

Diversity and Inclusion

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

This report outlines the work that the LGA has been doing since the publication of the memorandum of understanding on [Equality, diversity, behaviours and organisational culture in the fire and rescue service \(MoU\)](#) and the findings from the LGA's recent Diversity Summit.

Recommendation

That the Fire Commission approves the next steps set out in paragraph 12.

Action

Officers will undertake the actions as outlined in the next steps.

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Diversity and Inclusion

Background

1. In January 2017 the LGA published a memorandum of understanding on [Equality, diversity, behaviours and organisational culture in the fire and rescue service \(MoU\)](#).
2. The MoU was co-signed by the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA), National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), Fire Brigades Union (FBU), Fire Officer's Association, GMB, quiltbag, Retained Firefighters Union (RFU), Stonewall, Unison and Women in the Fire Service.
3. The MoU contained a number of commitments and principles for the LGA and the other signatories to uphold. As a part of its commitments in the MoU the LGA held a Summit with the other signatories in April 2018. The aim of the Summit was to understand progress on embedding diversity and inclusion since the MoU was published, any challenges that remained as well as provide suggestions for further work on this issue.

LGA work on inclusion and diversity

4. The LGA's commitment under the MoU was largely to promote specific activities in relation to diversity and inclusion. This has been fulfilled to date by publishing the MoU, and the LGA fire conference publication on an inclusive service in 2017,¹ a letter from Fire Service Management Committee (FSMC) lead members to Fire Commission members in March 2017, promoting both the publication and the measures in the MoU, two fire leadership essentials courses with a new session on inclusion and diversity and a masterclass on inclusion for fire authority members, which was held at Layden House in September 2017. For the 2018 LGA Fire Conference we produced a set of case studies on recruitment and inclusion, attached at **Appendix A**. We also published the Fire Vision 2024 which set out a number of ambitions on increasing diversity in the fire and rescue service, including the below:
 - 4.1. Set individual organisational goals for BAME recruitment reflective of their own working population and use this data to direct and guide any positive action.
 - 4.2. Seek to increase the rate of female firefighter recruitment to 30 per cent nationally by 2024/5.

¹ *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. The document is available on the LGA's website: <https://local.gov.uk/fire-vision-2024>
6. The MoU committed the LGA to working to evaluate progress. However, the volume of work generated by the Grenfell fire, both for the LGA and fire and rescue services (FRSs), meant this did not take place in late 2017 as planned. Holding a Summit with the signatories of the MoU was agreed as an alternative by the FSMC in January.
7. At the same meeting it was agreed that a member champion should be nominated.
8. All signatories were invited to the Summit, and given the opportunity to submit written comments if they could not attend. We had contributions from the FBU, AFSA, Women in the Fire Service, Unison, the RFU and the Fire Officer's Association. The NJC's Inclusive Fire Service Group (IFSG) also outlined the work that they have been undertaking to embed the group's improvement strategies.

Issues from the Summit

9. The Summit covered a range of issues including the work of the LGA, the NJC's Inclusive Fire Service Group and that of attendees. It provided an opportunity to discuss inclusion and diversity more generally as well as raise issues with the LGA for future work. A number of issues for further consideration and work were raised at the Summit.
 - 9.1. Attendees agreed that to drive change and improve inclusion and diversity buy-in from the political leadership of the sector was the key contribution the LGA could make to delivering a more diverse workforce. Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) members' leadership role can help to set the tone for change. It was not clear that all FRA members have bought into diversity and inclusion and more needed to be done to correct this impression. The IFSG had recognised this and emphasised the need for visible senior management and elected member buy-in and support in its improvement strategies. It now holds a record of the lead in each case within virtually all FRAs/FRSs.
 - 9.2. Creating an inclusive culture more generally would create a more conducive environment for change.
 - 9.3. There were still issues with a lack of appropriate equipment and facilities for women.
 - 9.4. There was a divide between operational staff, who are predominately men, and 'support' staff, who are predominantly women. It was reported that this had left women in non-uniformed roles feeling that their contributions were not recognised in the same way as operational staff, it was also reported that there had been bullying by uniformed on non-uniformed staff. The idea that 'balancing' male-dominated fire-fighting staff with predominantly female 'support' staff addresses gender imbalances in the workforce needs to be challenged, it was argued. Having a predominantly female 'support' workforce can in fact do no more than reinforce the gender

stereotypes the service needs to remove if it is to modernise. At the same time the LGA could do more to make non-firefighters in the FRS feel valued and part of the service.

- 9.5. Leavers' statistics were not collected or published by the Home Office in a similar way to joiners' statistics. This could mean that leaving patterns for groups with protected characteristics were not being captured at a national level.
- 9.6. It was noted that the use of the term "fireman" was still common in the media etc though the #firefightingsexism campaign had started to make some progress on changing this.
- 9.7. Following the publication of the gender pay gap data on the Government's website there were comments that breaking gender pay gap data down between uniformed and non-uniformed might be helpful.
- 9.8. There is a lack of women moving into middle management. Talent management strategies can be used to address this. The Inclusive Fire Service Group has already identified this as an issue and addressed it in the improvement strategies it had developed for FRAs – fair, transparent and consistently applied promotion processes should be in place and staff aware of them, FRSs should develop support networks and meaningful mentor/coaching programmes, talent spotting and leadership training, and provide opportunities for development such as job swaps, taster weeks and acting-up/temporary promotion (so that an individual can experience the higher role). The strategies are well supported and improvement should be delivered as a consequence. There may be scope for more to be done by the LGA to support the improvement strategy on talent management.
- 9.9. A focus on only increasing recruitment among women and ethnic minorities without education and other cultural changes can simply lead to more casework for unions and poor retention rates.
- 9.10. Unconscious bias training should be focussed on those making decisions on recruitment and HR, as the group felt that this is where it can have the most impact.
- 9.11. Matters relating to fitness standards can be an issue. More emphasis needs to be placed on the fact that firefighters do not have to be big men.
- 9.12. Early experience with the inspection system in one pilot suggested more work is required if inspection is to drive inclusion. There was some uncertainty about if the right people were being spoken to during the inspection on diversity issues as they did not necessarily sit with HR.

9.13. The sector needs to emphasise that it wants a more diverse workforce because it wants good people.

9.14. The need for evaluation was stressed. The IFSG had issued improvement strategies on inclusion. Time needs to be allowed for the strategies to bed down in order that any improvement can be identified. It is the current intention of the group to undertake a monitoring exercise in July. The group wished to consult FRSs on the best way to gather the information and had intended to do so some months ago. However, it also believes that organisations should work to reduce the survey burden on FRSs if possible and avoid asking similar questions at different times in the year. Hence it was endeavouring to first reach a consensus with others to discuss the needs of all and ideally share data where there was a common interest to avoid those multiple requests. Whilst that objective is still being pursued it cannot continue to await an outcome and must now move forward with its own monitoring role.

Implications for Wales

10. 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. The IFSG is a UK-wide body as it is led by the NJC, therefore the improvement strategies apply across the UK, including Wales.

Financial Implications

11. Further work can be undertaken within existing budgets.

Next steps

12. The proposed next steps for this work are to:

12.1. Undertake a series of regional leadership events for members of FRAs to provide training, case studies and networking with other councillors on issues around equality and diversity. These would be held in the political year 2018-19.

12.2. Continue to promote the MoU and the behaviours within it.

12.3. Lobby the Home Office on collecting and publishing data from those leaving the service to help identify any patterns in behaviour from those with protected characteristics.

12.4. Continue to support the IFSG, including inviting Linda Dickens, the Independent chair of the IFSG to FSMC to see how else the LGA could help to drive forwards change.

12.5. Identify a member champion on the FSMC for inclusion.

- 12.6. Invite London Fire Brigade to an FSMC meeting to hear from them about their recruitment journey and any lessons learned from their last round of recruitment.