

**Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority**

**Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Annual Report**

**April 2024 to March 2025**



## **Alternative Formats**

We are committed to ensuring that all our information is fully accessible for all communities across Merseyside. Our website is supported by ReciteMe which offers several accessibility functions including, read aloud and translation. To access this please click on the accessibility button on the toolbar at the top of our home page.

| <b>Content</b>                           | <b>Page</b> |
|------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Foreword                                 | 4           |
| Welcome                                  | 5           |
| Introduction and our Equality Objectives |             |
| Equality Objective 1                     | 9           |
| Equality Objective 2                     | 11          |
| Equality Objective 3                     | 13          |
| Equality Objective 4                     | 16          |
| Equality Objective 5                     | 18          |
| Closing statement                        | 21          |

## **Welcome to the 2024 - 2025 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (ED&I) Annual Report.**

### **Foreword**

#### **Chief Fire Officer Nick Searle**

I am proud to introduce our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Annual Report for 2024–25. This report reflects our continued commitment to fostering a culture of fairness, respect, and belonging across Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service. It is both a celebration of the progress we have made and a reaffirmation of our dedication to creating an inclusive environment for our staff and the communities we serve.

Over the past year, we have taken meaningful steps to embed EDI into every aspect of our organisation. From improving recruitment practices and enhancing staff development opportunities, to engaging with underrepresented groups and listening to lived experiences, our efforts have been guided by a clear purpose: to ensure that everyone feels valued, heard, and empowered. This report outlines the initiatives we have undertaken, the challenges we have faced, and the impact of our work so far.

We recognise that inclusion is not a destination, but a continuous journey. Our commitment goes beyond internal improvements—it extends to addressing the inequalities that affect our communities. By collaborating with partners, listening to diverse voices, and acting with integrity, we aim to build trust and strengthen relationships across Merseyside. This work is essential to ensuring that our services are equitable, accessible, and responsive to the needs of all.

Our goal is clear: to make Merseyside a safer place to live and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service a truly great place to work. We remain steadfast in our belief that diversity enriches our organisation and inclusion drives excellence. I invite you to explore this report and join us in our ongoing journey toward a more inclusive future.

As leaders within the fire and rescue sector, we understand the importance of setting the tone from the top. That is why we have embedded EDI into our strategic planning, governance, and performance frameworks. Our leadership actively champions inclusive practices, making EDI a lived experience across all levels. We remain committed to transparency—publishing

workforce data and engaging staff networks to ensure accountability. This initiative-taking approach helps our service evolve with the communities we serve, staying resilient, responsive, and representative



## **Introduction and Governance of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion**

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority is proud to publish this report as a reflection on the work delivered across the organisation in pursuit of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I) excellence. This report presents the public and other stakeholders with success stories about the work we do on a day-to-day basis to ensure that the services we deliver provides our diverse communities with confidence that we are addressing their needs.

Therefore, as part of our commitment to delivering services and employing staff in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, and in line with the responsibilities placed on the Authority by the Act, we have established five equality objectives below which contribute to eliminating discrimination, harassment, and victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity; and fostering good relations.

1. Create a strong Inclusive organisation that is positive to rising to the future challenges we face
2. Ensure that people from diverse communities receive equitable services that meet their needs
3. Reducing fires and other incidents amongst vulnerable people in the protected groups and deprived areas
4. To continue to evolve the Service's cultural competence based on community insight so that all staff can undertake their role recognising the value of difference. This strengthens our approach to Equality (equity), diversity and inclusion, meaning our staff are well equipped to engage with our diverse communities and are sensitive to their needs.
5. To continue to aspire for equality, diversity, and inclusion excellence; measuring ourselves against best practice and benchmarking tools within the Fire & Rescue Service and other sectors

This report also demonstrates our commitment to ensuring compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public-Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in relation to:

1. Publishing, at least annually, information to demonstrate our compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the PSED.

2. Preparing and publishing one or more specific and measurable objectives that help to achieve the aims set out in the PSED.
3. Publishing equality information and the objectives in a manner that is accessible to the public.

ED&I is embedded in each area (Function) of the organisation, with ED&I priorities included in Functional annual plans and our Station Plans, which in turn become part of our Service Delivery Plan. This ensures we are incorporating ED&I at all levels of the organisation, supporting not only our staff but understanding and knowing the communities that we service.

In addition, ED&I has been an integral part of the work on our leadership message, which sets out our Vision, Purpose, Aims and associated behaviours. Furthermore, the Fire Standards and Fire Service Core Code of Ethics have also provided other ways of ensuring ED&I and the associated ED&I objectives are an integral part of the business of MFRS.

Discussions on ED&I matters form the basis of regular equality engagement meetings with the Representative Bodies (trade unions), Staff Inclusion Networks, and a variety of other stakeholders to ensure that they are aware of the ED&I developments and have an opportunity to contribute to the consideration of the ways in which ED&I influences the provision of our fire and rescue services.

Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are carried out on policies, strategic plans, and service delivery (including changes). EIAs play a crucial role in the design of services and enabling the Service to measure outcomes but also demonstrate due regard.

EIAs are attached to the governance documents to be considered when approved by the Authority and they are published on our website [www.merseyfire.gov.uk](http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk) with Authority papers.



## **Equality Objective 1 - Create a strong Inclusive organisation that is positive to rising to the future challenges we face**

At MFRS we produce a detailed report, analysing of our workforce and employment data each year. This report also includes our Gender Pay and Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting for 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. The Equality Analysis Workforce & Employment Data Report, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, report can be found on our [website](#).

Key highlights of the report include:

- As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, data shows that we had 84 female firefighters (an increase of 3 since March 2024) which represented 13.8% of our total firefighters. Nationally the percentage for female fighters is 9.3% (March 2024)
- As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, we had 23 women in the roles of Crew and Watch Manager, representing 10.9% of supervisory managers. This compared to 21 in 2023-24, representing an increase of 0.1%. Figures produced from the Fire Statistic returns for the Home Office (published October 2024) show that nationally women at the rank of Crew and Watch Manager make up 11.0% of all firefighters. (607)
- Figures produced from the Fire Statistic returns for the Home Office (published October 2024) that nationally firefighters from an Ethnic Minority background, equates to 5.4% firefighters. By comparison in MFRS we currently have 48 of firefighters from an ethnic minority background.
- In 2024-25 we had 16 members of staff working in support services representing 4.5% of the total who are from an Ethnic Minority background. Which is a slight decrease of 1 when compared to 2023-24. When the 2024-25 gender pay gap<sup>1</sup> is compared to the previous year the gap has reduced from 8.4% to 8.3% overall. For Support Staff the gap has risen slightly from 9.4% during 2023/24 to 10.2% during 2024/25. For operational staff, the gender pay gap has decreased from 8.8% during 2023/24 to 7.3% during 2024/25.
- When looking at the 2024/25 Ethnicity Pay Gap figures, the mean gap is 5.4% or £1.04 per hour. For operational staff only, the gap is 6.5% and for support staff the gap has

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<sup>1</sup> The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 came into force on 31st March 2017. The regulations stipulate that organisations that employ more than 250 people must publish a report on their gender pay gap. There is a slight difference in the regulation for public sector organisations, in so much as we must publish an annual "snapshot" of our gender pay as of the 31st of March each year in our annual report.

fallen to 2.9%. This is based on a total of 980<sup>2</sup> staff in scope for this exercise; 905 (92.3%) were White British/ Irish and 75 (7.7%) were from an Ethnic Minority background.

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<sup>2</sup> A number of employees weren't included in the Gender Pay Gap Figures because they were not "Full Pay Relevant". This means that, for the reasons detailed below an individual did not receive a full month's salary for the reporting period.

- Staff who joined the service part way through the pay period
- Staff who left the service part way through the pay period
- Staff in receipt of childcare vouchers
- Staff on maternity leave
- Staff with deductions for unpaid leave / jury service
- Staff with deductions for half/no pay due to sickness

## **Equality Objective 2 - Ensure that people from diverse communities receive equitable services that meet their needs**

In May 2024, as part of the Community Risk Management Plan consultation process, our Community Engagement Team brought together 17 representatives of our local communities to talk about our plans for the future. This engagement was the result of several months of relationship building, which laid the foundation for open, honest conversations about the services we provide, their impact on different communities and how we can ensure equitable access for all.

One powerful outcome of this engagement was a visit by representatives of our deaf communities to Fire Control. This allowed them to see first-hand the facilities available to support deaf individuals in emergency situations, and to provide valuable feedback on how we can continue to improve accessibility.

During the tragic events that affected Southport in July 2024 and the civil unrest that followed, the relationships that we had built with our communities proved vital. These connections enabled us to support, protect and reassure residents during these times of heightened tension and concern, while helping to maintain safety and promote community cohesion when it was needed most.

We have developed a Communications and Engagement Strategy, which will assist us in ensuring engagement is always meaningful, and as part of this have updated our community guidance. This reference book provides information about diverse communities on Merseyside to help staff to engage with confidence.”



### Case Study

We have enhanced our relationships with Asylum Seekers and Refugees. Our Community Engagement Advisor and a member of the REACH Staff Network were invited to attend a cookery class at Asylum Link Merseyside. As a result of this engagement, they organised collections of winter clothing, baby products and food from other MFRS staff members. The donations were gratefully received.

### **Equality Objective 3 - Reducing fires and other incidents amongst vulnerable people in the protected groups and deprived areas**

Our Prevention Function provides reassurance, support, and advice. Alongside our partners, we protect the most vulnerable and reduce inequalities.

Key highlights include:

- Through completing 51,242 **Home Fire Safety Checks 2024-25 (HFSC)** we continue to ensure interventions to keep people safe in their home. Home Fire Safety Checks and Safe and Well visits are targeted and we use data collected in line with protected characteristics<sup>3</sup> to support our future planning activity.
- In terms of **Safe and well visits**, on 96.3% % of occasions the occupier of the dwelling told us their ethnicity. 3.7% of Safe and Well visits have been conducted in homes where the resident identifies as Ethnic Minority compared to a Merseyside Ethnic Minority of 8.3%. It should be noted that Safe and Well visits primarily target the over 65's and according to the 2021 Census, the over 65 Ethnic Minority population is 2.27% of the total, therefore the 3.8% achieved reinforces the effectiveness of the approaches taken.
- **Youth engagement activities** and engaging with the young diverse population shows continuing progress and success. In terms of the work of the **King's Trust** engage with young people 16-25 who are not in employment or education. There were more male attendees than female, with 58.3% being male. In addition, 19.8% were from a LGBTQ+ background and 77.1% considered themselves to have a disability.
- In terms of the **Fire Cadets** (for teenage participants); the majority 96.2% White British/White Irish, with 29.6% of participants being young women and 20.4% considered themselves to be disabled.

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<sup>3</sup> As detailed in the [Equality Act 2010](#) are: Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Race, Religion or belief, Sex, Sexual orientation and Pregnancy and Maternity

Detailed reporting and analysis of our Home Fire Safety Checks and Safe and Well visits can be found in our [Equality Analysis Workforce and Employment Data Report for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025](#).

### Case study

The Beacon Team received a prestigious Certificate of Commendation at the Merseyside Police Chief Superintendent's Rewards & Recognition Ceremony on 11 February. Presented by the Chief Superintendent, the award recognises their "exceptional leadership and partnership working" in delivering the Beacon Project, which provides young people across Merseyside with safe, positive experiences and essential life skills.

Our Beacon Manager said: We are delighted to receive this recognition from Merseyside Police. It highlights the importance of our work in helping young people develop personally, emotionally, and socially. The vital support from the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership and their funding has been crucial in delivering the Beacon Course and helping to make Merseyside safer and stronger."

Thank you to the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership for continuing to empower the Beacon Team to make a lasting impact.



**Equality Objective 4 - To continue to evolve the Service's cultural competence based on community insight so that all staff can undertake their role recognising the value of difference. This strengthens our approach to Equality (equity), Diversity and Inclusion, meaning our staff are well equipped to engage with our diverse communities and are sensitive to their needs.**

This year has seen a number of significant achievements and events that reflect our commitment to excellence, inclusion, and collaboration across Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS).

Key Highlights include:

- Race Equality and Cultural Heritage (REACH) staff network held their culture and inclusion event, Diaspora, at the Black-E in Liverpool's iconic Chinatown. Colleagues from Fire Services across the country, partner organisations and MFRS staff were among the attendees, with the aim of Diaspora to encourage discussion and debate, learning and unlearning; and sharing of thoughts and ideas.
- MFRS hosted an extensive and complex national training exercise at the Training and Development Academy. Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams from across the country, including Tyne and Wear, Lancashire, West Yorkshire, and Lincolnshire, and our local HART team participated in a series of simulated emergency scenarios.
- We proudly hosted the British Firefighter Challenge at Liverpool's Pier Head, welcoming teams from across the country. This high-profile event celebrated the skill, strength, and dedication of firefighters, while engaging the public and promoting the role of fire and rescue services in keeping communities safe. The event also coincided with the Annual Pride in Liverpool March, which saw its highest attendance yet.
- International collaboration was also a highlight, with a team from Malta's St John Rescue Corps participating in Urban Search and Rescue training at our new National Resilience Centre of Excellence. This exchange of knowledge and expertise underscores our commitment to global best practice and continuous improvement.



**Equality Objective 5 - To continue to aspire for equality, diversity, and inclusion excellence; measuring ourselves against best practice and benchmarking tools within the Fire & Rescue Service and other sectors**

As an organisation we continue to aspire for excellence and measure ourselves against best practice. This section outlines some of the work undertaken.

The key highlights include:

**Workplace Wellbeing Charter**

MFRS has reaccredited the Workplace Wellbeing Charter. The charter demonstrates the organisation's commitment to proactively championing a healthy workplace culture. The charter looks at:

**MFRS Accreditation Results 2024**

|   |                                |             |
|---|--------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Leadership                     | Excellence  |
| 2 | Absence Management             | Excellence  |
| 3 | Health and Safety              | Excellence  |
| 4 | Mental Health                  | Excellence  |
| 5 | Intoxicants                    | Achievement |
| 6 | Physical Health                | Excellence  |
| 7 | Environment and Sustainability | Commitment  |
| 8 | Inclusion and Culture          | Excellence  |

The level of awards giving against each area are determined after a thorough evaluation of the evidence submitted, the Organisational Wellbeing Assessment, and consultations with members of the Health and Wellbeing Team.

**MFRS awarded The Fair Employment Charter – Aspiring Level.**

The Fair Employment Charter is one of Metro Mayor Steve Rotherham's Mayoral Manifesto pledges, and it is all about making our region, the fairest, most equitable place in the country to work in, and celebrate fair employment practices where they are in place and drive-up standards elsewhere.

To achieve Aspiring status, we had to provide the following evidence across four key commitments;

- safe workplaces supporting a healthy workforce.

- fair pay and fair hours.
- An inclusive workplace that supports staff to grow and develop.
- voice for staff to help deliver justice in the workplace with opportunities available for young people.

Gaining 'Aspiring status,' of the Employment charter supports our Vision to be the best Fire & Rescue Service in the UK and demonstrates how we both support and develop our staff, and the display the values that drive us forward as an employer and service provider.

### **North West Protection Governance Structure**

As part of the protection governance structures across the North West, MFRS along with colleagues from Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester and Lancashire participate in and contribute to a regional peer initiative.

This involves inspections and reviews of business premises and facilities to ensure compliance against a range of Fire Safety Legislation. This framework was developed by Protection staff at MFRS and allows for colleagues to review aspects of each others inspection processes and share learning.

### **White Ribbon accreditation**

As an organisation MFRS is committed to preventing violence against women and girls through White Ribbon accreditation. This builds on our longstanding safeguarding efforts and aligns with established domestic abuse protocols.

In November 2024 MFRS signed up to the White Ribbon accreditation process and formed a steering group, supported by senior leadership, which has been created to drive these efforts. The accreditation process includes collaborative partnerships with local authorities, domestic abuse charities, and health services across Merseyside. The aim is to maximise impact and establish MFRS as a leader in community safety and support for abuse victims.

All staff have been asked to consider signing up as a White Ribbon Ambassador or Champion.

## **AFSA Award Winners**

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service has been celebrated for its exceptional commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion (ED&I) at the Annual Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) Awards in November 2024.

The service received two accolades, highlighting its pioneering initiatives and unwavering dedication to fostering inclusivity and supporting local communities. We received the ED&I Champion Award for 2024. This prestigious recognition celebrates the innovative work in engaging staff through meaningful conversations about race equality. By facilitating vital discussions and sharing lived experiences.

We were also honoured with the Shining Light Award, which is presented annually to a fire and rescue service for outstanding contributions to ED&I. This recognition follows the Service's commendable efforts in supporting local communities during the Southport disturbances. MFRS demonstrated its deep commitment to community cohesion by working tirelessly to rebuild trust and understanding during a challenging time for the region.



## Closing Statement & Summary

This ED&I Annual Report demonstrates the continual work taking place across the organisation to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone. In addition to complying with our statutory obligations, we invest significant time, effort and dedication to initiatives and activities to increase diversity, inclusion and belonging in the organisation.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on building upon progress made over the past 12 months. Our priorities for the coming year include:

- Continuing delivery of our **Culture Action Plan** and the **EDI Action Plan**.
- Rolling out **EDI, Core Code of Ethics, and Values training** across the organisation.
- Developing **new training packages** to support inclusive leadership and cultural awareness.
- Creating a **new EDI Action Plan** to guide our next phase of work.
- Strengthening our partnership with the **Liverpool City Region Race Equality Hub**.
- Renewing our commitment to the **Liverpool City Region Fair Employment Charter** through a submission for **Accredited Member** status.

We are proud of the progress we have made, but we know there is always more to do. With the continued support of our staff, partners, and communities, we will keep working to ensure that Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service is not only a great place to work, but also a service that reflects and respects diversity of the people we serve.