



**Hampshire  
& Isle of Wight**  
FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

## **HIWFRA Full Authority**

Purpose: Approval

Date: **21 February 2023**

Title: **ANNUAL STATEMENT OF EQUALITY**

Report of Chief Fire Officer

### SUMMARY

1. The Equality Act 2010 established general and specific duties for public sector bodies to improve their equality performance. In order to meet these duties, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (HIWFRS) must publish equality information on an annual basis and set equality objectives every four years. The published information must be accessible to employees and members of the public.
2. Our workforce demographic is a continued reminder of our need for action to improve our equality performance. Whilst there has been positive progress and impact, we know that it will take considerable time to be reflective of our communities, and therefore we must remain committed to positive action to drive improvements over the longer term.
3. This report provides an update on our workforce profile and highlights of some of the activity and actions taken within the last 12 months towards progressing the 2022-26 equality objectives.

### BACKGROUND

4. The Equality Act 2010 established a general duty for the public sector which aims to ensure that people with protected characteristics are not excluded, discriminated, or otherwise treated less favourably than anyone else, due to their protected characteristics. The protected characteristics covered by the general equality duty are age (including children and young people), disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

5. In summary, organisations are required to comply with the general equality duty and must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
  - Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act.
  - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
  - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
6. The general duty is further supported by specific duties that are intended to help public bodies improve their equality performance by improving their focus and transparency. In summary, each public body is required to:
  - Publish information to demonstrate its compliance with the general equality duty on an annual basis. This information must include information relating to people who share protected characteristics that are employees.
  - Publish one or more objectives that it thinks it needs to achieve to further any of the aims of general equality duty. This must be done every four years.
  - Publish both the equality information and the equality objectives in a manner that is accessible to the public.

## ANNUAL EQUALITY INFORMATION

7. Our equality information at Appendix A provides a snapshot of the Service's workforce demographics as at 31 December 2022, based on information we currently collate in relation to gender and ethnicity.
8. As of 31 December 2022, 20% of HIWFRS' workforce was female. Most of our female employees work in support staff (green book) or control room roles. Nationally, the last review of gender in the fire and rescue sector was published in 2021 and found that 17.9% of all employees were female. Therefore, we are comparing favourably against other Services.
9. The 2021 national review of gender also found that 7.5% of operational employees were female. Combining our wholetime and on-call figures gives us a total of 7.9%, which means we are performing slightly higher than others in the sector. However, it is worth noting that those employees with multiple contracts have been excluded from the on-call data.
10. 9.5% of our wholetime workforce is female and 5.5% on-call. This is an increase of 1.5% and 0.5% respectively from 2021, which suggests that we are making some progress towards diversifying our workforce. However, the gender imbalance within the Service is still high and therefore it is imperative that we continue to use positive action to understand barriers and take action to address the imbalance.

11. We are confident in our use of positive action in increasing applications from and successful recruitment of females. One third of our most recent wholetime firefighter trainees were female. We have also seen our proportion of female on-call firefighters increase to 20% over the last 12 months. If we can maintain this standard of performance over the next few years, we will make a significant difference to our equality profile.
12. Our employment of non-White British personnel is at 5% which is in line with the national average in the fire sector. As most of our employment opportunities are limited to individuals who live within or close the county boundary, it is important to consider the diversity in the wider population. The 2021 census found that 7.1% of Hampshire and Isle of Wight's population was not White British. Therefore, while our significant increase from 2% to 5% over the last 12 months should be welcomed and brings us much closer to being representative of the community we serve, we still have further to improve in this area. In addition, for the first time, our green book and on-call figures exceed the national average at 7.25% and 6% respectively.
13. Our operational recruitment campaigns (both wholetime and on-call) achieved 5% of applications from non-white candidates. The lifting of Covid-19 regulations has provided far more opportunities to engage with different communities across Hampshire and Isle of Wight, but to continue our progress towards being more representative, we need to ensure we use these opportunities to understand the barriers these communities face and why they are not applying for firefighter roles.
14. In respect of the disability status of our workforce, we only capture this information when an employee chooses to make a disclosure using employee self serve (ESS). Currently we have 49 employees (3.5%) who have declared a disability. Therefore, it is important that we continue to encourage employees to feel confident about sharing this information with the Service.

## EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

15. Public Authorities listed in Schedule 1 and 2 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 must:
  - Prepare and publish one or more objectives that they think they should achieve to improve their quality performance.
  - Publish the objectives in such a manner that is accessible to the public.
16. The four equality objectives that HIWFRA approved for the period 2022-26 are listed below in paragraphs 17-20. The published and more accessible representation of these objectives is found at Appendix B in the document titled 'Our Inclusive Service'.

17. Objective 1 – Inclusive: We will create a great place to work for all. We will have a culture where we can be authentic, feel valued and supported to thrive. Our inclusive environment means we value each other's contributions and can attract, recruit and retain the most diverse range of thoughts, experiences, skills and talent.
18. Objective 2 – Representative: To become more representative, we will improve the quality of our equality information year on year. We will use data and insight to identify, understand and address disparities and under-representation to support our commitment to reflect the diversity of our community.
19. Objective 3 – Respectful: We will treat each other and those we work with outside our organisation with respect every day. Respect at work means taking personal responsibility for living our values and holding each other to account by having honest, respectful conversations when we do not role model our behaviours.
20. Objective 4 – Accessible: We will ensure our services are accessible to all parts of our community. We will engage with stakeholders and partners to understand different community needs to deliver accessible, local services.

#### PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVEMENT OF EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

21. In the past 12 months, we have undertaken a range of activity to assist in our progress against the equality objectives. To quality assure our supporting strategic action plan, we have worked with independent experts and consultants such as Inclusive Employers. We have also reviewed our current performance in respect of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) using the NFCC maturity modelling.
22. Key to our success over the last year is the drive, commitment and support from our network groups, and credit should be given to them for championing the EDI agenda and generating so much activity and progress throughout the year. The Chairs of the network groups are reverse mentoring Directors and other senior managers which is proving invaluable in raising awareness and understanding of the experiences of staff and the community represented by these groups.
23. A list of some of the activities undertaken this year can be found at Appendix C, but of note is our continued use of positive action to reinforce the message that being a firefighter is a job for all. This has supported an increase in the gender and ethnic minority profile across our workforce and delivered positive results in our recruitment activity.
24. We continue to work collaboratively with partners and this year has been no exception. We have formed a baby loss support group with Hampshire Constabulary and increased our understanding of the impact of domestic violence across Hampshire and Isle of Wight and how we can support victims in our own Service. We have also formed a blue light choir who performed at the Carol Concert at Winchester Cathedral.

25. Post Covid-19, we have also been able to participate in far more community events such as Eastleigh Mela, Southampton Pride, Black History Month and even a charity football event. These provide important opportunities to engage with different communities, share messages about the inclusiveness of our Service and seek to understand barriers that limit our ability to attract and recruit talent from a more diverse range of candidates.
26. Our values and behaviours, which were created by our workforce in 2019/20, have become central to everything we do. By including them in recruitment, promotion and appraisal processes, they define and reinforce who we are, what we stand for and how we act as an organisation. The peer to peer recognition scheme, which recognises our values champions, has gone from strength to strength over the last 12 months, and highlights how our values are truly being lived by our employees.

### FOCUS FOR NEXT YEAR

27. We are confident that our Equality Objectives and our supporting EDI plans remain relevant and appropriate for our Service. However, it is important that our actions are shaped by national learning across the sector as well as our own experiences. Therefore, it has been critical that we reflect on and consider the recommendations from the Independent Culture Review into London Fire Brigade (LFB) and the concerns that have been raised about bullying, harassment and discrimination.
28. We are committed to being an inclusive Service which shows respect to our colleagues and communities, and where instances of bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated. Our internal mechanisms and processes for raising issues of this nature do not indicate a problem with these behaviours in our culture. However, we know from our HMICFRS Inspection report that some staff reported having experienced bullying and discrimination within our Service.
29. Therefore, over the next 12 months will be particularly focussing on improving our understanding of this issue within our organisation, starting with an independent and anonymous survey and focus groups. We will also work with the NFCC and other Services to make sure we are doing all we can to treat every colleague with dignity and respect and to uphold our values.

### SUPPORTING OUR SAFETY PLAN AND PRIORITIES

30. This paper supports the following priorities within the Safety Plan:
  - Our communities – ensuring we improve our understanding of different community needs and using this insight to deliver accessible, local services.
  - Our People – creating a great place to work for all through our inclusive and respectful culture, where our values are embedded.
  - High performance – ensuring we are able to attract, recruit and retain the broadest range of talent by tackling any barriers to entry and taking positive action

## RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

31. There are no additional resource implications or requirements.

## IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

32. This report details the positive impact we have already made to improve the diversity of our organisation and create an inclusive culture.

33. The proposals in this report are compatible with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998.

34. The equality information in Appendix A is anonymous and has been scrutinised to ensure that individuals cannot be identified.

35. There are no environmental or sustainability concerns.

## LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

36. Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service has a legal duty under:

- Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (public sector duty)
- The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011

to collate and publish equality information on an annual basis, as well as equality objectives at least every four years.

Publication of this report and its appendices ensures we meet these duties.

## OPTIONS

37. Option A – HIWFRA to note the contents of this report and publish the updated equality information.

38. Option B – HIWFRA to not note the contents of this report and not publish the updated equality information.

## RISK ANALYSIS

39. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has a statutory duty to enforce the general and specific duty. Failure to do so can result in a compliance notice being issued.

## EVALUATION

40. Our progress will be monitored, evaluated and reported to Authority on an annual basis.

## CONCLUSION

41. HIWFRS has a general and specific duty under The Equality Act 2010 to publish equality information on an annual basis.

## RECOMMENDATION

42. That the Annual Statement of Equality be approved by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority.

## APPENDICES ATTACHED

43. Appendix A - Workforce demographics for Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service as at 31 December 2022.
44. [Appendix B – Our Inclusive Service](#).
45. Appendix C – Work undertaken by the Network Groups.

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