

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan

2020-25

Building an inclusive future



HEREFORD & WORCESTER
HWFR
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Foreword

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are essential elements to the success of any modern-day organisation and Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue Service is no exception.

We serve a wide range of local communities that are diverse in both their nature and their thought, just as the people who work for us have a diverse range of backgrounds and beliefs themselves.

Therefore, to respect that diversity and to aspire to be inclusive in everything we do is vitally important to our continuing success.

There are minimum legal requirements that we must comply with but our ambitions are much higher than that. We want the communities we serve to feel confident that we understand them as well as appreciate what they value – and we want our own people to respect one another for who they are and, at the same time, feel comfortable being themselves in the workplace.

But we are not there yet and there is still a great deal to do – hence the need for this plan.

And as Chief Fire Officer, that is why I am championing this plan – in the expectation and desire that I can proactively promote, inspire, empower, support and challenge the organisation and our people to rise to the challenge and achieve on our ambitions.

Nathan Travis

Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive

Introduction

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) is committed to providing an efficient and effective service that meets the needs of our communities across Herefordshire and Worcestershire. We firmly believe we can make a positive difference to the safety, quality and wellbeing of the people in our communities, by better understanding their many and diverse needs.

“Diversity describes our differences. This often relates to the nine protected characteristics, (e.g. sex, age, race) but it also refers to the diversity of our experiences, working styles and backgrounds. These differences can be visible and non-visible.”¹

This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion plan helps us to identify our priorities over the next five years, building on previous work and helping us to address the different needs of our workforce and the communities we serve. It is an ambitious plan to make our services accessible and relevant to all the people of Herefordshire and Worcestershire whilst also striving to be an employer of choice for people from all backgrounds. To achieve this, we need to have the best possible understanding of our communities and we need a talented, diverse and knowledgeable workforce to meet those needs.

“Inclusion describes how we harness our differences and reap the benefits of our diversity. Working in environments where people feel respected, listened to and included makes it more likely that people will perform at their best. By being inclusive, we are enabling people to be their ‘whole self’ at work.”¹

Our inclusive culture must be embedded in everything we do as a public service provider; it drives how we treat each other as colleagues; how we engage with our customers and how we interact with and deliver services for our diverse communities. Delivering the plan will require continued strong leadership and partnership working; championing and sharing good practice; challenging inappropriate behaviours and ensuring respect and dignity for all.

We will keep our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion plan under review and will make improvements on an ongoing basis where there is a clear case for change or where new priorities emerge.

¹ House of Lords (2019) Focus on Inclusion

Our Purpose, Vision and Mission



Who we are: Our core purpose, vision and mission are what drives and motivates our people to make the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire safer. To do this effectively we need to ensure we understand and appreciate the diversity of the communities we serve and that we have a workforce that is inclusive; where our people fully represent and understand those communities.



Our People: Our People Strategy is a key pillar of our vision and sets out how we will support and value our workforce. An inclusive workplace can help our people to be their whole selves at work, benefiting both our people and our organisation which strengthens our ability to deliver our services effectively.



Our Commitment: We are committed to building a culture where our people feel included, supported and treated fairly. We do not tolerate bullying, harassment, discrimination or any other negative behaviours. We welcome respectful honesty and openness; where our people feel able to offer constructive and professional challenge at all levels, without boundaries across roles and pay grades.

“Diversity is what you see; Inclusion is what we feel”²

² Stuart Crabb, Head of Learning, Facebook

Our Values

How we carry out our core purpose is set out in our values. These are the guiding principles that are most important to us about the way we work. They help us to identify the right ways of working and acting within our organisation and with the public and our partners, and they help us to make important decisions.

What we believe in

Integrity

We will do the right thing and show fairness and consistency in our approach, taking responsibility for the decisions we make and the actions we take.

Teamwork

By working collaboratively, we can exceed expectations and go beyond the achievements of individuals

Honesty

We will be truthful in our actions and duties to build trust amongst our colleagues and within the communities we serve.

Openness

We will act in a way that is transparent and open to review and will welcome new or innovative ways of thinking.

Respect

We value the differences between individuals and create an inclusive environment which recognises everyone's experiences and opinions.



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Meeting our Statutory Obligations

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. We will continue to meet our core statutory responsibilities by ensuring that we are compliant with the Equality Act.

As a public body, we have obligations under the Equality Act to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and foster good relations between the key equality strands set out in legislation. This is supported by specific duties which require us to publish relevant proportionate information demonstrating our compliance with the Equality Duty; and to set specific, measureable equality objectives.

Our Equality Priorities and Objectives

As part of the Equality duty, we have prioritised three areas of focus:



Our equality objectives help us to focus on the areas where we recognise we can realise the benefits of diversity and inclusion as part of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion plan.

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan Priorities

Building on our equality objectives, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion plan has the following key aims:

Our Organisation

Leadership & Corporate Commitment

Our leaders will provide visible leadership to ensure our people, our partners and our communities see the personal commitment to inclusion

We will maximise the transparency of our organisation so our activities can be scrutinised and we can be held accountable

Our People

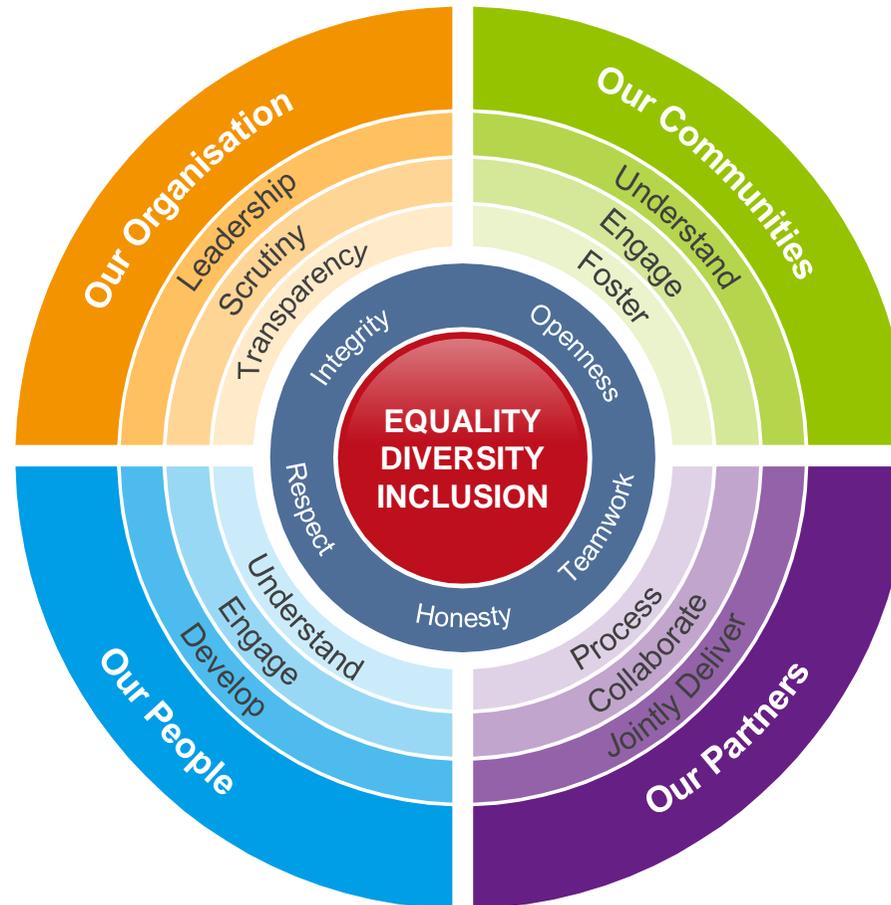
Develop, Engage and Understand

We will develop our people to better understand diversity and inclusion

We will create an inclusive culture where our people feel able to be themselves

We will better understand our workforce composition through our workforce data

We will put in place effective strategies to enable engagement with our staff and networks to continue to develop an inclusive culture



Our Communities

Understand, engage and build good relationships

We will better understand our communities by ensuring we put in place systems that enable the collection, collation and analysis of community data and information.

We will enhance our engagement with our communities to foster good relationships and understand community priorities

Our Partners

Working together

We will work with external partners to develop strategies that enable effective service provision to our communities

We will collaborate across our own business functions and staff networks to better build equality and inclusion into our policies, processes and practices to ensure inclusion and our values are at the heart of everything we do

Our Governance Structure

The Fire Authority (FRA) and Senior Management Board (SMB) collectively hold governance responsibilities for improving our equality and diversity performance, with a progress update report provided to the Audit and Standards Committee every six months. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion plan aims will be met through a delivery framework supported by HR & Development and a number of other key stakeholders.

The Organisational Development and Challenge Group (ODCG) will act as a sounding board, critical friend and champion to recommend solutions to embed inclusion within the organisation. The ODCG consists of a number of employees from a cross section of our organisation; from various roles and levels of seniority. Our work will also be informed through consultation and engagement with our communities, our staff and representative bodies.

Measuring success

We will know we are delivering our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion plan when we see:

- Our workforce is more representative of our communities
- Our retention rates increase
- Our gender pay gap reduces
- Our representation at senior level is more diverse
- There is a reduction in the number of staff grievances
- There is a greater use of flexible working arrangements
- There is a reduction in staff absence

Communication

We will update our people on what the organisation and its leadership is committed to via our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champions at FRA and SMB level. Internal communications will also be used to promote what we are doing; building awareness about inclusion in the workplace. We will increase awareness within our organisation of our staff network groups and their activities and initiatives and promote learning to increase our people's inclusion skills. We will ensure our managers recognise their responsibilities in promoting an inclusive culture.

We will use articles and stories on our website and through our social media channels to let our communities know what we are doing. We will also identify external partnerships to improve our community relationships and strengthen our visibility within the community.

Activity will be underpinned by our core values to create a consistent and supportive message to our people, our partners and our communities.

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