

Summary of Single Equality Scheme

2009-2012:

(Draft: Version 1a)



Avon Fire & Rescue Service – About us

Many people believe that our sole function is to provide an emergency response to incidents of fire, road traffic collisions, flooding, biochemical hazards and other crisis. However we work hard to reduce the risk of death and injury by providing safety advice and guidance within our communities and regard this as the most important of our functions. We also work with those responsible for businesses, accommodation and public buildings to ensure that these spaces are safe for people to use them. When fires occur, we investigate the causes so lessons can be learned.

We serve a population of just over one million people living in the four unitary authorities of Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol City, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. We have 23 fire stations spread throughout the area and our headquarters is in Bristol city centre. We employ nearly 1,200 people working as full and part time firefighters, fire control operators and support staff.

Our approach to equality and diversity

Avon Fire & Rescue has taken the decision to consolidate its existing equality schemes of Race, Disability and Gender into a single framework and extend these to cover Age, Sexual Orientation and Religion and Belief, and socio-economic exclusion.

We have used this Single Equality Scheme to set out in one place what we will do to meet our legislative requirements, mirror best practice and deliver real and sustainable change.

This Single Equality Scheme will:

1. Provide a framework for equality and diversity issues to be continue to be mainstreamed within the organisation. It is the responsibility of every employee, elected member and partner.
2. Ensure that AF&RS meets its legal obligations.
3. Ensure all our functions are assessed for their impact upon equality and diversity and action is taken to prevent or remove discrimination.
4. Provide a framework for improving performance.

We have agreed an Action Plan showing what we are going to do over the next 3 years to meet the commitments set out in the Single Equality Scheme. The Action Plan is at the end of this document.

Equality Impact Assessments

When used effectively, Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) help mainstream equality within the service planning and decision-making processes of an organisation. We will use Equality Impact Assessments to assess the impact, or likely impact, of all our policies and practices on each equality strand. We will use them to prevent our decisions and activities (including those that arise from partnerships and procurement) from either inadvertently causing discrimination or failing to proactively promote equality of opportunity.

Our Plans

Our action plan is split into five parts.

1. Leadership and Promoting Inclusion

Like all public bodies in Britain, Avon Fire and Rescue Service is subject to a range of legislation that covers its role as an employer and service provider. The Single Equality Scheme aims to combine many of the duties we are asked to carry out in one document. Two of the pieces of legislation we are asked to work with, and which are mentioned in the action plan are the Equality Framework for Local Government and the National Fire & rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2009-2018.

Equality Framework for Local Government

Since 2001, the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG) helped local authorities and fire and rescue services make progress in mainstreaming equality. The ESLG had 5 levels and AF&RS reached Level 2. In 2009, the ESLG was replaced by the Equality Framework for Local Government which has three levels: developing, achieving and excellent. AF&RS is currently performing at the “developing” level. However, we aim to reach “achieving” status by April 2010.

The framework contains several new features including:

- a wider definition of equality, based on equal life chances i.e. “An equal society protects and promotes equal, real freedom and opportunity to live in the way people value and would choose, so that everyone can flourish”
- a new section on ‘authorities knowing the communities they serve and equality mapping’
- a focus on equality outcomes for all sections of the community, mapping and narrowing gaps
- a central role for self-assessment and peer challenge.

The EFLG has been adapted so it is more applicable to the work of fire and rescue services. The adapted version focuses on the themes set out in the National Fire & Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018.

National Fire & Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008- 2018

In 2008 the Government published a new equality and diversity strategy for the English Fire and Rescue Service. It was produced collaboratively with other key stakeholders including the Chief Fire Officers’ Association, Local Government Association, Fire Brigades Union and UNISON. The strategy supports the fire service in tackling current

inequalities, promoting equality and diversity and establishing a culture of inclusion in employment and service delivery. The strategy sets out a vision of the reduction of death and injury in all the communities by effective working of a workforce that better reflects the diversity of those communities.

The strategy has 5 priorities:

- Leadership and promoting inclusion
- Accountability
- Effective service delivery and community engagement
- Employment and training
- Evaluation and sharing good practice

Our Leadership and promoting inclusion action plan

Ref number	Action	Relevant Equality Strand	Responsible Manager	Deadline
1	Achieve "Developing" status under the Equality Framework for Local Government	All	Head of E&D	April 2010
2	Achieve "Excellent" status under the Equality Framework for Local Government	All	Head of E&D	April 2012
3	Fire Authority Members will undertake appropriate training in order to perform their role effectively in promoting equality, diversity and fairness and providing leadership to others.	All	Clerk to the Fire Authority	March 2010
4	Ensure all new policies are subject to an Equality Impact Assessment and existing policies are reviewed at least once every 3 years	All	Head of E&D	Yearly
5	All new managers are given appropriate training so they aware of their responsibilities relating to equality and diversity	All	Head of People Development	Yearly
6	Internal and external communication strategies designed to promote good relations across all local communities.	All	Media & Communication Manager, Social Marketing Manager	Yearly
7	Carry out a review of how we procure goods and services and monitor any contracts to ensure that equality and diversity issues are fully considered	All	Supplies and Services Manager	March 2011

2. Accountability

Every year we will publish a report containing a summary of our equality work. It will include:

- progress on action plan targets;

- progress on Equality Impact Assessments;
- all information gathered through monitoring; and
- what we have done with the information we gathered.

Our Accountability action plan

Ref Number	Action	Relevant Equality Strand	Responsible Manager	Deadline
8	Avon Fire Authority will receive an annual report on progress on equality and diversity generally, and specifically the Single Equality Scheme. This report will be made available to the public.	All	Head of E&D	Yearly
9	Submit an annual report to the Department of Communities and Local Government on progress on equality and diversity	All	Head of E&D	March 2010

3. Effective Service Delivery and Community Engagement

Avon Fire and Rescue is committed to ensuring that equality and diversity are integrated into the delivery of our services, whether this be responding to an emergency, engaging in our fire prevention and community safety activities, undertaking fire investigation or delivering education and training initiatives.

We will ensure that:

- Services are accessible, and are delivered appropriately in order to facilitate equality of treatment;
- Information about services is offered in appropriate formats and languages to meet the needs of all members of the community;
- Ensure that resources are targeted to promote equality of access;
- There are improvements in the monitoring of service provision in relation to age, disability, gender and race, religion and sexual orientation and the similar monitoring of complaints
- The equality impact of proposed and amended functions and policies is assessed;
- Awareness and understanding of the needs of different groups is improved through effective community profiling, consultation and involvement; and

Employees are aware of the impact of the Single Equality Scheme on the services they provide.

Our Service Delivery and Community Engagement Action Plan

Ref Number	Action	Relevant Equality Strand	Responsible Manager	Deadline
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10	Ensure that the Integrated Risk Management Plan takes full account of the needs of local communities and IRMP sets out plans for review of service delivery	All	Risk Reduction Group Manager (IRMP)	March 2010
11	Equality outcomes are integrated into business planning processes. Equality and diversity objectives regularly monitored, reviewed and updated	All	All managers	Yearly
12	Work with partner organisations to improve knowledge of community and identify and address community needs	All	Risk Reduction Area Manager	Yearly
13	Reduce fire incidents, deaths and injuries across local communities	All	Risk Reduction ACFO	Yearly
14	Geographic and demographic communities most at risk of death and injury are engaged on service delivery and planning.	All	Risk Reduction Area Manager	Yearly
15	Through targeted use of resources, demonstrate measurable increases in the number of Home Fire Safety Visits being conducted in homes in communities disproportionately affected by fire, particularly BME, Disabled people, people aged 65 and over, and geographic communities that experience high levels of multiple socio-economic deprivation.	Age Disability Race Socio-economic	Head of Community Safety	Yearly
16	Develop community safety strategies targeting those communities most at risk of fire which include specific work to reduce number of hate crime incidences	Age Disability Race Socio-economic	Head of Community Safety	March 2010
17	Establish robust evaluation measures to assess effectiveness of community safety strategies and report progress to partners and public	All	Head of Community Safety	March 2011 March 2012
18	Identify tools to benchmark community satisfaction with performance of AF&RS	All	Head of Community Safety	March 2011
19	Increase satisfaction rates of equalities communities with performance of AF&RS	All	Head of Community Safety	March 2012

20	Widen partnership profile to include third sector and public sector organisations that increase our capacity to target households and communities most at risk	All	Head of Community Safety	March 2011 March 2012
21	Increase diversity of young people engaged with to specifically include BME and gypsy/traveller communities, Disabled people, members of faith groups and LGBT communities	Disability Sexual orientation Religion\ belief Race Transgender	Head of Community Safety	Yearly
22	Regular communication with employees to raise awareness and understanding of local community issues and the actions needed to address them	All	Head of Community Safety	Yearly

4. Employment and Training

The Director of Human Resources and People Development has the specific responsibility for ensuring that employment practices are compliant with our legal obligations, and wherever possible we implement policies and practices that are considered best practice.

We have a duty to ensure that those policies and practices that affect our employees are fair. We want to involve our employees in the work the Service does through effective employee engagement mechanisms such as staff surveys, consultation with representative bodies, and employee support networks

We will ensure all aspects of the working environment allows all employees to receive the support and tailored resources necessary to work to the best of their ability. We will provide training and development so employees are aware of their individual responsibilities under the equality and diversity agenda and are confident to deliver services to all communities. We will not tolerate harassment and bullying regardless of the motivation.

We want every community to see Avon Fire & Rescue Service as an employer of choice. We will continue our policy of appointing the right people to the right post, based solely on merit and ability. We have a significant under-representation of many communities in our operational and support staff and at all of our layers of management. This is particularly true for women, Black and Minority Ethnic communities, Disabled people and Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals. We are committed to carrying out a programme of Positive Action initiatives specifically aimed at these communities.

We have been awarded the "Two Ticks" symbol because of our approach to employing Disabled people and we will continue to guarantee an interview for job applicants who state that they are disabled and who meet the essential criteria.

We have chosen to commit to stretching targets around the recruitment of women and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities. Our aim is that by 2013, at least 18% of our operational recruits will be women and that 13.7% of recruits into any position in the organisation are members of BME communities. This will be a considerable increase in our performance. In 2008/9 only 7.3% of our operational recruits were women and only 3.3% of recruits into any position in the organisation were from BME communities. We will consult on the appropriateness of setting recruitment targets relating to disability and sexual orientation.

All applicants are requested to complete a confidential equal opportunities monitoring form as part of the recruitment process. Once every two years we also request existing members of staff to complete one. Across the six equality strands, we currently monitor and publish information on:

- Employees in post
- Managers in post
- Applicants for employment
- New employees

We want to expand our monitoring processes to include:

- Recipients of training
- Employees who are invited to attend Assessment Development Centres and those who are placed on a development programme
- Employees who are offered temporary and substantive promotion
- Employees involved in grievance procedures
- Employees subject to disciplinary procedures
- Individuals that leave the organisation

Our employment and training action plan

Ref Number	Action	Relevant Equality Strand	Responsible Manager	Deadline
23	Undertake awareness campaigns and positive action to support and encourage applications to all posts from women, members of Black & Minority Ethnic communities, Disabled people and lesbians, gay men and bisexuals.	Disability Gender, Race Sexual Orientation	Head of Equality & Diversity	Yearly
24	Meet minimum yearly targets for recruitment of women into a percentage of operational posts i.e. 13.5% in 2009/10, 15.5% in 2010/11 and 17.5% in 2011/12	Gender	Director of Human Resources & People Development	Yearly
25	Meet minimum yearly targets for recruitment of members of BME communities into a percentage of posts i.e 6% in 2009/10, 8% in 2010/11 and 11% in 2011/12.	Race	Director of Human Resources & People Development	Yearly

26	Create at least two employment or work experience vacancies targeted at Disabled people	Disability	Director of Human Resources & People Development	Yearly
27	Create at least one apprenticeship for a young person experiencing long term unemployment	Age	Director of Human Resources & People Development	April 2010
28	Publish, monitor and analyse equality and diversity data relating to employment	All	Director of Human Resources & People Development	Yearly
29	Support the development of an employee support group for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees	Sexual Orientation, Transgender	Head of Equality & Diversity	Yearly
30	Ratify a Transgender Employment Equality policy	Transgender	Director of Human Resources & People Development	March 2010
31	Undertake equal pay audit and agree an action plan with trade unions	Gender	Director of Human Resources & People Development	March 2010
32	Fully implement Equal Pay action plan	Gender	Director of Human Resources & People Development	March 2012
33	Review impact of including equality and diversity objectives in all employees' Personal Development Reviews.	All	Head of People Development	March 2010
34	Introduce mechanisms to record all incidents of harassment and bullying and actions taken in response	All	Head of Equality & Diversity	March 2010
35	Provide anti-harassment training to all managers	All	Head of People Development	March 2011

5. Evaluation and Good practice

Avon Fire and Rescue are committed to constantly improving the service we provide to the communities we serve and the working environment of our staff. Through evaluating

our current work we hope to continue setting objectives which address the needs of our communities, enable our staff to feel comfortable disclose diversity information and map the perception of Avon Fire and Rescue Service as an employer and service provider.

Ref Number	Action	Relevant Equality Strand	Responsible Manager	Deadline
36	Work with partners to collect and analyse qualitative and quantitative data and information about local communities, identify key equality gaps experienced by local communities and set appropriate objectives to address them	All	Risk Reduction Area Manager	Yearly
37	Ensure organisational culture encourages and supports members of staff to disclose personal diversity data and work for a non-disclosure rate of less than 20% for each equality strand .	All	HR Manager (personnel)	March 2011
38	Undertake employee and community surveys to measure perceptions of Avon Fire and Rescue Service as an employer and service provider	All	Director of Service Improvement	March 2011