

Performance against the Fire Service Equality Framework: Gap Analysis Outcomes and Action Plan

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report provides the Committee with an analysis of shortfalls in evidence of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's meeting the 'Excellent' standard in the Fire Service Equality Framework, and the action required to demonstrate these criteria are met.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- a) Note the contents of this report;
- b) Agree to continue to use the Fire Service Equality Framework as the basis for measuring progress on equality and diversity work in the organisation; and
- c) Agree to implement cost-neutral improvements in obtaining evidence to support the Service's compliance with the 'Excellent' level in the Fire Service Equality Framework.

3 Background

The Fire Service Equality Framework has introduced three new achievement levels: 'developing', 'achieving' and 'excellent'. These have replaced the five levels within the earlier equality standards and frameworks. This Service achieved Level 4 out of 5 under the previous Local Government Standard and is currently recognised as 'moving towards excellent'.

Following recent speeches by the Fire Minister, it seems unlikely that Fire and Rescue Services will be assessed against these new national achievement levels, and it had already been decided that this Service would not apply for assessment until the end of 2012. However, the Framework provides a useful template against which the Service's local progress on equality and diversity (E&D) is measured and reported.

The Framework identifies five priority areas of performance:

- Leadership and promoting inclusion;
- Accountability;
- Effective service delivery and community engagement;
- Employment and training; and
- Evaluation and sharing good practice.

The Service decided to analyse the current evidence to ascertain whether it meet the criteria at all levels of the Framework. A gap analysis has therefore been undertaken by E&D, which includes responses from all departments.

This report:

- Highlights the main areas where we have inadequate evidence to demonstrate that we meet the new Fire Service Equality Framework criteria, whether at 'developing', 'achieving' or 'excellent' levels;
- Identifies key themes relevant to these gaps in evidence; and
- Identifies actions necessary to obtain this evidence.

4 Analysis of Gaps in Evidence

Level: Developing

Leadership and promoting inclusion

Element	Existing evidence	Gap(s)
1.1. The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) and Members commit publicly to the service's core values, to developing an organisation which is fair to everyone and which values and supports equality and diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CFO chairs the Equality and Diversity Steering Group which meets every 6 weeks. • 10 out of 17 elected Members have signed the E&D Charter for Fire and Rescue Authority Members. • CFO and Chair of Authority have joint introductions to Single Equality Scheme. 	Evidence needed of public commitment of Chief Fire Officer and Members: for example attendance at cultural diversity events,

Element	Existing evidence	Gap(s)
1.2. The Chief Fire Officer, Senior Managers and Members undertake appropriate training and development in order to perform their roles effectively in promoting equality, diversity and fairness and providing leadership to others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CFO chairs the Equality and Diversity Steering Group which meets every 6 weeks. • Members are signed up to Equality & Diversity Charter for FRA Members. • CFO and Chair of Authority have joint introductions to Single Equality Scheme. 	Evidence needed of Members' equality and diversity training outside SFRS.

Employment and Training

Element	Existing evidence	Gap(s)
1.25. The Service has undertaken an equal pay audit as required by the Equal Pay Act 1970 (Amended).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Agreement on Pay. 	Equal Pay audit not undertaken.

Level: Achieving

Leadership and promoting inclusion

Element	Existing evidence	Gap(s)
2.2. Members and senior service leaders demonstrate personal leadership and understand the relevance of equality and diversity to their local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQIA Process • E&D steering group • Directorate BP • Individual station plans E&D targets • E&D Champion role. • CFO was previously Equality Officer. • CFO attendance at local mosques • CFO attends local BME events. • Members' support on strategies for work with vulnerable people. 	Evidence needed of public commitment of senior service leaders and Members: for example attendance at cultural diversity events, examples from Members' local advice surgeries, involvement in non-SFRS E&D activities.

Element	Existing evidence	Gap(s)
2.5. The service's equality action plan is being implemented and regularly monitored by the senior leadership, and delivering some outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E&D Steering Group oversee implementation Service Performance Group and Committees monitor the Action Plan quarterly. 	Evidence needed of directly related OUTCOMES
2.6 Representative bodies are enabled to deliver on equality and diversity objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Union engagement in implementation of Stress Audit action plan; Action on employment and core values. 	Examples needed of RBs 'delivering' on equality and diversity objectives rather than commenting or negotiating.

Employment and Training

Element	Existing evidence	Gap(s)
2.25. The service has an action plan in place on equal pay and consulted with recognised trade unions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equal Pay Statement Job Evaluation Policy 	Equal Pay audit not undertaken
2.30. Employees are engaged positively in service transformation and in developing new roles and ways of working.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff consultation on new Brigade Orders Membership of working groups 	Need feedback of suggestions, examples from supervision and IPDRs

Level: Excellent

Leadership and promoting inclusion

Element	Existing evidence	Gap(s)
3.2. Senior service leaders and members demonstrate their commitment to equality and diversity through personal impact and by making resources available to deliver improvements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive team visits include discussion on E&D. Core values clearly stated on our corporate plan. Funding for E&D activities secured. 	Evidence needed of public commitment of senior service leaders and Members: for example attendance at cultural diversity events, examples from Members' local advice surgeries, involvement in non-SFRS E&D activities,

Element	Existing evidence	Gap(s)
3.3. The service has gained a reputation within the community and among key partners for championing and achieving equality outcomes and promoting good relations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telford and Wrekin Senior Citizens panel • Corporate Plan consultation • Scrutiny by LSP (quarterly) Support & membership of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shropshire LGB Network • SAAR • Cultural Diversity Day • 'Pride' participants • Hate Crime partnership • Rainbow Film Festival sponsors • Operational attendance at community events 	Evidence needed of reputation within community
3.4. The service can demonstrate that procurement is contributing to its equality and diversity objectives.		Evidence needed
3.6. Representative bodies are actively encouraged to fulfil a positive role in delivering a wide range of equality and diversity improvements.		Evidence needed of 'active encouragement'
3.14. There are significant and sustainable year-on-year equality improvements.		Need to map progress over time on implementation of Action Plans

Effective service delivery and community engagement

Element	Existing evidence	Gap(s)
3.15. There is an improvement in outcomes for communities, including those who are vulnerable and marginalised.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRMP results - reallocation of resources from urban to rural communities • Joint LGB consultation 	Need to evidence OUTCOMES

Element	Existing evidence	Gap(s)
3.16. The service has achieved measurable improvements arising from community engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bilingual Outreach Advocate • Vulnerable Persons Officers 	Examples needed of improvements from this work. Need to evidence OUTCOMES

Employment and Training

Element	Existing evidence	Gap(s)
3.22. The service has achieved significant improvements across a wide range of the elements of the working environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEAP • Quarterly Performance Monitoring report • Resourcelink reports on all strands • Cultural Audit results • Stonewall 'top 100' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to focus on OUTCOMES • Need to include evidence on organisational culture (e.g. staff attitudes, support/ cultural awareness)
3.24. The implementation of equality objectives is helping to maximise the potential of all employees.		Need OUTCOMES, for example anonymised IPDR examples
3.25. Action has been taken to ensure equal pay is fully implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We operate a job evaluation system for staff conditioned to the 'Green Book' • We are awaiting the outcome the CFOA HR working group on equal pay issues within the FRS. 	No Equal Pay audit
3.29. There is strong evidence of outcomes arising from individual personal development.		Need examples of OUTCOMES, such as anonymised IPDR examples, specific pieces of work

5 General Conclusions

The analysis confirms that there are relatively few gaps at the 'developing' and 'achieving' levels. At the 'Excellent' level, there are more gaps.

Two key themes emerge from this analysis are:

- We have little evidence of the proactive personal involvement of Authority members in equality and diversity practice or outcomes. For Members we need to be able to evidence this in response to a number of the Framework criteria, either through engagement within their Authority roles, or through evidence of engagement with the issues elsewhere - for example through their Council work, through local surgery casework and through local campaigning or development work.
- Much of the available evidence on equality and diversity relates to process rather than outcome. This reflects the emphasis in earlier national equality standards and frameworks. However, the new Framework is emphatically outcome-focused, and we need to identify appropriate evidence in response to a number of criteria. This is particularly the case in relation to our outward-facing work in Community Fire Safety.

6 Actions to Obtain the Necessary Evidence

a) Service leaders' engagement with equality and diversity

One gap which crosses all three levels relates to evidence of Members' and, in some cases, senior managers' direct involvement in equality and diversity activities. Such evidence could relate to attendance at cultural diversity and community events, public statements, which address equality and discrimination issues, or equality-related case work, relevant training attended outside the Service or Authority, or similar activities.

A separate report to the Human Resources Committee on Members' engagement with equality and diversity addresses some of these issues.

b) Need for evidence of equality and diversity OUTCOMES

This gap is a reflection of the change in emphasis in the new Framework to demonstrating outcomes rather than process. This means a greater focus on narrative or 'soft' evidence to demonstrate impact of the work.

Key actions will include:

Service user and community responses:

- Better recording and analysis of public attitudes towards the Service;
- Greater focus on obtaining evaluations from service users;
- Recording and analysing feedback and evaluations from community events; and

- Recording and analysing comments and views obtained during home visits;

Employment and training:

- The Service has not undertaken a recent Equal Pay Audit; and
- Collection and analysis of examples of changes in practice, behaviour, policy, etc as a direct result of equality and diversity work. For example, actions relating to one-to-one supervision, IPDRs, training courses, trade union consultations, etc.

7 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

8 Legal Comment

The majority of the provisions of The Equality Act 2010 will come into legal force on 1 October 2010. This Act replaces the existing anti-discrimination laws with a single Act of Parliament and brings in new concepts relating to discrimination as well as expanding on the types of behaviours which might amount to discrimination.

It is recommended that the Fire Authority understands its responsibilities under the Act, and that it continues to give emphasis to equality and diversity work, thereby reducing risks of legal challenge. Legal Services are available to provide technical support regarding the new Act, if required.”

9 Equality Impact Assessment

A preliminary Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.

10 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

11 Background Papers

Report to HR Committee on Gap Analysis - 5 May 2010

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk), the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Business Continuity Planning		Member Involvement	*
Capacity		National Framework	
Civil Contingencies Act		Operational Assurance	
Efficiency Savings		Public Value	
Environmental		Retained	
Financial	*	Risk and Insurance	
Fire Control/Fire Link		Staff	
Information Communications and Technology		Strategic Planning	
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	*
Legal	*		

