



Case Study: Improving Equality & diversity

Source: Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service

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Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) has recently made a strong commitment for further developing Equality and Diversity by creating a dedicated Equality and Diversity team that will allow greater focus of all the work that has been done up to now. BFRS has aimed to gain expertise from outside the Fire Service to bring in new skills and knowledge. It has also been identified that there would be an advantage to supporting this expertise from within the organisation – specifically from operational personnel. This combination will combine knowledge of Equality and Diversity and the Fire Service which will increase the effectiveness with which Equality and Diversity can be taken forward.

The team has received strong support from leading members of the Fire Authority and the CFO demonstrating the corporate commitment from the top of the organisation. This support has resulted in the team being able, in quite a short time, to develop an updated Equality and Diversity Policy and the organisation's first Corporate Single Equality Scheme. Both of these have incorporated all of the statutory six strands. The Single Equality Scheme has gone out for consultation to partners, representative bodies and all staff and includes the Organisation's Equality and Diversity action plan and each department's prioritisation for their People Impact Assessments. BFRS is aiming to consolidate all its past work by achieving level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG) by the end of the financial year.

The Diversity Working Group has also been reviewed so that all staff are represented. Cllr Mary Baldwin now chairs this group in order to demonstrate elected Members' commitment to the diversity agenda. This will allow an effective two-way transmission of Equality and Diversity information and improve the organisation's commitment to this. The intention is for the Working Group to incorporate Equality and Diversity in all aspects of the Service and not restrict most of the activity to the E&D team.

To further support Equality and Diversity within the organisation use will be made of the BFRS intranet and the development of an Equality and Diversity bulletin so that all staff can become fully engaged in the corporate commitment. Staff training will be further developed by considering the possibility of e-learning based upon information that will be gained from a cultural audit of all staff.