

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 JULY 2023

1. **DIVERSITY INCLUSION COHESION EQUALITY (DICE) UPDATE**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT Scrutiny Committee note the ongoing progress made by the Service in relation to Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion, Equality (DICE).

2. **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 2.1 To provide an update to Scrutiny Committee to review and consider the ongoing progress being made by West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) in advancing DICE. This activity supports our equality objectives as well as our statutory requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Act 2010.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 DICE objectives fulfil our legal duties as a public-sector organisation under the Equality Act 2010.
- 3.2 This report details our continued progress towards achieving our objectives and provides an update in relation to DICE activity.
- 3.3 DICE has now moved from People Support Services (PSS) to People Development and Inclusion as part of the People Programme restructure.

4. **LEADERSHIP, PARTNERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT**

4.1 **TOP INCLUSIVE EMPLOYERS**

In 2022 WMFS achieved the top position of most Inclusive Employer. This is following achieving a top ten position for several years.

4.1.1 The award is judged by an independent panel looking at inclusion across a wide range of indicators, it is open to both public, private and third sector organisations. The prestigious top position is highly sought after, with several multinational companies, West Midlands Police, NHS, FRS, and government including the House of Lords entering. Following the award, WMFS have been approached by several organisations who are in the top 50 to share good practice including West Midlands Police and The Royal Orthopaedic Hospital Trust.

4.1.2 Work has begun on gathering evidence for this year's submission, with the announcement due later in the year.

4.2. **INCLUSION STEERING GROUP – DIFFERENT TOGETHER**

4.2.1 In 2019 an independent cultural review was carried out. In 2020, a steering group was formed to develop a Joint Cultural Implementation Plan (JCIP). The steering group was made up of a range of people, including Fire Authority Members, Trade Unions and Officers. Shortly after this, the Covid-19 pandemic hit and over the following years a series of lockdowns occurred, fundamentally changing the way we worked with each other.

4.2.2 Following a benchmarking exercise in November 2022, progress was established, and next steps considered.

4.2.3 In April 2023, the Inclusion Steering Group was formed and will work together to develop an inclusion action plan based on evidence, data, learning and feedback from across the Service and the wider fire sector.

4.2.4 The Inclusion Steering Group membership is from a wide range of stakeholders who will drive, champion, and action change, working together to address the gaps and find solutions to create an inclusive fire service. The Service acknowledges the outcomes of several internal and external reviews and is committed to action, in pursuit of inclusivity for all.

4.3. **STAKEHOLDERS GROUPS**

- 4.3.1 All the Stakeholder groups are going from strength to strength, a revised 'Terms of Reference' has been developed for each, along with a review of the budgetary arrangements to enable events and learning opportunities to be delivered.
- 4.3.2 Looking forward, working in collaboration with the stakeholder groups and corporate communications, the DICE calendar will be enhanced to bring to life the communication and planning of key events, occasions, and celebrations.

4.4. **AFFINITY**

- 4.4.1 The group is active on Microsoft Teams and DICE has funded a place for a member to attend a leadership conference. The group is also influencing the welfare review and helped promote, engage, and facilitate a recent Brave Space on Women's experiences in WMFS.
- 4.4.2 Representatives from the group engaged with SET in the light of recent national events and have shared their views, thoughts, and considerations. Affinity is in the initial stages of planning its own regional women's weekend based on the format of the successful Women in the Fire Service development weekend held at the Fire Service College yearly.

4.5. **INSPIRE**

- 4.5.1 Inspire are active on Microsoft Teams and support recruitment campaigns and promotional processes as well as representing the Service at various external diversity events across blue light services
- 4.5.2 On 22nd March 2023, members from Inspire, supported by DICE, organised and promoted a Safeguarding, County Lines and Adverse Childhood experiences development day. This event was online and in person with various FRS and blue light services attending, the event was supported by a range of guest speakers from various organisations including WM Police, third sector, and the private sector.

4.5.3 Feedback gathered described the event as “excellent”, “relevant”, and “thought-provoking”. Leads from Inspire met with SET to have an open conversation about recent national events and the impact on staff.

4.6. **AFSA (Asian Fire Service Association)**

4.6.1 WMFS AFSA supported the national AFSA event on 17th March 2023 to celebrate international women's day. This national event was hosted by WMFS and had a range of guest speakers and was well attended by WMFS and other FRS staff and attendees from public sector organisations.

4.6.2 A revised process has been implemented for attendance at all conferences to ensure appropriate and proportionate attendance.

4.7. **FIREOUT**

4.7.1 This year WMFS, organised by FireOut, hosted Birmingham's first Tri Service Pride breakfast on the morning of Birmingham Pride, with fantastic attendance from West Midlands Police and West Midlands Ambulance Service as well as several FRS in the region joining to celebrate Pride. The overall attendance was around 250 people which made it the largest Pride breakfast outside of London.

4.7.2 WMFS's attendance at this year's Pride was bigger than ever and an overall crowd of around 100,000 people. It is anticipated that West Midlands Police and West Midlands Ambulance Service will take the lead in running the tri service Pride breakfasts for the next two years with the potential to continue to hold it at WMFS headquarters. A debrief is planned to capture the learning from this year's event.

4.7.3 It is important to recognise the members of FireOut and volunteers that planned and delivered the events and recognise the success of the event.

4.8. **NEURODIVERSITY**

- 4.8.1 During October, November 2022, and February 2023 the group ran specific focus sessions for employees with Autism, ADHD, and dyslexia. Over 30 staff took part, contributing and supporting each other, identifying, and developing positive ways to work.
- 4.8.2 On 16 March, the group held an event “Turning negatives into positives” to celebrate Neurodiversity week, a range of internal and external guest speakers brought both professional expertise and lived experiences to life. The event was impactful, generating discussion and challenge, concluding with a panel lead discussion.
- 4.8.3 The event was held in person and via teams with a good attendance, the group is planning to use the learning from this event to hold a larger regional event later in the year.
- 4.8.4 Leading on from the event the group have provided feedback to support the planning of selection processes to ensure that neurodiversity is considered to realise the full potential of all.
- 4.8.5 The group is in the initial stages of developing a series of short videos from Neurodiverse employees focusing on the various roles people with neurodiversity can achieve, the aim is to inspire school aged children who are neurodiverse to think big!

5. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

- 5.1 Since January 2023, 46 Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) have been completed. 40 initial Equality Impact Assessments of which three progressed to Full Equality Impact Assessment with an additional six Full EIA that required a full assessment from the outset.

6. **UNDERSTANDING AND WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES**

6.1. **ARMED FORCES DAY**

WMFS is committed to treating our serving personnel, veterans and their families with fairness and respect. On 24th June, all of our stations and locations were asked to fly the ‘Armed Services Show Your Support’ flag to show our support to not only those within the Service who are

reservists but to all of those who make up the Armed Forces Community.

6.2. **PRIDE MONTH**

6.2.1 All our stations were asked to fly the Pride flag during June to show support for the LGBTQ+ community. Information about LGBTQ+ history was issued on MESH before and during the month to highlight a wide range of LGBTQ+ issues and history.

6.2.2 Our Communications team, working alongside FireOut and DICE, managed public comments, with adverse comments being challenged respectfully, but firmly. Flying the flag was described as an expectation in all staff briefings.

6.3. **VANGUARD PROJECT**

6.3.1 The Vanguard Project is a new community engagement project. Crews from a range of stations have started to contact faith groups in their station area and are either arranging a visit to the station to see an operational demonstration or arranging for a demonstration, such as an RTC (Road Traffic Collision), to be delivered at the place of worship.

6.3.2 This pilot, if successful, will be delivered across WMFS to re-establish links with faith communities lost during Covid, promote the work of WMFS and raise awareness of career options among groups which are underrepresented in our workforce.

6.3.3 Current stations taking part in the Vanguard pilot;

- Wolverhampton
- Ladywood
- Ward End
- Highgate
- Foleshill

6.3.4 Connections made during the development of the Vanguard Project has enabled further opportunities to be explored with faith communities for events throughout the year.

6.4 **SAFEGUARDING**

6.4.1 Headlines include:

- A similar number of safeguarding concerns were reported in 2022-23 as in the previous year.
- A 37% increase in safeguarding concerns related to children in 2022-23 compared to the previous year.
- 52% of safeguarding concerns in 2022-23 related to females compared to 57% in the previous year.
- 71% of safeguarding concerns related to people who are White British - English/Welsh/Northern Irish/British compared to 70% in the previous year.
- 40% of safeguarding concerns are in Birmingham in 2022-23 compared to 33% in the previous year.
- 81% of concerns do not have the action taken or outcomes recorded in Q4 compared to 92% in Q3.
- There were eight Position of Trust allegations made against WMFS employees compared to three in the previous year.

6.4.2. **THEMES**

6.4.3 The table below shows the main themes of the reasons safeguarding referrals have been made. In many cases the main reason is recorded but there will be elements of other factors in, what can be, complex situations.

Themes	Frequency
Poor living conditions and poor housing	170
Mental Health	170
Self-neglect	127
Hoarding	114
Alcohol	69
Child neglect	64
Smoking including smoking in bed	56
Domestic Violence and Abuse	49
Dementia	44
Evidence of drug use	40
Threat of or attempted suicide	37
Deliberate setting of fire	35

6.5. **POSITION OF TRUST ALLIGATIONS**

6.5.1 There have been 8 Position of Trust Allegations in the year with 3 position reported in Q4. A summary of action taken is shown in the table below.

NB. All Position of Trust Allegations are reported to the LADO. Some of these cases may then result in investigations under safeguarding and/or disciplinary/Code of Conduct.

Action taken	Number of cases
Referral to LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer)	8
Investigation (safeguarding)	5
Investigation (code of conduct/disciplinary)	5

The outcomes of investigations are shown below.

NB. Each case may result in one or more of the following outcomes:

Outcome	Number of cases
Investigation is in progress (no outcome yet)	0
Closed to LADO	7
Investigation completed	8
LADO criteria not met	1
Dismissal	4

7. **DIVERSE AND ENGAGED WORKFORCE**

7.1 **BRAVE SPACE TALKS**

7.1.1 Brave Space talks continue to be impactful and are planned to tackle challenging and difficult subject areas.

7.1.2 Most recently the impact of alcohol dependency with a guest speaker from the Aquarius Organisation and a Brave Space on the lived experiences of women in WMFS covering both negative and positive experiences.

7.1.3 DICE is working with several teams to plan the next six to eight months of Brave Space talks, identifying subjects that are

meaningful to individuals and enable learning and development for the Service. The development and communication of these sessions is being supported by the People and Culture leads.

Future suggestions for Brave space talks include:

- Men's mental health
- Veganism (now a protected characteristic)
- Adoption, fostering and infertility
- Mental health across cultures scheduled for Black History month (October).

7.2. **'IS IT OK' CAMPAIGN**

7.2.1 Work has started on developing a campaign around behaviours in the workplace called "Is it OK?" including case studies from WMFS staff, open discussions, training, and educational resources to support creating an inclusive environment.

7.2.2 A working group has been set up with a wide range of stakeholders to scope initial ideas and broad plans, with a further detailed timeline for development and implementation to follow.

7.3. **DICE TRAINING AND AWARENESS COURSES**

7.3.1 A DICE Strategic Awareness workshop for middle managers has been launched following feedback from the pilot.

7.3.2 DICE workshops on unconscious bias, Equality Impact Assessment, and Disability and Reasonable Adjustment continue to be run monthly with good attendance.

7.3.3 Trainee Firefighter induction sessions has been recently updated, it is now linked by a follow up session specifically around discipline and self-discipline, this is supported by the Station Commander recruitment/workforce planning. The Trainee Firefighter Development Programme (TFDP) is being revised for August 2023, with a focus on values and behaviours at both the start and completion of the course, with continual assessment of the TFF (trainee firefighters) throughout their development programme.

7.3.4 As the Career Development pathway is developed there will be a focus on ethics, values, and behaviours at all levels of the progression to ensure leaders have the skills, knowledge and understanding to develop, challenge and champion a positive and inclusive culture.

7.4. **RAMADAN BUDDIES**

7.4.1 During the period of Ramadan, DICE posted advice and awareness information and held a Ramadan buddies' event, eight of our Muslim staff offered to buddy up with someone who wished to try fasting for a day and learn more about what Ramadan is about and why it is so important for the Muslim community. A number of Staff took part in an Iftar hosted at WMFS Headquarters, supported by buddies, FRA Vice Chair and community members

7.4.2 Feedback from this year's event will support the planning of future events.

7.5. **WORKFORCE PROFILE**

As of 1st April 2023, WMFS employed a total of 1875 employees of which:

- 1398 are uniformed, 418 are non-uniformed and 59 Fire Control
- 13% of uniformed staff are female compared to more than half (54%) of non-uniformed staff and 87% fire control. 50% of the working population of the West Midlands are female.
- 15% of all employees are from a Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic (BAME) background. 30% of the working population of the West Midlands are from BAME communities.
- Declaration rates remain high with 90% of all employees having made a declaration regarding disability. 4% have stated they have a disability.
- 85% of all employees have made a declaration regarding sexual orientation. It should be noted however that 11% (200) employees have declared that they 'prefer not to state'
- The average age of our employees is 43 years.

7.6 **FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT**

- 7.6.1 Between April 2022 and March 2023 WMFS employed 92 new entrant Firefighters of which 24 (26%) are women and 19 (21%) BAME.
- 7.6.2 Our positive action strategy for Firefighter recruitment focusses on supporting and nurturing firefighter candidates.
- 7.6.3 There is a refreshed 'Be a Firefighter' portal alongside new social media video clips. The success of the latest videos is being monitored with a view to creating further content of a similar nature to build upon success.
- 7.6.4 Regular recruitment development programmes for under-represented candidates are being carried out, as well as female fitness programmes.
- 7.6.5 Meet and greet sessions continue to be rolled out providing a 'soft' introduction to the recruitment process and the role of the firefighter. These are well attended sessions, and the impact will be monitored over coming months as potential candidate's progress through the recruitment process.
- 7.6.6 Kit familiarisation sessions are being reintroduced for all candidates who have been assigned to a Trainee Firefighter Development Programme.
- 7.6.7 New initiatives for firefighter recruitment are being developed including regular 'Ask Recruitment' events for any potential candidates considering a career with the Fire Service. These will be online sessions for maximum exposure. Targeted taster sessions are being developed, targeting specific groups of people, for example Armed Forces leavers, or Football Academy candidates. These will run alongside station-based taster sessions.

7.7. **PROGRESSION**

- 7.7.1 40% of uniformed posts are Crew Commander or above. 23% of female uniformed staff hold positions of Crew Commander or above, compared to 42% of male staff.

7.7.2 27% of BAME uniformed staff hold the position of Crew Commander or above, compared to 44% of white staff.

7.7.3 67% of non-uniformed posts are at supervisory level or above. 55% of female non-uniformed staff hold positions of supervisory level or above, compared to 82% of male staff.

7.7.4 61% of BAME non-uniformed staff hold positions of supervisory level or above, compared to 71% of white staff.

7.7.5 A talent pool positive action work package is in the initial stages of development. WMFS is committed to supporting the progression of under presented groups into leadership roles at all levels.

7.8 **GENDER PAY GAP**

7.8.1 The mean gender pay gap has decreased to 6.8% in 2022 when compared to the 8.9% gap reported in 2021.

7.8.2 Since the last reporting period we have seen an increase in the number of female supervisory managers, alongside a decrease in male supervisory managers. This includes female crew commanders as well as female non-uniformed supervisory managers. In addition, the number of women holding middle manager positions has increased since the last reporting period.

7.9. **LOOK FORWARD**

7.9.1 WMFS has made considerable progress in creating an inclusive and cohesive environment. This continual improvement journey is strengthened by the Inclusion Steering Group and developing the role of the People and Culture Leads to drive change across the Service. Equipping our staff to engage with all individuals, groups and communities across prevention, protection, and response and to advocate WMFS as employer of choice will make the people of the West Midlands safer, healthier, and stronger.

8. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

8.1 This report responds directly to the General and Specific Duties of the Equality Act and considers DICE issues that are pertinent to the needs

of the Service. In doing so, a range of equality data has been analysed and considered regarding all protected characteristics.

9. **RISK IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

9.1 The objectives identified in this report support the organisation in mitigating its risk regarding claims of unlawful discrimination.

10. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The recommendations outlined in this report assist us to fulfil our duties under the Equality Act 2010 particularly to advance equal opportunities and eliminate behaviours that are unlawful under the Act.

11. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

12. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

The contact officer for this report is Sam Burton, Head of People Development and Inclusion.

WAYNE BROWN
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER