

Equality information analysis Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS)

**1. What are the directorate's key functions and services?
In this section please provide an overview of the directorate's main functions and the services with names of managers.**

Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS) includes the blue light emergency response service along with other special services including Civil Contingencies, Community Safety Academy, Legislative Fire Safety, Fire Support Services and the specialist risk critical support to Firefighters. The Fire & Rescue Service has a holistic and universal approach to providing Services but delivers specialist initiatives and training to targeted vulnerable groups. The specific responsibilities of the service are listed below;

Fire & Rescue:

- Respond to incidents and emergencies including fires, road traffic collisions, chemical, biological, radiations and nuclear incidents, flooding, swift water, mud and ice rescue, major incidents.
- Handle emergency calls.
- Provide advice and guidance on how to prevent fires, as well as enforcing fire safety legislation to ensure businesses comply with the law.
- Work to prevent emergencies happening within homes and communities.
- Respond to special service requests such as lift rescues, providing water for non-emergency or humanitarian reasons, replenishing water supplies, filling swimming pools and hiring equipment.
- Identify, examine and record key risks that may threaten our communities, then prepare appropriate emergency response plans, train staff and test these arrangements through exercises.
- Provide advice after fires and floods.

Public Protection:

- Pest control
- Trading standards
- Pollution
- Neighbourhood problems
- Health and safety
- Domestic violence
- Animal welfare and dog control
- Environmental enforcement
- Environmental health

- Customer satisfaction surveys

Paul Hedley is the Chief Fire Officer with Mark McCarty as Deputy Fire Officer.

2. What information does the group or service area have about people for each of the protected characteristics below?

Age

89% of Fire & Rescue Service staff are between the ages of 25 and 55. The average age of the operational workforce is 49 for Principal and Flexible Duty Officer; 46 for Wholetime Duty personnel and 43 for On-Call / Retained duty personnel.

23.1% of Northumberland residents are over 65 years old, by 2031 this percentage is set to rise to 31%.

We know that older people are more at risk from fire incidents. As people get older, it can become more difficult to detect and respond to fires. For example, it can become harder to hear smoke alarms, smell smoke, detect changes in heat and turn off appliances. Anecdotal evidence suggests that older people may be more likely to possess older appliances, which have a greater potential to be faulty and would also increase the risk of fire. Rates of disability also increase with age and increase risks associated with fire incidents.

The service provides the following facilities;

- Prince's Trust Team: A 12 week personal development programme for unemployed 16-25 year olds. Young people can gain a certificate in Employment, Teamwork and Communication Skills. Retention rate for this programme is 82.05%
- Northumberland Young Firefighters Association (YFA): A cadet scheme for 13-18 year olds. There are 9 branches (Alnwick, Berwick, Haltwhistle, Hexham, Pegswood, Rothbury, Stannington, West Hartford and Wooler). In addition to employed instructors, each branch provides 2 volunteer opportunities.
- Firesetters Intervention Scheme: Specifically for those who have been identified as displaying firesetting behaviour. Individuals are visited in their home with the consent of the parent or guardian, and by a team of two fire and rescue service personnel. The team will also work with the family to address wider safety concerns.
- Home Fire Safety Check programme (HFSC): fire and rescue service personnel visit those most at risk from fire. They carry out an assessment of the home, provide advice and fit smoke alarms where appropriate. Where occupants are believed to be particularly vulnerable, the Fire and Rescue Service will work with partners to introduce additional technology to increase safety.

- Volunteering Scheme: This provides opportunities for volunteers to support our HFSC programme, development programmes, and/or YFA.
- All community safety programmes are supported by partners, with robust referral processes both onto programmes and post programme.

NFRS engages with agencies, other organisations and authorities who work with older people, to identify and target those in need of assistance and advice on fire safety. This type of multi-agency targeted approach is particularly important for older, vulnerable people, who may not be able to obtain information via the usual channels – for example they may not have access to the internet, or mainstream fire safety material. Information may need to be provided in accessible formats, such as easy read or large font. There are a number of initiatives, such as installing smoke detectors, which also aim to decrease their vulnerability to fire.

disability

52.3% of Northumberland residents who claim disability benefits are aged between 16 and 64. 90% of Fire & Rescue Service staff who have completed equality monitoring information regard themselves as having no disability.

The service provided by NFRS is one that is based on statutory duties under the Fires Services Act 2004, Fire Safety Order 2005 and Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The service provided is a universal one based on risk assessment and the provision of prevention, protection and response. However within this, the Service provides a more targeted approach for disabled people with regard to proactive safety measures.

NFRS works with other groups, organisations, authorities and agencies to identify disabled people who may be vulnerable, help make their premises safe as well as improve awareness of the fire service and fire safety. For example: work undertaken with Adult Services and health agencies has established a referral system to identify people with mental health needs at risk from fire. NFRS then performs a risk assessment and provides specific advice to assist in this respect;

- Specialist fire alarms (which use lights and vibrating pads) are installed to alert people who are deaf to the occurrence of a fire;
- Some of the services are working to ensure that heat/smoke detectors are installed using technology which alerts emergency services directly and can be installed in homes where occupants may not be able to telephone for help;
- Fire & Rescue Services provide easy-read and accessible information on fire safety;
- Local voluntary and other organisations work in partnership with the Fire & Rescue Services – for example, to ensure their service users (older and disabled people) have a working fire alarm.

To assist Fire & Rescue Service staff in responding to the needs of disabled people, the service has provided training on equality and diversity. For example, control staff are trained to elicit vital information, calm callers and assess circumstances to provide fire crews with as much information as possible. Staff providing community safety advice are given training on disability issues, given that they may be required to provide information to a wide range of people with different needs.

gender identity

NCC does not yet have the means to gather reliable data on the numbers or needs of trans* residents, but is working to improve the data available. A joint working group which includes representatives who have experience of the gender transition process has been established with Northumbria Healthcare Trust and the Council to look at ways of improving services for this group of people.

NFRS's commitment is to delivering quality universal services and how well it responds to our local communities. NFRS will continue to work with NCC to deliver appropriate services as when such needs are identified.

As part of the development of an NFRS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy contact and networking with LGBTQ groups/forums will be established to advertise our universal service delivery ethos and promote the service as a potential career of choice.

pregnancy and maternity (which includes breastfeeding)

It is estimated that around 5% of the female population in Northumberland will be pregnant at any one time. We are aware that a number of parents will have additional needs with regard to safety issues such as learning difficulties.

NFRS have partnership arrangements for referrals for home safety checks to assess safety within the home. NFRS work closely with SureStart and collocate on several sites with joint initiatives on young mothers and family safety. NFRS has shared premises with SureStart services embedded within community fire stations at a number of rural locations to deliver joined up services.

race

92% of Fire & Rescue Service staff who completed equality monitoring data regard themselves as being White/British.

3% of Northumberland residents classify themselves as non-white, with the greatest number of these being Asian.

Census data shows that the ethnic minority population of Northumberland is small but a diverse range of groups live in Northumberland; 50 different languages are

spoken by children in Northumberland schools. Some parts of Northumberland have higher numbers of people from ethnic minority groups living in them. There are significant county variations in this respect, with urban areas having the most ethnically diverse population and some rural areas having very low ethnic minority profiles.

Some of the largest ethnic minority populations in England are comprised of long established and well integrated communities. While some newer communities are less integrated, smaller, more dispersed and can retain some customs that may present as a fire risk (e.g. methods of cooking), established communities often have a significant profile at national levels, with long-standing relationships with Fire & Rescue Services. Newer communities are less likely to be aware of public services in general and are more likely to move residence. This poses some specific issues in Northumberland in supporting them and keeping their properties safe from fire. Engaging with ethnic minority communities and meeting their needs is an area that service delivery actively considers. Ethnic minority communities may also require targeted communications, particularly where English is not their first language.

The Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service Migrant Workers Engagement Strategy focuses on international migrants who come to the county to work and/or live. 85% of migrants in Northumberland are Polish. We have also attended an international women's day event in Blyth and established links with Black, Asian minority ethnic minority groups in northumberland.

Some examples of good practice taken by Fire & Rescue Services to provide targeted communications for people who don't speak English as their first language, emergency call handling, in community education and in enforcement activities, includes :

- the use of pictorial phrase booklets where language barriers have been identified as a particular regional issue;
- translation of enforcement and education materials;
- use of translation services and telephone interpretation services as well as local services and partner organisations specialising in community languages specific to certain regional areas; and
- working with fire services from other countries and using these links to assist work with Northumberland's local communities.

religion or belief

Within the Fire & Rescue Service, 47% of staff who completed equality monitoring data stated that they were Christian while 52% stated they have no religion or did not respond. 69% of Northumberland residents classify themselves as Christian, 23.9% say they have no religion, 0.3% are Muslim, 0.2% are Buddhist and 0.2% are Sikh. 'Quiet Room' facilities are provided on some of our fire stations for those who choose or need to practice their religion whilst at work.

The degree to which we respect religion and belief reflects NFRS's commitment to delivering a quality universal service and how well it responds to our local communities

In general there is a targeted strategy in terms of community safety that looks at the factors in formulating a risk profile. In terms of response there is a universal provision which is provided to all sections of communities in Northumberland.

NFRS have also appointed a service Chaplain who as part of the multi faith partnership in the North East is available to work with all communities. As part of our awareness programme the Chaplain has visited all parts of the workforce across Northumberland and is available for contact and support.

sex

Within the Fire & Rescue Service 85% of staff are male and 15% female. 49% of residents are male, 51% are female.

In terms of gender equality issues, women are more likely to be the victim of domestic violence and the Fire & Rescue Services have found that this has the potential to be related to a fire incident. In addition, we know that significantly more boys than girls are responsible for fire-setting behaviour.

NFRS has undertaken equality and diversity training to help address equality issues, raise awareness and ensure good practice in the workplace. This includes providing information on gender equality and considers (amongst other things) issues affecting women in the workplace such as discrimination, harassment, bullying and equal pay. A refresh of the equality, diversity and inclusion training programme will be included within the forthcoming Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

A significant majority of the population of older people, and in particular frail older people, are women, as women tend to live longer than men. (According to the most recent mid-year population estimates from the Office for National Statistics, 45% of people over 65 in Northumberland are men and 55% are women.) Life expectancy is 9.7 years lower for men and 6.4 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Northumberland than in the least deprived areas (Source: JSNA 2011). Therefore it is clear that older women who may be vulnerable and on lower incomes may be more at risk from fire in Northumberland than older men, NFRS will continue to evaluate and examine data to ensure that our services are targeted to address this at risk group.

The Fire and Rescue Services works with other groups/organisations regarding violence in the home; raise awareness amongst fire service personnel about violence against women where fire is used as a means of attack and a weapon; and work with local parent groups. The CFO is the Vice-Chair of the Safer Northumberland Partnership which has responsibility for the instigation,

management and delivery of Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR). A senior NFRS manager has acted as chair of one such DHR.

sexual orientation

89% of Fire & Rescue Service staff who completed equality monitoring data stated that they were heterosexual.

475 households in Northumberland declared they were in a Civil Partnership in the 2011 Census. The Registrar's Service conducted 19 Civil Partnerships during 2012/13 and 28 in 2013/14. In 2015/16 they conducted 2 Civil Partnerships and 75 same sex marriages.

NFRS does not currently routinely record data on sexual orientation, however, government actuaries estimate that 6% of the population is lesbian, gay or bisexual which would equate to approximately 18,000 LGB people in Northumberland. Information gathered by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) through the 'Integrated Household Survey' (178,000 response) showed that 93.5% stated they were 'heterosexual' or 'straight', just 1.1% said they were 'gay' or 'lesbian' and 0.4% said they were 'bisexual'. The remainder either refused to answer or stated 'didn't know' as a response. The high number of people who did not respond in this survey may mean the percentage of the LGBT population is underestimated. Using the ONS survey results would equate to approximately a 3,300 Gay and Lesbian population and a 1,200 Bisexual population in Northumberland but caution needs to be used as this figure may be an underestimate.

At present NFRS have a universal service which is inclusive to all sectors of society with prevention targeted households and sectors of society based on risk. The targeting of higher risk premises is carried out through risk modelling utilising social modelling computer based profiling tools to assist in identifying those most at risk.

NFRS equality and diversity training aims to raise awareness and help ensure good practice in the workplace. It includes information on the issues faced by LGBT people. The Fire Brigades Union has a specific section of the Union for LGBT members, where support and advice can be sought. There are also National Fire Service based LGBT employee networks. The service participates in Newcastle Pride events.

The Fire and Rescue service will promote the opportunity to become Equality allies to members to raise awareness of equality issues.

3. What consultations or engagement has the group undertaken, were there any differences in results for different protected groups?

Fire & Rescue:

- Peer challenges have been undertaken by employees from fire services across the country - a range of activities including interviews, focus groups and visits to four fire stations. The purpose is to provide external challenge to help support improvement and to reflect how the service is performing in key areas. During the challenges, the peer team meet with a broad cross-section of members, officers, front line firefighters and partner agencies.
- Active member of a Local Resilience Forum - to co-ordinate the actions and arrangements between responding bodies in the area - to provide the most effective and efficient response to civil emergencies when they occur.
- Work with the 'Think Family' support programme, delivering a bespoke programme designed to meet the needs of identified and more challenging families.

We will be looking to engage with external focus groups for race, sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief under the new strategy.

Public Protection:

- Customer satisfaction surveys are undertaken for Public Protection, Building Control and Pest Control.

4. Are there any good practice examples or progress in improving services or employment opportunities for people with protected characteristics within your group or service areas?

NFRS provides employment opportunities in the following;

Fire & Rescue:

- 8 apprentices (Business Administration and Customer Service)
- 187 retained (part-time) personnel
- 6 Learning Centre and externally funded staff personnel
- Provide training for Social Housing Providers to deliver HFSCs (Home Fire Safety Checks), using software programmes and classification tools to prioritise lone adults who are over 65 years of age
- Deliver the Young Firefighters Association programme to 13-17 year olds
- Work in partnership with the Prince's Trust and fund colleges to deliver the Team Programme (a development programme for unemployed young people aged 16 to 25).
- The service were represented at an international women's day event in Blyth and provided information to women from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Public Protection:

- Advises service users of support groups in the region and has links with these groups e.g. MESMAC, Victims First Northumbria, Women's Aid, Mankind, Broken Rainbow, LGBT North East.

Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service is committed to equality of opportunity and diversity in employment.

NFRS welcome applications from all sectors of the community and we aim to recruit a diverse workforce that reflects the communities we serve. Women and people from ethnic minority groups are under-represented with the service and are actively encouraged to apply for positions that become available.

We attend schools and recruitment fairs to promote the work of NFRS and to try and widen the scope of applicants we receive. We give further knowledge to school leavers of the services we provide and what careers are available within NFRS.

NFRS try whenever possible to get out into the wider community to represent and promote the good work of NFRS. As Northumberland is such a diverse county we are restricted within the audience that we have but we try to cover as many hard to reach areas and equality groups and send representatives to as many national and regional events as possible.

We also have various representatives at many equality groups including LGBT, We attended the recent Pride event in Newcastle and promoted NFRS as a supporter and ambassador for the LGBT community.

All staff complete the equality training on regular basis making sure they are all kept up to speed with any new legislation and refresh their knowledge and identify any areas to explore further within the current appraisal system.

5. What actions have been taken or are planned within the group or service area to achieve the NCC equality objectives?

NCC's equality objectives:

1. To ensure that our services are accessible for all customers we will improve collection of data about their experiences to help us improve our services for everyone in Northumberland.
2. To improve access to, and the experience of, council services for disabled people, and in particular older disabled people, to help bring their life opportunities more closely into line with those of other groups in the community.
3. To promote and foster an accessible and inclusive culture and working environment for all our staff.

4. To work with communities to prevent hate incidents and crimes and encourage reporting.

NFRS have designated officers who cover all the equality groups and attend meetings and focus groups at a regional and national level, representing NFRS and will continue to do so showing NFRS's commitment to delivering a quality universal service and that responds to the needs of our local communities.

NFRS will continue to work with NCC to deliver appropriate services as when such needs are identified.

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