



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

HIWFRA Full Authority

Purpose: Approval

Date: **14 December 2021**

Title: **ANNUAL STATEMENT OF EQUALITY AND EQUALITY OBJECTIVES**

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. Prior to April 2021 and the creation of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire Authority, this information was agreed and published separately. Therefore, this report and its appendix is the first time we will publish equality information for all employees across Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service.
3. 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.
4. The report contains highlights of some of the activity and actions taken within the last 12 months as progress towards the 2018 equality objectives. It also provides an opportunity to share the new HIWFRS equality objectives for 2022 – 2026, as well as the governance and monitoring arrangements for delivery of these.

BACKGROUND

5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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

8. Our equality information at Appendix A provides a snapshot of the Service's workforce demographics as at October 2021, based on information we currently collate in relation to gender, ethnicity and disability.

9. As of 1 April 2021, HFERS formally joined with IWFRS to become one Service so this is the first time that equality information has been reported for HIWFRS which means we cannot draw a comparison with previous equality data. However, it sets the benchmark for performance going forward. It also sets the benchmark for information and data content, as we intend to enhance our future reporting to provide greater insight about our workforce.
10. As of 1 October 2021, 19% of HIWFRS' workforce was female. Most of our female employees work in support staff (green book) or Control Room roles. In operational roles, 8% of our wholetime workforce is female and 5% on-call. However, it is worth noting that those employees with multiple contracts have been excluded from the on-call data.
11. Nationally, the last review of gender in the fire and rescue sector was published in 2019 and found that 6.4% of operational employees were female. Combining our wholetime and on-call figures gives us a total of 7%, which means we are performing slightly higher than others in the sector.
12. However, the gender imbalance within the sector is still high and therefore Services must continue to take action to address the imbalance. Positively, HIWFRS has seen improved gender balance in the make-up of our last two intakes of wholetime firefighters, which achieved ratios of 60:40 (male to female) and 50:50. By maintaining this standard of performance over our next few years, we will make a significant difference to our equality profile.
13. Our employment of minority ethnic personnel is at 2% which is below the national average of 5%. Our green book figures are closer to the national average at 4.33%, however, the majority of our employees are in operational roles where the average reduces to 1.43%.
14. As most of our employment opportunities are limited to individuals who live within or close to the county boundary, it is important to consider the diversity in the wider population. The last census found that 8.2% of Hampshire's population was non-white British. This aligns with our recent performance in our wholetime firefighter recruitment where approximately 10% of trainees have been from an ethnic minority.

EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

15. Public Authorities listed in Schedule 1 and 2 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 must:
 - Prepare and publish one or more objectives that they think they should achieve to improve their equality performance.
 - Publish the objectives in such a manner that is accessible to the public.

In 2018, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service published three equality objectives and has been reporting progress against these to the Authority on an annual basis. This report is the last update against these objectives, as future reports will be against the new equality objectives, which are detailed in paragraphs 33-38.

EQUALITY OBJECTIVE 1

16. We will take actions to increase the diversity of job applicants to help us reflect the community focusing particularly upon women and minority ethnic groups.
17. In 2018, to demonstrate our commitment to improving the diversity of our workforce, HFRS published a positive action statement that outlined our aspiration for our workforce to be reflective of our community. It also outlined our intention to use positive action to encourage and support applications from groups who are under-represented in our workforce. The statement has been updated to reflect our new combined service and to align with our Safety Plan priorities. This statement is attached as Appendix B.
18. There are many advantages of having a diverse workforce which is representative of the local community. It is important for our staff to understand the various sections of the community and engage with them to deliver better outcomes. Our community engagement activity over the last 12 months has been impacted due to Covid-19 restrictions, but we have been working with our Network Groups to understand and address barriers to recruitment for our hard to reach groups.
19. Some examples of activity in the last 12 months to increase diversity of job applicants is listed below:
 - We have established a positive action working group to specifically support our wholetime recruitment campaign. The Chairs of our Network Groups attend this monthly meeting to advise on and support positive action recruitment activity.
 - We have developed targeted social media campaigns, featuring female and minority ethnic role models to reinforce the message that being a firefighter is a job for all.
 - Targeted recruitment notifications to all female and minority ethnic people who have signed up for job alerts. The update provided information about our programme of recruitment open days, fitness standards, and the upcoming wholetime recruitment process prior to go-live in January.

- Regular positive action recruitment days, supported by members of our Network Groups. Attendance at recruitment days has been approximately 30% female and 10% minority ethnic. We will be running additional open days aimed specifically for women and minority ethnic potential applicants.
- We are promoting that we are a Disability Confident Employer on all our job advertisements.
- As Covid-19 restrictions lifted, we were able to attend both Southampton and Eastleigh Pride events and Eastleigh Mela.
- Currently planning for fitness sessions led by female instructors aimed at female potential applicants. We are also planning to run application clinics in early 2022 as this part of the selection process saw the highest attrition rate from minority ethnic applicants in 2020.

EQUALITY OBJECTIVE 2

20. We will create an inclusive working environment that will enable us to maximise the potential of a diverse workforce.
21. We are committed to continuing to develop a culture where everyone feels valued and is treated with dignity and respect. We believe that creating diverse teams where everyone feels supported to be at their best, will lead to improved organisational performance. In the last 12 months, we have further embedded our organisational values into recruitment and promotional processes as well as personal development reviews and our leadership and management training.
22. We have worked with our workforce to develop underpinning behaviours that enable everyone to live the values. These were created using feedback from surveys, focus groups and workshops held with staff from right across the Service. Importantly, they also align with the National Code of Ethics Standard which was published in 2021.
23. It is important that our values and behaviours are understood by both our employees and managers, but also by external stakeholders, including people in the community who might be interested in working for us. Therefore, we have produced two documents, one which provides guidance to assist our staff in understanding and embedding these values and behaviours (Appendix C), and another which explains how critical our values are to the service we deliver to the community and to the culture within our organisation (Appendix D).

24. To support the embedding of the values and behaviours, we have launched a peer to peer recognition scheme. This is an opportunity for members of our organisation to recognise, praise and thank others within the organisation who are positively role modelling and reflecting the values and behaviours of the Service. Importantly, the scheme is open to employees and volunteers and will assist us in capturing positive stories about our workforce. All those nominated are entered into a monthly Values Champion competition where they could win a hamper.
25. The working environment within HIWFRS has been impacted considerably by the Covid-19 pandemic. Over the last 18 months, employees have had changes in working practices, reduced connection/social interaction between teams, balancing caring responsibilities with work, and adapting to new technology. There have also been societal changes caused by legislation to prevent the spread of the virus, and for some a 'fear' of activities that could place them or their loved ones at risk of contracting Covid-19.
26. To better understand the impact of Covid-19 on our workforce, we undertook a wellbeing pulse survey in April 2021. The survey found 80% of respondents were benefitting from positive mental health. However, those suffering with poor mental health raised concerns regarding workload, poor sleep and feelings of isolation. In response to this, we have placed considerable focus on activities to support wellbeing and positive mental health. Some activities within the last 12 months include:
 - Development of a wellbeing portal.
 - Promotion of support channels such as the Employee Assistance Line.
 - Provision of training on how to identify and address signs of poor mental health.
 - Delivery of workshops on stress and resilience, sleep and recovery, and nutrition and lifestyle.
 - Provision of guidance on digital wellbeing.
27. We will conduct a full wellbeing survey to review and evaluate the success of these interventions, and the findings from this will be used to prioritise future wellbeing provision and support.
28. Our Network Groups have also assisted us to develop an inclusive culture and working environment. For example, the Communications Team and FireOUT have been working on raising awareness of pronouns and options to use these in email signatures. FireABLE and our IT Department have worked together to develop the Personal Supportive Passport (PSP). The PSP enables members of staff with mental health, learning or disability needs to share their required adjustments or support arrangements discreetly and confidentially. This means we can ensure they get the support they need to maximise their potential.

EQUALITY OBJECTIVE 3

29. We will proactively engage with our diverse communities to understand their needs and promote HFRS as an employer of choice.
30. We are committed to developing and designing our service delivery model in response to the risks and needs of our community. This requires insight into our community demographics, particularly those who may have traditionally had greater risks in relation to fire and other emergencies, and how they feel able to access our services.
31. To support this, we undertook a survey with our charity partners to explore their views on access to our services. The 235 respondents provided their views on how we can better communicate and support the more vulnerable or hard to reach members of our communities. They highlighted how we could make our information more accessible including providing information in different formats and languages, better access for those who may be digitally excluded (particularly for our elderly population), and increasing our visibility in the communities we serve.
32. We will use this local insight, alongside the NFCC (National Fire Chiefs Council) Equality of Access guidance documents, to ensure we understand our community's needs and develop plans to ensure the services we deliver are relevant, reduce risk, and are accessible.

EQUALITY OBJECTIVES 2022-2026

33. Four objectives for 2022-2026 have been proposed by the People and Organisational Development Board and approved by Executive Group. These objectives will ensure we meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. More importantly, they will enable us to continue to ensure equality of opportunity for all within our organisation, create an inclusive environment where everyone can thrive, and ensure we tackle any instances of behaviour that doesn't align with our values.
34. Our progress against these objectives will continue to be reported to Authority on an annual basis alongside our annual statement of equality. We will establish internal governance frameworks and delivery plans to ensure senior leaders are visibly leading these objectives and holding delivery groups to account for their achievement.
35. 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.

36. 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.
37. 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.
38. 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.

SUPPORTING OUR SAFETY PLAN AND PRIORITIES

39. 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

40. No additional resources have been identified.

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

41. This report details the positive impact we have already made to improve the diversity of our organisation and create an inclusive culture.
42. The proposals in this report are compatible with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998.
43. The equality information in Appendix A is anonymous and has been scrutinised to ensure that individuals cannot be identified.
44. There are no environmental or sustainability concerns.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

45. 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 and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017

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 helps to ensure the Authority meets these duties.

OPTIONS

46. Option A – HIWFRA to note the contents of this report and approve the new equality objectives and positive action statement.

47. Option B – HIWFRA to not note the contents of this report and not approve the new equality objectives and/or positive action statement.

RISK ANALYSIS

48. 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

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

CONCLUSION

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

RECOMMENDATION

51. That the Annual Statement of Equality (Workforce Demographics) be approved by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority.

52. That the new equality objectives and positive action statement be approved by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority.

APPENDICES ATTACHED

53. Appendix A shows the workforce demographics for Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service as of 1 October 2021.
54. Appendix B shows the Positive Action Statement published in 2020 revised as HIWFRS.
55. [Appendix C – Our Values – Who We Are](#)
56. [Appendix D – Our Story](#)

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Appendix A

Annual Statement of Equality

1 October 2021

Workforce by Employment Type

Employment Type	Headcount	Percentage of Workforce
Grey Book – WDS	708	48%
Grey Book – RDS	408*	27.5%
Grey Book – Control	38	2.5%
Green Book	323	22%
Total	1477	

*Employees with dual contracts, i.e. WDS and RDS have only been counted once in their WDS employment

Workforce Gender Profile by Employment Type

Employment Type	Overall Headcount	Male Headcount	Percentage	Female Headcount	Percentage
Grey Book – WDS	708	650	92%	58	8%
Grey Book – RDS	408	388	95%	20	5%
Grey Book – Control	38	6	16%	32	84%
Green Book	323	154	48%	169	52%
Total	1147	1198	81%	279	19%

Male Workforce by Employment Type

Employment Type	Headcount	Percentage of Male Workforce
Grey Book – WDS	650	48%
Grey Book – RDS	388	27.5%
Grey Book – Control	6	2.5%
Green Book	154	22%
Total	1198	

Female Workforce by Employment Type

Employment Type	Headcount	Percentage of Female Workforce
Grey Book – WDS	58	21%
Grey Book – RDS	20	7%
Grey Book – Control	32	11.5%
Green Book	169	60.5%
Total	279	

Workforce Ethnicity Minority* Profile by Employment Type

Employment Type	Headcount	Percentage
Grey Book – WDS	11	1.5%
Grey Book – RDS	5	1.25%
Grey Book – Control	0	0%
Green Book	14	4.33%
Total	30	2%

*Ethnicity stats include: Black African & Caribbean, Asian Mixed & Other Asian, Chinese, Indian, Mixed Other, Mixed African & Caribbean, Gypsy or Irish Traveller, White Eastern European & Other Ethnicity

Workforce Disability Profile by Employment Type

Employment Type	Overall Headcount	No Disability	Disabled	No Record	Percentage Disabled
Grey Book – WDS	708	175	11	522	1.5%
Grey Book – RDS	408	186	3	219	0.75%
Grey Book – Control	38	9	0	29	0%
Green Book	323	163	17	143	5%
Total	1477	533	31	913	2%

Appendix B

Positive Action Statement of Intent

What is positive action?

Positive action is lawful activity which helps employers identify and remove or reduce barriers to the employment, retention and progression of people from 'under-represented' groups, whilst still employing people on merit.

This means that if there is an imbalance in our workforce with certain groups under-represented, the Equality Act 2010 permits us to attempt to remedy this by taking 'positive action'.

Why would we do this?

As an Equal Opportunities employer, we strive to ensure our workforce represents the community in which we work, and positive action enables us to do this.

We are committed to equality, including making sure our recruitment, selection and promotion process encourages applications from a wide range of people, reflecting the difference in our community.

We are passionate in our belief that a diverse workforce will enable us to deliver a better service and make our community even safer.

Positive action measures bring benefits to our organisation because it:

- Widens the pool of talented, skilled and experienced people from which to recruit;
- Helps us create a dynamic and challenging workforce able to respond to changes;
- Gives us a better understanding of the needs of a more diverse range of customers.

Positive action is not positive discrimination!

Positive action should not be confused with positive discrimination. Positive discrimination is the act of favouring someone based on a 'protected characteristic' and is unlawful.

Setting quotas or benchmarks in the recruitment process to take on a proportion of people from a protected characteristic group, or promoting a specific number of people within a minority group would be positive discrimination. Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (HIWFRS) does not adopt this type of initiative.

Positive action does not mean lowering or diluting standards to help under-represented groups to pass our tests and meet our role-specific entry requirements. HIWFRS only appoints the best candidates based on their performance, skills and merit.

What positive action does HIWFRS take?

We know some people may never consider the fire service as a career. Others do not think the role of a firefighter is something they can do or worry they may not fit in to our organisation because of their lifestyle or background, or that the role is not available to them because of their gender, ethnicity, disability, religion or sexual orientation. Positive action aims to get rid of these myths and show potential employees how inclusive HIWFRS is.

In HIWFRS, we have a substantially higher proportion of white, male firefighters. Therefore, positive action initiatives enable us to seek to remedy this by encouraging applications from, and removing or reducing barriers to the employment of women and those from an ethnic minority background.

- We target our communications to ensure HIWFRS is seen as an employer of choice by all members of our community.
- We will actively encourage under-represented groups to consider and apply for a career with us. We will offer support to under-represented applicants prior to the process, especially in operational roles where fitness is clearly a consideration given the nature of firefighting.
- We run recruitment open days, to encourage under-represented groups to have a go at key firefighting skills, as well as supporting skills in completing application forms and developing interview techniques.
- We provide unconscious bias training for interviewers and collate and monitor equality data to enable us to evaluate positive action initiatives.

Our recruitment will always be open to everyone – and all who apply will have to go through the same selection processes and reach the same standards, including those who are from under-represented groups.

All appointments will always be made on merit and based on selecting the best candidate available.