

## Introduction

The day began with a welcome from Kam Basi Area Manager who said that he was pleased to see so many here at Alfreton Community Fire Station. He said the welcome was extended from the Chief Fire Officer and the Fire Authority. He proceeded to give a little background about the station and the domestic arrangements.

## CFO Brian Tregunna

A very warm welcome and great to see so many travelling from across the UK with a special welcome to those from outside the fire and rescue service. Derbyshire is very pleased to be working with AFSA and recognise the its positive leadership.

He is very enthusiastic to be working with AFSF having had the first experience at the London event 2006. At that time the mechanism didn't exist and Derbyshire wasn't ready at that time for corporate membership. He was pleased that AFSA had moved to the point where this was possible and was glad to see that its reputation has grown and so many CFOs are interested in making the association. Derbyshire FRS is in for the long haul.

He was very aware and appreciative of all the hard work that staff had put in in making today happen. They had given of their time freely and he very pleased at that and all were invited to freely ask anything of DFRS staff that they might need during the day.

He wished all a good conference.

## Zahoor Ahmed

Zahoor asaid he would be chairing the event for the day and invited all to take a moment to study the extensive delegate packs have that were filled with useful information.

Included in the pack was a copy of the draft Constitution that delegates would have the chance to contribute to later in the day.

He said that the day was decided on as an interim and in preparation to a main conference and would give all attending the opportunity asked ourselves what was known about AFSA, and what questions needed to be asked and answered?

It was necessary for us to be able to convey meaning to others and to be creditable in offering that meaning to others.

He went on to say that delegates needed to ask yourselves what AFSA is able to do to assist and how it can support their ambitions?

Zahoor said he felt not all present were aware of the history of AFSA and invited Jagtar Singh to offer a potted history which he duly did, inviting questions and offering everyone a copy of the slide presentation.

## Jagtar Singh

Jagtar surmised that AFSA Values are those of the FRS.

He went on to say that we know what we know and the day was about filling the gap between what you know that you don't know and then bringing out some of the things that you don't know you know.

AFSA was all about openness and transparency and open to all although non members are not able to put things on the agenda for consideration.

He felt that AFSA aspired to progress and contribute but that can only be achieved in small stages. The Fire and Rescue Service doesn't need to be turned around as it's high performing but having to face some elements that are seen as the rocks of diversity. It was his assertion that AFSA is there to help negotiate around the rocks and destroy the myths associated with diversity and the Asian community.

AFSA had met with the previous Fire Minister which had been fruitful and he was now aware that we are dealing with the well kept secrets.

Develop products.

B&EMM had rightfully developed following the Lawrence Enquiry and Report.

Four London firefighters wanting to do something and the seeds of ALFA were sewn and the evolution of AFSA was seeing the strategic vision to develop the London structure and grow organically.

There was the need to answer the question "Why not us?" from folks outside London but AFSA couldn't go national until interest was there with people wanting to contribute.

The very successful first conference led to the second last year which received endorsement from the CFOA President and the Minister making a number of promises which he subsequently kept.

AFSA has since engaged with many stakeholders and in response to the question "Are you ready?" people said yes with 4-5 CFOs wanting to contribute. Initial work has started with two CFOs from Essex and Lancashire to develop best practice.

Jack wished to commend Sukwinder and Tej who as the first Chairs had each chair has brought something to the role. We now have a shadow committee and London is now a region and the Chair will always have a position on national committee.

The Regional Reps have the primary remit to populate with service reps and then membership as a whole. Corporate membership has been agreed as an approach and fire and rescue services will be invited to join.

The first meetings have been held in Derbyshire and then West Yorkshire. They have shown full commitment from their Principal Officers.

Our pledge is to doing the something that I can do. It may be the lowest denominator but each contribution welcomed. Reps should be prepared and committed to doing the bit that they can do.

AFSA knows where it's going with a clear constitution, and with vision and the right action together can change the world. If the road was easy it was probably travelled before.

Zahoor highlighted that with the range of people, and the geography, organisationally mean the challenge will be great. However, we don't need to reinvent the wheel. Pick up what we can from best practice and other experiences. We have invited colleagues from the NHS with a track record of different experiences in organising and running networks. He welcomed and introduced Grace Broderick.

### Grace Broderick

Grace introduced herself as the Regional Coordinator of the *Breaking Through Programme* aimed at developing BME staff within NHS through to senior roles. Part of her work involved reenergising and establishing support networks.

The NHS employs 1.3 million staff of whom 15% coming from BME. 30 % Nurses and Doctors from BME but just four are represented at Chief Executive level.

Grace declared that most joined the NHS to deliver good quality care to the population, but how can staff give their best when they disenfranchised? Networks aid development and help members in dealing with issues they face daily.

In setting the scene Grace said that Networks have been about for about 15 years and some had become established and well developed. Then NHS structure changed and each time that happened, networks dipped. London networks are still the most mature and effective.

She had been holding events to reenergise and inform others about getting started. The aim would be how to deliver on organisational aims by being a resource to organisations acting as conduits for both staff and management.

Grace commented that her presentation slides were based on the words used by those who had attended some of these events and recorded through the eyes of a cartoonist.

'Without us there would be no NHS'

'It was your fault' There is disproportionate blame on BME employees.

'NHS should do more' Employers do not discourage but do not do enough to encourage. Networks help to support and ease access.

'Can't treat everyone the same'

'Let's dislodge you'

'In an ideal world diversity would be core to everyone'. This is not the case so networks are necessary.

'What we do is business critical' 'NHS must be representative of the community'. Networks help to work through EIAs etc.

'Mindset and culture is influenced from the top' There is lots of buy in at the top (real or otherwise) but in many cases this has not filtered down so that everyone understands.

'BME issues are not just BME issues'. Networks should be opened up to all as long as there is sign up to the Aims and Objective.

'Management missing so many issues because they are chasing other priorities'

'Unleash the potential' - 'Plug me in and let me light up the whole place'. Networks communicate successes and celebration allows others to follow.

'Issues need to be taken seriously – right to the top of the ivory tower'

'We should identify the talents'

'Where is the progress?' After 20/30 years

'Don't be afraid to monitor' Networks provide good tools

'Middle managers only have half the skills'

Networks failed possibly because some thought them to be only talking shops, moans and groans sessions. They need to be so much more giving members the opportunity to share and celebrate.

#### Mohamed Jogi

Mohamed extended his thanks for the invitation and said from experience of working with networks within the Ambulance service he had developed 8 points to remember and used as a barometer for the NHS.

1. Work with leaders to develop the vision that matches theirs and high level strategies.
2. Work with leaders to contribute to their high level strategies. Each CE has a lead for a strategic element. Network action link into each strategic element. Get Buy-in, Personal contact with leaders. Leads to other ends.
3. Translate strategic goals into active measures. If we are linked in we can anticipate and contribute to new initiatives and offer realistic interventions
4. Always looking for change and improvement
5. Communicate strategies and objectives to all – Communications strategy to share everything that we do
6. Identify performance measurement systems and structures
7. Strategic Review process – Network fit for purpose, meeting aims, matching need
8. Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

Mohamed offered that in addition people should enjoy being part of the network, supporting others and each other at a personal level and group level, and projecting self and the group. He gave an example of reverse mentoring where a network member was able to offer mentoring to a Chief Executive.

He closed by saying that he had personally seen the benefits of what Jagtar and Graham Meldrum had brought to the Ambulance Service and very much wanting to pay that back by being part of the day.

Jagtar gave example of some recent input of advice on Pandemic Flu relating to facial hair and the use of respirators. The advice was based on experience. Communication, communication, communication.

### Amit Popit

Amit was adamant that language was important and we had to be clear on the question, What do we mean?

He knew that he would be knowingly be opening up a can of worms. Amit prefers to take a broad view of diversity putting in the context of Organisational change etc. The all inclusive nature of diversity was reflected in the full page of handouts.

### Ideas, Identity, Ideology

There are lots of ideas out there, some good some not so. The tensions come with Identity and Ideology e.g. faith and sexual orientation. It is necessary to adapt an anti discriminatory perspective, from a personal level, culturally for the organisation and at a strategic level.

Thinking about anti-discriminatory behaviours and mindsets starts with 'Me'; understanding my personal mindset, does my behaviour have a negative impact on the diversity agenda?

Amit said that much about his was in improving things.

Communication and dialogue can be different things with dialogue being more challenging. It requires people to take risks.

BLACK – Many have pondered on the use of the term. We need to ask What is the language of an anti discriminatory agenda?

The Race Card – The more we allow these things to come out the more dialogue is necessary and results.

Because we are black we don't need to think about other strands. Are checking on ourselves?

Action and doing more powerful than words alone

Anti discrimination – We need to deal with discrimination. It underlies what we are trying to achieve. The network is in the political arena. Needs to understand the ideology.

Personal – I'm not racist, sexist etc. Not enough in itself

Cultural – Interaction with others

Structure – Policy, procedure, etc

There needs to be interaction at all three levels. Structures can influence Culture and Personal.

BME – Emphasises Minority suggesting needing support, less power and needy.

Society over Community - the notion of embracing the white community. The mutual engagement of learning.

Black is important – It offers political identity. Each group has an issue with cultural identity but we are multi identified. Understand the political agenda then you can hold your personal and cultural identity but hold the black holistic perspective. Black perspective etc. (A Sivanadan) Education takes place outside the comfort zone.

Let's get real about the RRA. It took the death of a black person to change laws. Do we need to be told what to do? The response was 'Let's do some quick training' That's not enough – The Duty is about addressing anti discriminatory practice! Empowerment, education and practice

Amit said the prevailing premise was 'you can be how you are as long as you do what we do'; being accepted on Majority terms. Networks are threats to that thinking.

He closed by proffering the challenge of being assertive enough to be able to say 'we will'

#### Panel Brief and Discussion

Panel members were invited introduced themselves.

Brian Tregunna (BT) – CFO and host for the day having a national role too. Timing is right for AFSA development. UK FRS in receptive mode and ready for a step change. The light has come on and this is a chance for FRS to become the lead public service by 2018. Aspirational but achievable as the door is partly open. There is the need for a lot of Joint working and AFSA has a lot of experience and technical knowledge to bring to the table. Aims bring a lot of optimism for AFSA and looking forward to working with them as part of the family working on the shared agenda. There may be a need for some adjustments and to have internal and external focus.

The business case for AFSA clearly exists. The challenge will be the scope of race, culture etc. There is a nervousness about if this network is just for Asian people. The overriding need is to see that it is not just a self interest group but there for society as a whole. We need to get people with real life experiences to engage with their colleagues. That willingness to do that is priceless. Would ask AFSA to consider this and encourage their members.

Neville Levy (NL) – Paramedic Station Manager. Invited to be part of the network and appreciated the invite but didn't know what he was letting himself in for. Since joining in 1981 he was always aware, like management, that under-representation was apparent. It became part of the role to make a change. Soon became aware that he was the only one and felt isolated, not knowing how to address issues, never wanting to play the 'race card'.

Joining the network changed all of that. Networks bring ideas and challenges. Motivates staff, empowers, and raises the feeling of being a part of something, able to bring something to the table, somewhere to turn to share experiences and never feeling understood.

Assuming is dangerous. Has to be communication and dialogue. Have to share, need to value others opinions, accept difference. BME strand now seen as less a priority. We will keep it on the agenda.

Ann Waters (AW) – Retained FF with Oxfordshire for 13 years. Invited to attend an NWFS and as soon realised there was a problem when she returned to work. The Watch put her in her place but she still went for it and joined. The network is similar to AFSA in terms of structure and is open to all having many men in influential positions. Share the concern over the blockage at Middle Managers level. Still hearing from CFOs of their commitment but still getting managers who won't release people to attend events or support them in the things they need or want to do. The network offers one to one support, mentoring and celebration of achievement. An achievement event was held at national conference which had been a powerful experience. The network has given me confidence and lots of encouragement, and thought about leaving on a few occasions the network helped in working through that. Some personal challenges. Rubbing shoulders with a whole range of people. Not 100% but getting there. Gave example of dealing with FSC issue and affecting change. NWFS is now developing a three year business plan. Personally working on the Positive Action project and very pleased that AFSA is engaging in the project.

Samantha Samuels (SS) – FBU Chair of B&EMM and in 19<sup>th</sup> year as a Firefighter with West Midlands FRS. Became involved because of isolation from being the only Black women in the service. B&EMM is the longest existing of the networks in the FBU and had come about as a result of mistrust within the service and the union. It was felt the way forward was with the FBU and became a part of that structure. Have tried to remain focused on BME issues and believe that there is too much workload to spread interests across all strands. The regional structure follows that of the FBU. It was a reactive group dealing with issues affecting individuals. There was a small group of individuals that pulled things together, offering advice and assistance where ever needed.

B&EMM will represent members on none race related issues. If we can get to the point where RRA is implemented properly then we will have a positive impact on organisation. Far right membership is a primary concern and B&EMM holds the position that states that it is not compatible with FRS values and there is a paragraph in the national strategy to that effect. The annual school is a powerful event for our members. AFSA and B&EMM share same aspirations.

### Question

If you could give one piece of advice what would it be?

NL – Why should the service accept me as an individual? The network is for those that follow.

SS – Start at the grassroots with those who are interested. A ground swell will come from engaging the committed on the ground. Always be there when you're needed.

AW – Use whatever other networks have to offer. Don't reinvent the wheel.

BG – Work hard on communications. Tell them tell and then tell them again until you get to a critical mass who understands what it's about.

#### Question

How will you make sure E&D stays on the agenda?

BG – I don't see the threat because of the E&D a Strategy that is now in place. Committed, acknowledge the financial pressures but can see it happening.

#### Question

How can you get middle managers to support individuals attending events like this?

SS – Engage with CFOs and force them to inform middle managers. You may be able to work around them.

#### Question

With the BNP, can't we just say it? The FRS doesn't want it.

BT – DFRS wanted to put out a joint statement but needed to take legal advice. Have spoken with CLG but nothing forthcoming at the moment. It is very difficult to take an overt anti BNP position.

JS – Credit to B&EMM for bringing it to attention of CLG. Wanted to follow Police and Prison Service. Minister was asked to write on the issue. Response was that FRS has no legal right to deny access. Can use the values position. Can get there in changing FRs legal status in time.

AP – EIA on leadership function of BNP

Erin? – CLG is committed to raising the awareness of young people from BME and Women to join FRS. Looking for ambassadors.

#### Full Panel

#### Question

Bringing in Talent. What does the panel think about the positive action of bringing in people on HPDP and graduate programmes?

SS – B&EMM does have some concerns. We believe that there is talent existing and we haven't done enough to develop that existing talent.

MJ – Look to the business case for diversity. There is a need to get the organisation to think about long term needs. NHS has already started. We do need to look at developing existing staff but at the same time bringing in new talent. Looking to the future and take every opportunity to tap into talent.

AW – Will help in getting underrepresented groups through to the upper levels of the service. These scheme can facilitate that process and more under-represented people at the top will make a change.

JS – ‘Yes’ we support it but ‘No’ if we don’t facilitate existing staff breaking through.

AP – Does the programme include competency and embracing diversity? How does that contribute to talent? If they can’t manage diversity as a key competence then what is gained?

MJ – Organisation has to be ready both for the scheme and for diverse leaders.

NJ- We talk a lot about recruitment but often neglect retention. There has to be a development pathway for people to follow. We need light at the end of the tunnel for existing talented staff. Without that emphasis we don’t attract people.

#### Question

National Firefighter Selection Test not yet embedded so how can we introduce HPDP?

JS – There was a pressure to get them introduced. Now finding that there is adverse impact and there is now the need to feed that back and get changes made.

#### Question

Why so long to get the test in?

JS – It was rushed and so now dealing with concerns.

AP – We still dealing with symptoms and not causes. Who is dealing with the racism, sexism etc?

SS – B&EMM were involved in the trials and said that there was adverse impact but we were not listened to.

#### Question

Has there been a culture shift in the service to facilitate women progressing?

SS – It varies from service to service. We need managers to state clearly that we are focussed on female progression.

AW – From within NWFS we have seen a change through the demand for the type of elements that have been called for by membership. Women are feeling confident to have a go, at the conference, and maybe go back and commit.

AP – With all these programmes there is the tag of being inadequate. Language is important. We are not the ones with the problem. None of it will be any good without anti-discriminatory activity.

JS – Breaking Through programmes inform those who do not have the inside knowledge; knowledge that comes from informal networks that culturally exclude some.

MJ – Those delivering coaching, support and mentoring haven't got the skills to perform those roles because of their own lack of cultural competence.

GB – The exposure is vital. Even with high potential people coming in who still struggle with the existing culture.

#### Question

How do we deal with Middle manager blockers?

AW – Agree with the communication, communication, communication approach. However, have a personal difficulty in dealing with the personal challenge and maybe need to be more assertive.

MJ – Got the CE from the lead on the forum to write to all CEs.

AP – Directive to middle managers that they are part of a public sector that is involved in change and they are all expected to manage all parts of that and they should be looking to getting their staff involved and getting feedback from them and putting the findings in place.

#### Question

How do we deal with non conscious racism?

AP - Diversity training that doesn't include recognition of conscious and subconscious racism is a No. Still dodging the issue!

SS – EIA process will tease out product of sub-conscious discrimination.

#### Question

Is there discrimination in Selection Test?

Js – Old test excluded women and not sufficiently role specific. The New test is still proving to be discriminatory to women and BME. They included some but not enough serving women and BME and didn't listen to feedback from B&EMM

#### Question

How do you get over the difficulty of getting into meaningful conversation on diversity issue when people are fearful of misinterpretation?

AW – Gave an example of controlled discussion of sensitive topics.

JS – No perfect answer. Networks will empower people to manage situations differently/better.

NL – Can't stop anyone feeling offended at anything that is said. How it's managed after that is more important.

MJ – Agree it is about managing the consequences.

AP – Not sufficiently challenging questions at selection to properly test attitudes.

## Final Comments

Comment from the floor – The presence of NHS representatives has really brought something to the day.

MJ – Understanding the culture and then changing steadily.

SS – Always do a report to managers as it helps for future support.

AW – Having FAQ page on the website really helps.

AP – ‘No Fear’ Develop a culture of no fear in all the things I do. Stop bowing to the culture of fear.

GB – Why should it be different to going to scheduled training event. Do not hide it

NL – Maintain your vision. I am someone and I am important to this organisation. Still work to be done but if we engage with the community on their grounds we will make a difference.

JS – Yes I Can!