

STONEWALL
WORKPLACE
EQUALITY INDEX 2022

EMPLOYER FEEDBACK
REPORT

CHESHIRE FIRE AND
RESCUE SERVICE

SUMMARY

Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index is about recognising the work that goes into creating LGBTQ+ inclusive workplaces in the UK. By ensuring all LGBTQ+ people feel safe and welcomed in the workplace, we can create an inclusive culture that allows everyone the freedom to be themselves without fear.

This report will guide you through your submission by detailing our feedback to each section of the criteria and ending with our findings from the Staff Feedback Questionnaire (if applicable). We'll highlight what you've done well and focus on improvements for the future.

We understand that the last two years have been a difficult time for everyone, especially as we adapt to new working practices, so we greatly appreciate the time you took to continue your inclusion journey and to complete your submission. We recognise the commitment it takes to put a submission together and you should feel incredibly proud of what you've achieved in a challenging year.

The Workplace Equality Index is an opportunity to measure, progress and celebrate the work you're doing to make your organisation a better place for LGBTQ+ employees. From new policies to Pride events, leadership briefings to updating your training - each small change can make a big difference to our communities.

We hear incredible stories every year of workplaces making real impact, transforming the environments we work in every day. We know it's not easy work, but every day we move closer to a world in which LGBTQ+ people are free to be their true selves.

Thank you so much for taking part, and I hope we continue to work together over 2022.

Nancy Kelley, she/her, Chief Executive Officer

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service ranked 2 with a score of 166 out of 200

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is in the Top 100 Workplace Equality Index 2022 entrants

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has been awarded a gold award

Section	Marks available	Marks claimed	Marks awarded	Marks claimed, but not awarded
1) Policies and benefits	17	17	14	3
2) The employee lifecycle	22	22	18	4

Section	Marks available	Marks claimed	Marks awarded	Marks claimed, but not awarded
3) LGBTQ+ employee network group	26	23	23	0
4) Empowering individuals	20	13.5	13	0.5
5) Leadership	18	18	13.5	4.5
6) Monitoring	20	19	14.5	4.5
7) Supply chains	17	17	17	0
8) External engagement	40	32	33	†
Staff Feedback Questionnaire	20	n/a	20	n/a

† When marking, sometimes our markers spot evidence that counts towards questions you didn't claim. In those cases, we award the points anyway.

SECTORAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

We understand the different challenges organisations face may depend on the sector and location they are based in. That's why we separate this data out, allowing organisations to benchmark themselves against others in a similar field or part of the UK.

We know that regulatory frameworks, budgetary constraints, organisational size and the geographical spread of a workforce can all be factors in creating or removing barriers to inclusion.

Each sector and location has its own unique challenges. We can support you to face these challenges and achieve the best outcomes for your organisation.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service ranked 1 in the Emergency Services sector

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service ranked 1 in employers headquartered in North West

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service ranked 1 in employers that operate in the North West of England

MARGINALISED OR UNDER- REPRESENTED LGBTQ+ GROUPS

This section focuses on those within our community whose stories and experiences we rarely get to hear. By breaking down this data, we aim to show you how you are progressing with this work.

Bi erasure and biphobia are real problems. They create a culture of stigmatisation, and many bi people are still wary about being open about their bi identity in the workplace.

Transphobia and anti-non-binary discrimination are areas of concern for many workplaces, with staff feeling scared and unable to be their authentic selves around colleagues.

We all have multiple facets of our identities, and many of us experience different forms of marginalisation and discrimination, such as racism and ableism. These experiences also affect many LGBTQ+ people at work. Tackling one form of marginalisation requires tackling them all: ending misogyny and making work welcoming for people of faith, for example, are important for making sure all LGBTQ+ people feel welcome.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service scored 41.5 on questions specific to marginalised or underrepresented LGBTQ+ identities

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service scored 7 on questions specific to bi inclusion and anti-biphobia

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service scored 30.5 on questions specific to trans inclusion and anti-transphobia

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service scored 14.5 on questions specific to non-binary inclusion and this strand of anti-transphobia

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service scored 3 on questions specific to intersectionality and inclusion of LGBTQ+ people who experience multiple marginalisations, such as racism and ableism

SECTION ONE: POLICIES AND BENEFITS

This section examines the policies and benefits the organisation has in place to support LGBTQ+ staff. The questions scrutinise the policy feedback process, policy content and provision of specific support.

Entrant	Marks claimed	Marks awarded	Marks claimed, not awarded
Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service	17	14	3
Average: Emergency Services	15.5	10	5.5
Average: Headquartered in North West	12	7.5	4.5
Average: Top 10	16.5	15	1.5
Average: Top 100	15.5	12	3.5

We would recommend providing an opportunity and channel for all employees to feedback on the inclusivity of relevant policies. We recommend the process be actively communicated to all employees, and good practice would be to do this year-round (e.g. with a mechanism for feedback listed on all policies).

It was good to see you having a clear zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment and providing examples of what biphobic, homophobic and transphobic behaviour might look like. You could consider including examples of bullying, harassment and discrimination on the basis of multiple marginalised identities as a next step.

It was good to see that your adoption policy used gender-neutral language, which makes it clearly accessible to all LGBTQ+ employees who it might apply to. It also proactively states that it's inclusive of all people, regardless of gender. It was also great to see that your compassionate leave policy uses gender-neutral language and is explicitly inclusive of 'chosen families', who LGBTQ+ people may disproportionately rely on.

For your maternal, paternal and parental leave policies we would recommend reviewing the language in these for clarity of access for LGBTQ+ people. Using gender-neutral or gender-inclusive language throughout your policies will make it clearer that LGBTQ+ employees are covered. Solely using the word 'mother' can create uncertainty for trans men and non-binary people who are giving birth. It can also create uncertainty for female employees in same-sex relationships who have not given birth and are also mothers. Where you use 'mother', we would recommend either expanding on this or using gender-neutral language instead (e.g., 'mother or birth parent'). You may find the following terms useful: 'pregnant employee', 'birth parent', or 'parent who has given birth'. An easy way to make your policies gender neutral or gender inclusive is by defining who they are for at

the beginning and then referring to the employee as 'you' throughout the body of the policy.

Your trans inclusion policies have a clear commitment to supporting all trans including non-binary employees.

We would recommend explicitly addressing the needs of non-binary staff when discussing toilet facilities and uniforms, as this is not clear in your current guidance. However, it was good to see clear guidance as to how a trans colleagues' confidentiality and data would be respected and maintained.

Your transitioning at work guidelines provide clear information for the transitioning individual. We would recommend providing a clear list of where name and gender markers will need to be changed internally. It was also good to see clear guidelines for managers and colleagues as to expectations of their behaviour.

It was good to see that you have started working on a commitment to have gender-neutral facilities, we can discuss how this has progressed in our benchmarking meeting. Additionally, your work around LGBTQ+ inclusive mental health provision was good. You could expand this work by providing links for staff to LGBTQ+ specific mental health support as a means of signposting colleagues to appropriate resources.

SECTION TWO: THE EMPLOYEE LIFECYCLE

This section examines the employee lifecycle within the organisation, starting with recruitment practices and finishing with exit processes. The questions scrutinise how the organisation engages and supports employees throughout their journey in the workplace.

Entrant	Marks claimed	Marks awarded	Marks claimed, not awarded
Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service	22	18	4
Average: Emergency Services	20.5	9.5	11
Average: Headquartered in North West	16	8	8
Average: Top 10	21	17	4
Average: Top 100	20.5	12.5	8

It's great to see you being proactive in your recruitment to the LGBTQ+ community by using LGBTQ+ friendly advertising and Twitter accounts. It's also great to see you sharing information about your LGBTQ+ network through your recruitment materials. To build on this, it would be good to explore if you have a Diversity & Inclusion statement in your job packs, not just in emails.

It is good to see that sexual orientation and gender identity were included in your unconscious bias training. To go further, you could provide more practical tips related to LGBTQ+ identities, for example by explaining the importance of sharing pronouns at the start of interviews, not assuming gender from someone's voice on the phone, or outlining all the networks you have available at the end of interviews.

From the moment they have accepted a job offer, LGBTQ+ employees should know that they have joined an organisation that values their identity, so they can be comfortable being themselves. Including explicitly LGBTQ+ inclusive content in your inductions is a great way to achieve this, so as a next step you could consider information about your LGBTQ+ network and policies.

It's good to see that you enable non-binary employees to have their identities recognised through the HR system. Next steps could be to consider gender fluid identities in your practices, for example offering multiple passes.

You have a good range of all-employee training on offer which covers examples of homophobia, transphobia and biphobia, bringing to life what compliance with your Bullying and Harassment Policy looks like. You could build on this by also including examples of discrimination on the basis of multiple identities. We would also recommend providing a clear route for feeding back on the inclusion or

representation of employees' identities in the training, for example with feedback forms or routes to feedback through networks.

It was great to see that a wide range of detailed internal communications were provided throughout the year for your staff on LGBTQ+ identities. It's also great that you proactively recognise contributions to D&I activity during employee performance appraisals, and it looks like you have a very good exit interview system with a thorough process that collects data around LGBTQ+ experiences.

SECTION THREE: LGBTQ+

EMPLOYEE NETWORK GROUP

This section examines the work of your LGBTQ+ employee network group. The questions scrutinise the support the group is given by the organisation, its commitment to inclusivity, and the activities it carries out.

Entrant	Marks claimed	Marks awarded	Marks claimed, not awarded
Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service	23	23	0
Average: Emergency Services	20.5	12.5	8
Average: Headquartered in North West	17.5	12.5	5
Average: Top 10	25	24	1
Average: Top 100	24	20	4

Your network has a very well defined terms of reference with lots of useful information. It's good to see that the organisation supports your network by providing a budget and a senior sponsor. It's also positive that there are ways for your network members to access hours, but we would suggest a system for formal allocation of time spent on network activity for committee members.

It is also great to see your network having access to training and leadership development, as well as time given to facilitate external opportunities. You've also established a strong formal mechanism to ensure bi and trans issues are engaged with regularly and consistently.

The network has done lots of work to raise awareness about the experiences of marginalised and underrepresented groups within the LGBTQ+ community. It's great that you have been able to set up specific spaces for some of these groups, such as LGBTQ+ parents. Next steps could be expanding this offering to other identities. We would also recommend building on this with other formalised strategies for promoting the network group being open and inclusive – writing this into terms of reference could be a great start. We would also recommend thinking about developing a formal strategy to ensure your network is inclusive of and accessible to these groups.

It's great that you have provided a space that is confidential and that you have thought about training staff who facilitate through this space. It's also good to see that the network is being consulted on policies and processes internally. As a next step, We would recommend considering how the network can empower and support network members to report bullying and harassment should they experience this.

It's great to see a range of events being hosted by the LGBTQ+ network group that cover different lived experiences. You have numerous events directed towards and

dealing with issues relevant to the intersection of LGBTQ+ identities and other diversity strands – these events seem well thought-out and impactful. This is really fantastic work.

Finally, it's great that you have thought of different ways to ensure work reaches employees in all locations, especially during a very difficult year.

SECTION FOUR:

EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS

This section examines the process of engaging individuals to create an LGBTQ+ inclusive culture at the organisation. The questions scrutinise how the organisation empowers LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ employees to step up as change makers and allies.

Entrant	Marks claimed	Marks awarded	Marks claimed, not awarded
Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service	13.5	13	0.5
Average: Emergency Services	13.5	8	5.5
Average: Headquartered in North West	11	6.5	4.5
Average: Top 10	18	17	1
Average: Top 100	17	13	4

It looks like you have plenty to offer to support LGBTQ+ employees at all levels to become change makers, the range was very impressive and developed.

We would recommend sharing the workplace experiences of LGBTQ+ people with a wider range of identities to all employees. We would recommend making the person's identity explicit so that people can recognise similar identities to their own. Good practice would be sharing experiences of internal employees; where this is not possible, an alternative could be to share experiences of LGBTQ+ people from outside your organisation but within your sector.

It's also great that you have a substantial offering for allies, including a separate allies network group. This will help all employees understand the issues that impact the LGBTQ+ community, as well as support the network in a variety of ways so that LGBTQ+ people do not have to do all inclusion work by themselves.

It's fantastic that you have created specific training to help people understand identities within the bi and trans communities, too. Next steps could be to focus on other marginalised communities through training, programmes or resources.

It looks like you have set up a good system for all staff to access all of your resources across the organisation, and have built on this well during the COVID-19 pandemic.

SECTION FIVE: LEADERSHIP

This section examines how the organisation engages senior leaders and line managers in their responsibility to set an LGBTQ-inclusive culture. The questions scrutinise how the organisation empowers senior leaders, the individual actions senior leaders take, and how all line managers are encouraged to recognise LGBTQ+ inclusion as key to their role.

Entrant	Marks claimed	Marks awarded	Marks claimed, not awarded
Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service	18	13.5	4.5
Average: Emergency Services	15	8.5	6.5
Average: Headquartered in North West	10	5.5	4.5
Average: Top 10	16.5	13	3.5
Average: Top 100	14.5	10	4.5

It looks like you have a variety of structures in place to support senior leaders to learn about LGBTQ+ identities and multiple senior leaders engaging with this work. You have a reverse mentoring scheme in place which has had participation from a senior leader and a member of Fire Pride, which is great to see. A potential next step could be for your engaged senior leaders to mentor others on their approach.

It's great that you have held a variety of events and that some senior leaders have attended. Your 2021 FirePride breakfast sounded great, and it was particularly impressive to see that it continued into a seminar. However, where you have provided examples of senior leaders attending internal conferences or seminars, we are looking at opportunities for senior leaders to learn about how they can drive inclusion as a leader or learn from other leaders about how to support these identities. Let's discuss this at our benchmarking meeting.

It was good to see so many strong messages of support from senior leadership being communicated internally. Your senior leaders are very involved in your LGBTQ+ network group and in reviewing strategies and other key updates like monitoring reports, which is fantastic. They also clearly attend several events in the sector to show their support.

It's good to see that you are ensuring senior leader activity is visible to all staff, and have thought about the best way to achieve this. It's also great that you require all senior leaders and line managers to meet an inclusion-based competency on internal and external recruitment.

Finally, it's good to see you have thought carefully about holding senior leaders and line managers to account through the Equality Steering Group.

SECTION SIX: MONITORING

This section examines how the organisation uses monitoring to understand the representation and experiences of its LGBTQ+ employees. The questions scrutinise data collection methods, analysis and outcomes.

Entrant	Marks claimed	Marks awarded	Marks claimed, not awarded
Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service	19	14.5	4.5
Average: Emergency Services	11.5	5	6.5
Average: Headquartered in North West	9	3	6
Average: Top 10	14.5	9	5.5
Average: Top 100	12.5	5.5	7

It is good to see that the organisation gathers data on sexual orientation. To improve your work here, we would recommend including a free text box ('I use another term') so that people can write in their own identities, and you can gain more robust data.

To improve your gender question, we would recommend having a standalone non-binary option, rather than including it as part of the 'prefer to self-describe' where there is no open text box.

We would also recommend including a separate question on trans status, unconnected to any questions on gender. The current wording for the question on trans status ('Do you identify as trans?') part is strong; you could consider building on this by including an 'Unsure' option for those who are questioning their identity.

It's good to see that you monitor and analyse success rates of LGB identities from application to appointment as part of your recruitment process. Implementing a non-binary inclusive gender question, as mentioned above, may allow you to capture and analyse data on non-binary identities too.

We would make similar recommendations for analysis of pay gap data and staff satisfaction. Beyond your current activities, in order to boost declaration rates further, we would recommend providing a definition of 'bi' that is explicitly inclusive of pan and queer identities on the monitoring form itself.

SECTION SEVEN: SUPPLY CHAINS

This section examines how the organisation affects change in its supply chain. The questions scrutinise the steps taken to ensure suppliers are LGBTQ-inclusive, from tendering new suppliers to monitoring current contracts.

Entrant	Marks claimed	Marks awarded	Marks claimed, not awarded
Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service	17	17	0
Average: Emergency Services	10	6	4
Average: Headquartered in North West	7	3.5	3.5
Average: Top 10	14.5	12.5	2
Average: Top 100	11.5	7.5	4

Ensuring that your supply chain processes are LGBTQ+ inclusive helps to progress LGBTQ+ inclusion beyond your four walls and into your communities. It also helps ensure that your staff and public don't experience discrimination in their interactions with suppliers.

You have a strong system of measures in place to scrutinise the LGBTQ+ inclusion work of new suppliers before awarding a contract.

You also provide staff with procurement responsibilities with in-house EDI training, which is really good to see.

It is admirable that you continue to hold suppliers to account once the contract is awarded, for example, by including a broad diversity and inclusion slot in contract monitoring meetings, as well as analysing LGBTQ-related feedback on the supplier.

You are also very active in collaborating with your suppliers and providing them with access to events, training and advise.

SECTION EIGHT: EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

This section comprises of three parts. Part 1 (Community Engagement) examines the outreach activity of the organisation and how it supports wider LGBTQ+ communities. Part 2 (Sector Engagement) examines how the organisation promotes LGBTQ+ equality to other organisations in its sector. Part 3 (Service Delivery) examines how the organisation ensures it meets the needs of any service users or customers.

Entrant	Marks claimed	Marks awarded	Marks claimed, not awarded
Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service	32	33	†
Average: Emergency Services	24	13	11
Average: Headquartered in North West	16	10	6
Average: Top 10	33.5	28.5	5
Average: Top 100	27.5	18.5	9

† When marking, sometimes our markers spot evidence that counts towards questions you didn't claim. In those cases, we award the points anyway.

It looks like you have a good range of partnerships with community groups and it's very positive that you are funding a wide range of groups. Next steps could be to seek out and support community groups or initiatives that serve the bi and trans communities specifically.

It's good to see you utilising your social media accounts to demonstrate support of LGBTQ+ equality. You have taken this further by supporting LGBTQ+ equality campaigns like Rainbow Laces as well as the initiatives for LGBT+ History Month. We would recommend that you publicise these externally to show LGBTQ+ people in your community the great work that you are doing.

You are doing great work to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion in your sector, both through the conference and other initiatives. It's really positive that you have a proactive approach to encouraging staff to give their time towards this work.

Your customer mapping exercise to identify any areas where issues may arise for LGBTQ+ people is strong, and it is great to see that this has resulted in work to avoid assumptions about what families may look like. It is great to see you reaching out on social media to deal with negative feedback. Something to consider would be training frontline or customer-serving staff to be inclusive of non-binary identities.

We were really pleased to see that you consult with LGBTQ+ service users to tailor your services to their needs, as well as provide frontline training on a number of LGBTQ+ identities. The public-facing policy that bans discrimination in your services on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity is great; to push

this work even further, we'd suggest ensuring the bi and non-binary communities are mentioned explicitly here. You may also want to consider streamlining your statements of inclusion to have one explicit statement that services are LGBTQ+ inclusive, but it's still fantastic to see all the good work that you have done in this area.

STAFF FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

As part of the Workplace Equality Index, employees from across the UK take part in Stonewall's Staff Feedback Questionnaire (SFQ).

The SFQ is an anonymous questionnaire that employers share with their staff. The results help us generate each employer's score and gives them a deep understanding of their employees' experiences at work.

Entrant	Marks claimed	Marks awarded	Marks claimed, not awarded
Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service	n/a	20	n/a
Average: Emergency Services	n/a	8	n/a
Average: Headquartered in North West	n/a	8.5	n/a
Average: Top 10	n/a	17.5	n/a
Average: Top 100	n/a	13.5	n/a