

Equality and Diversity Steering Group Update

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact John Redmond, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201 or Jonathan Hyams, Equality and Diversity Officer, on 01743 260236.

1 Purpose of Report

This report provides a summary of the work of the Equality and Diversity Steering Group from August 2012 to September 2013.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

3 Background

The remit of The Equality and Diversity Steering Group, which was reviewed in April 2013, is:

- To improve the services we provide to the wider Shropshire community
- To promote community cohesion and anti-discrimination with people living and working in Shropshire, including issues of rural access, social isolation and income inequality
- To initiate, facilitate, monitor and evaluate projects to improve the wellbeing of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service employees
- To promote excellence in equality and diversity practice throughout the organisation
- To maintain organisational focus and ensure strategic priorities for Equality and Diversity in the organisation and the communities we serve
- To ensure that the SFRS culture encourages employees and service users to be valued and accepted as individuals
- To provide leadership, strategic direction, development and resources to ensure progression of our Equality Framework and Single Equality Scheme

Since the last review by the Human Resources Committee, the Steering Group has introduced some changes in the emphasis of equality and diversity work. It has amended the presentation of information on the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan and Equality Impact Assessments in order more accurately to reflect current equality and diversity issues and to improve the accessibility of the information they contain.

4 Main Areas of Work

The Steering Group has overseen a wide range of work since August 2012, the major elements of which are summarised below.

Single Equality Action Plan

Progress on implementing the Single Equality Action Plan has been monitored. Actions and priorities have been reviewed in response to their effectiveness in delivering Equality and Diversity outcomes. The current position is that thirteen actions are being progressed, seven have not yet been started and twelve are repetitive or permanently ongoing.

From October 2013 the format of the Action Plan is being changed to simplify ease of understanding of the key issues and monitoring progress on actions (see Appendix A).

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Plan

The three year Equality Impact Assessment plan has been monitored. Seven assessments are currently in progress, twenty two are outstanding, six have been completed, and two removed.

The EQIA process is currently under review, with the introduction of a comprehensive single Initial Risk Assessment, which includes Equality and Diversity (see Appendix B). Our Partner agencies are being consulted about updated best EQIA practice in order to ensure closer alignment of our assessment processes and to simplify the exchange of information about good practice and shared issues.

Positive Action

Following detailed consultation with officers, it has been decided to combine core aspects of the 'Bring Our Daughters to Work' and taster day events in a two-stage process. The first stage will be a women's taster introductory event at Oswestry Fire Station on 26 October 2013, which will seek to engage women across the whole of the west area of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service. It will aim not only to encourage women to think about joining Oswestry Retained Duty System (RDS), but also to raise awareness about the opportunities for women to become RDS firefighters across a wider area as opportunities arise.

The second stage will be held at a later date at Telford Central, and will comprise a more rigorous programme of tests, scenarios and information-sharing for women from the Oswestry session, who express interest in finding out more.

Hate Crime Reporting

The Service now receives regular updates on Hate Crime report statistics from West Mercia Police for the areas of both Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils. The importance of the Shropshire Hate Crime Reporting campaign has been underlined by feedback contained in recent reports from the LGB Research Project (see below).

Following an offensive posting on the Service's Facebook site in September 2013, an internal reporting procedure has been introduced.

Equality and Diversity Training

Gypsy and Traveller RDS Training

This programme of training is complete, apart from Craven Arms, Bishop's Castle and Clun RDS employees, for whom the training will be run in October and November 2013. This programme has seen the introduction of highly participative equality and diversity training. It has provoked considerable interest among participants, promoted reflective learning about the wider application of equality and diversity approaches within service delivery, and has engaged the Fire Authority elected Members who have attended. The evaluation to date is attached at Appendix C.

Wholetime 'Refresher' Training

Wholetime firefighters are to take part in refresher training sessions during November and December 2013, which will incorporate lessons learned from the RDS gypsy and traveller training. It is highly participative, and explores some of the core reasons for equality and diversity based service delivery and employment practice in the Service.

RDS Induction Training

The RDS equality and diversity induction training programme has been reviewed and is in process of being revised. An interim revision version was delivered in June 2013, amended to include more participative exercises. A second evaluation is planned, with the aim of producing a final revised programme in time for the next RDS session.

Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin LGB Research Project

This research project sought the views of both LGB and heterosexual people within Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin about their views on the services provided by public agencies, and on perceptions of how well they meet the needs of LGB people.

It was co-ordinated by the Equality and Diversity Officer, implemented by Rights and Fairness Telford, and managed by a steering group, including officers of the Fire Service, Shropshire Council, Shropshire Primary Care Trust, Rights and Fairness Telford, Telford & Wrekin Council, Victim Support, Citizens Advice, Shropshire LGB Network, housing providers and others.

The Fire Service emerged well from this research. The relatively low levels of participation mean, however, that many conclusions are necessarily tentative. The Service Management Team is to consider the general and specific recommendations, which include the need to review imagery used in publicity and information material, and the need for sensitivity to many LGB people's reluctance to report hate crime.

Project reports have now been produced and distributed, comprising a publicly-available general report, drawing wider conclusions and recommendations from the research data. A series of confidential reports is also included, drawn up for each participating agency, which details comments and recommendations about their specific services. Copies of both reports are available to Fire Authority Members from the Equality and Diversity office.

External Groups, Partners and Events

Equality and Diversity External Activities and Events

The Service has actively supported:

- Dyslexia Information Day in June 2013
- Shrewsbury Action Against Racism's annual Cultural Diversity Day on 6 July 2013¹
- Shrewsbury Interfaith Forum's Fun Day on 21 September 2013 (subsequently postponed)
- Sponsorship of the Shrewsbury Rainbow Film Festival (October 2013)
- The formation and development of Fairness, Respect Equality Shropshire (FRESH) Ltd, a new independent Community Benefit Society, set up to take over and develop the functions and activities of the earlier Shropshire Equalities Forum
- The formation and development of the new Shropshire Public Sector Equality Officers' Group, set up better to co-ordinate and integrate equality and diversity policies, activities and practice in Shropshire's public sector agencies, and to share best equality and diversity practice and process

In addition the Service is planning its involvement in the Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration events, which will take place on 27 January 2014. The Service will also support the international White Ribbon Day on 25 November 2013, the campaign led by men to stop domestic violence against women

¹ A selection of photographs of this event will be shown at the Committee meeting.

Subscriptions and Memberships

The Service has renewed its subscriptions to Stonewall and Networking Women in the Fire Service and has taken out a membership subscription to Fairness, Respect Equality Shropshire Ltd (FRESH).

The Service has decided not to renew its membership of the Asian Fire Service Association, because of its lack of clear engagement with rural issues, and officers' perception that its work is only marginal to this Service's needs.

5 Legal Comment

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

6 Initial Impact Assessment

An Initial Impact Assessment is not required as this report is an update report, looking at historical information.

7 Appendices

Appendix A

Single Equality Scheme Action Plan

Appendix B

Initial Impact Assessment

Appendix C

Gypsy and Traveller RDS Training

8 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

Single Equality Scheme Action Plan – new monitoring format

The new format breaks actions down into ten separate areas:

- Policy creation & review
- E&D Training & Development
- Communication
- Monitoring, evaluation & assessment
- Recruitment & selection
- Outside organisations (Networking, membership, mutual support)
- Research and consultation
- Accountability & Reporting
- Events and networks
- Promoting E & D

Each area lists the relevant actions, and contains condensed forms of the existing classification data (i.e. characteristics, Framework categories, type of action. Each action is then analysed by issue/ action/ employment and/or service delivery outcome / target date /progress and progress date:

Action area

Characteristic	Age	A	Disability	D	Sex	S	Race	SO	Religion and belief	RB	Sexual orientation	SO	Transgender	T
FSEF Category	Leadership & inclusion	LI	Accountability	A	Service & community	SC	Employment & training	ET	Evaluation & good practice	EGP				
Type of action	Policy	P	Projects	Pr	Routine	R	Training	T						

Characteristic	FSEF Category	FS Strategy (Y/N)	Type of action	Issue	Action	Outcome (employment)	Outcome (service delivery)	Target date	Progress since	Since (date or event)

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service
 Initial Impact Assessment (IIA)

Initial Impact Assessment of	
Completed by (see purpose below)	
Date Completed	

This is a:

Please tick the appropriate box and state which option

- Report (CFA/Committee/SMT/Other)
- Brigade Order (state Service Area)
- Project (STP/C+C/Other)
- Other (please state)

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

.....

.....

.....

.....

Purpose
 This IIA provides a summary assessment of factors that may/will impact upon the community or Authority/Service. Where either a positive or negative impact is identified, further details should be provided and continued, if required, into a Full Impact Assessment (FIA). The decision to proceed to an FIA will be made case by case and should be based on experience and impact. This will be considered by the Lead Officer and Line Manager and signed off by the Line Manager. An IIA will not be required where a document is presenting only historical or factual information.

Factor	Impact	Details of likely/actual impact (positive or negative) plus mitigating actions of negative impacts (continue details overleaf, if necessary)
	✓ or ✗	
Capacity	
Community Safety	
Contractual	
Customer/Stakeholder	
Environment	
Equality and Diversity	
Financial (required in all CFA/Committee Reports)	
Health and Safety	
Human Rights	
Legal (required in all CFA/Committee Reports)	
Local Economy	
Performance	
Political	
Public Value	
Reputation	
Security	
Service Delivery	
Partnership Working	
Social	

Factor	Impact	Details of likely/actual impact (positive or negative) plus mitigating
Technological	
Training	
Other (state)	

Is a Protective Security Marking required (see guidance for definitions of descriptors)? Y/N

If so, is it Protect – Personal Protect – Commercial Protect – Legal

Further Details

Factor	Impact + or -	Where the impact is negative, what mitigating actions will be taken?
Is a full impact assessment required?		

Gypsy and Traveller RDS Training

March 2012 – January 2013

TRAINING EVALUATION

RDS Stations covered so far:

- Albrighton
- Baschurch
- Bridgnorth
- Church Stretton
- Cleobury Mortimer
- Ellesmere
- Hodnet
- Ludlow
- Market Drayton
- Minsterley
- Much Wenlock
- Newport
- Oswestry
- Prees
- Shrewsbury
- Tweedale
- Wellington
- Wem
- Whitchurch

Totals

Criteria	← Not met			Fully met →		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. The course held my level of interest.	5	7	16	33	80	43
2. Questions were encouraged and fully answered.	1	1	9	18	67	87
3. The documentation and course notes were clear and relevant.		2	6	27	65	83
4. The length of the programme was correct.	2	9	22	30	51	66
5. I felt comfortable about raising any concerns with training staff.			10	15	56	98
6. Were your personal expectations fully met?		3	12	24	70	71
7. Were the expected course outcomes fully met?		1	14	29	61	75
8. How did you rate the quality of the trainer?		1	7	14	55	104
9. Please rate the overall benefits of this course to yourself on scale 1 – 6.	8	5	19	32	67	49
10. Please rate the course with respect to its relevance to your role on scale 1 – 6.	5	3	21	33	59	58
11. Please rate the level of the course, i.e. 1 = too basic, 6 = too advanced.	4	7	17	79	46	28