



Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service

Equality and Diversity Strategy 2009 – 2013



Northamptonshire
County Council

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Our Vision

It is our aim to provide a flexible, cost-effective and accessible fire and rescue service which fully meets the needs of Northamptonshire communities.

We will deliver our services effectively and consider it crucial that our workforce is more representative of our communities and we will take a progressive approach to increasing the proportion of staff that is drawn from our under-represented groups.

Equality and Diversity is about ensuring that services are available to all sections of the community and that our workforce is equipped with the different skills and competencies necessary to meet all such challenges.

We will ensure we are clear about who is responsible for delivering the Strategy and how it is monitored and reviewed. We will ensure that all stakeholders have the opportunity to contribute. We believe that Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Services must reach out to groups who are not currently involved with the service as employees, partner organisations or through other effective engagement mechanisms.

Our Values

The heart of our service is formed from our core values:

Service to the community:

We value service to the community by working with all groups to reduce risks, treating everyone fairly and with respect, being accountable to those we serve and striving for excellence in all we do.

People:

We value each other by practising and promoting fairness and respect, recognition of merit, honesty, integrity and mutual trust, personal development and co-operative and inclusive working.

Diversity:

We value diversity in the service and community by treating everyone with dignity and respect, providing varying solutions for different needs and expectations, promoting equality of opportunity in employment and progression within the Service and challenging prejudice and discrimination.

Improvement:

We value improvement at all levels of the service by taking responsibility for our performance, being open-minded, responding positively to feedback, learning from others and consulting others.

Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce to you Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service's Equality and Diversity Strategy.

Diversity

Only a harmonious and cohesive community can demonstrate that each individual is equally understood, valued and respected. As a key public service we have a responsibility to ensure we recognise everyone's differences and are responsive to their needs. This is essential if we are to deliver a service that is fair, honest and just, as perceived by the diverse community we seek to serve and all members of staff of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Culture

This strategy is further demonstration of our commitment to listen to our staff and assist them in challenging discriminatory ideas and behaviour. We must all work towards being tolerant and patient whilst developing a listening culture based on respect and mutual trust. We need to ensure the further development of co-operation and creativity and positively encourage innovation which can be acted upon for the greater good.

What does this mean for us?

Every member of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service, whatever their rank or role, has a responsibility to implement this strategy. We also have a responsibility to uphold the principles upon which the strategy is founded which means that we equally must be prepared to challenge language, behaviour and attitude that falls short of them.

My Personal Commitment

The publication of this strategy heralds my personal and professional commitment to this crucial area of our work. It is my belief that we should uphold these principles because we believe them to be right and honourable and I am proud to be a member of an organisation that has convinced me of its desire to do just that.



Chief Fire Officer
Martyn Emberson

Introduction

Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service are committed to achieving equality and diversity in all aspects of its work. We are seeking not only to meet our duties under legislation but also to embrace and enter into the true spirit of fairness and equality in the way we deliver our services to the community.

The Strategy is a tool setting out our approach to people issues. It will enable us to serve our community, workforce and demonstrates our approach to commitment and assistance in challenging discriminatory ideas and behaviour.

In the production of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescues` Strategy the National Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018 has been extensively embedded. Alongside the National Strategy, the National Framework 2008-2011 has been used to guide our direction with Equalities and Diversity until 2011.

“Fire and Rescue Authorities` most important resource is their people. In order to be able to deliver services which meet the needs of the whole community Fire and Rescue Authorities need to introduce, review and maintain effective employment policies, procedures and processes so that they can: Recruit people with the right skills and potential, Develop them to realise that potential, support them by ensuring they are valued, treated fairly and with respect and Provide them with equality of opportunity to progress”

(Fire and Rescue National Framework 2008-2011)

The Equality and Diversity Action Plan can be viewed on: www.northamptonshire.gov.uk or alternatively contact the Equality and Diversity Adviser on: 01604 797000.

This strategy is a further demonstration of our commitment to listen to staff and assist them in challenging discriminatory ideas and behaviour. We must all work towards being tolerant and patient whilst developing a listening culture based on respect and mutual trust. We need to ensure the further development of co-operation and creativity and positively encourage innovation which can be acted upon for the greater good.

Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue demonstrates real commitment to our core values and refer to those values as the heart of our service. It is the responsibility of all within the Fire and Rescue Service to deliver change and promote equality.

The Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue, Equality and Diversity Strategy has been equality impact assessed.

The assessment process has enabled the service to clearly and fairly represent the needs of its community. Through the equality impact assessment new action was warranted including that of specifying the needs of the transgender community alongside the decision to relate to **race** as **ethnicity**.

Requirements of the Strategy

The Fire and Rescue National Framework requires all Fire and Rescue Authorities to implement the national and their local strategy, this is set by section 21 of the fire and rescue service act 2004.

“Fire and Rescue Authorities need to take ownership of and implement the Equality and Diversity Strategy in order to reduce the impact of fire on the diverse communities they serve, to continue to build community engagement and to ensure an efficient and effective balance in their recruitment and deployment of a retained and wholetime workforce”

(The Fire and Rescue National Framework 2008-2011)

The Strategy requires: action planning, monitoring and reporting on all strands of diversity. These requirements from the national framework and strategy are there to be built upon existing duties relating to the equality scheme.

These are:

- Annual review of the action plan for the implementation of the strategy and a report outlining the findings to be produced and delivered
- Individual performance reviews carried out annually against agreed objectives including those around equality and diversity
- IRMP and all plans, policies and practises effectively equality impact assessed
- Provision of progress document for Communities and Local Government, including
 - 1) Statistical information on recruitment, progression and employee retention inclusive all diversity strands
 - 2) Policies, practises and processes which support equality and diversity, qualitative information evidencing progress made
- Provision of progress in relation to service delivery, employment practises and corporate provisions (procurement etc). This includes how policies and procedure changes have made a difference to the workforce/community and quantitative information such as statistics showing the number of staff with disabilities that have achieved promotion
- Indirect monitoring of: age, race/ethnicity, gender identity, disability, religion/belief, and sexual orientation for women in support roles is not a specific target, however monitoring progress in these areas is a worthwhile task in monitoring the service.

“The framework is a foundation on which to build local solutions”

(Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-2011)

Why do we need an Equality and Diversity Strategy?

If we are to uphold our tradition of providing the best possible Fire and Rescue Service we must recognise, value, respect and respond to all elements of diversity within the Northamptonshire community. The way we go about our daily business must always be with a view to gaining and maintaining the trust and confidence of the community.

This Strategy also has serious implications for all members of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service. If we are to continue and further develop an inclusive and cohesive Fire and Rescue Service we must seek to ensure that we create and maintain a diverse workforce that is also highly motivated to actively demonstrate the principles upon which the strategy is founded. A key element of our demonstration of commitment to these principles must be by our adherence to pursuing issues of Positive Action for those groups that are currently underrepresented within our workforce.

Diversity is all about balance within the organisation. It is essential that we develop an organisational working environment that is supportive and understanding of everyone's sense of value and respect. We must ensure that our approach to these issues is cohesive and consistent. Our overall aim is to provide the best possible service to all members of the Northamptonshire community.

This strategy will assist us to enhance the attractiveness and effectiveness of our organisation both as an employer and service provider. By collaborating and working in sustainable partnerships across our county, we help to create an environment in which our communities are safer and our people feel valued and respected. Equality and diversity is part of all we do and provide a 'cross-cutting' theme for all work within the service. All departments will be required to identify the equality and diversity implications of their work plans in order that the strategic benefits are delivered in a cohesive way.

"The framework is a foundation on which to build local solutions"
(Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-2011)

Why We Need Equality

We need equality to ensure people are treated fairly and given fair opportunities. Equality is not about treating everyone in the same way, but it recognises that their needs are met in different ways.

Equality is not just right in principle, it is necessary for:

Individuals – everyone has the right to be treated fairly and the opportunity to fulfil their potential. To achieve this we must tackle inequality and root out discrimination;

The Economy - a competitive economy draws on all the talents and ability – it's not blinkered by prejudice;

Society – a more equal society is more cohesive and at ease with itself.

Everyone has a stake in creating a fair society because fairness is the foundation for individual rights, a prosperous economy and a peaceful society. Fairness and equality are the hallmarks of a modern and confident society.

Equality

As a public service provider we have the duty to strive and achieve equality. Ensuring people's ability to achieve their potential is not limited by prejudice or discrimination; there is respect, and dignity and protection of individual's human rights.

The Report of The Equalities Review, Fairness and Freedom, which was published in February 2007, identified the need for a new definition of equality that is relevant to our society now and in the future.

“An equal society protects and promotes equal, real freedom and substantive opportunity to live in the ways people value and would choose, so that everyone can flourish. An equal society recognises people's different needs, situations and goals, and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and can be.”

(The Equalities Review, Fairness and Freedom report 2007)

There are multiple aspects of our individual identities, these being the six strands of equality: Age, Race/Ethnicity, Disability, Gender, Sexual Orientation and Religion/Belief. We acknowledge all these strands alongside our core values and relate to them in moving the service forward making it inclusive and dynamic.

Equality drives how we treat each other and our community, guaranteeing our policies, practices and procedures are fair so we ensure an appropriate and effective service to all. We value ourselves on creating a level playing field on which everyone is evaluated fairly and is able to progress, purely on the basis of merit.

Diversity

To protect the public effectively through prevention and emergency response we must fully understand the needs of the diverse communities we serve and plan and deliver our services to take account of those needs.

Diversity describes the range of individuals that make up our society. Our sole consideration must be that the individual is valued for who they are and their chosen way of being. We play an important part in making up our society and thus its diversity. Diversity is not about minority groups, it's about all of us.

It is a broader concept than equal opportunities it is about valuing and respecting all forms of difference and actively striving to meet the needs of individuals. Diversity goes beyond existing legislation, so the driving force behind it is not fear of legal action, but possible desire to create an environment in which everyone can contribute and fulfil their potential.

As a key public service we have a responsibility to ensure we recognise everyone's differences and are responsive to their needs. This is essential if we are to deliver a service that is fair, honest and just, as perceived by the diverse community we seek to serve and all members of staff of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service.

In order to protect our community effectively we must actively seek understanding of our diverse communities and on delivery of our service take into account these needs.

We respect and value all forms of difference in individuals, and are positively striving to meet the needs of different people.

It is our sole consideration that the individual is valued for who they are and their chosen way of being. Respectful behaviour and language is central and continuing theme of this Equality and Diversity Strategy

Our Strategy

Every member of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service, whatever their rank or role, has a responsibility to implement this diversity strategy. We also have a responsibility to uphold the principles upon which the strategy is founded which means that we equally must be prepared to challenge language, behaviour and attitude that falls short of them.

This Strategy compliments National Fire Service activity. Co-operation, partnership working and co-ordination will enable action to be taken on two levels, National and Local to be cohesive.

All employees are responsible for the delivery of this strategy and demonstrate personal and professional commitment to all issues of diversity by:

- Adopting the diversity strategy as an integral element to our approach to achieving an effective, quality service that is open to scrutiny and transparent in its applications
- Ensuring the provision and maintenance of an effective structure within Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service to deliver this strategy
- Ensuring best practice by monitoring and reviewing relevant processes against targets that are clearly measurable
- Reporting our progress to the community of Northamptonshire
- Adopting this strategy, and embracing the concept of diversity, thus ensuring all employees are treated in a respectful and dignified manner
- Engaging with community members through dedicated Equalities Officer and Community Fire Safety team and maintaining a transparent communication process, to establish varying needs of the local community that we serve
- Ensuring accessibility of information and Fire and Rescue Services to all of the local community

Leadership and Promoting Inclusion

Managers enable all with the vision and are actively promoting inclusion.

It is vital that everyone signs up to championing equality and diversity, this will be demonstrated through the direct impact of their behaviour and insurance that resources will be available to make necessary changes.

“In 2006 the communities and local government select committee identified the need for Fire and Rescue Authorities to strengthen leadership at all levels and in all sectors of the organisation to meet current and future challenges. Fire and Rescue Authorities are expected to ensure that those with leadership responsibilities, or potential to, have opportunity and encouragement to develop their skills.”

(Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-2011)

Positive leadership at all levels is essential to drive change, maintain commitment and ensure accountability. The role of Fire and Rescue Service members and senior Fire and Rescue Service managers in promoting and championing equality and diversity is crucial to delivery.

Partnership between employer's representative bodies, staff organisations, government and other agencies will be essential to provide effective support in achieving the required improvement in performance on equality and diversity.

We will:

- Develop an equality and diversity action plan for implementation of the Strategy, which ensures that equality and diversity is embedded throughout the organisation, and is compatible with current equalities legislation, covers all strands of diversity and all Fire and Rescue Authority business (including employment practice, procurement and service delivery) and is reviewed at least annually
- Report to Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority on progress on equality and diversity quarterly
- Review progress against statutory equality schemes as required by legislation
- Ensure all employees are aware of and understand the requirements of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service's Core Values
- Ensure Authority Members of Fire and Rescue Authorities and Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service staff undertake appropriate training in order to perform their role effectively in promoting equality, diversity and fairness and providing leadership to others
- Ensure that those with leadership responsibilities or potential have the opportunity and encouragement to develop their skills
- Ensure resources for Human Resources and equality and diversity functions are sufficient to deliver fair and effective employment practice

- Ensure all staff across the organisation are aware of their role in promoting equality and diversity and of their obligation to ensure that all Northamptonshire Combined Fire Authority plans, practices and procedures relating to any Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service function undergo effective equality impact assessment
- Ensure that equality and diversity issues are fully considered in the procurement of goods and services
- Fully consult with representative bodies with regards to all equality, diversity and fairness issues in order to develop a partnership approach

Service Delivery and Community Engagement

Effective planning and engagement are key to improving the quality and effectiveness of service delivery to all communities. We aim to tailor our services to meet the needs of the people we serve through sustained dialogue and alongside the use of equality impact assessments.

We will:

Engagement

- Consistently communicate progress on service delivery to all local communities, including targeted communication
- Ensure complaints are dealt with quickly, fairly and transparently
- Work with partner agencies and community advocates within local communities to improve/create new ways of communicating with community groups
- Monitor and take action on community perceptions and satisfaction identified through surveys, complaints procedures etc
- Maintain relevant service user groups

Training and Awareness

- Provide all employees with appropriate training and development to build skills and confidence in delivering a service which is effective in meeting the needs of all local communities and is in accordance with legal requirements
- Communicate clearly and consistently with staff to raise awareness and understanding of local community issues and the actions needed to address them

Planning

- Ensure equality of service to all sections of the community. Identify and taking into account of the needs of the full range of communities it serves
- Assess the impact of all new policies, plans, procedures and practices to ensure effective service delivery to all communities, tailored to their needs
- Review all policies, plans, procedures and practices regularly. In particular, ensure that the Risk Management Plan takes full account of the needs of local communities and that all aspects of the planning process have been effectively equality impact assessed
- Implement procedures to ensure progress review for service delivery in our Risk Management Plan

Accountability

The Strategy is the responsibility of all, to be familiar with the message we represent, becoming united in our commitment to equality and diversity.

Driving change and developing confidence among employees and the public requires the accountability of everyone in the organisation.

We have a welcome response to change and challenge and will continue reviewing our strategy at every opportunity. We do not seek for the workforce to silently conform to the strategy but to creatively be made aware of the thread running through our service and for the strategy to be actively witnessed in action.

To ensure our commitment towards the Equality Standard we pledge the responsibility of the strategy across employment and training, service delivery and community engagement.

We will:

Require a report to be made to Authority Members, at least annually, on the implementation of the Equality and Diversity Strategy and statutory equality schemes. Report to Communities and Local Government annually by the end of September on improvements to service delivery and employment practice, including progress against the employment targets

- Make evidence available to the public annually on improvements to service delivery and employment practice, including progress against the employment targets through our website
- Ensure that all employees have annual performance appraisals with annual objectives including for equality and diversity
- Demonstrate compliance with employment and equalities legislation and specifically the public duties for disability, gender and race and review progress in its Integrated Risk Management Plan
- Ensure that bullying, harassment, unfair discrimination and unacceptable behaviours are dealt with fairly, quickly and transparently
- Seek regular peer review (at least once every three years)

Employment and Training

In order to understand, recognise and respond to the needs of our diverse community we will develop a workforce which reflects this. Developing workforce awareness in relation to equality, diversity and fairness, alongside action to eradicate bullying, harassment, unacceptable behaviour and discrimination is an area we have strong motivation within.

Recruitment Targets set by the National Framework are as follows:

- By 2013 a minimum of 15 per cent of new entrants to the operational sector to be women
- By 2013 recruitment of minority ethnic staff across the whole organisation to be at the same percentage as the minority ethnic representation in the local working population
- By 2013, parity in rates of retention and progression between minority ethnic and white employees, and between men and women

These are challenging but achievable targets within the timescale.

The target to reach parity in retention and progression is supported. However, parity in progression at all levels by 2013 would be almost impossible as this would depend on steady recruitment from these groups, targeted development programmes at all levels, and sufficient leavers to create the space for movement.

Changes to pension's regulations (leading to fewer leavers) and the ability for retained firefighters to bypass some recruitment procedures make this more difficult. The target would need to be progressive to be achievable.

We are committed to recruiting fairly within our organisation and pride ourselves on making the progression of opportunities equal for all. We are mindful that in some instances emergency temporary recruitment may occur.

We will:

- Undertake awareness campaigns and positive action to support and encourage applications from currently under represented groups. Use national process as appropriate for recruitment, development and promotion of staff
- Review and equality impact assess employment policies, practices and procedures to ensure they are robust, fair and effective, using monitoring data including information derived from exit interviews
- Assess all aspects of the working environment (including equipment, travel, training, clothing, facilities, food etc) to ensure all employees receive the support and tailored resources necessary to work to the best of their ability
- Where necessary undertake equal pay audits as required by the Equal Pay Act 1970 (Amendment Act 2003) and take steps to ensure staff are paid appropriately for

undertaking work of equal value

- Carry out annual individual performance reviews based on the relevant role maps for all employees, including equality and diversity objectives, to provide evidence of fair progression
- Provide all employees with training and development on equality, diversity and fairness issues including those relating to harassment, bullying, unfair discrimination and unacceptable behaviours
- Provide training for all managers, and where necessary Authority members, on handling grievances and disciplinary cases and on tackling bullying, harassment, unfair discrimination and unacceptable behaviours
- Advertise career progression correctly and fairly ensuring all those who are interested have the equal opportunity
- Ensure that within any career progression/outside applicants at interview Equality and Diversity is discussed and understanding of this assessed
- When application forms are sent out a copy of our core values is included
- Communicate regularly with employees to raise awareness and understanding of workforce equality and diversity issues for Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service and the actions needed to address them

Evaluation and Sharing Good Practice

Monitoring, evaluation and recognition of good practice are essential to ensure continuous improvement and make best use of resources.

We will use the Equality Standard for Local Government (Equality Framework from April 2009) to give structure, focus and measurement to our achievement of Excellence.

We will:

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Collect and submit to Communities and Local Government qualitative and quantitative evidence of improvements to service delivery for inclusion in the annual Equality and Diversity Report for the Fire and Rescue Service
- Collect and submit to Communities and Local Government evidence of improvements to employment practice in relation to all staff, including progress against the employment targets and in respect of all other roles where monitoring is required, for all diversity strands for inclusion in the annual Equality and Diversity Report
- Review, monitor and evaluate policies, practices, plans and procedures to assess their impact on equality, diversity and fairness (i.e. undertake robust equality impact assessment)
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of processes and procedures for dealing with bullying, harassment, unfair discrimination and unacceptable behaviours
- Undertake employee and community surveys, in partnership with representative bodies, to measure perceptions of the Fire and Rescue Service as an employer and service provider and to assess the level of effective engagement with employee and community representatives
- Ensure that the provisions for collection and storage of personal information are secure and that the organisational culture encourages and supports members of staff to disclose personal diversity data

Reporting and Recognition

- Recognise and celebrate local and national achievements
- Work with local, regional and national partners to promote and share good practice
- Communicate clearly and consistently with employees to raise their awareness, including on the reasons for action on issues of equality and diversity, on progress made and of successes

Our Principles and Our Pledge

Ownership

We will achieve ownership of this Strategy throughout all levels of the Service through various means, including communication, education, training and development.

Maintenance

We will maintain our standards and focus on our aims. We will ensure that objectives are challenging, but are monitored evaluated and reviewed regularly to ensure their continued relevance. We will provide clarity and certainty regarding our standards of service to both our team members and members of the community.

Unacceptability

We will not tolerate, but we will target, unacceptable language, inappropriate behaviour and attitude. We will develop effective sanctions and through active leadership and supervision, we will ensure that acceptable standards are clearly articulated, acknowledged and supported.

Effective Team Work

We will actively encourage and endorse partnership working that will include working with the community, statutory and voluntary organisations to generate an effective community oriented service. We will encourage the involvement of the community in the scrutiny of our actions and activities, both internal and external.

Confidence

We will increase confidence in our Service by a participative and pro-active programme of training, management and performance measurement which will be founded on fair practices that will ensure the elimination of unfair discrimination in all its forms. All team members will be responsible for delivering this Strategy via their actions, language and behaviour at all levels throughout Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service. Training and development will enable a common understanding of accepted norms.

Bibliography

Fire and Rescue Services National Framework 2008 – 11:

www.communities.gov.uk

Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008 – 2018:

www.communities.gov.uk

The Equality Standard for Local Government:

www.lg-employers.gov.uk

Equality and Human Rights Commission:

www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/Pages/default.aspx

The Report of the Equalities Review, Fairness and Freedom February 2007:

<http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/equalitiesreview/>

Core Values: National Fire Service

<http://www.cfoa.org.uk>

Key Equality Legislation

Key Equality Legislation

Equal Pay Act 1970 (Amendment Act 2003)

Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (Amendment Act 2008)

Race Relations Act 1976

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Human Rights Act 1998

Sex discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

Part Time Workers Regulations 2000

Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003

Disability Discrimination Act (Amendment) Regulations 2003

Civil Partnership Act 2004

Gender Recognition Act 2004

Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

Equality Act 2006

This information can be provided in other formats such as Braille, audiocassette etc. If you require another format please phone (01604) 797000 quoting the name of the document.