



## Dorset Fire Authority

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| MEETING  | Dorset Fire Authority   |
| DATE OF MEETING  | 23 September 2015   |
| OFFICER  | Chief Fire Officer  |
| SUBJECT OF THE REPORT  | Meeting Our Equality Duties   |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  | The Meeting Our Equality Duties Report fulfils the Fire Authority's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011.   |
| RISK ASSESSMENT  | Failure to adequately discharge the Fire Authority's legal obligations in respect of the Equality Act 2010 could result in legal challenge and loss of the Service's 'Excellent' rating against the Fire and Rescue Equality Framework. |
| COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT<br><i>Note: If the matrix indicates negative impacts on the community or staff, an equality impact assessment (EIA) will need to be completed.</i> | There are positive benefits for communities, staff and volunteers where Fire Authority Members scrutinise and monitor the Service's progress against our equality objectives.   |
| BUDGET IMPLICATIONS  | None.   |
| RECOMMENDATIONS  | It is recommended that Members scrutinise and approve the progress made against the issues outlined in this penultimate Meeting our Equality Duties Report.   |
| BACKGROUND PAPERS  | None.   |
| APPENDICES   | A: Meeting Our Equality Duties Report   |
| REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT  | Jill Warburton, Community Engagement & Inclusion Manager<br>Tel (01305) 252692  |

Appendix A



**Dorset  
Fire & Rescue  
Service**

# Meeting our Equality Duties 2015



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# Foreword



*This 'Meeting Our Duties Report' highlights key progress made in the last year towards becoming a more inclusive and more responsive organisation and service provider.*

*I am mindful as I present this, fourth **Meeting Our Duties Report**, of the distance we have travelled since the our equality journey began back in 2003, and the challenges and opportunities facing us as we continue to plan for our combination with the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority to establish a new Fire Authority from April 2016.*

*Dorset Fire and Rescue Service (DFRS) is proud of our performance to date. We are rated as an 'Excellent' Authority for Equality and Diversity, currently the only Fire and Rescue Service in the South West and one of only two local authorities at this level. Among the features that contributed to this were:*

- a clear vision for the organisation driven by positive leadership from elected members and managers*
- services shaped as a result of information about changing community needs*
- effective partnership working*
- innovative ways of communicating and engaging 'hard to reach' groups*
- excellent use of equality analysis*
- effective use of community volunteers*

*As we move forward into 2015 we know that we face significant challenges. However you can be assured that the decisions we make will include a thorough analysis of equality issues and how these may affect the diverse communities of Dorset, as well as our volunteers and staff. We'll target our resources towards community members most at risk from fire and injury to ensure we meet our corporate aim of working in partnership to make Dorset safer. It's important that, as we move forward towards a combination, we retain our focus on diversity, continue to challenge unacceptable behaviour based on our values and maintain our inclusive "one team" approach, albeit with a bigger Dorset and Wiltshire one team.*

**DARRAN GUNTER**  
**Chief Fire Officer**

# Introduction

Equality, diversity and inclusion are part of Dorset Fire and Rescue Service's (DFRS) core values and "how we do business", both as an employer, working with our Community Volunteers and in providing services to the people of Dorset. For this report as in previous years, we'll be using definition of Equality set out in the Government Equalities Review:

***"An equal society protects and promotes equal real freedom and opportunity to live in the way people value and would choose so that everyone can flourish, recognises people's needs, situations and goals, and removes the barriers that limit what people do and can be"***. Source: Cabinet Office.gov.uk

We want to bring about change, break down barriers and achieve real improvement in outcomes for the people of Dorset.

Since we produced our first Equality and Diversity Annual Report in 2006, there have been number of changes that affect employment and the services we deliver. Not least of these was the introduction of the 2010 Equality Act which aimed to simplify and strengthen the previous legislation and protect individuals from unfair treatment.

The Public Sector Equality Duty, (section 149 of the Equality Act)<sup>1</sup> supports good decision-making by ensuring public bodies like DFRS consider how different people will be affected by their activities, and deliver policies and services which are effective, accessible and which meet different people's needs.



The Equality Duty requires public bodies like Dorset Fire Authority to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity
- and foster good relations in all that they do

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<sup>1</sup> The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013>

The Equality Duty is supported by Specific Duties which require public bodies to publish relevant information to demonstrate how they meet the Equality Duty, and to set themselves specific, measurable equality objectives.

This report shows how we will meet the General and Specific duties of the Equality Act and contains an annual update of:

- information relating to employees who share “protected characteristics” such as disability, age, race, gender reassignment, gender, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity.

We will publish this information by 31st January each year.

The second requirement of the Equality Duty is to publish:

- information relating to Service users and other people who are affected by Dorset Fire and Rescue Service’s policies and practices who share protected characteristics

This information can be found on our website [www.dorsetfire.co.uk](http://www.dorsetfire.co.uk) in the “What we Do” section. The information contained on the website includes the outcomes from the latest:

- Community Safety Plan
- Customer Satisfaction Surveys
- Fire Safety Checks completed in the last financial year broken down by the protected characteristics of ethnicity and disability
- After the Fire survey data – for commercial and domestic properties
- Outcomes of consultation with different Dorset community, voluntary and business groups about the proposed Combination with Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority.

We want to build a Fire and Rescue Service which is inclusive in its culture and proactive in its support for communities, one which is a clear example of excellence in public service, providing intuitive and appropriate services to ensure all our communities are safer.

# 1. Dorset Fire and Rescue Service in Context

The aim of Dorset Fire Authority is to 'work in partnership to make Dorset safer' by providing an excellent fire and rescue service that works in partnership with others to reduce death, injury and economic loss due to fire and other emergencies. We provide services across the whole of Dorset and employ 784 staff, including 601 operational firefighters and 25 members of our fire control.

We have 26 stations operating 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. 19 are staffed by 'On call' or retained duty firefighters, three by wholetime staff, three by wholetime and on call firefighters and one by a mixture of "day crewed" and on call firefighters. We have 40 fire appliances and a further 30 special appliances, including Technical Search and Rescue, Mass Decontamination, Water Rescue and High Volume Pumping, to improve our resilience in response to emergencies. We work closely with other partners to provide a co-ordinated and cost-efficient response to the public.

There is an integrated approach to risk reduction within the community through a combination of Response to fires and other incidents, and also Protection and Prevention activities.

Last year (from April '13 to the end of March '14) Dorset Fire and Rescue Service:

- Attended 7,866 incidents
- Tackled 466 house fires (438 accidental, 28 deliberate)
- Responded to 271 vehicle fires
- Carried out more than 41 rescues from home fires
- Carried out 112 rescues from road traffic collisions
- Rescued 25 people from flooding
- Fitted 10,658 smoke alarms
- Completed 10,736 home safety checks

# 2. Community Mapping

Knowing our communities: who we serve.

## Ethnicity

Dorset County, which includes both the Dorset County Council area and Bournemouth and Poole Boroughs, is an increasingly diverse one. The 2011 Census results for Dorset County as a whole show that the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population has increased significantly since 2001 from 4.67% to 9.06%. Additionally, the proportion of the population in the BME category in Bournemouth has increased from 7.5% to 16.2%, and in Poole from 4% to 8.1%. This figure has not increased significantly in the Dorset County Council area (3.2% in 2001 to 4.4% in 2011)<sup>1</sup>. Nationally this increase has also been greater, rising from 13% of the total population to 20% of the total, approximately 1 in 5. The most widely spoken non English first language in Dorset schools is Polish and that East Dorset, Purbeck and West Dorset have the largest number of usual residents in the “gypsy or Irish traveller” ethnic grouping.

## Age

Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole have much higher proportions of their population aged 65+ (26.7%), than either the South West (22.8%), or the whole of England (19.3%). From the 2011 census it's clear that Dorset also has a significantly higher proportion of one person households aged 65+ than the national average.<sup>2</sup> The number of children and young persons below 18 is at 18.8%. In Dorset 56.5% of the population is of working age (defined as 65 for men/60 for women in these statistics) which is well below the figure for England of 61.9%.<sup>3</sup>

## Socio Economic Issues

Although not a protected characteristic, increasingly socio-economic issues are impacting on all of our communities requiring refinement in the targeting of resources. Additionally, 65% of the population lives in urban areas and 35% in rural areas. Our challenge is to ensure we provide the appropriate level of service required to meet the needs of our communities.

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<sup>2</sup> Census data 2011 [www.Dorset For You](http://www.DorsetForYou)

<sup>1</sup>Census Data [www. Dorset For You](http://www.DorsetForYou) 2011 <sup>3</sup>Office for National Statistics 2009



## **Gender**

There is a slightly higher proportion of women than men in Dorset with 51.4% women compared with 48.6% men. However this is similar to the figures for England (50.7% women, compared with 49.3% men).

## **Disability**

Dorset has a significant number of disabled people - 19.2% as opposed to the national average of 18.2%. Of these 19.2%, 37% are of working age.

## **Religion and Belief**

There are many faith and non-faith groups across Dorset and all of the nine major UK religions are represented. DFRS is an associate member of *FaithnetSouthWest*, but we recognise that there are relatively few initiatives in Dorset to bring together different faiths and develop joint projects to improve community cohesion. Our volunteer Multifaith Chaplaincy Scheme supports the Service's work in this area and we developing approaches with Churches Together and with Multifaith Groups like *Faith and Fire* to address any gaps with our faith communities.

## **Sexual Orientation** (including civil partnerships)

Research suggests that 6% of the population is gay lesbian or bisexual (LGB). We want to ensure workplaces and services are accessible to all sections of the community. We have been leading work in this area since 2009 and this year recruited a volunteer Diversity Champion for LGBT. We are Stonewall Diversity Champions and are currently ranked 239th employer in the country in the 2014 Stonewall Equality Index.

## **Pregnancy and Maternity**

Whilst the average rate of teenage pregnancies in females aged 15-17 per thousand for the county is 17.4-25.4 (amongst the lowest in England), the teenage pregnancy rate in Weymouth and Portland is amongst the highest in England at 39.5 - 57.8 per thousand.<sup>4</sup>

## **Gathering Information**

Information systems are in place to capture all employment data and community information related to risk. It should be recognised that collecting community data is a

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<sup>4</sup>Teenage Pregnancy Unit and ONS 2006-8

challenging area as existing incident reporting systems do not provide data across the nine protected characteristics introduced by the 2010 Equality Act.

### **Assessing our Policies and Involving People**

We will continue to carry our Equality Analysis of our policies, practices and service areas to identify trends, good practice and impact in terms of equality, diversity and inclusion.

### **Ensuring Public Access to Information and Services**

We remain fully committed to making sure that local communities' needs and concerns are given the importance they deserve. People know best the issues affecting their lives and it is essential that they have the opportunity and the tools to get involved with the work of the fire service. This includes engagement with the Service's key decisions making structures.

Good public access to information and services will involve talking, listening and removing barriers to access and communication. This access also includes engaging with groups who may not always be vocal or who may be traditionally excluded, including elderly people, some black and minority ethnic groups, deaf and disabled people and people whose first language may not be English.

DFRS will provide information by using its website, the local press, community organisations and other appropriate media. We will make sure that local people know about their local services at their local fire station. We will consult the community using groups such as the Dorset Forum for Equality and Diversity (FED).

### **Training our Staff and Volunteers**

We will continue to train all staff and volunteers to make sure they understand, value and respect difference. We recognise that delivering our commitment to community engagement may require new skills and knowledge about different ways of communicating. We will continue to deliver various face to face and e-learning programmes on Diversity and Inclusion to everyone.

### **Complaints and Compliments**

We have a comprehensive system for recording, tracking and monitoring complaints. We ensure the quality and transparency of the process by encouraging complainants to complete a short survey about their experience. This provides additional opportunities to ensure the data we hold relating to the complaint and complainant is accurate and that the complaint was dealt with effectively and sensitively.

In 2013/14 we received 37 complaints and in the same period we received 181 compliments. We have received 17% less complaints in this year than 2012/13 (45) and around the same number of compliments.

There has also been a reduction in the number of upheld complaints. In 2013/14, 22% were upheld after investigation, compared with 42% in the previous year. We record the types of complaints received and figures continue to demonstrate a trend with the highest number of complaints being received relating to staff conduct and driving issues.

Of the 37 complaints, 97% (36) were resolved within 14 working days and 100% of people who complained were satisfied with the way in which their complaint was handled.

The breakdown of complaints in 13/14 was as follows:

- staff conduct: 46%
- driving: 21%
- other: 16%
- responding to an incident: 8%
- damage to property: 3%
- damage to vehicle: 3%
- Home Safety Check: 3%

### **Equality Monitoring of complaints**

Equality monitoring data is requested when the complaint is resolved and the complainant is asked to complete and return a feedback form. Our recording system is monitored by protected characteristics and in 2013/14 no negative issues or trends were reported. The response rate for this form is poor and therefore we are often reporting equality data as undisclosed. Consideration needs to be given during 2014/15 to improve this process and ensure more meaningful data is collected.

Of the 37 complaints received during 2013/2014 the following equality data have been recorded:

### **Complainant gender**

32% from females

54% from males

14% unknown

This data shows similar figures to last year, but a reduction in the unknown indicates better recording of this data.

### **Complainant ethnic origin**

8% white British

3% Asian

89% unspecified

Similar figures from the previous year, a large proportion are undisclosed which indicates work required on data collection for equality monitoring.

### **Disability**

0% disabled

11% not disabled

89% unknown

Similar figures as last year.

### **Age**

5.5% 60+

5.5% 40-59

89% unknown

Similar figures as last year.

### **Discrimination**

No complaints (0%) have been received on the grounds discrimination as was the case in 2012/13.

# 3. Our Workforce Profile

## Knowing our workforce

Providing a safe, competent workforce is one of our strategic priorities. Dorset Fire and Rescue Service is totally committed to ensuring our employees and volunteers are treated with dignity and respect. We will achieve this by providing improved training and learning opportunities, improvements to health, safety and welfare arrangements, enhanced risk information and implementing innovative workplace policies.

New ways of working have been introduced to ensure that our resources are targeted towards those most at risk in our communities. We have positive productive partnerships with our representative bodies. We have introduced changes to health, safety and welfare provision as well as a Positive Mental Health initiative to ensure staff feel supported at work.

## Gender (including maternity and pregnancy, marriage and gender reassignment)

Since recruiting our first woman firefighter to the organisation in 1989 we have invested resources and training to make changes to our workforce profile. We now employ 29 women firefighters and operational managers and another 18 women fire control staff. Our highest ranking (for operational duties) women are at Station Manager level. Our non-uniformed or “Green Book” employees (who work in support roles) reflect the community we serve in Dorset: 46% are women, 54% are men. Progression of Green Book women has improved over the past three years with 14 women at middle manager level or above compared to 10 men. These figures are being monitored to see how the High Potential and Mentoring schemes and our Springboard and Springforward development programmes will impact our gender profile.

## Discipline and Grievance

Discipline figures for the period January to December 2014 inclusive show that there were:

- Five (all male) informal discipline cases managed by the employees’ line managers and assisted by our HR team, all resulting in local management action.

- Thirteen (1 female, 12 male) formal discipline cases. This compares to sixteen cases (2 female, 14 male) during 2013.

This year two cases led to the retirement or resignation of the individual concerned, one to dismissal, one case remains outstanding at the end of this period with the remainder dealt with through local management action or formal discipline sanctions. As with last year all those involved in disciplinaries recorded their ethnicity as White British, with no declared disability.

Over the same period, our grievance statistics show that:

- six formal grievances (1 female, 5 male) were submitted. Of these, one was accepted with a resolution meeting held. The remainder were rejected but appeals were made in at two cases promoting further enquiry. This compares to the same time last year when there were 11 formal Grievances, all from male staff
- actions resulting from grievances in 2014 have included local management action, along with organizational learning and procedural changes.

## Flexible Working Requests

We provide extensive support for women returning from maternity leave, including flexible working policies, work shadowing and Keeping In Touch days. We are very pleased to report that 100% of women on maternity leave have returned to work over the last four years.

From January to December 2014 inclusive the Service also received three requests for flexible working (1 from males and 2 from females). The reasons for these included caring and childcare responsibilities. Two of these requests were agreed on a temporary basis, subject to review and one was agreed and implemented on a permanent basis.

## Fire Authority Members

Dorset Fire and Rescue Service is responsible to a Board of fifteen elected Members that comprise the Dorset Fire Authority. The profile of the Dorset Fire Authority has changed since 2009. 33% of Members are women- a high ratio for the Fire and Rescue sector. Both Chair and Vice Chair are women – probably unique in the UK. The Fire Authority includes a Member Champion for Diversity and each Member has made a personal commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

## Community Volunteers

We currently have ninety nine (99) volunteers who support the Service in a variety of ways: from completing Home Safety Checks, acting as advocates and interpreters for minority community groups, helping with our Youth and School programmes and even running our volunteer Fire Chaplains Scheme! Although the gender balance of our volunteers has changed this year with 33% of our volunteers being women (-1% since last year), our volunteers remain an incredibly diverse and exciting team.

We are pleased that of the 99 people volunteering for the Service, 7 (or 8%) are from a minority ethnic background. This is an increase since the same quarter in the previous year. It is pleasing to note that if the figure for 'white other' is added, this figure increases to 15%. This number includes Community Volunteers, SafeWise Volunteers and Children and Young People Volunteers, and reflects the growing diversity of our volunteer group.

## Leavers and Joiners

There were fifty six (56) leavers from January 2014 to December 2014 and all staff, other than where employment was terminated, were offered an Exit Interview. Reasons for leaving included retirement, alternative employment with personal/work commitments applying in particular to some of our retained or 'On Call' leavers. Leavers were spread across all age ranges. There were 65 joiners in the same period.

## Race

December 2014 figures show that 25 staff (3.18%) were from ethnic minorities across the Service. This figure is lower than the 2011 census figures for ethnicity within the wider Dorset population but reflects lower black, Asian and minority ethnic communities outside the main conurbations of Poole and Bournemouth and the need for on-call firefighters to live within 5 minutes of their local station. We will monitor these figures and work with our recruitment team and community groups to communicate job opportunities within the Fire Service and promote positive action initiatives.

Of the 99 people volunteering for the Service, 7 (or 7.07%) were from a minority ethnic background. The total number of volunteers in the service has increased from the same quarter in the previous year by 12.5% from 88 to 99 volunteers. The total volunteer number includes Community Volunteers who help with our prevention activities, specialist

volunteers who work with Children and Young People, as well as our Fire Chaplains, and reflects the growing diversity of our volunteer group.

## Disability

DFRS is a member of the national Two Ticks Disability Scheme and is committed to disability equality. We have signed up to a number of measures covering recruitment, appraisal and welfare of disabled applicants and staff.

In December 2014, 5.47% of staff had a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010. This breaks down as 29 (3.69%) operational firefighters and 14 (1.78%) Fire Control and Support staff. We have made reasonable adjustments to accommodate issues including mobility, dyslexia, hearing impairment, diabetes and mental ill health. The rise in the number of staff declaring a disability is largely due to better communication and reporting being effectively managed by our Employee Support team. 72% of people declaring a disability across the Service had reasonable adjustments recorded.

5.05% of volunteers declared a disability and 13% of Fire Authority Members declared a disability with one person requiring reasonable adjustments.

## Religion or Belief

The richness and diversity of different faiths of Dorset is mirrored among our workforce including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and no religion or belief. 18.60% of staff have declared that they belong to the Christian faith, 0.51% to the Buddhist, Jewish or Muslim faiths, 1.15% to other faiths, 67.26% declared no religion or belief and 12.48% declared that they belonged to a religion or belief but decided not to state.

## Age

Most staff within Dorset Fire and Rescue Service are in the 46-55 age range(35.41%) and 36-45 age range(33.25%),with fewer staff aged 17 to 24(3.95%) and 56 to 65 years(7.26%). The remaining staff were in the age ranges of 25-35 (19.87%) and (0.26%) staff members decided to not state their age range. We will continue to monitor these figures to understand the impacts of the abolition of the default retirement age and our positive action initiatives on our workforce profile.



## Sexual orientation

Dorset Fire and Rescue Service has made significant progress in sexual orientation equality and have been members of the Stonewall Equality Champions Programme since 2009. Over the past year we have undertaken a number of projects in this area of workplace equality including:

- completed the 2015 Workplace Equality Index which we use to benchmark our performance against national best practice indicators
- appointed a volunteer Diversity Champion for LGB and T issues who will support staff and volunteers but also be a link to 'harder to reach' community groups within Dorset
- visits to stations/offices by SMT and the raising of Sexual Orientation issues

For the past four years DFRS has entered the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (WEI). The Workplace Equality Index is a very tough national benchmark, with challenging in-depth criteria which highlights employers' best practice on LGBT issues across the UK. In January 2015 DFRS was ranked 256<sup>th</sup> gay friendly employer in the UK from submissions to the Index from hundreds of public and private companies.

## Equal Pay

In January 2012 independent Peer Assessors carried out a review and reported that: "the implementation of Equal Pay is a strength of the organisation". DFRS has now fully implemented a review of our job evaluation scheme including a "sore thumbing" exercise across grades of the organisation to analyse and remove anomalies. Removal of the market forces increment and removal of a lifelong protection element from some jobs has been finalised. Our Equal Pay Action Plan has also been completed.

# 4. How we Meet the General Duty

Public bodies like DFRS must publish information to show their compliance with the 3 aims of the Equality Duty. In summary we must, in the exercise of our functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

These are often referred to as the three aims of the general equality duty.

The Equality Act explains that the second aim (advancing equality of opportunity) involves, in particular having due regard to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Take steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encourage people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

It states that meeting different needs includes (among other things) taking steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities. It describes fostering good relations as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups. It explains that compliance with the general equality duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others.

This section looks at how we comply with the General Duty of the 2010 Equality Act:

## General Duty Aim1: Eliminate Unlawful Discrimination

Dorset Fire and Rescue Service is constantly improving the way we address unlawful discrimination to ensure that staff, elected Members and communities who receive and have access to our services receive appropriate protection, support and advice. Further information can be found in our in *Our Journey to Excellence: Narrative Report*, some simple *Case Studies for Excellence*, our ED&I Annual Assurance Report and our website: [www.dorsetfire.gov.uk](http://www.dorsetfire.gov.uk).

### Equality Objectives

Dorset Fire and Rescue Service's equality objective is to: **retain our Excellent Rating and associated measures against the UK Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework (FRSEF)**. The Action Plan to achieve this is contained within the Diversity & Inclusion Assurance Framework Annual Report.

### Accessible Information

The Diversity and Inclusion pages of our intranet provide members of staff with various resources to support members of the community including information on equality and diversity procedures, community contacts and a Diversity Guide for Dorset.

Information can also be provided in a variety of formats, including information in British Sign Language (BSL) and the main languages spoken in Dorset.

### Equality Analysis

Dorset Fire and Rescue Service will continue to evaluate the impact of our work on different groups of people using Equality Analysis or Equality Impact Assessment. In 2009 we developed a simple electronic Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) database. The system is focused on the analysis of evidence to support decisions made within DFRS which affects our communities and staff. Equality Analysis Guidance is available to communities and staff through the DFRS website [www.dorsetfire.co.uk/equality](http://www.dorsetfire.co.uk/equality).

The independent inspection in November 2012 against the highest level of the equality Framework found that equality analysis was embedded and “*a strength of the organisation*”

Although there is no legal requirement to publish the results of equality analysis, we believe it's important to be as transparent as possible about the services we provide, and the decisions we take. Members of the public can access a list of past equality analysis or take part in new assessments through our website.

## Hate Crime Reporting

Dorset Fire and Rescue Service is a sponsor and principal signatory to the Dorset-wide Code of Conduct on Hate Crime Reporting, and continue to act in the capacity of a "Hate Crime Reporting Centre". Key members of staff have been trained and all front facing staff also receive training in Safeguarding Vulnerable People.

## Member Champion

Dorset Fire Authority Members lead and champion equality and inclusion issues within Dorset Fire and Rescue Service, holding the Chief Fire Officer to account in this area. The Chair of the Fire Authority, Cllr Rebecca Knox, is also the Member Champion for equality, inclusion and diversity issues.

## Support for Community Groups and Forums

We support community groups and forums that represent people sharing different protected characteristics. Some of the support is given through service level agreements, or in "kind" through officer time and use of resources such as meeting rooms.

Further details of these groups can be found in *Our Journey to Excellence: Narrative Report* and *Case Studies for Excellence* available on our website: [www.dorsetfire.gov.uk](http://www.dorsetfire.gov.uk).

## Bullying & Harassment Procedures

Dorset Fire and Rescue Service has robust procedures for dealing with bullying and harassment including a Peer Support Scheme and regular meetings for Investigating Managers to ensure a consistent approach and to enable organizational learning to take place.

## How Diversity, Equality and Inclusion is Assured within DFRS

A recent “Operational Assurance” inspection praised our Assurance - based approach to equality, with local ownership of equality actions by teams and individuals across the Service.

Further details of how Equality diversity and inclusion is assured can be found in *Our Journey to Excellence: Narrative Report and Case Studies for Excellence* available on our website:

[www.dorsetfire.gov.uk](http://www.dorsetfire.gov.uk).

## Staff Support Networks

Staff from Dorset Fire and Rescue Service are able to attend the staff groups shared with Dorset County Council and Devon and Somerset Fire Service for Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transsexual, (LGBT) and for Disabled Staff. In 2014 the Service also appointed a volunteer to become Diversity Champion for sexual orientation equality. There are also staff groups and support for women and for ethnic minority staff available. Specialist mentoring is available through our Mentoring Scheme and a black or gay staff member (for example) would be able to request a black or gay external mentor.

## Training and Information

All staff including temporary staff in post for more than 3 months undertake Equality Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) training to raise awareness of the Service’s values, equality legislation, community engagement and our procedures. Following this initial training all staff and volunteers complete parts of an e-learning equality toolkit which covers: Equality and diversity Essentials, Exploring Diversity with case studies, and Managing Equality and Diversity. Our Diversity and Inclusion Learning Delivery Plan details the levels and amounts of training that our staff and members receive.

More specific ED&I training is commissioned when a training need is identified, for example Deaf Awareness Training or Language Awareness. There are also Diversity Masterclasses for our staff and Partners and further learning programmes for our volunteers.

Information and support is also available from the Diversity and Inclusion Manager and pages on our staff intranet which include a variety of resources and factsheets with practical information and advice.

## Whistle Blowing & Grievance Procedures

Dorset Fire and Rescue Service has clear processes in place for ensuring that incidents of discrimination are investigated fairly and robustly. The bullying and harassment, whistle blowing and grievance procedures allow us to take account of the needs of protected groups.

## Partnership Working

Dorset Fire and Rescue Service's strategic aim is: "to work in Partnership to make Dorset Safer". To further this aim we have close local, regional and National ED&I partnerships with a number of authorities, businesses, third sector organisations and social enterprises. We are also members of the Forum for Equality and Diversity, Prejudice Free Dorset and the South West Equalities Network.

## General Duty Aim 2: Advance Equality of Opportunity

### Action supporting our communities

Dorset Fire and Rescue Service work extensively with the communities of Dorset. Some of our work is detailed in the ED&I Annual Assurance Report and the Community Safety Plan, available on our website.

### Consultation and Research

Staff must consider equality issues and barriers to public participation in consultation exercises. This includes considering the location and time of meetings, access and communication needs, childcare and other caring issues, as well as the different techniques for consulting.

## Support for Community Organisations

In addition to the community groups and forums we also support a number of other community organisations and initiatives aimed at advancing opportunity of people with protected characteristics, and are partner members of strategic countywide groups, where expertise, knowledge and research is shared. These include:

- West Dorset Home Start
- SW Dorset Multi Cultural Network
- Dorset Forum for Equality and Diversity
- Domestic Violence Forum
- Dorset Safeguarding Children Board
- Dorset Safeguarding Adults Board
- Bournemouth and Poole Safeguarding Children Board
- Bournemouth and Poole Safeguarding Adults Board
- Dorset Women's Outreach Project
- Dorset Age Partnership
- Gypsy and Traveller Working Group
- Prejudice Free Dorset

## Actions supporting Staff

We are committed to consulting with staff, volunteers, trade unions and elected members on the implementation of any policies which will have an impact on staff and volunteers.

The Personal Development and Performance Review (appraisal) scheme is used as a tool for gaining feedback on equality issues. Staff monitoring and Staff surveys are undertaken and highlight equality issues, also providing the Service with regular updates relating to protected characteristics among staff.

Female staff are offered specialist training through the Springboard and Springforward programmes, and there is a similar scheme for men. DFRS has active Mentoring, High Potential and Peer Support Schemes.

## General Duty Aim 3: Fostering Good Relations

In addition to the work listed above, Dorset Fire and Rescue Service communicate, host or promote a number of events and special days/months throughout the year, aimed at improving relations between people sharing protected characteristics and those who do not.

There are many other examples of where the Service has promoted the three aims of the General Equality duty in the Annual ED&I Assurance Report, Community Safety Plan or *Our Journey to Excellence: Narrative Report* and *Case Studies for Excellence* available on our website: [www.dorsetfire.gov.uk](http://www.dorsetfire.gov.uk).



# 5. Moving forward

***“There is a commitment to equality and diversity led from the top. In particular there was a high level of awareness of the communities across both rural and urban Dorset. There is an ambition to achieve ‘excellent’ under the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework”.*** Operational Assessment Report March 2011

***“There are a broad range of outstanding community safety activities for those who may be perceived as being vulnerable or marginalized”*** Peer Review 2012

Dorset Fire and Rescue Service is meeting its duties under equality legislation and has moved forward to become more inclusive and effective as a service provider and employer of choice.

This was demonstrated in November 2012 when Dorset Fire and Rescue Service became the first Fire and Rescue Service in the South West and only the second Authority in the South West to be rated ‘excellent’ according to the National Equality Framework.

However, equality is a journey, not a destination. We’ll do our best to retain our focus on inclusion, equality and diversity issues despite a challenging financial forecast, and ensure we consult and engage our communities on any changes we need to make. We also hope to retain our focus on equality as we move forward towards combination with Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service.

To learn more, get more involved or ask a question please contact our Community Engagement team on 01305 252600 or access us through the Equality and Diversity pages of the website: [www.dorsetfire.gov.uk](http://www.dorsetfire.gov.uk).