



**Hampshire  
& Isle of Wight**  
FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

## **HIWFRA Full Authority**

Purpose: Approval

Date: **10 JUNE 2024**

Title: **ANNUAL STATEMENT OF EQUALITY**

Report of Chief Fire Officer

### SUMMARY

1. The Equality Act 2010 established general and specific duties for public sector bodies to improve their equality performance. In order to meet these duties, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (HIWFRS) must publish equality information on an annual basis and set equality objectives every four years. The published information must be accessible to employees and members of the public.
2. The report outlines HIWFRS' commitment to diversity, equality and equity, emphasising the importance of creating an inclusive culture. It tracks progress against our four equality objectives, focusing on promoting inclusivity and supporting wellbeing.
3. The report highlights positive strides made in creating an inclusive Service, including improvements in the disclosure of protected characteristics; but recognises we have further to go in continuing to diversify our employee profile. The report concludes by identifying areas of focus for the coming 12 months which will further assist in achievement of the equality objectives.

### RECOMMENDATION

4. That the Annual Statement of Equality be approved by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority and the updated equality information at Appendix A be published on our website.

## BACKGROUND

5. The Equality Act 2010 established a general duty for the public sector which aims to ensure that people with protected characteristics are not excluded, discriminated, or otherwise treated less favourably than anyone else, due to their protected characteristics. The protected characteristics covered by the general equality duty are age (including children and young people), disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
6. In summary, organisations are required to comply with the general equality duty and must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
  - Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act.
  - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
  - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
7. The general duty is further supported by specific duties that are intended to help public bodies improve their equality performance by improving their focus and transparency. In summary, each public body is required to:
  - Publish information to demonstrate its compliance with the general equality duty on an annual basis. This information must include information relating to people who share protected characteristics that are employees.
  - Publish one or more objectives that it thinks it needs to achieve to further any of the aims of general equality duty. This must be done every four years.
  - Publish both the equality information and the equality objectives in a manner that is accessible to the public.

## ANNUAL EQUALITY INFORMATION

8. Our equality information at pages 22 – 24 of Appendix A provides a snapshot of the Service's workforce demographics as of 1 April 2024.
9. As of 1 April 2024, 20% of HIWFRS' workforce are female. We have seen an increase in female employees across all staffing groups except Control. When we compare ourselves against the sector, our performance aligns well in our whole-time and on-call workforce and we are performing favourably in our non-uniform and control teams. Despite this progress, there continues to be a gender imbalance in our organisation and therefore it is imperative that we continue to use positive action to understand barriers and take action to address the imbalance.

10. Our employment of non-White British personnel is at 6% which is above other Services in our family group but behind the sector nationally. We also have some way to go to be representative of the communities we serve as 15% of Hampshire and Isle of Wight's population is from an ethnic group other than White British. We must continue to engage with different communities and community leaders to understand the reasons why they are not applying for firefighter roles and take action to address this.
11. Our employment of individuals with a disability and the number of those who disclose a sexuality other than heterosexual has increased and is above the sector average. Whilst this is positive progress, we know that many of our staff have chosen to not disclose this personal information. Therefore, we need to continue to encourage our employees to feel confident about sharing this information with the Service.

### EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

12. Public Authorities listed in Schedule 1 and 2 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 must:
  - Prepare and publish one or more objectives that they think they should achieve to improve their quality performance.
  - Publish the objectives in such a manner that is accessible to the public.
13. The four equality objectives that HIWFRA approved for the period 2022-2026 are listed below in paragraphs 13-16. The published and more accessible representation of these objectives is found at Appendix B in the document titled 'Our Inclusive Service'.
14. Objective 1 – Inclusive: We will create a great place to work for all. We will have a culture where we can be authentic, feel valued and supported to thrive. Our inclusive environment means we value each other's contributions and can attract, recruit and retain the most diverse range of thoughts, experiences, skills and talent.
15. Objective 2 – Representative: To become more representative, we will improve the quality of our equality information year on year. We will use data and insight to identify, understand and address disparities and under-representation to support our commitment to reflect the diversity of our community.
16. Objective 3 – Respectful: We will treat each other and those we work with outside our organisation with respect every day. Respect at work means taking personal responsibility for living our values and holding each other to account by having honest, respectful conversations when we do not role model our behaviours.

17. Objective 4 – Accessible: We will ensure our services are accessible to all parts of our community. We will engage with stakeholders and partners to understand different community needs to deliver accessible, local services.

**PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVEMENT OF EQUALITY OBJECTIVES**

18. In the past 12 months, we have undertaken a range of activity to assist in our progress against the equality objectives. We have worked with independent experts and consultants such as Green Park, and engaged with the NFCC and HMICFRS to learn from and implement best practice from across the sector and beyond.
19. Our Network Groups continue to be critical to our success and much of what we have achieved has been supported by their drive, commitment and passion for improving our Service. Recognition and appreciation should be given to our Network Group members for championing the IDE agenda and generating so much activity and progress throughout the year.
20. The report at Appendix A provides comprehensive information about our work and progress towards achieving the equality objectives. The notable highlights of our progress is captured in the table below.

Inclusive	Representative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Green Park undertook an independent culture review "The Way We Work Together", involving surveys and focus groups and identifying areas for improvement.</li> <li>Delivery of neurodiversity assessments and reasonable adjustment consultations</li> <li>Increased disclosure of personal information/protected characteristics</li> <li>Improved completion of PIAs reflects a commitment to considering impacts on people and implementing mitigations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvements in representation across most protected characteristics and continuing to perform well against other services in the sector.</li> <li>Network Groups have contributed to and been consulted on all change projects, to help to identify and address systemic barriers, as well as bridging the gap with diverse communities.</li> <li>Participation in awareness days, community events, and community fire safety initiatives with a diverse pool of volunteers demonstrates a commitment to engaging with and serving diverse communities.</li> </ul>
Respect	Accessible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivery of comprehensive EDI training for all staff, covering various topics such as introduction to EDI, understanding the difference between banter, bullying, and harassment.</li> <li>Promoted and shared learning from our confidential reporting system SaySo, demonstrating our commitment to fostering a culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publication of an EDI events calendar.</li> <li>Roll out of Personal Supportive Passports (PSP) allows individuals to communicate their learning needs effectively.</li> <li>Stations and community safety teams engaged with local communities through various initiatives including events like Gosport Summer Passport, HYROX Challenge, Early Intervention Programme, Fire Cadets, senior citizens events, young</li> </ul>

<p>where staff feel comfortable reporting concerns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased nominations for peer-to-peer awards recognising behaviour or achievements that are aligned with our Service values.</li> </ul>	<p>carers parties, community open days, soup kitchens, Eid celebrations, and Pride events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration with local authorities, universities, and businesses to enhance accessibility through initiatives like health and wellbeing workshops and national best practice consultations.</li> </ul>
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## FOCUS FOR NEXT YEAR

21. We recognise the importance of learning from our culture review and implementing our culture action plan. Whilst our Equality Objectives and EDI plans remain relevant, it is crucial to incorporate national sector learnings alongside our own experiences. We will continue to examine closely the recommendations from across the sector as Services conduct their own culture reviews, particularly regarding concerns about bullying, harassment and discrimination.
22. Our commitment is to foster an inclusive Service that respects both colleagues and communities, where instances of bullying, harassment, and discrimination are swiftly addressed and not tolerated. While internal mechanisms don't indicate a widespread issue with these behaviours, HMICFRS Inspection reports highlight some staff experiences of bullying and discrimination.
23. In the next 12 months, we will focus on enhancing our understanding of these issues within our organisation, with a strong focus on our EDI training and learning from the HMICFRS misconduct thematic due to be published in Summer 2024. We'll also collaborate with NFCC and other Services to ensure we uphold our values and treat every colleague with dignity and respect.

## SUPPORTING OUR SAFETY PLAN AND PRIORITIES

24. This paper supports the following priorities within the Safety Plan:
  - Our communities – ensuring we improve our understanding of different community needs and using this insight to deliver accessible, local services.
  - Our People – creating a great place to work for all through our inclusive and respectful culture, where our values are embedded.
  - High performance – ensuring we are able to attract, recruit and retain the broadest range of talent by tackling any barriers to entry and taking positive action.

## RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

25. There are no additional resource implications or requirements.

## IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

26. This report details the positive impact we have already made to improve the diversity of our organisation and create an inclusive culture.
27. The proposals in this report are compatible with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998.
28. The equality information in Appendix A is anonymous and has been scrutinised to ensure that individuals cannot be identified.
29. There are no environmental or sustainability concerns.

## LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

30. Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service has a legal duty under:
  - Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (public sector duty)
  - The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011

to collate and publish equality information on an annual basis, as well as equality objectives at least every four years.

31. Publication of this report and its appendices ensures we meet these duties.

## OPTIONS

32. Option A (Recommended) – HIWFRA to note and approve the contents of this report and publish the updated equality information at Appendix A on our website.
33. Option B – HIWFRA to note the contents of this report but not publish the updated equality information.

## RISK ANALYSIS

34. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has a statutory duty to enforce the general and specific duty. Failure to do so can result in a compliance notice being issued.

## EVALUATION

35. Our progress will be monitored, evaluated and reported to Authority on an annual basis.

## CONCLUSION

36. HIWFRS has a general and specific duty under The Equality Act 2010 to publish equality information on an annual basis.

## APPENDICES ATTACHED

37. [Appendix A – Annual Statement of Equality April 2023 to March 2024](#)
38. [Appendix B – Our Inclusive Service](#)

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