

**Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service  
Race Equality Scheme  
2005/2007**

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## **FOREWORD BY THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

Equality and respect for diversity is at the heart of all we do in Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service. This Race Equality Scheme sets out my commitment to ensuring that all our policies and practices are fair, and that we promote equality and diversity in all our employment policies and in the service we deliver to the communities of Merseyside. It builds on the success of our three-year Equalities Action Plan (EAP) published in 2002. We now are reviewing and redefining that plan for the next three years.

This RES, as part of our new Equalities Action Plan, focuses on developing our commitment to addressing all aspects of potential discrimination, including race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion/belief and age discrimination, and making sure that equality becomes part of the day to day processes of MF&RS.

### **Leadership**

The Chief Fire Officer has overall responsibility for the delivery of equality and fairness throughout all the policies and practices operated by MF&RS

The development of policies and practices that deliver equality and fairness is the responsibility of the Executive Director, Legal and Human Resources, reporting to the Chief Fire Officer.

The Equal Opportunities Section reports to the Executive Director, Legal and Human Resources through the Director of Human Resources. The Section has responsibility for developing the Equalities Action Plan and monitoring and scrutinising its implementation through the Equalities Steering Group.

The Equalities Steering Group is chaired by an independent external consultant. The group consists of committed, trained volunteers from a range of uniformed and non-uniformed departments across the service with broad experience of equality and fairness issues within Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service. The group includes Equality Champions from the Fire Authority and senior management representation. The Chair of the Equalities Steering Group and the Equal Opportunities Manager will report on progress to the Corporate Leadership Team and to the Fire Authority.

### **The Role of the Fire Authority**

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority will scrutinise progress on all aspects of the Race Equality Scheme. Specifically, the Fire Authority will receive quarterly reports to both the Committee and its sub-committee Policy & Finance.

The following pages identify the action that is to be taken to fully implement this Race Equality Scheme, and will inform more generally MF&RS's work in the area of race and community relations. In line with the guidance issued by the Chief Fire Officers Association (Circular 2005 1014) the principles outlined in this Race Equality Scheme also will inform our activities under the other discrimination strands of gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion/belief and age.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background**

In 1999 two unprecedented reviews documented overt and institutional race equality issues for Fire Services throughout the UK to address - the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report and Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire Services Thematic Inspection of Equality and Fairness in the Fire Services of England and Wales.

The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report was a landmark report with implications for all public services. The breakdown in "consensus policing" documented there corresponded with the rise in community safety issues broadly affecting the delivery of Fire Services, amongst the range of public sector provision. This stands as a clear indicator of the public danger caused by the gap between service providers and the public in its fullest inclusive sense.

Much of what Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service has achieved in respect of progressing race equality has demonstrated the keenness of the public of Merseyside to engage with us. The highest aim of this RES is to meet and develop this relationship.

### **The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000**

The recommendations of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report prompted the government to pass the Race Relations (Amendment) Act which sets out both General and Specific Duties for Public Authorities to undertake to combat and promote race equality in all their policies and practices.

The General Duty states that every public authority shall, in carrying out its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Promote good relations between persons of different racial groups

Additionally, the Act places Specific Duties on certain public authorities, including MF&RS. As part of those specific duties MF&RS is required to produce this Race Equality Scheme and to monitor a range of internal functions according to their impact upon employment practice and service delivery to people from different racial groups. The detail of all the Specific Duties is provided at the beginning of each of the chapters within the document.

### **Procurement**

Because of the link between raising the local economic base and reducing fire risk, the procurement process plays an important role in achieving our core aims. Ensuring that our policies and practises are not compromised or diluted by engaging companies that do not deliver our commitments to achieve the General Duty is an important part of the Procurement function. Access to the

tendering process is often an issue for minority businesses, consultants and providers of services.

When a function is put out to tender, we will insist that all companies evidence their eligibility for the contract being awarded by providing information on their equal opportunities policies.

Any functions that are contracted will undergo an assessment process, particularly where they are in public or highly visible areas. Action will be taken immediately against any supplier who is found to be in breach of the conditions of their contract.

### **Youth Engagement**

In 2004 MF&RS carried out public consultation on our approach to equalities, specifically our three-year Equalities Action Plan. We had good participation from people of a range of racial and cultural backgrounds. Many people were aware of some of our initiatives and activities, and people were very positive about the priorities given in respect of employment and service delivery. The one area of activity that the public felt we should give equality priority to was Youth Engagement activity.

MF&RS has developed and delivered a range of youth activities and programmes mainly targeted at young people in schools as a route to take-up of home fire safety, or those at risk of arson-related activity.

However, we recognise the issues that the public has highlighted to us—that Youth Engagement *is* linked to race equality, as a progression route to future employment, as a positive role modelling experience, and as an access route to information and the take-up of services. It is a key area of activity in improving life chances for all.

We will monitor all our Youth Engagement activity and carry out a full Equality Impact Assessment on the policies & processes of Youth Engagement as a high priority function in Year 2 of our Equalities Action Plan.

## **STRATEGIC APPROACH**

### **Strategic Priorities**

The strategic priorities identified within the Mission Statement of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service are to:

- Reduce death, injury and loss of property due to fire and protect the people and the environment, including visitors to the region
- Provide a high quality fire and rescue service within the resources available and in accordance with Best Value principles

These core aims are relevant to Merseyside because the level of poverty and disadvantage in the area raises the incidence of fires, and injuries and deaths caused by fires. The link with race equality on Merseyside is through the interrelation of race, disadvantage and increased fire risk. Merseyside has a longstanding Black community from a range of racial and cultural

backgrounds, as well as minority communities of more recent settlement. Issues of social exclusion, an aging population, racism, over-representation of ill health, unemployment and under-employment statistics have been major concerns for many years.

### **Equalities Action Plan**

To meet our Duties under the Act we released a Race Equality Scheme in May 2002. We then developed our first Equalities Action Plan addressing race, gender and disability as the means by which to make and monitor progress on race equality.

### **Aims**

Under our Equalities Action Plan our stated aims are:

- To carry out our work as a major public service provider on Merseyside with excellent equality practice at the heart of our policies, our service delivery and our practice as an employer;
- To provide a workplace in which fairness and dignity characterise the environment and the code of conduct of the values we share;
- For the breadth of our service delivery to benefit every community in the region and for excellence in equality practice to provide quality services for all.

### **Partnership Working**

The role of partnerships for delivery of race equality cannot be underestimated. Building relationships with minority communities through joint-working is a key step to making employment and service delivery widely accessible. It enables the Fire Service to benefit from the experience and expertise of minority organisations in meeting community needs appropriately. Partnerships can inform Best Value approaches to providing services and information that is of interest, suitable and accessible. Without partnership working, minority communities are unlikely to gain access to the range of opportunities and activities the Fire Service has to offer.

Our Equalities Action Plan brings the Partnerships section together internally for joint-working and shared responsibility with the Equal Opportunities Section, Fire Safety, Performance Management at District and Station Level, Home Safety, the Safety Training Centre, Corporate Communications and Corporate Research to research, adopt and develop working partnerships with communities at highest fire risk e.g. minority communities, people living in deprived areas and the elderly wherever they live. Through ongoing two-way consultation with key community leaders and organisations, the development of best practice and effective dissemination of suitable information, partnerships activities can be an equality driver for Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service.

As a public authority, we are responsible for making sure those partnerships within which we work take account of the General Duty, and that all members of the partnership are aware of our commitments and responsibilities.

Our partnerships can vary considerably in their membership. The listed authorities within these partnerships are responsible for ensuring that the functions and policies of the partnership are carried out in compliance with the race equality duty.

MF&RS will have a Partnerships Strategy that ensures the terms of reference reflect the General Duty of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, and will identify the functions and policies that are relevant. Where necessary, these functions or policies will be monitored and evaluated. We will monitor partnership activity within MF&RS, seeking to be accountable for the equality delivery of our partnership involvement and our responsibilities with regard to race equality within a partnership context. Monitoring will be reported and impact assessed under our Equalities Action Plan [S1.4, C1.1, C1.11, C2.2, C3.1 and C3.4] and will be considered at strategic level with further action subsequently defined.

### **Scrutiny**

Appropriate structures have been put in place to monitor progress of the Race Equality Scheme. The scheme overall will be monitored internally by the Equalities Steering Group.

External scrutiny will be undertaken using a combination of methods to access a cross-section of the public on Merseyside, as outlined by the head of Strategic Planning in the organisation's Consultation Strategy. Where possible to engage in consultation jointly with other public bodies for the convenience of the public we will do so.

This Race Equality Scheme will be reviewed every three years, including reviewing the assessment of those functions and policies that are considered relevant to the General Duty.

### **Comprehensive Performance Assessment**

Fire and Rescue Authorities are also subject to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and the equality dimensions of this assessment are being enhanced to ensure that any lack of progress in this assessment is addressed.

### **Key Objectives for this Scheme**

We intend to achieve the following key objectives through this Scheme:

- Ensure our workforce is representative of the communities we serve
- Identify and address any adverse impact that our internal and external functions and policies may have on any minority ethnic group
- Promote equality within MF&RS, encouraging an open, flexible and fair workplace which celebrates diversity
- Provide appropriate training to staff on equality issues
- Ensure that all sections of the community have access to the full range of fire prevention and emergency services information provided by MF&RS

- Embrace the principles contained in any guidance issued from the Equality Commissions

### **Achievements under the Previous Scheme**

We will build on existing work in this area that already has included:

- Successful Positive Action supporting the recruitment of firefighters
- Piloting, evaluating and developing service delivery targeted at minority communities with higher fire risk
- Launch of the MF&RS Equalities Action Plan
- Equality & Fairness policies in place, with review and updating underway and some new policies in place
- Successful work with key community leaders and representatives to recruit and support targeted fire prevention services for an increasing number of vulnerable minority communities
- Successful public consultations in English and community languages facilitated by community researchers
- Strategic reviews underway on communities at risk, partnerships, communications including consultation and translation & interpreting, equality & diversity training.
- Equality audit of our Safety Training Centre generating three new actions within the Equalities Action Plan.

### **IDENTIFYING RELEVANT FUNCTIONS AND POLICIES**

*Public authorities must list in the Race Equality Scheme the functions and policies (including proposed policies) that are relevant to the general duty to promote race equality. They should review this list at least every three years.*

The evaluation of functions and policies in MF&RS has been undertaken under the following framework:

#### **Best Value**

The government has set National Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) intended to help us improve the quality of local services by establishing high standards. The Equality Standard for Local Government requires the Fire Rescue Service to mainstream equality and diversity into policy and practises at all levels.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has set BVPIs for all Fire Authorities to measure individual progress in the area of equality and diversity using the Local Government Equality Standard as a framework document. The Standard has been developed as a tool for mainstreaming equalities for race, gender and disability but it can also be used in implementing policy around sexuality, religion and age to meet the requirements of the EU directive and future legislation. In addition it is designed to help fire authorities develop the structures that will help them determine the equality outcomes appropriate to their local fire service and provide evidence based continuous improvement.

In order to achieve continuous improvement in equality the Standard works as a system for evidence based policy-making. Within this system, assessment processes provide the basis for collecting and reviewing evidence through which effective equality outcomes can be achieved.

### **Equality Standard for Local Government**

The Standard is the recognition that fire and rescue services should provide a fair and equally accessible service to all its customers. This principle of fairness is central to the Government's agenda to modernise the Fire and Rescue Service, and is embraced in the concept of "Best Value" which lies at the heart of this agenda. The Standard seeks to encourage a local response to local circumstances while securing an approach that will ensure continuous improvement in equality practice.

The Standard consists of five levels of achievement in Leadership and Corporate Commitment: Consultation and Community Development and Scrutiny: Service Delivery and Customer Care: Employment and Training:

Level 1 – commitment to a Comprehensive equality Policy (CEP)

Level 2 – assessment and consultation

Level 3 – setting equality objectives and targets

Level 4 – information systems and monitoring against targets

Level 5 – achieving and reviewing outcomes

The Standard outlines the Service's approach to mainstreaming equality categories into policies and services and delivering the five levels by October 2009 in the following equality categories, race, gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, and age.

### **MF&RS Equalities Action Plan**

The Equalities Action Plan addresses four strategic functions:

- Leadership and Corporate Commitment
- Consultation, Community Development and Scrutiny
- Employment and Training
- Service Delivery and Community Care

Policies and practices under each function that are relevant to the delivery of equality in MF&RS have been identified and set out in the Action Plan on three strategic levels corresponding to the Equality Standard for Local Government.

Equalities Action Planning will be a rolling programme in three-yearly cycles. MF&RS has achieved some aspects of Levels I, II and III of the Equality Standard for Local Government. The Equalities Action Plan is designed to enable MF&RS to achieve Level III overall by 2007.

## **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS AND CONSULTATION**

*Public authorities must set out in their Race Equality Scheme their arrangements for assessing, and consulting on, the likely impact of their proposed policies on race equality.*

The Equalities & Diversity Business Stream of the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) has issued guidance (Circular 2005 1014) prepared by the CFOA Equality and Diversity Professionals Forum, giving advice and guidance on Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) as part of business processes within Fire and Rescue Services. This guidance states that, to begin with, self-assessment will be the primarily concerned with putting the Equality Standard for Local Government in place. However, as a Fire Authority moves on to Level III it will be used to measure progress against the equality objectives set within the service plans.

### **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a thorough and systematic analysis of a policy/procedure/service area, whether it is written or unwritten, formal or informal, and irrespective of the scope of that policy.

The primary function of the EIA should be to determine the extent of differential impact upon the relevant groups and in turn whether that impact is adverse, i.e. whether it has a negative impact on groups or individuals in relation to one or more of the equality categories i.e. race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religious or belief and/or age.

Whilst the EIA must address all six categories, it is not intended that each category will be afforded equal emphasis throughout the assessment process. The EIA must be responsive to emerging issues and prioritise these accordingly. In the light of this assessment, if it is decided that the policy fails to meet the needs of specific groups or has discriminatory outcomes, the Service must consider alternative policies, which more effectively achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity or a measure, which might be employed to mitigate the adverse impact.

An EIA is a two-stage process. The first stage is to assess whether the proposed policy has any differential adverse impact on any one group. If a high adverse or negative impact is identified for any equality group it may be necessary to carry out a full EIA. See Appendix A

### **Initial Assessment/Screening**

An Equality Assessment Template is attached at Appendix B. It requires:

- Collection and analysis of relevant data on how the proposed policy is likely to affect people from each relevant groups
- Consulting people who are likely to be affected
- Reviewing and revising the proposed policies in light of the assessment and consultation

Differential impact will occur when a particular group has been affected differently by the policy in either a positive, neutral or negative way. If differential impact is identified, all available information should be assessed in order to make a reasonable judgement on whether the impact is adverse. If the impact is adverse then policy makers must consider whether it is or is not unlawfully discriminatory and in both cases then respond to this assessment appropriately, that is by considering mitigation and alternative policies.

### **Consultation**

The consultation strategy of MF&RS is contained within an overall organisational Communications Strategy. As part of the ongoing Equalities Action Plan process, this primarily will be used to meet the consultation requirements of the EIA Process. Groups that may be used for consultation, where appropriate, include:

#### **Internal**

- Equality Steering Group
- Equality & Diversity Forum with representative bodies
- Forum for Black and minority staff
- Forum for women firefighters
- Forum for disabled staff
- Inviting comments from all staff relevant to any particular area of work

#### **External**

- Bilingual Steering Group partners
- Representatives of the range of minority communities resident on Merseyside, through established voluntary and community sector organisations, Neighbourhood Renewal forums, older people's forums, disability networks and Merseyside Pathways Network, including minority faiths and Gypsies and Travellers' representatives
- Asylum seekers and refugee support organisations
- Other local authorities and public sector partners
- Community Safety and Racial Harassment Prevention forums
- Equality practitioners from the North West Region
- Metropolitan Brigades Equality Practitioners
- BEME
- Women's Committee of the FBU
- Gay & Lesbian Firefighters
- Networking Women in the Fire Service

#### **Methods of consultation will include (this list is not exhaustive):**

- Community Researchers in English and minority community languages
- Surveys and Questionnaires in English, minority community languages and using alternative formats and email
- Conferences
- Work shops
- Liverpool Community Network and other E-groups
- **Networking and community visits**

### **Monitoring Impact Assessment**

The completed Equality Impact Assessment Templates will be monitored by the Equality Steering Group as part of the Equalities Action Plan monitoring process.

### **MONITORING POLICIES FOR ADVERSE IMPACT**

*Public authorities must set out in their Race Equality Scheme their arrangements for monitoring their policies for any adverse impact on race equality.*

Monitoring is an essential part of the EIA process. Monitoring specific areas of our activity and service delivery enables us to assess whether different minority groups experience the same treatment or level of service delivery, allowing us to identify areas that need improvement or reform.

Monitoring allows us to scrutinise:

- Levels of Participation – to check for any over or under representation of groups from particular racial groups
- Levels of Satisfaction – to ensure that all groups regardless of background are satisfied with the service we provide
- Levels of Relevance – to be confident that our policies and service address the real needs of the different communities
- Levels of Appropriateness – to ensure that our service and policies are delivered in a culturally sensitive and respectful manner

We already have systems in place to monitor in the following areas:

- Employment data
- Customer satisfaction surveys
- Complaints and compliments from the public
- Staff attitudes and perceptions surveys

Collating monitoring data is the responsibility of the departments that it concerns, as part of the Equalities Action Plan process. The Equal Opportunities Section is available to provide guidance and support.

Monitoring data will be reported through Equalities Action Plan progress reporting. The Equal Opportunities Section has responsibility for analysing and interpreting results, identifying trends and considering these findings for possible implications on policy. The findings will be discussed at the Equality Steering Group meetings and then reported by the Chair of the Equality Steering Group and the Equal Opportunities Manager, first to the Corporate Leadership Team, then to the Policy & Finance Subcommittee of the Fire Authority.

We publish a *Best Value Performance Plan* annually, in which our progress against the Local Government Standards is reported.

## **PUBLISHING ASSESSMENT CONSULTATION & MONITORING RESULTS**

*Public authorities must set out in their Race Equality Schemes their arrangements for publishing the results of any assessment, consultations and monitoring they carry out to see whether policies have an adverse impact on race equality.*

### **Summary Report**

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service will publish a summary report containing the following information obtained as a result of this scheme:

- Details of all policies which have been assessed for their impact on race equality since the last published summary, and the results of these assessments
- Actions taken to mitigate any potential adverse impact of newly assessed policies identified as having the potential to impact on race equality
- The results of the monitoring of policies previously identified to have potential to impact on race equality
- The results of any public consultation regarding policies

This summary will be published annually as the “*Equality, Fairness and Diversity Annual Monitoring Report*”. A communications strategy will be developed to support the release of the report; reflecting our current Partnerships working and communities targeted for engagement.

### **Internet**

The annual report will be published on the Fire Service website <http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk> This report will be signposted on the most prominent page on the site. Any information translated into community languages and using alternative formats will be available on the website.

### **Printed Copies**

We will make the annual report available on request in alternative formats, including large print, audio-cassette, Braille and relevant community languages on Merseyside.

### **Full Report**

Rather than publish the full assessment, consultation and monitoring reports, they will be made available for viewing through our Freedom of Information policy [EAP S2.1]. Such requests should be made to the Freedom of Information Team, Merseyside Fire Service Headquarters, Bridle Road, Bootle L30 4YD.

## **ENSURING PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND SERVICES**

*Public authorities must set out in their Race Equality Scheme their arrangements for making sure that the public have access to information and services they provide.*

Merseyside has been a racially and culturally mixed area for centuries. Many communities conduct community life in more than one language. Many people find obtaining information only through written formats difficult or even

impossible. We aim to make Merseyside a fire safe community and to make information available in many different ways.

These issues are addressed directly in our Equalities Action Plan through twenty-eight actions for our Corporate Communications Section across all four areas for action (Leadership & Corporate Commitment; Consultation, Community Development & Scrutiny; Employment & Training; and Service Delivery & Customer Care) and through working jointly with the Equal Opportunities Manager, the Director of Strategic Planning, the Director of Performance Management, Home Safety Manager, Fire Safety Manager and all Department Heads to take a partnerships approach to develop suitable consultation and information methods for Merseyside.

### **Written Translations**

We will translate into relevant languages, any document identified as being of significant relevance or interest to people who do not read English.

Where there may be interest in the information amongst people who do not read, we will present information at community meetings, in community venues and with support from community leaders, using interpreters when necessary.

### **Language Line**

MF&RS subscribe to the "Language Line" interpreter facility. This facility aims for any person who does not speak English or whose English is limited, to communicate with our staff, particularly in emergency situations.

### **Bilingual staff**

We initiated bilingual fire safety advocates to ensure that our services are taken up in communities on Merseyside who otherwise could not engage with the Fire Service. We are able to communicate directly to people whose first language is not English in the Arabic, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Somali and Deaf communities.

The more our workforce represents the communities we serve, the better we will be equipped to meet the information needs of the public directly.

### **Reviewing Our Effectiveness**

We began research to identify the barriers that exist for minority groups when the first Bilingual initiative was proposed. We commissioned an external evaluation of the first year of the Bilingual Pilot Project. We will publish a summary of the Bilingual evaluation in 2005, in English and the range of minority community languages targeted by our bilingual services. We will use this research as a basis to monitor how effective our existing systems are and how responsive we have been to what people have told us. We will identify new areas of work, specifically with regard to the range of minority communities subject to fires, injuries and deaths, and including asylum seekers, refugees, Gypsies, Travellers and the elderly generally.

## **TRAINING**

*Public authorities must set out in their Race Equality Schemes their arrangements for training their staff in connection with the general duty to promote race equality, and any specific duties.*

### **Personnel with identified responsibilities under the RES**

It is vital that staff with specific responsibilities within the scheme have the necessary skills. Where appropriate staff will receive relevant training (Level 3) on:

- Assessment of functions and policies, or proposed policies
- Assessing and consulting on likely impact of its proposed policies on the promotion of race equality
- Publication obligations
- Ensuring the public have access to information and services, which it provides
- Monitoring within employment, looking specifically for trends and patterns

### **Training on race & diversity issues in general**

A review of the organisation's overall equality & diversity training needs is currently underway. This review will take cognisance of the requirements of the Race Equality Scheme and specifically consider the role of community involvement in race and diversity training. The training needs analysis also will be informed by the findings of the External Evaluation of the Bilingual Fire Safety Advocates Pilot Project 2004, and a Staff Attitudes & Perceptions Survey on Equality & Diversity conducted by the external equality consultancy, *Innervision*, at MF&RS in 2004/5.

We will also undertake a review of all our mainstream training packages to ensure they include elements of race and diversity training for all staff, and to ensure that these meet the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Our Training & Professional Development Section have developed an Equality module for all new recruit firefighters, and a module for Crew and Watch Managers as part of the Integrated Personal Development System for the Fire Service UK.

### **Monitoring of training**

The Equality Steering Group will scrutinise the Equalities Action Plan progress reports submitted by the Training & Professional Development Section to ensure that all staff have been trained and that the training has been effectively evaluated.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

*The specific duty on employment applies to most public authorities bound by the general duty, including the Fire Service. We shall monitor and impact assess, by reference to the racial groups to which they belong:*

*(a) the numbers of:*

- 1) staff in post*
- 2) applicants for employment, training and promotion from each such group*

*(b) number of staff from each such group who -*

- 1) receive training*
- 2) benefit or suffer detriment as a result of its performance assessment procedures*
- 3) are involved in grievance procedures*
- 4) are the subject of disciplinary procedures*
- 5) cease employment (leavers)*

We shall publish the results of this monitoring annually. We will continue to develop approaches to recruitment and retention that are making our workforce more representative of the people who live on Merseyside.

Monitoring of our employment processes is vital in providing management information to inform and direct change. Our target is to achieve a workforce that reflects the community we serve on Merseyside. By 2009, our target is to have over 2% of our staff from visible minority racial groups across all departments and roles within Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service.

Currently, the representation of visible minority racial staff within the workforce is 1.45% of uniformed officers and 3.4% of non-uniformed staff (March 2005). The under-representation of visible minority racial staff is a significant priority for the fire service; furthermore we are seeking to recruit women from minority racial backgrounds as firefighters, and to increase minority racial representation in the top 5% earners of the organisation.

### **Monitoring**

Monitoring is carried out in accordance with the Information Commissioners Code of Practice on employment monitoring. In keeping with our responsibilities under Data Protection, we ask each employee to verify or amend the personal information we hold about them, including their ethnic background, on a regular basis.

As best practice recommended by the CRE, we have begun work to develop ethnic monitoring that reflects the racial history and make-up of Merseyside. Many families have dual and multiple heritages that enrich their sense of identification but which are not reflected in the national Census monitoring. We have consulted with key community organisations and service providers from BRM communities on the relevance of a monitoring more appropriate to Merseyside, and the guidance required to give the public confidence about how the information will be used. We will complete a pilot use of our Merseyside monitoring, to see whether use will help deliver the Duty to promote good relations between people of different racial backgrounds.

### **Recruitment Monitoring**

The Recruitment Team has responsibility for monitoring the recruitment processes

The specific objectives for the Recruitment Team are:

- To actively promote career opportunities within MF&RS across all communities
- To increase the number of minority applicants who apply to MF&RS and who are subsequently successful in the recruitment process
- To develop effective media and communications channels that will target minority men and women under-represented in both uniformed and non-uniformed posts
- To work with the Equal Opportunities Section, Community Fire Safety staff, District Managers and the Partnerships section to develop strong links with minority communities

The Recruitment Team monitors minority ethnic groups through every part of the application process. Through impact assessment, analyses of the processes will be undertaken and reported under the Equalities Action Plan process. [Actions C2.12, L2.3, E2.1, E3.2]. Where under-representation is identified or particular problems are experienced, this will be highlighted to the Equality Steering Group. The Recruitment Team also will lead on incorporating equality responsibilities into job descriptions at all levels.

Our recruitment processes have been successful in recent years in improving our workforce profile for minority racial groups and women as firefighters. We will continue to use and develop positive approaches that support the application process for under-represented groups, in partnership with relevant external agencies and using appropriate methods of consultation with the communities concerned. We will report on the outcomes of our recruitment processes, striving for transparency both internally with our workforce and externally at community level.

### **Retention and Progression Monitoring**

Retention of staff successfully recruited comes through using good employment practice, putting in place relevant support systems and maintaining fairness in the processes of career progression.

We will carry out consultation with external agencies, community leaders and key specialist providers to identify best practice in proactive approaches to training and progression. We will act upon consultation with minority communities to provide support for minority employees, through internal support routes, suitable mentoring and strong links with key community leaders.

We will introduce monitoring of the application of our Absence Monitoring Policy and access to Occupational Health support in order to assess any potential equality impacts for staff from different groups.

### **Performance Appraisal Monitoring (IPDS)**

MF&RS, in line with all other Fire Services, currently is implementing a new performance appraisal system under guidance issued by the ODPM. All outcomes of the system will be monitored for disproportionate impact on any group.

### **Training Monitoring**

The Training & Professional Development Section collect and report ethnic monitoring data on all applications for training, actual training granted, selection for career development schemes, applications for promotions and successful candidates as part of their Equalities Action Plan progress reporting [C2.12b]. They also monitor attendees on Work Experience placements.

### **Grievance Procedures**

All stages of the grievance procedures are monitored and reported under the Equalities Action Plan process [C2.12a]. Each case is reviewed on closure to identify any learning points either for the individual manager or for the organisation as a whole. The Equality Steering Group will consider the findings from the monitoring results and make recommendations as appropriate.

### **Disciplinary Procedures**

All stages of the disciplinary procedures are monitored and reported under the Equalities Action Plan process [C2.12a]. Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out to identify any adverse impact or disproportionality within the operating procedures, and reported to the Equality Steering Group for scrutiny of the results, and to raise issues regarding the handling of discipline cases. Where necessary, changes will be recommended.

### **Staff Leaving**

The Human Resources department is developing exit interview protocols for staff who decide to leave the organisation. All staff will be asked to complete an exit questionnaire that will be monitored as part of the Personnel responsibility under the Equalities Action Plan to monitor those who leave Fire Service employment [C2.12c]. Any equality issues raised by staff in the exit interview will be reported to ensure changes are made where appropriate. Where staff have not completed a questionnaire on leaving, a referral to the Equal Opportunities Section for confidential follow-up will be made.

### **Commitment to the annual publication of the monitoring data**

We are committed to publishing the results of our monitoring on an annual basis through the organisation's approach to Freedom of Information. The information will be transparent and detail our employment targets, success in achieving the target, disproportionality and changes made as a consequence of the equality process. The report will also be submitted to the Fire Authority Policy & Finance Committee for scrutiny.

## COMPLAINTS

*In order to increase public confidence in the Race Equality Scheme it is important that there is a mechanism in place for people to complain about it. The system should allow interested parties to change the scheme where appropriate.*

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service has a comprehensive procedure to ensure your complaint is dealt with in a fair and efficient manner. A complaint can be made in writing, in person or by phone to any Merseyside community fire station or Fire Service Headquarters (Human Resource Support). Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service believes that by listening to and acting upon your complaints it can improve the service provided to you. If you believe you have cause for complaint, please follow the following steps. Alternatively you can log on to the web site and register your complaint.

### Step 1

Your complaint can be made in person, by telephone or in writing to any Fire Service premises. Contact the officer in charge, who will hopefully be able to resolve the problem there and then.

### Step 2

Failing an immediate resolution the officer in charge will forward your complaint to Service Headquarters. Acknowledgement will be sent to you within two working days of receipt at Headquarters. You will be advised of the findings and decision of these investigations within 28 working days or advised of any delay.

### Step 3

If you disagree with the findings of your complaint you should inform us within 28 days. Your complaint will be passed on to an appropriate senior officer. You will be advised of the findings of their investigations within 28 days or advised of any delay.

### Step 4

If you are still not satisfied with the findings of your complaint you should inform us within 28 days. Your complaint then will be referred to the Clerk to the Authority. We will inform you in writing of the outcome of the Clerk's independent assessment within 28 days or advise you of any delay.

### Step 5

If you are still not satisfied with the findings you are entitled to send your complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

The contact for the North of England is:

Mrs. P A Thomas

Local Government Ombudsman

Beverley House, 17 Shipton Road, York YO30 5FZ

Phone: 01904 663200 FAX: 01904 663269

A pamphlet giving more information about the procedure of complaining to the Ombudsman can be obtained from your local council, library or Citizens Advice Bureau. Alternatively log on to: [www.open.gov.uk/lgo](http://www.open.gov.uk/lgo)

**Role of the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority**

Any complaints, feedback or ideas about the Race Equality Scheme can also be directed to the Fire Authority at:

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority  
The Clerk to the Authority  
Fire Service Headquarters  
Bridle Road  
Bootle L30 4YD  
Merseyside  
Tel: 0151 296 4000

**Role of the Commission for Racial Equality**

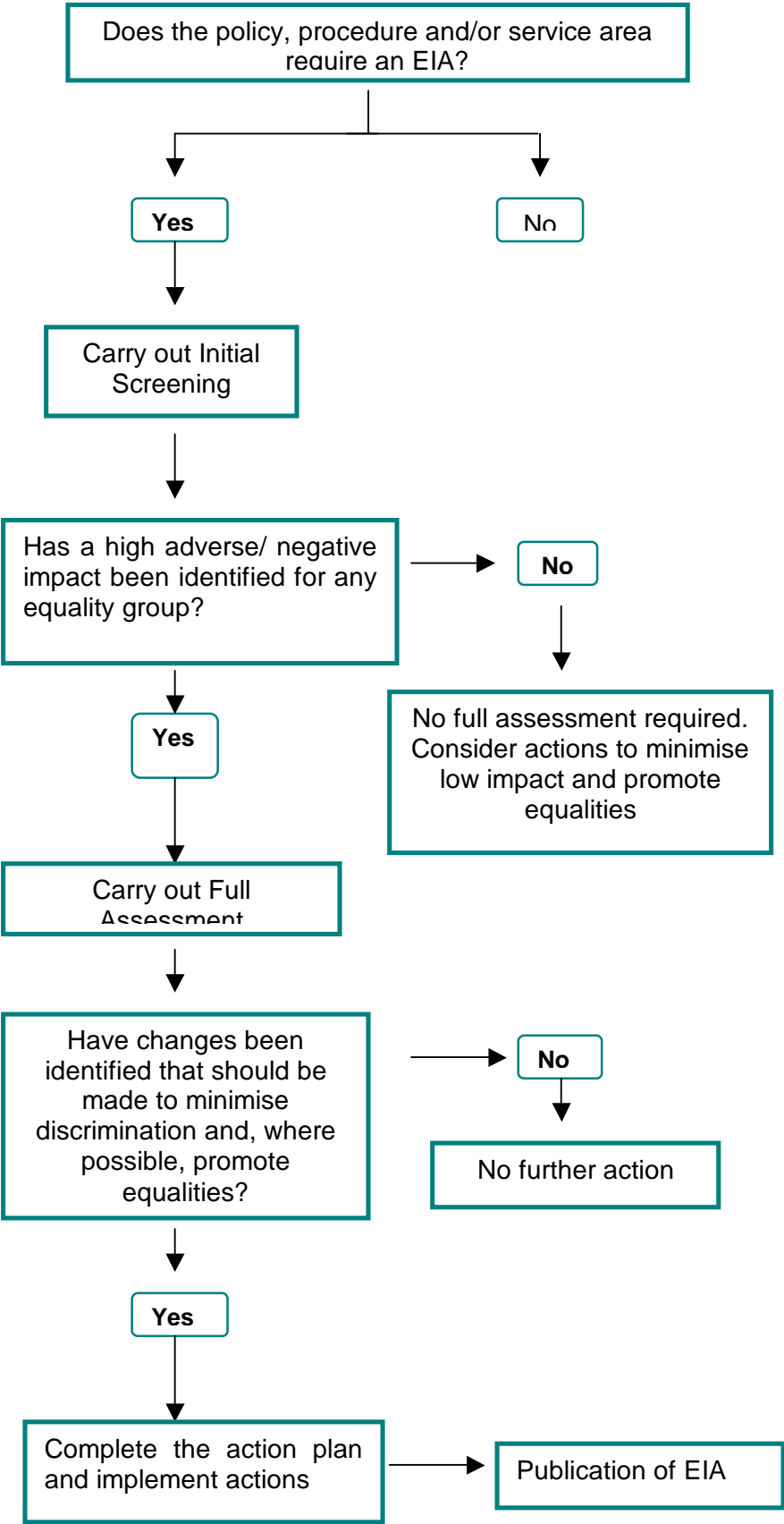
The Commission for Racial Equality is responsible for ensuring that MF&RS's Race Equality Scheme complies fully with the law. In the event of any investigation we will provide assistance and support to the Commission.

Further assistance and guidance can be provided by the CRE at:

Commission for Racial Equality  
St Dunstan's House  
201-211 Borough High Street  
London  
SE1 1GZ  
Tel: 0207 828 7022  
Fax: 0207 630 7605  
Minicom: 0207 932 5419  
[www.cre.gov.uk](http://www.cre.gov.uk)

Appendix A

Equality Impact Assessments - Flowchart



**INITIAL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Directorate		Department/Section		Manager		Telephone No.	
						e-mail	
Name of Policy/Service to be assessed				Date of Assessment		Is this a new or existing policy?	
1. Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy/service.							
2. Who is intended to benefit from this policy/service, and in what way?							
3. What outcomes are wanted from this policy/service?							
4. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the policy/service?				5. Who implements the policy/service, and who is responsible?			
6. Are there concerns that the policy/service has/could have a differential impact on the following groups and what existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?		Y	N	Please explain			
Race		Y	N				
Gender		Y	N				
Disability		Y	N				

Religion or Belief	Y	N	
Sexuality	Y	N	
Age	Y	N	
7. Could the differential impact identified in 6 amount to there being the potential for adverse impact in this policy/service?	Y	N	Please explain
8. Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group? Have you consulted those who are likely to be affected by the policy/service?	Y	N	Please explain for each equality heading (questions 6) on a separate piece of paper.
9. Should the policy/service proceed to a full impact assessment?	Y	N	10. Date on which Full assessment to be completed by.
			<b>Date</b>

I am satisfied that this policy has been successfully impact assessed.

I understand the Impact assessment of this policy is a statutory obligation and that, as owners of this policy, we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this process.

Signed (completing officer) ..... Date.....

Signed (Head of Section)..... Date.....

PLEASE NOTE – THIS IMPACT ASSESSMENT WILL BE SCRUTINISED BY THE EQUALITY STEERING GROUP

FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Directorate		Department/Section		Manager		Telephone No.		Email	
1. Review Policies and Services <b>What is the policy/service being assessed.</b>									
2. Examine the Evidence <b>In which areas does the Policy/Service differentially/adverse impact?</b>  <b>Please identify specific group/s</b>		<b>Disability</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Religion or Belief</b>		
<b>Where differential/adverse impact has been identified, is this intentional and/or justifiable?</b>  Yes      No  If yes please explain		<i>Please explain intentional impact</i>			<i>Please explain justifiable impact with an example</i>				
<b>For which group/s is the impact most relevant?</b> <b>Please identify specific group/s</b>  <b>Has consultation already taken place with this group/s?</b>		<b>Public</b>	<b>Staff/Members</b>	<b>Community groups</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Contractors</b>	<b>Consultants</b>		
		Yes      No	Yes      No	Yes      No	Yes      No	Yes      No	Yes      No		

If you have identified unjustified differential/adverse impact on areas of either function, policy or service provision, please read the guidelines and complete below. If you haven't, please go to 7 and sign and date

<p>3. Consultation <b>Who was consulted</b> <b>What were the key points identified in the consultation.</b></p>					
<p>4. Options <b>List the options considered to modify the policy/service to reduce adverse impact on group/s.</b></p>					
<p>5. Decisions <b>What solution/s was chosen to modify the policy/service to remove unintended or unjustified impact on group/s.</b></p>	<p><i>Please List Solutions for Unjustified Impact</i></p>		<p><i>Please List Solutions for Unjustified Impact</i></p>		
<p>6. Monitor/Review <b>How will you monitor the progress on impact of policy/service.</b></p>	<p><i>Please explain</i></p>		<p><i>Date of Review</i></p>		
<p>7. Signed Print Name Job Title</p>	<p>..... ..... .....</p>	<p>Date Started</p>	<p>.....</p>	<p>Date Completed</p>	<p>.....</p>
<p><i>Reminder: If you have identified unintentional differential/adverse impact of either function, policy, or service provision, the impact assessment cannot be Signed off until the consultation has taken place with the relevant group/s.</i></p>					

**PLEASE NOTE – THIS IMPACT ASSESSMENT WILL BE SCRUTINISED BY THE EQUALITY STEERING GROUP**

### **Report Format for the Full Equality Impact Assessment**

The report should begin with an Executive Summary of the results of the EIA, in particular focusing on any decisions which may have been reached. It should contain a description of the policy aim, the context within which the policy operates, the scope of the policy and any existing data which are available and which may have informed development in the past.

An example of how the report should be constructed is as follows:

#### **Introduction**

This section should explain why the EIA came to be undertaken.

#### **Background**

This section should give the background information to the policy and the perceived problems with the policy which are the reason for the Impact Assessment.

#### **Methodology and Sources of Data**

This section should outline the methodology used to collect data and what sources of data were used. In addition to this it should explain any other procedures which have been used to draw together pertinent information (such as original data collection exercises).

#### **Assessment of Impact on Equality**

This section should consist of a detailed explanation and assessment of the policies impact on race/gender/disability/sexuality/religion/age equality.

#### **Consideration of Alternative Approaches/Mitigation of Adverse Impact**

This section should explain in detail all the considerations of alternative approaches/mitigation of adverse impact of the policy.

### **Monitoring Arrangements**

This section should also outline systems which will be put in place to monitor for adverse impact in the future and should include all relevant timetables. In addition it may include the following:

- An explanation of monitoring and why it is important
- Monitoring systems and methods you used
- Summary and assessment of your monitoring, making it clear whether you found any evidence of discrimination
- How you will use these results to develop future policy and practice.

### **Formal Consultation**

This section should outline all the consultation that has taken place on the EIA, and may include the following:

- Why you carried out the consultation
- Details about how you went about it
- A summary of all the replies received from people you consulted
- An assessment of your proposed policy (or policy options) in the light of the responses you received.
- A statement of what you plan to do next

### **Publication of Equality Impact Assessment**

This section should state how the EIA will be published.

### **Conclusions**

Conclusions drawn from the results in terms of the policy impact and will outline the decision-making process concerning policy review. This section should state the decisions made by the authority on the basis of the EIA, for example, by the way of an action plan, with associated timescales. If a decision is made to introduce measures to mitigate adverse impact or alternative policies then it would be appropriate to address each of the six questions listed below:

- How does each option further or hinder equality of opportunity?

- How does each option reinforce or challenge stereotypes which constitute or influence equality of opportunity?
- What are the consequences for the group concerned and for the public authority of not adopting an option more favourable to equality of opportunity?
- How will the relevant group be advised of the new or changed policy or service?
- What are the costs of implementing each option? Will the social and economic costs and benefits to the relevant group of implementing the option outweigh the costs to the public authority or other groups? An evaluation of net social benefits achieved by adopting each option must be considered.
- Does the public authority have international obligations which would be breached by, or could be furthered by, each of the options?