



**GREATER
MANCHESTER**
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

2022 - 2025

Foreword by Baroness Beverley Hughes, Deputy Mayor for Greater Manchester

Greater Manchester is a richly diverse community with many strengths. We also know there exist historic and deep-seated inequalities which the COVID pandemic and other recent events have exposed even more starkly. They present an urgent challenge for all our public services that we are determined to tackle.

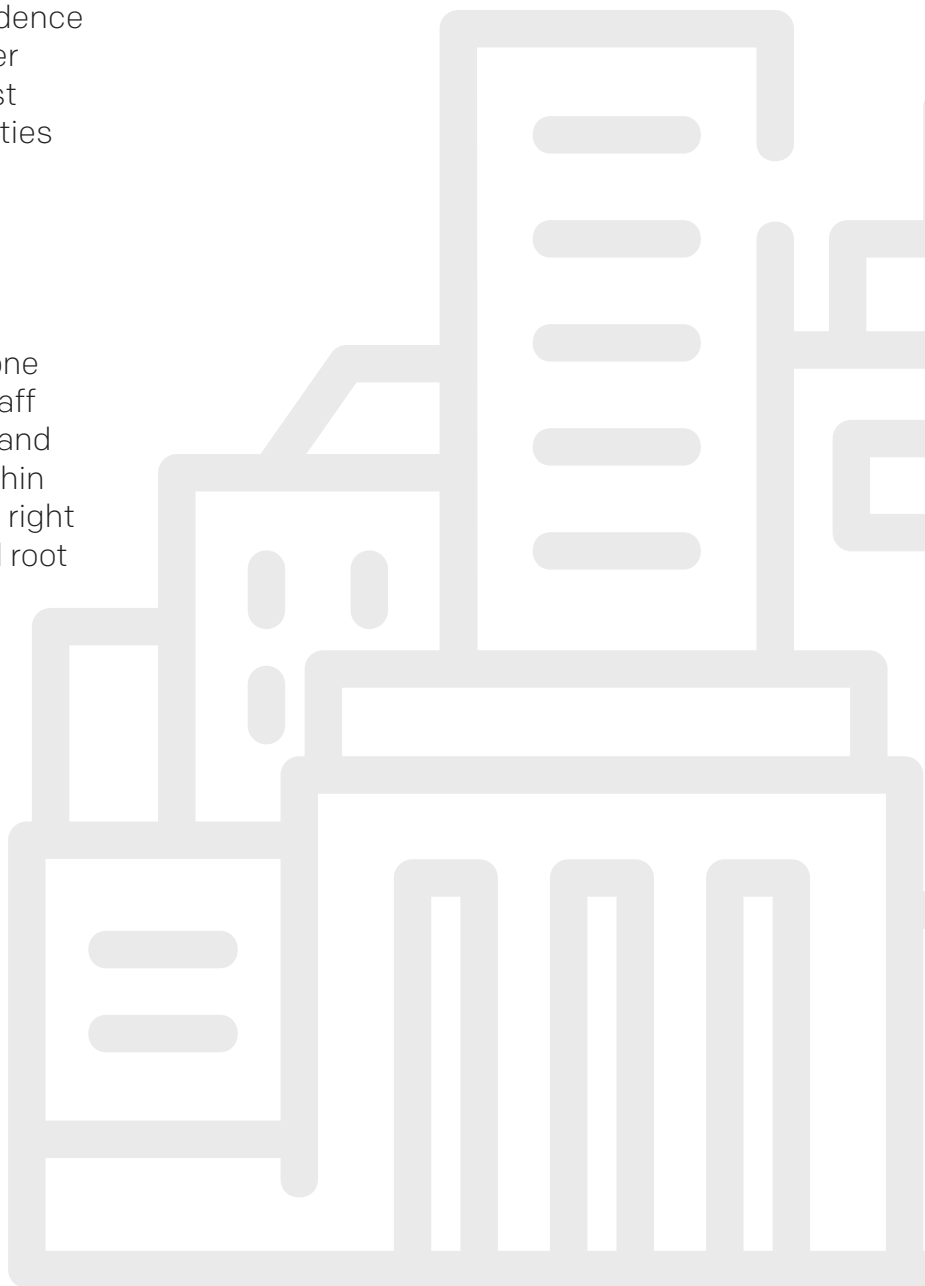
Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion is therefore central to the Greater Manchester Strategy and our Greater Manchester Fire Plan. To deliver a good service the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) must have the trust and confidence of all people and communities in Greater Manchester. To do so, its workforce must be representative of all those communities and GMFRS must be fair, unbiased, and accountable to all.

GMFRS have made good progress in developing a workforce that is more representative but more needs to be done to achieve even greater diversity and staff need to have the right culture, training, and opportunities to thrive and progress within the service. This also means having the right culture and processes to challenge and root out unacceptable behaviour.

It also means GMFRS continuing to undertake the proper equality impact assessments to ensure all communities have proper access to services and working with communities and partners to problem-solve in communities and ensure a continued culture of trust.

As Deputy Mayor I fully support the objectives outlined in this plan and will make certain that progress is made against these objectives.

Rt Hon Baroness Beverley Hughes, Deputy Mayor – Police, Crime, Criminal Justice & Fire.



Foreword from Chief Fire Officer Dave Russel

Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is resolute.

This new strategy sets out the Service's ambitions and plans to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of our service delivery and thoroughly embedded in our organisation's culture. It builds on our aim to drive a step change in the culture of our organisation, helping us to embed positive behaviours in all that we do, for the benefit of our staff and our communities.

We are proud of the progress we have made to date, but we are committed to further improvement and we are well-placed to overcome all present and future challenges and to respond appropriately. This is not about compliance – it is about it being the right thing to do for our staff and our communities, and it is about being as effective as we can be as a fire and rescue service.

This strategy builds on the progress and momentum of our previous EDI strategy, and sets out our continued commitment to evolve and to grow. We aim to show that diversity and inclusion is business as usual, and that everything we do reflects a culture where our staff are empowered to create, innovate, and enrich an organisation that is truly representative of those we serve. It challenges us all to think differently about how we support and value difference within our organisation, because this will also affect how we support and value difference in our communities and increases our legitimacy in the eyes of our communities.

We are committed to increasing our understanding of the communities we serve and their priorities, and through increased engagement and insight, we aim to deliver more responsive and effective services with a strong emphasis on Integrated Place Based Working. We remain committed to taking positive steps to develop an increasingly diverse workforce, which is reflective of our communities. This will enable us to reap the benefits of the talents and skills of our staff and increase our ability and confidence to understand and address local priorities.

The measure of the success of this strategy will be judged by how embedded its principles become. The responsibility for delivering this strategy does not sit with one particular group of individuals, it is the responsibility of every one of us. We all have a role to play in this strategy.

Dave Russel, Chief Fire Officer, Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service.



1. Introduction

This document is Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue's (GMFRS) Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) strategy. It sets out how we will attract and retain a workforce that is representative of all our communities; help all our communities access and shape our services; and create a culture where all our staff can thrive and are empowered to continually improve the organisation. This Strategy also enables GMFRS to meet its core functions under the Equality Act 2010 which legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. The Public Sector Equality Duty, under the Act, requires authorities, in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The Fire Plan for Greater Manchester identifies six priorities for the Service:

1. Provide a fast, safe and effective response
2. Help people reduce the risks of fires and other emergencies
3. Help protect the built environment
4. Use resources sustainably and deliver the most value
5. Develop a culture of excellence, equality and inclusivity
6. Integrate our services in every locality with those of partner agencies

Covering the period 2022-25, this Strategy primarily supports the delivery of Priority 5 of the Fire Plan. However, attracting and retaining the best candidates from all our communities, as well as engaging successfully with those communities, will improve effectiveness across the whole of the Service, helping to deliver all the priorities in the Plan. This Strategy also supports the

ten priorities in the wider Greater Manchester Strategy, Good Lives for All, by placing GMFRS at the centre of the communities it serves, helping people start well, live well and age well.

The Service has a clear Mission, Vision and set of Values - Respect, Excellence, Honesty, Professionalism and Inclusivity. This strategy supports the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) Core Code of Ethics. The Code is built around the pillars of communities, integrity, dignity and respect, leadership, and EDI.

To ensure the delivery of this Strategy, GMFRS will produce an action plan, updated annually to adapt to changing risks and progress, and will be underpinned by an outcomes framework. The action plan will provide more detail regarding activity and responsible leads, reporting to the EDI Strategic Group, Senior Leadership Team, Improvement board and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA).



2. Governance and progress

Our previous Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy was launched in July 2019 to share the positive ambition of the organisation, which strives for equality and inclusion for Greater Manchester.

The EDI Strategy and phase one of our Action Plan (2019-2021) saw a redesign to the internal structure of our reporting process, allowing leads to play a key role in implementing our ambition and enabling all our colleagues to have a voice in shaping our EDI activities.

The Strategy and Action Plan focused on GMFRS implementing recommendations from our 2019 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) report, in readiness for our inspection in 2021.

Governance of our EDI initiatives and ambitions has evolved to fully embed an inclusive culture in the workplace and enable all staff to have a voice. The structure incorporates our staff networks, EDI single points of contact and Equality Impact Assessment working group. The EDI Strategic group measures performance against the delivery of the strategy and the annual action plan, and reports to our Service Leadership Team, the Executive board and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. The structure is designed to enable continuous improvement and recognise best practice so that we can deliver the best possible outcomes for our staff and for the communities we serve. Its aim is to ensure our vision is communicated from a strategic level, through associated plans, into the make-up of our teams, the behaviours of our staff and our relationships with communities.

Since the start of our EDI journey, we have made huge strides in the delivery of our ambitions. Following our last inspection in 2021, HMICFRS now recognises the Service as being Good at promoting its values and culture and we have also moved from Inadequate to Good at ensuring fairness and diversity

3. Our organisation and our workforce

Since we introduced our EDI Strategy in 2019, we have undertaken considerable work and implemented a number of new initiatives.

We commit to ensuring EDI is firmly embedded across the Service and improving staff understanding of the purpose and benefits of positive action.



The policies the organisation has in place are designed to support all staff. Consultation is undertaken for any policy that is introduced or reviewed. We are continuing to improve our processes to ensure all employees can feedback on the inclusiveness of relevant policies. New policy areas currently being introduced will identify our approach to issues around the menopause, domestic abuse and neurodiversity

We will make it explicitly clear that the organisation will not tolerate discrimination, bullying or harassment. More information can be found in our Bullying and Harassment Policy.

We commit to continually review and introduce new policies to remove any types of discrimination in the workplace.



Our policies are complemented by the completion of meaningful Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), which are scrutinised internally and audited by EDI UK. EIAs help us to ensure that the services that we deliver have a positive impact on groups and also enable equality of access to services. EDI UK support our EIA working group to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to produce high quality EIAs that make a difference.

We commit to continually improving our EIA processes, ensuring meaningful completion and therefore ensuring equality of access to our services - identifying gaps in learning for further development



We are committed to meaningful staff engagement. The B-Heard Survey was introduced, providing a robust system to listen to our staff and drive forward improvements in response to feedback. We have adopted Freedom to Speak Up, an initiative pioneered by the NHS. Freedom to Speak Up is a pledge to our staff and a platform that allows anyone to flag a concern, offer a suggestion for improvement, raise a grievance, and make a complaint or disclosure. We will continue to proactively seek and respond to feedback from staff and make sure any action taken is meaningful. We will monitor key themes and identify learning that will benefit the organisation.

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Our EDI Strategy has also seen the launch of a Reverse Mentoring Programme; improved mandatory online and face-to-face EDI training; and the establishment of four staff networks. We are currently planning to launch a new Armed Forces Staff Network. As of March 2022 we have over 200 members in our staff networks and over 110 single points of contact across the Service as active allies. We are training and encouraging staff network members to be involved in the recruitment process to improve the diversity of recruitment panels.

We commit to growing and amplifying the work of the staff networks, developing members and empowering them to act.



Improving organisational culture and ensuring equality, diversity and inclusivity is at the heart of what we do, and requires ongoing commitment and visibility. We will continue to take steps to remove inequality and make progress to improve fairness, diversity and inclusion at all levels within the Service.

We commit to publishing an annual diversity calendar of campaigns, undertaking meaningful activities that will increase visibility and awareness as we strive for EDI excellence.



Training and development

We commit to developing an Inclusive Leaders programme to equip leaders and managers with the skills and knowledge to promote and advance EDI.



We will build the skills and confidence of senior and middle managers to implement EDI practices that challenge and respond to inappropriate and exclusionary behaviour.

We commit to launching Promotion Pathway and Leadership Development Frameworks.



The Promotion Pathway and Leadership Development Frameworks identify high-potential staff and support aspiring leaders to develop and progress within the organisation. These, along with a progressive and inclusive recruitment strategy, forms the key pillars of our Talent Management Strategy.

Inclusion Essentials is a mandatory EDI e-learning module we have developed for all staff. Staff have access to a full range of EDI e-learning packages, to increase awareness and enable managers to support their teams across the Service. We will continue to grow our learning, development and training offer so that firefighter instructors can deliver EDI learning as part of apprenticeship training and wider workforce development.

We will ensure EDI is firmly embedded and understood across the organisation. Our aim is to make all employees feel valued, welcome, integrated, and included in the workforce.

We commit to launching our "Inclusive Culture" face to face training for all staff and volunteers to complement our e-learning packages.



Firefighter Attraction Strategy

Our firefighter attraction strategy was launched in 2019 to support the delivery of the EDI Strategy. It had a specific ambition to attract and retain a talented and diverse front line firefighter workforce, one that represents the Greater Manchester communities we serve.

The strategy has been successful. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, we have increased applications and new starters of people from our underrepresented groups to our firefighter apprenticeship programmes. For our operational workforce, we consider the following groups i.e. females, people who are racially diverse, LGBTQ+ and those who have a disability.

Continually improving our engagement with communities is a priority. We have a dedicated attraction team who lead, plan and deliver targeted campaigns that focus on promoting firefighter careers including apprenticeships to communities across Greater Manchester. Between 2019 and 2022, expressions of interest from our under-represented groups increased by 55%.

Additional work has taken place to make our recruitment practices more inclusive. This includes anonymised sifting to reduce bias; unconscious bias and interview skills training; and increasing the diversity of assessment panels. Our diverse panels now include trained staff network members.

There has been a year on year increase in the number of recruit firefighters from our under-represented groups. Between 2019 and January 2022, the proportion of new starters from these groups increased from 18% to 39%.

We commit to launching a new Attraction Strategy to continue to build on our success so far.



4. Working with our partners

We commit to closer partnership working to effectively reach underrepresented sectors of our communities and inform our improvement opportunities.



Nationally we are represented at NFCC platforms including the Equality Forum to ensure we integrate best practice and influence inclusive change. We have also built strong professional relations with Stonewall UK over the past five years and have received a national accolade for our commitment to the inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in the workplace.

We commit to seeking and implementing feedback and best practice from EDI partners to improve our services and be the best we can be.



We work closely with The Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) continuing to embed an inclusive culture through training, events, campaigns, conferences and the sharing and embedding of good practice. Our recent Culture and Inclusion review February 2022 commended our progression with recommendations that will support our continuous improvement.

We are represented at Women in Fire Service UK, through training events and award celebrations. Members have sought to influence the equality agenda, taking active roles in research initiatives, such as women's fit fire kit. We support positive action initiatives, working with the government in nationwide campaigns for recruitment and holding a seat on the Fire Sector Federation.

We commit to ensuring EDI is integral to organisational culture, seen as a core value, a source of innovation and a means to growth and success.



We have moved up

109 places

since our last submission in 2019.



We now rank

93rd

in Stonewall's list of Top Employers for LGBTQ+ people.



We also won a **Gold Employer Award** from the charity in 2022.

We commit to working with GM Equality Forums on collaborative plans that benefit GM Communities.



Locally we are continuing to build good relations with the Greater Manchester Equality Officers Forum and the seven equality panels. They were established to tackle the structural causes of inequality and injustice in the region, influencing change in a way that best responds to the needs of marginalised communities. We are committed to collaborating with partners to align our equality, diversity and inclusivity vision across services ensuring all sectors are invited to take part, with an emphasis on integrated local services. This includes working with organisations in the GM family such as Greater Manchester Police on common equality objectives such as recruitment and workforce development.

We commit to developing an EDI Events and Campaigns forum to enable even closer working, and to showcase our commitments and best practice externally.



5. Supporting our communities

It is vital that all our communities feel able to access our services. We need to tackle barriers that can include language, perceived prejudice, and other societal factors. Using EIAs effectively to ensure equality of access to our services as well as reviewing how our resources are deployed and services delivered will continue to be central to the work that we do. Through events, campaigns, and other activity, we will develop and deliver our EDI functions to support our communities to adopt safer practices, improving their safety and wellbeing.

We commit to implementing the NFCC's Inclusion, Equality and Diversity Strategy and to continually learn, identify changing priorities, and evaluate success.



The NFCC Inclusion, Equality and Diversity Strategy encourages fire and rescue services to undertake and strive to improve their assessment levels within the national Equality Standard for Local Government. This will help ensure all individuals and community groups can easily access our services and feel valued as we work together to promote safer communities. We will utilise NFCC equal access reports and GM equality data to develop a Community Equity Plan of action.

We will actively seek to engage groups who may be unaware of, or choose not to access, services from us and other public sector providers, to build trust and awareness of our offer. We will do this by undertaking proactive community engagement with key voluntary sector partners and engaging in meaningful collaboration at local level.

We commit to ensuring marginalised, and diverse communities are consulted, engaged, and represented, with particular attention paid to those with the greatest need.



Our approach is designed to ensure equality of access irrespective of age; gender race; marital status; being pregnant; having a disability; religious belief; sexual orientation; having caring responsibilities and socio-economic class.

We will also co-design our EDI volunteering function to ensure we attract and retain a diverse group of volunteer staff, representative of our communities, to support the delivery of our EDI initiatives.



6. Measuring Success

The objectives of the Fire Plan are to:

- Reduce deaths, injuries and damage caused by fire and other threats to our communities.
- Deliver the best value to the public with the least impact on the environment.
- Develop and maintain a diverse, high performing, and healthy workforce.

The ultimate aim of this strategy is to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion is at the heart of everything we do. This will help ensure our diverse workforce thrives and improves service delivery, and that we understand, attract, and effectively engage with all our communities.

To help achieve these outcomes, the aims of this strategy are to:

- Create and maintain a truly inclusive workplace, making all employees feel valued, welcome, integrated, and included in the workforce.
- Make employees feel they have a say in decisions that impact their work, with leaders and managers proactively finding ways to give employees a voice.
- Proactively promote diverse ideas and perspectives, focusing our efforts on inclusive practices that will become second nature to employees and are woven into the culture, mission vision and values of our organisation.
- Create equal access to opportunities.
- Create equal access to services, support and resources for all our communities
- Do everything we can to eliminate all forms of discrimination and continue to improve race equity in the workplace.
- Engage marginalised communities in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

We will measure the success of this strategy by analysing and publishing feedback from staff surveys; benchmarking through local and national equality standards such as Gender and Race Equality Pay gap reports and Stonewall UK's Workplace Equality Index reports; and external assessment through HMICFRS. We will use the NFCC evaluation framework to measure the success of our EDI Annual Action Plan and EDI Strategy. EDI activity will also be monitored and reported in line with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and our corporate reporting framework. Finally, the Mayor/Deputy Mayor will take an active role in ensuring that objectives set are delivered and that GMFRS engages effectively with the GMCA Equality Panels.





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MANCHESTER**
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**PROUD TO BE A
WORKPLACE THAT
WORKS FOR ALL.**

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