



**Equality Information Report**  
Our commitment to inclusion  
and equality



## Introduction

**At Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS), we believe that creating an environment where every member of our team can succeed allows us to deliver the very best service we can to the people who live, work and travel in Essex.**

In this report, we will share what we did in 2022 to be an inclusive employer. When we include everyone, we create the opportunity for differences to be understood and proudly celebrated. We believe that every employee has the right to be treated fairly with kindness, equality, dignity, and respect. We are committed to providing a supportive and inclusive working environment to promote this.

We want colleagues to feel valued and contribute to our vision to be one of the best fire and rescue services in the country. We know that diversity supports greater creativity and innovation if people can be open about their strengths, experiences and knowledge. This is why we promote a positive culture. Each of our colleagues is unique, so it's important they feel that they can be themselves. That way, they are more likely to speak up and share their thoughts, needs, or views, highlighting what others may not have considered.

This is how diversity adds value to our service. It improves how we do things, guides our policies, practice and decision-making, and expands our collective knowledge. All of this means we can provide equal access, opportunities and outcomes, and do our best for our communities.



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## Our Fire and Rescue Plan

Our Fire and Rescue Plan shows that promoting a positive culture in the workplace and always trying to improve the diversity of our workforce are key priorities for our service. It also states that we will:

- work with our partners;
- make the best use of our resources;
- develop and broaden our roles and activities; and
- be accessible, transparent and open about our processes.

This means we can help vulnerable people stay safe, improve safety on our roads and provide the right services for all our communities through our prevention and protection activities and when we respond to incidents.

[Fire and Rescue Plan](#) - Click here for more information



## Our Public Sector Equality Duty

We provide an equal service because we believe it is the right thing to do. However, as a public service, we also have a legal duty to do this. The Equality Duty was developed to bring together previous public sector equality duties and extend them across the following nine protected characteristics.

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation



Related legislation sets out specific duties which support the general Equality Duty.

We have the following duties.

- Preventing unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as any other conduct which is forbidden under the Equality Act 2010.
- Making sure there are equal opportunities for people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Building positive relationships between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.

These duties are sometimes referred to as the three aims of the general Equality Duty.

Under the Equality Act 2010 we must do our best to promote equality in the following ways.

- Removing or reducing disadvantages which people experience because of their protected characteristics. This includes having due regard (giving genuine thought and attention) to
- preventing unlawful discrimination against someone because of their marriage or civil partnership status.
- Working towards meeting the needs of people from protected groups (groups of people who share a particular protected characteristic) when these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to join in with their community and other activities in which participation from protected groups is low.

[Public Sector Equality Duty](#) - Click here for more information

## Our equality objectives

As part of our Equality Duty, we set equality objectives to make sure we are always improving and monitoring our progress. From 2018 to 2022 we had the following equality objectives.

1. To improve the recruitment, retention, progression, development, and experience of the people employed by Essex County Fire and Rescue Service to enable the organisation to become an inclusive employer of choice.
2. To promote and encourage employees to voluntarily declare their self-classification diversity data to ensure ECFRS' actions as an employer are evidence led and improvement focused.
3. To improve the mapping, quality, and extent of equality information to better facilitate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty in relation to service delivery including IRMP additional activities.
4. To review the equality impact of key organisational policies for differential impact in areas such as: recruitment and selection, learning and development, absence management, modified duties, talent management, appraisal, disciplinary and grievance.
5. To ensure that all staff are treated with dignity and respect and have a workplace that is free from harassment and bullying by changing the culture of the organisation to one that is genuinely inclusive. All employees are high performing because we value their differences, which includes gender or gender identity, race, or religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, pregnancy, caring responsibilities, or membership of a trade union.
6. To seek external review, challenge, and accreditation of ECFRS' actions as an employer by actively participating with relevant equalities standards and benchmarks including the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework.

In this annual report, we provide an overview of our progress towards meeting our objectives, and the activities we have carried out to deliver our Fire and Rescue Plan and provide an equal service to our communities.



## Our progress

### 1. To improve the recruitment, retention, progression, development, and experience of the people employed by Essex County Fire and Rescue Service to enable the organisation to become an inclusive employer of choice.

#### Taking positive action to improve diversity in our service

We proudly promote a culture of inclusivity in our recruitment processes and, in line with the Equality Act 2010, do our best to encourage people from a wide range of backgrounds to apply for our vacancies. This helps to build the skills and knowledge of our existing staff and brings different experiences from each person's life to our workforce.

Like many fire and rescue services in the country, our workforce does not currently reflect the diversity of the communities in our county. However, we believe that by:

- promoting a positive culture;
- actively engaging with our communities;
- sharing information about our activity and progress towards our objectives; and
- taking opportunities to reach out to younger people in Essex;

we can increase the diversity of people we attract to our varied roles. This includes our apprenticeships, cadet opportunities and voluntary positions.

In 2022, we applied positive action principles when we were recruiting to attract people from groups that are currently under-represented in our service. This included attending local events and using targeted advertising to reach out to under-represented groups.

Our positive action approach actively encourages the participation of females, ethnic minorities and people under 25-years-old. We receive a lower proportion of applicants from these groups, which means they are under-represented in our workforce when compared to the communities in Essex.

In November 2022, we hosted a positive action development day. We considered good practice and identified solutions and opportunities to work with others to help us achieve goals we share with our public service partners across Essex and the East of England.

Colleagues from the Asian Fire Service Association led this day. They support fire and rescue services to achieve their equality, diversity and inclusion objectives.



## Applications

We monitor our recruitment and selection data for equal opportunities to understand if any diverse groups may experience barriers or unfair outcomes in our processes.

In 2022, we received 2,872 applications for our vacancies. The applicants shared the following information with us.

- 387 applicants were female (13.2%)
- 149 applicants were from an ethnic minority group (5.2%)
- 503 applicants were under 25 years old (17.5%)
- 54 applicants identified as LGBTQ+ (1.9%)
- 100 applicants had a disability (3.5%)



## New colleagues

In 2022, 183 new colleagues joined our workforce. These new colleagues shared the following information with us.

- 42 people were female (23%)
- 14 people were from an ethnic minority group (11%)
- 27 people were under 25 years old (14.8%)
- Six people identified as LGBTQ+ (3.3%)
- Six people had a disability (3.3%)

[Employee profile by shared diversity data - Click here for more information](#)

## Internship – Change 100

Over the summer of 2022, the Prevention Department welcomed Skie Hewitt to the team. Skie joined the team as an intern from the Change 100 programme for a three-month placement. Change 100 is a programme of paid summer-work placements, professional development and mentoring led by the Leonard Cheshire charity. Talented university students and recent graduates with any disability or long-term condition are matched with inclusive employers.

Skie's academic skills combined with her experience of living with sight loss, allowed her to produce insightful reports and recommendations. She considered subjects from the perspective of those who have experienced sight loss and wrote reports on the impact of neurodivergence (the range of cognitive function) in the workplace and the accessibility of our museum site. Skie immersed herself in her work and our team, with a keen willingness to learn from her experience and educate others. Skie openly shared her experiences and wrote a piece for our Inclusion Insights monthly e-newsletter, inspiring others within the organisation to be themselves.

Skie made a lasting impression on her colleagues in our service, not only in her reports and recommendations, but also by educating us and demonstrating that disability doesn't define us. Skie is the second intern we have welcomed through Leonard Cheshire, and we look forward to welcoming a third in 2023.



## Development and progression

Our Leadership, Resourcing and Succession Development Programme gives everyone the opportunity to work towards achieving their career goals.

In 2022, 199 of our colleagues took part in the programme.

Equality monitoring of the 199 colleagues showed the following.

- 23 colleagues were female (11%)
- Four colleagues identified their gender as non-binary or other (2%)
- 11 colleagues were from an ethnic minority group (5%)
- 13 colleagues had a disability (6%)

We offer coaching to all our colleagues to help them succeed in their career. We provide access to coaches within our service and through outside organisations. We work with Genius Within to provide coaching which meets the needs of neurodivergent thinkers. In 2022, 12 colleagues received coaching through Genius Within and 90 colleagues received coaching from an outside organisation. In 2023 we look forward to offering additional development coaching for colleagues who are under-represented in our service.

## Promotions

In 2022, 119 people were promoted in our service.

Equality monitoring of the 119 people showed the following.

- 26 colleagues were female (21%)
- Two colleagues were from an ethnic minority group (1.6%)
- Six colleagues had a disability (5%)



We compare development and promotions data with our general workforce data to see where we may need to make positive changes to make sure there are equal opportunities for all our employees.

**2. To promote and encourage employees to voluntarily declare their self-classification diversity data to ensure ECFRS' actions as an employer are evidence led and improvement focused.**

## Data and equality monitoring

We carry out equality monitoring, but understand that not everyone chooses to share their personal information.

Although there are gaps in our equality data, particularly for sexual orientation, we are pleased that more of our colleagues shared their information in 2022.

The tables below show the number and percentage of colleagues that had not shared their personal information for each category at the end of 2021 and at the end of 2022.

December 2021

Category	Number of employees who hadn't shared their information	Percentage of employees who hadn't shared their information
Gender	60	4%
Ethnicity	282	19%
Sexual orientation	426	28%
Religion or belief	412	27%

December 2022

Category	Number of employees who hadn't shared their information	Percentage of employees who hadn't shared their information
Gender	54	3.5%
Ethnicity	259	17%
Sexual orientation	398	26%
Religion or belief	383	25%

[Employee profile by shared diversity data - Click here for more information](#)

We collect and handle personal information fairly and in line with data protection laws. We will continue to educate our employees on the benefit of sharing their personal information as it allows us to see potential inequalities and work towards inclusion.

**3. To improve the mapping, quality, and extent of equality information in order to better facilitate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty in relation to service delivery including IRMP additional activities.**

Our Prevention Team focuses on different aspects of vulnerability, working with partners such as Essex County Council and local councils on shared goals to reduce vulnerability and fire risk within our communities.

Improving the data we collect helps us to understand and meet people's needs to reduce this risk.

We visited 7,150 residents through our home-fire safety checks and safe and well visit services to raise awareness of fire risk and home security and also offer information about health and well-being.

We received the following data about the residents we visited.

- 52% were over the age of 75
- 25% were over the age of 65
- 37% lived alone
- 30% said they had a disability
- 15% had some level of sensory loss (sight and hearing)
- 5% were restricted to a bed or single room

(Some of the people we visited may fit into more than one of the above groups.)

We received the following ethnicity data from the residents we visited

- 78% were white British
- 7% were from an ethnic minority group or white other
- 6% preferred not to say
- 9% did not share this information

We are always improving the ways that we collect meaningful information and knowledge about our communities to help reduce risk.

We have been eagerly waiting for the Census 2021 data to be published. We are working with Essex County Council and other partners to use the data to shape the way we provide our service, and will consider how it affects the risks that exist within different communities and groups of people. We can then use the data and other information to update our People Impact Assessments and develop our Community Risk Management Plan.

Our partnership work continues to develop and grow. We are working with over 150 organisations across Greater Essex to reduce vulnerability and risk in the following areas.

- Social isolation and loneliness
- Socio-economic and health inequalities
- Language and literacy needs
- Frailty
- Mental health



We know that vulnerability doesn't discriminate. This is why, as well as collecting necessary data, we prioritise engaging with our diverse communities. Our conversations with individuals, groups, charities, public service partners and organisations help us learn about the vulnerable members of our community and adapt our service to meet their needs.

The relationships and partnerships we create support our vision to make Essex a safer place to live, work and travel for everyone.

#### 4. To review the equality impact of key organisational policies for differential impact in areas such as: recruitment and selection, learning and development, absence management, modified duties, talent management, appraisal, disciplinary and grievance.

##### People Impact Assessment (PIA)

We carry out PIAs when we create and review policies. This is to identify inclusive improvements we can make and any action needed to reduce the risk of discrimination or disadvantage. We use information, data and evidence to consider how the policies may affect groups of people and ask for feedback from our employee forums and representative bodies.

As part of our strategic decision-making process, every formal decision includes a PIA.

We listened to feedback from our colleagues because we wanted to improve the quality of PIAs for our good practice – this included how often we do these assessments. We introduced a People Impact Assessment Hub which offers a central library for our PIAs to be reviewed and stored, and a user-friendly way for all colleagues to access forms, guidance, data and information.

We are also developing an app to improve the way we carry out PIAs. The app will make the task easier and can be used on a range of digital devices so we can make the best use of our resources. Colleagues will be able to use the app in 2023.

##### Inclusive policies

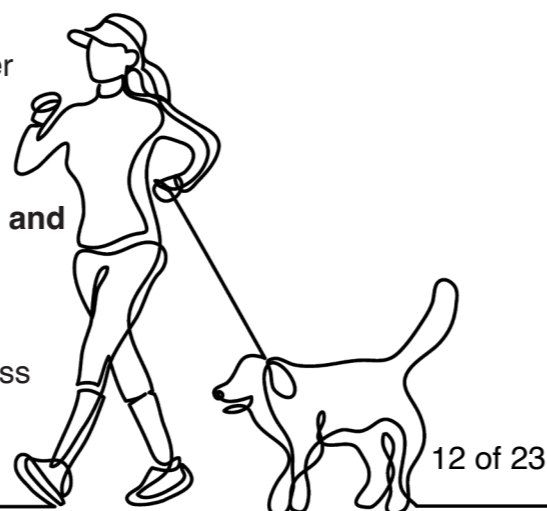
Over the year, we made changes to our policies to make them more inclusive in order to meet the diverse needs of our employees and make sure all our employees have equal opportunities.

We published our **Recruitment Policy**, which provides a framework of inclusive practice, principles and procedures which we follow when we hire new employees to make sure outcomes are fair.

We published our **Transitioning at Work Guidance**, which provides support and direction to make sure our transgender employees are treated fairly and with, dignity, confidentiality and respect.

We published our **Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy and Safeguarding Children policies**. All our colleagues had to attend training to support these policies.

We reviewed our **Grievance Policy** to make sure the process for appeals is clear.



We revised our **Acting Up and Temporary Promotions Policy** to include support colleagues. This policy gives clear guidance on how to fill temporary promotion opportunities. Temporary promotions can be a great way to help people progress in our service.

We amended our **Paternity Leave Policy** to be more inclusive of same-sex couples.

We reviewed our **Attendance Policy** following feedback from employees. We made improvements to the layout and provided additional guidance to help managers lead informal attendance review meetings. We will also carry out assessments before any pay is reduced due to sickness absence to consider the possible effects of this.

Towards the end of 2022 we reviewed three policies that will be published in 2023, after their consultation periods.

Our **Special Leave Policy** which supports our Family Friendly Charter.

We fully support family-friendly legislation and are committed to providing policies and practices which allow employees to balance work and home responsibilities.

The aim of our special leave policy is to give guidance to managers and employees on the range of circumstances when special leave may be granted, with or without pay. We aim to be inclusive to support individual needs for time off, including:

- for religious celebrations;
- for extended family visits, breaks and trips;
- to support disabled people and carers;
- for blood donors and live organ donors; and
- for compassionate leave and parental bereavement leave.

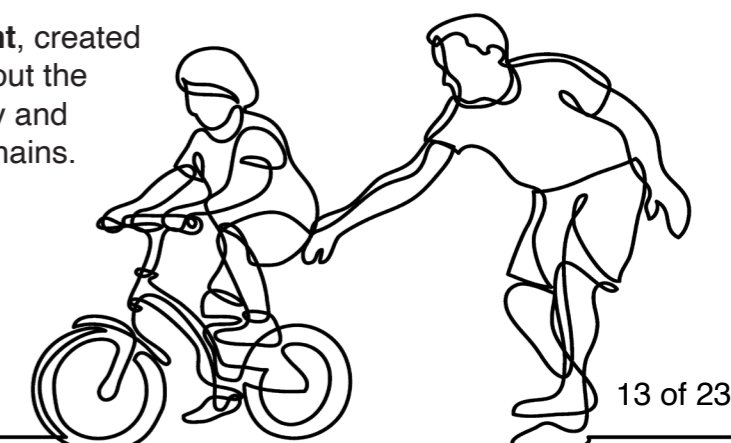
We believe that by discussing and agreeing workable solutions with our employees, we can make sure the outcomes are fair, consistent and inclusive.

- Our **Dignity at Work Policy** which now includes the Core Code of Ethics.

We renamed this policy as our **Dignity and Inclusion Policy**. We believe that individuals have the right to be treated equally and with dignity and respect in the workplace, so we are committed to providing a supportive and inclusive working environment to promote this.

##### Core Code of Ethics - Click here for more information

- Our **Modern Slavery Policy and Statement**, created in line with the Modern Slavery Act 2015, sets out the steps we have taken to prevent modern slavery and human trafficking in our business and supply chains.



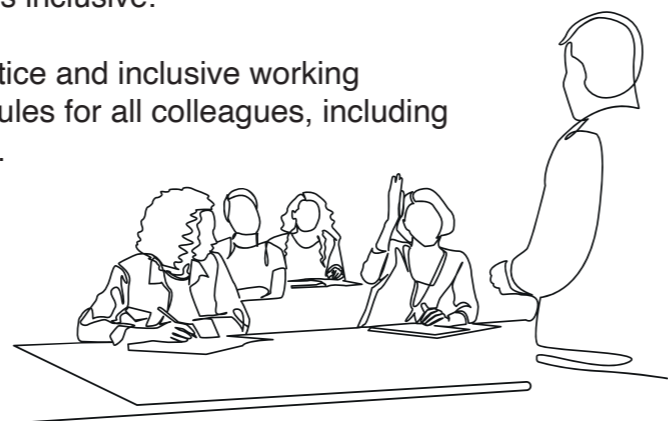
**5. To ensure that all staff are treated with dignity and respect and have a workplace that is free from harassment and bullying by changing the culture of the organisation to one that is genuinely inclusive. All employees are high performing because we value their differences, which includes gender or gender identity, race, or religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, pregnancy, caring responsibilities, or membership of a trade union.**

In March 2022, Rick Hylton, our Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive, announced inclusion and equality as one of our priorities to make sure our practice is inclusive.

To continue developing our cultural awareness, good practice and inclusive working environment, we introduced new compulsory training modules for all colleagues, including dignity at work, the Core Code of Ethics and safeguarding.

So far, completion rates for each module are as follows.

- Dignity at work – 88% of employees
- Core Code of Ethics – 89% of employees
- Safeguarding – 90% of employees



We worked with our partners at Inclusive Employers to provide training for all colleagues which was relevant to their leadership level in our service.

The number of people who attended each level of training was as follows.

- Inclusive language and behaviours (for colleagues with no management responsibility) – 73 people
- Inclusive line managers (for colleagues leading others) – 84 people
- Inclusive leaders (for colleagues leading functions or the service) – 100 people

This training will continue in 2023.

Our employee forums and dignity and inclusion advocates provide support and a listening ear for anyone in our service who is experiencing, or has witnessed, behaviour that is not acceptable. They will refer to relevant policies to make sure appropriate action is taken.

Our employee forums offer an opportunity to use lived experience, different perspectives and expertise to shape our policies, practice and decision-making. By understanding the needs of people in our service, we can encourage our employees to stay with us for longer. We value the voice of our people and welcome feedback and contribution from everyone.

Our forums are open to all colleagues. We encourage everyone to take part, regardless of personal identity, to support learning and understanding. Each forum is supported by a member of our Service Leadership Team, so employee feedback can be considered in strategic planning and decision-making.

Any employee can contact the chair person of our relevant staff support networks in confidence if they need specific support or guidance. They can also contact their line manager and our Inclusion and Diversity Team.

## Our employee forums

- Women's Forum
- Ethnic Minority Forum
- Being – our LGBTQ+ Forum

We are developing a Men's Forum in 2023 following the success of our other forums, feedback and agreed actions.

This year we held the following learning events (led by our employee forum leads and members) with Essex Police and East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust.

- International Women's Day conference
- International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOBIT) conference
- International Men's Day conference

Speakers and topics cover a range of diversity, lived experiences, information and perspectives. We base our learning events and information on evidence, and encourage a person-centred approach to diversity. We held a Race equality event in February 2023 to develop a Race Action Plan as part of our Race at Work Charter.

We are members of the following national fire and rescue networks and membership organisations.

- Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA)
- Women in the Fire Service (WFS)
- Inclusive Employers
- Business Disability Forum

We work with faith leaders and other public services to support our communities and colleagues, and are members of the Faith Covenant Steering Group in Essex, which offers information and support on matters relating to religion and belief.

Because of the gap in our workforce equality data, we take a multi-faith approach to educating our colleagues about religion and belief in Essex and wider society.

We encourage our leaders to get to know the people in their teams and meet their needs relating to religion and belief when possible, for example, by allowing employees to take time off for religious celebrations.

We work with colleagues who wear a uniform to find solutions to meet their needs. We provide options to meet individual needs related to:

- gender;
- race;
- religion or belief; (including veganism); and
- any specific health requirements;

as long as safety standards are met.





## 6. To seek external review, challenge, and accreditation of ECFRS' actions as an employer by actively participating with relevant equalities standards and benchmarks including the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework.



In March 2022, we achieved bronze status in the Inclusive Employers Standard – another important step for our inclusion, diversity and equality work.

The Inclusive Employers Standard supports organisations to assess their progress in becoming an inclusive employer, and awards accreditation to those meeting the standard. It is an evidence-based, objective, accreditation tool for assessing and promoting inclusion in the workplace.

The standard, which is only awarded to a few organisations in the public and private sectors, helps us assess how effective our inclusion work is. We use the detailed feedback to help us further develop our inclusion and diversity priorities.

Our service joined other organisations, including Asda, Sony, Bank of England and Serco, in receiving the accreditation.

Colette Black, Director of People Services, said:

“To achieve bronze status is a great step forward for our service and recognises the commitment we are making to valuing all our people. We are on an exciting journey to becoming a more diverse and inclusive place of work that represents the people of Essex.

This independent verification shows that we have strong foundations in place and provides a clear plan for us as a service to achieve silver and gold in the future.”

Rupert Moyne, MD Corporate Services at Inclusive Employers, said:

“Huge congratulations to all of the amazing organisations who took part in the latest round of the Inclusive Employers Standard.

This round saw almost one third of participants coming from organisations that had taken part previously and wanting to measure the progress they have achieved since the last time (and looking to improve their accreditation level).

The great thing about the Inclusive Employers Standard is that participation works for organisations at all stages of their journey to workplace inclusion.”

Feedback from our submission helped us set new goals and developed our new equality objectives, which we created in partnership with the Asian Fire Service Association.

### Our new equality objectives

We have set four new equality objectives for 2022 to 2024, which came into effect on 1 September 2022.

### Our new equality objectives are as follows.

1. We will consistently demonstrate ‘due regard’ (give genuine attention and thought) to equality and diversity in our organisation and aim to be leading practitioners of workplace diversity and inclusion across Essex.
2. We will invest in a diverse workforce with the skills, knowledge and attitude needed to build a culture of diversity and inclusion.
3. We will deliver inclusive evidence-based services that show ‘due regard’ when assessing risks and behaviour in the community, to help make sure services are accessible and fair to everyone.
4. Demonstrate community-focused leadership by working in partnership and making the most of our presence in the region to stress the importance of socio-economic factors and how they affect both employment and services.

The People Strategy Project Board and Portfolio Management Board will monitor our progress and performance. Our Inclusion and Diversity Action Group will co-ordinate and carry out work related to our new objectives.

We will provide an update on our progress in our next commitment to inclusion and equality report.

### Our community-engagement activities

Engaging with our public to prevent incidents can be challenging if we take a generic approach. Often, for a variety of reasons, there are some people who do not benefit from the way the information is provided or shared.

The importance of achieving meaningful outcomes to provide equal opportunities for everyone in Essex is a priority for us. We believe that inclusion creates equality and fairness. That’s why we value working as one team, listening to the contributions of everyone and appreciating diversity of thought.

Below we tell you about some of the ongoing work we are doing to identify any potential risk of inequality or disadvantage for us to overcome.

During 2021 to 2022, there were 14 fatal fires across Greater Essex. Following every serious and fatal fire we must write a Serious After Incident Report which gathers as much information as possible about the incident.

By analysing our reports, we identified some common factors in these incidents, which helped us develop a new risk model. We discovered that three key areas, relating to a person’s health and behaviour, can significantly increase the risk of serious injury or death resulting from a fire. These were:

- mental well-being;
- physical well-being; and
- the home environment.

This gave colleagues in our Prevention Team the opportunity to focus on those experiencing difficulties in the areas listed above and the links between the key areas and:

- the increased likelihood of a fire (for example, because of poor risk behaviours and habits); and
- the decreased likelihood of escape if a fire did occur (for example, because of mobility and hoarding).

Our Prevention Team reached out to others working in our communities to help in identify people who would benefit from a home fire-safety visit.

In 2022, we delivered fire-awareness training to almost 500 people who work with vulnerable people in our communities. This has allowed us to identify those who are most vulnerable to the risk of fire, so we can refer them for a home fire-safety visit to reduce their risk.

### Our museum

Our museum is located behind Grays Fire Station. It had a busy year in 2022 – over 6,000 people visited to learn about the history of the fire service in Essex as well as get fire-safety tips to stay safe in their homes.

The Museum Team ran a number of events and group activities aimed at:

- young children;
- older people;
- cultural communities; and
- those with learning disabilities, sensory loss and cognitive loss (for example, reduced memory and judgement).

One of our firefighters from the Hungarian community arranged for the MAKI Hungarian Club community to visit the museum. They were able to receive fire-safety information and ask questions as firefighter, Zsolt Nagy, translated for community members to help them understand.

As the museum works towards achieving Dementia Friendly status with the Thurrock Dementia Action Alliance and Alzheimer's Society, the museum staff and volunteers have become 'dementia friends.' This will improve the experience of visiting the museum for people living, or supporting those, with the effects of dementia.



### Prevention awareness and training in inclusion, diversity and equality

Diversity in our communities across Essex is growing. Our relationships with some of the diverse community groups are well established, but we know that there are still some groups that we could work better with and some new communities we need to introduce ourselves to.

Every day our Prevention Team works with people across Essex, so it's important they feel confident delivering their services effectively for everyone.

Our connections with Essex Faith Covenant, Essex Cultural Diversity Project and Essex Equality Network provide us the opportunity to work with some of the groups that we have not yet been able to connect with.

Working with diverse communities educates us about matters such as cultural awareness and appropriate ways to deliver our service, and can help us discover high-risk environments linked to certain cultural practices.

When we know better, we do better.

We provide evidence-based information and training in meaningful subjects, as well as the information and training we must provide by law. The following were our focus areas in 2022.

- Digital exclusion in our communities
- Neurodiversity
- Dementia
- The Equality Act and the Public Sector Equality Duty responsibilities
- Our equality objectives
- Our service values
- The Core Code of Ethics
- People Impact Assessments

These areas support the overall development of inclusive services that provide fair opportunities to everyone in our communities.

### Working with our Muslim communities

Crews from Chelmsford Fire Station, members of our Service Leadership Team and colleagues joined a special open day at Chelmsford Mosque on Saturday 12 November 2022.



The event, which was open to the public, was an opportunity to learn more about Islamic faith, ask Muslims in our community questions and visit the mosque.

## Violence against women and girls

Our Women's Forum Lead Nicole Smy, our Service Leadership Team and other colleagues worked together to highlight White Ribbon Day, which took place on Friday 25 November 2022.

The campaign aims to end violence against women and girls – that's #TheGoal (the campaign's hashtag) and asks you to sign the White Ribbon promise (you can find more information or sign the promise [here](#)). It also asks people to be an 'upstander', not a 'bystander' and stand up for women and girls when you see violent or sexist behaviour.



## Armed Forces Covenant

Our service signed the Armed Forces Covenant in June 2022, to promise its support to members of the armed forces community. The covenant recognises our commitment to make sure all staff who have served (or will serve) in the armed forces, and their families, are treated fairly. Since signing the pledge, we have done the following.

- Published our Armed Forces Covenant commitments on our website's home page and recruitment pages. You can read them [here](#) and [here](#).
- Promised to support colleagues who choose to be members of the reserve forces. We allow reservists to take time off for training commitments when possible. This includes paid special leave for periods of up to two weeks of training, including annual camp. You can read our **Reservists Policy** [here](#).
- On Friday 11 November 2022 at 11am, colleagues at our stations and service headquarters paused to mark Armistice Day. On Remembrance Sunday 13 November, firefighters, officers and fire cadets attended Remembrance events across our county and at the Cenotaph in London.



## Working with our LGBTQ+ communities

As part of the Pride celebrations, colleagues from our service took part in the Pride parade to Central Park in Chelmsford on Saturday 25 June 2022 and Basildon Pride on 3 September 2022.

Colette Black, Director of People Services, said:

“It was amazing to walk alongside such a large group of people from both the LGBTQ+ community and allies. Having the crowd supporting the fire service was really great. There is a lot of love for our service being so inclusive.”



Our LGBTQ+ employee network group BEING allows our LGBTQ+ colleagues to have the chance to connect with each other. The group talks about what Pride means, and making sure it lasts beyond one day, and that is part of our service on a daily basis.”

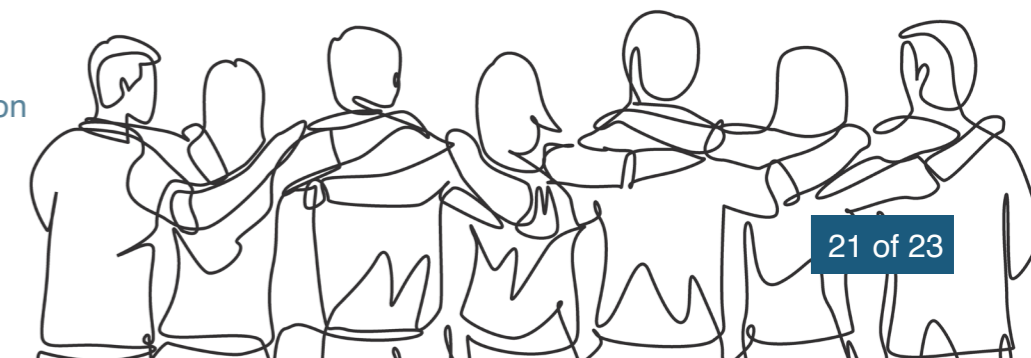
## Reward, Recognition and Awards

### Our annual People Awards

We were delighted to be able to hold our annual People Awards in person on 30 March 2022. It was great to be able to celebrate our people and their achievements.

Award categories:

- Employee of the Year
- Team of the Year
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
- Excellence in Innovation



## Asian Fire Service Association Personal Fair and Diverse Awards

Colleagues from our service were runners-up at the Asian Fire Service Association's Personal Fair and Diverse Awards held on 23 November 2022 – jointly hosted with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Congratulations to our colleagues nominated for their commitment to inclusion and diversity within our service who are making a difference on our journey.

Those recognised include the following.

- Our On-Call Liaison (OCLO) Team – Kirk Collins, Kim Polley, Steven Perry, Sharon Blute, Steve Osborn, Laura Taylor and Steve Wintrip – for their work to attract greater diversity in our on-call firefighter recruitment activities.
- Group Manager, Dave Bond, was nominated as our Equality Role Model of the Year for many inclusion and diversity activities that he supported and led over the past 12 months. These activities included Meet our Firefighters online sessions, a careers day for college students, and our first International Men's Day conference.
- Watch Manager, Paul Pemberton, our Inclusion and Partnerships Manager for Prevention, was nominated as our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champion. This was for the amazing work he does with our Prevention Team and partners to make sure we provide inclusive prevention activities that promote equality for our communities.



## Excellence in Fire and Emergency Services Awards

Firefighter Matt Hill won the Most Influential LGBTQ+ Individual in Fire award at the Excellence in Fire and Emergency Awards 2022.

Nikki Hudson, Inclusion and Diversity Lead at Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, nominated Matt.

She said: "During his career, Matt has made a huge contribution to promoting and supporting LGBTQ+ colleagues in Essex County Fire and Rescue Service. He has helped to raise the profile of topical issues and kept LGBTQ+ firmly in the spotlight. He attended a number of Pride events in Essex over the summer and encouraged colleagues from across our service to take part too."



Matt chaired BEING, our LGBTQ+ Employee Forum, for six years, as well as being an active member of our Women's Forum and supporting our Inclusion and Diversity Action Group.

We were finalists for two awards at the ceremony this year. Donna Bentley, Head of Safeguarding, was shortlisted for the Most Influential Woman in Fire award.

We were shortlisted for the Children and Young People award at the National Fire Chiefs Council's first ever Celebrating Prevention Awards in November 2022.

Our In Her Shoes initiative, delivered as part of our Firebreak Programme, focused on working with 13- to 17-year-olds to address public safety issues, in particular those that affect women and girls.



Trained colleagues delivered classroom-based sessions on the consequences of certain behaviours. They also had conversations with young people focusing on safety issues for women and girls.

The aim of this initiative was to develop empathy in young men towards women and girls, and to understand how educational training aimed at young men can improve attitudes towards women and girls and improve safety for women and girls in Essex.

It focused on less serious forms of violence against women and girls such as cat-calling, inappropriate comments, harassment and cyberbullying.

Our firefighters have delivered four courses in the last six months to more than 40 schoolchildren. We are proud of all that we continue to do to keep the people who live, work and travel in Essex safe.

You can find more details and information about our activities and progress across our service in our Annual Report here