Diversity and inclusion

**Purpose of report**

For discussion and direction.

**Summary**

The report updates members on the actions taken under the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on equality, diversity, behaviours and organisational culture in the Fire Service. Members are asked for their views regarding the monitoring and review of implementation of measures listed in the MoU.

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| **Recommendations**  Fire Services Management Committee members are asked to:   1. Note the actions taken to promote the MoU; and 2. Approve the actions proposed in paragraph 17.   **Action**  Officers to progress in accordance with members views on paragraph 17. |

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Diversity and inclusion

**Background**

1. Following a recommendation in the Thomas Review of conditions of service, the LGA published a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on equality, diversity, behaviours and organisational culture in the Fire Service on 31 January 2017. It can be found here: <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/memorandum-understanding-f0f.pdf>.
2. The MoU was co-signed by the Asian Fire Service Association, National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), Fire Brigades Union, Fire Officers’ Association, GMB, quiltbag, Retained Firefighters Union, Stonewall, Unison and Women in the Fire Service.
3. The MoU recognised the role of the Inclusive Fire Services Group (IFSG) established by the National Joint Council (NJC) in taking forward some of its actions. The IFSG is independently chaired by Professor Linda Dickens and includes employer and employee representation from the NJC and NFCC, the Fire Officers Association and the Retained Firefighters Union.
4. The recommendations in the MoU were promoted in the conference publication *An inclusive service - The twenty-first century fire and rescue service* (<https://www.local.gov.uk/inclusive-service-twenty-first-century-fire-and-rescue-service>).
5. FSMC lead members also wrote to Fire Commission members in March, promoting both the publication and the measures in the MoU.
6. Subsequently, following discussion with NFCC and the Home Office, a working group of officers has been established to look at a possible national campaign around the image of the firefighter. The working party, which was delayed by the election, is due to meet on 20 June.
7. The LGA has agreed to organise a masterclass on inclusion for fire authority members. This is taking place at Warwick University on 26 September.

**Actions in the MoU**

1. The MoU contained a number of specific actions, which can be grouped as follows:
   1. A commitment to ‘jointly monitor the progress of actions arising from the memorandum throughout 2017, adjusting them as necessary and jointly review its impact in December 2017’.
   2. Two other general points (supporting action on diversity, and supporting the IFSG).
   3. Two were dependent on progress with the appointment of the Inspectorate (an early meeting to align work on diversity with the Inspectorate and embedding work on Diversity in our review of peer support).
   4. Six were actions to be taken forward by the Inclusive Fire Service Group, which is supported by LGA workforce officers in their capacity as employer secretariat to the NJC.
   5. Seven required specific action on the part of the LGA (in some cases with others).

**Progress on MoU actions**

1. The IFSG has completed four of its six actions, which related to employee surveys and improvement strategies. The employee survey saw a 6.5 per cent response rate and it has now been published.
2. On 5 June the IFSG contacted all Chief Fire Officers, Chief Executives/Clerks to Fire Authorities, Chairs of Fire Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authority Directors of Human Resources, enclosing a list of actions and asking them ‘to consider the strategies suggested at both member and officer levels, how they can be taken forward in individual services, and provide a response by 28 July 2017’. This fulfills the commitment to publish improvement strategies.
3. A fifth action simply covered continuing IFSG work to develop guidance, support and improvement strategies on a wide range of equality, diversity and cultural issues in general and is ongoing.
4. One IFSG action in the MoU – to publish guidance on data collection – has not yet been completed because of delays in being able to arrange a meeting with the Home Office to discuss principles underlying any data collection.
5. The LGA’s commitment in relation to six of the seven actions in para 8.5 above was to promote specific activities. This has been fulfilled to date by publishing the MoU, sending the letter to Fire Commission members, and the conference publication on an inclusive service. It will further be fulfilled through the two fire leadership essentials courses we are running, one in October 2017 and the other in February 2018, along with the masterclass on inclusion and diversity we are running for members in September this year. We will also seek other opportunities to promote this agenda.
6. The seventh action on the LGA in para 8.5 was, together with the NFCC, was to establish an online community to share practice on diverse recruitment as soon as possible, in conjunction with any IFSG work on improvement strategies. This has been done. However, an existing Chief Fire Officer Association (CFOA) community was utilised and this has not been successful. Officers are now considering using a different NFCC community. This will be taken forward over the summer. The significance of this has arguably been diminished by the establishment of a working group to look at national work around the image of the firefighter.
7. Although we are fulfilling its commitments under the MoU, it is necessary to monitor the extent to which the sector is acting on these ideas if we are to ascertain the impact of our actions.
8. The following paragraphs list the commitments (in italics) and make proposals for monitoring.
   1. *We will immediately begin to encourage all individual services to conduct exit interviews with all employees and to record, monitor and act upon any evidence from these interviews which relates to bullying, victimisation, discrimination or harassment*
   2. This is covered by an action in the IFSG Improvement Strategies so the IFSG survey covers its implementation.
   3. *The LGA will encourage all services to monitor the number and proportion of applications from women, BME and LGBT individuals and to monitor the numbers and proportions at stages of recruitment to identify barriers to recruitment. The IFSG will do this at national level.*
   4. The NFCC is collecting data on this. There appears to be no need for LGA to collect data separately.
   5. *We will immediately begin work on raising awareness of the role of positive action and the law around it in addressing diversity in recruitment and progression.*
   6. *The LGA will encourage all services to have undertaken training on identifying and countering the effects of unconscious bias by 31 October 2017 and to take steps at institutional level to counter those effects.*
   7. *The LGA will encourage all services to have undertaken inclusive leadership training for senior managers by 31 October 2017.*
   8. *The LGA will encourage all services to publish an inclusiveness strategy by 1 January 2018 and to demonstrably act on that strategy and to embed inclusion in across their activity.*
   9. The IFSG survey may provide information that enables us to ascertain the extent to which FRAs have adopted inclusive leadership training and published inclusiveness strategies but none of these four points is directly covered by its survey.

**Recommendations**

1. It is therefore proposed that the LGA contribute to promoting and monitoring the MoU as follows:
   1. Officers to liaise with NFCC over application monitoring.
   2. Officers to consider the early feedback from the IFSG survey in August, and whether further work is needed to gather information on progress.
   3. Officers to issue a survey to Fire and Rescue Authorities covering the actions not covered by other monitoring and report back to the Committee meeting on 22 September.
   4. Workforce colleagues to report to a future meeting of the Committee on the outcome of the IFSG survey.
   5. Officers to continue to seek opportunities to promote the measures in the MoU and the work of the IFSG.
   6. Officers to liaise with other signatories and prepare a draft review of the MoU for the FSMC meeting on 26 January 2018.

**Implications for Wales**

1. As responsibility for fire and rescue policy is a devolved matter, the work set out in the report will be limited to English Fire and Rescue Authorities.

**Financial implications**

1. Any work arising from this report will be met from existing resources.

**Next steps**

1. Members are asked to:
   1. Note the actions taken to promote the MoU; and
   2. Approve the actions proposed in paragraph 17.