

**Women in the Fire Service
National Executive Committee
Wednesday, 23 February 2022 via Zoom**

Attending: Jules King (Chair), Caroline Anderson (Vice-Chair), Nicola Lown (Regional Support/International), Divine Zake (Executive Member), Gina Gray (Co-opted), Nicky Thurston (Co-opted), Bex Sims (RR East Midlands), Jenny Nangle (RR North West), Serena Benassi (RR LFB), Jo Henry (RR North East), Nicola Bottomley (RR South West), Abi van Loon (LR Cheshire), Jo Dawson, (LR Nottinghamshire), Megan Thomas (LFB rep), Rebecca Bowers (LR Essex County), Sue Mallinson (LR Greater Manchester), Nathalie Holden (WFS Marketing and Communications Officer and Karen Smith (WFS Administration Manager)

1. Apologies: Alex Johnson, Miriam Heppell, Paula Lyons, Elizabeth Curtis, Carley-Jo Rackley, Caz Whiteman, Hannah Lodder, Sara Hall, Louise Brown, Chloe Marriott, Amy Beams, Lynsey McVay, Tracey McKenna, Georgina Connor, Jan Morris, Karla Stevenson, Felicity Lynch

JK welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Notes of the last meeting on 2 December 2021 were agreed as a true record.

3. Matters arising

6. Member Mojo – individual membership. Question regarding what a was the benefit to a Super Supporter. Agreement that a goody bag to be given at the Training and Development Event.

7.4 Discussion on Maternity wear and NFCC PPE Project. Nicky Thurston and Nicky Bottomley to approach their contact – completed.

8.1 Retention Policy – wording amended.

9.2 Inclusive language training – took place in February facilitated by Shilla Patel. Session recorded, ask Shilla if she is happy for this to be shared. Hope to do another session in the near future. **Action KS**

11. HeForShe – Miriam to follow up with discussion on presenting at the Training and Development Event.

4. Gifts and Hospitality:

Jo Henry – Invited to attend LGA Dinner in Gateshead by Lesley Routh-Jones. WFS not paying. Jo has also asked to attend the full event on the next day through Tyne & Wear FRS.

5. Chair's Report

With just under two weeks to go to this year's International Women's Day I know many of you will be involved in events up and down the Country. The theme this year is 'break the bias and I would encourage you all to share what you are involved in through social media, I am sure Nat would love to hear from you.

Recently as part of the IWD focus, a few of us took over the firefighters' podcast and was hosted by Sara Hall. This will be available in the next couple of weeks and we would encourage you all to have a listen and share amongst your contacts.

You will hopefully know that this year's awards are currently open, with the deadline being extended to 9th March. If you have not yet nominated someone, then please do take a look at the website and have a look at the categories and consider nominating someone. It only takes a few minutes and I am sure we can all think of someone who is worthy of being nominated.

Much of the focus for WFS is of course now on the forthcoming training and development event and you will hear more about that later in the meeting from Caroline, however I think it is fair to say that the excitement and optimism is certainly increasing. With this of course means increasing workloads for our team and especially Karen and Nat and so if there are areas that you are wishing for support from them, please do consider the impact this work will have on them.

I do sincerely hope that the next time we all see each other will be at the 20th T&D event at the Fire Service college.

6. Treasurers Report:

No report available, however, finances are in same position as the last meeting. Sara and Karen meet monthly to updated on the finances.

7. Regional Reports:

Joanne Henry – TWFRS/North East

Signed up to be Endometriosis Friendly Employer Scheme

Confirming our commitment to developing an environment and culture that enable employees with endometriosis to thrive at work.

3 main areas connected that guidance is provided under with the scheme:

- 1 leadership and management support
- 2 tackling stigma and changing culture
- 3 communications

Benefits:

Certificate to display

Name on website as a supportive employer

E-newsletters to share with workforce

Support from a champion with an induction webinar

Literature provided

Use of the endometriosis friendly employer logo

Working to meet the principles of the initiative, being the 3 main areas

IWD – breaking the bias on 8th March

Running a virtual event that includes speakers from our service and guest speakers:

Lynsey McVay opening event, Alex Johnson – key note speaker, Endometriosis awareness Champion
Menopause awareness – Bev Hill and Andy Appleby

Some of our network groups are going to speak: LGBT – learning from Cadets/Neurodiversity
Awareness in the work place

Menopause Training for managers

Recently launched our menopause policy, are running lunch and learn events for menopause awareness. This is delivered by one of our senior managers and myself. We have 2 of our employees who speak about their personal experience from an employee and manager view. Delivered the first one to our Senior Management Team, the feedback was very positive.

Ran White a Ribbon in December 2021 including lunch and learn events and LGBT history month 2022 on line campaign with quotes from employees and allies.

Stonewall WEI

Announcement today, very well done to those in the top 100, TWFRS submitted an application and were awarded a bronze award.

Operational Women WhatsApp group, for advice and guidance

Sharon Lewin - DDFRS

We are planning to do a video of women in the service saying that they are breaking the bias (the theme of the day this year) and then panning out to a collage of women across the service.

We have recently published our menopause guidance and are doing a lot of work on positive action. As you know, wellbeing is a huge issue for us all and I sit on the wellbeing committee which has been rejuvenated – I'm co-ordinator (with Dan McManus) for our Trauma Support Team, on the Mental Health Committee and a Suicide Assist Volunteer and I will be keen to explore women's issues regarding wellbeing going forward (I don't think that any of us could deny that the pandemic has had a huge effect on us all in some way or another).

I also think that the economic climate and everything else going on in the world at the moment can be a worry for some and I hope that we can do something to alleviate that (if only a little bit). Operationally, there is a women's WhatsApp group so that women can talk freely about anything and everything that might affect them and I would be keen to capitalise on that if we can and increase peer support right across the service.

We have White Ribbon accreditation and I am meeting with them to discuss the second year of our plan.

Cleveland FRS

We haven't had time to organise much for IWD. We have done a couple of interviews with women in different roles that is going to be put out on social media on IWD. But that's all. We were keen to do so much this year with our network group just time goes so quick. I would be great to have a NE meeting.

Jenny Nangle (Lancashire FRS/North West)

Lots of people on the WDP and it makes it much easier attending on Zoom rather than travelling. Go ahead to start organising a regional event at Lancashire Training Centre around October time after the school holidays and will be sending out details to the North West. IWD walk organised trying to incorporate as many as regions as possible starting in Derbyshire.

Bex Sims Derbyshire FRS/East Midlands

Had a female FF meeting before Xmas to discuss whether or not to run female only sessions – final consensus to ask people when booking onto a course whether they'd prefer to attend a single sex or mixed session. Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire are running a joint development day on Friday 4th March in support of International Women's Day with guest speakers and injured military veterans

discussing resilience. Currently have interviews taking place for whole time FF jobs – 24% of delegates are female at this stage.

Nicky Bottomley – Gloucester/South West

FRS set up women's support group but difficult to get people together. Very few female Firefighters. Regional recently supported Cornwall FRS, underrepresented groups and offered some coaching.

Turned out to be mostly male attendees but received good feedback.

IWD working with the County Council and supporting their campaign.

Natalie Parkinson – Humberside NFST all completed female rookies, got through all the assessments and did really well. Just waiting to hear the stats after interviews.

SLT paper approved for 15 delegates to come to the TDE. Promoting WDP. Forum leading into equality and inclusion, voices for women. IWD piggyback on Staffordshire FRS on their interactive all day programme. Continuing to promote WFS within the service.

Lyndsey Gymer – Essex County FRS

As part of developing workplace in Essex, a Facebook group has been set up

Agreed funding for 4 places for the TDE

Third year as partnership with WFS and would like to grow awareness and trying to get awareness out. Shared Awards Sponsorship and reached out to team on the jobs board

IWD – online event, two on IWD will represent England Fire Services in Rugby.

Operational female group which meets every month. New ACFO also in the group. WhatsApp group runs alongside this.

Sue Mallinson -Greater Manchester FRS

Sue and Paula joint Chairs on network group, workload is big.

Number 93 on stonewall survey. Both sit on the EDI strategy group with the Chief Fire Officer. Also sit on the Recruitment, Talent and Resources Team.

Network struggles with ops members. IWD later event is on 22nd March, Becci Bryant speaking/Katie Cornhill, AJ Whittaker (The Firefighters Charity) Uroosa Arshid from Nottinghamshire FRS.

Abi van Loon Cheshire FRS and stepping in for Hannah Remelie who is on Maternity Leave.

Lots of recruitment going on in Cheshire including migration from on call to full time

Apprenticeship just started with 4 out of 11 women.

IWD – in person event joint with Cheshire Police.

Maternity WhatsApp group. Menopause champion. Domestic abuse policy. 2nd place in Stonewall.

Bronze for grading. Will look at the WDP. Will be attending the TDE.

Jo Dawson - update from Nottinghamshire FRS

We have had several attendees on the Women's Development Programme with great feedback and colleagues booked in for the future programme. I am hoping to get funding for at least 6 places for the training and development weekend. We are co-hosting two International Women's Day events, one with DFRS at their training centre and one with Nottinghamshire Police at our Joint HQ. Both have had mixed support, with limited attendance from 'ops staff', but I am buoyed by the fact that we have events and they are being attended. Our Women's Network virtual meetings are well attended and we have a couple of standing items including 'barrier busting' – last meeting we discussed the reasons why operational FFs don't go for promotion.

On a personal note, my secondment to Organisational Development and Inclusion Team has ended and I will return to station as a Crew Manager. I was lucky to present to our SLT about my secondment and focussed on feelings and impact which seemed to provide an appropriate level of

challenge and was well received. I will continue as WFS rep and Chair of our women's network and would recommend a secondment to anyone! IWD joint event, trying to get people to attend tricky no ops. Womens network going well. Ops staff who don't like zoom or meetings. Set up Netball group which went really well. More on WhatsApp group wanting to go next time. Secondment to inclusion team going back to station will continue on WFS.

Megan Thomas (LFB) Vice-Chair of the Women's Group

Heavily involved with all of the Equalities groups around London. Have monthly rep meetings and looking for tips on how to increase attendance. Also working on Female PPE which I not available on all stations.

IWD, SB worked really hard, women in blue light section police, FS and Paramedic – a piece on what a day in the life of ...

Arti Shaa guest speaking about 'what is normal' and panel discussion.

Nat Holden – Marketing and Communications Officer update

Extending deadline for award nominations to 9am Tuesday 15th Mar 2022. 19 nominations so far from: Royal Berkshire, West Midlands, Scotland, Hants, Shropshire, Mersey, Leicester, Lancashire, Avon, London, Devon & Somerset, Derby, Jersey, Notts. If you don't see your service's name, please encourage nominations. Please forward the update email I sent to NEC 23/2/22 about the extension date to at least one colleague. Would like to match number of entries we had in 2020 which surpassed all expectations 50+. From 2014-19 WFS had a total of 23 nominations. Especially want entries for Bright Light & Exceptional Allies categories. Thanks to those who've already nominated. Confirmed Sponsors: Cold Cut Systems/ Merseyside. Greater Manchester in process. We have 1 or 2 awards remaining for sponsorship - would your service like to sponsor?

<https://wfs.org.uk/awards/>

1,200+ downloads of the Future Firefighter Podcast Series, average 77 per week. Most popular is Role of the Firefighter, with Applications & Interview Techniques second. Final Ep 6 is scheduled for release in March. Please subscribe and share. <https://wfs.org.uk/future-firefighter-podcast/>

Future Firefighter Programme. I've set up an online form on the website to gather a waiting list of people interested in FF programme. <https://wfs.org.uk/future-firefighter-programme/>

Approaching 400 jobs submitted to the jobs board which is excellent, and fast becoming one of the most valued corporate benefits. <https://wfs.org.uk/jobs/>

Individual members approaching 100 on the new online membership system with over half Super Supporters, proving how a tiered membership can really work.

Brand new Corporate Member, Cold Cut Systems to be announced publicly soon. They are also generously sponsoring our awards.

We're supporting SYFRS on their IWD campaign (exhibition of women firefighters/stories). Great news as the communications team are brilliant at what they do. It will be good to have our logo/name associated with the campaign and award winning team. Miriam is speaking at the SFRS IWD conference and has a stand to promote WFS. I'd like to promote anything your Service is doing - please email me.

8. WFS Events

8.1 Women's Development Programme (update provided by Jo Henry)

The second programme started on 3 February with 30 delegates. The second part of this programme is next week on the 3rd March and final session will be on 6 April.

We have dates for the third programme with sessions running on 3 May, 7 June and 5 July. This is advertised with 16 delegates booked on so far. Fourth programme set for 15 September, 13 October and 9 November. We hope to follow with the fifth programme at the later part of November through to January 2023. The sixth programme will start in February 2023.

8.2 Future FF update (provided by Sara Hall – JK read out)

Huge thanks to all who have given up their energy and time to deliver the sessions. Sara specifically said it would not happen without Karen and Nat so thank you. Meeting to debrief, discuss and move forward to continue inspiring future firefighters.

Training & Development Event (update provided by Caroline Anderson)

Caroline did a run through of the programme and details for the event. Friday to include the CFO panel and Awards Presentations. Keynote speakers are Antarctic Fire Angels on the Saturday night. Hoping to open up Eventbrite for bookings at the end of February. Also considering a contingency plan in case the event can't go ahead face to face. Bookings all to go through Eventbrite. KS gave a quick run through of the WFS Team volunteer role.

Delegate fee £549.00 Corporate Members/£599 Non-Corporate. Day rate TBC.

Jo Henry – query re Childcare. Have had childcare facilities in the past. However, no longer able to provide this partly due to cost but more significantly childcare was only for the daytime with the intention for delegates to look after their children in the evening. This did present some tricky situations where children were running around areas of the FSC without supervision and causing health and safety issues. WFS had to make the difficult decision to no longer provide childcare and cannot change the position on this.

9. Coaching and Mentoring – no update for this meeting

Ruth Powell – Director of Engagement and Funding for The Firefighters Charity joined the meeting and gave an update:

11 months in post and met 39 Chief Fire Officers.

On a drive to let people know TFF is there for everyone and to be the first point of call.

Goal is to understand, thanks for support

Know the value, need to be the first point of call. Opportunity to meet and understand

Occupational health, Hr, Control Leads

Changing in so many way, visible and engaging. Rebranding, explaining purpose and why we are here
Calculated about 300,000 potential beneficiaries. Talking to about 10,00 people with the services but there are too many people who don't know the benefits. This is the only charity that supports everyone in the Fire and Rescue Services.

Launching a book on 4th May and hoping to get this read by a celebrity or WFS members, list of people interested from WFS to be passed onto Ruth. **Action NH**

Could be available at our Training & Development Event on the merchandise stand.

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday, 27 April - 10.00-13.00

Wednesday, 21 September - at the Emergency Services Show which is on 21/22 September.

Time tbc

Wednesday, 7 December - 10.00-13.00