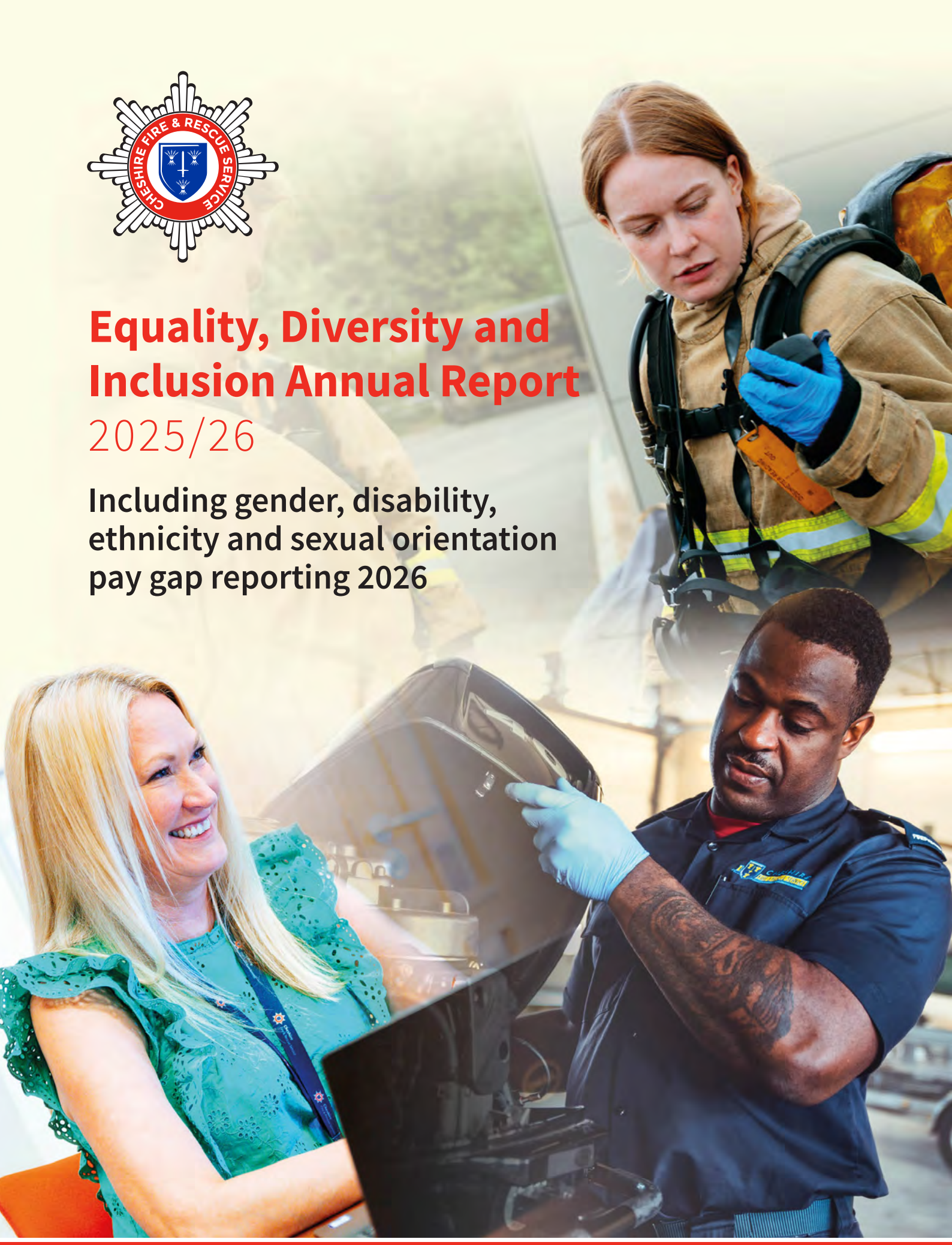
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2025/26

Including gender, disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation pay gap reporting 2026



www.cheshirefire.gov.uk

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Introduction

This annual report provides an update on progress during 2025/26 towards the aims and objectives of **Including Everyone**, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2025-28.

Built around six clear commitments, it focuses on creating a workplace where everyone can be themselves, have a voice and have a fair opportunity to succeed, while supporting our ambition to better understand, meet the needs of and support the diverse communities we serve.

The 12 months between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026 marked the first full year delivering the strategy. This report therefore provides an overview of the progress made during this first year and highlights activity undertaken by colleagues from across the Service. It demonstrates how inclusion continues to support our core value of **being inclusive** and contributes to delivering safer communities, stronger relationships and a positive workplace culture.

As part of our commitment to transparency and continuous improvement, this year's report for the first time incorporates our **gender, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation pay gap** reporting into a single publication. While gender pay gap reporting remains a statutory requirement, we have voluntarily chosen to include other pay gap information to provide a broader understanding of workforce representation, progression and inclusion across our Service.

This annual report is a public document and is presented to Cheshire Fire Authority's Performance and Overview Committee before being published on our website. It is promoted through our internal and external communication channels in line with our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

If you would like this information in another format or language, please call **01606 868700** or email **equalities@cheshirefire.gov.uk**

We are active members of:

Part 1: Our strategy

Including Everyone was developed in consultation with colleagues, staff networks, representative bodies, EDI Group members and approved by Cheshire Fire Authority in February 2025.

The strategy is built around six commitments which guide our approach to inclusion both within our workplace and across the communities we serve.

Including everyone

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-28

In our workplace:

Everyone can be themselves
and feel safe, respected and able to give their best

Everyone has a voice
so they can share their unique experiences and shape our Service for the better

Everyone has a fair opportunity
to reach their full potential because of their skills and talents, not their backgrounds

Serving our communities by:

Understanding everyone
through talking and listening to people from a diverse range of backgrounds

Meeting the needs of everyone
through services that recognise the different risks and challenges people face

Supporting everyone
by being proud champions for diversity and inclusion, and strong and visible allies to people who feel underrepresented

Challenges, opportunities and headlines in 2025/26

- Between October 2025 and January 2026, we were inspected for the fourth time by **His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)**. The inspection included scrutiny of the way we look after our people and in particular how we ensure fairness and diversity. The findings of the report were published in June 2026, outside the period of this annual report.
- National **debate surrounding EDI, workplace culture and public sector neutrality** continued throughout the year. These discussions reinforced the importance of ensuring the way in which we engage diverse communities at external events remains evidence-based, proportionate and aligned to our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.
- We continued to respond to the recommendations arising of the HMICFRS **HMICFRS Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services** spotlight report and the **National Fire Chiefs Council Culture Action Plan**, with a focus on workplace culture, inclusion, psychological safety and colleague wellbeing.
- In November 2025, we were once again recognised as one of the UK's **Top 50 Inclusive Employers**, achieving **19th place nationally** - 20 places higher than the previous year. This independent recognition reflects our continued commitment to EDI and belonging across the organisation.





In our workplace:



Everyone can be themselves

Commitment

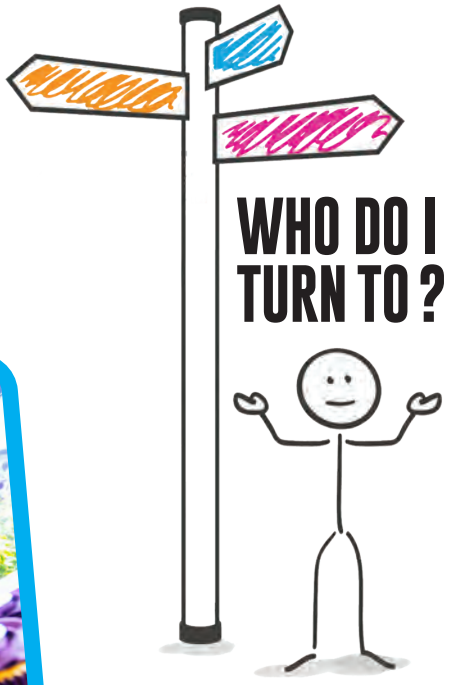
We want everyone to feel safe, respected and able to give their best. Creating an inclusive workplace culture requires strong leadership, effective communication, trusted routes for raising concerns and opportunities for colleagues to learn from one another's experiences.

Progress this year

- A programme of **Culture Conversations** continued throughout the year, providing opportunities for colleagues to discuss workplace culture, inclusion, behaviours and organisational values. These sessions supported delivery of the recommendations of HMICFRS's Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services spotlight report and encouraged open discussion, reflection and learning.
- By March 2026, **91% of colleagues had completed the Effective Bystander microlearning package**, supporting a workplace where colleagues feel confident to challenge inappropriate behaviour and support one another.
- We continued to raise awareness of dignity, respect and professional standards through ongoing promotion of our **Who Do I Turn To?** campaign and the implementation of a **Professional Standards Framework**, helping colleagues understand how to raise concerns and access support where needed. The **2025 Staff Survey** showed improvements in confidence around reporting concerns and understanding the routes available to do so.
- Staff inclusion networks continued to play an important role in creating a culture where colleagues feel supported and able to be themselves. Activities throughout the year included **Divergence Week, National Staff Networks Day, International Women's Day, Black History Month** and a range of other awareness, learning and networking opportunities.

- Additional support was provided to staff networks through **dedicated administration, communications support, senior sponsorship and allocated budgets**, helping to increase participation and improve colleague engagement. Staff network pages were also reviewed and refreshed to improve accessibility, visibility and access to information.
- During 2025/26, we continued to develop our approach to supporting transgender and gender-diverse colleagues by starting work on a new **Gender Identity Policy, Manager Guidance and Employee Toolkit**. Once launched, this will consider workplace facilities, inclusion and practical support arrangements.

The culture conversation







In our workplace:



Everyone has a voice

Commitment

We want everyone to have the opportunity to share their experiences, contribute ideas and help shape the future of our Service. We recognise that colleagues' lived experiences and perspectives are essential in helping us create a more inclusive workplace and deliver better services to our communities.

Progress this year

- The **Engaging Everyone** communications and engagement framework supported open dialogue between colleagues and leaders. Our new **Cheshire Fire Live** monthly Teams broadcast provides a new channel through which staff can ask questions, share ideas and contribute to the development of our Service.
- **Staff inclusion networks** continued to play an important role in representing colleague perspectives and providing constructive challenge. Through quarterly network meetings and regular engagement with senior leaders, colleagues were able to share experiences, raise issues and contribute to discussions on policy development and organisational change.
- During the year, staff networks and colleagues were involved in the **review of several policies and initiatives**, helping ensure a broader range of perspectives were considered. This included engagement on the Trauma in Risk Management Policy, ways to recognise 100% attendance, fire station modernisation and the implementation of a new human resources IT system.
- We created opportunities for colleagues to discuss menopause and access support. **Menopause Cafés** were held in October 2025 and February 2026, providing a safe space for colleagues to share experiences and practical advice. To coincide with **International Menopause Day**, the Fire Fighters Charity delivered a workshop to increase awareness and understanding of menopause and its impact in the workplace.

- In January 2026, we started work with the four other North West fire and rescue services to plan the **UK FirePRIDE Conference 2026**. The extensive collaboration involved colleagues from across the sector and helped strengthen regional and national partnerships focused on Lesbian, gay, bi and trans (LGBTQ+) equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging.

Armed Forces Network

Divergence Neurodiversity Network

Embrace Parents and Carers Network

Firepride LGBT+ Network

Limitless Women's Network

REACH Race Equality And Cultural Heritage Network



In our workplace:

Everyone has a fair opportunity

Commitment

We want everyone to have a fair opportunity to reach their full potential because of their skills and talents, not their background. We are committed to removing barriers, challenging stereotypes and creating pathways that enable colleagues from all backgrounds to succeed.

Progress this year

- We continued to **challenge traditional perceptions of careers within the fire and rescue service** through targeted communications, positive action activity and community engagement. Our recruitment campaign featured colleagues from a diverse range of backgrounds and highlighted the breadth of operational and non-operational career opportunities in our Service.
- This work generated **2,911 applications** to become a wholetime firefighter, compared with **1,589 applications** the previous year. Representation among applicants remained encouraging, with **14%** of applicants being women, **7.6%** from minority ethnic communities and **9.8%** identifying as LGB.





for everyone

- We continued to monitor **workforce demographic information** and encouraged colleagues to update and maintain their equality monitoring data. This improved the quality of workforce information available to support recruitment, retention and progression activity. During the year, non-disclosure rates reduced for ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation, providing greater confidence in workforce data and supporting more informed decision-making.
- Development programmes continued to support colleagues from underrepresented groups in overcoming barriers to progression. The **Elev8** programme provided operational colleagues with mentoring, coaching and leadership development opportunities, while our **Wider Horizons** career directory and development toolkit for non-operational staff were converted into digital intranet resources to give people easier access.
- In March 2025 we became only the second fire and rescue service in the country to become an **Endometriosis Friendly Employer**, committing us to raising awareness of the condition and supporting affected colleagues' so their careers are not held back.



Elev8

WIDER HORIZONS

Workforce representation 2025 vs 2026

	Women	Ethnic minority	Declaring a disability	Lesbian, gay or bi (LGB)
2026	224	50	43	47
2025	220	49	38	39

Female representation increased by 1.8%, disability declarations increased by 13.2% and colleagues identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual increased by 20.5%.

Improving data confidence

Improved disclosure rates provide greater confidence in workforce data and support more informed workforce planning, inclusion activity and organisational decision-making. The reduction in employees choosing not to disclose information about their ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation demonstrates growing confidence in sharing protected characteristic information and helps us better understand our workforce.

	Ethnicity	Sexual orientation	Religion
2026 not declared	17	117	123
2025 not declared	41	134	142

Serving our communities by:

Understanding everyone

Commitment

We want to better understand the diverse communities we serve by listening to people, building relationships and using evidence to inform our decision-making. Understanding the needs, experiences and risks faced by different communities helps us to deliver services that are more inclusive, accessible and effective.

Progress this year

- To develop our understanding of our diverse communities and their needs, we started to develop **demographic profiles of each of our fire station areas**. These will support operational crews and prevention and protection teams to target their community safety activity and positive action recruitment work in ways that reach people that might not otherwise access our services or consider careers with us.
- To give a wider range of people a better understanding of our work and our performance, we have made significant **improvements to the way we promote our work to the public**. For example, our Annual Report is now published to many thousands of people across our social media channels instead of merely being published on our website. This gives people a better understanding of our Service ahead of them helping to shape proposals for the future of our Service when the time comes.
- We have overhauled the way we **monitor what people think of our Safe and Well visits**, our flagship community safety programme. Everyone who is visited now has the chance to answer questions about the quality of the advice they were given and the option to declare equality information. This helps us identify any differences in people's experiences.



Serving our communities by:

Meeting the needs of everyone

Commitment

We want to ensure our services are accessible, inclusive and responsive to the needs of the communities we serve. By understanding the different risks, barriers and experiences that people face, we can tailor our approach and provide the right support to those who need it most.

Progress this year



- We completely redesigned and rewrote the **booklet given to households visited through our Safe and Well programme**. The information is now in easy-read format and addresses the key risks we know people in our communities face. The most crucial information has also been translated into British Sign Language and Makaton, and will be made available through our website.
- Our **Persons at Heightened Risk (PaHR)** approach remained a cornerstone of prevention activity, helping colleagues identify and support those most vulnerable to fire and other risks. Working alongside partner organisations, colleagues targeted interventions towards individuals who may be at increased risk due to factors such as age, disability, health conditions, social isolation or wider vulnerability.
- Through **Safety Central**, mainstream and specialist schools, community groups and partner organisations were able to access a wide range of educational experiences covering topics such as fire safety, road safety, water safety and personal wellbeing. These activities were designed to be engaging, accessible and appropriate for a diverse range of audiences with a range of needs.

- Operational crews and prevention teams also **visited mainstream and specialist schools and community groups** throughout the year, delivering age-appropriate safety messages and helping young people better understand the risks they may encounter in everyday life. These visits provided opportunities to support learning, promote safety awareness and build positive relationships with young people.
- We continue to support young people through initiatives such as the **King's Trust Team Programme**, helping participants develop confidence, teamwork and employability skills while increasing awareness of fire and rescue service careers and community safety. Colleagues also supported the **Fire Cadet** programme, providing opportunities for young people to develop new skills, build confidence and contribute positively to their communities.
- **Water safety, road safety and prevention campaigns** continued throughout the year, using targeted communications and engagement activity to reach communities most at risk. These campaigns were supported by operational crews, prevention teams and partner organisations, helping to ensure safety messages reached as many people as possible.
- Our **Business Safety Team** continued to provide tailored advice, guidance and support to businesses and responsible persons across Cheshire, helping organisations understand their responsibilities and improve fire safety arrangements. Through inspections, engagement activity and education, the team worked to ensure that fire safety information was accessible and relevant to a wide range of businesses.



Serving our communities by:



Supporting everyone

Commitment

We want to be visible champions for diversity and inclusion and strong allies to people who feel underrepresented. Through community engagement, partnership working and advocacy, we aim to promote understanding, strengthen relationships and demonstrate our commitment to inclusion both within the Service and across the communities we serve.

Progress this year

- Colleagues supported 12 **LGBTQ+ Pride events** across Cheshire, helping to strengthen relationships with LGBTQ+ communities, promote community safety messages and increase understanding of our Service. We continued our longstanding partnership with **Chester Pride**, supporting Cheshire's largest LGBTQ+ community event and helping promote career opportunities and safety advice.
- The **REACH Network** continued to engage with ethnically diverse communities through cultural celebrations, awareness activity and community engagement opportunities, helping strengthen understanding of different cultures, identities and experiences. Examples include the Warrington Mela and a visit to Chester Mosque's open days.
- We remained committed to challenging violence against women and girls through ongoing support for **White Ribbon.** Once again, our crews visibility supported White Ribbon Day in Chester and displayed white ribbons on fire engines on the awareness day in November.
- We also continued to be active partners to organisations including the **Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA), Women in the Fire Service, Women Talking Fire, Inclusive Companies, Business Disability Forum and UK FirePRIDE.**

Our EDI objectives for 2026/27

- Launch and embed the **Embrace staff network**, to provide support and signposting to staff with parental and caring responsibilities.
- As required under the Employment Rights Act (2025), we will produce a **Gender Equality Action Plan** to clearly set out our objectives to ensure women have their same opportunities and protections as their male colleagues.
- Publish our new **Workplace Adjustments Policy** and **Gender Identity and Transitioning at Work Policy**, with accompanying resources for managers and staff, ensuring we continue to comply with best practice and legal requirements.
- Support a **programme of pre-engagement** with the public, staff and stakeholders, to begin forming our proposals for our 2028-32 Community Risk Management Plan.
- **Evaluate the effectiveness of our positive action activities** to attract a wider pool of applicants to our next round of wholetime firefighter recruitment. We will specifically target younger people, women, people from diverse ethnic backgrounds and the LGB community.
- Renew our **Disability Confident Level 2 accreditation**, achieve Silver status in the **Armed Forces Covenant scheme** and aim to improve on our 19th placing in the **Top 50 Inclusive Employers rankings**.
- Develop and implement a robust process for agreeing our attendance at **community events**, which have the potential to be contentious so that we can continue to reach a diverse range of people.
- Implement any recommendations from our fourth **HMICFRS inspection** that relate to EDI.



disability confident EMPLOYER

Embrace Parents and Carers Network

Part 2: Pay gap reporting

About this section

We have reported our gender pay gap since it became a mandatory requirement in 2017, as a standalone document published on our website. This year we are combining it with our EDI Annual Report, to give a broader, more transparent overview of our progress towards our EDI objectives.

Furthermore, we are also voluntarily publishing pay gap information relating to colleagues who declare a disability, those from a diverse ethnic background and those who identify as LGB. This aligns with our commitment to continuous improvement and transparency.

In the context of the gender specifically, all UK employers are legally obliged to pay men and women equally for work of equal value. However, for lots of reasons, in many organisations there is a difference between the average earnings of male and female employees. This is known as the gender pay gap. This gap does not mean employers have breached equal pay provisions or that women are paid less to do the same job as men. It normally indicates that men are occupying higher-paying positions in the workplace than women.

All public, private and voluntary sector organisations with 250 or more employees must report annually on their gender pay gap. They must do so against six different measures, based on a snapshot of pay data on a set date identified within Schedule 1 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017.

1

Mean Gender Pay Gap

The difference between the mean hourly rate of pay of male full-pay relevant employees and that of female full-pay relevant employees.

2

Median Gender Pay Gap

The difference between the median hourly rate of pay of male full-pay relevant employees and that of female full-pay relevant employees.

3

Median Bonus Gap

The difference between the median bonus pay paid to male relevant employees and that paid to female relevant employees.

4

Mean Bonus Gap

The difference between the mean bonus pay paid to male relevant employees and that paid to female relevant employees.

5

Bonus Proportions

The proportions of male and female relevant employees who were paid bonus pay during the relevant period.

6

Quartile Pay Bands

The proportions of male and female full-pay relevant employees in the lower, lower-middle, upper-middle and upper quartile pay bands.

Our gender pay gap explained

Like other fire and rescue services, we have a fair and gender-neutral approach to pay across all levels of our organisation. However, in common with the rest of our sector a gender pay gap persists. We believe there are three principal reasons:

1. More men than women across the operational workforce

Although more women than ever before are becoming firefighters, they remain outnumbered by men at all levels – including higher-paying senior officer roles. While it will take time for the new generation of operational women to progress through the ranks and for average female earnings to increase, closing this gap is a major priority for us. We are already seeing positive steps in the right direction, and we remain committed to accelerating progress by breaking down barriers to development and promotion.

2. Differences in operational and non-operational pay arrangements

It is difficult to make direct comparisons between nationally negotiated firefighter and local government rates of pay, but there are non-operational pay grades that pay less than that of a trainee firefighter's. These grades apply to office-based and community safety posts, which do not pay the same level of overtime nor are they eligible for other allowances. Many of these roles are undertaken by women and therefore bring down average female pay.

3. A smaller non-operational workforce

In any fire and rescue service, there are fewer non-operational roles – which traditionally attract more women – than firefighting or fire officer roles. In Cheshire, this was compounded by the transfer of many fire staff (many of whom were female, some in higher paying middle management roles) to a joint corporate services arrangement with Cheshire Police between 2016 and 2018. The ongoing disaggregation of some of these departments and the return of staff to our organisation's payroll is having a positive effect on our gender pay gap.

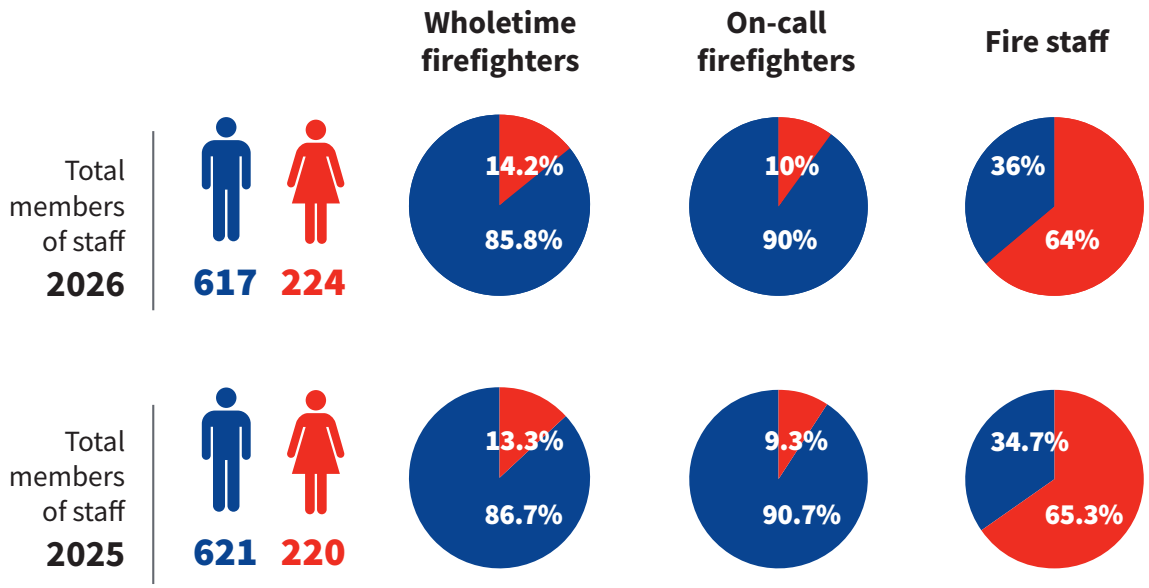




This year's data

Composition of our workforce

At 31 March 2026, we employed 841 colleagues. In line with the UK Government's gender pay gap reporting guidance, only 834 employees have been included within the hourly pay calculations, as seven employees did not receive a full month's pay during March 2026 due to unpaid leave, statutory-only sick pay or zero-hours arrangements with no payment during the reporting period. All 841 employees have been included within the bonus pay analysis.



Although men continue to outnumber women across the workforce, progress continues to be made in increasing female representation across a number of roles. At 31 March 2026, the number of women employed by the Service increased from 220 to 224, despite workforce numbers remaining unchanged overall.

Female representation continued to increase within operational roles, supported by recruitment activity, positive action initiatives and ongoing development opportunities. During 2025/26, 20 women joined the organisation, including appointments directly into middle and senior grades, contributing to an overall increase in female representation across the workforce.

Analysis of earnings

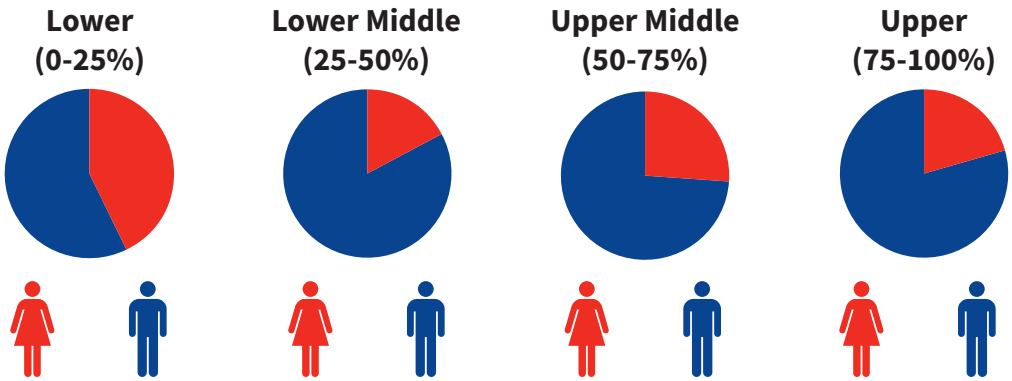
Based on a snapshot of data available on 31 March 2026, showing earnings of all staff, our gender pay gap is calculated as follows:

					% GENDER PAY GAP
1	Mean Hourly Rate	2026	£18.34	£20.00	8.30%
		2025	£17.46	£19.25	9.30%
2	Median Hourly Rate	2026	£17.75	£18.19	2.42%
		2025	£17.20	£17.63	2.44%
3	Proportion of Staff in receipt of a bonus	2026	20.54%	63.70%	
		2025	18.18%	57.8%	
4	Mean Bonus	2026	£940.97	£1,202.08	27.75%
		2025	£882.51	£815.60	-7.58%
5	Median Bonus	2026	£952.50	£952.50	0%
		2025	£921	£921	0%

Between 2025 and 2026, our gender pay gap, measured as the difference between the average hourly earnings of men and women, reduced from 9.3% to 8.3%. The median Gender Pay Gap also reduced slightly from 2.44% to 2.42%. These improvements continue a positive long-term trend and reflect our ongoing commitment to improving representation, development and progression opportunities across the Service. When we began reporting our gender pay gap in 2017, it stood at 25.5%.

We do not operate a traditional performance-related bonus scheme. However, certain payments, including awards made through our employee recognition scheme and payments associated with the on-call availability pilot, are required to be reported under gender pay gap legislation. During 2025/26, bonus figures were significantly influenced by payments associated with our on-call availability pilot, which increased both the number of employees receiving payments and the value of those payments when compared with previous years. As a result, bonus figures should be interpreted with caution and viewed within the context of the pilot arrangements operating during the reporting period.

6 Quartile Pay Bands 2026



2026	42.8%	57.2%	17.3%	82.7%	26.3%	73.7%	20.6%	79.4%
2025	47.3%	52.7%	17.2%	82.8%	19.1%	80.9%	22%	78%

Between 2025 and 2026, female representation within the **upper-middle pay quartile** increased from **19.1% to 26.3%**, while female representation within the **upper pay quartile** remained broadly stable at **20.6%** compared with **22%** the previous year. At the same time, female representation in the lower pay quartile remained stable at **42.8%** and in the **lower-middle pay quartile** remained largely unchanged at **17.3%**.

Of the **75 new starters** during 2025/26, **20 were women**, including four appointments directly into the upper-middle and upper pay quartiles. These appointments, combined with ongoing progress through development programmes and promotion opportunities, continue to strengthen female representation at senior levels of the organisation.

Changes within the pay quartiles have also been influenced by wider organisational activity, including workforce movement, recruitment into specialist and leadership roles, changes resulting from the disaggregation of services from the Blue Light Collaboration arrangements with Cheshire Police and continued investment in talent development.

While women continue to be underrepresented in higher-paid operational and senior leadership roles, the continued increase in female representation across the workforce and within higher earning quartiles is encouraging and supports our long-term ambition to reduce the gender pay gap and improve representation at all levels of our Service.



Closing the pay gap



Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, **Including Everyone 2025–2028**, sets out our commitment to ensuring everyone has a fair opportunity to reach their full potential, regardless of their background or personal characteristics.

Reducing the gender pay gap is not simply about pay, it is about creating an environment where women have equal opportunities to join, develop, progress and succeed within our Service.

While progress continues to be made, we recognise that achieving greater gender balance across all areas of the organisation, particularly within operational and senior leadership roles, remains a long-term priority.

During 2025/26 we:

- continued to deliver **targeted positive action activity** to encourage women to consider careers within our Service
- worked closely with the **Limitless Women's Network** to support engagement, networking and development opportunities for women across our Service
- continued to support the **Elev8** and **Wider Horizons** development programmes, helping colleagues from underrepresented groups access learning, mentoring and career development opportunities

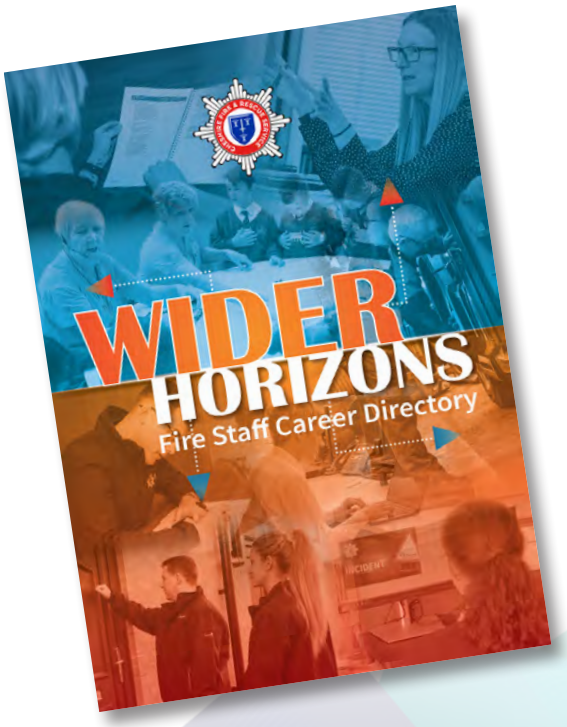


Limitless
Women's Network

- reviewed **recruitment processes** and **candidate support materials** to ensure they remained accessible, inclusive and fair

- supported colleagues to attend **sector events and conferences** that promote personal development, networking and leadership opportunities. During the year, colleagues attended events including the Women in the Fire Service Conference, Women Talking Fire and FirePRO, providing valuable opportunities to build networks, share best practice and support personal and professional development

- continued to promote **flexible working arrangements** and **workplace support** to help attract and retain talented colleagues from a wide range of backgrounds. This included hybrid working arrangements, flexible approaches to working patterns, workplace adjustments and the development of support frameworks, such as menopause guidance and resources, to help colleagues remain engaged and supported at work.





WFS
Women in the Fire Service UK

Other pay gap information

For the first time, the Service is voluntarily reporting **disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation pay gap** reporting within its annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report. This reflects our commitment to transparency and to developing a broader understanding of workforce representation, progression and employee experience across the Service.

While gender pay gap reporting is a statutory requirement and relies on analysis of much larger numbers of staff, the numbers of disabled, ethnically diverse and LGB employees is much smaller. As a result, individual appointments, promotions, retirements or changes in disclosure rates in these groups can have a more pronounced impact on the figures than would typically be seen within gender pay gap reporting.

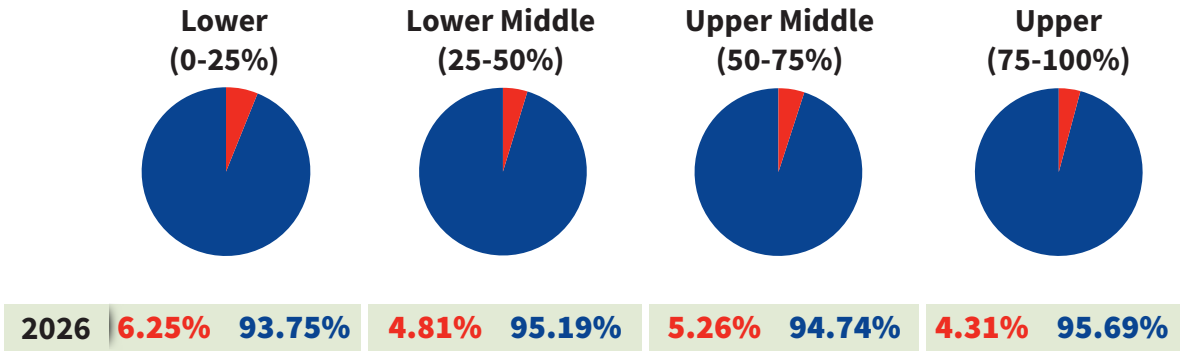
The data presented should therefore be interpreted alongside workforce composition, pay quartile distribution and disclosure rates, rather than in isolation. As workforce disclosure rates continue to improve and the UK Government issues guidance on statutory reporting by 2029, we will continue to refine both the presentation and analysis of workforce equality data to provide greater insight into representation, progression and employee experience.



Disability pay gap

			Disability declared	No disability declared	% disability pay gap
	Mean Hourly Rate	2026	£19.28	£19.57	1.48%
	Median Hourly Rate	2026	£18.19	£18.19	0.00%
	Proportion of Staff in receipt of a bonus	2026	3.64%	96.36%	

Disability pay quartiles



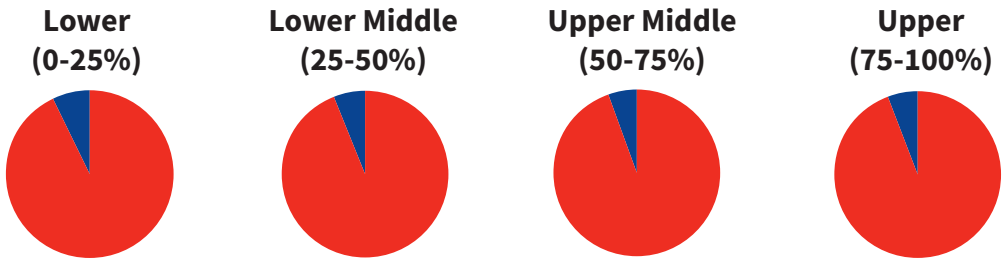
	Lower (0-25%)		Lower Middle (25-50%)		Upper Middle (50-75%)		Upper (75-100%)	
2026	6.25%	93.75%	4.81%	95.19%	5.26%	94.74%	4.31%	95.69%

Disability declared No disability declared

Ethnicity pay gap

			White British	Other ethnic backgrounds	% ethnicity pay gap
	Mean Hourly Rate	2026	£19.63	£19.88	-1.27%
	Median Hourly Rate	2026	£18.19	£18.19	0.00%
	Proportion of Staff in receipt of a bonus	2026	94.92%	5.08%	

Ethnicity pay quartiles



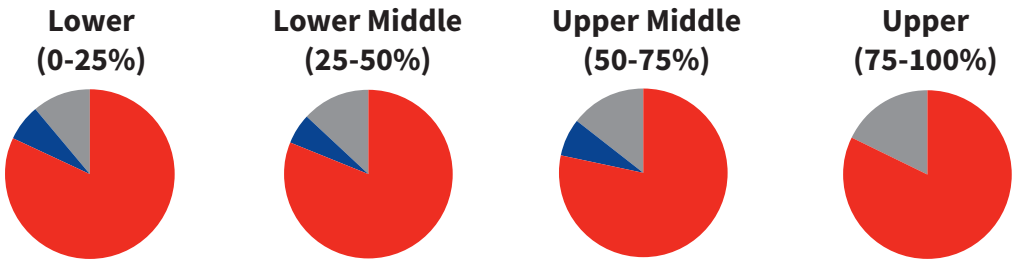
	Lower (0-25%)		Lower Middle (25-50%)		Upper Middle (50-75%)		Upper (75-100%)	
2026	93%	7%	94.06%	5.94%	94.69%	5.31%	94.17%	5.80%

White British Other ethnic backgrounds

Sexual orientation pay gap

			Heterosexual	LGB	% sexual orientation pay gap
	Mean Hourly Rate	2026	£19.62	£18.15	7.49%
	Median Hourly Rate	2026	£18.19	£17.75	2.42%
	Proportion of Staff in receipt of a bonus	2026	96.22%	3.78%	

Sexual orientation pay quartiles



	Lower (0-25%)	Lower Middle (25-50%)	Upper Middle (50-75%)	Upper (75-100%)
2026	82.21% 6.73% 11.06%	81.25% 5.77% 12.98%	78.47% 7.18% 14.35%	81.86% X% 17.65%

Heterosexual LGB Not stated/declined

Commentary on other pay gap data

The **disability pay gap** remained low, with a mean pay gap of **1.48%** and a median pay gap of 0.00%, suggesting broadly comparable earnings between employees declaring a disability and those who have not declared a disability. Employees declaring a disability were represented across all pay quartiles, with a relatively balanced distribution throughout the workforce.

The **ethnicity pay gap** was **-1.27%** and a median pay gap was **0.00%**, indicating broadly comparable earnings between employee groups. Representation from ethnic minority communities remains relatively small and, as a result, small changes in workforce composition can have a more significant impact on reported outcomes than would typically be seen in larger workforce cohorts.

The **sexual orientation pay gap** was higher than both the ethnicity and disability pay gaps, with a mean pay gap of **7.49%** and a median pay gap of **2.42%**. While colleagues identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual were represented across all pay quartiles, representation within the upper pay quartile was lower than within the lower and middle pay quartiles, which is likely to influence the reported pay gap.

Bonus participation data has been included to provide additional context regarding workforce representation across disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation. Once again, the relatively small size of some workforce cohorts, individual appointments, promotions, retirements and changes in disclosure rates can have a more pronounced impact on findings than would typically be seen within gender pay gap reporting.

To protect confidentiality and reduce the risk of identifying individual employees, any data relating to **fewer than eight employees has been redacted and displayed as "X"** throughout the report. This approach reflects good practice where reporting on small workforce groups could increase the risk of inadvertent identification.

Continued improvements in workforce disclosure rates are providing a stronger evidence base to help us better understand representation, progression and employee experience across all characteristics. As disclosure rates continue to improve and statutory guidance on the presentation of this data is published, we will further refine both the presentation and analysis of all pay gap data to ensure even more meaningful analysis.



Cheshire
Fire & Rescue Service

Our Vision is a Cheshire where there are no deaths, injuries or damage from fires and other emergencies.

Our Mission is to help create safer communities, to rescue people and protect economic, environmental and community interests.

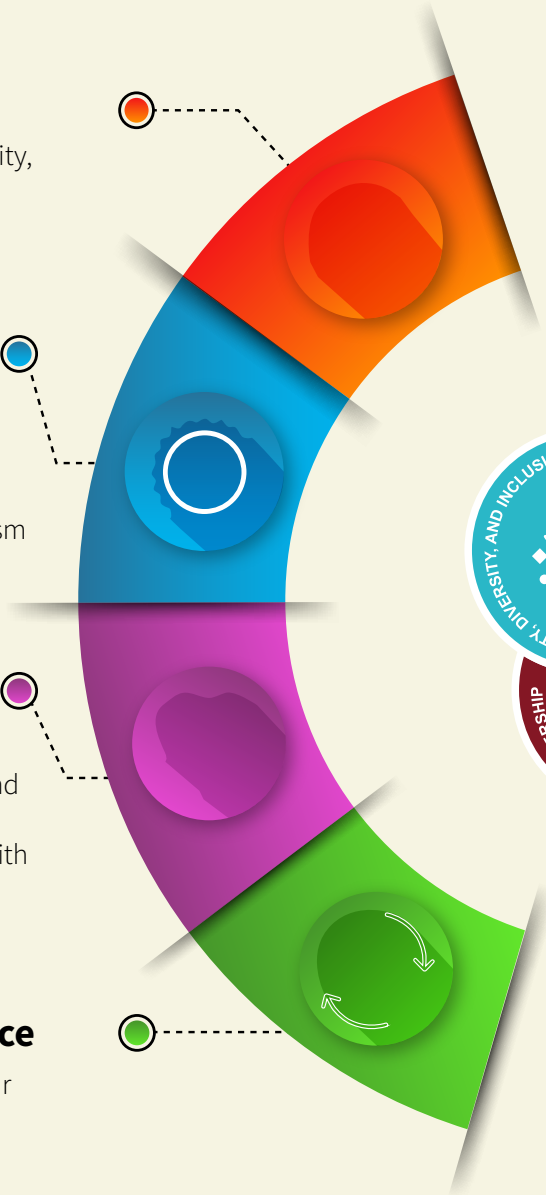
We will deliver this through our
Core Values

Being Inclusive
By acting fairly, with integrity, respect and without prejudice.

Doing the Right Thing
By holding each other to account for ensuring high standards of professionalism in everything we do.

Acting with Compassion
By being understanding and offering help to each other and to our communities with warmth, patience and kindness.

Making a Difference
By making an impact in our organisation and in our communities in whatever ways we can, for as many people as we can.



Recognising the Fire and Rescue Service's
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NFCC
National Fire Chiefs Council

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