

# **Equality and Diversity Annual Report**

April 2014 to March 2015



# Alternative Formats

We are committed to ensuring that all our information is fully accessible for all communities across Merseyside. We have included this document on our website which can be accessed from our webpage <http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk/aspix/pages/equality/equalityDiversity.aspx>

We also provide a free speech, reading and translation service using BrowseAloud to help people who require online reading support to access our documents. This can be located on the front page, top left of our website by clicking the button called "listen with Browse aloud".

If you would like a copy in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French or Somali, please contact us at Diversity Team, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters, Bridle Road, Bootle, Liverpool L30 4YD. Telephone 0151 296 4422 or email [diversityteam@merseyfire.gov.uk](mailto:diversityteam@merseyfire.gov.uk).

## Arabic

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## Bengali

আপনি আরবি, বাংলা একটি কপি চান, চীনা, ফরাসি বা সোমালি করুন যোগাযোগ ডাইভারসিটি দল আমাদের, MF & আরএস সদর, ব্রশ্‌মি রোড, Bootle, লিভারপুল L30 4YD. টেলিফোন এবং মিনি কম 0151 296 4422 বা ইমেইল [diversityteam@merseyfire.gov.uk](mailto:diversityteam@merseyfire.gov.uk) বৃহত্তর মুদ্রণ এছাড়াও উপলব্ধ.

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## French

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## Somali

Haddii aad rabtid nuqul Carabi, Bangaali, Shinees, Faransiis ama Soomaali fadlan la xirii kooxda Diversity, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, Headquarters Service Bridle Road, Bootle Liverpool L30 4YD. Telefoonka: 0151 296 4422 ama Emailka: [diversityteam@mersyfire.gov.uk](mailto:diversityteam@mersyfire.gov.uk) Sidoo Kale waxaa heli kartaa iyadoo far waaweyn ah.

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# Foreword

I am pleased to share with you our second Equality and Diversity Annual report, which highlights our progress against the Equality and Diversity Action Plan and Objectives. The report provides a wealth of information about our achievements against our core aims of; Excellent Operational Preparedness, Excellent Operational Response, Excellent Prevention and Protection and Excellent People.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority's (MFRA) approach to diversity has always been broad and challenging. We have been at the forefront of innovation, looking at new ways to deliver our commitment to Equality and Diversity, whilst working with ever decreasing resources. This year I am particularly pleased with our focus on Positive Action during our recent firefighter recruitment, where we have increased participation across the entire application process. This has resulted in us attracting staff from under-represented groups, helping us to be more reflective of the communities we serve.

We have been commended for our excellent commitment to Equality and Diversity, winning two awards this year, the first being the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) National Fire Service (FRS) award for our work on Positive Action, and the second was the recent award of the Matrix standard for our Youth Engagement programmes, where Equality and Diversity was singled out as being integral and embedded across all aspects of youth programmes delivered at MFRA.

Like much of the Public Sector, we are facing very challenging times, with further reductions in budgets inevitable. This requires us to consider our priorities very carefully, but rest assured, the progress made on our Equality and Diversity agenda thus far will continue to figure highly among the Authority's priorities.

**Phil Garrigan, Deputy Chief Fire Officer,**  
Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service.



# Welcome

As Authority Lead for Strategy and Performance, I have responsibility for Equality and Diversity throughout the Service. During 2014-15 I have worked closely with the Diversity and Consultation Manager to ensure that we are embracing and promoting equality throughout the organisation; sharing best practice within the districts of Merseyside and continually challenging ourselves to improve by removing any barriers to being an outstanding employer.

We have now completed year two of the Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2013-16 and I can report that not only is the plan performing better than the targets in most areas, it is becoming embedded in the Service and is having a very positive impact on performance and outcomes. This includes the excellent work around our Positive Action and recruitment of firefighters and new apprentices. I have attended Diversity Action Group (DAG) meetings throughout the year and I was really pleased in April to attend the review and planning day. The latter convinced me, through conversations with staff from all departments, that the commitment of the staff to Equality and Diversity in Merseyside is second to none.

Our challenge going forward continues to be maintaining the highest standards with diminishing resources. I believe the key to maintaining positive outcomes lies in good communications and creative problem solving. We are listening closely to the residents of Merseyside and our staff as we forward plan for future years and we will endeavour to maintain high quality services that are appropriate to the communities we serve and the staff we employ.

I hope you find this report useful and that we have presented the information in a meaningful way. We would welcome any feedback you may have with respect to the report and we are keen to develop further partnerships with other organisations to improve outcomes for the people of Merseyside with respect to fire, safety and rescue. For more information or to initiate talks please do not hesitate to contact me at [Barbara.Murray@liverpool.gov.uk](mailto:Barbara.Murray@liverpool.gov.uk).

**Councillor Barbara Murray** – Authority Lead Member for Equality and Diversity 2014/15.





# Introduction

This report provides us with an opportunity to celebrate some of our many success stories in relation to our achievements around the Equality and Diversity agenda in support of our diverse communities over the last financial year (April - March).

The Authority has a long established commitment to Equality and Diversity, giving responsibility for its achievement to everyone connected with the organisation. Equality and Diversity is well embedded throughout the organisation and can be evidenced in our work across our core aims. It is driven by a comprehensive and well monitored Equality and Diversity Action Plan underpinned by an Equality and Diversity Policy. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are carried out on policies and strategic documents and published with Authority papers.

This report also provides an internal reflection on the Diversity work that has been delivered. As an employer it is important that we are embedding Equality and Diversity to achieve fairer outcomes for all our staff.

This report also demonstrates our commitment to meeting the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in relation to:

1. Publishing, at least annually, information to demonstrate our compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the PSED.
2. Prepare and publish one or more specific and measurable objectives that helps to achieve the Aims set out in the PSED.
3. Publish equality information and the objectives in a manner that is accessible to the public.

# Governance and Performance Management

Delivery of the Equality and Diversity Action Plan is led by the Diversity and Consultation Manager and co-ordinated through our Departmental and Senior Managers and our Diversity Action Group (DAG). The DAG is made up of departmental representatives (and is supported by the Authority Lead Member for Equality and Diversity) meeting quarterly to discuss and monitor progress against the action plan objectives. The DAG is also critical in reviewing equality impacts in relation to MFRA's services, policies, and projects through a robust Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process.

The Diversity and Consultation Manager also holds regular Equalities engagement meetings with the Representative Bodies (trade unions and staff associations), to ensure that they are aware of Equality and Diversity developments and have an opportunity to contribute to the consideration of the ways in which Equality and Diversity influences the provision of fire and rescue services.

Performance against the Equality and Diversity Action Plan is scrutinised at two levels. The first is through the Strategic Equality Group (SEG), which is chaired by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and made up of senior managers representing all departments of the organisation. It meets on a quarterly basis to review progress made and provide assurances to the Authority on that progress. The second level of scrutiny is through the Authority's Performance and Scrutiny Committee made up of Elected Members who review MFRA's Equality and Diversity progress on a six-monthly basis.

Authority members have received EIA training to support their scrutiny role and help with approving significant decisions on changes to services provided by the Authority. There is also an Authority Lead Member role that looks at the ongoing development of Equality and Diversity across the Service. Councillor Barbara Murray is currently serving in this role.

Reports to the Performance and Scrutiny Committee are made public via the MFRA website:

[www.merseyfire.gov.uk/asp/pages/fire\\_auth/authorityContent.aspx](http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk/asp/pages/fire_auth/authorityContent.aspx)



# Our Equality Objectives 2014/2015

## Equality Objective 1

In the past ten years Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MF&RS) has reduced accidental fires in the home by 37%.

### Action:

We will continue to build on this work through the use of our Customer Insight (Vulnerable Person Index) modelling and our station planning process to target individuals at risk.

### Target:

To reduce accidental fires in the home and the deaths and injuries they cause on Merseyside by a further 5% by 2017.

### How this impacts on Equality and Diversity:

#### Protected Characteristic – Age and Disability:

We know through extensive research that some of the people at highest risk from fire are also covered by the nine protected characteristics that form part of the Equality Act 2010, for example elderly and disabled people. Our activity focuses on reducing risk for vulnerable people.

### Current Progress

During 2014/15, MF&RS attended 1,050 accidental dwelling fires. This is 103 fewer incidents than during 2013/14. When compared to both the E&D target of 1,136 and Service Plan target of 1,170, this reflects good performance for 2014/15.

The use of Customer Insight and more specifically the Vulnerable Person's Index has ensured a more targeted approach to Home Fire Safety Check visits allowing us to identify the most high risk and vulnerable people who have never previously received a visit from Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service. Data sharing agreements with partner agencies allow us to intelligently target those most at risk of fire.

An example of these agreements is that, through effective joint working with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, we have entered into an information sharing agreement with the NHS to have access to basic information about where people over 65 live in Merseyside (this does not include clinical data). MF&RS is also now working with the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) to extend this arrangement to all UK fire and rescue services.

The resultant qualitative Home Fire Safety Checks will ensure that people are given the relevant home safety advice and that every contact with Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service counts.

Please note, data is correct as of 13th April 2015. Late fire report submissions and quality assurance can affect this number.





# Equality Objective 2

We will reduce risk for people who live in rented properties across Merseyside.

## Action:

By continuing to build productive relationships with Registered Social Landlords.

## Target:

To cut accidental kitchen fires in social housing by 5% by 2017.

## How this impacts on Equality and Diversity: Protected Characteristics – Age and Disability, Socio-Economic Disadvantage:

We know that people who live in rented properties often have other needs and fall within the protected characteristics. We've worked well with Registered Social Landlords to protect their residents, but some of the higher risk people live in privately rented accommodation and we want to help them too.

## Current Progress

By the end of Quarter 4 of 2014/15 there had been a total of 183 Accidental Dwelling Fires in Registered Social Landlord (RSL) properties. This was 36 (-19%) fewer incidents than at the end of 2013/14.

Close working partnerships formed with Registered Providers has allowed us to identify high risk and vulnerable tenants and deliver appropriate interventions to reduce the risk of fire in the kitchen and home. Also the introduction of assistive technology will allow the installation of safety equipment such as Wi-Fi heat alarms and cooker isolation switches to reduce the risk in the kitchen even further to those with special requirements. Fire Support Network also provide support to members of the public for specialist services including hoarding, Gas Safe scheme and fitting fire guards and baby stair gates.







## Equality Objective 3

We will continue to engage with young people in vulnerable areas.

**Action:**

Through our award winning youth engagement programmes.

**Target:**

Reducing deliberate anti-social behaviour fire setting by 5% by 2017.

**How this impacts on Equality and Diversity: Protected Characteristics – Age, Socio-Economic Disadvantage:**

The anti-social behaviour of a minority of young people can impact most on the elderly and on other young people too. We want to help young people become good role models for others in their area and help older people feel safer in their homes

**Current Progress**

There were a total of 3,917 deliberate secondary fires attended during 2014/15, this is 1,210 fewer incidents (-23.6%) than in 2013/14.

When compared to the projected E&D target of 5,767 incidents attended by the end of 2017/18 this target has been achieved for the 4th year in succession.

Through an intelligence-led risk management approach, we will continue to identify arson and anti-social behaviour (ASB) hotspots and reduce secondary fires through education and engaging with our partner agencies. We also have plans in place to deploy our resources efficiently during spate conditions such as summer grass fires. Identifying known local high risk periods, such as the time around Bonfire Night and the summer months, we make specific plans to ensure that our communities receive a quality service around the reduction of risk in our communities.

# Equality Objective 4

We will work with at-risk groups and local partners to contribute to the reduction in the number and severity of road traffic collisions across Merseyside.

## Action:

To work towards achieving the local target of reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions.

## Target:

Reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions by 37.5% by 2020.

## How this impacts on Equality and Diversity:

### Protected Characteristic – Age:

Young people are at a particularly high risk of being killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions. We want to have a positive impact on this group and help to keep them safe on the roads, whilst also monitoring road traffic collision risks in relation to young and old across all five districts and responding accordingly.

## Current Progress

RTCs and resultant injuries and fatalities have not met the E&D targets for 2014/15. There were 958 more RTCs during 2014/15 than in the previous year.

Work is ongoing to understand why the number of RTCs and injuries in RTCs have risen so much during this year. This includes devising data sharing protocols with Merseyside Police to obtain additional data to allow further insight into who might be the type of people involved in these incidents.

We continue to deliver road safety advice to young people in schools and colleges.



# Equality Objective 5

Our aim is to create a strong, cohesive organisation which is positive about rising to the future challenges we face.

## Action:

Our aim is to increase the representation of all minority groups within the communities of Merseyside in the Fire and Rescue Service.

## Target:

To increase the diversity of our workforce and volunteers in order to reflect the local community we serve and increase applications for roles within the organisation (including volunteering) for those protected groups under-represented currently within our workforce.

## How this impacts on Equality and Diversity:

### Protected Characteristics – Gender and Ethnic Origin:

We'd like our workforce to better represent the make-up of our communities and will work to encourage applications from under-represented groups when we carry out any recruitment.

## Current Progress

The following data has been collated to look at two main characteristics, gender and ethnicity, for two recruitment programmes completed during 2014/15 - Apprenticeships and Firefighter recruitment. The data on this page can be considered as the benchmark to measure against going forward.

### Apprenticeships: 12 recruited

**Gender:** 7 male (58%) and 5 Female (42%)

**Ethnicity:** 11 White British (92%) and 1 BME: 1 (8%)

### Firefighter Recruitment: 16 Recruited

**Gender:** 13 Male (81%) and 3 Female (19%)

**Ethnicity:** 14 White British (87.5%) and 1 BME (6.25%) and 1 prefer not to say (6.25%).

A further detailed report is currently being compiled by the Positive Action Team with support from the Diversity and Consultation Manager to provide an Equality Impact Assessment for all stages of recruitment.







Part One

# Equality and Diversity Activities and Outcomes 2014/15

# Equality and Diversity Activity and Outcomes 2014 - 2015

Our **Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2013-16** identifies key objectives and actions designed to ensure that we continuously improve against our diversity agenda and deliver against our Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirements and Equality Objectives.

The Action Plan is a living document which sets out our actions in relation to Equality and Diversity for each of the Authority's Corporate Aims. The plan spans three years and progress is monitored on a quarterly and six-monthly basis. Having the Action Plan in place ensures that we have a transparent means by which we can demonstrate our commitment to Equality and Diversity (in relation to our staff and our communities), in a way that allows interested parties to hold us to account and measure our progress in relation to:

- The extent to which our services meet differing customer needs.
- The extent to which we are able to attract, retain and develop a talented workforce from across all sections of the community.

This part of the report focuses on the key outcomes delivered in the second year of our Action Plan, including case studies which help bring the Action Plan to life. In addition, this section provides information on who we have delivered some of our key services to in relation to the demography of Merseyside and also the make-up of our workforce and the extent to which that reflects the local demography.

To demonstrate how Equality and Diversity is mainstreamed and embedded across the organisation, progress has been documented using the four key organisational aims; Excellent Operational Preparedness, Excellent Operational Response, Excellent Prevention and Protection and Excellent People.



# Excellent Operational Preparedness

**“To provide our firefighters with the training, information, procedures and equipment to ensure they can safely and effectively resolve all emergency incidents.”**

## **Learning and Assessment**

Work is ongoing on a review of our Training and Development Academy, looking at all training delivery and assessment processes carried out by our staff. A review of core activities has already been started with staff looking at our Station Training Activities to establish if they are designed to be reflective of our diverse staff needs and to ensure that the processes are clear and transparent. The areas being reviewed are focused on training, learning and assessment of firefighters which includes the below:

The first Training and Development Academy Equality and Diversity educational workshop was delivered to key staff in March 2015. The workshop is in two stages. Stage one is to provide staff with the knowledge about the Equality Act 2010. This includes the responsibilities we have as an organisation to ensure that our training and development and assessment processes/procedures are fair and support staff with different requirements, especially those with a disability or long-term health condition (e.g. diabetes) or cognitive/learning disability (e.g. dyslexia). The second workshop will focus on carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for key aspects of Training and Development Academy work to establish if there is any requirement to make changes to the way we deliver training, development or assessment at the Training and Development Academy.

## **Equality and Diversity Training**

A review has taken place on the e-learning modules we use to establish their currency and validity. The review has established that we need to modernise our Equality and Diversity training and education to best suit the needs of different staff. This will help them to gain a greater insight into how they can consider and deliver Equality and Diversity in their daily roles. The need for a blended approach to training is essential. However, this is difficult to balance with ever reducing resources, which presents real difficulties with removing staff from their operational roles to train for significant periods of time whilst maintaining our response standards. A project team will progress this area of work during 2105/16.



### Improving Communication Across Operational Preparedness Teams

Following an office relocation and reorganisation, it became apparent to Cathy Scarth, a Watch Manager in the data management team, that a member of staff, Edward, was isolated in the office due to being deaf. There was already a procedure in place for meetings and training courses to ensure that there was always a British Sign Language Interpreter, but conversations and communication in the office was limited.

It was decided to arrange a number of Deaf awareness courses for the department. The course which was delivered gave staff an insight into what it would be like to be deaf, and gave everyone a better understanding of the challenges a deaf person faces. It also included ways to communicate, with some basic sign language, and tips on what not to do, so that someone can lip read more effectively.

Since receiving the training, the department has relocated to a larger office and the training has helped further as everyone feels more confident about their ability to talk to Edward. One member of the team has also completed a British Sign Language Course.

Alex Litwinski said: "The Deaf awareness session helped break down the communication barriers within the office and the fear of looking stupid when trying to communicate with our deaf colleagues. It pointed out some of the issues deaf people face on a daily basis in work. It also highlighted how isolated some deaf people may feel due to the fears of others regarding communication. The sessions were very informative and fun. Overall it was a brilliant session enjoyed by all."

Edward Melvin said: "Before the training I felt people were scared to talk to me. Now it is much better."





# Excellent Operational Response

**“To maintain an excellent emergency response to risk across Merseyside, with safety and effectiveness at its core.”**

## Support for an ageing workforce

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service is committed to the development and maintenance of a fit and healthy workforce to meet the requirements placed on the Service and the physical demands involved with delivering safe, effective fire and rescue services.

MFRA has an ageing profile with 55.5% of its uniformed/ operational staff aged over 45, this requires the organisation to ensure it tailors its support for staff to enable them to maintain their fitness to deliver safe, effective fire and rescue services.

The Occupational Health team is dedicated to developing and maintaining a healthy workforce by emphasising the importance of physical fitness and an employee's ability to carry out their role within a risk critical and, at times, highly demanding environment.

The following measures have been introduced by MF&RS and the Occupational Health Department to assist all employees in achieving, maintaining and improving their level of physical fitness;

- A safe environment for training in compliance with the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992.
- Physical training equipment available at all fire stations and other working locations.
- Provision of a Service Health and Fitness Advisor and a team of Fitness Advisors, available for advice and guidance on any health, fitness and wellbeing issues required, appropriate to the role.
- Introduction of dedicated fitness period has been included in the firefighters' work routine to allow staff time to keep and maintain fitness levels.
- Information on fitness training circuits and programmes that accommodate the training needs for staff with varying levels of fitness, age, gender and experience in the use of gym equipment is provided. These programmes are supported by national information that is available on the Chief Fire Officers Association FireFit Steering Group website. The information is accessible to all via online learning and the Service intranet.
- Advice on all aspects of wellbeing, health and fitness is available from the Occupational Health Team, especially where rehabilitation is required following illness or injury.
- Non-operational employees will be offered the same health support as operational staff to ensure that they are fit and healthy for their role.

## **Making Community Consultation Accessible**

During the past year we have undertaken a number of public consultation events concerning the changes to our operational services required to help save £6.3 million in 2015/16. The Authority has identified the need to save £3.4 million from our emergency response budget has required the need to consider station closures and mergers. Public consultation has been carried out ensuring that all parts of the community can access information on the proposals. This included making sure the public venues were accessible, providing information in alternative formats and providing a British Sign Language interpreter and a hearing loop at each meeting. The public were also able to provide their views via an online or paper survey. The consultation also considered the needs of those diverse community groups who are most affected by the changes using the Equality Impact Assessment process.

## **Reaching Diverse Communities**

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority recognises that Merseyside is made up of people from many diverse communities and as such created the Community Diversity Forum. The forum is a register of community groups, charities, organisations and individuals from

across Merseyside, from as many different and diverse backgrounds as possible. The register will allow us to select people from different areas/backgrounds to be involved in our consultation process throughout the year. The members are also invited to attend up to four meetings a year to discuss various topics.

As part of our March meeting, members were also given a tour of our Heritage and Education Centre.

## **Supporting our Female Firefighters**

Female firefighters make up 3.1% of the total firefighter population across the UK. At MFRA our proportion of females in firefighting roles is 5%. Women were first formally employed in a Fire and Rescue Service during peacetime in 1982 with the first female firefighter employed at London Fire Brigade. Since then, there have been many developments to support women in the fire service, from ensuring equipment is suitable, to providing relevant facilities on stations. In order to understand the female firefighter experience on Merseyside, we have provided a dedicated forum to ensure that women in the Service have a voice to express any equality concerns and to raise the profile of the important work female firefighters contribute to the Service.

**Ruth Cooke, FBU Women's Representative, said: "I am really pleased that the Service has provided an opportunity for female firefighters to come together and to discuss matters that are meaningful to their role within the Service. We have been able to provide feedback to enable improvements to facilities on fire stations and at our Training and Development Academy as well as highlighting the need for greater consideration when purchasing equipment, uniforms and breathing apparatus to support different genders."**

The forum is also working with women who want to progress within the organisation through targeted mentoring and training. This will be a key feature going forward in the next phase of the Equality and Diversity Action Plan.

## **After the Incident Leaflets**

A project has been carried out by our Operational Response Team to design and develop an "After the Incident" leaflet. The leaflet is aimed at providing valuable guidance for members of the public affected by fire. One of the main concerns was that the information must be accessible to all communities. The leaflets will be made available in different languages and online as a read aloud version for those with visual impairments.

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# Excellent Prevention and Protection

“To work with our partners and our community to protect the most vulnerable through targeted local risk reduction interventions and the robust application of our legal powers.”

## Fire Safety Legislation

Our Protection team has been developing a business support strategy to establish the types of support the Service can offer to help business owners within the Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic Communities. It is important for our staff to have a clear understanding of what our communities need. The aim of the strategy is to ensure that all business owners have a clear understanding of the work we do and the importance of enforcement, prosecution and fire safety advice. To support this area of work a conference is being held in September 2015 by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority to encourage the sharing of notable practice and to establish what barriers Fire and Rescue Services have encountered when supporting businesses from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities.

## Specialist Fire Safety Support

Our District Prevention Team have developed a holistic approach to Home Fire Safety Checks, by ensuring that each Home Fire Safety Check is tailored to an individual's needs.



# Case Study

**A gentleman who was registered blind and deaf required focused fire safety advice and support as part of our Service's work to protect those who are more vulnerable if a fire in the home.**

The man lived in a flat in an independent living facility and over six years had had seven separate instances when he had set off the smoke alarms due to either smoking habits or unsafe cooking.

The man required a particular type of interpreter who scribes on the palm of his hand, known as Hands on Signing. Fire safety advice had been given in the past, utilising the previous independent living facility manager's ability to use Hands on Sign.

Advocate Chris Murphy, from the Liverpool North Prevention Team, said: "After the man had two incidents close together, it was decided by Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service and the current independent living facility manager that he required some more, fresh fire safety advice. Also, it was deemed beneficial to involve the man's sister, Social Services and the Merseyside Society for Deaf People (MSDP), who all provide support for the man.

"A meeting was held to consider the Fire and Rescue Service's concerns and discuss what could be done to assist the man. Working together with the Equality and Diversity team at the Service, I was able to provide a Hands On Signing interpreter and so Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service was able to communicate specific advice to the man on how to reduce the risk of fire within the home and establish a speedy and effective signal for firefighter communication to the man in case he needed to evacuate the flat.

"Operational crews have been informed about the sign/signal required to be given to the man in the event of an emergency or evacuation so he will understand and comply with physical direction."

Chris added: "Due to our work, the man has a greater understanding of the dangers of fire in the home and how to reduce the risk of an incident. He now knows how a firefighter will communicate with him should the need arise for him to be moved or evacuated in the event of a fire.

"Fire retardant equipment, including a fire retardant throw and metal bin, have been issued to help reduce the risk of fires starting involving cigarettes. Other partners are also looking at arranging for newer cooking appliances to be used at the flat to make it easier for the man to use these to cook food."

The interpreter who visited the man as part of the Home Fire Safety Check was found by the Merseyside Society for Deaf People.



## Youth Engagement and Prince's Trust

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service runs a range of programmes for young people throughout the year including Beacon, Fire Cadets and the Prince's Trust team programme. The Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service Youth Engagement team, who run these programmes, welcomes those children and young people who are not always fully represented. To that end, we have engaged with same sex couples and young people with sometimes multifaceted needs such as ADHD and Asperger's Syndrome.

## Case Study

In September, our Bootle/Netherton Prince's Trust team had two team members who had cerebral palsy. We ensured the necessary risk assessments were in place which in turn allowed them to fully participate in the programme which included the five-day activity residential.

Karen Metcalf, Youth Engagement Manager, said: "Staff have received guidance on how to support young people with a disability to help manage their needs and expectations to make their time on the youth programmes as inclusive as possible. We are really proud of our achievements."

This year has seen our Huyton Prince's Trust team have a cohort of approximately 25% of their members from the LGBT community.

Prevention staff have supported the work of the youth teams by securing work placements and apprenticeships with the Chamber of Commerce for Prince's Trust participants and cadets.

The Beacon teams are young people aged 8 to 14-years-old. The primary school children are young people who are lacking confidence and suffer from acute shyness. The programme's aim is to build the children's self-assurance to make that transition into secondary school. The groups had a mix of young people who had epilepsy, asthma, ADHD and other learning difficulties.

A teacher said: Staff worked brilliantly by keeping the day flowing – involving all pupils and making the day both fun and disciplined. Pupils who are normally shy/withdrawn/feel left out, are becoming more confident. The pupils have gained a lot of knowledge for future life skills and the confidence shown on the course and back at school from pupils is brilliant."

For further information on what our Prince's Trust teams do and how they help young people, please read Elly's speech from her presentation evening.







**"Hi my name is Elly and I honestly can't believe I'm standing before you all here today. It is so hard to try and sum up the last twelve weeks and how much it has meant to me to be a part of the team programme. I turned 21 half way through the team and it was an age I never thought I would reach. Twelve weeks ago I couldn't imagine any sort of positive future for myself. During the last few years I have been hospitalised eight times due to poor mental health. I was then moved to a rehabilitation unit and I am still living there for the foreseeable future.**

**"Mental health has been such a huge part of my life for so long and I want to support others like me, who are fighting for their life back. The team programme is so unique and all of us on Team 27 have developed so much and we are all unrecognisable from the nervous, reluctant group that walked through the door on that first Monday.**

**"I believe that the residential was the turning point for my team and in Wales is where we started to develop the strong bonds we have today.**

**"After the residential, we started planning for the community project and decided together to renovate two rooms at the Dunnings Bridge Centre. It was so rewarding to give something back to our local community.**

**"My life was going nowhere before this programme and you encouraged me and taught me the skills I needed to believe in myself."**

**Elly Bryson,  
Prince's Trust Team 27**

## **Beacon**

The programme is for 12 weeks (one day a week) and is an alternative education tool run through school term. The project is designed to engage with young people who meet one of the following criteria:

- Have been or are at risk of exclusion from mainstream education.
- Students who are involved in risk-taking behaviour, fire setting or involved in Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).
- Looked After Children.
- Young Carers.

The overall objective is to reduce the numbers of pupils being excluded from mainstream education, reduce Anti-Social Behaviour in Merseyside communities and for Beacon participants to gain qualifications.

Please note, we deliver a Beacon programme every Friday for a team of young people who have special needs who are students of Hugh Baird College.

### Prince's Trust

The programme aims to re-engage young people by enabling them to develop skills, confidence and motivation to increase their employability and get their lives working.

The programme is full-time over 12 weeks and is aimed at 16 to 25-year-olds with a mix of diverse backgrounds, educational abilities, ethnic and cultural differences reflecting the demographics of Merseyside communities.

The programme also offers opportunities for team members to gain nationally recognised qualifications.

### Fire Cadets

The Cabinet Office made available funding to set up uniformed youth groups including the Fire Cadets.

The national cadet programme enables young people to become part of a team and experience a wide range of activities and learning such as drills, home safety, road safety, first aid, attending a residential and becoming involved in a Social Action project in their local community.

The cadets attended one day a week in school term and, in addition to the programme in Merseyside, they can work towards a BTEC qualification Level 2 Fire and Rescue Service in the Community.





## Beacon Success

One of the Beacon Project courses aimed to engage with a group of young people and adults with learning difficulties as well as giving participants an opportunity to take part in a learning programme. A course was staged for a group that were between 16-years-old and 32-years-old. It aimed to, and succeeded in, developing wider key skills in communication, problem-solving and how to work with others as well as providing safe, fun and enriching experiences.



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## Case Study

### Letter from parent who attended Hugh Baird College Beacon Pass Out parade:

"I felt I must write after attending the passing out parade of Hugh Baird students on the Beacon Project last Friday.

"The whole event was wonderful and the students were a credit to themselves and the college. I did not realise how much was involved and how much the students were able to achieve after only 12 weeks. Great credit must go to the Fire Service and all the support staff who made this project the great success it undoubtedly was. The students all seemed to thoroughly enjoy the whole experience. You could see the benefits the course offered the students in their firefighting and search and rescue displays. The teamwork, taking of responsibility and pride in their achievements was there for all to see, the attitude of the students and their discipline throughout the presentation was first class. I can honestly say that on a personal level, my daughter has never enjoyed such a worthwhile experience as the Beacon Project.

"On a practical level she has also picked up first aid, basic firefighting and road and home safety skills. My daughter's certificate takes pride of place in our house and she enthuses about the project to all her family and friends. I hope that the college continues to collaborate with the Fire Brigade to provide this very worthwhile project for future students."

### Hate Crime

Community fire stations across Liverpool, Knowsley, Wirral and Sefton are now designated as Safe Havens for members of the public who feel threatened, intimidated or at risk.

Safe Havens are easily identified by an illuminated sign on the stations that can be seen at night. If firefighters are not at the station, people can still call for assistance in an emergency situation by using the yellow emergency phone box located at the front of the building, below the Safe Haven signs.

The Safe Havens also provide people with the opportunity to report hate crime or domestic violence.

Safe Havens have been formally activated on 11 occasions, with a total of 14 people attending stations for safety. Eleven were adults and 3 were children, with a total of 11 males and 3 females.

### The information below highlights the reasons why people have found the need to find a Safe Haven:

- Homeless and frightened on three occasions.
- Assault – sought refuge.
- Person in pain with bruising.
- Vehicle attacked by youths.
- Person feeling suicidal.
- Seeking help after hospital discharge.
- Two people chased by group.
- Male lost.
- Child being hit at home.

**"Four youths were attacking a car with three people in it. They pulled into the fire station and asked for help. The youths made off through the park. We found out that the male in the car had had his bike stolen at knife point earlier in the day by the same youths. They saw him in the car and tried to attack it with stones. We brought the family in and made them safe and comfortable."**  
**Marvin Yates,**  
**Watch Manager, Bootle and Netherton Community Fire Station**



### Domestic Violence

In February 2015, our Arson Reduction co-ordinator joined the Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner to launch the "Love not Hate" campaign ahead of Valentine's Day. The campaign urges people not to suffer hate crime in silence and encourages victims to contact Merseyside Police or, if they don't feel confident speaking to the police, to get in touch with Stop Hate UK. The charity has been funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver an independent confidential 24/7 helpline for victims across Merseyside.

Three of our fire appliances in Knowsley have been branded to support the Choices campaign against domestic abuse, which is part of the Safer Knowsley Partnership Domestic Violence Campaign. As part of the high profile campaign, fire appliances have been branded with the message "Domestic abuse – it's all about Choices" and the support line contact number. As well as fire appliances, the message has also been seen on taxis, buses and roadside adverts across the area. As part of the national White Ribbon campaign against domestic violence all of our fire appliances also wore a White Ribbon.





### Road Safety

One of our Equality Objectives is to reduce the number of road traffic collisions on our roads across Merseyside, targeting specific groups; the young and the old. Road safety campaigns took place throughout the summer across the Liverpool District. In August, firefighters staged two car rescue demonstrations to show the public the use of special hydraulic equipment. Staff from the ODEON Liverpool were also at the event. To help highlight safety messages, a short film by Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service was shown during the trailers before films, including Disney's Planes 2: Fire and Rescue. This is an excellent way to target families and young people to provide safety messages in a cost effective way.

Further road safety events were staged in a supermarket car park in Hunts Cross, where firefighters used hydraulic cutting equipment to remove a car roof to show how we help paramedics to move people following collisions where spinal or neck injuries are suspected or confirmed.

As part of the summer campaign by MF&RS, cyclists were urged to be seen and be safe by wearing high-visibility clothing and a helmet.

Pedestrians were urged to look out, listen and be aware and motorcyclists were also advised to ensure they stay hydrated, particularly during the summer, as dehydration can affect concentration and reaction times.

There have been other road safety events held throughout Merseyside at different times of the year. One included a rescue demonstration at Calday Grange Grammar School, in Wirral, which was followed by a 10-week programme of road traffic collision reduction presentations to the entire sixth form at the school.

### Healthy Homes Knowsley

Healthy Homes Knowsley was launched in September 2013 and since then 3,200 homes have been visited as part of the initiative, which aims to improve both the living conditions and health and wellbeing of residents. This has resulted in over 1,000 referrals to other agencies including referrals for energy efficiency advice, smoke alarms and housing issues. The Healthy Homes Project is delivered in partnership with MF&RS and we have assisted in training, supplied co-branded uniforms, a Service vehicle and have a District Prevention Advocate working with the team one day a week. As part of the initial service, the Healthy Homes team will carry out a short fire safety check. If there are any high levels of risks identified the details will be passed to our district team to carry out a full Home Fire Safety Check.

Healthy Homes aims to tackle common issues that residents may be experiencing, such as living in damp conditions, having difficulty managing household bills or disabled residents struggling to get around without adaptations to their home. These can all have a significant impact on health, wellbeing and general happiness.

### Summer Family Fun Day

An event was held in the grounds of the Seacombe Children's Centre which attracted more than 300 people.

The event was aimed at young people with the intention of helping reduce the number of accidental and deliberate fires involving grass, rubbish, bonfires and fly-tipped material. The event was also aimed at providing information to the community on wellbeing, lifestyle and fitness.

The event was attended by MF&RS with one of the quad bikes, which we use at community events and for specific campaigns such as Beachsafe on the Sefton coastline. Children were able to sit on the quad bike, while people received information on how to help reduce fires. Merseyside Police were also there registering bicycles to help prevent bike thefts and help return them to their owners if they are stolen.

There was a number of partners at the event offering a wide range of advice including the NHS offering health checks, debt advice to young families and support to pregnant women.

There was also a range of fun activities including the MF&RS smoothie bike, making healthy fruit smoothies, and a Build a Butty stall offering tips on how to make a health snack. Entertainment on the day was provided by the Hoylake Hand and Voice Choir, who performed four songs in British Sign Language.

# Excellent People

**“To develop and value all our employees, respecting diversity, promoting opportunity and equality for all.”**

## Positive Action

Positive Action is a term which refers to a number of methods designed to counteract the effects of past unintentional discrimination in employment and to help abolish stereotyping. Employers are allowed by law to take Positive Action to help redress any imbalances that may have arisen as a result of past discrimination or disadvantage. The aim of Positive Action is to ensure people from previously excluded groups have the opportunity to compete on equal terms with other participants.

This year, our Positive Action Team has seen staff visiting events including Africa Oye, Liverpool Pride, Brouhaha and the Race for Life at Aintree, Sefton Park and Birkenhead to encourage people from a wider background to consider becoming a firefighter in the future. In addition, we engaged with community groups and organisations from under-represented groups and local colleges and universities. Practical support and advice is provided to assist people who wish to apply to join the Service as a firefighter. It is all part of the Service's Positive Action approach.

## Dementia Friends

This year has seen our district prevention team in Wirral and our firefighters in Sefton participate in Dementia Awareness training. The statistics below demonstrate the importance of understanding how dementia will affect our communities across Merseyside and the impact it may have on fire safety.

- By 2015 there will be 850,000 people with dementia in the UK.
- There will be 1 million people with dementia in the UK by 2025.
- There are 40,000 younger people with dementia in the UK.
- There are 25,000 people with dementia from black and minority ethnic groups in the UK.
- Two thirds of people with dementia are women.
- The proportion of people with dementia doubles for every five-year age group.
- One in six people aged 80 and over have dementia.
- 60,000 deaths a year are directly attributable to dementia.

Across Wirral, the District Prevention Team has been working with Age UK who have provided excellent training to MF&RS on becoming Dementia Friends and in return MF&RS staff have provided reciprocal training to help Age UK staff to identify vulnerable people at risk of fire.

The plan is being led by Wirral South Constituency Manager Fergus Adams to make Heswall a "dementia friendly community" in 2015 and MF&RS is a key partner in the initiative. Meetings have taken place with local community representatives, about the initiative, and how agencies and community members can get involved.

Heswall was chosen as the pilot location and local partner agencies (including Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service) and the wider third sector were involved from the very beginning of the project. Dementia Friend sessions were held throughout March 2015. Over 100 new Dementia Friends (including Merseyside Fire and Rescue staff) have been created so far.

Firefighters across Sefton have linked in with Home Instead to enhance their ability to deal with incidents involving people with dementia. Home Instead is an organisation that provides support for people with dementia to help them remain in their own home. The training they provided consisted of two training presentations delivered to all the Watches at Crosby and Bootle and Netherton community fire stations, which included information about what dementia is, the causes of Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia and the symptoms and how to support people with these conditions.

**"All members of the Watches found the presentation to be informative and helpful in providing an insight into this terrible disease."**

**"Operationally it will be helpful to quickly identify when we are dealing with people living on their own who are in the early stages of dementia, when either attending incidents or when carrying out Home Fire Safety Checks."**

**Marvin Yates,  
Watch Manager, Bootle and Netherton  
Community Fire Station**





# Case Study

## Reaching out to our Communities

Crews at Southport Community Fire Station teamed up with paramedics from the station to make sure that 26 pensioners, who may have spent the day alone, enjoyed a Christmas dinner on Christmas Day. Firefighters organised the event and were assisted by local volunteers. The pensioners enjoyed a four course Christmas dinner, bingo, raffle, brass quartet, DJ and presents delivered by Santa, who arrived on a fire engine.

Transport provided by two mini buses, one from MF&RS and one from the North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust, ensured that everyone arrived and got home safely. One firefighter, Brian Grimley, gave up most of his Christmas Day to volunteer with his family and drove the MF&RS minibus.

The event was organised by Watch Manger Ian Nelson and Brian Grimley (white watch) following a suggestion from one of the paramedics Sara Smith who is based at Southport Community Fire Station. With the help, donations and funding from over 50 businesses in the area they were able to organise a great day, and ensured everyone went home with a gift.

Southport Blue Watch also distributed meals to homeless people in Southport following their annual Christmas dinner, earlier in the month, rather than waste the large amount of food left.

## Apprentices

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service has developed an apprenticeship in Community Safety. This has enabled 12 young people to gain valuable experience in contributing to their community as well as gain a qualification.

The process to select the young people involved an open evening to inform them of the opportunity and the requirements for an assessment centre followed by an interview.

The young people are aged between 17 and 24, seven of which are male and five are female.

They have settled in well and are making a difference to their communities. They have also engaged in a residential course to assist their personal development and undertaken courses in key transferable skills such as presentations, report writing, problem solving and team working. In partnership with a local college, we have also offered apprenticeships in catering and finance.

"I have always wanted to work in the Public Sector. After completing my Public Service qualifications, I applied for the Community Safety Apprenticeship with MF&RS. I was really pleased I got the job, even though I was having to leave my family in London and move up to Merseyside on my own.

"I have been overwhelmed with the support I have had from staff at MF&RS and my fellow Apprentices. I love the work I do, I feel really privileged to be meeting people in their homes and making a real difference to their lives.

"The Apprenticeship has enabled me to grow in confidence and independence. The residential was a fantastic experience and I've also encouraged other apprentices to become a member of the Toxteth Fire Fit Hub.

"Although I really miss home and my family back in London, the team in Liverpool North are looking after me and making sure I have everything I need."

Afi Khan,  
Liverpool North Apprentice



### Think People: Engagement Commitments

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service carried out a staff survey (Your Service, Your Voice) in the summer of 2014. 68% of staff responded. Since the publication of the results in October 2014, we have held 35 staff engagement meetings to discuss the results and to help identify possible solutions to the issues identified.

Those staff who attended the meetings represented many of the different staff groups across the organisation including different roles, levels and working patterns. The Strategic Management Group (SMG) members were also encouraged to meet with their teams to share the results of their survey for their own functions and with their managers to discuss any possible actions that may help to improve staff engagement.

The survey and focus groups and stakeholder meetings have helped MFRA to define some key principles that can explain what positive engagement looks like. These are expressed in seven statements, which we have now adopted as our Engagement Principles.



## Our Engagement Commitments

- **Staff feeling valued and recognised** – as individuals and for the job that they do.
- **Great Management and Leadership** – leaders at all levels being visible, open and accountable with two way communication channels from Principal Officers and managers through to staff.
- **Innovation and Transformation** – having mechanisms for all staff to share, learn, put into action good ideas and make a real contribution to the way our services are delivered.
- **Involvement in decision making** – ensuring staff are properly engaged and consulted on the future direction of the organisation and the way things are done.
- **Development and Training for all** – providing opportunities for teams to grow and learn and achieve high quality outcomes and satisfaction levels.
- **A healthy and safe work environment** – where staff can deliver high quality and services safely and operate to the best of their ability.
- **Being positive about Diversity and Equality** – valuing people, differences and respecting each other. Understanding that difference is healthy and enables us to deliver services to our diverse communities.

The Engagement Principles expressed above helped to introduce the concept of **“Think People”**, ensuring that considerations about people are at the heart of everything we do, are real and embedded in day-to-day management.

Work is now well underway to improving ways in which we engage with our staff and providing different approaches to valuing and recognising the contribution our staff make to deliver our core business aims. Our Think People: Engagement Commitments document is available from our website.

N.B. A separate report is available on our website which contains all the results from our 2014 staff survey.

<http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk/aspix/pages/Corporate/staffSurveyResults.aspx>





## Key employment related information – as at 31st March 2015

- There were 1,102 staff employed at MFRA, as at the end of 2014/15, of which 68% were uniformed/operational\* and 32% were support staff.
- 78% of staff were male and 22% were female.
- Support staff have a 50% split between male and female.
- Uniformed /operational staff have a gender split of 95% male and 5% female.
- 48% of the total staff employed at MFRA are aged 46 and over.
- 5% of staff declared a disability (lower than the UK average population at 20%).
- 94% of the total staff population at MFRA were White British/ White other, 3% of staff are Black Minority Ethnic (BME) –lower than the Merseyside average at 5.5%.

More information on recruitment can be found on page 13, where we have provided diversity information on recruitment to support Equality Objective 5.

\* Includes Fire Control staff.



Part Two

# Equality and Diversity Standards and Events



# Equality and Diversity Activity 2014/15

## Standards and Awards

### Asian Fire Service Association – Positive Action Award

An approach by MF&RS to encourage people from diverse and under-represented backgrounds and wider backgrounds to consider a future job as a potential firefighter has received a national award.

In recognition of this work, the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) presented an award at their annual conference and awards ceremony to the MF&RS Positive Action Team.

AFSA works with Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) to mainstream subjects around equality and diversity in two priority areas:

- Service Provision and Delivery.
- Employment Policy and Practice.

The AFSA Vision is: "The Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) will work with the National Fire and Rescue Services and supporting agencies to enhance equality and diversity and its associated values."

### Data Sharing

This year MF&RS has won three awards for our work to help to protect vulnerable people in the community through our data sharing with partners.

The first two were presented by the iNetwork for the recent project with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service and the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA). The Excellence in Information Sharing and Security Award (EISS) recognises the data-sharing work with the National Health Service to identify and highlight vulnerable people.

These awards were received at the same time as a new publication was launched to encourage data sharing amongst agencies across Merseyside to help identify those who may be at a higher risk of a fire occurring in their home.

The publication is called "Dying for Data – Reducing Fire Deaths in Merseyside" and is available on our website [www.merseyfire.gov.uk](http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk).

### Matrix award for Youth Programmes – Equality and Diversity is commended

Matrix is an international quality standard for organisations that deliver information, advice and guidance (IAG) as part of their service offering. The Matrix is an outcome-based standard. This means MF&RS was assessed not only on the processes used to support IAG delivery but also on the results achieved.

The Matrix standard comprises of four elements – Leadership and Management, Resources, Service Delivery & Continuous Quality Improvement with each element containing assessment criteria, all of which must be met to achieve accreditation.

Primary evidence is collected through interviews with people who are directly involved in IAG delivery and those affected by it. One to one and/or group interviews are held with a sample of service delivery staff and their managers, clients and, where appropriate, representatives of partner organisations. In MF&RS's case this is The Prince's Trust, Hugh Baird and St Helens College.

MF&RS was awarded Matrix accreditation for delivering excellent IAG in Fire Cadets (Schools Project), Beacon, LIFE and Prince's Trust. The Assessor highly commended the Youth teams' work on making Equality, Diversity and inclusion integral and embedded across all aspects of the youth programmes delivered at MFRA.



### Fire Fit Schools International Olympic Committee recognition

Our Fire Fit Schools programme involves a member of MF&RS staff working with a local school, delivering physical education, adding strength to the existing provision within the school by increasing physical activity, improving wellbeing and acting as a point of contact to deliver other prevention messages.

### A number of key performance outcomes have been identified for measuring the success associated with delivering Fire Fit Schools. These are:

- Increased physical activity.
- Increased attendance at school.
- Improved behaviour.
- Improved confidence and self-esteem.
- Instil a sense of achievement.
- Reduction in anti-social behaviour.

Around 340 schoolchildren from across Merseyside were put through their paces at the 2014 Fire Fit Active Challenge organised by our Service.

The World Cup Brazil-themed event saw pupils from 11 Merseyside schools competing in a range of sports such as netball, rugby, football and volleyball at the Toxteth Fire Fit Hub.

Our Service staff delivered the event and firefighters gave their support, along with young volunteers from Prince's Trust Toxteth Team 20.

All the children were given special yellow and green Fire Fit t-shirts, to fit in with the colours of the Brazil flag, and were awarded a Brazil-themed certificate at the end of the tournament.

As well as promoting sport, the event also encouraged healthy eating with a variety of nutritious food from across the world on offer for children to sample.

Through the wider stakeholder engagement, Fire Fit has successfully been listed as one of 40 programmes by the International Olympic Committee on its website as part of the "Get Moving" Initiative.





# Equality and Diversity Events in 2014/15

## Accessible Britain Challenge

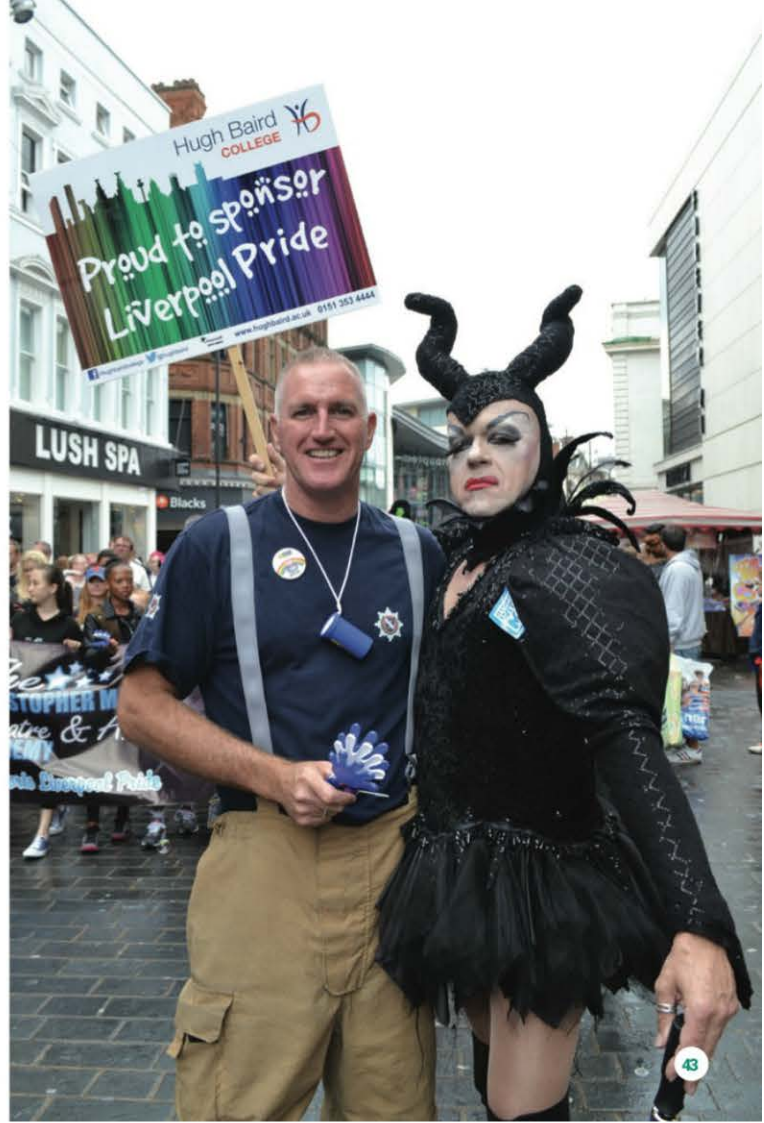
MF&RS made a significant contribution to the Accessible Britain Challenge conference organised by Wirral Council at the Floral Pavilion, New Brighton. Group Manager Guy Keen, head of Protection for MF&RS, delivered a presentation to over 300 guests on the importance of providing personal emergency evacuation plans to assist people with a disability in the event of an emergency.

The vision of the Accessible Britain Challenge is for communities to become more inclusive and accessible by engaging and working with disabled people to remove barriers that get in the way of them being full and active contributors in their community.

## Liverpool Pride 2014 - Glam Fairy Tales

In 2014, as in previous years, staff and officers of MF&RS showed their support for LGBT issues, by participating in the 5th Liverpool Pride, which took place on Saturday 2nd August. The theme for the March was "Glam Fairy Tales".

Although the weather was not at its best, the event was very well supported. Staff and their families started the day with breakfast at our Liverpool City Community Fire Station, before joining the march through Liverpool city centre. The march ended at the Pier Head, where MF&RS had a stall to promote our Positive Action campaign and raise awareness of Hate Crime. Staff were also joined by our pink fire appliance.



### Ageing Safely Week 2014, (29th September to 5th October)

Because the risk of dying in a fire for those aged 65 and over is more than twice as high as the average risk for all ages, MF&RS identifies those who are most at risk and undertakes targeted prevention and protection activities.

Ageing Safely Week is an opportunity to highlight the important role of older people in our communities, and the fire and rescue services' commitment to protecting them - particularly those who are vulnerable and may be most at risk.

A week of events were held across Merseyside as part of Ageing Safely Week, to help to keep elderly people safe from fire in their homes. As part of the week's events, over 70 staff from Service Headquarters from a variety of departments joined our District Prevention Team and

firefighters in carrying out Home Fire Safety Checks and home visits to elderly people. The day coincided with the UK Older People's Day on 1st October.

Other events organised that week were visits to sheltered accommodation, attending community events aimed at older people and organised activities such as a pilates class for seniors at the Toxteth Fire Fit Hub delivered by personal trainer Paula Muldoon.

The public were also encouraged to check on elderly relatives and neighbours to ensure that smoke alarms on each floor of their home were working.





### Engaging with our Diverse Communities

Villages Housing organised a welcome event on the Stockbridge Village estate for their Polish residents following an increase in Polish families. Some of the Polish residents had been targets of anti-social behaviour, verbal threats and discrimination. Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service had received several referrals from Merseyside Police for properties on the estate requesting help to make their properties safe from fire attacks. A big concern was that the Polish families were not always reporting incidents; due to fear of the Police, language barriers, not knowing who to call or not having the correct contact details.

To provide targeted support, invitations were given to the Polish residents for a welcome event, where partners including Merseyside Police and Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service provided an overview of their services for Home Fire Safety Checks, anti-social behaviour concerns, hate crime and Safe Havens. An interpreter was used to deliver key messages, provide literature and help with specific information and advice.

The residents were all sent letters inviting them to the event, which Villages Housing then followed up with home visits.

The event was well attended with 15 families attending throughout the evening.

Villages Housing are planning a similar event later in the year in the hope to engage with more families and spread the word about the support and services they can access.

### Faith Forum

MFRA has set up a multi-faith forum including support from the MFRA Chaplain, Merseyside Police Chaplain and the Diocese of Liverpool - Director for Church and Society. The purpose of the forum is to share contacts of key representatives for all major faiths across Merseyside to enable us to develop partnerships to assist faith communities in understanding fire safety. Further aims of the forum are to raise awareness of diversity events and provide support for our diversity calendar and to introduce our Positive Action programmes for recruitment to those under-represented groups. More work will continue around these partnerships during 2015/16.







# Conclusion

I feel that MFRA has much to be proud of and I am confident that the Service will make further strides in this area of work in the future. I hope that you have enjoyed reading about what our staff have been doing to support Equality and Diversity and that you too have been inspired to get involved with us in the future whether that be as a member of staff, the community or a stakeholder.

**If you would like to learn more about our work, or have any questions please contact:**

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**Phil Garrigan,**  
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