

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 MAY 2022

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.

4. LEADERSHIP, PARTNERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

- 4.1 **Stakeholder Groups**

All groups have been impacted by Covid limiting their interaction and initiatives. We are currently rewriting/ updating terms of reference of the groups to refocus activity post lock down with greater emphasis on supporting people objectives and community engagement. All groups have been active in recent Brave Space talks around hidden disabilities and Positive Action which had a focus on internal positive action.

Neurodiversity Group

The group has now formally launched and has developed awareness and guidance on their mesh page. The group has gathered momentum with a lot of interest from the workforce. Members of the group have been supporting various departments to ensure training packages and materials are Neurodiversity friendly and are currently working on a video to highlight role models within the Service.

Inspire

Inspire have held a well-attended general meeting. They are preparing for local and national events, including Simmer Down and Notting Hill Carnival, as well as planning for Black History Month.

AFSA

Local AFSA has not held any meetings recently but helped with the hosting of the AFSA event 'Empowering Women' at the end of March which WMFS hosted. Local AFSA members are in the early stages of supporting a regional event for LGBT+ to be held later in the year. Members of local AFSA have been supporting DICE with a series of staff videos for Ramadan.

FireOut

Members of FireOut have been supporting recruit firefighter interview panels and are now planning for Birmingham Pride (September) and Pride Month. They issued communications around LGBT history month and have been supporting DICE

in the development of an Elearning course around LGBT+ awareness. They have also been supporting our first openly transgender operational member of staff and supporting DICE with Mother's Day videos of our female staff's children talking about what it's like having their mum work for the Fire Service.

Affinity

Affinity's focus has been prepping for the Women in the Fire Service weekend at the Fire Service College, where 15 of our staff will attend support various activities. Members of Affinity attended a regional event hosted by Staffordshire FRS on cultural change.

4.2 **British Sikh Awards**

One of our employees was recognised at the first British Sikh awards held in Birmingham in February. The awards recognise a wide range of achievements from inspiring individuals who positively impact on business, charity, sport, arts, culture, religious advocacy, education and medicine.

Our employee was recognised for work with numerous charities as well as being a volunteer for our UK ISAR team.

4.3 **LGBT+ History Month**

During February members of FireOut were promoting LGBT+ history month and raising awareness through the initiative 'Time to Talk.' The aim of LGBT+ history month is to promote equality and inclusion by increasing the visibility of LGBT+ people, their history, lives and experiences.

The 'Time to Talk' initiative encourages all staff to engage in conversations with their teams about the LGBT+ community and ask those 'difficult' questions to encourage an open and honest supportive environment, as well as improve awareness around key LGBT+ issues to support our staff.

5. COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE, ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE DELIVERY

5.1 Safeguarding

The most recent safeguarding data provides some points of note. These include:

- The number of safeguarding concerns being reporting are increasing.
- Gender is till reported as male or female. 50% of safeguarding concerns are about males, 46% females and in 4% of cases they relate to both.
- Just over 17% of safeguarding concerns are about children and almost 83% about adults.
- Ethnicity is recorded in the Fire Control data using free-text. There is considerable variation in the way staff have recorded ethnicity. A PowerBi is being developed and changes will be made to the recording of ethnicity data.
- Since quarter 1, mental health has become the most frequent recurring theme in reported safeguarding concerns.

5.2 Covid 19

WMFS staff continue to volunteer for activities in relation to the Covid 19 pandemic. These include the delivery of Lateral Flow Testing and supporting the delivery of the Covid Vaccination Programme.

Through our partnership with NHS Wolverhampton Central Health, 'pop up' vaccination clinics will be set up at various fire stations including Fallings Park, Wolverhampton and Tettenhall. This is initially a month's trial and our staff will be offered the opportunity to have their first, second or booster vaccine.

5.3 Reducing Health Inequalities

Building on our well-established Prevention work, the Reducing Health Inequalities project has been implemented. The project brings together both existing and new work to enable WMFS to target those within our communities who are at risk and vulnerable to fire and other emergencies.

At the end of January, the new Prevention policy was introduced alongside workshops for our staff to attend to assist with their understanding of the policy.

The newly introduced Safe and Well Public Survey, alongside the PowerBi dashboard, shows that the information, guidance, support, equipment and referrals made during safe and well visits, can change behaviours, reduce risk and vulnerability to fire, and reduce health inequalities at the same time.

It is envisaged that the Reducing Health Inequalities project will encompass many different areas of work including training and development, as well as changing the way we use data to improve our systems, build partnerships and collaborate.

6. EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS, HEALTH AND WELLBEING

6.1 Workforce Profile

As at 1st February 2022 WMFS employed a total of 1894 employees of which:

- 1392 (73%) are uniformed, 440 (23%) non-uniformed and 62 (3%) Fire Control
- 12% of uniformed staff are female compared to more than half of non-uniformed staff and 88% Fire Control staff. 50% of the working population of the West Midlands are female.
- 14% 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 91% of all employees having made a declaration regarding disability. 3% have stated they have a disability.
- 85% of all employees have made a declaration regarding sexual orientation. It should be noted however that 12% (227) employees have declared that they 'prefer not to state'
- The average age of our employees is 43 years

6.2 Grievance

During the reporting period July 2021 to December 2021 there were a total of 5 grievances raised.

All 5 were raised by uniformed Grey Book members of staff.

- 1 x at risk employee, qualified for direct assimilation, formal outcome which was upheld at the appeal stage
- 1 x recruitment process within Fire Control, dealt with informally
- 1 x working relations at a fire station, dealt with informally
- 1 x Covid status not declared, upheld as an outcome at the appeal stage
- 1 x recruitment process, formal process, outcome was not upheld at the appeal stage

Of those who submitted a grievance 2 were female members of staff, and 3 were male members of staff. All 5 of the staff are white.

6.3 Discipline

During the reporting period July 2021 to December 2021 there were a total of 8 discipline cases.

All 8 were uniformed members of staff (Grey Book).

- 3 x misconduct
 - 1 informal process
 - 1 formal process with an 18-month final written warning with no appeal lodged
 - 1 formal outcome 6 month written warning with no appeal lodged

- 5 x gross misconduct
 - 1 formal outcome individual dismissal which was upheld at appeal
 - 1 still ongoing disciplinary hearing scheduled for 23rd March 2022
 - 2 formal outcomes with a 12-month written warnings and neither went to appeal
 - 1 formal outcome dismissal which was upheld at appeal

Of those subject to disciplinary procedures 7 were male employees and 1 female employee. 7 are British White and 1 Mixed White and Asian.

6.4 Occupational Health and Wellbeing

Our Occupational Health and Wellbeing team continues to offer and promote a wide range of activities for our employees, encouraging participation in our full wellbeing programmes which include the use of gym facilities, 24/7 Support Line (EAP), Occupational Health, Mindfulness and weekly webinars delivered by psychotherapists.

The MESH pages for both Occupational Health and employee Wellbeing offer a 'one stop shop' for information and toolkits for staff.

Specific information for Long Covid has been made available to staff recognising the broad range of debilitating physical, cognitive and psychological symptoms that may persist beyond 12 weeks post Covid.

Our Occupational Health referral process has been updated providing the opportunity for a post Covid Occupational

Health Consultation on the management referral form for those suspected to have any post Covid related issues.

7. RECRUITMENT TRAINING AND PROGRESSION

7.1 Firefighter Recruitment

- Between April 2021 and March 2022 WMFS have employed 85 new entrant firefighters. Of these, 10 (12%) are women and 20 (24%) BAME.
- Whilst activity has been restricted due to the pandemic, a range of positive action initiatives continue for both women and BAME candidates.
- We have seen a decline in the number of females who are successful during recruitment. This has been attributed to our inability to provide targeted physical training sessions during the pandemic restrictions.
- Our strategy for increasing representation of both women and BAME candidates is constantly under review, and there is currently specific focus to ensure we improve on the diversity of candidates from what we have seen over recent months.
- Now that Covid Restrictions are easing, the FF recruitment programme for females and BAME candidates has been reintroduced. We currently have 2 programmes running with 16 women and 19 BAME candidates.
- Taster sessions are being introduced with the first session being hosted by Canley Fire Station in May 2022.
- The 'Be a Firefighter' portal that we utilise for initial attraction and expressions of interest is having a facelift. Working alongside colleagues in our Communications team, we have produced new video footage and photographs, and the look and feel of our recruitment web pages will be enhanced. This follows

research undertaken by our WCdr in DICE, considering feedback from candidates and 'best practice' examples from other Services.

7.2 Gender Pay Gap

With effect from 2017, any organisation that has 250 or more employees is required to publish and report figures regarding their gender pay gap. The gender pay gap is the difference between the average earnings of men and women, expressed relative to men's earnings.

The figures are calculated using a specific reference date called the 'snapshot' date. The snapshot date for public sector organisations is 31 March. The data must be published within one year of the snapshot date, i.e.: by the 30 March each year.

Measure 1 - The Mean Gender Pay Gap for WMFS is detailed below:

Employee Group	As at 31.03.20		As at 31.03.19		As at 31.03.18		As at 31.03.17			
	Pay Gap £	Pay Gap %	Pay Gap £	Pay Gap %	Pay Gap £	Pay Gap %	Pay Gap £	Pay Gap %		
All employees	1.46	8.9	1.55	9.8	1.76	11.3	1.57	10.4	2.18	14.2
Operational employees (inc. Fire Control)	1.10	6.9	1.11	7.1	1.17	7.6	0.71	4.7	0.42	2.8
Support staff employees	3.61	19.6	3.33	19.0	3.18	19.2	3.00	18.6	5.56	34.9

The mean gender pay gap has decreased to 8.9% in 2021 when compared to the 9.8% gap reported in 2020.

In 2020, when considering the top 50 salaries, there were 18 females in this group. This has decreased to 17 in 2021. In 2020, when considering the top 100 salaries, there were 32 females in this group. This has increased to 37 in 2021.

Median Gender Pay Gap is the difference between the midpoints in the ranges of men's and women's hourly pay. The median gender pay gap as at 31 March 2021 is 4%. This has decreased from the 8% reported in March

2020 and is the lowest percentage reported since we began calculating in 2017.

Quartile Pay Bands refers to the proportion of male and female full pay equivalent employees in the upper, upper middle, lower middle and low quartile pay bands. The figures below show this information for each year. The % for females has increased year on year for the upper and upper middle quartiles.

		As at 31.03.21	As at 31.03.20	As at 31.03.19	As at 31.03.18	As at 31.03.17
Upper Quartile	Male	79.5%	80.5%	82.2%	83.0%	84.6%
	Female	20.5%	19.5%	17.8%	17.0%	15.4%
Upper Middle Quartile	Male	82.1%	83.7%	86%	87.6%	86.8%
	Female	17.9%	16.3%	14%	12.4%	13.2%
Lower Middle Quartile	Male	89.9%	91.3%	93.8%	93.9%	92.8%
	Female	10.1%	8.7%	6.2%	6.1%	7.2%
Lower Quartile	Male	50.8%	51.0%	49.6%	55.5%	55.2%
	Female	49.2%	49.0%	50.4%	44.5%	44.8%

7.3 Progression

42% of uniformed posts are Crew Commander or above.
26% of female uniformed staff hold positions of Crew Commander or above, compared to 44% of male staff.

25% of BAME uniformed staff hold positions of Crew Commander or above, compared to 44% of white staff.

66% of non-uniformed posts are grade 9 or above. 54% of female non-uniformed staff hold positions of grade 9 or above, compared to 80% of male staff.

60% of BAME non-uniformed staff hold positions of grade 9 or above, compared to 67% of white staff.

Our positive action strategy has been enhanced to encompass internal positive action for progression. During the attraction phase of promotion selection activity, candidates from under-represented groups will be actively engaged to encourage and support participation in selection

activity. Early and sustainable contact is made with our Networking Groups throughout.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

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

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

The contact officer for this report is Alex Shapland, Strategic Enabler for DICE, contact number 07973 810156.

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