

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group Update

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report provides an update on the work of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Steering Group from October 2024 to October 2025

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the report.

3 Background

The aims of The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group is:

- To provide a fair service to all our communities and service users
- To ensure all employees understand their responsibilities with regard to EDI
- To create a fully inclusive place of work
- To increase diversity in the Service
- To ensure the Service complies with the Public Sector Equality Duty
- To promote excellence in EDI practice
- To implement recommendations from national reports and enquiries

4 Main areas of work

The Steering Group has overseen a wide range of work since October 2024, major elements of which are summarised below. The Steering Group meets quarterly, and last meeting was held on 2 July 2025.

Culture Transformation Programme

The EDI Steering Group has played a key role in advancing this project. Their contributions have included:

- Providing feedback to help select appropriate external consultants
- Shaping the criteria and scope of the programme

Supporting inclusive decision-making throughout the process

Employee workshops have now been completed and initial feedback is being shared with staff. This marks an important step in ensuring transparency and engagement across the Service.

The project is being overseen by the Programme Board, which is responsible for managing progress, ensuring alignment with strategic goals and supporting implementation of outcomes.

To support broader participation in the EDI Steering Group and ensure inclusivity, a draft Terms of Reference was developed for a proposed Culture Working Group. The aim of this group is to gather diverse perspectives from across the organisation and ensure all employees have a voice in shaping our culture.

However, the formation of this group will be placed on hold pending the outcomes of the current culture programme. This will allow us to align future initiatives with the insights and recommendations that emerge from the programme.

External Activities and Events

The Service attends and supports the following events:

- Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) National Conference
- Dyslexia Information Day
- Using social media to promote local and international events eg World Mental Health Day, Holocaust Memorial Day, Time to Talk day, Black History Month
- Interfaith Community basketball
- LGBT Conferences
- LGBT Pride event in Bridgnorth
- Shrewsbury Town Football Club Job Centre Event
- Telford Interfaith Group
- Telford Equality and Diversity Partnership

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Training

During the past year the Service has attended or undertaken a range of training:

- Dyslexia awareness training has been commissioned and delivered
- Equality Impact Assessment training
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion induction training has been given to non-uniformed staff, apprentices, on-call and wholetime firefighters

- Mental Health First Aid Aware training and refreshers Mental Health First Aider courses
- Preventing Sexual Harassment training for managers
- Suicide Prevention training has been offered to all employees
- Women in the Fire Service development weekend
- Women's Development programme
- A range of information on different issues has been acquired or developed and is available for employees
- A host of EDI webinars have been offered to all staff in the Service
- NFCC lunch and learn sessions offered

Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

The Service promotes national events internally and uses social media externally. The Service supported World Mental Health Day in October 2024.

The Service is continuing its work on the Mental Health at Work Commitment Action Plan, which is now incorporated into the Equality Action Plan.

The Service has trained:

- 81 people as Mental Health First Aiders (2-day course)
- 88 people in Mental Health Awareness (1/2-day course)
- 40 people in Suicide Prevention
- 16 people in Suicide Safety Planning

National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Equality, Diversity & Inclusion meetings and documents

The EDI Officer attends the National EDI meetings including menopause, fireworks national staff networking forum and LGBT+ groups. The Service responds to consultation documents and shares information with other Services.

Equality Monitoring Data

The Service continues to monitor and report on gaps in equality data to support informed decision-making and improve representation. The Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Team has issued targeted requests to stations to enhance the quality and completeness of submitted data.

This proactive approach has resulted in a significant improvement in the quality of the Service's equality data, strengthening our ability to track progress and identify areas for further action.

Reasonable adjustments

The Service continues to support employees with reasonable adjustments, covering a wide range of needs including:

- Neurodiversity (e.g. dyslexia, ADHD)
- Physical disabilities
- Musculoskeletal conditions (e.g. back pain)

Where appropriate, the Service accesses Access to Work funding to help implement these adjustments.

Training & Awareness:

Managers receive dedicated training on dyslexia awareness and ADHD Online courses are available to other relevant employees to promote understanding and inclusive practices.

Case Load Overview:

- 58 current cases
- 5 new cases since the last Steering Group meeting
- 0 reopened cases
- 13 cases closed

Further work has been initiated to promote the use of Workplace Adjustments Passports, helping employees document and communicate their needs consistently across roles and teams.

Equality Action Plan

The action plan is monitored and reported to the EDI steering group, it details progress on a wide range of EDI initiatives and projects.

The Equality Action Plan will be reported on annually and is available at each steering group meeting.

Legal

Preventing Sexual Harassment – Service-Wide Implementation:

The EDI steering group has approved the gap analysis, training requirements, and action plan for the prevention of sexual harassment. These measures will be implemented across the organisation to ensure a safe, respectful and inclusive working environment for all employees.

Supreme Court Ruling – Legal Definition of a Woman:

Following the UK Supreme Court ruling in April 2025, which clarified that under the Equality Act 2010, the term “woman” refers to biological sex, the Service has reviewed and approved actions to ensure compliance with the legal interpretation.

Subscriptions and Memberships

Subscriptions have been renewed for:

- Networking Women in the Fire Service
- The Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA)

On-Call Firefighter Taster Sessions

The Service has delivered a series of taster sessions aimed at encouraging interest in on-call firefighter roles. These sessions were designed to provide insight into the role, including job-related tests and practical expectations.

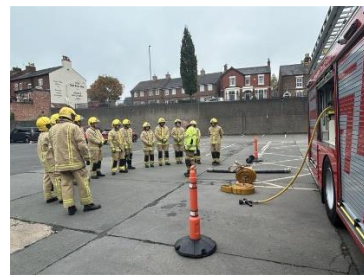
Session Overview:

10 September 2025 – Virtual session at Shrewsbury Station – 7 Attended

20 September 2025 – Oswestry – Open to All Session – 8 Attended

11 October 2025 – Shrewsbury – Open to All Session – 15 Attended

11 October 2025 – Shrewsbury Job-Related Tests Taster – 17 Attended



Further sessions are being planned for 2026 to continue building interest and engagement across the County.



Voices Group – Engagement & Development

The Voices Group launched in 2021, is now fully embedded within the Service's EDI framework. Each Voices representative meets regularly with the EDI Officer to share ideas and co-develop a 12-month workplan.

5 Group Activities & Structure:

Full Voices meetings are held three times per year, providing a space for reps to collaborate, share ideas, and explore intersectionality in planning events and activities.

Voices reps also attend the EDI Steering Group to provide feedback and contribute to strategic discussions.

The Service distributes Voices Newsletters, co-developed with reps, to share updates, educate staff, and gather feedback from employees.

6 Recent Developments:

In January 2025, the Service held its first Voices planning meeting, resulting in a series of recommendations to enhance the group's operations.

The Service has now appointed three ADHD/Autism representatives to provide dedicated support to employees and promote neurodiversity awareness.

Many activities have taken place, given below are some of these:

BAME

- Ongoing connection with the West Mercia BAME group
- BAME Rep was a guest speaker at the Breaking Barriers Conference on 11 October 2025
- Ongoing attendance at the National Black Firefighters Network
- Ongoing discussions with employees

Mental Health

- Wellbeing activities continue with jogging, circuits and lunchtime walks.
- World Mental Health Day – October information on social media.
- Promoted mental health internal training courses.

Dyslexia

- EDI officer has shared advice on Dyslexia to several other Services throughout the year.
- Dyslexia Awareness Training took place in September 2025. Further training to take place in 2026.

LGBT+

- Ongoing attendance at the National Fire networking group
- Attendance at the local LGBT+ conference

Menopause Group

- Perimenopause / Menopause Books available for all staff to borrow
- Menopause Champions attended the national menopause conference in September
- Closed teams area where all members post advice and articles/information
- Chomp and Chats took place on 9th October in Shrewsbury and on 14 October in Telford
- World Menopause Day – October information on social media

Women's International Women's Day 2025, the Service embraced the theme of Accelerate Action with 4 guest speakers:

- Sam Burton – DCFO – sharing her journey
- Kelda Wood – MBE – Climbing Out, Empowering Life After Trauma
- Shindo Barquer – Gave a session on Imposter Syndrome
- Susannah Hancock – CEO of the NFCC, Youth Justice Board Member

Voices rep – created a quiz on women in the Service

All of these women shared their unique and inspiring stories to all our employees.



The EDI Officer has been part of a newly formed Women's networking group with West Mercia Police, the Ambulance Service and Hereford and Worcester Fire Service, this allows these Services to share events, ideas, information and they are currently organising a joint event for International Women's Day in 2026.

The Women's Voices rep is creating a women's networking group and ongoing fitness sessions are available for employees.

The new reps held their first Chomp and Chat on 22 October 2025 in Shrewsbury, with a Virtual Session arranged for 17 November 2025.

The purpose of the Voices group is to:

- Be a point of contact for that group
- Provide support to employees
- Raise any issues
- Make improvements
- Attend events to support inclusion
- Initiative meetings
- Provide advice to SFRS
- Create an action plan
- Assist with recruitment initiatives

These representatives will work closely with the EDI team and report back to the Steering Group.

7 Fire Alliance / Collaboration / Partnership Working

The EDI team share best practice with other Services.

8 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

10 Equality Impact Assessment

EQIA's are completed for individual projects contained in this report, this report is a historical report therefore an EQIA of this is not required.

11 Reputation

The work around EDI promotes the Service as being inclusive and give a positive impact to the Service's reputation, supporting areas and events such as Black History Month, Dyslexia, LGBT+ events, Mental Health Awareness.

12 Appendices

There are no appendices to this report.

13 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.