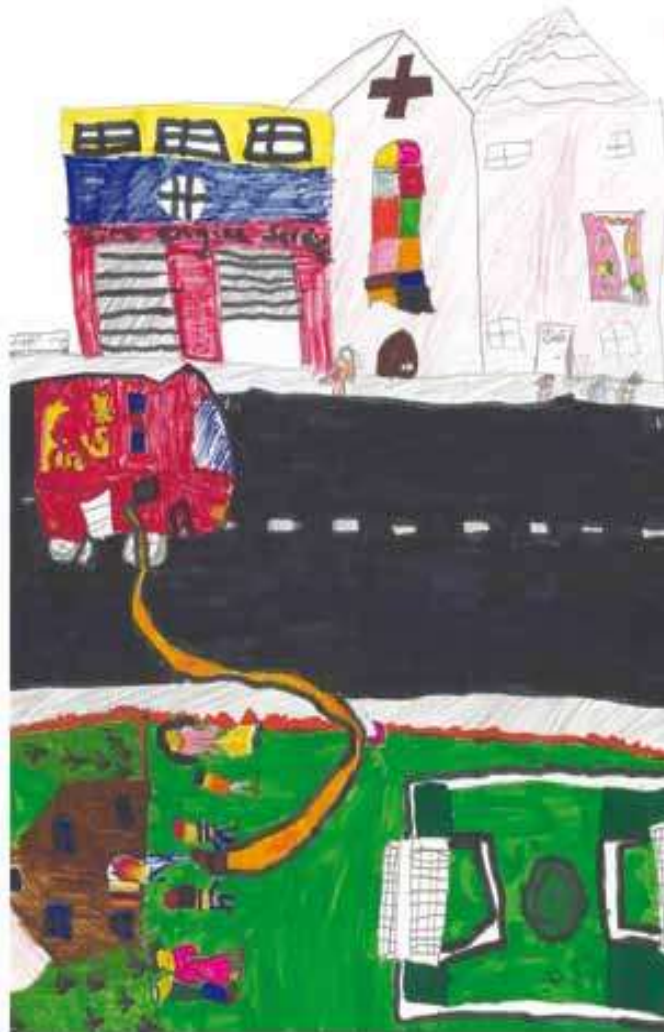
More information regarding our commitment to equality can be found on our internal intranet, within the current IRMP, in our service core values, on the internet, in the national framework, and national, regional and local equality and diversity strategies.

About Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service

NFRS provide emergency fire and rescue cover, fire safety legislation enforcement and community fire safety advice for the residents and visitors of Northamptonshire. We are a county council fire authority.

The Chief Fire Officer, Martyn Emberson, is head of Protective Services; which encompasses; Fire and Rescue, Trading Standards, Emergency Planning, the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) and the Community Safety Team. NFRS sits within the Customer and Community Services directorate of Northamptonshire County Council (NCC). It is funded by the public through allocation from central government and local council tax. Employing over 600 staff, services are delivered through 22 fire stations across the county and three support/management office buildings.

The service has 28 fire appliances and 10 special appliances (support vehicles, e.g. water bowser, aerial appliances, incident command vehicle, etc). Emergency calls come through the fire control centre that mobilise appliances and officers to incidents on a pre-determined attendance.



Drawing by: Tai age 10

Our Vision and Values

It is our vision to create a safer community in Northamptonshire built on equality, dignity and respect, with people secure in all aspects of their diversity.

To achieve our vision we will have to demonstrate professionalism, dedication and responsiveness. All of our staff are expected to behave in accordance with national and local values.

In delivering our service, NFRS operates within a set of core values:

- Service to the community
- People
- Diversity
- Improvement

Our values describe how we work and the standards that apply to all our services. Paramount to the diversity agenda is our value of respect. We believe that if everyone treats each other with due civility and respect then discrimination should be eliminated.

Our Aims and Objectives

We aim to:

- Improve our service to the community
- Improve our organisation and personnel
- Enhance our preventative, protective and intervention work within our communities
- Maximise capacity providing value for money
- Develop a competent workforce, living our values

Our Key Objective:

As part of NCC we share the key objective of the county Equality Scheme. This is to ensure that all our customers and colleagues are treated equally in terms of their access to all our services and that they feel confident in their right to expect fair outcomes.

Our objectives are to:

- Promote understanding of the importance of equality and diversity
- Encourage good practice in relation to equality and diversity
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Promote awareness and understanding of rights under the equality enactments
- Enforce the equality enactments
- Work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination
- Work towards the elimination of unlawful harassment



Drawing by: Lauren - age 10

Enforcement

The Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) has the power to take legal action if public authorities fail to meet their duties. It can also seek a judicial review of an authority if it is not meeting the general duty.

We must:

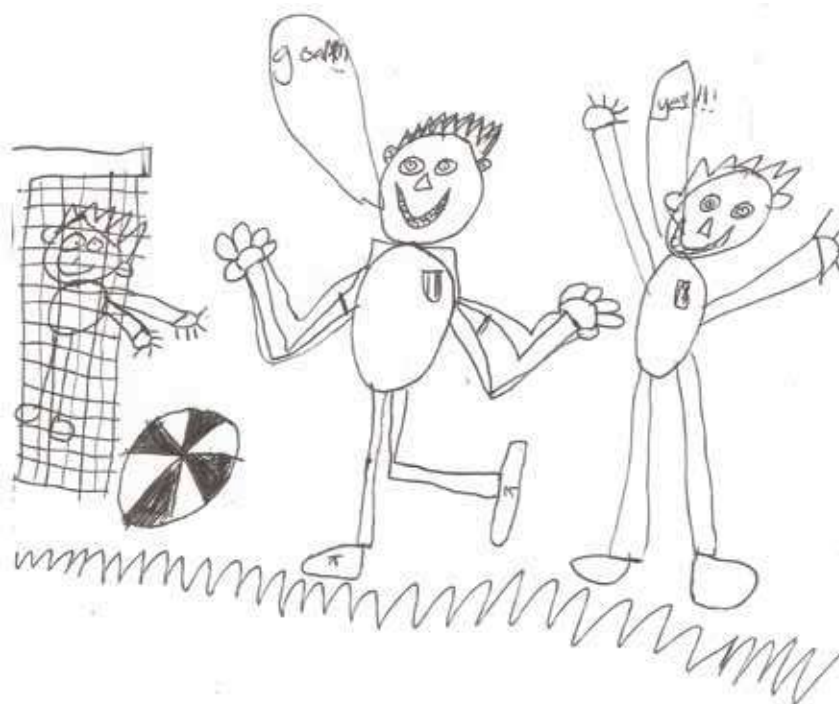
- Review the terms and conditions we use to procure goods
- Include in every contract that the contractor must comply with anti-discrimination provision
- Specify where relevant the evidence the contractor may need to provide to the authority to demonstrate its compliance with equalities legislation
- Monitor, where relevant, the way contracts are fulfilled, in respect of equalities
- Ensure that quality considerations are reflected and given due weight, in the specification/criteria for selection and award of the contract, and in the contract conditions with European Commission (EC) and United Kingdom (UK) procurement rules
- Ensure that contractors fully understand any equality requirements of the contract
- Train all staff involved in procurement work, to fully understand the provisions of equalities legislation and the relevance of the various equality duties in their work

Contractors themselves must not discriminate, but they do not have the same legal obligation to promote equality of opportunity. Public authorities must build relevant equality considerations into the procurement process to ensure that all of their functions meet our legal requirements.

So, to comply with their duty under the Act, local authorities should make sure that public money is not spent on practices that lead to unlawful discrimination, but is used instead to support and encourage equality of opportunity and good community relations.

Procuring Goods and Services

Procurement is an important and essential function for us and in line with relevant legislation we are committed to promoting equality and diversity within our procurement strategy. We must consider equality of opportunity and take the promotion of good community relations into account when procuring goods, venues, and services from external providers.



Drawing by: Joshua age 8

Age

Our goal:

“To ensure provision of a fire and rescue service that encompasses all age groups within the workforce and community that effectively meet their needs without discrimination.”

Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006: Prohibits discrimination on grounds of age in employment and training and provide greater rights for employees with regard to requesting to work beyond the normal age for retirement.

All have knowledge and skills which would be of benefit to the service regardless of age. A key consideration must be that we do not limit our access to these groups through unjustifiable and under recognised age orientated restraints.

NFRS is totally committed to establishing an environment for both employees and the community we serve that supports and encourages people of all ages to deliver their full potential.

Actions:

- Developing further links through community safety with, for example: Age Concern, Youth Clubs, Connexions, Disability Groups, and County Councils services to older people
- Continue work within schools, colleges, and children excluded from education and youth clubs
- Ensure all fire safety initiatives are accessible to everyone
- Promote equality for all prospective colleagues and the community on the grounds of age
- Work within the county councils policy for the employment of retired people
- Complete Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to detail the areas where age must be respected, following steps to address these points wherever possible
- Devise an action plan and agree to the monitoring of the scheme

Disability

Our goal:

“To provide a fire and rescue service and working environment that is welcoming and appropriate to people living with a range of disabilities.”

Disability Discrimination Act 1995: States it is unlawful to discriminate against disabled people in relation to employment, education and the provision of goods, facilities, services and premises.

Disability Discrimination Act (Amendment) Regulations 2005: All employers and service providers must make reasonable adjustments to physical features on their premises to overcome barriers to access.

We intend to fulfil our duty under section 49A (1) duty of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. Under section 49A public authorities are under a general duty to promote disability equality. This means that a public authority shall, in carrying out its functions, have due regard to:

- The need to eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act
- The need to eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities
- The need to promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- The need to take steps to take account of disabled persons’ disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons
- The need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- The need to encourage participation by disabled persons in public life

A person living with a disability is defined under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) as someone who has a “physical or mental impairment which has substantial or long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”.

This definition covers a variety of physical, sensory and mental disabilities. Examples include sight impairments and learning difficulties as well as less obvious conditions such as diabetes, epilepsy and dyslexia.

We are committed to removing barriers which take little or no account of people who have impairment. NFRS recognise it is not the person with the disability in the Northamptonshire community that is a problem, but the barriers that we fail to recognise. Our policies and practices must reflect such recognition.

Our specific duties:

Publish a disability equality scheme demonstrating how it intends to fulfil our general duty and specific duties.

Involve disabled people in the development of the scheme

The Scheme should include:

- Consultation with disabled people
- The authority method of equality impact assessing
- Arrangements for gathering information in relation to employment
- Arrangements for putting gathered information to use, in particular in reviewing the effectiveness of the action plan



Drawing by: Katryna - age 7

Faith, Belief and Religion

Our goal:

“To provide a Fire and Rescue Service and working environment that is appropriate and welcoming to people whatever their faith, belief or religion.”

Faith, belief and religion are important elements of many people’s lives. Northamptonshire is representative of a range of such views and we must be aware of, respectful and understanding of how to avoid causing unnecessary offence.

Our respect can be demonstrated via our recognition, for example, that differing cultures have expectations of us in relation to our understanding of their diet, dress, family make up, and holy days and events. It is essential that we deliver an inclusive fire and rescue service to everyone within the community.

In relation to our workforce we must respect the different faiths and beliefs that are represented and where necessary, make the appropriate arrangements to accommodate them.

We will take all reasonable steps to achieve compatibility where faith, beliefs and religion may appear to be incompatible with operational requirements. We must take additional care to avoid discrimination and exclusion against existing team members or members of the community in relation to their faith, beliefs and/or religion. Should discrimination or exclusion of any form be identified, a zero tolerance procedure will be adopted. Should malicious or false accusations be made, the complainant will be dealt with in a serious manner and in accordance with the disciplinary procedure.

We also take into account that some people do not have a faith or may be undecided in relation to these issues. Such people should be treated with equal respect.



Drawing by: Monir - age 10

Actions:

- Developing further links through our outreach worker within the diverse culture surrounding beliefs, faith and religion
- Community safety advice to be provided to all different places of worship using various communication tools and media
- Faith, belief and religion awareness training to be provided to workforce
- Information to be made available to workforce in relation to holy days, events and cultures
- Regionally set employment equality targets for workforce profile for faith and belief
- Complete EIAs to detail the areas where faith, belief and religion must be respected, following steps to address these points wherever possible
- Devise an action plan and agree monitoring of scheme



Drawing by: Aimee - age 9

Gender

Our goal:

“To develop a working culture that will see the removal of all barriers that prevents both sexes from making a full contribution to Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service.”

The gender equality duty is a legal obligation which came into force in April 2007. It was introduced by the Equality Act 2006, which in turn amended the Sex Discrimination Act 1975.

Equal Pay Act 1970: Gives an individual the right to the same contractual pay and benefits as a person of the opposite sex in the same employment and performing equal work of equal value.

Sex Discrimination Act 1975: Applies to men, women and children. The act prohibits sex discrimination against individuals in areas of employment, education and the provision of goods, facilities and services and in the disposal or management of premises.

The Sex Discrimination Act allows positive action, but does not allow positive discrimination. Positive action means to encourage people from an under-represented group to apply for jobs, training or promotion. This is lawful practice (Equal Opportunity Commission - The Gender Equality Duty).

The Equality Act 2006: Created the Gender Equality Duty for the public sector. The Gender Equality Duty requires public authorities to promote equality between women and men and eliminate unlawful sex discrimination and harassment. This means the public sector employers are required to develop policies, design services and have employment practices with the different needs of women and men in mind.

The Sex Discrimination Act provides clear guidelines as to what is acceptable and appropriate in terms of our recruitment and employment practices.

Our commitment to the development of an open and honest culture will also serve to ensure that all team members view any form of sexism with intolerance. There is also a clear message being delivered to the wider community in our commitment to these principles - as we treat each other, so will we translate our principles into our service delivery.

General duty:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
- To promote equality of opportunity between men and women

Specific duty:

- Include gender issues within the equality scheme identifying the gender equality goals and actions to meet them, in consultation with employees, unions and stakeholders

- Monitor and review progress
- Produce an action plan
- Consider objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap
- Conduct and publish gender impact assessments on all major functions and policies relating to gender issues
- Gather information on the effect of its policies and practices on men and women, in employment, services and performance of its functions
- Use the information to review the implementation of the scheme objectives
- Review and revise the scheme at least every three years
- Report on progress on gender equality annually

Actions:

- Facilitation of regular meetings of the Networking Women in the Fire Service (NWFS)
- Implementing the NCC policy on adoption leave
- Monitoring of activities resulting from adoption of flexible working policy
- Review guidance and policies around the duties and return to work of pregnant operational staff members
- Positive action to be directed at women to promote awareness and how they can enhance their career and the service
- Regionally set employment equality targets for workforce profile for gender
- EIAs to detail the areas where gender must be respected; following steps to address these points must be made wherever possible
- Devise an action plan and agree monitoring of scheme



Drawing by: Keeley 9½

Sexuality

Our goal:

“To ensure appropriate provision of service to Lesbian, Gay and Bi-sexual (LGB) people that is supportive of colleagues and builds confidence in our service delivery to such groups within the community.”

Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003: Unlawful to discriminate against or harass a job applicant or employee on grounds of their sexual orientation (sexual orientation towards persons of the same sex, opposite sex or same sex and opposite sex).

Civil Partnership Act 2004: Allows same-sex couples to make a formal, legal commitment to each other by forming a civil partnership providing them with the same rights and responsibilities as the opposite sex couples who enter into a civil marriage.

Within the regulations, sexual orientation is defined as:

- Orientation towards persons of the same sex (lesbian and gay men)
- Orientation towards persons of the opposite sex (heterosexual)
- Orientation towards persons of the same sex and the opposite sex (bisexual)

Sexuality is a personal and private issue that should be considered with the utmost sensitivity. Many individuals choose to keep this issue private and this is a fundamental right which we should all treat with respect. If an individual discloses their sexuality to us, we should not disclose it further without their consent. It is also important that we do not make and act on assumptions relating to a person's sexuality.

If we are to build trust and confidence both internally and externally we must recognise that homophobia can be particularly concerning and therefore we should be prepared to tackle such an issue positively. Part of our commitment to developing an open and supportive culture will enable staff and members of the community to report issues of homophobia to us comfortably and confidently.

Actions:

- Develop specific awareness training around issues relating to LGB people
- Regionally set employment equality targets for workforce profile for sexual orientation
- Development of partnerships and access to appropriate representative groups, using the dedicated equalities adviser, both within the service and within the community
- Positive action initiatives to encourage job applications from the LGB population of Northamptonshire
- Complete EIAs to detail the areas where sexuality must be respected, following steps to address these points wherever possible

Transgender

Our goal:

“To ensure appropriate provision of service to the transgender community, developing a working environment and organisational culture that values and actively supports all employees and the community we serve.”

Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999: Protection of those who have undergone, who are currently undergoing or intend to undergo gender reassignment on the grounds of sex, in matters of pay, employment and training.

Gender Recognition Act 2004: Allows transsexual people to apply for full legal recognition in their acquired gender. The Act also defines an individual's gender history as protected information, prohibiting employers from disclosing it.

Transgender people face distinct issues that are both complex and sensitive. We need to raise awareness within the service to ensure that we offer appropriate support and service to all such individuals.

We acknowledge that transgender is not identified as a separate equality strand; however we acknowledge the separate issues this community face. NFRS recognise that there is lack of understanding and awareness around transgender and will promote awareness within the delivery of equality and diversity training.

If an individual discloses their sexuality to us, we should not disclose it further without their consent. It is also important that we do not make and act on assumptions relating to a person's sexuality. Should discrimination, exclusion, malicious or false accusations of any form be identified, a zero tolerance procedure will be adopted. Should a complaint be made it will be dealt with in a serious manner and in accordance with the disciplinary procedure.

Actions:

- Ensure that within the delivery of equality and diversity training, transgender is acknowledged and awareness given
- Positive action initiatives to encourage job applications from the transgender population of Northamptonshire
- Complete EIAs to detail the areas where transgender must be respected, following steps to address these points wherever possible

Ethnicity

Our goal:

“We aim to reflect the diversity of communities in Northamptonshire within our workforce, to further promote good relations by the provision of a fair and equitable fire and rescue service to all black, eastern European and ethnic groups.”

Race Relations Act 1976: It is unlawful to treat a person less favourably than another on grounds of race, colour or nationality. Prohibiting discrimination in areas of employment, education and the provision of goods, facilities, services and premises.

Race Relation Amendment Act 2000: This act outlawed discrimination and victimisation in all public authority functions. It also placed a general duty on specified public authorities to promote race equality.

Section 71 (1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 required a range of public authorities to publish their own race equality scheme that would detail the arrangements put in place by the Authority. The scheme should demonstrate how, in carrying out its functions, the Authority would have due regard for the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination; and
- Promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.

Eastern Europeans are a new and ever growing community within Northamptonshire and we aim to have this reflected in our workforce. We are committed to ensuring links with this community are established and maintained through the work of our Outreach Worker.

General duty:

The aim of the general duty is to make the promotion of race equality central to the work of public authorities and in carrying out its function, have due regard to the need:

- To eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- To promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups

Specific duty:

- Prepare and publish a race equality scheme
- Assess and consult on the likely impact of proposed policies on the promotion of race equality
- Monitor its policies for any adverse impact on the promotion of race equality
- Produce an action plan
- Publish the results of such assessments and undertake consultation
- Ensure equal public access to information and services which it provided
- Train staff in connection with the duties

Actions:

- Monitoring of our equality scheme. Reporting feedback of progress and development to the NCC corporate equality group
- Positive action to encourage more job applications from members of ethnic minority groups. The removal of barriers and promotion of equality to be ensured throughout the recruitment process
- Further development of partnership working within hard to reach areas and communities. Outreach worker to maintain and establish links and relationships, incorporating the use of translators or interpreters
- Review of internal reporting system for external and internal racist incidents
- All policies, programmes and service delivery have an EIA
- Annual equality and diversity training to be delivered
- All new employees to be given equality and diversity training as part of their induction to the service
- Regionally set employment equality targets for workforce profile for race/ethnicity
- Formation of Equality and Diversity Action Group to be maintained
- To ensure access to information can be done so in any required language
- A rolling programme of cultural awareness to be delivered by our outreach worker
- Annual collation of results in relation to; numbers of staff by reference to racial groups in relation to staff in post, applicants for employment, training and promotion. Results to be collated on those in receipt of training, benefit or detriment suffered as a result of performance assessment procedures, those involved in grievance and disciplinary procedures. Findings to be analysed to find links to inequality.

Flexible Working

Our goal:

“To develop a working environment and organisational culture that actively supports and values a range of working patterns amongst all service members and promotes a healthy work/life balance.”

Part Time Workers Regulations 2000: Ensures all part time workers are entitled to equal terms and conditions of employment as full time workers.

NFRS as an organisation and its workforce gain a range of benefits from the introduction of flexible working arrangements. Flexible working patterns are viewed as being a part of the process that will enable us to develop a more open and encouraging organisational culture, judging people by what they contribute and achieve, rather than by the hours they work. Increased and improved productivity and aspects of morale have been viewed as positive outcomes from such measures.

The above are some of the reasons why flexible working patterns are seen as important in terms of our organisational development but we are also required by law to consider requests relating to flexible working:

Staff members who have young children are able to request flexible hours of working and parents of children under 5 years old are entitled to take statutory leave, although unpaid.

Our responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act as a ‘reasonable adaptation’ may be to enable a person with a disability to work from home or have flexible working hours arrangements in place (where practical) to enable them to receive regularly hospital treatment. We will also give careful consideration to all posts being made available for part-time working.

Another commitment from us is that of providing a working environment that facilitates all team members to balance their work and other responsibilities e.g. home and/or leisure, where it is not causing an adverse effect upon our operational effectiveness.

Leadership and Promoting Inclusion

Actions:

- Review and correct access to service buildings
- Improve all buildings resources for those with disabilities, such as: hearing loop, seating etc
- Develop further links through community safety with disability groups. Provide equality training ensuring inclusion of disability strand
- Equality and Diversity Officer to advise service on disability legislation
- Ensure working environment is tailored to staff that have disability needs
- Monitor employment data across disability strand
- Guarantee consultation and involvement with disabled people in the development of policies, practice and procedures which may have an impact upon them
- Complete EIAs to detail the areas where disability must be respected, following steps to address these points wherever possible

We believe that only by appropriately valuing and demonstrating our value for all team members will we be able to expect the very best from them. We view the achievement of this as being crucial in providing the best possible fire and rescue service for the community of Northamptonshire.

Actions:

- Endorsing and encouraging a working environment that enables support networks for all team members to develop
- Complying where operationally viable with the NCC work/life balance policy and active consideration being given to flexible work patterns in line with terms and conditions nationally
- Review of current provision of career breaks, part-time working and post sharing procedure
- Continually review our part-time and flexible working systems



Drawing by: Courtney -age 8

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

The undertaking of Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) enables NFRS to improve the services provided to the community of Northamptonshire and the working lives of our staff. EIAs allow us to assess the impact of our policies and services, helping us to eliminate or mitigate against any adverse effects these may have on our employees and the communities we serve.

Purpose and Process

The purpose of an EIA is to ensure that all policies, practices, provisions and criteria are fair to all groups of people. NFRS has a legal obligation to ensure that it does not discriminate against a particular group or individual due to gender, race, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

NFRS have decided to take a 2 stage approach to EIA:

- Initial Screening
- Full EIA

This decision was made as it enables NFRS to efficiently and effectively consider the impact of new and amended policies and procedures.

Initial Screening

The purpose of Initial Screening is:

- To identify any immediate changes that are required to policies, practices, provisions or criteria in order to eliminate any adverse effects on particular groups
- Identify any adverse effect on the diversity strands, and if a significant effect is identified, complete a full EIA

NFRS has a commitment to equality and diversity which means that all our policies will be screened in relation to the use of gender-neutral language, jargon-free plain English, recognition of the needs of disabled people, promotion of the positive duty in relation to race and disability and avoidance of stereotypes.

Full EIA

The purpose of a full EIA is to ensure that a thorough and systematic analysis of a policy, procedure or regulation is carried out to determine whether it has an adverse impact on identifiable groups of people. A policy can adversely affect different groups of people in different ways, and the aim is to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.

Training

We will put into place an EIA training programme for all employees responsible for policies and functions. The training programme will be delivered by the Equality and Diversity

Officer.

The programme will cover the following areas:

- An overview of the Race Relation Act
- Principles and purpose of impact assessment
- The Impact Assessment Screening process and documentation
- Purpose and importance of monitoring
- How to implement monitoring procedures

Consultation

We believe in engaging with our communities to seek to improve the service that we deliver and our practices in promoting equality in employment.

Comments regarding how our services are delivered or how our employees conduct themselves are valuable as part of our monitoring process. As part of this commitment we have established a range of consultation mechanisms, which we will engage in meeting the requirements of the impact assessment process.

Our impact assessment template includes a requirement to detail the proposed consultation activity. The consultation exercise will be undertaken by the Equality and Diversity Officer or Outreach Worker.

Groups that will be used for consultation are:

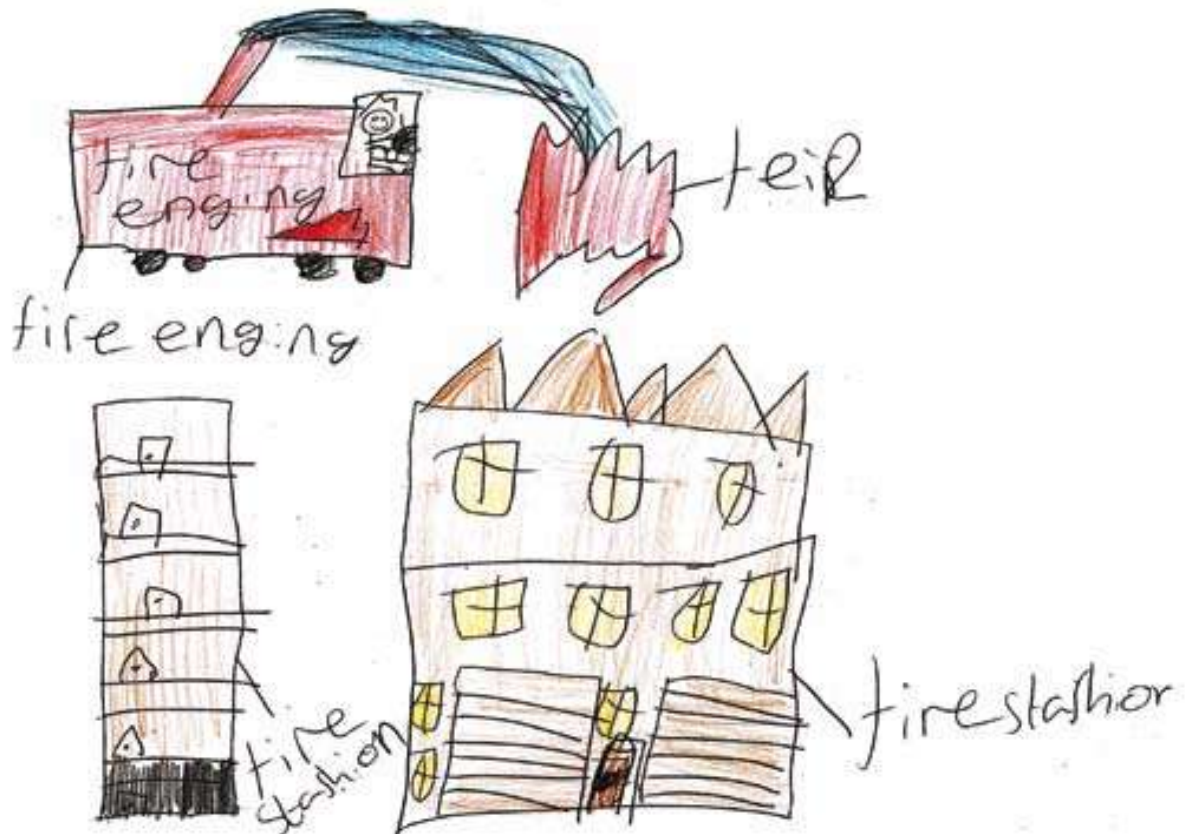
- The Black and Ethnic Minority Members Section (BEM) of the Fire Brigade Union (FBU)
- Fire Brigades Union (FBU)
- Retained Firefighters Union (RFU)
- Unison
- Networking Women in the Fire Service
- NFRS Equality and Diversity Action Forum
- Local forums, support groups and services
- National organisations
- Individuals whom an adverse impact has been identified

Monitoring

The EIA process includes a requirement to monitor specific areas of our activity and service delivery can provide us with crucial information. It can inform as to whether everyone in the community experiences the same level of service and treatment, enabling us to identify any areas that need improving.

Monitoring helps to identify:

- Levels of usage - gives an indication of under or over representation from particular ethnic groups
- Levels of satisfaction - ensure groups from all backgrounds are aware of the service we provide
- Levels of relevance – enables us to evaluate if NFRS policies and services meet the real needs of our diverse communities
- Levels of appropriateness - to ensure that our services and policies are culturally sensitive



Drawing by: Millie - age 8

Dealing with Complaints

We are fully committed to implementing the actions set out in the equality scheme. We recognise that we may get things wrong or that people may be dissatisfied with the way we are carrying out our duties. We therefore intend to make sure that people in our communities know that they have a right to complain about how we are discharging our duties and are given the information in the required formats about how to do this.

NFRS has a corporate complaints procedure which allows service users to make complaints, compliments and suggestions on any aspect of its services or policies.

We will also ensure that details of our complaints procedure are widely publicised using appropriate formats.

Publishing assessments, consultations, and monitoring results.

Public authorities must set out in their equality scheme their arrangements for publishing the results of any assessments, consultations and monitoring they carry out to see whether policies have an adverse impact on equality.

We will also report on our progress in relation to the equality scheme, what actions we have succeeded in and on progress undertaken.

NFRS will publish an annual summary report which will include the outcomes of the implementation of this equality scheme through the following channels:

- Details of all policies which had an EIA and the results of these assessments
- Equality training
- Positive action
- The Equality and Diversity Action Forum
- Bullying and harassment
- Community engagement

Developing Staff

Skills and knowledge are fundamental to providing better services, preventing fires and saving lives. We recognise that to deliver our commitment to community development and community empowerment NFRS staff need to enhance existing and develop new skills and knowledge around communication.

We will continue to develop our staff to make sure they understand, value and respect difference. In addition, we will continue to work with our Equality and Diversity Action Forum and unions to add value to our equalities commitment.

We will deliver a programme on equality and diversity to all staff. In particular, as part of our commitment to equality, a programme of cultural awareness training will be created.

We are currently revising our approach to equalities training to ensure it is business driven, directly relevant to organisational objectives and practically effective.

Consultation

The authority will involve trade unions and staff groups in the development of an equality action plan. Copies of our scheme will be available at all our fire stations and offices and our staff will be encouraged to become involved and provide feedback on the implementation of the scheme.

The scheme has undergone an EIA and has further been consulted on by appropriate structures, community services and corporate leadership. The scheme will be monitored internally by the NFRS Equality and Diversity Action Forum which is chaired by the Equality and Diversity Officer. The group consists of core members across the service representing various groups and includes senior management.

We also have representatives from the Fire Brigades Union, including representatives from the Black and Ethnic Minority Members section (BEM), UNISON, the Retained Firefighters Union (RFU) and Networking Women. The group's role also includes giving specific equality and diversity guidance on issues and developments as appropriate as well as initiating ideas on how to further embed equalities.

Glossary

BEM - Black Ethnic Minority:

Is the phrase that is currently most commonly used by community and equality organisations. NFRS use of this phrase is with the understanding that “Black/Minority Ethnic” or “BME” also includes minority ethnic groups in England who are White (those recorded under any of the “White” groups other than “White British”).

EDAF - Equality and Diversity Action Forum:

An internal forum made up of staff across the service to promote the equality and diversity agenda.

EIA - Equality Impact Assessment:

An equality impact assessment (EIA) is a tool for identifying the potential impact of a services policies, services and functions on its community and workforce. It can help the service provide and deliver excellent services to local communities by making sure that these reflect the needs of the community. EIAs offer an opportunity for the service to think carefully about the impact of their work with local people and other members of staff. They can then take action that will promote equality for all.

FBU - Fire Brigade Union:

The Fire Brigades Union represents firefighters at all levels within the Fire and Rescue Service across the UK – in fire stations, control rooms or other departments.

IRMP - Integrated Risk Management Planning:

A document which is about improving public safety, reducing the number of fire incidents and saving lives it looks at the risks arising from all fires and other emergency incidents, and at the options for reducing and managing them.

NCC - Northamptonshire County Council:

Like most English shire counties, Northamptonshire has a two-tier structure of local government. The county has an elected county council based in Northampton, and is also divided into seven districts each with their own local authority.

NWFS - Networking Women in the Fire Service:

NWFS is an independent voluntary group of people who aim to contribute to making the Fire and Rescue Service a place where women and men can work together harmoniously and professionally.

NWFS has sought to influence the equality agenda, engaging with the major players in order to have the voice of all women in the Fire and Rescue Service heard.

NFRS - Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service

Your local Fire and Rescue Service.

Outreach:

Is the term given to the efforts by individuals in an organisation or group to connect its ideas or practices to the efforts of other organisations, groups, specific audiences or the general public.

RDS - Retained Duty System:

Firefighters who respond to calls on a need-only basis - and are often fully employed in other occupations.

RFU - Retained Firefighters Union:

The Retained Firefighters Union (RFU) represents serving personnel within the Retained Duty System (RDS). The RFU is an independent trade union under the Trade Union & Labour Relations Act 1992.

Transgender:

Transgender is the state of one's "gender identity" self-identification as woman, man, or neither.

Unison:

UNISON is Britain and Europe's biggest public sector union with more than 1.3 million members. Their members are people working in the public services, for private contractors providing public services and in the essential utilities. They include frontline staff and managers working full or part time in local authorities, the NHS, the police service, colleges and schools, the electricity, gas and water industries, transport and the voluntary sector.

WDS - Wholetime Duty System:

Firefighters who fulfil the role on a full-time basis.

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