



Women in the Fire Service

National Executive Committee Meeting

Notes of the meeting held on 25 October 2023 via Teams

Attending:

Jules King, Chair (JK)
Divine Zake, Executive Member (DZ)
Sue Mallinson, Executive Member (SM)
Paula Lyons, Co-opted Member (PL)
Jenny Nangle, Regional Rep North West (JN)
Jo Hardy, Local Rep (JH)
Kasey Grainger, LR Cumbria (KG)
Lisa Howsden, LR Cleveland (LH)
Katie Love, Cleveland (KL)
Shelley Turner Dockery, LR Suffolk FRS (ST-D)
Peggy Male, LR West Midlands (PM)
Hannah Patchett, LR Surrey (HP)
Natalie Parkinson, LR Humberside (NP)
Amy Croxton Evans, LR North Wales (ACE)
Ellie Watson, Women's Network at Notts Fire (EW)
Karen Smith, Administration Manager (KS)
Kerry Cassidy, Administrative Assistant (KC)
Emma Smith (Marketing and Communications Officer (ES)

1. **Apologies** were received from Caroline Anderson, Lynsey McVay, Nikki Harvey, Georgina Connor, Jessica Champion, Hannah Lodder, Zoe Crossan, Karen Pointer, Beth Barton, Jennie Schamp, Helen Chadwick, Gemma Hodges, Jan Morris, Caroline Ingleby-Bostock, Jo Dawson and Bex Sims

2. **Notes of last meeting held on 7 March 2023:** Agreed as a true record

3. Matters arising:

3.1 Treasurers Report – action point SS to write off outstanding invoice/actioned.

3.2 Newsletter, any items or information you'd like to be included please contact Emma Smith.

3.3 AGM – would like to have more people getting involved. Directors looking to organise an information Teams meet to show what Directors do, in the new year.

Presentation by Jo Hardy (Role and Implementation NFCC)

Jo Hardy (NFCC) was invited to give a presentation on the work the National Fire Chiefs Council are involved with, what is relevant to WFS and how to navigate through the website and what support is available associated with that. Moved to a new website which has not been easy. Two websites merged together which has made it complicated to navigate around. Another way to access is through Workplace and groups that are relevant to most people i.e. code of ethics, diversity and inclusion, HR. It is a great way to communicate with colleagues and can store this information and conversations. The best way is to use the search function on workshop to find what you are looking



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for. All information is available however you may need to set up an account through Jo Hardy. The power point would be sent to all the committee.

Following on from the presentation, JH asked if WFS felt there were other areas NFCC could support. JK thought it would be really beneficial to have a model Menopause policy. The more information available the better as these kinds of conversations were regularly coming up on the Facebook group.

JK thanked Jo for all the information provided and encouraged the committee to have a look, some may already be involved and others unaware of all that is available.

Action Point:

KS to forward NFCC PowerPoint to all the committee

JH to follow up on model menopause policy

4. WFS Gifts and Hospitality – none declared.

5. Chair's report from Jules King

Since our last meeting we delivered another fantastic and inspiring training and development event, we recognise there were some disappointed people and services as we experienced a very high demand for places. Planning has already started for the event in 2024 and you will have seen various communications from Karen in relation to this. WFS are committed to putting on the best 'delegate centred' event we can, and we are focussed on maximising the number of delegates that can attend whilst working with the FSC on accommodation which ultimately is the driver on total numbers. We are exploring new ideas and there will be a more detailed update later in the agenda.

In September WFS was invited to attend the NFCC Menopause conference, which was well attended, and it was great to see so many people from WFS. I was delighted to be invited to speak at the conference and continue to be involved in the development of the NFCC menopause toolkit. My reflections of the conference were much like the feeling when you come away from an event at the FSC, full of inspiration and positivity for change – I was really struck by the power of the shared experiences throughout the day, it truly was a safe and open space in which to be open.

You will no doubt have seen in the news of another published culture report this week and further news items around the culture in the FRS and may well trigger thoughts of our own lived experience and I wanted to encourage everyone to please reach out and talk if you have been affected, we are here for everyone. WFS have received some further requests to provide comment and I wanted to remind you all that we have a published statement that we have been referring people to.

'WFS UK is a not-for-profit company with a purpose of supporting and developing members of the UK Fire & Rescue Service. We are not a political body and have jurisdiction or authoritative powers over individual Services therefore we cannot comment on any individual cases as these should follow due process. We strongly condemn any unacceptable behaviour with the Fire and Rescue Service and encourage anyone who has experienced this to report it to their individual services (and if appropriate also the Police) for it to be investigated properly. We will continue to support our colleagues in any way that we can during these challenging times.'



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Linked to that we have written a letter to the Home Office and NFCC asking for their continued support with pushing the culture review forward. Once this is finalised will ask KS to share with NEC.

Looking forward, the excellence in fire awards is just around the corner on the 1st December in London and WFS have sponsored the Young Person of the Year category this year. I have been invited to be on a judging panel once again and further to this I have been invited to co-host the awards event with Dave Etheridge from Fire Knowledge which is a great honour and an opportunity to promote the work of WFS. Our next NEC meeting is on the 5th December and so I will update you all on the awards then.

6. Treasurer's report

JK presented the financial summary on behalf of Sara Slater who is unable to attend.

Financial Year Ending 30 April 2024 (Current Year) - The draft financial position as of 14 September 2023 is shown below. Further work is being carried out to summarise the position of both the Women's Development Programme and the Training and Development Event 2023.

Opening current bank balance £8,909/Income £182,118.00/Expenditure £183,425.00

Closing cash book bank balance £7,602.00

The reserves are shown as below, note interest is yet to be added:

Opening Reserve Balance £110,902.00/Closing Reserve Balance £100.902

As of 14 September 2023, the amount of money owed to WFS from events and sponsorship is £15,253.

7. Regional reports (RR)

Jenny Nangle – North West

As a region we kicked off regional events in 2022 and since then the idea is to do an event every six months, so those services in the Northwest that can't get the development weekend have an opportunity to go to a local one. Cumbria hosted the last one, which was amazing, really good, well attended, brilliant workshops and that was just last month. And the next one is going to be held in Manchester hopefully early next year. I will be reaching out to all the other local reps in the region to see who's got the availability and the time to organise with support from myself and other local reps.

We've now secured all the welfare packs on our appliances, which is great. It's taken a long time, but we've managed it. We're also trialling AMP flow through a contract. So that will be on a couple of large stations, 224 stations, our training centre and our headquarters initially and then it will be rolled out across the county if the trial proves successful. The AMP flow is basically just a machine where you press the button, and you can get whichever sanitary product you need without cost.



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We can now order additional uniform for females who are suffering through perimenopause or the menopause. It's a small step but we're hoping the amazing conference in Birmingham the NFCC will help.

For world menopause day, we did have a drop in sessions with the Firefighters Charity on teams but as a service we are looking to see whether we need to do something of a more mandatory sessions because we do want to get the men involved, with the majority of managers are men, so they need to have a really good understanding of the issues that we battle with during perimenopause and menopause.

Looking at providing additional training to some of our PTA's and for pre and post Natal fitness. We have not got any specialists in in that area so are looking to incorporate that into some additional training for our PTI to support people better. When they find out they are pregnant and obviously when they come back into work or that that build up coming back into work.

Launched a lifting climb in Lancashire which is an internal mentoring programme. This is about trying to support people within the service. Lancashire are fully aware that people can get a mentor or a coach externally, however there might be somebody in your service that you feel is your guiding light. The idea is that you can approach individuals if they've put themselves down as a mentor and in different departments.

Also planning for next year's International Women's Day with a similar format to what we've done this year which is hosting a positive recruitment day at our training centre under WFS banner.

Greater Manchester FRS – Paula Lyons and Sue Mallinson

Since we last met, we've had a refresh of WFS, Greater Manchester network, as there were a lot of people joined and maybe hadn't had those initial introductions to the network. We just started again which has been really successful and the result of that we've now got some specific points of contacts. So, within every single borough, we've got a specific point of contact who's now sharing our messages and really promoting what we're doing.

In terms of successes, we've had the British firefighter games where we had the overall winner in the women's section and quite a few individual women won their age categories and not all these women are part of these sort of WFS GM, but it's got that bigger picture. We've also had national success in the woman's football competition. They went up to Scotland and won.

This year we've got a number of women going for crew manager and I was in a mutual mentoring session when one of the women accredited specifically to our 'developing for success' programme which we ran in house. She said this really gave her the motivation and inspiration to push forward. Thank you, Jules because you sat with us on that and it went down very well. Moving forward, Sarah Nattress is joining us shortly as a CFO, so hopefully we can get her on board as well. And with some of the WFS work we're doing, we have now joined up with Greater Manchester Combined Authority. They have their own woman's network. But what we're doing is putting on joint events every now and then. Things like Endometriosis which has been very successful. We have another event in December, which is just our network. We've linked them with the woman's nighttime safety charter. We've also put on training for that for both women and male allies within the service to promote safety internally and externally and have been another meeting this morning, around some of our estates to ensure we have lighting as we go into the darker nights.

Sue and I presented at the 'power of the staff networks', if anyone can come next year you're absolutely invited. You will hear from some amazing guest speakers. We had Wayne Brown this year and all the other networks, so it's a great opportunity to link up but also get some good practice from everyone around the whole country. It's fantastic, really positively. There's been a shift and



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now as network Leads, we have a place on the Culture First board. We also sit with members of SLT and have those conversations about driving cultural change in the service.

Finally, our estates refresh programme is fully underway. Have a meeting just after this. Our stations moving forward are all going to have individual study rooms so everyone will have their own resting facility study space and lockers all in one place. Absolutely, moving away from the old sort of communal dorms and locker areas and we will keep you updated on the regionals when we have a date, possibly March/April time.

Cumbria FRS – Kasey Grainger

Update from Cumbria, we also have welfare packs on all of the appliances and our welfare units now. We had a regional event in Cumbria at the end of September and the service were brilliant with the support that they offered and the different staff who pulled it together. It was amazing, a real team effort. We had a multitude of workshops on RTC, Incident Command, Well-being, the ALP and the Firefighter Fitness Challenge and Menopause, and with some public speakers. Received very useful feedback and encouraged people to be really honest.

A couple of learning points, we had some people involved who were maybe there for their own gain rather than just supporting. This was stamped on really quickly to ensure only the right people were there.

If other regions struggle to get the right people to deliver workshops or what you want to deliver on the day. Consider opening this wider, for example I'd have absolute appetite to come in to support other people's workshops and deliver workshop, if needed. Moving forward we are going to have quarterly catch ups internally and further development days. There is a real appetite from across the service and more people getting involved.

Next month we have a mixed teams netball tournament for The Firefighters Charity, and this is being headed up by our group manager Angela Rope.

We also have a place on our SLT and our Chief Fire Officer has a real appetite for the different network groups to feed into SLT on a regular basis. He is actually allocating slots for us to give them updates, which is great. There is more opportunity for us to be feeding into different departments when they've got certain decisions that they're making, they're asking our opinion and wanting the group to be more involved, which is brilliant as well.

East Region – Daisy Byron

We welcomed our first only operational female Station Commander a week ago. Her name is Tracy Hutchinson. She's not part of WFS, however I'm hoping to persuade her.

One event that we have going on is the man talking to Scalp walk, which a lot of the women have put themselves on for. We've also got some males allies joining us too. I think by the end of the joining up session, we'll have about 180 people walk in that loop on the 16th of May next year. We are also trying to get together for International Women's Day in March next year.

We have a mini WFS training event with workshops schedule for 25th of September 2024. I've already got some workshops like Nikki Harvey Fire Investigation, RTC, fire working at height which is all looking quite promising. Will update as we know more.

Our ACFO is leaving, who was supporting the event so will need to ensure Bedfordshire will fund the day so that it can remain free to delegates.



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Nottinghamshire FRS -Ellie Watson (on behalf of Jo Dawson)

This is my first meeting as I'm here on behalf of Jo Dawson. I'm recently appointed Chair of the women's network and we've been busy continuing a lot of the work Jo started when she was Chair. The organisation has just become White Ribbon accredited and that was started within the network. The network is pushing a lot of things forward, but we want to see the organisation taking responsibility. We're trying to work with our police partners to get them White Ribbon accredited as well. We've continued our donations with Broxtowe Women's project and we're starting an internal kind of Christmas toy collection that's going to go to all women's refuges across the whole county and that's led by the networks. We're still getting lots of seats at SLT. We recently sat on some recruitment panels and we're getting a new welfare unit. We've been invited to consult on the facilities available in that. so having welfare packs, sanitary products, kind of anything that operational firefighters, female firefighters would need, which is really positive.

A couple of our firefighters are looking at how to improve and review our maternity policy as that is obviously something that's quite topical at the moment with the FBU. Lots of work is going on in the background for that and we're supporting where we can. We recently had our 2nd birthday event as a network with a talk from a local women's history group about women's history and Nottingham. Then one of our former OC Health, came to do a bit of a talk and a kind of stretch session all about menopause. This was really interesting, and we managed to send two of our non-OPS female staff members to the Menopause conference.

East Midlands – Bex Sims

We re-started our Gender network in DFRS after an 18m month break - becoming co-chair Internal DFRS women's IC awareness day had 13 delegates. Aimed at female FFs considering becoming OIC featuring Jo Dawson as guest speaker, workshops on XVR and what makes an incident commander, Q&A with currently female SMs/WM and signposting and support going forwards. Great feedback so far, hoping to make it an annual event. Recent promotions - 1 new female SM, 1 new female WM Sadly 1 female SM has just put notice in for her retirement, so we'll be back to 1 next year!

West Midlands Fire Service – Peggy Male

Our women's networking within the service group is having a relaunch-resurgence and had its 1st meeting this week which was well attended from green and grey book plus male allies. It has been agreed from Jan 2024 maternity and adoption pay will increase to 52 weeks full pay plus 2 weeks paternity full pay so please encourage Ellie Watson to keep pushing in that direction. West Midlands have also taken on a new Deputy - Jo Bocock who is already a refreshing change to all that have met her. She is visiting all stations very informally sharing knowledge and hopes for our service. Jo is already putting things in place for the better-seeing things from the outside in, from another perspective. I think Kasey mentioned right people for the right reasons - a chap from our BA department asked about WFS W/end and if it was still happening as he has instructed for WFS previously, he is definitely interested in joining us again if needed.

JK thanked Peggy for her update and expressed her heartfelt thank you from all WFS as this was her last meeting before retiring and going onto her next adventure. Peggy has made a huge impact on WFS, more than she realised.



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8. Marketing and Communications update

Emma Smith introduced herself as this was her first meeting since taking over the role of Marketing and Communications Officer in April.

Website – the website has been unreliable for a while now; going down regularly, and the office have had internal problems with emails running from the site. Since July we have had a new host provider, and all is working really well.

Awards – preparation is now underway for the 2024 Awards and the policy has been updated slightly. We have removed the British Fire Services Association Accommodation Medal from the policy which has never been awarded or even advertised as an option for nominations. In addition to this, moving forward Directors will decide in September each year when the scheme will be launched, the time parameters, award categories, and consider any special circumstances and how the winners will be recognised.

Sponsorship opportunities for the awards will be sought by the Marketing and Communications Officer and then a budget can be confirmed once we have sponsorship in place. The directors will review the award categories yearly and add or remove and edit awards if necessary. The NEC will review this policy every three years.

There will be four new award categories;

Digital trailblazer - To acknowledge individuals in the fire service who utilise social media to inspire, educate, and positively influence people about fire service careers. This award spotlights those who break barriers and encourage diversity in the fire service through their online presence. Whether sharing personal journeys or building supportive communities, this person should use social media to ignite enthusiasm and empower individuals from all backgrounds to explore and pursue this career.

Outstanding Team - to recognise outstanding teamwork within the fire service. Whether they've executed daring rescues, pioneered training programs, or led community initiatives, this award celebrates exceptional collaboration, unity, and excellence in the fire service. It highlights the collective efforts that make a real difference in ensuring the safety and well-being of communities.

Fundraising Heroes - This award honours individuals or groups who have demonstrated exceptional dedication in raising funds for a charity. Whether it's an individual's tireless efforts or the collective teamwork of a group, this award recognises outstanding contributions from those who have gone above and beyond to fundraise to help support a charity to continue their essential work and help those in times of need.

Advocate of Excellence Award - to celebrate a Local or Regional Representative who have been instrumental in advancing our mission and contributing to the development of a more progressive Fire and Rescue Service for women. It serves as a recognition of their dedication, tireless efforts, and unwavering commitment to our cause. These representatives play a pivotal role in driving positive change within their local or regional contexts, ensuring that women in the Fire and Rescue Service are supported, empowered, and represented effectively.



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We have also put together a new sponsorship package, we will be seeking sponsors for all the award categories and for the Training and Development Event itself. If anyone has contacts or knows of any companies that may be interested in support with the awards or the events, please get in touch. We will be updating the sponsorship packages and details will be available soon.

Action: ES/KS sponsorship package send to all

Newsletter – the newsletter will be ready to send out in December. If you have any stories or anything of interest for our newsletter readers, please let me know and we can discuss putting an article together. Our April newsletter gain nearly 400 subscribers and is continuing to grow.

IWD 2024 - We are in discussion with Amy Croxton-Evans from North Wales FRS regarding International Women's Day and a possible video in conjunction with WFS.

Individual Membership – the Individual Membership remains stagnant; membership fee is £15.00 standard/£25.00 super supporter which is not expensive for showing support to WFS. In October 2022 there were 143 members and as of 25 October 2023 there are 183 members. This needs a review and push to increase our membership. Membership mainly increases over the Training and Development event; more promotion is needed during the year. There is a digital 'join the movement' poster which can be forwarded to reps, if requested.

Social media – social media is growing really nicely. We have had Instagram since April which has increased to 300 followers. This may not seem many however this is our fastest growing social media and where we receive most direct messages.

Facebook -We also have a new Facebook page in addition to the closed group page. This is a public Facebook page basically to share what we do and information about us.

LinkedIn - is our second most prevalent social media platform. This has increased by nearly 300 since April.

Website – the website is receiving an average of 3715 views a month.

There is definitely an appetite for what WFS do, this just needs to continue getting our message out there. If there is anything you can do in services to increase awareness of WFS as there are still people out there who haven't heard of WFS.

Emergency Service Show – WFS attended the ESS in September and had lots of people visit the stand. It was quite noticeable how many people had not heard of WFS, especially people who have reps in their services.

JK emphasised what an opportunity it is to show how services can demonstrate their commitment to gender equality by sponsoring an award or sponsoring the training development event.

9. WFS Event updates

9.1 Women's Development Programme



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The 7th programme started on 17th October with 26 delegates, with sessions following in November and December.

The 8th Programme will commence in February 2024 which will be the final programme for this contract with Women to Work. WFS are looking to extend this for a further 4 programmes to take this into 2025. A review will then take place to decide whether to continue and go out for tender again in line with our WFS procurement policy.

9.2 WFS Futures – Positive Action

This is a bespoke positive action campaign and we are in the process of reviewing the programme, we will update at a future meeting.

9.3 Training and Development Event

KS updated on the 2024 National Training and Development Event: dates confirmed as the 7th to the 9th of June. The Events Management Team (EMT) have already started the planning process.

We are aware that accommodation at the Fire Service College will be similar to this year and 'bed spaces' will be limited. We are therefore looking at ways to increase our delegate numbers and other options for accommodation. As well as delegates staying on-site there will be the opportunity of delegates bringing campervans, delegates attending the whole event but staying off-site (accommodation would need to be sourced by individual FRS) and Saturday delegates only.

With services missing out on places this year, we have been reviewing ways to make it fair for all services to send delegates. A proposal has been presented to the Directors for allocating places based on number of employees/corporate membership fees. This would mean offering services a number of 'on-site' places, if more places were requested, we can consider the other options, or they would go on a waiting list. More details will be available at the next meeting. A letter will be sent to all Chief Fire Officers explaining how this will work.

JK suggested this may help with representatives when asking for funding, if services were already aware of their allocated places. Especially as November is generally budget setting time for the next financial year.

KL – asked if volunteers needed to be reps to help at the event.

JK – explained the focus was on delegate numbers which will have an impact on the number of helpers that may be able to attend. We will be looking at this asking for people to express an interest if they want to be part of the team that is supporting. You don't need to be a local or a regional Rep, however we do need to bring in just a little bit of governance around people expressing an interest and then allowing Karen and Caroline as the main responsibilities around the training development to allocate the roles. Because we've got a lot more demand for people to want to come to help than we actually have space for, which is brilliant. It would also be helpful to build a skills matrix so those helping can be given specific roles.



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KS – the number of volunteers will need to be reduced to accommodate everyone needed to ensure we cover all safety aspects. This year we had 76 volunteers in total, it is unlikely we will be able to accommodate this many next year. The number of workshops will also need to be considered, for 2023 we had 27 workshops, some requiring 6 instructors.

DB – happy to support the day but can travel home in the evening. There may also be support from other local services.

KG – Eleven of the Multi Incident Scenario instructors have already signed up for next year which is amazing. We've obviously got quite a good skill set on our team that there is appetite if you wanted us to run anything on the Sunday to get maximum benefit from us being there. Generally, on a Sunday morning we tend to use for obviously packing up, making sure the fire college get everything back, the debrief from the event. But there would be capacity for us to help with some of the workshops, if need be. It might be an opportunity to run a slightly different workshop on Sunday if this would be more helpful.

Delegate fees:

Full delegate with on-site accommodation - £649.00 corporate membership rate or £699.00 non-members.

Other options for attending the event (fees tbc, however less than the main delegate fee)

- Bringing and staying in a campervan
- Full delegate off-site accommodation (FRS to be responsible for the accommodation)
- Saturday only delegate

Eventbrite will not be used for 2024, bookings will be all in-house with Microsoft Forms, payment either by invoice/PO number or credit card payment via a link to the Sum up machine.

Theme/Entertainment/Workshops/Sponsorship- looking for suggestions.

Programme to be reviewed with the hope of moving the Awards to the Saturday night, to make this more of an event for award recipients.

Icebreaker/kit fitting/BA set familiarisation on Friday – to be reviewed
We also have an event email address now – events@wfs.org.uk

Action point:

All – suggestions for theme/entertainment/workshops

10. Any Other Business

KS – new corporate member – Isle of Man FRS

11. Date of next meeting



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Tuesday, 5 December 2023 (10.00-13.00)