

# Our Commitment to Inclusion and Equality



## 2022 Equality Information Report – DRAFT (subject to approval, Plain English and design being added)

### Introduction

Creating an environment in which every member of our team at Essex County Fire and Rescue Service can flourish, is essential to us delivering the very best service we can to the people that live, work, and travel in Essex.

In this report, we will share what we did throughout 2022 to be an inclusive employer, because when we include everyone, we create the opportunity for differences to be understood and proudly celebrated. We believe that every employee has the right to be treated fairly and inclusively with kindness, equality, dignity, and respect. We are committed to providing a supportive and inclusive working environment to promote this.

We want colleagues to feel valued and contribute to our vision to be one of the best Fire and Rescue Services in the Country. We know that diversity enables greater creativity and innovation if people can be open and honest about their strengths, experience, and knowledge. This is why we promote a positive culture; every one of our colleagues is unique, so it is important that they feel that they can be themselves.

That way, they are more likely to speak up and share their thoughts, needs, or perspective, highlighting what others may not have considered or be aware of. This is how diversity adds real value to our service, improving how we do things, informing our policy, practice and decision making and expanding our collective knowledge so that we provide equal access, opportunities, and outcomes and get it right for our communities.

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## Our Fire and Rescue Plan

Our Fire and Rescue Plan confirms that promoting a positive culture in the workplace and continuously improving the diversity of our workforce are key priorities for our Service. It also states that we will work in collaboration with our partners, make the best use of our resources, develop, and broaden the roles and activities we undertake and be transparent, open, and accessible. By doing so, we will help the vulnerable to stay safe, improve safety on our roads and provide the right services for all our communities through our Prevention and Protection activities and when we respond to incidents.

Click here to view our Fire and Rescue Plan: [fire\\_and\\_rescue\\_plan.pdf \(essex-fire.gov.uk\)](#)

## Our Public Sector Equality Duty

We commit to providing an equal service because it is the right thing to do. However, as a Public Service, we also have a legal duty to do so. The Equality Duty was developed to harmonise the equality duties and to extend it across the protected characteristics. It consists of a general Equality Duty, supported by specific duties which are imposed by secondary legislation. In summary, our Service 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 sometimes referred to as the three aims or arms of the general Equality Duty. The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics;
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people;
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The Equality Duty covers the nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Public authorities also need to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination against someone because of their marriage or civil partnership status. This means that the first aim of the duty applies to this characteristic but that the other aims (advancing equality and fostering good relations) do not apply.

Click here for further information on the Public Sector Equality Duty:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty>

## Our Equality Objectives

As part of our Equality Duty, we set equality objectives to continuously improve and monitor our progress. Our equality objectives from 2018 – 2022 were:

1. To improve the recruitment, retention, progression, development, and experience of the people employed by Essex County Fire and Rescue Service to enable the organisation to become an inclusive employer of choice.
2. To promote and encourage employees to voluntarily declare their self-classification diversity data to ensure ECFRS actions as an employer are evidence led and improvement focused.
3. To improve the mapping, quality, and extent of equality information to better facilitate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty in relation to service delivery including IRMP additional activities.
4. To review the equality impact of key organisational policies for differential impact in areas such as: recruitment and selection, learning and development, absence management, modified duties, talent management, appraisal, disciplinary and grievance.
5. To ensure that all staff are treated with dignity and respect and have a workplace that is free from harassment and bullying by changing the culture of the organisation to one that is genuinely inclusive. All employees are high performing because we value their differences, which includes gender or gender identity, race, or religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, pregnancy, caring responsibilities, or membership of a trade union.
6. To seek external review, challenge, and accreditation of ECFRS' actions as an employer by actively participating with relevant equalities standards and benchmarks including the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework

In this annual report, we provide an overview of our progress against our objectives, and our activities to deliver our Fire and Rescue Plan and provide an equal service to our communities.

## Our Progress

- 1. To improve the recruitment, retention, progression, development, and experience of the people employed by Essex County Fire and Rescue Service to enable the organisation to become an inclusive employer of choice.**

## Taking Positive Action to grow diversity in our Service

We proudly promote a culture of inclusivity in our recruitment processes and take positive action as described in section 158 of the Equality Act 2010 to attract greater diversity to our vacancies, to continue to grow the skills, knowledge and lived experience in our workforce.

Like all Fire and Rescue Services in the Country, our workforce does not currently reflect the diversity of our communities in our County. However, by promoting a positive culture, actively engaging with our communities, sharing activity and progress, and taking opportunities to reach younger people throughout the County, we can make a difference to the diversity of people we attract to our varied roles, including our apprenticeships, cadet opportunities and voluntary positions.

Throughout 2022, we applied positive action principles to all recruitment activity across the Service, to attract people from groups that are currently underrepresented in our Service.

In November 2022, we hosted a Positive Action Development Day to consider good practice, identify solutions and collaborative opportunities to achieve shared goals with our Public Service partners across Essex and the East of England.

The day was led by colleagues from the Asian Fire Service Association who support Fire and Rescue Services to achieve their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives.

## Applications

We know from our data that our vacancies attract diverse candidates, however, the diversity of our applicants does not yet represent the diversity of our communities in Essex.

We monitor our recruitment and selection data for equality of opportunity and to understand if any diverse groups may experience barriers or disproportionate outcomes in our processes.

In 2022, we received 2872 applications for our vacancies, of those applicants, the following data was shared:

- 387 applicants are female (13.2%)
- 149 applicants identified as an ethnic minority (5.2%)
- 503 applicants are under 25 years of age (17.5%)
- 54 applicants identify as LGBTQ+ (1.9%)
- 100 applicants told us they have a disability (3.5%)

## New Joiners

A total of 183 new colleagues joined our workforce in 2022, of our new joiners, the following data was shared:

- 42 people are female (23%)
- 14 people are an ethnic minority (11%)
- 27 people are under 25 years of age (14.8%)
- 6 people told us they are LGBTQ+ (3.3%)
- 6 people told us they have a disability (3.3%)

Our workforce shared diversity data profile can be found here: [Employee Profile by shared diversity data 31 March 2022.docx](#)

## Internship – Change 100

Over the summer months of 2022 the prevention department welcomed Skie Hewitt to the team. Skie joined the team as an intern from the Change 100 programme for a 3-month placement. Change 100 is a flagship programme of paid summer work placements, professional development and mentoring led by Leonard Cheshire who match talented university students and recent graduates with any disability or long-term condition with progressive employers.

Skie's academic skills and diversity of thought combined with her lived experience of sight loss enabled Skie to produce insightful qualitative reports and recommendations, She considered subjects from the perspective of those experience sight loss and produced reports on the impact of Neurodivergence, and accessibility for our Museum site. Skie immersed herself into her work and our team with a keen willingness to learn from her experience and educate others. Skie openly shared her experiences and wrote a piece for our Inclusion Insights monthly e-newsletter, inspiring others to be their authentic selves throughout the organisation.

Skie left a legacy with her colleagues in our Service, not only in her reports and recommendations, but also by educating us and demonstrating that disability doesn't define us. Skie is the second intern we have engaged through Leonard Cheshire, we look forward to welcoming a third in 2023.

## Development and Progression

Our approach to Leadership Resourcing and Succession provides everyone the opportunity to work towards achieving their career goals.

In 2022, 199 of our colleagues participated in our Leadership, Resourcing and Succession development programme.

Equality monitoring revealed that, of the 199:

- 23 colleagues identified as female (11%);
- 4 colleagues identified their gender as non-binary or other (2%) ;
- 11 colleagues identified that they are an ethnic minority (5%);
- 13 colleagues told us that they have a disability (6%) .

We offer coaching to all colleagues and provide access to internal, external and we work with Genius Within to provide coaching tailored to the needs of neurodivergent thinkers. In 2022, 12 colleagues accessed coaching via Genius Within and 90 colleagues accessed an external coach. In 2023 we look forward to having additional development offering for colleagues who are under-represented throughout the Service.

## Promotions

In 2022, 119 people were promoted in our Service.

Equality monitoring revealed that:

- 26 colleagues identified as female (21%);2 colleagues identified as an ethnic minority (1.6%);
- 6 colleagues told us that they have a disability (5%)



We review development and promotions data for proportionality against our workforce data to identify where positive action may be required to ensure equality of opportunity.

2. To promote and encourage employees to voluntarily declare their self-classification diversity data to ensure ECFRS actions as an employer are evidence led and improvement focused.

## Data and Equality Monitoring

We undertake equality monitoring however acknowledge that not everyone declares their personal information.

Whilst gaps remain in our Equality Data, particularly for Sexual Orientation, we are pleased that a greater proportion of colleagues shared their data in 2022.

The tables below provide a comparison of the number and percentage of colleagues that had not yet shared their data, for each category at the end of 2021 and at the end of 2022:

### December 2021:

| Category           | Total employees Not Stated | % of employees Not Stated |
|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Gender             | 60                         | 4%                        |
| Ethnicity          | 282                        | 19%                       |
| Sexual Orientation | 426                        | 28%                       |
| Religion or Belief | 412                        | 27%                       |

### December 2022:

| Category           | Total employees Not Stated | % of employees Not Stated |
|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Gender             | 54                         | 3.5%                      |
| Ethnicity          | 259                        | 17%                       |
| Sexual Orientation | 398                        | 26%                       |
| Religion or Belief | 383                        | 25%                       |

Our workforce profile by shared diversity data can be found here: [Employee Profile by shared diversity data 31 March 2022.docx](#)

We are proportionate in our approach to collecting personal information, and commit to continue to educate people in the benefit of providing their data to enable us to monitor for potential inequalities. This report provides examples of how our data informs us.

We continue to encourage declaration by demonstrating our prioritisation of Inclusion and Equality, by being open, honest, and transparent in the use of data provided and by giving assurance that data is handled in accordance with Data Protection Law.

**3. To improve the mapping, quality, and extent of equality information in order to better facilitate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty in relation to service delivery including IRMP additional activities.**

In our Prevention team, we focus on different aspects of vulnerability, working with partners such as Essex County Council and unitary authority areas on shared goals to reduce vulnerability and risk within our communities.

Improving the data we collect and access, helps us to understand and meet needs to reduce risk.

We visited 7,150 residents through our home fire safety checks and safe & well visit services. Raising awareness of fire risk in our HFSC's along with home security and health & wellbeing information through our Safe & Well visit service.

When separated into groups, considering vulnerability, the data that was shared confirmed:

- 52% of people were over the age of 75;
  - 25% of people were over the age 65;
  - 37% of people lived alone;
  - 30% considered they have a disability;
  - 15% had some level of sensory loss (sight & hearing);
  - 5% who were restricted to bed or single room usage.
- \*(Some visits may have involved persons experiencing one or more of the above groups categories during the engagement.)*

Ethnicity data captured from our visits confirmed that:

- 78% identified as white British;
- 7% identified as an ethnic minority or white other;
- 6% preferred not to say;
- 9% were not captured

We are continually improving the ways that we collate meaningful proportionate disaggregated data, information and knowledge about our communities to reduce risk.

We, like other Public Services have been eagerly awaiting the publication of the Census 2021 data. As the data is published, we are working with Essex County Council and other partners to create meaningful information to support our Service delivery and consider how this impacts the risks that exist within different communities and groups of people by using the data and other information to inform our People Impact Assessments and develop our Community Risk Management Plan.

Our partnership work continues to develop and grow, we are working with over 150 organisations across Greater Essex to reduce vulnerability and risk on matters such as:

- Social Isolation & loneliness
- Socio economic and health inequalities
- Language & literacy needs
- Frailty
- Mental health

We know that vulnerability doesn't discriminate which is why in addition to collecting data where appropriate, we prioritise engaging with our communities, learning and adapting through our conversations with individuals, groups, charities, public service partners and organisations.

Our approach to engagement reflects our integrity to provide a Fire & Rescue Service that meets the needs of its diverse communities to the best of our abilities. The relationships & partnerships we create support our vision to make Essex a safe place to live, work and travel for all.

- 4. To review the equality impact of key organisational policies for differential impact in areas such as: recruitment and selection, learning and development, absence management, modified duties, talent management, appraisal, disciplinary and grievance.**

## People Impact Assessments

We conduct People Impact Assessments when we create and review policies, to consider inclusive improvements we can make and to identify any action required to mitigate risk of discrimination or disadvantage. We use information, data and evidence to consider impacts that may occur for different groups of people and ask our employee forums and representative bodies to provide feedback.

We also conduct People Impact Assessments as part of our strategic decision-making process; every formal decision includes a people impact assessment.

We listened to feedback from our colleagues as we wanted to improve the quality and quantity of People Impact Assessments, as we embed good practice. We introduced a People Impact Assessment Hub offering an accessible centralised digital solution that can be accessed by all colleagues. The hub includes forms, guidance, data and information and a centralised library for our People Impact Assessments to be reviewed and stored.

In addition, we are developing an app to improve the way that our colleagues complete People Impact Assessments by making the task easier and can be completed on a range of digital devices, so that we make the best use of our resources. The app will be available for use in 2023.

## Embedding Inclusive Policies

Over the year, we made a number of changes to our Policies to be more inclusive of diverse needs and ensure equality of opportunity for our employees.

Our **Recruitment Policy** was published and provides a framework of inclusive good practice, principles and procedure, which will be applied within our recruitment and selection approaches to ensure fair and transparent outcomes.

We published our **Transitioning at Work Guidance** which provides support and direction to ensure fairness, dignity confidentiality and respect of transgender employees.

We published our Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy and Safeguarding Children Policies, supported by mandatory training for all colleagues.

Our **Grievance Policy** was reviewed to provide clarity on appeals.



We revised our **Acting Up and Temporary Promotions Policy** to include support colleagues. This policy provides clarity on how to support temporary promotion opportunities, temporary promotions can be a great way to develop people to progress within our Service.

Our **Paternity Leave Policy** was amended to be more inclusive of same sex couples.

Our **Attendance Policy** was reviewed following feedback, we made improvements to the layout and provided additional guidance to help managers undertake informal attendance review meetings. The Service has also committed to undertake impact assessments prior to any reduction in pay due to sickness absence.

During the last quarter of 2022, we reviewed 3 policies that will be published in early 2023, following their consultation periods:

Our **Special Leave Policy** which supports our Family Friendly Charter.

We fully support family friendly legislation and are committed to providing policies and practices, which allow employees to balance work and home responsibilities.

The aim of this policy is to give guidance to both managers and employees on the range of circumstances in which Special Leave may be granted, with or without pay. We aim to be inclusive and supportive of individual needs, this includes religious observance, extended family visits, breaks or trips, supporting disabled people and carers, enabling blood donors and live donors as well as the provision of compassionate leave and parental bereavement leave.

We believe that by the employer and the employee discussing and agreeing workable solutions, we enable fairness and consistency and inclusive outcomes.

Our **Dignity at Work Policy** was reviewed and now includes the Core Code of Ethics.

We renamed it as our Dignity and Inclusion Policy. We believe that individuals have the right to be treated with equality, dignity and respect in the workplace and are committed to providing a supportive and inclusive working environment to foster such a culture.

More information on the Core Code of Ethics can be accessed by following this link: <https://www.ukfrs.com/core-code-ethics>

Lastly, we created our Modern Slavery Policy and revised our Statement. The **Modern Slavery Policy and Statement**, created in accordance with Modern Slavery Act 2015, sets out the steps taken by our Service to prevent modern slavery and human trafficking in our business and supply chains.

- 5. To ensure that all staff are treated with dignity and respect and have a workplace that is free from harassment and bullying by changing the culture of the organisation to one that is genuinely inclusive. All employees are high performing because we value their differences, which includes gender or gender identity, race, or religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, pregnancy, caring responsibilities, or membership of a trade union.**

In March, our Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive Rick Hylton announced Inclusion and Equality as one of our Service Priorities to embed inclusive practice into all areas of our Service.

To continue our cultural development, embed good practice, create inclusive working environments, we introduced new mandatory training modules for all colleagues including Dignity at Work, Core Code of Ethics and Safeguarding.

So far, completion rates for each module are:

- **Dignity at Work** - 88% of employees
- **Core Code of Ethics** - 89% of employees
- **Safeguarding** – 90% of employees

In addition, we worked with our partners at Inclusive Employers to provide training aimed at all colleagues aligned to their leadership level within the Leadership Framework.

Inclusive Language and Behaviours training for colleagues with no management responsibility are considered as 'Leading Self'.

Inclusive Line Managers training for colleagues Leading Others and Inclusive Leaders training for colleagues leading functions or leading the Service.

The number of attendees for each level of training was:

- Inclusive Language and Behaviours – 73 people
- Inclusive Line Managers – 84 people
- Inclusive Leaders – 100 people

This training will continue in 2023.

Our Employee Forums and Dignity and Inclusion Advocates provide peer support and a listening ear for anyone in our Service that is experiencing or has witnessed unacceptable behaviour and will signpost to relevant policies to ensure appropriate action is taken.

Our employee forums provide peer support and offer an opportunity to gain from lived experience, perspective and expertise which informs our policy, practice and decision making. Forums provide a way for us to understand the needs of people in our service and aids retention. We value the voice of our people and encourage feedback and contribution from everyone.

Our forums are open to all colleagues, regardless of personal identity with encouragement for allies to participate, to aid learning and understanding. Each Forum is supported by a member of our Senior Leadership Team as their sponsor providing opportunity for employee feedback to be considered in strategic planning and decision making.

Chairs of our networks can be contacted in confidence by any individual that requires specific support or guidance, in addition to line managers and our Inclusion and Diversity team.

## **Our Employee Forums:**

- Women's Forum
- Ethnic Minority Forum
- Being – our LGBTQI+ Forum

We held three learning events led by our Employee Forums in collaboration with Essex Police and East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust this year:

- International Women's Day Conference
- International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOBIT) Conference
- International Men's Day Conference

We are developing a Men's Forum in 2023 following the success, feedback and agreed actions from our International Men's Day event.

All our learning events include consideration of intersectionality and speakers and topics cover a range of diversity, lived experience, information, and perspective. We acknowledge diversity is not one dimensional, we aim to be evidence led in the education and information and encourage a person-centred approach.

We are planning a Race Equality Event in February 2023 to develop a Race Action Plan as part of our Race at Work Charter progression.

We are members of the following national Fire and Rescue networks and membership organisations:

- Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA);
- Women in the Fire Service (WFS);
- Inclusive Employers;
- Business Disability Forum.

Essex County Fire and Rescue are also members of the Faith Covenant Steering Group in Essex which provides access to information and support on matters relating to Religion and Belief, working in partnership with Faith Leaders and other Public Services to support our Communities and steer us to get it right for our colleagues.

Given the gap in our workforce Equality Data, we take a Multi Faith approach to educating our colleagues about Religion and Belief in Essex and wider society.

Our Leaders are encouraged to get to know the needs of people in their teams and meet their needs in relation to religion or belief where possible, employees are able to take leave for religious observance.

For colleagues that wear uniform, we provide options to meet individual needs related to gender, race, religion, or belief, including veganism as well as any specific health requirements, as long as safety standards can be maintained. We work with colleagues to identify solutions to meet their needs.

We know that Inclusion is a feeling, we want all colleagues to feel included and free to educate us on anything that creates a barrier for them.

We thank all of our partners for supporting us to continuously improve the way that we include people to meet their diverse needs and ensure equality.

- 6. To seek external review, challenge, and accreditation of ECFRS' actions as an employer by actively participating with relevant equalities standards and benchmarks including the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework**

In March 2022, the Service achieved bronze status in the Inclusive Employers Standard - another important step for our inclusion, diversity and equality work.

The standard, which is only awarded to a handful of organisations in both the public and private sectors, helps us to assess how effective our inclusion work is and provides detailed feedback to enable further development and progress of our Inclusion and Diversity priorities.

Our Service joined the likes of Asda, Sony, Bank of England and Serco in receiving the accreditation.

Colette Black, Director of People Services, said: “To achieve bronze status is a great step forward for our Service and recognises the commitment we are making to valuing all our people. We are on an exciting journey to becoming a more diverse and inclusive place of work that represents the people of Essex.”



Colette added: “This independent verification shows that we have strong foundations in place and provides a clear plan for us as a Service to achieve silver and gold in the future.”

The Inclusive Employers Standard supports organisations to assess progress with their inclusion journey and award those meeting the Inclusive Employers Standard with accreditation. It is an evidence-based, objective, accreditation tool for assessing and promoting inclusion in the workplace developed and run by Inclusive Employers. Rupert Moyne, MD - Corporate Services at Inclusive Employers, said: “Huge congratulations to all of the amazing organisations who took part in the latest round of the Inclusive Employers Standard.

“This round saw almost one third of participants coming from organisations that had taken part previously and wanting to measure the progress they have achieved since the last time (and looking to improve their accreditation level).

“The great thing about the Inclusive Employers Standard is that participation works for organisations at all stages of their journey to workplace inclusion.”

Feedback from our submission has helped us to set new goals and informed the development of our new Equality Objectives which were created in partnership with the Asian Fire Service Association who support Fire and Rescue Services throughout the UK on their Inclusion and Diversity progression.

## **Our New Equality Objectives:**

We have set four new Equality Objectives for 2022 – 2024, these came into effect on 1st September 2022.

Our New Equality Objectives:

1. We will consistently demonstrate ‘due regard’ (give genuine attention and thought) to equality and diversity in our organisation and aim to be leading practitioners of workplace diversity and inclusion across Essex.
2. We will invest in a diverse workforce with the skills, knowledge and attitude needed to build a culture of diversity and inclusion.

3. We will deliver inclusive evidence-based services that show 'due regard' when assessing risks and behaviour in the community, to help make sure services are accessible and fair to everyone.
4. Demonstrate community-focused leadership by working in partnership and making the most of our presence in the region to stress the importance of socio-economic factors and how they affect both employment and services.

Progress and performance will be monitored by the People Strategy Project Board and Portfolio Management Board. Activity will be coordinated and delivered by our Inclusion and Diversity Action Group.

We will provide an update on our progress in our next Commitment to Inclusion and Equality Report.

## **Community Engagement Activities**

Prevention engagement can be challenging if we take a generic approach. Often there may be those who do not benefit from the way the information is delivered or shared. This can be for a variety of reasons, however, the importance of delivering meaningful outcomes to provide equal opportunity to all citizens of Essex is a priority for us.

Our Values to work as One Team and to value the contribution of all enables diversity of thought which leads to inclusion and we believe that inclusion creates equality and fairness.

Below we provide an insight into some of the ongoing work, considering inclusion and diversity that enables equal opportunity and helps to identify any potential risk of inequality or disadvantage for us to overcome, at the earliest opportunity.

During 2021-2022 there were 14 fatal fire incidents across greater Essex. With every serious and fatal fire incident ECFRS develop a Serious After Incident Report, which gathers as much information as possible relating to that incident.

Analysis identified commonalities in these incidents that allowed a model to be developed. It was discovered that three key areas, relating to a person's health & behaviour, would significantly increase the risk of serious or fatal harm injury resulting from a fire with persons experiencing challenges in the following:

- Mental wellbeing
- Physical wellbeing
- The Home environment

This discovery enabled prevention colleagues the opportunity to focus on those experiencing these effects along with:

- the increased likelihood of a fire occurring (poor risk behaviours and habits)  
and
- the decreased likelihood of escape if a fire were to occur (mobility, hoarding etc.)

Prevention colleagues reached out to others working in our communities, to “join the dots” in identifying those they were in contact with daily, that would benefit from our home fire safety visit services.

We delivered awareness to almost 500 individuals in 2022 that are involved in daily activities and services supporting those more vulnerable in our communities. They enable us to increase our opportunities of recognising the fire risk, recognising the most vulnerable to the risk of fire and are equipped to refer directly into our intervention services, offered through our home safety visits.

This has enabled us to discover and connect with those most vulnerable before we meet them at crises.

## Our Museum

Our Museum, located at the rear of Gray’s Fire Station, had a busy year in 2022 with over 6,000 people visiting , learning about the history of the fire service in Essex as well as fire safety tips to stay safe in their homes.

As well as the general public events and openings the museum team has also run a number of events and targeted group activities aimed at young children, older persons, cultural communities, those with learning disabilities, sensory loss and those experiencing cognitive loss.

An ECFRS firefighter from the Hungarian community arranged for the MAKI Hungarian Club community to visit and experience what the museum offers. They were able to receive fire safety information, ask questions all supported by Firefighter Zsolt Nagy who provided translation for community members to improve understanding.

As part of the museum working towards achieving Dementia Friendly status, with the Thurrock Dementia Action Alliance and Alzheimer’s Society, the Museum staff and volunteers have become dementia friends. This will support the experience for those visiting the museum living with, or supporting those, with the effects of dementia.



## Prevention Awareness & Training in Inclusion, Diversity & Equality

Diversity in our communities across Essex is growing. Some of those diverse community groups are well established and connected into our services, yet we know that there are still some that we could work better with and some new emerging communities we need to introduce ourselves to.

Our various prevention teams are engaging daily with our citizens across the county of Essex, so it's important they are aware and confident in delivering their services effectively for all in our communities.

Our connections in areas such as the Essex Faith Covenant, Essex Cultural Diversity Project & Essex Equality Network, provides us the opportunity of engagement we seek into some of the groups that may be disconnected by choice or situation from ECFRS.

Participating and engaging educates and informs us in matters such as cultural awareness, appropriate service delivery and discovery of high risk environments associated with certain cultural practices.

When we know better, we do better....

What this also provides is the opportunity to deliver evidenced based awareness and training in meaningful subjects, as well as those of the statutory organisational needs. In the period of 2022, the focus areas were:

- Digital Exclusion in our communities
- Neurodiversity
- Dementia
- Equality Act and the Public Sector Equality Duty responsibilities
- Equality objectives
- Our Service Values
- Core Code of Ethics
- People Impact Assessments

These support the overall development of inclusive services, that deliver fair opportunity to all in our communities, considering our prevention activities.

## Engaging with our Muslim communities

Crews from Chelmsford Fire Station, members of our Service Leadership Team and colleagues joined a special open day at Chelmsford Mosque on Saturday 12 November.

Pictured right: Dr Muhammad Ahsan, Community Safety Officer with crews from Chelmsford Fire Station.



The event was open to the public to learn more about Islamic faith and was a chance to ask Muslims in our community questions, as well as visit the mosque.

Pictured right: Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive Rick Hylton, Deputy Chief Fire Officer Moira Bruin, Inclusion and Diversity Partner Nikki Hudson, Inclusion and Partnerships Manager Paul Pemberton, Dr Muhammed Ahsan with colleagues from Essex Police.



## Violence Against Women and Girls

Our Women's Forum Lead Nicole Smy, our Service Leadership Team and colleagues united to highlight White Ribbon Day, which took place on Friday 25 November.

The campaign aims to end violence against women and girls – that's [#TheGoal](#) and asks you to sign the White Ribbon promise [here](#), as well asking allies to be an “upstander”, not a “bystander”.

Pictured at the Essex Police event: Nicole Smy, Sarah Taylor, Andy Waldie, Rachel Nolan, and Laura Stellan.



## Engaging with our LGBTQIA+ Communities

As part of the Pride celebrations, colleagues from our Service took part in the pride parade to Central Park in Chelmsford on Saturday, 25 June and Basildon Pride on 3 September.





Colette Black, Director of People Services, said: “It was amazing to walk alongside such a large group of people from both the LGBTQIA+ community and allies. Having the crowd supporting the fire service was really great. There is a lot of love for our Service being so inclusive.

“Our LGBTQIA+ employee network group BEING allows our LGBTQIA+ colleagues to have the chance to connect with each other. The group talks about what Pride means, and making sure it lasts beyond one day, and that is part of our Service on a daily basis.

## Armed Forces Covenant

Our Service signed the Armed Forces Covenant in June 2022, to pledge its support to members of the Armed Forces Community. The covenant recognises the Service’s commitment to ensure the fair treatment of all staff who have served or will serve in the Armed Forces, and their families. Since signing the pledge we have:



- Publicised our Armed Forces Covenant commitments through our website on the home page and also on the [www.join.essex-fire.gov.uk](http://www.join.essex-fire.gov.uk) recruitment pages.
- Committed to support colleagues who choose to be members of the reserve forces. We accommodate reservists’ training commitments wherever possible; this includes paid special leave for periods of up to two weeks of training, including annual camp. The Reservists Policy can be found here: [Reservists \(msapproxy.net\)](http://msapproxy.net)
- On Friday 11 November, at 11am, our colleagues at our stations and Service Headquarters paused to mark Armistice Day. On Remembrance Sunday 13 November, firefighters, officers, and fire cadets also attended Remembrance events across our County and at the Cenotaph in London.

## Reward, Recognition and Awards

### Our Annual People Awards

We were delighted to be able to hold our annual People Awards in person in on 30 March, it was great to be able to Celebrate our People and their achievements.

### Our award categories are:

- Employee of the Year
- Team of the Year

- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Award
- Excellence in Innovation
- Inspirational Leader
- Unsung Hero

### AFSA Personal Fair & Diverse Awards

Colleagues from our Service were runners-up at the Asian Fire Service Association – Personal Fair and Diverse Awards held on 23 November – jointly hosted with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.



Congratulations to our colleagues nominated for their commitment to inclusion and diversity within our Service and making a difference on our journey.

Those recognised include:

Our **On-Call Liaison (OCLO) Team** for their work to attract greater diversity in our On-Call firefighter recruitment activities – Kirk Collins, Kim Polley, Steven Perry, Sharon Blute, Steve Osborn, Laura Taylor and Steve Wintrip.

**Group Manager Dave Bond** was nominated as our Equality Role Model of the Year for many inclusion and diversity activities that he supported and led over the past 12 months, including our Meet our Firefighters online sessions, a careers day for college students and our first International Men's Day Conference.

**Watch Manager Paul Pemberton**, our Inclusion and Partnerships Manager, for Prevention, was nominated as our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champion for the amazing work he does with our Prevention Team and partners to ensure that we provide Inclusive Prevention activities that ensure equality for our communities.

## Excellence in Fire and Emergency Services Awards

Firefighter Matt Hill, pictured below, won the Most Influential LGBTQ+ Individual in Fire Award at today's Excellence in Fire and Emergency Awards 2022.

"During his career, Matt has made a huge contribution to promoting and supporting LGBTQ+ colleagues in Essex County Fire and Rescue Service. He has helped to raise the profile of topical issues and kept LGBTQ+ firmly in the spotlight. He attended a number of Pride events in Essex over the summer and encouraged colleagues from across our Service to take part too."

Matt chaired BEING, our Service's LGBTQ+ employee forum, for six years, as well as being an active member of our Women's Forum and supporting our Inclusion and Diversity Action Group.

We were finalists for two awards at the ceremony this year. Donna Bentley, Head of Safeguarding was shortlisted for the Most Influential Woman in Fire Award.



## We've been shortlisted for the Children and Young People Award at the National Fire Chiefs Council's first ever Celebrating Prevention Awards.



Our *In Her Shoes* initiative, which is being delivered as part of our Firebreak programme, focused on the specific theme of engaging with 13 to 17-year-olds to address public safety issues, in particular those that affect women and girls.

In practice, this saw trained colleagues delivering classroom-based sessions on the consequences of behaviours. They also have conversations with young people during breaks and downtime, for example over lunchtime, focusing on safety issues for women and girls.

It aims to develop empathy in young men towards women and girls, to understand how educational training aimed at young men can improve the feeling of safety for women and girls and to change attitudes towards improving safety for women and girls in the Essex area.



It focuses on lesser forms of violence against women and girls such as cat calling, inappropriate comments, harassment, cyber bullying and much more.

Four courses have been delivered by our firefighters in the last six months, to more than 40 school children.

We are proud of all that we continue to do to keep the people that live work and travel in Essex safe.

More details and information about our activities and progress across the Service can be found in our Annual Report, which can be accessed by following this link:

<https://www.essex-fire.gov.uk/about-us>