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Meeting	Performance & Resources Board	Agenda no.	10
Meeting Date	29 September 2023		
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Presented By	Colette Black, Director of People Services		
Subject	Equality Objectives Progress Update		
Type of Report	Information		
PFCC Action Point No.	N/A	For Publication	Yes

RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Board are asked to note the progress made on our Strategic Equality Objectives, part of our Public Sector Equality Duty 2011.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Delivery is progressing against each of the Equality Objectives.

BACKGROUND

In 2022, we worked with JS Associates as part of our Partnership with the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) to review and reset our Public Sector Equality Duty Objectives. Following consultation, we agreed the following 4 Strategic Equality Objectives for our Service:

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.

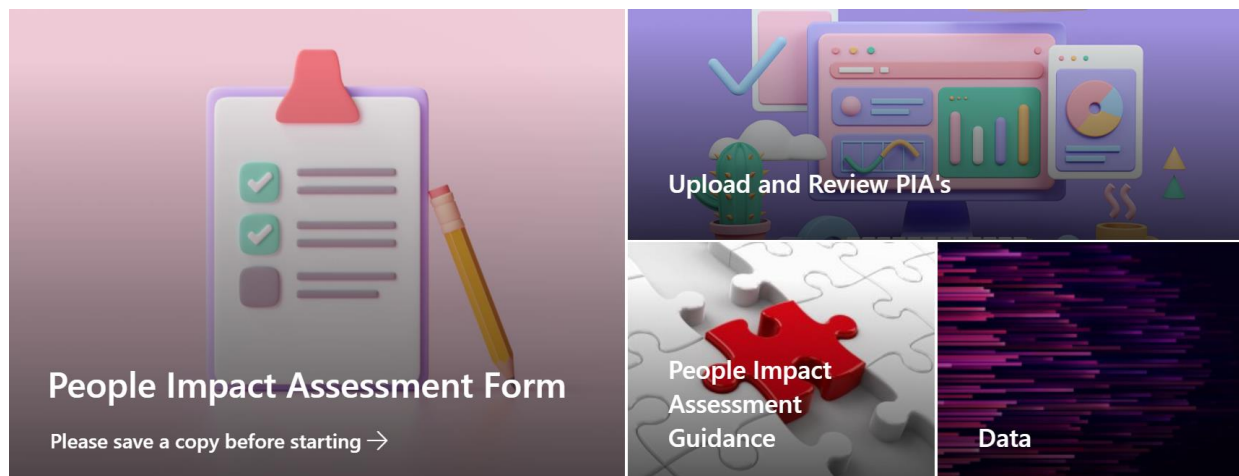
PROGRESS

Equality Objective 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.

We have developed a new accessible self -service intranet area for Inclusion, Diversity and Equality, which includes our new People Impact Assessment (PIA) Hub. People Impact Assessments are the key tool that we use to demonstrate ‘Due Regard’ as part of our Public Sector Equality Duty.

The PIA Hub has been created to include a central library of completed People Impact Assessments and a helpful ‘One Stop Shop’ for those needing to complete a new PIA, including access to the PIA Form, Guidance documents and Data files and sources:



Completed PIA's are reviewed and quality assured by our Inclusion & Diversity Team, and any Mitigating Actions are centrally recorded and monitored.

Over the past 12 months, a key focus has been to improve the quality of our People Impact Assessments, by improving the confidence and knowledge of our people and improving our processes:

- We have provided 17 one to one and group coaching sessions to improve understanding of the purpose of a PIA and how to complete a quality assessment.
- We are continuously improving the data we collect and access, to provide our evidence-base, and measure impacts.
- We review completed People Impact Assessments, providing comments and questions to the author to further improve the quality and value of the assessment;
- We have completed and reviewed 48 People Impact Assessments, which can be located in our Library;
- There are currently 15 People Impact Assessments awaiting further action by authors, following review;
- We have designed and built an App to improve how we create, review and monitor People Impact Assessments, which is due to be launched at the end of September 2023.
- The PIA App includes a number of improvements including a reporting tool, providing a central record of the mitigating actions identified and enabling

greater visibility and accountability, so that we are reducing the risk of discrimination and becoming more inclusive, together.

We are members of Inclusive Employers, a leading membership organisation for employers that aspire to grow and develop inclusive workplaces and cultures. In 2021/2022, we completed our first Inclusive Employers Standard Assessment, a thorough evidence based independent verification of our achievements and progress and were proudly awarded Bronze.

Two years on, we are currently undertaking our second Standard Assessment, to be submitted in December 2023, results will be shared in March 2024.

Our Inclusion and Diversity Business Partner is an active participant in the Essex Equality Network, attended by Public Services across Essex, (including Thurrock and Southend) and is also a member of a recently established a working group to develop a Community of Practice, a key opportunity to collaborate and lead well on Inclusion, Diversity and Equality in Essex.

Equality Objective 2:

We will invest in a diverse workforce with the skills, knowledge and attitude needed to build a culture of diversity and inclusion.

We continue to undertake Positive Action in our attraction and recruitment activities to attract people representing greater diversity. Our primary focus is on women for Firefighter roles, and ethnic minorities and age (under 25) for all roles. Additionally, we take opportunities to engage and attract people that identify as LGBTQ+, or that have a Disability, as defined by the Equality Act 2010, including Neurodivergence.

We undertake Equality monitoring; all applicants are encouraged to share their personal equality data at the outset of their application process. We actively monitor each stage of our recruitment processes for outcomes to identify any differential impacts or risks of discrimination.

Positive Action

AFSA Review and Recommendations:

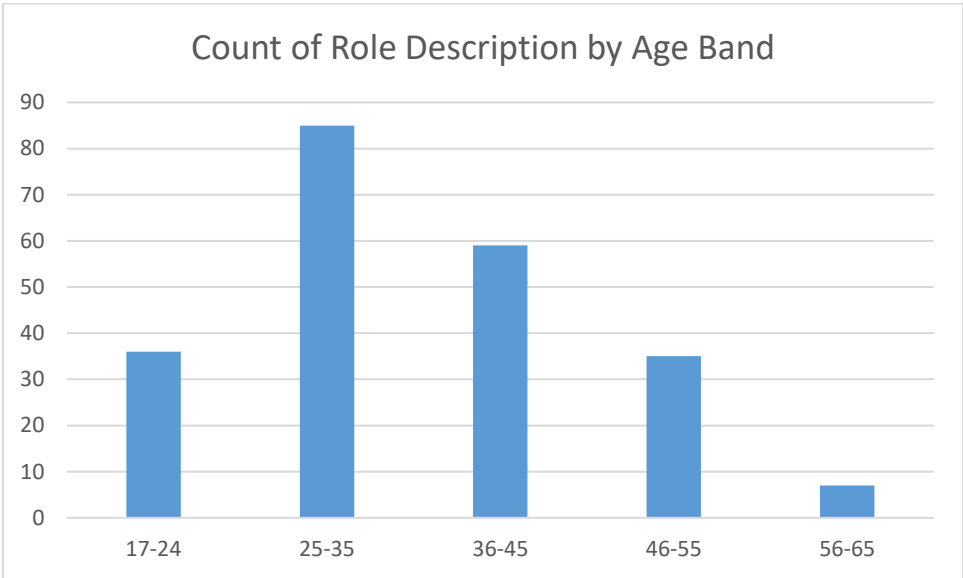
Following AFSA's report into our recruitment practices, an action plan was implemented. On completion of the action plan, a series of review meetings and discussions were held with AFSA, who confirmed there was significant evidence of positive action and best-practice approaches to inclusive recruitment practices within ECFRS, and that there was no identified evidence of practices that were not inclusive, or that would be detrimental to any group of applicants of any protected characteristic.

The 2022 Positive Action plan defined four areas of focus: All, Age (under-25), Gender and Ethnicity.

Joiners

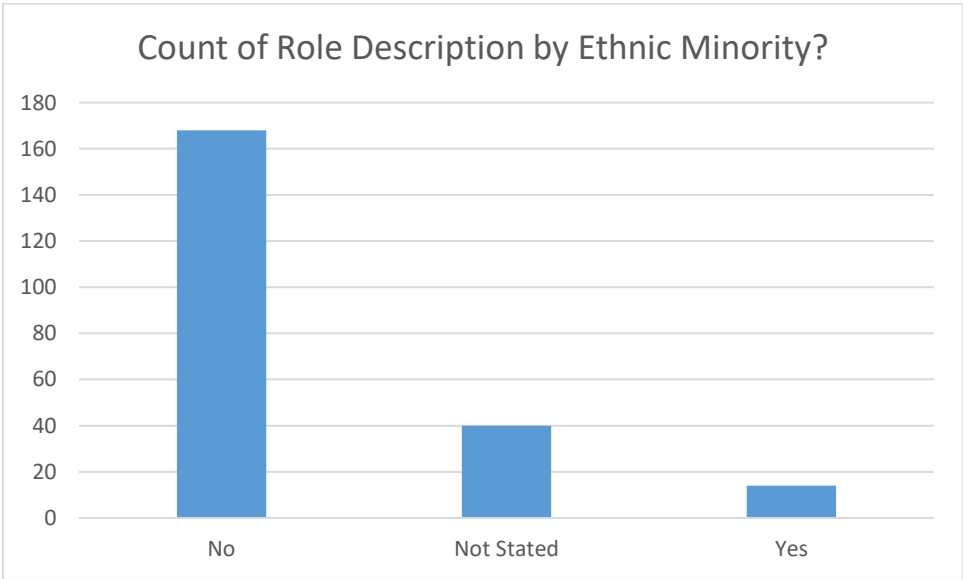
Between 1st September 2022 and 1st September 2023, we recruited 222 people in total.

Age



The majority of people we recruited were between 25 and 35 years of age, however, 15.7% of new starters (35 people) were from our target group of 17-24 years of age (under 25).

The 2021 Census confirmed that 5.2% (78,100) of Essex Residents are 20-24 years of age and 5.3% (79,700) of Essex residents are 15-19 years of age. Whilst the age bands used for Census reporting do not enable a like for like comparison, our selection data compares favourably with the Essex demographic of 15-24 year olds (10.5%). We have recruited people across all Age Bands over the past year.



Of the 222 people we recruited:

- 14 (6.3%) people shared that they are an Ethnic Minority, an increase from 2020/21 when it was just 2.8%.
- 40 (18%) people did not share their ethnicity.
- The Census 2021 revealed that 14.1% of people living in Essex are an Ethnic Minority.

Ethnic minorities continue to be underrepresented in our Service, however, our attraction and selection rates are improving.

Gender

Count of Gender	Column Labels					Grand Total
Row Labels	Control	On Call	Support	Wholetime	(blank)	Grand Total
Female	2	5	48	3		58
Male		86	25	52		163
Not Stated (blank)				1		1
Grand Total	2	91	73	56		222

- 58 (26.1%) of all new starters were female, an increase from 16% in 2020/21
- We recruited 8 Cisgender Females into our Firefighter roles (5.4% of all Firefighters recruited).
- 5 (5.5%) in On Call
- 3 (5.4%) Wholetime Firefighters.
- No joiners shared that they are Transgender or Non-Binary.
- 1 (1.8%) Wholetime Firefighter did not share their Gender.

Women continue to be underrepresented in our Service; however, our attraction and selection rates are improving.

Internship – Leonard Cheshire Change 100

Over the Summer of 2023, the Service engaged an intern as part of our partnership with Leonard Cheshire’s Change 100 Programme, which provides internships for graduates with a disability. Our Intern supported our Head of Resourcing by undertaking a review of our Positive Action activity, conducted some valuable research and reviewed case studies of similar organisations (including other Fire and Rescue Services), to inform an updated Positive Action & Inclusion approach and planning.

Providing an internship always provides mutual learning and our Intern this year has benefitted our recruitment team with her lived experience and knowledge of neurodiversity, reviewing our approach to reasonable adjustments and the information we provide applicants about neurodiversity. We are positive about neurodiversity and are continuously learning as we discover more about the talents and needs of the 15-20% of the population that are neurodivergent.

Learning, Development & Leadership

- Inclusion and Equality is a Service Priority
- Improved Governance
- Inclusive Behaviours mandatory training for every employee, launched 7th June 2023 (62.2% completed) We have a communication plan to improve completion further that will be shared by the end of September 2023.
- Mandatory Dignity at Work training in 2022/23 (91% completed)
- Inclusion & Diversity Input delivered to all WT recruits.
- Recruitment Assessors trained to recognise the effects of Bias.
- Inclusion Panels on Promotion Processes (CFO, DCFO, Director of Op's, AM, GM and SM)
- Neurodiversity Hub created on new Intranet.
- Neurodiversity Awareness learning package content created.
- Coaching for Neurodivergents via Genius Within
- Collaborative International Women's Day Conference
- Collaborative Race Equality Week Conference
- Collaborative International Men's Day Conference
- Asian Fire Service Association Events, Resources & Guidance
- Women in Fire Service Events, Resources & Guidance
- Inclusive Employers Guidance and Webinars
- Introduction of Springboard and Navigator Development Programmes
- Introduction of Monthly Inclusion, Equity & Ethics Group

Supporting our People

- Introduced and trained over 50 Dignity and Inclusion Advocates
- Digital Accessibility Inclusion Group (Digital & Data Strategy)
- Texthelp Read & Write Software available on all devices.
- Texthelp Read & Write 'Free for Family' introduced.
- Employee Forums
- Individual Needs Plan (Workplace Adjustments)
- Inclusion Insights
- Accessible Intranet launched.
- New Inclusion, Diversity Equality Intranet self-service area
- Dignity and Inclusion Policy (Code of Ethics embedded)
- Asian Fire Service Association Members
- Women in Fire Service Members
- Inclusive Employers Members
- Business Disability Forum Members

Equality Objective 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.

In addition to the achievements already shared regarding People Impact Assessments under Objective 1, which is key to this objective, the achievements to be inclusive of our diverse communities and provide an equitable Service include:

- We have commenced planning for our Community Risk Management Plan, and related Strategies, informed by Census and community data;
- Our People Impact Assessments are being utilised for Prevention and Protection activities and Operational Policy, informed by Census and community data;
- We are making effective use of Census Data to better understand potential language barriers, to be more accessible to our Communities
- We are actively engaging with our vulnerable communities including disabled people, and people living with dementia to identify and reduce risks in the home, supported by partner agencies;
- We work with our Partners to better safeguard people in our Communities and Collaborate to achieve shared goals, e.g., Domestic Abuse and Mental Health;
- Actively engaging with the growing Muslim communities throughout Essex, which have grown by c11,000 between Census 2011 and Census 2021, Muslims represent the second largest Faith group in Essex;
- We reached c14,000 people by attending Pride events throughout the county to engage with our LGBTQ+ communities;
- We are integrating the Fire Standards, Inclusion, Diversity and Equality are embedded within;
- We are guided by the Code of Ethics & NFCC EDI Maturity Model, currently working on Level 3, Integrating Inclusion;
- We Participate in a range of Collaborative Strategic Boards across the County;
- We are developing and increasing our Partnerships.

Equality Objective 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.

We are achieving more with our partners than ever before, we have a seat at many tables, connecting information, data and resources to achieve more for the people that live, work and travel in Essex.

Our Collaborative Boards:

- Safer Essex brings together key partner organisations to work jointly and effectively to facilitate a collaborative approach between agencies and partnerships in delivering the following community safety outcomes:
 - Prevent crime and anti-social behaviour
 - Prevent fires from happening
 - Understand and tackle hate crime
 - Understand and tackle violence, including violence against women and girls
 - Improve community confidence in the multi-agency response to community safety issues
 - Continue to deliver effective Community Safety Hubs across Greater Essex
 - Support delivery of the ECFRS 'Live Well' prevention strategy

- Local Community Safety Partnerships to protect vulnerable people and reduce crime and disorder;
- Safer Essex Roads Partnership (SERP) to reduce casualties on our roads and achieve Vision Zero;
- Health and Wellbeing Boards and Integrated Care Board to deliver the Essex Health and Wellbeing Strategy and reduce health inequalities;
- North-East Essex Health and Wellbeing Alliance working together to tackle not just ill-health, but the causes of ill-health and reduce health inequalities;
- Southend, Essex & Thurrock Domestic Abuse Partnership (SETDAB) The Board is responsible for designing and implementing the Domestic Abuse Strategy across Southend, Essex and Thurrock. SETDAB provides strategic leadership to address domestic abuse by providing a multi-agency framework, common ethos and co-ordinated approach to innovate, drive change and address domestic abuse.
- Violence and Vulnerability Unit to reduce the volume of serious violence across the county, focusing on tackling gangs, County Lines and exploitation across the county.
- Essex Resilience Forum to ensure we are ready to respond and working together to minimise any impact if a large-scale emergency should occur;
- Faith Covenant Steering Group connecting Faith Leaders across the County to reduce loneliness and isolation and improve mental health.
- Pan Essex Dementia Action Alliance to create dementia friendly communities and transform the lives of people living with dementia;
- UK Health Security Agency to protect our communities from the impact of infectious diseases, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents and other health threats.
- Essex Equality Network is attended by people responsible for Equality in Public Services across Essex, Southend and Thurrock. Our Equality Lead is part of a new working group to develop a Community of Practice, to collaborate and innovate so that we are working smarter to deliver together.
- Regional EDI Forum is attended by Equality Leads in Fire and Rescue Services in the East of England to support each other to achieve our shared priorities, and learn from each other.

We work with many Partners to keep the people that live, work and travel in Essex Safe, including:

- Essex Police
- East of England Ambulance Trust
- Parish, Town and City Councils
- Essex County Council
- Coastguard
- Essex Association of Local Councils
- Voluntary Sector Organisations

RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

Delivery of our Equality Objectives is a key control for SRR150019.

LINKS TO FIRE AND RESCUE PLAN

Delivery of our Equality Objectives is a key enabler for the Fire and Rescue plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Details of any financial implications, include breakdown of costs etc, including any on-costs if relating to staffing

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Public Sector Equality Duty 2011
Equality Act 2010

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

None identified

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

The actions being taken will not have a disproportionate impact on individuals with protected characteristics (as defined within the Equality Act 2010), when compared to all other individuals and will not disadvantage people with protected characteristics.

Race	N	Religion or belief	N
Sex	N	Gender reassignment	N
Age	N	Pregnancy & maternity	N
Disability	N	Marriage and Civil Partnership	N
Sexual orientation	N		

No negative impacts identified; the Strategic Equality Objectives aim to progress Equality for all.

If an impact on one group or more is anticipated, a full People Impact Assessment must be completed and **attached to the report**. Please also look to add other comments to ensure that a review has been properly considered as part of this report process.

The Core Code of Ethics Fire Standard has been fully considered and incorporated into the proposals outlined in this paper.

HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None Identified.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Inclusion and Diversity Action Group September 2023.

FUTURE PLANS

Our Strategic Equality Objectives remain active until September 2024.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS AND APPENDICES