

**Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority**

**Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Annual Report**

**April 2023 to March 2024**





## **Alternative Formats**

We are committed to ensuring that all our information is fully accessible for all communities across Merseyside, we have included this document on our website which can be accessed from our webpage

<https://www.merseyfire.gov.uk/about/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/>

Our website is supported by ReciteMe which offers a number of 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 to this report and Governance of ED&I	7
Connecting with our diverse communities (Equality objectives 2, 3 & 5)	11
Creating a positive, resilient & inclusive organisation (Equality objectives 1& 4)	20
Case Studies – Connecting with communities and fostering an inclusive organisation	33
Closing statement	36
<b>Appendix A</b>	
• Equality Objective 2024 – 2027	37

Welcome to the 2023-2024 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (ED&I) Annual Report.

## **Foreword**

### **Chief Fire Officer Phil Garrigan**

I am proud to introduce our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (ED&I) Annual Report for 2023-2024.

The report sets out our progress on inclusion and our unswerving commitment to the people we serve. It captures the work we have undertaken to improve the experience and sense of belonging of our own staff whilst tackling the inequalities that effect our communities.

Ultimately making Merseyside a safe place to live and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service a great place to work.

Over the past year we were inspected by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) which congratulated the Service on how it promotes equality, diversity and inclusion and how it works with underrepresented groups in the workforce.

Whilst the report embraces our commitment to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion we know we can improve further and it is essential that we celebrate our diversity and in doing so we create an environment where everyone feels included, valued and able to speak up.

To support this endeavour, we have introduced ambitious people and cultural action plan(s), which are delivered through the Culture and Inclusion and People Board, with independent scrutiny and leadership provided by an independent strategic advisor.

Key aspects of these plans are the creation and maintenance of a positive and professional workforce culture that will mean our people feel listened to, appreciated and psychologically safe, making Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service an employer of choice.

Our People Plan moves us away from warm words to deliver tangible outcomes for our people and our communities.

We will use it and our incredible workforce to positively impact on our communities, particularly those blighted by inequality.

We know that this requires leadership at all levels and the part we play as public servants has never been more important.

**Councillor Jan Grace**

**Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority Lead Member for People**

The LGA produced this Vision Statement in 2023:

‘Fire and Rescue Services are inclusive and safe places to work where all staff are valued, supported and able to thrive in an environment free from bullying, harassment, discrimination, abuse and harm. Fire and rescue services deliver services that are inclusive, safe, and professional and inspire public confidence and trust.’

The shock of the HMICFRS Spotlight Report still resonates, it opened our eyes to the fact that despite all the targeted work, not every F&RS in England is in the position to move forward into the future, confident that ED&I are embedded into their everyday strategies and work life.

For any organisation, their most important asset is people, at every level, and they form the culture of that organisation. While ED&I may be an important and valued policy to many, there may be some for whom it has little or no significance, or some whose religious or other beliefs make some aspects difficult to support. Every individual is entitled to their views and beliefs, but within any workplace/organisation there is the expectation that while working and representing their organisation the cultural aspirations of their employers are upheld. Unacceptable behaviours should never become normalised, it is noteworthy that MFRS has a well-established Whistleblowing Policy in place and uses the independent organisation 'Safe Call' to allow staff to raise concerns anonymously. MFRS continues to lead the way in pro-actively promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. A significant example of this is the working with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust to give staff the skills to challenge unacceptable behaviours, something we all as individuals have to take responsibility for. It is necessary to be sensitive to issues to enable to navigate change.

It is an immense privilege to serve on Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority, as MFRS continue to motivate and empower their people, we can all witness and celebrate the good practice, the continued impetus to change. The sustained

improvement can never be an automatic process, it has to be actively worked for, it is significant to see Chief Fire Officer, Phil Garrigan says: *'We are very proud of our progress, MFRS is a great place to work but we know that we can get even better.'*

## Introduction and Governance of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority is pleased 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 many success stories about the work we do on a day-to-day basis to ensure that the services we deliver provide 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 that are both inward looking (staff related) and outward looking (community and service delivery related)

The objectives below demonstrate how we show due regard to eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

The Equality Objectives we are reporting on in the report have been in place for a period of three years 2021-2024 and this is the final update on them. Our new objectives for 2024 -2027 are included in our 2024 - 27 Community Risk Management Plan which will be published on our website. Full details of our new objectives can be found in Appendix A

<b>Equality Objective 1</b>	<b>Equality Objective 2</b>	<b>Equality Objective 3</b>
Create a strong Inclusive organisation that is positive to rising to the future challenges we face.	Ensure that people from diverse communities receive equitable services that meet their needs.	Reducing fires and other incidents amongst vulnerable people in the protected groups and deprived areas



<p><b>Equality Objective 4</b></p> <p>To ensure that all staff can undertake their role whilst understanding the need for and the benefits of equality, diversity, and inclusion:</p>	<p><b>Equality Objective 5</b></p> <p>To continue to aspire for equality, diversity, and inclusion excellence, measuring ourselves against best practise and benchmarking tools within the Fire &amp; Rescue Service and other sectors.</p>
---	---

In addition, the Fire Service Core Code of Ethics also provides a strong foundation to support ED&I governance.

## Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services



The Core Code sets out five ethical principles, based on the Seven Principles of Public Life, which alongside the accompanying guidance provides a basis for promoting good behaviour and challenging inappropriate behaviour.

- Putting our communities first – we put the interest of the public, the community and service users first.

- Integrity – we act with integrity including being open, honest, and consistent in everything we do.
- Dignity and respect - making decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.
- Leadership – we are all positive role models, always demonstrating flexibility and resilient leadership. We are all accountable for everything we do and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.
- Equality, diversity, and inclusion (ED&I) – We continually recognise and promote the value of ED&I both within the FRSs and the wider communities in which we serve. We stand against all forms of discrimination, create equal opportunities, promote equality, foster good relations, and celebrate difference.

This year's report provides an overview of:

- How we have met the needs our diverse communities in line with the above ED&I objectives in the last 12 months
- How we have created a positive, resilient and inclusive organisation in line with the above ED&I objectives in the last 12 months

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 targeting 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.

The Culture and Inclusion Board that is jointly chaired by the Chief Fire Officer, meets bimonthly and the membership includes Functional heads and Staff Network chairs as well as colleagues whose role is to ensure ED&I is mainstreamed.

This ensures that ED&I is consistently considered and delivered as part of organisational planning and service development. These priorities form the basis of a comprehensive ED&I action plan.

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.

## Connecting with our diverse communities (Equality objectives 2,3 & 5)

For this section we wish to highlight the work of three particular Functions of MFRS.

- The Protection Function
- The Prevention Function
- The Strategy and Performance Function

The above Functions have connected with our communities in the following ways:

**PREVENTION FUNCTION:** We are there for you. We are a visible presence that provides reassurance, support, and advice. Alongside our partners, we protect the most vulnerable and reduce inequalities.

Key highlights include:

- Through **Home Fire Safety Checks 2023-24 (HFSC)** we continue to ensure interventions to keep people safe in their home (through Home Fire Safety Checks and Safe and Well visits) are targeted with a particular focus on collecting data in line with protected characteristics.
- In terms of **Safe and well visits**, on 94.7% % of occasions the occupier of the dwelling told us their ethnicity. 4.5% of Safe and Well visits have been carried out in homes where the resident identifies as non-white British and Irish compared to a Merseyside Non-white British and Irish population of 8.3%. It should be noted that Safe and Well visits primarily target the over 65s and according to the 2021 Census, the over 65 Non-white British and Irish population 2.27% of the total, therefore the 5.3% achieved is an over performance.
- **Youth engagement activities** and engaging with the young diverse population shows continuing progress and success. In terms of the work of the **Prince's Trust** (for participants in their late teens and early 20's). There

were more male attendees than female, with 61.5% being male. In addition, 13.2% were from a LGBTQ+ background and 71.4% considered themselves to have a disability. In terms of the **Fire Cadets** (for teenage participants); the majority were White British/White Irish, with only one attendee identifying as being other White, while 13.5% considered themselves to be disabled. Similarly, for the **Beacon Course** (younger children); .9.2% of those who were involved identified as Non-white British/Irish and 43.8% considered themselves to have a disability.

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 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

### **Accidental Dwelling Fires 2023/24**

Prevention staff have contributed to the release of annual figures showing record reductions in Accidental Dwelling Fires and only one fire death. Accidental fires in the home have fallen by 15% over the last year and 20% over a two-year period with the lowest number of fire deaths ever recorded.

Through the efforts of the Service and its incredible teams, this year only one family have had to live with the loss of a loved one, something that would have been unimaginable only 10 years ago.

Figures released show that in Merseyside in the year to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024, there were 663 accidental fires in the home compared to 780 for the same period a year earlier. Only ten years ago, the Service responded to 1153 such fires with today's figures representing a 43% decrease over that period.

Area Manager Mark Thomas, Head of Prevention at MFRS said "In an average day, Firefighters and Prevention Teams will visit 170 homes across Merseyside, giving fire safety advice to occupiers and fitting lifesaving smoke alarms for those people who are most vulnerable to fire. By talking to people in their own homes and demonstrating what good fire safety looks like, our teams are making a hugely positive difference."

Mr Thomas added "Our downturn in fires in the home is unprecedented across the UK and without doubt linked to the determination and professionalism of our Firefighters and Prevention Teams; it is because of them, helped by the diligence of the public of Merseyside, that we have collectively been able to reduce the number of fires in the home, making sure more people stay alive and safe from fire."

### Youth Engagement – Beacon Programme

The Beacon Project is a Youth Education activity delivered by MFRS and funded by the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership. The project aims to support young people who have experienced ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences), have been exposed to trauma, are transitioning to secondary school and need to develop their independence skills, and to support young people with disabilities and vulnerabilities.

The Beacon Project has been running since 2002, originally solely delivering courses to teenagers. Primary Beacon Courses have been running for around three years and have delivered 41 courses in that time. The most recent course on 26th May for St Anne's Primary school marked the 200th course overall for the Beacon Project. Deputy Headteacher, Mrs Keegan, said: "I am unbelievably proud of our Year 6 children. It's a privilege to be the 200th group of the Beacon Project! This course has been a key part of development for the children. It's been lovely to see them grow in confidence and witness a boost in their communication and teamwork skills."



**PROTECTION FUNCTION:** Seeks to improve the safety and wellbeing of the communities of Merseyside by reducing risks and incidents in the built environment. We do this through education and regulating those responsible for keeping buildings safe, encouraging people to adopt safer behaviours and delivering proportionate and robust fire protection activities to comply with statutory responsibilities.

2023/24 saw MFRS' Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) drawing to its conclusion with the highest recorded performance levels recorded across the Protection directorate. Notable areas of performance included:

- 1869 completed audits (over 20% more than our projected annual target and over 25% performance increase on the previous year)
- 1811 fire safety concerns received and actioned (a 620% increase on the previous year)
- 13% increase in our peak hours' activity supporting and sustaining our nighttime economy with a focused emphasis towards takeaway establishments enabling us to address a diverse range of occupants and risk profiles.
- 87% of the 2023/24 Functional Delivery Plan key deliverables completed.

As well as high levels of performance associated with our measurable outcomes, other areas of note include:

- We have reviewed and revised our risk-based inspection programme to ensure our regulatory officers focus and target on the most hazardous buildings across Merseyside.
- Our most recent inspection by the HMICFRS once again acknowledged the work of our Protection function with a 'good' grading being received for the 3<sup>rd</sup> inspection in a row.
- In our work focusing on vulnerable people who live or work in high rise premises, as part of our robust response to the Grenfell phase 1 inquiry recommendations, we have actively contributed and developed procedures

and equipment that will enable a more proactive response to people considered to be at the highest risk in the taller buildings across Merseyside.

We have also introduced a new broadcast VLS system that can be utilised at a range of incident types, including high rise buildings. This equipment has a range of pre-recorded fire safety associated messages that can be relayed to occupants in real time during an ongoing incident. As part of our ED&I focused analysis and with awareness of our diverse community presence across Merseyside, these messages are available in a range of languages and can be played at incidents based on knowledge of the types of people who live in the building and the needs they might have.

- We have started delivery of fire safety training to firefighters which includes the discussing our business safety engagement framework where we look to ensure that we are not disproportionately applying our regulatory powers to our diverse businesses. This will prove an invaluable supplement to our Simple Operational Fire Safety Assessment (SOFSa) protocols which we have also revised to ensure a more intelligence-led approach to how our operational crews engage with our diverse businesses.
- We increased the number of regulators within the Protection team and across the entire function. We have increased the diversity of the whole team and have some of the highest numbers in regard to female, Non-white British and Irish and neurodiverse team members across the Service.
- Our targeted Business Engagement activities now use data from the national Index of Social Deprivation, Fire Statistics and Socio Economic Deprivation tables to enable us to identify businesses most at risk from fire and support them in complying with their legal requirements. Increasing our Equality Monitoring and standardising our data collation approaches enables us to evaluate what we do and where we do it, ensuring we focus on the most vulnerable within our communities.



- Our fire safety audit and SOFSA recording now includes an ED&I monitoring template to enable us to direct our business engagement and to ensure we are delivering a fair and equitable service

## **Protection Look Forward 2024/25**

Our Head of Protection has provided the following overview of how the coming year's activities will continue to sustain the momentum and positive work following the conclusion of our 2021-24 IRMP:

“We believe everyone has the right to feel safe and protected and be safe in the knowledge that at their time of need, there is someone there to help. Our role in Protection is more than the enforcement of Fire Safety legislation, but centres around engagement with our stakeholder and business partners in the pursuit of making them and our own personnel safer”.

“We strive to ensure our built environments are safer for our communities and our firefighters, making Merseyside a place where people can thrive whether at work or at home. Looking ahead to the first year of our new Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) we have committed to”:

- Monitor our recruitment and succession planning arrangements to ensure the directorate is appropriately resourced to oversee the risk across Merseyside and be representative of the communities we serve.
- Taking on board the recommendations from His Majesty's Inspectorate, we will review and enhance our enforcement and prosecution protocols ensuring such activities are not disproportionately applied and are fair and equitable for all.
- Evolve our use of data and intelligence to inform our business safety engagement and risk-based inspection activities and monitor our findings to ensure we are achieving our focus towards those at the highest risk from fire.
- Continue to review our internal processes and procedures so as to enhance efficiency and effectiveness and promote equitable practices and a positive work culture for all.

- Continue to develop our relationships with external partners and stakeholders, particularly the Health and Safety Executive and the Building Safety Regulator

### **Eurovision Contest – Liverpool May 2023**

Support, advice, guidance and planning as part of the Eurovision Song Contest which was hosted in Liverpool in May 2023 on behalf of Ukraine.

We engaged with surrounding businesses, undertook Fire Safety Audits and provided guidance to countless numbers of businesses and stakeholders to ensure the event was delivered and managed safely. Our contribution to the success of the event, including our engagement with a range of diverse businesses and stakeholders, has been held as an exemplar model for Eurovision moving forward.



**STRATEGY & PERFORMANCE FUNCTION** - Understanding and engaging with our communities is pivotal to our success. During 2023-24 we have successfully developed and maintained effective relationships with a range of individuals, hard to reach groups, community groups and key stakeholders.

We have continued to help staff to develop a better understanding of the different communities they serve, and we are developing a leaflet for our community contacts to help them connect with people in MFRS who can help them.

Community engagement is not just about broadcasting information, it's about knowing the communities. It involves us being active listeners and being able to respond to any community needs, concerns, feedback. We have plans to further improve our engagement by providing guidance to staff on how to ensure engagement is inclusive and the benefits of establishing two-way dialogue.

**During the year we...**

**Expanded our community contacts to include:**

- Active Minds Day Centre (dementia, isolation and mental health)
- Liverpool Multi Faith Group
- Asylum Link
- Dialogue Society
- Sefton Faith Forum
- Sefton Council for Voluntary Services
- Merseyside Society for the Deaf

**Attended community numerous events including:**

- Africa Oyé
- MFRS Business Fire Safety campaign
- Merseyside Inter Faith Group
- Launch of Liverpool City Region Race Equality Hub
- Sefton Council for Voluntary Services Equal Voices
- Mary Seacole House Open Day

- Raised awareness of community room facilities on fire stations and at the Heritage Centre
- Coordinated community group visits to local stations.
- Coordinated community group visits to the fire service Heritage Centre
- Reviewed our Reaching all Communities on Merseyside staff guide. (Version 3 will be published in 2024/25)

## **Africa Oyé**

In June crews from Toxteth, Kensington and Belle Vale attended an event in Sefton Park called Africa Oyé. Africa Oyé is the UK's largest free celebration of African music and culture. It is held annually in Liverpool, beginning in 1992 as a series of small gigs in the city centre. The crews were there not only to support the event, but also to promote recruitment into the Fire and Rescue Service and to collect contact details of candidates for our firefighter recruitment 'have a go' days held on fire stations.



## **Creating a positive, resilient & inclusive organisation (Equality objectives 1 & 4)**

For this section the following three functions – (a) People & Organisational development (b) Operational Preparedness, (c) Response and (d) National Resilience will be highlighted for the focused work on inclusion and employment. All three Functions have made real progress in terms of taking action to foster a more inclusive organisation in the following ways:

**PEOPLE & ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUNCTION** – We have an overview of all people related areas, includes overseeing occupational health services, people services, recruitment and development of staff, professional standards, industrial relations, and human resource systems.

Key highlights include:

- In 2023-24 the data shows that we had 81 female firefighters, which represented 13.2% of our total firefighters, an increase of 5 since March 2023. Nationally the percentage for female fighters is 8.2% (March 2022)
- In 2023-24 we had 22 women in the roles of Crew and Watch Manger, representing 10.8% of middle managers. Compared to 18 in 2022-23, representing an increase of 1.4%
- Non-white British and Irish firefighter representation. In 2023-24 we had 49 firefighters from Non-white British and Irish backgrounds, which equates to 8% of firefighters, compared to 43 or 7.1% in 2022-23.
- Non-white British and Irish support services representation. In 2022-23, 13 members of staff worked in support service representing 4.0% of the total are from non-white British and Irish background. We now have 17 staff working in support services, who are from a Non-white British and Irish background, this equates to 4.8% of the total staff in this area.

- When the 2023/24 gender pay gap <sup>1</sup>is compared to the previous year the gap has reduced from 9.1% to 8.4% overall. For Support Staff the gap fell from 11.0% during 2022/23 to 9.4% during 2023/24. For operational staff, the gender pay gap has increased slightly from 7.7% during 2022/23 to 8.8% during 2022/23, (this directly relates to recruitment). (See Annex for detailed reporting and analysis of the gender pay gap)
- We have once again voluntarily reported on the ethnicity pay gap. (See Annex for detailed reporting and analysis of the gender pay gap)
- When looking at the 2023/24 Ethnicity Pay Gap figures, the mean gap is 6.1% or £1.11 per hour. For operational staff only, the gap is 6% and for support staff the gap is narrowly wider at 6.7%. This is based on a total of 977<sup>2</sup> staff in scope for this exercise; 911 (93.2%) were White British/White Irish and 66 (6.8%) were from a Non-white British and Irish background.
- Our Professional Standards department conducted a review of the grievance and discipline cases for 2023/24. The overall number of grievance and disciplinary cases per annum is small and the statistical basis for identifying any significant trends is therefore limited. The analysis of the data for 2023/24 did not identify any significant disparity of outcome regarding grievance and discipline cases based on gender and ethnicity. There is no evidence to suggest any concerns over disparities of outcome in relation to other Protected Characteristics. All cases of conduct resulting in a dismissal or Final Written Warning were restricted to male uniformed members of staff.
- The Service is not in possession of the data regarding the ethnicity of all its employees which hinders a full analysis of the data when interrogating for disparity based on ethnicity. Consideration will be given to action that can be taken to encourage staff to disclose their ethnicity.
- In terms of grievances, we have seen an increase in cases this year compared to the previous years, this is due to 21 (55.2%) cases being submitted in relation

---

<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.

to Bank Holiday. Female and staff from Non-white British and Irish backgrounds were less likely to enter the grievance process. (See Annex for detailed reporting and analysis of disciplinarys & protected characteristics).

Detailed reporting and analysis of our workforce and employment data, including our Gender Pay and Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting for 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 can be found in our Equality Analysis Workforce & Employment Data Report, 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024

We have:

- Been awarded the 'Aspiring Status', as part of the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram's Mayoral Manifesto's Fair Employment Charter. To achieve Aspiring status, we have provided evidence across four key commitments.
  - We are committed to safe workplaces supporting a healthy workforce.
  - We are committed to fair pay and fair hours.
  - We are committed to inclusive workplaces that support staff to grow and develop.
  - We are committed to a voice for staff to help deliver justice in the workplace with opportunities available for young people.
- As part of our work on workplace culture and our commitment to take steps to be able to address unwanted and aggressive behaviours such as harassment we have worked with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust who have developed a short programme to help staff develop the skills and confidence to 'Stand up to harassment and become active bystanders'.
- We have developed and started to deliver Race Awareness Conversation sessions, to all of our staff. These sessions have been developed in a way to share lived experiences which makes easier to understand and engage with hard topics such as race discrimination.
- We have been reporting on the recommendation made in the HMICFRS Culture and Values Report which was published in March 2023. This has included:
  - Introduction of SafeCall, an external reporting line, for staff to raise concerns in confidence and anonymously, which has built on the well-established Whistleblowing Policy and procedures already in place.
  - A full 360-degree feedback process to be in place for all Senior officers, has been undertaken and will be addressed further as part of our three-year Culture and Transformation Plan
  - Ensuring the implementation of the Core Code of Ethics, which has been embedded into our Strategic Leadership Team meetings' terms of



reference, within the Authority Constitution, within the strategic Boards which deliver the Service's aims and are embedded into the Service's Leadership Message and Leadership Behaviours

- Building on our new Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process, the ED&I Team have been running EIA workshops, talking staff through the process and how to complete them. To ensure staff get the most from these sessions they are tailored to look at a Policy, Service Instruction or Project specific to each Function and allow staff to work together to complete the EIA as a group, which helps with the process and provides different points of view.
- We have supported the National Fire Chief's Council with case studies and input for a number of the new toolkits including the updated Religion and Belief Toolkit, the new Menopause and Disability Toolkits.
- We have provided a case study which has been included in the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) Neurodiversity Toolkit.
- During 2023-24 we have been working with ICE Creates who have been facilitating and delivering a cultural leadership programme for 14 middle managers from across different areas of the organisation. One of the key areas of the programme is for participants to complete an individual project, which has been suggested by the head of their Function. These have included looking at some of the following key areas:
  - Children and Young People Education
  - Prevention and crew engagement
  - Direct Entry – looking at if such a scheme which allows people with proven leadership skills, from a variety of sectors, to apply for Station Manager and Area Manager roles without needing to have **fire service** experience or without needing to have taken the traditional **firefighter** promotional route.
  - Positive Action Initiatives for 2024
  - Develop and understanding our relationships with our communities.
  - Increasing diversity within key teams
  - Accessibility and usage of our community rooms on stations
  - Development of an evaluation process for establishing the effectiveness of communications campaigns

### Introduction of Safecall

We are committed to ensuring that the Service is a safe and inclusive place to work; a commitment that is underpinned by our internal policies, procedures, and the Code of Conduct. 2023 saw the Service introduce an external reporting line "Safecall". The service has been set up in partnership with Safecall who will provide a professional, independent, external, and confidential means for staff to report their concerns, around unacceptable behaviour they have experienced or witnessed in the Service.



**PREPAREDNESS FUNCTION:** We will always be the best that we can be by having highly skilled and trained people who plan for every risk and keep our teams safe and effective.

Key highlights include:

- Improved communication connections within the Operational Planning/Intelligence teams
- Staff have attended a BSL Deaf Awareness Day, which was then followed by a 6-week course “Introduction to basic BSL signing”.
- Hosted internal Women in the Fire Service development events, which were designed to provide staff with;
  - A better understanding and experience of opportunities available to them within the Service.
  - Opportunities to gain support with personal and career development.
  - Opportunities to talk to colleagues about experiences and opportunities.
  - Opportunities to attend workshops with influential female leaders from other fire and rescue services, other Blue light services and public sector organisations.
- Engagement with the Service’s Neurodiversity Staff Network about the introduction of reasonable adjustments for candidates undertaking command assessments.
- Development of our new Training and Development Academy which includes:
  - Improved changing facilities.
  - Provision of a prayer room/quiet room
  - Improved accessible toilets, showers and parking facilities.
  - State of the art training facilities
- Consultation with the Gender Equality network, to provide the opportunity for staff to familiarise themselves with the software we use for training staff in command.
- Engaging with staff networks to offer support to staff (who may be from underrepresented groups) who are considering/are applying for command roles.

- Staff from our TDA work closely with our recruitment and attraction teams, support the ongoing 'have a go days' for underrepresented groups, both at the TDA and at different stations across Merseyside.
- We now routinely engage with our different Staff Networks as part of our consultation/testing process when looking at introducing/purchasing new equipment and uniform.

#### Areas for development.

- We will arrange further deaf awareness sessions for new staff in the Operational Planning/Intelligence department.
- We will be offering staff the opportunity to undertake the BSL Level 1 qualification.
- We will investigate the possible trial of an online/video BSL interpreter service for use in the department, for short conversations or meetings when it is not possible to have a BSL Interpreter present.
- Work with and support the Deaf Resource Centre in St Helens to provide Fire Safety Education for Deaf children.
- Work with and support the Deaf Resource Centre and Deaf employees in the Service to highlight career opportunities within MFRS.
- Investigate how MFRS use an app called 999BSL and promote its use.

#### **Liverpool University Study**

During the last year a group of research students from Liverpool University have been working with MFRS staff to look at our ongoing work around positive action recruitment.

Work has been done to gain insight from the perspective of 13 serving female firefighters and the possible barriers in place that may exist for potential female recruits and existing female firefighters.

Several areas were highlighted that the Service looks to prioritise and strengthen, while other areas will be looked further and discussed with our Gender Equality Network.

**RESPONSE FUNCTION** - We will be there when you need us most, pulling out all the stops to save lives. Whether we are taking 999 calls, or attending incidents, we keep our communities safe.

Key highlights include:

As part of the 2023-24 Community Fire Station Plans across Merseyside each station has supported Positive Action and Recruitment by organising their own Community Engagement Event within their individual station area.

All 22 Community Fire Stations have identified key underrepresented demographics within their station area. As well as using statistics about their area, staff have physically gone out into their communities to engage with people, groups and businesses; getting to know their communities, discovering, visiting and building relationships with religious groups, sporting groups, learning centres and charities and working with them to identify a suitable local location for the event.

Once a location and date has been set, the staff on station work with our Corporate Communications, Recruitment and Attraction teams to:

- Promote the event via social media,
- Advertise it through the community groups our staff have built relationships with.
- Advertise the event with local businesses and other community groups.
- Carry out community safety work, such as Home Fire Safety Checks and Water Hydrant checks within their station's more deprived areas in the run up to the event in order to "level up" opportunities via leaflets and engagement.

At the event those attending are able to speak to a wide variety of staff including:

- Members of our Recruitment and Attractions teams
- Operational Crews about the role of a Community Fire Fighter.
- Members of our Staff Networks
- Staff in non-operational roles such as Fire Control, Prevention, Protection and Workshops, to learn about the wide range of opportunities available within the service.

- They are given information about the recruitment process, including the application form, assessment centres, physical tests and apprenticeships.
- They are able to try some of the physical tests in a “Have a Go” capacity.
- Every attendee who registers their contact details, is also given the opportunity to attend an official “Have a Go Day”.

At the “Have a Go Day” attendees will:

- complete four of the required firefighter physical tests
- be given bespoke advice and a training programme from MFRS Physical Training Instructors in areas they may need to improve on, such as cardio, strength, etc.
- As these take place on the fire stations with operational crews facilitating them, there is a further opportunity to gain an insight into the role of a Community Fire Fighter first hand within the operational environment.

### **Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA)**

At this year’s AFSA Personal Fair & Diverse Awards the Search and Rescue Team won a Charitable Activity award in recognition of their work with the VIBE project.

VIBE is a non-profit community interest company that provides social and development opportunities for young people and adults with additional needs.

The team have been involved in delivering a structured first aid course, health and wellbeing classes and a plan to deliver home safety awareness, fitness sessions, first aid awareness and water safety to the VIBE members. Individual lesson plans were created for the neurodivergent members and structured sessions around their needs.

**Education Award Winners**

MFRS were nominated for this year's Education Awards 2023. The ceremony in Manchester saw our Apprenticeship team receive two awards.

Apprenticeship Provider of the Year acknowledged and celebrated MFRS' exceptional contributions to the apprenticeship programmes provided by the Service.

Winning the 'Outstanding Support for Students' award recognised MFRS as an educational establishment that prides itself on the support that has been given to the students.

**NATIONAL RESILIENCE (NR) FUNCTION** – 2023 – 2024 has been a positive year as we continued to embed ED&I and MFRS values and culture into National Resilience (NR). The team respect and contribute to the drive towards improvement and continue to look at ways of overcoming barriers to ensure fair treatment and opportunities for all.

Key highlights include:

- A new governance structures is in place, ensuring that ED&I is a standard agenda item on all meetings for the Capability Teams, Cross Capability Advisors, NR Co-operative Group, NR Team and Capabilities National user Group (NUG).
- ED&I awareness training session have become a standard agenda item at annual professional development events. This year it has included the Race Awareness Conversation workshop being delivered across the Service.
- As part of the project on uniform for women within the NR Assurance Team (NRAT). NR personnel have engaged with the MFRS Gender Equality Network and the Female Firefighter Forum, considerations were put forward, leading to improved items with better sizing being procured.
- Data identified that the percentage of female representation in our Search and Rescue Team has risen significantly.
- Part of the Marauding Terrorist Attack capability review included looking into and procuring improved protective equipment for women.
- NR continued to look at opportunities for engagement, learning, progression and growth in roles. Attendance at events has raised awareness of NR and provided opportunities to inform colleagues on potential career opportunities: -
- NR Services Training team continued to introduce various courses to NRAT, focusing on different learning styles to promote ED&I. The aim of the courses was to enhance the skills and knowledge of NRAT in relation to the principles of ED&I in their daily activities, roles, and functions.
  - Courses delivered in 2023-2024:
    - Race Awareness workshop.
    - LGBTQ+ Masterclass - Community Pride and Creating a Safe Work Culture

- Tackling Inequalities & Creating Opportunities Workshop
  - EIA Template Workshop Session
- Comprehensive course feedback was gathered from NRAT regarding the ED&I training including responses to the question, *'How satisfied were you with the programme and content?'*
  - The feedback consisted of:
    - 16% indicating strong agreement.
    - 69% in agreement
    - 15% expressing neither agreement nor disagreement.
    - 0% indicating disagreement or strong disagreement.
- An overarching EIA was published for NR Training.
- Capability Teams developed EIA's for ND2, various documents and policies with the support of the ED&I Team.
- MFRS appraisal process has taken place which provided an opportunity to measure performance, set future goals and provide guidance on developmental and training needs. An opportunity to spend time with individuals and build on relationships. Instilling MFRS values has helped define the behaviours that the team are expected to demonstrate.
- NR Training team worked in collaboration with the capabilities to review all training materials and pre-course information which is disseminated to delegates and stakeholders prior to any training delivery to ensure that different learning styles are considered and materials are accessible. Information is collated in regard to any learning needs, additional measures or dietary requirements. This ensures such measures are in place for the delegates prior to course commencement. Where possible the team share ahead of any training, reading lists to remove unnecessary pressure on anyone who may be neurodiverse.
- Work is underway with the Crown Dependencies, Europe and International colleagues who have expressed an interest in coming on board with NR. Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with NR training delivery partners (TDPs) and users have been reviewed and the hosting fire and rescue services directed to ensure appropriate equality impact assessments are undertaken as a pre-requisite requirement of maintaining TDP status.

### **Areas for development in 2024 - 2025**

- NR Training Team to work with ED&I Team to consider ED&I requirements for FRS users with the implementation of the new learning Management System.
- Introduce mentoring and shadowing opportunities with the NR Capability Teams.
- To look at creating a video for NR working with MFRS and National Fire Chiefs Council comms teams to raise awareness of the capabilities, teams, roles and promote the brand.
- Ongoing work with UK NR single points of contact, Crown Dependencies, European and international colleagues.
- NR representation at Asian Fire Service Association Summer Conference in Nottinghamshire in July 2024.



## **Case Studies – Connecting with communities and fostering an inclusive organisation.**

### **International Women's Day 2024**

This year staff from across the organisation attended multiple events across the region. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of March crews attended an “Inspirational Women and Girls” networking event hosted by Everton Football Club. On Friday 8<sup>th</sup> March two appliances from Kirkdale Fire Station crewed by nine female firefighters, two female Watch Managers, and three female Fire Control Operators spent the day attending different all girl schools, informing students of all of the amazing work they do at MFRS and the wide range of roles and opportunities available.

Girls on the Go host a variety of events and activities exclusively for women that encourage people to get active, make new friends, and have fun. On Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> March their weekly running event had a special visit from MFRS, where crews and staff led the group in a ‘firefighter warmup’ to get them started and talked to those attending about what it takes to become a firefighter and other career opportunities at MFRS.

### **Armed forces Covenant**

This year, MFRS were confirmed as Gold Award recipients within the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (DERS). The DERS is a Ministry of Defence initiative that seeks to encourage employers within the public and private sector to support former defence veterans, past and serving reservists and cadet force volunteers and their families.

As well as the taking part in the DERS, MFRS have also created an Armed Forces Staff network to build on the work we already do and add further support for our staff.

## Diaspora

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service's Race Equality and Cultural Heritage (REACH) Network held its first ever major event, Diaspora, in October at the Black-E in Liverpool City Centre.

The event represented a landmark for Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service. People from across the country and different sectors, gathered to celebrate cultural diversity, learning and raising awareness. The event was about recognising diversity, and about unleashing the potential for a diverse workforce. It was about listening, hearing and understanding some challenges all staff go through, particularly those from a diverse background. Chief Fire Officer Phil Garrigan said "Be courageous enough to ask (questions) for a better understanding so we can act and perform better as a service and meet the needs of our communities and our staff".





### MFRS at Pride

Staff from across all areas of MFRS joined together on Saturday 29th July to celebrate the return of Liverpool Pride. It was fantastic to see everyone having such a good time in what was our 12th year of attendance and the largest Pride attendance Liverpool has seen. Our giant banner was hoisted up in pride of place at Liverpool City Fire Station, where our marchers - many donning their specially made MFRS Fire Proud t-shirts and rainbow coloured make-up - met before the parade for breakfast to set them up for the day's events.



## **Closing Statement & Summary**

We hope this ED&I Annual Report has shown you we are continuously working hard across the organisation to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone. In addition to complying with our statutory obligations, the evidence listed above highlights how we have invested time and dedication to several initiatives and activities to increase diversity, inclusion and belonging in the organisation.

Building on the work of the last 12 months we will continue to:

- Develop and introduce our 3-year Cultural Transformation Action Plan
- Develop and deliver our 3-year ED&I Action Plan.
- deliver and develop further conversational workshops, facilitated in an informal and safe environment and drawing on lived experiences where possible.
- Work closely with our new independent Chair of our Culture and Inclusion Board on the delivery of our new plans.

This year we have reviewed and refreshed our Equality Objectives to reflect our aims and plans for 2024-27. We were happy that our objectives still reflect what we want to do as an organisation and only minor changes have been made. Our Objectives for 2024-27 are detailed in full in Appendix A



## **Appendix A**

### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objective 2024 – 2027**

<b>Objective 1</b>	
<b>Create a strong Inclusive organisation that is positive to rising to the future challenges we face.</b>	
<b>Action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increasing the diversity of our workforce across all functions to increase the number of people from underrepresented groups in line with the Positive Action Strategy,</li><li>• Utilising the High Potential Programme &amp; Gateway pathways to address progression and retention where under representation exists and learning from and sharing results.</li><li>• Reviewing progression and promotion across all levels of the organisation to understand any perceived barriers to promotion and progression and addressing them.</li><li>• Working with local diverse communities to build better relationships with people and organisations that can promote MFRA as employer of choice to those groups underrepresented with reference to socio economic background in our workforce. Encourage staff to act as role models at all levels throughout the organisation.</li><li>• Continuing to monitor the workforce and encourage more disclosure of diversity information by staff, including Disability, Sexual Orientation and Religion and Belief &amp; socio-economic background.</li><li>• Working with all our staff to ensure that MFRA is an inclusive place to work, where everyone feels they can be themselves.</li><li>• Continue to work with our Senior Sponsors and staff networks to ensure that MFRA is an inclusive place to work.</li><li>• Build on existing practice &amp; Integrate equality, diversity &amp; Inclusion into all communications and engagement activity, procurement, and finance activities both in terms of service delivery and employment.</li><li>• SLT agenda planning ensures ED&amp;I matters are discussed &amp; progress shared with authority members.</li><li>• Help Authority Members understand their role in scrutinising the organisation's delivery of equality, diversity &amp; Inclusion &amp; work on workforce cultural transformation.</li><li>• Ensuring synergy of the ED&amp;I Action Plan &amp; the Cultural Action Plan</li></ul>
<b>How we will measure our success</b>	<p>We will see:</p> <p>Increased diversity in our workforce and volunteers, at all levels, in order to reflect the local community, we serve.</p> <p>Increased applications for vacancies, at all levels, by people from the protected groups currently under represented.</p> <p>We will be clearly supporting the progression, promotion and retention of staff across the organisation and especially those from currently underrepresented groups.</p> <p>We will evidence increasing levels of feeling a sense of belonging.</p>

	<p>How this impacts on Equality and Diversity: protected characteristics – Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Religion/Belief/LGBT+, Disability and socio-economic factors:</p>

	<p>We'd like our workforce to better represent the makeup of our communities and will work to encourage applications from under-represented groups when we carry out any internal or external recruitment</p>
--	---

## Objective 2

**Ensure that people from diverse communities receive equitable services that meet their needs.**

<b>Action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carry out activities to help us know and understand our diverse communities including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Gathering data and intelligence to help us know and understand our diverse communities better inline with our legal responsibilities and best practice such as the National Fire Chiefs Council Strategic Improvement Plan and the Equal Access to employment and services summary.</li><li>○ Engaging with diverse communities to understand their needs in relation to the services we provide.</li><li>○ We will standardise the data we collect and use it to evaluate what we do and target services at the most vulnerable people and communities.</li><li>○ Improving Equality Monitoring of the services we deliver to our communities (e.g., HFSC Monitoring, Business Safety Audits) and take account of satisfaction levels with our services provided through ongoing community engagement and consultation.</li></ul></li><li>• Ensure the community impact fund targets diverse and vulnerable communities.</li><li>• Undertake work supporting the commitment in line with the Socio-economic action plan and reporting on the socio-economic duty.</li><li>• Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments on services and policies that affect the diverse communities we serve</li></ul>
---------------	---

### **How we will measure our success**

We will have meaningful data and information that helps staff develop effective activities, campaigns and events that result in better engagement with diverse communities across Merseyside (including diverse businesses) and services that meet their needs.

How this impacts on Equality and Diversity: protected characteristics – Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Religion/Belief/LGBT+ and Disability and socio-economic factors:

This work will strengthen our services to meet the needs of a wide range of diverse communities. By understanding people's needs and carrying out engagement we can ensure that those groups are fully supported by the Fire and Rescue Service to help reduce risk.

### Objective 3

#### Reducing fires and other incidents amongst vulnerable people in the protected groups and deprived areas

##### Action

- Continuing to prioritise Home Fire Safety Checks at vulnerable people and in vulnerable places.
- To continue to work closely with Businesses owned and/or operated by people from protected groups to aid increased fire safety amongst those groups.
- Continuing to engage with young people and others in deprived areas to reduce anti-social behaviour.
- Increasing the Equality Monitoring and reporting of Home Fire Safety Checks, Business Safety Audits, hate crime and safeguarding.
- Ensure the community impact fund targets diverse and vulnerable communities.
- Undertake work supporting the commitment in line with the Socio-economic action plan and reporting on the socio-economic duty.
- Analysing our performance each year using the Performance Indicators (PI's) that relate to fire deaths, injuries and accidental dwelling fires. We will introduce measures as necessary to contribute to the reduction in these incidents.
- To use social media and other communication channels as a platform for safety messages and other campaigns, measuring the impact

##### How we will measure our success

- We will contribute to a reduction in fires, deaths and injuries and other relevant incidents.
- We will contribute to increasing the knowledge, understanding and importance of Fire safety to residents and business owners across Merseyside

How this impacts on Equality and Diversity: protected characteristics – Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Religion/Belief/LGBT+ and Disability & socio-economic factors:

By better understanding the impacts for diverse community groups in terms of Fires and other incidents we can measure whether there are any disproportionate outcomes for the protected groups of: Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Religion, LGBT+ and Disability



#### 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.**

<b>Action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continued development and delivery of cultural competence development interventions to help build capacity and capability across the organisation.</li><li>• Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments ensure that our Policies and services maximise any positive impacts and minimise any negative impacts on people from protected groups.</li><li>• Supporting and recognising the work of our staff networks in helping MFRA advance cultural competence and better support our diverse groups of staff and their contribution to the organisation.</li><li>• The continued development of the Senior Sponsors roles within the organisation to support our staff networks and promote key issues related to their chosen protected characteristic.</li><li>• Using staff survey results to understand levels of engagement in relation to the protected groups &amp; levels of cultural competence.</li></ul>
<b>How we will measure our success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff will feel better equipped to manage their functions. and delivery of services to all communities in an inclusiveway. This could be measured through:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Staff Engagement Surveys</li><li>○ the assessment of outcomes delivered to different groups.</li><li>○ community feedback from after the incident reports and other customer satisfaction surveys</li><li>○ Monitoring the impact of training sessions completed around Equality and Diversity</li><li>○ Reviewing the grievance, complaints and disciplines to ensure there is no disproportionate impact.</li></ul></li><li>• We will see an improvement in levels of engagement amongst staff from the protected groups</li></ul>

How this impacts on Equality and Diversity: protected characteristics – Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Religion/Belief/LGBT and Disability & socio-economic factors:

This helps the organisation to meet its Public Sector Equality Duty to have due regards to understand and meet the needs of different protected groups and foster good relations between groups

---

<sup>4</sup> To ensure that staff are better equipped to deliver their roles whilst showing due regard to the need to: "eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't." – The Public Sector Equality Duty - Equality Act 2010

<b>Equality Objective 5</b>  <b>To continue to aspire for equality, diversity and inclusion excellence, measuring ourselves against best practice and benchmarking tools within the Fire &amp; Rescue Service and other sectors.</b>	
<b>Action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake the NFCC Equality Maturity Model Toolkit to help measure progress and identify key targets.</li> <li>• Consider undertaking a further ED&amp;I audit as part of a peer review, external Cultural review, identify external benchmarking tools and awards currently available within ED&amp;I sectors</li> </ul>
<b>How we will measure our success</b>	<p>We will use external ED&amp;I audit to identify our current position and identify key areas for development moving forward, seeing improvements as a result.</p> <p>We will assess those results by undertaking external benchmarking such as the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion (ENEI), assessment against the NFCC Strategic Improvement Plan and undertaking the Disability Confidence peer review to achieve Level 3 (Disability Confident – Leader)</p>
<p>How this impacts on Equality and Diversity: protected characteristics – Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Religion/Belief/LGBT and Disability &amp; socio-economic factors:</p> <p>Taking part in an assessment helps us to integrate our commitments to promote equality and diversity across all functions of the organisation. This assists with meeting the Equality Act 2010 – Public Sector Equality Duty to ensure that we are having due regards to the needs of staff and public we serve around the 9<sup>5</sup> protected groups.</p>	