Contents

Introduction ........................................... 1
What is Equality Monitoring ................................... 2
Why we must monitor equality .......................... 2-3
Who should monitor and evaluate? ...................... 2
How CFRS will monitor equality ......................... 2 – 3
Consultation and Involvement ......................... 3
Data collection categories ............................. 3
Data Protection ........................................... 4
Appendix A Employment Equality Monitoring Form 5 - 7
Appendix B Service Delivery Equality Monitoring Form 8 - 9
Appendix C Youth Engagement Equality Monitoring Form 10 - 11
Introduction

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Authority is committed to ensuring that we are operating fairly and equitably in both our employment practices and service delivery. In order to achieve this, the Authority must do more than simply have equality and diversity policies in place. It must have a systematic equality monitoring process to check whether policies are having the desired outcomes and are accessible to all. The information collected via this process will help the Authority to identify which groups are using their services and how satisfied they are with them.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission recognise equality monitoring as good practice in its Codes of Practice as it is central to the principle of ensuring continuous improvement and effective performance management. A key recommendation of The Equalities Review was that equality of outcomes, opportunities and life chances should be monitored nationally and locally through a coherent measurement framework.

This is supplemented by the need for equality information to:
- support Local Area Agreements (LAA) indicators and the wider performance framework. (Addressing many LAA priorities will require that the specific needs of different groups are considered, whether or not the indicators appear in disaggregated form within the LAA)
- support Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAA) (for example, to provide evidence of reducing inequalities in key services)
- meet statutory equality duties – including Equality Impact Assessment
- progress through the new Equality Framework for Local Government.

This policy aims to introduce consistent equality monitoring arrangements across Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service. It covers the reasons for monitoring, taking into account equalities legislation and the Data Protection Act 1998, and also provides equality monitoring form templates.
What is Equality Monitoring?

Equality monitoring is more than just the collection of data. It is a continuous process that should be used to inform policy development and changes to policy and processes to ensure that both the Authority and the Service’s commitment to equality and diversity results in practical improvements.

Equality monitoring will help us to:

- Understand the changing make-up of our communities
- Establish whether we offer real equality of opportunity and treatment for our staff and residents within Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington.
- Determine whether our policies on tackling discrimination are having a positive impact
- Identify any organisational barriers that prevent our staff from making the best use of their talent.
- Identify any barriers that prevent residents from gaining full access to our services.
- Tackle inequalities and promote equality by investigating any underlying causes identified.
- Achieve credibility of our policies and encourage commitment from employees.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of any changes.

Although data collection may reveal indicators of possible discrimination, often such findings initiate a more detailed analysis and evaluation of the underlying causes.

For monitoring to be truly effective it needs to be seen not as an administrative exercise, but as one of the key factors that drive policy development and process change.

Equality monitoring should be considered a tool for continuous improvement of the Service’s policies, initiatives and service delivery and supports the delivery of the Services core values. The diagram below shows how this will be achieved:
Why we must monitor equality?

Externally, monitoring service users can help us to evaluate whether our policies and the actions that we are taking to support the delivery of the Service’s aims and objectives are effective. We can also use monitoring to determine whether our services are accessible; whether our policies have a disproportionate, unfair or positive impact on particular groups and whether members of those groups are satisfied with the service they receive. Indirectly, therefore, it will also help us to access harder-to-reach customers and to make sure that our services are relevant to their needs.

Internally, monitoring enables us to examine the make-up of our workforce and to compare it with our targets for representation across equality strands. It can also help us to evaluate whether our Human Resources (HR) policies have a disproportionate positive or negative impact upon particular groups.

In themselves, policies are rarely sufficient to effect cultural change: the measurable evidence that monitoring provides will help to ensure that our policies are working, that we are realising the business benefits of a diverse workforce and that moral considerations have been taken into account.

Cheshire Fire & Rescue Authority (CFRA) has achieved Excellence of the Equality Framework for Fire and Rescue Service’s but it is still aware that there are areas where we need to continue work to translate our commitment to equality and diversity into a reality.

In addition, there are legislative drivers and a regulatory framework which mean that the Service must collect and analyse equality data. As a public authority, CFRA is bound by duties contained within the Equality Act 2010, requiring us to examine the impact of our policies and functions on equality and diversity. There is also a national Equality Strategy for improvement in the Fire and Rescue Service. The Service as the agent of the Authority must demonstrate how it is promoting equality as an employer, and service provider.
The legislation does not always explicitly require us to monitor across all equality strands, but such information in practice is essential in helping CFRA to meet its legislative duties, to identify gaps, develop action plans and evaluate our success in eliminating unlawful and unfair discrimination.

**What should be monitored and evaluated?**

To achieve the desired outcomes from equality monitoring, systems and processes will have to be considered and developed during:

- Policy development— without adequate equality information policy developers will not be able to determine whether their policies tackle inequality, promote equality and offer real equality of opportunity.
- Service delivery – equality needs to be monitored to determine whether we are offering equality of opportunity to all residents and to ensure that they are equally able to gain full access to our services.
- HR processes – monitoring the equality of the workforce is essential to establish whether we offer real equality of opportunity and treatment of our employees, and identify barriers that prevent them from making the best use of their talent.

**How CFRS will monitor equality?**

Internally
Data collection methods refer to the strategies or systems used to gather different types of information on people, initiatives or any other events that the Service may be running. These methods may be qualitative or quantitative.

The Service’s HR system provides a mechanism for the secure storage of equality data of our workforce. This has enabled us to collect a substantial amount of quantitative information that can be used to indicate whether we are achieving our equality and diversity objectives as an employer.

However, it is not always possible or practical to undertake such systematic data collection. A range of data collection options are available which may provide more proportionate, efficient and cost effective methods of data collection. Each of the methods of gathering information has its own inherent advantages and disadvantages, and the selection of method(s) to be used should be based on what kind of information we need, for whom and under what circumstances (please see the equality impact assessment guidance for further details).

Below are some examples of how the Service currently captures equality information;

- HSA questionnaire
- Post Incident Scene Management forms
- Consultation Questionnaire
- Staff Satisfaction Survey
- Website questionnaire
- Training questionnaire
- Community Fire Protection audits/enforcements
- Events analysis
- Driver Engagement monitoring form
- Youth engagement monitoring form
- Complaints / compliments
- Grievances / Disciplinary
- Approved supplier list

This list is by no means exhaustive and the Service must continue to consider how we monitor in terms of equality, for all policies/initiatives/services or employment practices.

Externally
The Service needs to understand the different make up of the diverse communities it serves, and equally, understand how these communities change.

As part of the corporate planning process therefore, the Corporate Intelligence Unit, will provide a comprehensive overview of the diversity of the communities within Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington. They will identify specific groups with specific needs in order for the Service’s Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) to take account of any need to modify or adapt and differentiate serves to meet the expectations of these communities.

The Authority will also collect data from those who have received our services operationally and / or in a safety / protection capacity.

Consultation and Involvement

It is important to encourage individuals to provide personal information if we are to have robust data for monitoring. How we communicate our need for this information will affect the extent to which residents will be willing to provide it. The issues that will need to be included in any communication asking for sensitive equality data will include:

- Why we are collecting the information and how we will use it.
- How we will restrict access to protect the information and who has access to it.

Communicating information about how monitoring has helped to identify issues and what action has been taken to bring about improvement will help create confidence in the purpose and integrity of CFRA monitoring processes.

Whilst we can be more directive with staff and require information, it remains good practice to explain and request to promote a positive and supportive culture.

Consultation with relevant interested parties about plans for gathering information, setting targets and priorities is good practice; and is in some
instances a legislative requirement. The Disability Discrimination Act 2005, for example, requires public bodies to engage disabled people in a meaningful way, so that they can influence the public body’s decision-making processes.

The Service’s Communication and Consultation Officer can provide support and advice to employees on engaging with employees, trade unions, residents, and representative groups in the voluntary and community sector.

**What do we do with the information once we have collected it?**

The information collected via the relevant monitoring systems and arrangements must be fed into Departmental Team Meetings or Forums as a standard agenda item. The equality information should be summarised and used to identify trends or any potential barriers to employment or service delivery. This will then be used to inform decision making and policy development i.e. following analysis we see that a certain section of the community are featuring disproportionately on the post incident scene management statistics this information should be used to target fire prevention work to this specific section of the community or if we notice that those who are killed or seriously injured on the roads are all falling in the 16 – 25 age category we would positively target this section of the community via our driver engagement days to ensure that they are receiving safety critical information. It is important that this information is captured so that we have the evidence to support why the Service is undertaking such initiatives and also continued monitoring will determine how effective the initiative has been i.e. decrease in numbers or increased awareness.

A summary of the equality monitoring information captured by departments should be sent to the Equality and Diversity Officer on a quarterly basis.

**How will CFRA audit?**

In order to ensure that departments are using the information collected to identify any trends or potential barriers and in the decision making process the Equality and Diversity Officer will attend various departmental team meetings and forums on an ad hoc basis.

The Equality and Diversity Officer will also use the summarised equality information sent quarterly and report it to the Equality Task Group. The Equality Task Group is chaired by the Chief Fire Officer and also has an Elected Member Champion for Equality and Diversity leading the group. The information will also be used to produce an Annual Equality and Diversity Report. The report will be circulated internally and published on the Service’s website.

A formal report will be taken to the Performance and Overview Committee of the Fire Authority biannually. The report will cover all equality monitoring conducted by the Service and will also highlight what actions departments have taken where a trend/barrier has been identified.
Data collection categories

To ensure that the information we collect can be benchmarked against similar information from other authorities and with the general population, it is important that we use the same categories for data collection throughout CFRS and in line with the Census. Information must be collected to cover; race, disability, gender, and age in service delivery plus sexual orientation and religion and belief in employment. Appendix A shows the monitoring information that should be captured during service delivery and Appendix B shows the equality monitoring needed during the employment process i.e. recruitment and selection process, training, promotion, disciplinary, grievance, appraisals and employees leaving the organisation.

NB
The service will not ask for a person’s sexual orientation or religion/ belief at present in terms of service delivery. It will, however, always be aware that our policies and functions may potentially discriminate on these grounds and they will be considered during the Equality Impact Assessment of all the Service’s functions and policies.

Data Protection

Any information the Service receives will be dealt with in the strictest confidence and in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). The DPA protects the rights of people whose data we collect and process by providing a regulatory framework for managing personal information. Under the framework, personal data must be:

- Fairly and lawfully processed
- Gathered only for lawful and specified purposes: it should not be processed further in ways that are incompatible with the specified purposes.
- Adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Accurate
- Retained only for as long as is necessary
- Processed in accordance with individual’s rights
- Stored securely

Information should not be published in any way that allows an individual to be identified unless the individual has explicitly granted their permission.