



Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

Introduction

The NFCC Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy has been written to complement the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) People Strategy 2017-2022 and the NFCC Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Position Statement.

The People Strategy recognises the need for transformational change and as such supports changes needed in fire and rescue services (FRSs) to better serve their communities. One of the six key areas of improvement within the strategy is:

Strengthen our ability to provide an excellent service by diversifying our staff, promoting inclusion, and creating a fair and equal place to work.

This inclusion strategy sets out how we will deliver this.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are three principles that help to create a fair society where everyone gets equal opportunities. Equality is about equal opportunities and protecting people from being discriminated against while diversity is about recognising respecting and valuing differences in people. Meanwhile, inclusion refers to an individual's experience within the workplace and in a wider society, and the extent to which they feel valued and included.

We value diversity and recognise that different people bring different experiences, ideas, knowledge, and culture, and that this difference brings great strength. We want people to bring themselves to work completely. We believe that discrimination or exclusion based on individual characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation) or unique difference (e.g. caring responsibilities) represents a waste of talent and a denial of opportunity for a great career in the fire and rescue service.

Working towards inclusive practice is everyone's responsibility. Evidence from [the CIPD \(2019\)](#)¹ indicates that Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) initiatives delivered in isolation do not work, they will not make workplaces more diverse or inclusive. Inclusive behaviour allows individuals to work together effectively and creates a healthy environment for employees - it enables people, regardless of their differences, to work together effectively and avoid stereotyping.

Ultimately, it is unlawful to discriminate - this can bring great risk to any fire and rescue service. In order to improve the way we deliver services to our communities, we need to ensure we have a service that is reflective of the community it serves.

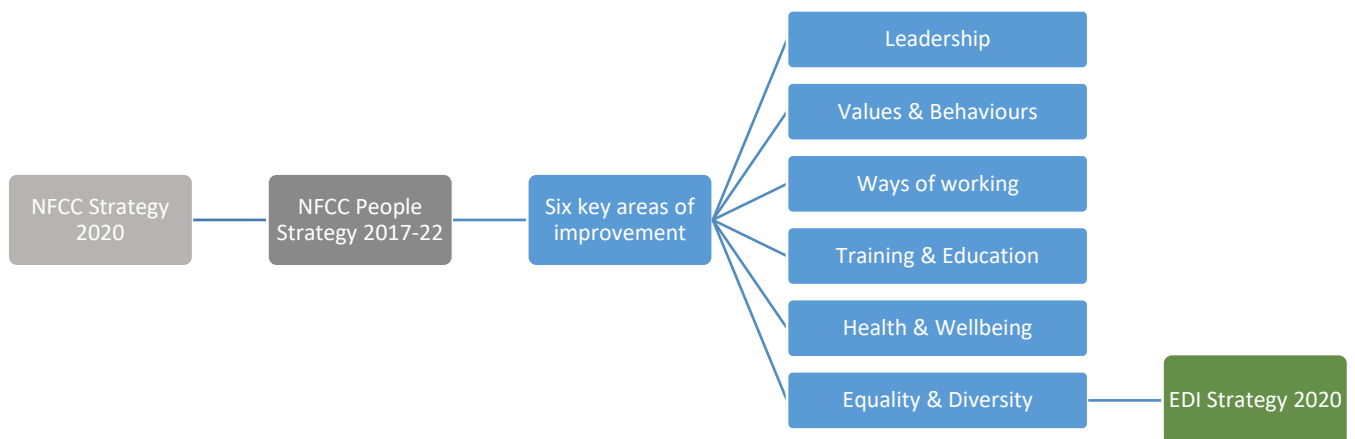
¹ Building Inclusive Workplaces – Assessing the evidence. Research report September 2019

Why do we need an Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Strategy?

- The needs, expectations and composition of our workforce and communities are changing. Many fire and rescue services are tackling recruitment, progression, and retention issues, and increasingly looking to innovate in order to develop more flexible, sustainable service delivery models and innovative methods of engagement.
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland governments have identified some cultural aspects of the sector that could be improved by a more inclusive approach at individual, team, organisational and sector levels.
- The private sector has demonstrated that a more inclusive approach can bring wide-ranging benefits, and this offers fire and rescue services an opportunity to build on this learning - inclusive workplaces, increase productivity and employee engagement which in the public sector has been evidenced to correlate with outcomes.

Many talented people within the fire sector are already working to deliver improvements at a local level. However, there needs to be a co-ordinated approach to build on what we know, providing clarity about the meaning and benefits of inclusivity, sharing best practice and innovation from both inside and outside the sector, and ensuring that we can make decisions based on evidence rather than assumption.

How the Strategy links with the NFCC Strategic Plans



The vision of the NFCC strategy and action plan is to support FRSs in their work towards inclusive workplaces and services by assuring diversity and inclusion is designed into everything they do, whether that is service delivery, people development or future innovation. We know we can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of our response, protection, and prevention services by:

- Using the benefits of diversity to better understand the communities we serve
- Promoting cultures of dignity and respect with the public and within our workforces so that engagement may flourish, making us more flexible, innovative and create environments where people feels valued.

Supporting the Strategy

The Strategy will be supported by several key strategic themes delivered in phases. They will be developed further through an action plan to show how progress is being made against them thus working towards achieving the vision of the Strategy.

Progress made and benefits realised will be captured through the NFCC Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Annual Report.

Key Strategic Themes and Objectives

Get commitment to the vision

- Evidence and share benefits
- Agree how we measure progress and work with HMICFRS to align their inspections
- Implement throughout NFCC governance
- NFCC leaders promote the Strategy
- Collaborate with Leadership project on a Code of Ethics

Use data to inform our actions

- Agree and implement consistent data collection to meet all stakeholders needs
- Work with the Digital & Data programme in terms of central collation
- Develop reporting mechanisms that align with HMICFRS and the devolved governments data collection, and the legislative reporting requirements.
- Work with HMICFRS to ensure public satisfaction survey assess against EDI
- Evaluate effectiveness and benefits of actions taken
- Celebrate and recognise EDI improvements and achievements

Build networks & sharing, embed across NFCC

- Establish a network of regional forums
- Appoint representatives at all relevant stakeholders groups
- Ensure all national policies, plans and procedures are equality impact assessed
- Assess to ensure under-represented groups are heard and have influence
- Promote sharing of local good practice and learning through forums and collaboration and with our partners

Deliver a national hub of good practice tools, guidance & assurance

- Develop national good practice people/equality impact assessment tools
- Central hub for national good practice and tools and guidance
- Offer quality assurance checks against FRSs IRMPs

Research a longer term strategy

- Literature review of existing research
- Better understand the barriers to diversifying the workforce
- Explore opportunities to influence diversity such as cadet and volunteering schemes
- Engage workforce and community to measure perceptions of the FRS as an employer and service provider
- Admission through multi-tier entry level

