<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>4 - 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background – recent progress by CFRS to improve equality and diversity</td>
<td>6 - 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Legal Framework</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles and Responsibilities</td>
<td>11 -12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority Areas</td>
<td>13 – 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority 1 – Leadership and promoting inclusion</td>
<td>13 – 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority 2 - Accountability</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority 3 – Effective service delivery and community engagement</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority 4 – Employment and training</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority 5 – Evaluation and sharing good practice</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Management</td>
<td>19 - 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed Equality and Diversity Statements</td>
<td>21 – 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Equality Policy Statement</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Equality Policy Statement</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Equality Policy Statement</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Equality Policy Statement</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith/Belief Equality Policy Statement</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation Equality Policy Statement</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 1 – Core Values</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 2 – Summary of Equalities Legislation</td>
<td>25 - 26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foreword

Equality and diversity continues to be one of the major priorities for all fire and rescue services. It is important because of the need to make sure our workforce is better representative of the local community and that we remove potential barriers which may prevent some people from applying.

But the issues raised by equality and diversity are just as critical in ensuring that we are fully aware of how we can best protect and improve the safety of all sections of the communities we serve.

In Cheshire we have made significant progress over the last few years in addressing these issues and we have had those improvements independently assessed and verified.

The Fire Authority’s aim, however, is excellence in everything that we do and this new Corporate Equalities Strategy sets out the principles and objectives we will follow to achieve this.

It outlines the journey which the organisation has been on so far, and sets out the next steps to embed equality and diversity into all our policies, procedures and processes.

Most importantly, this strategy highlights that delivering improvements in equality and diversity requires the commitment of everyone in the organisation.

Finally, the Fire Authority will ensure there is an annual Equalities Action Plan to monitor progress in detail, while the strategy itself will also be subject to regular review.

Paul Hancock
Chief Fire Officer

Cllr. David Topping
Chair, Cheshire Fire Authority

Cllr. Stef Nelson
Lead Fire Authority Member for Equality and Diversity
Introduction

This is Cheshire Fire Authorities (CFA) second Corporate Equalities Strategy. It aims to provide strategic direction and a set of clear and challenging aims for the organisation. It focuses on ‘mainstreaming’ equality and diversity into all our policies, procedures, practices and day to day processes, and is supplemented by a number of policy documents and an annual Equalities Action Plan.

Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service (CFRS) considers the notion of equality and diversity to be a key priority for the Service as the collective approach determines:

- how we treat each other as members of the Service
- how we treat service users
- how we interact with the diverse communities we serve, and
- how we deliver our services to those communities.

As part of that commitment we aim to measure our performance against the highest standards for equality and diversity by which public bodies are judged. This will involve ensuring our policies, procedures and practices are fair, and result in equality of access, equality of impact and equality of outcome for all.

To be able to attain these standards we must fully understand the needs of the diverse communities we serve and then plan and deliver our services to take account of those needs.

The Service also recognises that employees work more effectively and efficiently when they feel valued and there is a culture of inclusion. We are, therefore, committed to establishing a culture where people are encouraged and enabled to achieve their potential and which is open and honest and where colleagues feel motivated and encouraged to provide feedback.

The Service will also ensure that people are treated with dignity, respect and fairness and that bullying, harassment, unfair discrimination and unacceptable behaviour are not tolerated.

Creating this culture not only provides a positive working environment, it also results in significant business benefits as employees are more likely to remain within the organisation therefore retaining their skills and talents, reducing sickness absence and cutting recruitment costs.
Vision

There are a number of key strategic documents that this Strategy must complement, particularly the Service’s Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and the National Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008 – 2018 linking into the National Core Values (Annex 1). The Strategy also needs to ensure that CFRS is well placed to achieve the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework. The Service has, therefore, decided to adopt the wider definition of equality set out within the framework and detailed below:

‘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.

An equal society recognises people’s different needs, situations and goals, and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and be.’

This definition is more aspirational than the formal legal definitions of equality as it focuses on creating a fairer society and recognises that:
- equality is an issue for us all
- we don’t all start from the same place
- to create a fairer society we need to recognise different needs.

This is now particularly relevant for CFRS as we work ever closer with partners and local communities to meet the joint targets and standards set out in the Local Area Agreement framework.

We want to ensure equality and diversity is mainstreamed into everything that we do to ensure that:

- we truly understand who our communities are and the diverse risks that they face,
- we use inclusive consultation to assess how our services affect all members of the public
- our workforce better reflects the diversity of the communities we serve, and
- all our employees are equally respected and valued.

This greater understanding will support the Service in achieving its mission of helping ‘to help create safer communities, to rescue people and protect economic, environmental and community interests’, and ultimately its vision of ‘a Cheshire where there are no preventable deaths, injuries or damage from fires and other emergencies’.

To achieve this, the Service has made the following commitments:

- to understand and meet the needs of all the communities we serve
- to work in partnership with all communities and other local service providers and partners to protect the people it serves
- to fully engage employees and the community in the development and delivery of services and functions

- to encourage talented people from all parts of the community to join the Service and achieve their potential

- to recognise the talents of those within the Service and encourage them to achieve their full potential

- to create an inclusive culture in which everyone treats all colleagues and the public with equal dignity and respect

- to ensure all its policies, processes and practices are open and transparent and have undergone robust equality impact assessments

- to value and support a diverse workforce through fair and transparent recruitment and employment policies, practices and processes.

How we will achieve these commitments is set out later in this strategy.
Background – recent progress by CFRS to improve equality and diversity

The Service’s first Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) in 2005 identified weakness in the approach to equality and diversity and identified it as a key area for improvement. As a result the Service completed a fundamental review of equality and diversity led by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer of Corporate Services and scrutinised by the Authority’s Performance and Overview Committee.

This led to the Service taking the challenging decision to ‘downgrade’ itself against what was the Equality Standard for Local Government from a level 2 to a level 1. Immediate action was taken to address the issue by employing a part time -consultant and appointing a full time Equality and Diversity Officer. The Integrated Risk Management Plan / Corporate Plan was also developed to include equality and diversity as a key theme and set the challenging target of achieving Level 3 December 2007 and Level 4 by July 2009. In addition, the Service’s Fire Authority Member Champion for Equality and Diversity was appointed. Set out below is a timeline summarising the major developments which have taken place on the Service’s journey of continuing improvement.

January 2006

January 2006
Equality Task Group Established. The Group was Chaired by the Fire Authority Member who is the lead for E & D. It included representation from all service areas and differing levels throughout the organisation. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer - Corporate Services was a key member of the task group to reinforce senior management commitment to mainstreaming E and D.

January 2006
Production of the Service’s first Community Engagement and Corporate Communications Strategies highlighting methods of carrying out community engagement and the need for accessible information etc.

May 2006
Appointment of a Communication and Consultation officer. Establishment of a residents' consultation panel called Response.

July 2006
Equality and diversity objectives mandatory in all appraisals.

August 2006
Positive Action/Awareness days carried out in recruitment. The Service had very few female firefighters or employees of black and ethnic minority backgrounds. Invites were sent to local support groups, women’s only gyms letting them know that the Service would be in certain areas on certain days to discuss the recruitment process and provide an insight into what it is really like
to be a firefighter. The training for the new recruits was also reduced from 14 weeks to 7 and made non residential as the Service recognised that long residential courses are often difficult for people with caring responsibilities.

August 2006
Revision of the Valuing Diversity Policy resulting in the production of the first Corporate Equality and Diversity Strategy.

October 2006
Equality Impact Assessment training provided.

October 2006
Equality and diversity input into the Service’s Performance Delivery Group plans which set out projects and actions in local areas. All plans include equality and diversity targets.

November 2006
Consultation with Response Consultation Panel and Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Race Equality Council re Integrated Risk Management Plan and Access to the services of CFRS.

December 2006
The Service’s systems for monitoring departmental and station plans now include mandatory Equality Impact Assessment sections and list all activities which involve engaging with local communities.

December 2006
Disability Equality Scheme produced following consultation with local disability groups and published on the Service’s website.

January 2007
Review of the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) forms to include age, sexual orientation and religion and belief. Departments and stations asked to review their EIA’s to incorporate new strands.

March 2007
Gender Equality Scheme produced and made available on the Service’s website.

April 2007
Integrated Risk Management Plan produced detailing service equality and diversity objectives based on the results of a comprehensive community consultation.

May 2007
The Service met with Edge Hill University (the external assessors) to determine the most appropriate and effective method of assessment for Level 3. It was decided that a split assessment would benefit the Service most.
June 2007
The Service sent its draft self assessment to the external assessor.

July 2007
The Equality Task Group reviewed all initial equality screenings, and produced a list of critical and standard policies.

August 2007
The Senior Management Team reviewed the draft self assessment and feedback received from external assessor. Consultation on some of our critical policies began.

September 2007
Fire Authority Members were informed of feedback from external assessment. Results from the community consultation were fed back to Area Managers for inclusion in departmental action plans.

December 2007
External assessment and accreditation of Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

January 2008
Gap analysis of equality monitoring information collected by the Service. This highlighted that different service areas were collecting different information in many formats.

March 2008
E-learning equality and diversity training package purchased.

May 2008
Review of monitoring arrangements in different service areas.

June 2008
Equality Monitoring Policy produced explaining the importance of monitoring information and providing generic templates.

August 2008
The Service was successful in a bid to support the sub region with equality and diversity work via the introduction of an equalities outreach worker, the production of a best practice document and the production of an elected member induction package.

August 2008
Chief Fire Officer took the new chair of the Equality Task Group

September 2008
Review of the Equality Impact Assessment process following recommendations from the external assessment

September 2008 (quarterly)
Departments producing equality monitoring reports, collated by the Equality and Diversity Officer

**December 2009**
Establishment of an Equality and Diversity Officers group covering local authorities within Cheshire and Warrington. The group was established to look at areas for collective consultation and joint working.

**May 2009**
Production of the Service’s first Equality Monitoring Report.

**June 2009**
Self Assessment for Level 4 of the Equality Standard for Local Government
The Legal Framework

While there is a clear business case for ensuring that CFRS is fully committed to equality and diversity, the organisation must also operate within a legal framework. This includes a range of equalities legislation and codes of practice which outline our powers and duties as an employer and a service provider.

A summary of the key pieces of legislation can be found in Annex 2.

As highlighted previously, CFRS has adopted the broader definition of equalities as set out in the national Equality Framework. The Service is keen to ensure that it is doing everything that it can to meet and, where possible, exceed its legislative requirements. It has, therefore, taken the decision to use the general and specific duties set out in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and apply them across the equality strands. This is due to the fact that these general and specific duties are recognised as best practice as they go beyond the requirements set out under the race and gender legislations.

The general duties that the Service has adopted are to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between different community groups/individuals
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Eliminate unlawful harassment
- Promote positive attitudes towards all sections of the local community
- Encourage participation of all sections of the community in public life.

The specific statutory duties set out below are intended to assist the Service in meeting the general duties. In particular, this involves setting out what should be done to plan, deliver and evaluate action to eliminate discrimination and promote equality. The core requirements are:

- The preparation and publication of the relevant equality schemes i.e. race, gender, disability etc
- Implementation of the schemes via an action plan
- Arrangements for impact assessments to be conducted with regards to any disadvantageous experiences or outcomes for different sections of the community
- Employment monitoring – the Service must set out arrangements for gathering information on the effect of their policies and practices on the recruitment, development and retention of all employees. CFRS must also collect equality statistics on applicants for employment, those who receive training, the grievance and disciplinary processes
- Annual reporting to the Service Management Team, and relevant forums within the Service
- Ensuring that all functions carried out by external suppliers meet the general duties listed above.
Roles / Responsibilities

As highlighted previously, it is critical that every member of CFRS is aware of their individual responsibility in ensuring that equality and diversity are mainstreamed into the day to day process of the organisation. Below is a summary of the various roles within the organisations and accompanying responsibilities.

- **Leadership Team** will provide leadership and support to ensure resources are available and have overall responsibility for the direction and implementation of this strategy.

- All **Elected Members** have an important role in using their community links to develop relationships with community groups and individuals and to encourage communication with the service. The Service has a dedicated elected member with responsibility for Equality and Diversity. The elected member’s role is to monitor the work of the Equality Board and Equality Task Group, provide invaluable political steer and act as the link between the Board, Task Group and Cheshire Fire Authority. The Performance and Overview Committee will assist in the monitoring and review of the strategy and associated action plan.

- **Heads of Departments** with the support of the Equality and Diversity Officer, are responsible for the corporate co-ordination and strategic management of the strategy. They must ensure that equality and diversity objectives feature in all the corporate, departmental and individual action plans of the organisation and that monitoring and evaluation are planned into the process.

- **Managers** and **all employees** with supervisory responsibilities have departmental and local responsibility for implementing and promoting this strategy. They have to ensure that employees and partners are adequately informed, trained and supported to ensure that their duties are carried out effectively.

- **All employees** and the **trade unions** have a role and a responsibility in the implementation of this policy. Appropriate learning and development opportunities will be offered to improve understanding of the issues involved and all staff appraisals will reflect individual and team responsibilities for equality and diversity.

- **Contractors** working on behalf of CFRS will be expected to demonstrate their commitment to this policy and action by promoting equality of opportunity in their customer care and employment practices. N.B Officers awarding contracts will be expected to build this into their planning.

- **The Equality and Diversity Officer** will coordinate the Service’s efforts to achieve ‘Excellence’ of the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework, produce relevant equality reports both to Communities and Local Government and the Fire Authority, research best practice, support service areas to achieve their equality objectives, and audit the equality and diversity work within different service areas.
- **The Service Management Team** - will monitor the implementation and review of this strategy and the accompanying equalities action plans i.e. Corporate Equalities Action Plan, Functional Plans, Departmental Plans etc.

- **The Equality Task Group** - will provide practical support to individual service areas to address any areas for improvement and highlight any areas of possible best practice. The group will operate as a task and finish group, and will be co-chaired by the Chief Fire Officer and the Authority’s equality champion.

The Service’s Leadership Team (via the Chief Fire Officer) will also oversee the work of the equality task group.
Priority Areas

To make sure that the Service is meeting the national expectations as set out in the National Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008 – 2018 and to honour the commitments made as part of the ‘vision’ section of this document we have mirrored the five priority areas and actions identified within the National Strategy.

These are:

- **Leadership and promoting inclusion**
- **Accountability**
- **Effective service delivery and community engagement**
- **Employment and training**
- **Evaluation and sharing good practice**

Each of the priority areas are set out in more detail below.

**Priority 1 - Leadership and promoting inclusion**

Positive leadership at all levels is essential to drive change, maintain commitment and ensure accountability. The role of Cheshire Fire Authority members and the Service Management Team in promoting and championing equality and diversity is crucial to delivery. They need to demonstrate their commitment to equality and diversity both through the impact of their personal behaviour and by making resources available to deliver the necessary changes. It is vital that all Managers ensure all staff are clear about their role in making the Service a fair and inclusive organisation.

Actions required include:

- Ensuring that we have an equality and diversity action plan to supplement the Strategy, which embeds E and D in all parts of the organisation, is compatible with current legislation, covers all strands of diversity and is reviewed annually.

- Reporting to Members of the Fire Authority on progress on equality and diversity annually

- Ensuring all employees are aware and understand the Strategy and the Service’s Core Values

- Ensuring Members of the Fire Authority and Service Management Team undertake appropriate training to perform their role effectively in promoting equality, diversity and fairness and providing leadership to others

- Ensuring that those with leadership responsibilities or potential have the opportunity and encouragement to develop their skills

- Ensuring resources for equality and diversity functions are sufficient to deliver fair and effective support and practices
Ensuring all managers across the organisation are aware of their role in promoting equality and diversity and their obligation to confirm that all Service plans, practices and procedures undergo effective equality impact assessments

Ensuring that equality and diversity issues are fully considered in the procurement of goods and services

Fully consulting with representatives both internally and externally on all equality, diversity and fairness issues to develop a partnership approach.

Ensuring that everyone treats each other with dignity and respect in accordance with the core values

Challenging and reporting inappropriate behaviours.

The Service will also need to work with partners to deliver the strategy. This will involve Local Area Agreements (LAAs), Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and will ensure that the Service is aligning itself to the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) process. LSPs provide a forum for setting the strategic vision of an area, for capturing the vision in the Sustainable Community Strategy, and for agreeing a set of priorities for improvement. These priorities are set out in an action plan, known as a local area agreement (LAA), which have to reflect the needs of their communities. CFRS has to ensure that we are fully involved in all of the unitary performance areas, Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington in ensuring that the diverse needs of the communities we serve are addressed. LAAs are an effective way for CFRS to implement the objectives contained in this strategy and legal compliance. It is also the most effective way of engaging with local residents, and improves partner relationships by supporting collaborative work.
Priority 2 - Accountability

Driving change and developing confidence among employees and the public requires everyone in the organisation to be accountable. The Service will ensure that all Members of the Fire Authority and all employees are aware of their roles and responsibilities as detailed in roles and responsibility section of the Strategy.

Actions required include:

- Reporting to authority members, at least annually, on progress made
- Reporting to the department for Communities and Local Government annually on improvement to service delivery and employment practice
- Publishing the above reports on the Service’s website and circulating to community groups
- Ensuring all employees (including the Chief Fire Officer) have an annual appraisal with an equality and diversity objective
- Demonstrating compliance with employment and equalities legislation
- Ensuring that bullying, harassment, unfair discrimination and unacceptable behaviours are dealt with appropriately, quickly and transparently
- Seeking regular peer review
- Monitoring and reviewing progress against the annual Equalities Action Plan.
Priority 3 - Effective service delivery and community engagement

Effective planning and engagement are key to improving the quality and effectiveness of service delivery to all communities. The Service will aim to tailor its services to meet the needs of all the people it serves through sustained communication with them. Rigorous assessment and reviews of policies, plans, processes and procedures through effective use of the Equality Impact Assessment process will continue to be a priority for the Service.

Actions required include:

- Ensuring equality of service to all sections of the community
- Identifying and taking account of the needs of the full range of communities we serve
- Assessing the impact of all new policies, plans, procedures and practices to ensure effective service delivery to all communities, tailored to their needs
- Reviewing all policies, plans, procedures and practices regularly
- Ensuring that the Integrated Risk Management Plan in particular takes full account of the needs of local communities and that all aspects of the planning process have been effectively equality impact assessed and outcomes are regularly reviewed

Engagement

- Consistently communicating progress on service delivery to all local communities, including targeted communication
- Ensuring complaints are dealt with quickly, fairly and transparently
- Working with partner agencies and community advocates within local communities to improve/create new ways of communicating with community groups
- Monitoring and taking action on community perceptions and satisfaction identified through surveys such as place survey, satisfaction surveys, complaints and compliments procedures etc

Training and awareness

- Providing all employees with appropriate training and development to build skills and confidence in delivering a service which is effective in meeting the needs of all local communities and is in accordance with legal requirements
- Communicating clearly and consistently with staff to raise awareness and understanding of local community issues and the actions needed to address them.
Priority 4 - Employment and training

To recognise, understand and respond to the needs of all communities it is essential that the Service recruits, develops and retains a workforce which better reflects the diversity of the local communities it serves. To demonstrate that CFRS values and supports a diverse workforce, open, transparent and fair selection and progression processes must be evident. It is essential that the Service promotes internally the need for equality, diversity and fairness, and takes robust action to eradicate bullying, harassment, unfair discrimination and unacceptable behaviours within the workforce. CFRS will make sure that issues affecting culture, working practices, facilities, equipment, clothing etc are addressed so that all staff can work in a safe and supportive environment, to promote equality, diversity and fairness and maximise employee retention.

Actions required include:

- Undertaking awareness campaigns and positive action to support and encourage applications from currently under represented groups

- Using national processes for recruitment, development and promotion of staff

- Reviewing and equality impact assessing employment policies, practices and procedures to ensure they are robust, fair and effective, using monitoring data including information derived from exit interviews

- Assessing all aspects of the working environment (including equipment, travel, training, clothing, facilities, food etc) to ensure all employees receive the support and tailored resources necessary to work to the best of their ability

- Undertaking equal pay audits (where necessary) as required by the Equal Pay Act and taking steps to ensure staff are paid appropriately for undertaking work of equal value

- Carrying out annual individual appraisals based on relevant role maps/job descriptions for all employees including equality and diversity objectives

- Providing all employees with training and development on equality and diversity and fairness issues including those relating to harassment, bullying, unfair discrimination and unacceptable behaviours

- Providing training for all managers on handling grievances and disciplinary cases and on tackling bullying, harassment, unfair discrimination and unacceptable behaviours

- Communicating regularly with employees to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of diversity both in terms of employment and service delivery.
Priority 5 - Evaluation and sharing good practice

Monitoring, evaluation and recognition of good practice are essential to ensure continuous improvement and make best use of resources. CFRS will collect and analyse the evidence of improved performance and good practice, share it with others, celebrate successes and address failure to continuously improve.

Actions required include:

**Monitoring and evaluation**
- Collecting and submitting to CLG qualitative and quantitative evidence of improvements to service delivery for inclusion in the annual Equality and Diversity Report for the Fire and Rescue Service
- Collecting and submitting to CLG evidence of improvements to employment practice in relation to all staff
- Reviewing, monitoring and evaluating policies, practices, plans and procedures to assess their impact on equality, diversity and fairness (i.e. undertaking robust equality impact assessments)
- Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of processes and procedures for dealing with bullying, harassment, unfair discrimination, grievance, disciplinary and unacceptable behaviour
- Carrying out employee and community surveys, in partnership with representative bodies, to measure perceptions of CFRS as an employer and service provider and to assess the level of effective engagement with employee and community representatives
- Ensuring that the provisions for collection and storage of personal information are secure and that the organisational culture encourages and supports members of staff to disclose personal diversity data.

**Reporting and recognition**
- Recognising and celebrating local and national achievements
- Working with local, regional and national partners to promote and share good practice
- Communicating clearly and consistently with employees to raise awareness, including the reasons for action on issues of equality and diversity, on progress made and of successes
- Publishing any potential best practice.
Performance Management

Internally

The Service is keen to ensure that the equality and diversity work which individual service areas take part in is effectively performance managed. This is an issue previously identified as an area for improvement; therefore, the Service has taken the decision that the newly established Service Management Team and Leadership Team will have responsibility for ensuring the successful implementation, monitoring and review of this strategy and any accompanying equalities action plans. They will also monitor the work of the equality task group along with the Service’s performance against the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework.

The Equality Task Group will undertake practical pieces of work to ensure that the Service is performing as it should against the actions contained within relevant equality plans. For instance, this might be an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) quality assurance group – this sub group will look at samples of EIAs completed on a regular basis to ensure that they are at the standard needed to ensure positive outcomes for all sections of the community. The task group will also act as a critical friend by raising any concerns/challenges that are aired from both community groups and employees.

A report will be completed every six months to report progress to the Fire Authority’s Performance and Overview Committee. The report will be co-ordinated by the Equality and Diversity Officer and will be presented by the Member Champion for Equality and Diversity.

The annual report for CLG will be co-ordinated by the Equality and Diversity Officer for inclusion in the National Equality and Diversity Report. It will cover statistical information on recruitment etc and qualitative information on policies, procedures etc.

All Service plans will have clear and consistent equality actions and objectives contained within them.

Individual appraisals will be completed annually for each member of staff which will include an assessment of performance against agreed annual objectives, including equality and diversity objectives.

Externally

The Audit Commission will assess CFRS’s performance in implementing the requirements of the National Frameworks along with the Service’s Corporate Equalities Strategy through the FRS performance assessment framework. The Commission’s scored Direction of Travel Assessment will state how well Cheshire Fire Authority has performed since the last assessment and whether it is expected that it will continue to improve. Scores will be linked to progress on equality and diversity and achievement of the Equality Framework. For example FRAs will not normally be assessed as improving strongly without reaching ‘Achieving’ of the Equality Framework.

CLG will review progress on equality and diversity by each Fire and Rescue Authority annually, including progress against workforce diversity targets. The review will be based on reports submitted by every Fire and Rescue Authority.
and annual assessment by the Audit Commission. The review, including evidence on progress, will be published annually as the national Equality and Diversity Report for the Fire and Rescue Service.
Detailed Equality and Diversity Statements

Age Equality Policy Statement

Ageism can be defined as any negative action or attitude that discriminates against a person or group on the basis of their age. These stereotypes are based on ‘perceived’ notions of an individual’s ability and potential. Ageism is usually targeted against older or younger people. To address this we will ensure that services are delivered in a way that takes account of the needs of all service users irrespective of age, paying specific regard to the needs of youth groups and older people’s groups.

CFRS aims to improve opportunities for local communities to influence its decision-making processes through the principles and processes set out in its Community Empowerment Strategy 2009-12. This includes supporting self-organised groups and involving young and older people in consultation initiatives and extending public meetings of its four unitary performance groups.

The Service carries out extensive youth engagement work and will continue to review its projects to ensure they are inclusive and involve young people in their development. Older people are another key group for the Service to work and engage with and its campaigns and activity will continue to be developed in conjunction with partners to best address the risks facing this more vulnerable group.

Disability Equality Policy Statement

The Service considers that the major difficulties faced by disabled people include the lack of provision for their needs as well as discriminatory and prejudiced attitudes. We recognise that in addressing disability issues in an equal opportunities context, there is a tendency to focus solely on issues of access and employment for people with physical disabilities. We will address all various forms of disabilities including mental health etc.

The Service endorses the right of disabled people to lead an independent full life and we will base our policies and provision on the principles of the full integration of people with disabilities. We are committed to providing services and enhancing access and facilities to enable disabled people to make full use of our services and to take up employment.

We will also work to eliminate discrimination against people with disabilities in our policies, procedures and practices both in terms of service provision and employment. In doing so we will adopt the social model of disability which is based on the notion that people with disabilities are disabled by the way in which the environment is organised or built and by people’s attitudes.

We take seriously our duty to promote disability equality and will continue to involve the local disabled community, review all progress made and make any reasonable adjustments as necessary.
Gender Equality Policy Statement

The Service is determined to address discrimination faced by anyone on the grounds of their gender. We are committed to working collaboratively with employees and the community to eliminate sexism in our structures and culture, as well as encouraging changes in behaviours and attitude. The Service is committed to the provision of equal access and equal treatment of its employees and of people who use its services, regardless of their gender. We are also committed to working to eliminate discrimination against all genders in our policies, procedures and practices in terms of employment. We will work to ensure that all future policies, procedures and practices are equal opportunities-based in terms of gender equality.

The Gender Equality Policy also provides protection to transgendered people from unlawful discrimination and harassment. The Service will not separate transsexual people as they will be treated in their chosen re-assigned gender. We will however ensure that where somebody informs us that they are going through the gender reassignment process we will deal with the situation sensitively, professionally and in the strictest confidence and most importantly in conjunction with the person themselves. Discrimination and harassment of this sort will be dealt with in line with our grievance and disciplinary processes.

The Service is working hard to increase the number of female firefighters within the organisation and will continue to use awareness days and other appropriate techniques to ensure applications for employment are more representative of the gender balance of the local community.

Race Equality Policy Statement

The Service is aware of the unlawful discrimination sometimes faced by the Black, Asian and other ethnic minority communities including refugees, asylum seekers and Gypsies and Travellers in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington. This results in racial discrimination, disadvantage, hatred and harassment. We acknowledge that racism can be reflected in subtle ways by means of processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantages people for ethnic minority backgrounds.

We are committed to working with all communities to eliminate racism in our structures and cultures as well as encouraging changes in behaviours and attitudes. We will work to ensure that our structures, procedures and practices do not discriminate either directly or indirectly on racial grounds.

The Service will continue to work hard to increase applicants from those from Black and Minority Ethnic communities and in developing our workforce we will continue to explore opportunities to develop roles which minimise the restrictions on potential applicants.

We will continue working with Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Race Equality Council and other agencies.
Faith/Belief Equality Policy Statement

We seek to create an environment where faith and belief are respected and valued. We acknowledge that people hold different faiths and religions and others may have strong held beliefs they may not class as religious. The Service will ensure that religious observances are respected and accommodated wherever possible. Harassment of people due to their faith or belief will be taken seriously and will not be tolerated in any form in relation to service delivery or employment.

We will provide multi-cultural training to our employees to ensure that they have an understanding of the main religions within Cheshire, Halton and Warrington. We will engage with local faith groups in the run up to major religious festivals to ensure that those celebrating have all relevant safety information.

In developing our premises we will look to cater for the faith requirements of employees where practical and when developing our workforce we will continue to explore opportunities to develop roles which minimise the restrictions on potential applicants.

Sexual Orientation Equality Policy Statement

The Service recognises that discrimination can be faced by those who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual. We are committed to giving equal access to our service, and equal treatment to people who use our service and to our gay, lesbian and bisexual employees. We will take positive action to ensure that lesbian, gay, and bisexual employees feel safe in being open about their sexual orientation. We also recognise their right to be private about their sexuality. The Service will respect the right of individuals to be open or otherwise about their own sexual orientation. We will provide training to employees on matters relating to sexual orientation, and deal with any harassment of employees due to their sexual preference in line with our Bullying and Harassment procedure. The Service will work closely with the local gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals/support groups to establish what they feel are the main barriers to employment within the fire and rescue service.

For all of the above we will seek to find innovative projects and activities to ensure that we not only comply with all the relevant legislation and codes of practice but that we are implementing best practice.
Annex 1 - Core Values;

Community – we value service to the community by;
- Working with all groups to reduce risk
- Treating everyone fairly and with respect
- Consulting, involving and responding to those we serve
- Aiming for excellence in everything that we do

People – we value all our employees by practicing and promoting
- Fairness and respect
- Recognizing and rewarding performance
- Honestly, integrity and mutual trust
- Personal development
- Co operative and inclusive working

Diversity – we value diversity in the Service and the community by;
- Treating everyone fairly and with respect
- Adapting our services and policies to meet the differing needs and
  expectations of our communities
- Challenging prejudice and discrimination

Improvement – we value improvement at all levels of the service by
- Talking responsibility of our own performance
- Being open minded and encouraging constructive criticism and challenge
- Learning from our experience and those of others
- Consulting and involving others.
Annex 2 - Summary of Equalities Legislation

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 places a duty on service providers and employers not to treat disabled people less favourably and to implement reasonable adjustments. We must ensure that our services and premises are accessible to disabled people.

Disability Discrimination Act 2005

The Act places a new duty on public authorities when carrying out their functions to eliminate unlawful discrimination and the harassment of disabled persons. Public authorities also have to promote the equality of opportunity. The Act also amends the definition of disability in terms of persons with clinically identified mental health problems. It also extends the protection for disabled persons to include HIV, cancer and multiple sclerosis from the point of diagnosis.

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 places a duty on CFRS not to treat anyone unfairly because of their gender. It prohibits sex discrimination against individuals in the areas of employment, education and the provision of goods, facilities and services. It also prohibits discrimination in employment against married people. We need to ensure that the needs of men, women and the trans-community are taken into account in our services and employment.

Race Relations Act 1976

The Race Relations Amendment Act 1976 makes it unlawful to treat a person less favourably than others on racial grounds. It covers race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), and ethnic origin. It provides protection from race discrimination in the fields of employment, education, training, housing and the provision of goods, facilities and services.

Race Relations Amendment Act 2000

The Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 places a general duty on public authorities to take appropriate steps to promote race equality and good race relations. This means that the fire and rescue service has to work to eliminate unlawful race discrimination; promote equality of opportunity and promote good race relations between people of different racial groups. The Service is also required to publish a Race Equality Scheme.

Religion and Sexual Orientation

The fire and rescue service has responsibilities to promote equal opportunities in employment on the grounds of religion, belief and sexual orientation through the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 and the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003.
Human Rights Act 1998

The Fire and Rescue Service has to ensure compliance with the Human Rights Act (1998) which came into effect in October 2000. It incorporates provisions from the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law. Article 14 provides the right to the enjoyment of any of the other rights and freedoms of the Convention without discrimination on any grounds such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.

Gender Recognition Act 2004

This Act allows transsexual people who have taken decisive steps to live fully and permanently in their acquired gender to gain legal recognition in that gender. It gives them the right, from the date of recognition, to marry in their acquired gender and be given birth certificates that recognise the acquired gender. They will be able to obtain benefits just like anyone else of that gender.

Civil Partnership Act 2005

The Act allows same sex couples to legally register their relationship.

Equality Act 2006

This includes the creation of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of religion or belief or sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities and services the management of premises, education and the exercise of public functions. It also places a positive duty on public authorities to promote equality between genders throughout all their functions.

Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

Prohibits discrimination on grounds of age in employment and training and provide greater rights for employees with regard to requesting to work beyond the normal age of retirement.