



Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

This document is uncontrolled when printed. All users are responsible for checking to confirm that this is the current version of the policy before use.

PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING

Version: 1.1

Issue Date: 15/01/2016

Next Review: 14/11/2024

Government Security Classification: Official

Uncontrolled when printed – check online to check latest version.



Contents

1	Introduction.....	3
2	Who this policy applies to	3
3	Related policies	3
4	Policy statement on equality, diversity, and inclusion	3
5	Our commitment.....	4
6	Responsibilities of management.....	5
7	Responsibilities of staff.....	6
8	Bullying, harassment, and victimisation.....	7
8.1	Violence against staff	7
9	Employee support mechanisms	8
9.1	Internal Support.....	8
9.2	External support	8
9.3	Counselling.....	9
10	Monitoring and assurance.....	9
11	Complaints.....	10
11.1	External complaints.....	10
11.2	Internal complaints	10
12	Alternative formats.....	10

PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING



1 Introduction

Avon Fire & Rescue Service (AF&RS), under the governance of Avon Fire Authority, provides fire and rescue services to the area formerly known as the County of Avon. The area comprises the four unitary authority areas of Bristol, Bath and North-East Somerset, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire.

2 Who this policy applies to

The principles in this policy are applicable to all existing and potential employees, volunteers and auxiliary staff, elected members of Avon Fire Authority, contractors, and visitors to service premises.

We will ensure that contractors and providers of goods and services are aware of our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion and our expectations in terms of behaviour whilst on service premises or whilst carrying out work on behalf of AF&RS. These requirements will be clearly set out in written communications to contractors and providers of goods and services, forming an explicit part of the contact between them and AF&RS.

3 Related policies

The below AF&RS policies and procedures have some areas of direct overlap with the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy.

[Dignity and Respect Policy](#)

[Dignity and Respect Toolkit](#)

[Discipline Policy](#)

[Grievance Policy](#)

[Confidential reporting “whistleblowing” code and guidance](#)

All employment policies and procedures have a bearing on equality of opportunity. All of AF&RS’ policies are published in the [Policy Hub](#).

4 Policy statement on equality, diversity, and inclusion

AF&RS is committed to encouraging and promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion (ED&I) in employment practices, recruitment, partnerships, procurement, and service delivery.

This statement summarises our overarching approach to ED&I:

“We will be an organisation which promotes equality and values diversity. We will strive to provide a harmonious and inclusive

PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING



environment where the wellbeing, dignity and rights of all staff and service users are recognised, respected, and upheld”.

We believe that equality in the workplace means:

- Working in an environment that is free from discrimination, bullying, harassment, and victimisation.
- A working environment that promotes dignity and respect for every employee.
- Understanding that people have different needs and valuing individual differences.
- Equality of access and opportunity in employment and service delivery.
- Treating all individuals fairly and without bias, prejudice or stereotyping in all our functions including recruitment, selection, promotion, and career development, and in service delivery.
- Recognising that there is often not a level playing field and we may need to take extra steps to enable some people – including employees and service users – to benefit equally from our policies.
- All staff working together to ensure this policy works and abiding by the contents and spirit of this policy to ensure that we do not discriminate against colleagues, job applicants, suppliers, contractors, or people in the community who receive our services.
- Supporting, developing, and making best use of the skills and talents of all employees.

Equality in the workplace does **not** mean:

- Lowering standards in any way.
- Pretending that everyone is the same.
- Giving particular groups or individuals unfair or unjustifiable advantages.
- Choosing particular people for jobs or service just because of who they are.

The policy has the full support of the elected members of Avon Fire Authority and the Service Management Board of AF&RS. It is endorsed by the employee representative bodies.

5 Our commitment

- We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination or victimisation. We will not discriminate either directly or indirectly against anyone on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, ethnicity, colour, caste, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, sex, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, political opinion, trade union activity or employment status, whether part-time, full-time, fixed-term or temporary. This list is not exhaustive.

PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING



- Our aim is to build a workforce that is truly representative of all sections of society.
- We will strive to create a workplace which supports diversity, promotes dignity and respect for all, is free from discrimination, bullying, harassment and victimisation, and where individual differences and the contributions of all employees are recognised and valued.
- We will take a [zero-tolerance](#) approach to bullying and harassment.
- We will undertake a continuous programme of positive action to attract applications for employment with AF&RS from the people and groups which are under-represented within our workforce. This does not mean lowering standards or giving someone a job just because of who they are. All appointments to the service will be made on the basis of suitability of applicants against job-related criteria.
- We will uphold and promote the service's values of trust, respect, integrity, can-do, openness and learning.
- We will engage and communicate with everyone, including the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach members of our community to gain a greater understanding and ensure our services are tailored to meet the needs of everyone.
- We will provide positive leadership and ensure all employees are supported and encouraged to develop their full potential throughout their careers. Access to facilities, training, personal and career development opportunities will be available to all.
- We will provide training for managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the Equality, Diversity and Policy.
- We will carry out Scoping Impact Assessments for our key policies, processes, and practices to help us to identify and eliminate existing or potential barriers or inequalities.
- We will ensure that our communications, including web pages, emails, policies, forms, reports, documents, and advertisements will be written in an inclusive style that is gender-neutral, for example, using the pronoun "they" instead of "he" or "she".
- We will monitor the diversity make-up of the workforce with regard to the protected characteristics of age, disability, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity so that we can identify any areas where there are inequalities that need to be addressed.
- Breaches of this policy will be classed as misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action. In the event of a breach of this policy we will take appropriate action which may include providing support, training and where necessary taking disciplinary action in accordance with the service's disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- We will review this policy at least every three years.

6 Responsibilities of management

Overarching responsibility for ensuring the successful implementation and operation of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and the associated practices, procedures and arrangements sits with the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (CFO/CE) and principal managers - the Service Management Board (SMB).

PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING

Version: 1.1

Issue Date: 15/01/2016

Next Review: 14/11/2024

Government Security Classification: Official

Uncontrolled when printed – check online to check latest version.



The specific responsibilities of the SMB will be to:

- Maintain and put into action this Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy.
- Make appropriate arrangements to implement good equality practice in AF&RS. This includes securing equality in terms of service delivery and access to services, and every aspect of employment from the beginning to the end of the contractual relationship and even beyond – for example in the provision of references.
- Make appropriate arrangements to embed equality into the business planning and performance management processes.
- Provide clear guidelines on acceptable and unacceptable behaviour or conduct.
- Ensure that all managers are aware of their equality duties.
- Ensure that arrangements are in place to provide appropriate equality training for all staff at induction and at appropriate intervals throughout their careers, such as on promotion.

The specific responsibilities of all managers will be to:

- Ensure that they and their staff are aware of this policy and associated procedures.
- Ensure that they and their staff operate within the letter and spirit of this policy and associated procedures, and that all reasonable and practical steps are taken to avoid discrimination.
- Ensure that all grievances concerning bullying, harassment, victimisation, or discrimination are dealt with properly, fairly, and promptly and in accordance with AF&RS' discipline and grievance procedures.

Consultative arrangements are in place to enable all employees and stakeholders to contribute through the appropriate channels including the Equalities Sub-Committee (a sub-group of the Fire Authority), employee surveys and employee representative bodies. Consultation will also be undertaken with specialist groups and members of the community when appropriate.

The strategic lead for Equalities, Inclusion and Diversity is the Director of Service Delivery Support.

7 Responsibilities of staff

The attitudes of staff are crucial to the successful implementation of this policy. Every member of staff has a personal responsibility for their own compliance with this policy. All staff should understand that they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination in the course of their employment, against colleagues or managers, contractors, members of the public and anyone else whilst carrying out the work of, or representing, AF&RS.

PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING

Version: 1.1

Issue Date: 15/01/2016

Next Review: 14/11/2024

Government Security Classification: Official

Uncontrolled when printed – check online to check latest version.



Breaches of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy will be regarded as misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action which can result in dismissal. For contractors or agency staff this will result in termination of contracts.

It is the responsibility of all staff to:

- Comply with the policy and associated procedures.
- Not discriminate in their day-to-day activities or induce others to do so.
- Not victimise, harass, bully, or intimidate other staff or groups who have, or are perceived to have one or more of the protected characteristics.
- Ensure no individual is discriminated against or harassed because of their association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.
- Inform their line manager or other appropriate manager if they become aware of any discriminatory practice, bullying, harassment, victimisation, or other unacceptable behaviour.

8 Bullying, harassment, and victimisation

Different people bring different perspectives, ideas, knowledge, and cultures, and we respect the rights of all individuals to hold different views and beliefs. However, we will not tolerate those views and beliefs being manifested in a way that is hostile or degrading or in a way that negatively impacts on the dignity of others.

We have a [zero-tolerance](#) approach to bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination and will treat any complaints or allegations very seriously whether these are made by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public or any others in the course of our work activities. Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the service's [discipline policy](#) and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1977 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

We have a separate [Dignity & Respect Policy](#) and a supporting [Dignity & Respect Toolkit](#), both of which contain advice and guidance for staff about how to recognise and deal with bullying, harassment and other unwanted behaviours.

8.1 Violence against staff

Given the nature of services that AF&RS provides, staff may sometimes encounter violence or verbal abuse from members of the public when carrying out their work. Any incident in

PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING



which an employee is abused, threatened, assaulted, or otherwise subjected to anti-social behaviour should be reported to a manager and on Wellworker. This includes racist, sexist, or homophobic abuse.

Staff may experience domestic violence or hate crime at home or outside work which will affect them in all aspects of their lives, including their performance at work. Domestic violence can occur in many forms, such as physical, emotional, financial, sexual, but none are acceptable.

Information on how to tackle domestic violence and hate crime is available from the HR Department. Support and counselling is also available through the [Workout Solutions Counselling Service](#).

9 Employee support mechanisms

9.1 Internal Support

If any employee feels that they have not been treated in accordance with the word or spirit of this policy or the service's values, there are various channels of redress and support available. They should contact any of the following for support and advice:

- Their line manager
- Human Resources Department
- DICE Team
- Employee representative body

Employees can also access advice, guidance and support in the [Dignity & Respect Policy](#) and [Dignity & Respect Toolkit](#).

9.2 External support

Employees wishing to seek advice outside of the service may wish to contact:

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

The EHRC is an independent statutory body which has been established to help eliminate discrimination, reduce inequality, protect human rights, build good relations, and to ensure equality of opportunity. Visit their website for further information:

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/>

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)

This is an organisation devoted to preventing and resolving employment disputes and promoting fair employment practice. Visit their website at: <http://www.acas.org.uk>.



9.3 Counselling

Information relating to counselling can be found [here](#).

10 Monitoring and assurance

Strategic direction for equality, diversity and inclusion work in AF&RS is determined by Avon Fire Authority. Avon Fire Authority has adopted a Code of Corporate Governance. The Governance Framework sets out six Core Principles which include transparency, ethics, equality and fairness, culture, and values. Scrutiny and monitoring are through the Equalities Sub-Committee, a sub-group of Avon Fire Authority.

This policy, including all related policies, practices and procedures that have a bearing on equality of opportunity, operates in accordance with our statutory duties and responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and other applicable legislation on equalities and human rights.

We will also take full account of any guidance or codes of practice issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Government Departments, and any other relevant statutory bodies.

Auditing arrangements are in place with Bristol City Council who provide independent scrutiny and monitoring of all our operations, resources, services, and processes in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).

Regular, scheduled consultation with employee representative bodies is undertaken on all our key proposals and policies, through the Negotiating Committee and the Joint Consultative Committee.

We carry out Scoping Impact Assessments (SIAs) on our key policies, proposals, projects, and functions. SIAs are quality-checked prior to sign-off by the DICE team. A more in depth stage 2 People Impact Assessment may then be required, depending on the nature of the impacts which are highlighted in the SIA.

We operate a monitoring system where we collect and analyse information on employees by gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or belief and marital status. This information is used to inform policy, prevent discrimination, and support the development of a positive and inclusive culture. The information, which is provided voluntarily by our staff is confidential and will not be used for any other purpose.

We use the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework (FRSEF), a nationally accredited equality framework, to benchmark our activities and to support us in meeting our commitments as a public sector body so that we can continuously improve.

PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING

Version: 1.1

Issue Date: 15/01/2016

Next Review: 14/11/2024

Government Security Classification: Official

Uncontrolled when printed – check online to check latest version.



11 Complaints

11.1 External complaints

Members of the public may submit a complaint to us either verbally (in person or via the telephone to any AF&RS employee) or in writing. Our website contains a complaints form which can be accessed by clicking [here](http://www.avonfire.gov.uk/contact-us/non-emergency?id=171) or by visiting our website at <http://www.avonfire.gov.uk/contact-us/non-emergency?id=171>.

We have produced an [External Concerns and Complaints Process](#) to ensure that anyone making a complaint will be treated in a fair, reasonable and consistent manner, and that complaints are properly administered, recorded, acknowledged and, where necessary, investigated.

Any member of staff who receives a complaint from an external source should refer to the [External Concerns and Complaints Process](#) for guidance on the procedure to be followed.

11.2 Internal complaints

Employees have a right to pursue a complaint concerning discrimination or victimisation through our Grievance Policy which outlines the Grievance Resolution Procedure (GRP). Alternatively, staff can obtain advice from their line manager, union representative or a member of the HR team.

We will manage any complaints or concerns in a prompt, equitable and sensitive manner.

12 Alternative formats

This policy may be made available in alternative formats or languages on request. Please contact the DICE team at DICE@avonfire.gov.uk. Alternatively, you can call in to our reception in Headquarters at Temple Back, Bristol, BS1 6EU, or write to us at that address.


Document Control Information:

Policy Title:	Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy		
Policy Owner:	Richard Stokes		
Policy Owner [Role]:	DICE Manager		
Issue Date:	15/01/2016		
Next Review Due:	14/11/2024		
Audience:	For external publication		
Version Number:	1.1		
Impact Assessment No.	0	Date of IA:	[ImpactAssessmentDate]

Document Approval Information:

To be completed by the relevant representative from Service Leadership Board (SLB) to authorise publication.

Name:	[Document Approver]
Role:	-
Date of Authorisation:	[DateOfApproval]

Document History:

Review Date	Version No	Summary of Changes

Distribution History:

Date	Version No	Distributed to: (role/s or group/s)

PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING