



LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

LFC-25-078x

White Ribbon Accreditation

Report to:

Service Delivery Board
Commissioner's Board
London Fire Commissioner

Date:

30 September 2025
15 October 2025

Report by:

Sub Officer Rhiaïn Akin, Staff Officer to Assistant Commissioner Thomas Goodall and Chair of Phoenix

Authorising Head of Service:

AC Thomas Goodall, Head of Risk, Assurance, Strategy and Portfolio

Report classification:

For decision

For publication

Values met

Integrity
Teamwork
Equity
Courage

I agree the recommended decision below.

Jonathan Smith
London Fire Commissioner

This decision was remotely
Date **signed on 21 October 2025**

PART ONE

Non-confidential facts and advice to the decision-maker

Executive Summary

This report recommends that the Service Delivery Board approves the London Fire Brigade's (Brigade's) application to become White Ribbon accredited.

White Ribbon is a nationally recognised accreditation programme aimed at ending male violence against women and promoting gender equality through organisational and cultural change. By committing to White Ribbon Accreditation, the Brigade is taking a clear stand against institutional misogyny and reinforcing its dedication to building a safer, more inclusive workplace, post Cultural Review. This commitment aligns directly with the Mayor of London's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy, which prioritises prevention, protection, and support for victims, as well as the transformation of organisational cultures.

DECISION OPTIONS

Recommended decision

That the London Fire Commissioner endorses the report and agrees to London Fire Brigade seeking White Ribbon accreditation

1 Introduction and background

- 1.1 This report acknowledges that while domestic abuse can and does happen regardless of gender, it should be noted that Gender-Based Violence (GBV) disproportionately affects women and girls. It has been formally declared that England and Wales has an epidemic of GBV by the Home Office (National Police Chiefs' Council, 2024). The Government's manifesto in 2024 pledged to halve violence against women and girls (VAWG) in a decade. Furthermore, in the Mayor's Police and Crime Plan for London 2025-2029, VAWG is addressed as a core priority. The Mayor will publish a refreshed VAWG Strategy for London in 2025, setting out how he will continue to take a public health approach, address the behaviour of men and boys responsible and make London safe for every woman and girl.
- 1.2 There is an average of three thousand VAWG related crimes reported daily according to the NPCC in 2024. They also estimate that at least one in every twelve women in England and Wales will be a victim of VAWG each year. Three in five women have experienced sexual harassment, bullying or verbal abuse in the workplace (Trade Unions Congress, 2023). Seventy percent of women in the UK say they have experienced sexual harassment in public (All Party Parliamentary Groups for UN Women 2021).
- 1.3 In the last five years, the Phoenix Equality Support Group (ESG) have worked to set up a domestic abuse support group for all staff regardless of gender, background, race or rank. In that time there are one hundred and sixty ambassadors, one hundred of whom have completed specialist training. Phoenix have held an event to mark the occasion of White Ribbon Day for the last five years, which has become of increased interest.
- 1.4 White Ribbon is the UK's leading charity engaging men and boys to prevent VAWG. The charity aims to prevent VAWG by disrupting systemic issues that cause men's violence against women such as harmful attitudes, behaviours and systems predicated on rigid gender stereotypes and damaging assertions of toxic masculinity that perpetuate gender inequality and VAWG.
- 1.5 The White Ribbon Accreditation is a commitment made by organisations to encourage tangible and impactful change in their staff culture, systems and communities. Central to accreditation and the White Ribbon ethos is Allyship; To be an ally is to support, act and harness power on behalf of other marginalised groups despite not being a member of the group that they are defending and advocating for. White Ribbon Accreditation encourages men to challenge everyday issue and be allies, to stop harassment and violence against women and girls at its perceived, innocuous stages. It highlights that men as well as women are part of the solution for preventing others' harassment, abuse and violence of women.
- 1.6 Becoming White Ribbon Accredited brings significant organisational benefits to London Fire Brigade by reinforcing its commitment to tackling VAWG both within the service and across the communities it serves. Accreditation provides a clear, structured framework to promote respectful behaviours, support affected staff and embed gender equality into workplace culture. It enhances public trust, strengthens the Brigade's reputation as an inclusive employer, and aligns with its broader goals around safeguarding, community leadership, and social responsibility. As a visible commitment to challenging male violence and championing allyship, it positions LFB as a proactive force for cultural change. Importantly, it also aligns with both the UK Government's national VAWG strategy and the London Mayor's approach to prevention, making the Brigade a

key partner in achieving citywide and national goals.

2 Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1 To seek and obtain White Ribbon Accreditation thereby aligning with the Mayors' strategic priority to eradicate VAWG.
- 2.2 The drive for White Ribbon accreditation is especially relevant in the context of recent reports, such as the 2022 independent culture review led by Nazir Afzal, which highlighted serious cultural issues within the Brigade, including allegations of misogyny, bullying, and harassment. In light of these findings, the Brigade has publicly acknowledged the need for transformative change and has committed to rebuilding trust, both within its workforce and in the wider community.
- 2.3 Gaining White Ribbon accreditation would not only reinforce the Brigade's dedication to tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG), but it would also mark a significant step in fostering a safer, more respectful workplace culture. Moreover, as a high-profile public institution, the Brigade has the reach and influence to inspire broader societal change by modelling proactive, ethical leadership. White Ribbon accreditation aligns with the Brigade's broader goals of modernisation, accountability, and social responsibility—making it both a symbolic and practical step forward in its journey to become a truly inclusive organisation.
- 2.4 In undertaking accreditation, statutory requirements such as compliance with the new statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 introduced by the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, which mandates that employers must now take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace - not just respond reactively but act proactively is addressed. In doing so reputational standing is improved and aligned with a renowned charity in the field. By embedding preventative measures and leadership accountability, accredited organisations strengthen their duty of care, reducing the risk of legal breaches while setting a positive example for workplace conduct.
- 2.5 To gain accreditation, LFB must:
 - Publicly commit to the White Ribbon mission and gain senior leadership buy-in, meaning they become allies (if male) or champions (if female). This will be achieved by approving this proposal through the Brigade's governance process.
 - Appoint a lead contact, a strategic lead and establish a steering group, which will drive an action plan that's VAWG focused (over 3 years), with clear goals, timelines, and responsibilities
 - Deliver internal and external awareness campaigns, such as for White Ribbon Day on 25 November and provide training to staff challenging harmful behaviours
 - Review policies on domestic abuse and sexual harassment
 - Report progress annually to White Ribbon and seek to continuously review and improve

It's worth noting that work has already been ongoing over the last two years on a draft three-year action plan, meaning we are ahead of schedule in meeting this key requirement. This gives us a strong foundation to build on as we move forward with seeking formal accreditation.

- 2.6 Evidence of our work includes, writing our new Domestic Abuse Policy, the creation of our Sexual Harassment Policy, flexible working and paid special leave available to anyone experiencing domestic abuse.
- 2.7 The cost is £2495 per annum, which can be paid in three separate instalments over the three-year accreditation period (making the total cost £7485). Alternatively, if paid as a lump sum, a five percent discount will be applied (making the total cost £7110.75).
- 2.8 Consideration should be given to the Brigade joining Employers' Initiative Domestic Abuse (EIDA) which is a UK based, free-to-join membership network of employers focused on supporting employees affected by domestic abuse and sharing best practice across workplaces. This would give the Brigade access to webinars, training, toolkits and templates that could complement and assist the Brigade's action plan for White Ribbon. Over twenty other UK fire services have already joined as well as National Fire Chiefs and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services.
- 2.9 It is recognised that in applying for White Ribbon accreditation it could open the Brigade up to increased risk and scrutiny around its practices for gender equity. There is a chance that by aligning with White Ribbon, a charity who specialises on VAWG, male survivors of domestic violence could feel erasure in their experiences. To adequately mitigate this risk, communications should be made about the impact that seeking accreditation will have to support all survivors regardless of their gender identity. Furthermore, to educate staff that White Ribbon's mission is preventing male-perpetrated violence, especially against women, but that it does not exclude support for male victims and remind all that our ESG, Phoenix does support everyone.
- 2.10 Another area of risk is survivors who have not been supported by the Brigade, disagreeing that the Brigade deserves the accreditation. To mitigate this, pre-emptive communications and an awareness campaign should be utilised to dispel any misconceptions and highlight supportive mechanisms implemented, and actions taken to improve the culture. For example, the creation and implementation of the Professional Standards Unit, the update of our new Domestic Abuse policy and the creation of the Sexual Harassment policy.
- 2.11 A risk has been raised about the potential reputational risk associated with White Ribbon accreditation being withdrawn in the event of a high-profile case affecting the Brigade. White Ribbon have been approached on this subject and have reassured the Brigade that they are committed to supporting accredited organisations through challenging situations and reassured us that their focus is on continuous improvement, as opposed to withdrawing accreditation.
- 2.12 Conversely by choosing not to apply for White Ribbon accreditation, London Fire Brigade risk falling behind other public services, with more fire services and police forces achieving it. The Public and staff may interpret inaction as a lack of commitment to VAWG. There would be a missed opportunity in resources, training and upskilling staff to creating cultural change about gender equity. Furthermore, without external validation, such as accreditation, London Fire Brigade may be more vulnerable to criticism about misogyny, harassment and sexism. Accreditation would show accountability and a proactive strategy to be held to a high standard.
- 2.13 Securing White Ribbon Accreditation is a necessary and strategic step for London Fire Brigade. In the face of a national epidemic of violence against women and girls, and following significant cultural challenges highlighted in recent reviews, accreditation would demonstrate LFB's serious commitment to change, transparency, and accountability. It aligns directly with national and London-wide strategies to reduce VAWG, supports compliance with new legal duties under the Equality Act, and reinforces the Brigade's leadership role in public safety. White Ribbon Accreditation provides a practical framework for building a safer, more respectful workplace and strengthening community trust.

3 Values Comments

- 3.1 The LFC notes the Fire Standards Board requirements around adopting and embedding the Core Code of Ethics at an individual and corporate level. Following extensive engagement, the LFC has introduced Brigade values which build on and do not detract from the Code of Ethics.
- 3.2 The Brigade service strategies: engagement, protect, prevent. Additionally, the Your LFB Plan for 2023 – 2029 is aligned to create a safe culture and working together with other organisations to protect London.
- 3.3 Demographic data from the 2024 Your LFB Survey, shows that there is a statistically significant difference between men and women's experiences of colleagues demonstrating LFB values and of the belief that senior leaders are dealing with unacceptable behaviours. This directly highlights that while expectation in values are being broadly met, more needs to be done for women in the institution to feel supported. In undertaking White Ribbon Accreditation there will be tangible mechanism to ensure that we are being held to account in ensuring women feel valued.
- 3.4 By applying for White Ribbon Accreditation, London Fire Brigade puts the public first by committing to prevent violence, support survivors, build safer communities, seek equity, and continuously improve as a values-led organisation.

4 Equality Comments

- 4.1 The LFC and the Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service are required to have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) when taking decisions. This in broad terms involves understanding the potential impact of policy and decisions on different people, taking this into account and then evidencing how decisions were reached.
- 4.2 It is important to note that consideration of the Public Sector Equality Duty is not a one-off task. The duty must be fulfilled before taking a decision, at the time of taking a decision, and after the decision has been taken.
- 4.3 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership (but only in respect of the requirements to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination), race (ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality), religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex, and sexual orientation.
- 4.4 The Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision-takers in the exercise of all their functions, to have due regard to the need to:
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct.
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
 - foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 4.5 Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due

regard for the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic where those disadvantages are connected to that characteristic.
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
- encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

4.6 The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

4.7 Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard for the need to:

- tackle prejudice
- promote understanding.

4.8 The work has undergone an Initial Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix a) which is currently under review by the Inclusion Team. It is thought that there are no negative impacts of the work on any of the protected characteristics.

4.9 In choosing the White Ribbon organisation primary focus will be on VAWG and highlights the unique, deeply rooted gender-based inequalities and societal norms that perpetuate violence, enabling more targeted interventions and policies to create meaningful change. However, all interventions will positively support those of any gender identity surviving abuse.

4.10 White Ribbon also focuses on allyship, and this aligns with the need to foster good relations between those of protected characteristics with others who may not share it. In this instance, ensuring that men support the women who are commonly subjected to GBV.

5 Other considerations

Workforce comments

5.1 The following teams have been informed including inclusion, ESG leads (including union groups), Peoples Services, Leadership Team, Learning and Professional Development, PSU as well as operational staff. All feedback has been positive.

Sustainability comments

5.2 This report discusses committing to White Ribbon Accreditation, and the Brigade taking a clear stand against institutional misogyny and reinforcing its dedication to building a safer, more inclusive workplace. This will have a positive impact supporting the LFC's Sustainable Development Strategy, encompassing the aims relating to Equality and Social Inclusion.

5.3 This report does not introduce any significant sustainability impacts.

Procurement comments

- 5.4 This is a below-threshold procurement spend, and there are no other UK organisations that offer this specific accreditation. Therefore, this report does not present any procurement implications.

Communications comments

- 5.5 The organisation will have to make the commitment to communicate the aim of becoming White Ribbon Accredited.
- 5.6 Communications will need to be made about the PSU and Phoenix and the positive steps that have been taken to improve the culture in the organisation and where possible, ideas for further change.
- 5.7 To inform all staff that White Ribbon's mission is preventing male-perpetrated violence, especially against women, but that it does not exclude support for male victims and remind all that our ESG, Phoenix does support everyone.
- 5.8 To ensure the Brigade's pursuit of White Ribbon accreditation resonates authentically, it's important that all staff understand not just the 'what' but the 'why' - clearly communicating the Brigade's genuine commitment to creating a safer, more respectful workplace for everyone.
- 5.9 Best channels for communication can be via all staff email, hotwire and yammer posts. There could be scope to deliver a verbal briefing where individuals in the organisation can ask questions about the accreditation.

6 Financial comments

- 6.1 The purpose of the paper is to achieve corporate agreement to become White Ribbon accredited. Future action plans must align with the resources available to the Brigade. There is an immediate revenue requirement of £7k over three years from 2025/26 to 2027/28 proposed to be funded from the Inclusion Team cost centre. Lead contact and strategic lead roles will be met from existing budgets.

7 Legal Comments

- 7.1 Under section 9 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the LFC is established as a corporation sole with the Mayor appointing the occupant of that office. Under section 327D of the GLA Act 1999, as amended by the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the Mayor may issue to the LFC specific or general directions as to the manner in which the holder of that office is to exercise his or her functions.
- 7.2 By direction dated 1 April 2018, the Mayor set out those matters, for which the LFC would require the prior approval of either the Mayor or the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience (the Deputy Mayor).
- 7.3 Paragraph (b) of Part 2 of the said direction requires the LFC to seek the prior approval of the Deputy Mayor before "[a] commitment to expenditure (capital or revenue) of £150,000 or above as identified in accordance with normal accounting practices...".
- 7.4 The statutory basis for the action proposed in this report is provided by sections 7 and 5A of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (FRSA 2004). Under section 7 (2)(a) FRSA 2004, the LFC has the

power to secure the provision of personnel, services and equipment necessary to efficiently meet all normal requirements for firefighting; and section 5A allows the LFC to procure personnel, services and equipment they consider appropriate for purposes incidental or indirectly incidental to their functional purposes.

- 7.5 To seek and obtain White Ribbon Accreditation aligns with the Mayors' strategic priority to eradicate Violence Against Women and Girls

List of appendices

Appendix	Title	Open or confidential*
1	White Ribbon Accreditation Initial EIA Form	Open
2	https://londonfire-my.sharepoint.com/personal/rhiain_akin_london-fire_gov_uk/Documents/Documents/White%20Ribbon%20UK%20Accreditation%20Info%20Pack%20(1).pdf	
3	What we do Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse	

Part two confidentiality

Only the facts or advice considered to be exempt from disclosure under the FOI Act should be in the separate Part Two form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a Part Two form: No