



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda No:

Date: 27 June 2008

Purpose of Report:

- To present to Members the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018.
- To present to Members the outcomes of a national survey of current and ex-firefighters in England.
- To propose a revision to the governance arrangements for responding to the equality and diversity agenda within Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 On Wednesday 28 May 2008 Communities and Local Government (CLG) launched the Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018 for the Fire and Rescue Service nationally. The Strategy had been subject to extensive consultation to which Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service submitted a detailed response, ratified by the Policy and Strategy Committee at its meeting of 1 February 2008 (attached at Appendix A).
- 1.2 Additionally, at the launch of the Equality and Diversity Strategy CLG also released the findings of a survey of current and ex-firefighters in England. In November 2006 the then Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) commissioned an external research company to undertake this survey. The report identifies significant issues for the Service with regard to gender facilities, the role of firefighters and other behaviour.
- 1.3 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has for a long time had a well established Ad-Hoc Equalities Group, however in response to the Equality and Diversity Strategy and the firefighter survey, it is appropriate to review its structure and terms of reference.

2. REPORT

The Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018

- 2.1 As a public service provider, the Fire and Rescue Service has a duty to strive to achieve equality of access, equality of impact and equality of outcome for all. The Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy is designed to support this and assist Fire and Rescue Services in tackling current inequalities, promoting equality, diversity and fairness, and establishing a culture of inclusion which enables the Service to meet the needs of all our diverse communities.
- 2.2 The Strategy (attached at Appendix B) identifies the vision, commitment, goals and values the Service will need to meet in the objective of developing a truly inclusive service. The Strategy is not only designed to improve the way in which individuals treat each other, but also the effectiveness of the relationship the Service has with the public. To do this the Strategy requires action in five priority areas:

Priority 1 – Leadership

The Strategy identifies that positive leadership at all levels is essential to drive change, maintain commitment and ensure accountability. It identifies Fire and Rescue Authority Members and senior managers as essential to its delivery. Personal behaviour and commitment, as well as partnerships, must be clear in delivering required improvement in performance on equality and diversity.

Priority 2 – Accountability

The Strategy ensures that Members of Fire and Rescue Authorities and all employees are held accountable for delivering the Strategy.

Priority 3 – Effective Service Delivery and Community Engagement

The Strategy identifies that effective planning and engagement are key to improving service delivery to all communities. Tailored services, sustained dialogue, assessment and review of policies and procedures through equality impact assessments are seen as key to success.

Priority 4 – Employment and Training

Key to the delivery of the Service's ambitions is the requirement to recruit, develop and retain a workforce that better reflects the diversity of the local community. Measures such as sustained staff development, the eradication of bullying and harassment, revised working practices, facilities, clothing and a safe supporting environment are underpinning measures that are seen as key to the Strategy.

Priority 5 – Evaluation and Sharing Good Practice

Monitoring, evaluation and recognition of good practice are essential to ensure continuous improvement. CLG intend to collect and analyse improved performance so that this can be shared across the country.

- 2.3 The Strategy also focuses on the levels of responsibility, the role of the Regional Management Boards, Local Strategic Partnerships, and Local Area Agreements and the role of the Audit Commission, CLG and the Human Rights Commission in its delivery. The requirement to equality assess Integrated Risk Management Plans, produce and annually review an action plan for report to Members, and carry out individual Personal Development Reviews which include equality and diversity objectives are all identified as areas which will be monitored through performance assessment.
- 2.4 In respect of employment targets some specific areas of focus have been identified as a way of measuring progress across the organisation. These will be required to be included in an annual report by CLG on equality and diversity. The targets to be met by each Fire and Rescue Authority are:
- a) By 2013 a minimum of 15% of new entrants to the operational sector to be women.
 - b) By 2013, recruitment of minority ethnic staff across the whole organisation to be at the same percentage as the minority ethnic representation in the local working population.
 - c) Fire and Rescue Services with very low minority ethnic working age populations and low recruitment requirements may set a target in

terms of individuals recruited over a five year period, rather than a percentage of total recruitment.

- d) By 2013 parity in rates of retention and progression between minority ethnic and white employees, and between men and women.

2.5 The Equality and Diversity Strategy also advises that these targets will be revised after five years and new targets may be set for the second half of its life. These targets are set at the minimum requirements and to encourage a more rapid improvement CLG are offering a financial incentive. A capital grant of a minimum £42k will be allocated in 2009/10 or 2010/11 to those Fire and Rescue Authorities that strive to achieve:

- By 2013, a minimum of 18% of new entrants to the operational service to be women.
- By 2013 recruitment of minority ethnic staff across the organisation to be at 2-5% above the minority ethnic representation in the local working population.

2.6 The implementation of the targets will require Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service to revise its current equalities targets which were formerly collected under the Best Value Performance (BVP) regime. BVP indicators 11 (i– iii), 16 (i – ii) and 17 will all need reviewing to ensure they remain fit for purpose in relation to the Strategy's expectations.

CLG Survey of Current and Ex-Firefighters in England

2.7 The survey of current and ex-firefighters in England was undertaken in November 2006 (attached at Appendix C) by ICM Research, who had been commissioned by the DCLG. In order to complete this survey a strategy was devised which sampled all serving women firefighters and a random sample of men, as well as women firefighters leaving the Service in the previous three years, and all men leaving the Service within one year. The survey received a response rate of 21% with a profile which closely matched the actual profile of the Service at that time.

2.8 The employee survey covered a range of issues such as reasons for joining the Service, Equality & Diversity, prior engagement and the role itself. Some highlight areas in respect of the future of the Service are as follows:

- Men and women were equally likely to be successful in promotion, although a higher proportion of men apply.
- Two thirds found the work challenging.
- 15% did not feel valued by their colleagues at work.
- 80% enjoyed good working relationships with their peers.

- 23% saw or heard a range of unacceptable behaviour often. This behaviour ranged from verbal assaults (58%) to physical assaults (11%).
- 32% had been bullied or harassed at some time.
- 41% had thought about leaving the Service at some time.

- 2.9 What was clear from the survey is that a complex picture of the Fire and Rescue Service in England emerged. Clearly the Service for many people was/is still some way from being an inclusive workplace. Although many of the respondents are happy at work, some are evidently not. There is also a clear reluctance of the majority of respondents failing to see diversity as core service to its business and its functions as both an employer and service deliverer.
- 2.10 There is no suggestion that Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service have any significant issues in relation to this report, however, if the survey is seen as being reflective of the Service as a whole, then Nottinghamshire will need to respond appropriately to its findings. The report serves to assist in targeting training and education in the equalities arena as well as informing future recruitment strategies. Read along with the Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018 the report gives a revised impetus as to how the organisation should tackle its equalities agenda and the key aspect of governance.

Governance of the Equalities Agenda

- 2.11 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service have a long established forum for the issue of Equality and Diversity within the Service. This Ad-Hoc Equalities Group has its own terms of reference (attached at Appendix D) and meets on a quarterly basis. In light of the launch of the new Equality and Diversity Strategy and in response to the employee survey, the Service has taken the opportunity to review its current position.
- 2.12 As part of the response, the new Equality and Diversity Officer has taken the opportunity to review the way in which decisions are made, performance is managed and activities are scrutinised.
- 2.13 The current Ad-Hoc Equalities Group has 17 members and it is rare for the meetings to be fully attended. Membership currently includes:
- Elected Members;
 - Trade Union representatives;
 - Minority group representatives;
 - Senior Managers;
 - Human Resources representatives;
 - Equality & Diversity Officer.

Compared with other organisations within the Fire and Rescue Services and the public sector this is unwieldy and does not encourage departments and

managers to own the equalities agenda. It is primarily seen as a forum and lacks a “steering group” approach to tackling inequality within the Service.

2.14 Following a review of this structure and in response to the recent publications by CLG, the Equality and Diversity Officer has recommended that the current governance structure is reviewed and refreshed. Key to this would be:

- Changing the terms of reference, name and make up of the current Ad-Hoc Equalities Group.
- The establishment of a new Equalities Action Group led and attended by managers.
- The establishment of minority group forum where issues relating to them can be discussed in a safe, confidential environment. Such groups could also act as key consultees in any Service proposals.
- A Trade Union consultation group established that would ensure productive engagement and response.
- A clear reporting mechanism on equalities performance.

2.15 It is proposed that the Ad-Hoc Equalities Group is replaced by a Strategic Equalities Board. Membership of this group would be much smaller and its remit much tighter. Draft terms of reference are attached at Appendix E for information, although any confirmation would be subject to consultation. An open invitation would be extended to interested parties to attend as observers to ensure openness.

2.16 In support of this revised board and to ensure that equalities becomes further embedded and mainstreamed across the Service, all departments need to be involved or associated with the issues. In order to do this it is further proposed that an Equalities Action Group is chaired by a member of the Strategic Management Team and supported by managers based in departments. This would ensure that the strategic approach of the Member/Officer Board is cascaded throughout the organisation. Specific membership and terms of reference would be developed to support this process.

2.17 The formation of specific employee engagement and consultation groups covering areas such as disability, minority ethnic and women, for example, would ensure that all employees, trade unions and staff are engaged in any equalities actions. An outline of how the structure may look is attached at Appendix F.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Service currently allocates a specific budget to the equalities agenda which covers some actions to improve the service performance such as seminars, community events and literature. Additionally, funds from the training budget are

used to support recruitment of underrepresented groups within the Service. There will be a need to review these amounts in response to the national strategy to ensure the Service meets its legal and moral obligations with regard to equalities.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

The recruitment, development and retention of a diverse workforce is essential for Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service if it is to continue to deliver a quality of service and create a better understanding of the advice and support the public can receive. Recruitment of staff and their ongoing development will need to form a key part of the Service's approach to its staff in the future.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An initial equality impact assessment is attached at Appendix G.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

7.1 As a public body Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has both general and specific legal duties to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination for service users and employees. Failure to comply with such requirements may not only lead to prosecution but could also:

- Reduce the Service's ability to protect and serve the community because of a poor understanding of its needs;
- Cause detriment to employees who may not have the equality of opportunity to develop their potential; and
- Damage the standing and reputation of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

7.2 Performance against CLG's targets within the Equality and Diversity Strategy will be measured through annual returns and the Audit Commission inspection process. Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service may not be able to achieve a "performing well" assessment until it achieves Level 3 on the Equality Standard for Local Government scale. This could lead to the potential of intervention by the Secretary of State under the provisions of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That Members note and endorse the publication of the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008 – 2018 and the associated firefighters survey produced by CLG.
- 8.2 That Members task the Policy and Strategy Committee with reviewing the governance of equalities within Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service in response to the recommendations and findings of the Equality and Diversity Officer.
- 8.3 That Policy and Strategy Committee are tasked with agreeing revised Performance Indicators to measure the Service's performance in response to the Equality and Diversity Strategy.
- 8.4 That Members agree to receive an annual report on performance against equalities targets from the Performance Monitoring Committee.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

- Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018 – CLG;
- Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004;
- "A survey of current and ex firefighters in England" – CLG (May 2008).

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NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Response to the Consultation on the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018

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January 2008

RESPONSE TO FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY 2008-2018

General Comments

Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the consultation and the reviewed commitment to this issue is welcomed. The fact that the Strategy is intended to be concise and strategic is also welcomed.

However, NFRS is disappointed that the overall approach does not strengthen the focus on the operational/business case. NFRS believes that to make the cultural advances for greater diversity, a change from the solitary focus on employment targets towards a more fundamental understanding of the benefits diversity brings to a modern public service is required.

There are also concerns regarding the understanding of the equality legislation and the practical improvements required.

In response to the questions raised, our particular comments are as follows:

Targets

NFRS supports the principle of targets as these can act as a spur and a means of measuring progress in both employment (recruitment, retention and progression) and service delivery and believes that SMART targets should lead to improvements in both of these areas. However, comments are sought on the ranges proposed without scope for discussing these ranges and the reasons for maintaining them. In abandoning the current targets before the current ten year period is over, could be unhelpfully interpreted as an admission of failure.

For instance, the target relating to the employment of women in operational roles of between 12 and 18% by 2013 is simply unachievable, given that the current female operational workforce is 2.8% and the current target is set at 15%. This target obviously was not SMART and so it is suggested that perhaps the range of 12-15% is reconsidered, or a variation of targets be set. These could include attraction of applications, recruitment and progression. Clearly with Services changing their establishment, such an approach would give a more defined view of individual Services' performance.

Additionally, we feel the CLG strategy should consider in more detail the equal opportunities publication "How to set targets for gender equality". There are elements within this publication which show good practice that could enhance the proposed strategy.

It is suggested that the Strategy is clear on the definition of operational roles. Control employees come under this definition and could therefore be included within this target. Also, roles within the fire service are changing so rapidly that separate

targets for operational and non-operational employees are perhaps less relevant than they were in 1999 and will probably be even less relevant in 2018. The Strategy should not ignore the impact of the introduction of Regional Control Centres, and greater collaborative working as proposed by the national framework consultation. These aspects will affect a Fire and Rescue Service's recruitment rates significantly.

With regards to the target relating to black and minority ethnic employees, NFRS supports Option 1. The Authority should be working towards reflecting the population it serves. We are unsure of the reasons for the 'plus up to 5%' aspect in Option 2 which seems to go beyond the requirement of the law and again would not be an achievable target.

It is also disappointing that nowhere in the Strategy are the issues around working problems and working practices addressed. By establishing targets in these areas, some of the indirect barriers to recruitment and retention may be addressed.

Outcome Measures

NFRS have some concerns about some of the outcomes expected by this draft strategy. For instance, the fourth bullet point stating that we will know we have succeeded when 'gay, lesbian and bisexual staff have no concerns about being open about their sexuality at work' is not achievable. Young people and adults alike still have difficulty in declaring their sexual orientation to their families and friends. Some organisations with less traditionally divided roles and working environments are able to provide safer environments for people to come out at work. But even the most liberal of organisations would find it difficult to state that their staff would have 'no concerns' in being open about their sexual orientation at work.

This outcome would be very difficult to measure and would also have to apply to all members of staff and not just gay, lesbian and bi-sexual employees.

Monitoring

NFRS considers that robust monitoring of all strands of diversity (in most cases) is practical, achievable and provides a useful baseline for action. However, this consultation appears to rely very heavily on the requirements of the local government equality standard and marginalises statutory duties in this area. The local government standard, whilst providing a good outline framework, does not apply effectively to the Fire and Rescue Service. It focuses too heavily on procedures rather than outcomes.

Conclusion

As stated above, a National Strategy for Equality and Diversity is welcomed. However, NFRS feels that a 10 year strategy, during such an intense period of change at Fire and Rescue Authorities, will mean that the strategy and its aims will soon become outdated and targets unachievable. NFRS feels that this strategy should match the timescale of the National Framework which is 3 years.

Appendix B

Fire and Rescue Service
Equality and Diversity
Strategy 2008 - 2018



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Fire and Rescue Service
Equality and Diversity
Strategy 2008 - 2018

Statement of commitment

This Strategy will support the Fire and Rescue Service in tackling current inequalities, promoting equality, diversity and fairness, and establishing a culture of inclusion which enables the Service to meet the needs of all our diverse communities. We acknowledge and accept our role in supporting the implementation of the Strategy through the leadership and commitment of our organisations.

Communities and Local Government

Chief Fire Officers' Association

Local Government Association

Fire Brigades Union

UNISON

Asian Fire Service Association

Fire Officers' Association

National Disabled Fire Association

Networking Women in the Fire Service

Retained Firefighters Union

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Our vision

We will make fairness and inclusion fundamental to everything we do to ensure:

- That we reduce the impact of fire and other risks on all the communities we serve, by effective prevention, protection and emergency response
- That our workforce better reflects the diversity of the communities we serve
- That all our employees are equally respected and valued.

Our commitment

We are committed to deliver a transformed, effective and modern Fire and Rescue Service which:

- Works in partnership with all communities and other local services to protect the people we serve
- Understands and meets the needs of all the communities we serve
- Is fully engaged with its employees and the community in the development and delivery of its services and functions
- Ensures that equality and diversity are fully mainstreamed
- Encourages talented people from all parts of the community to join us and achieve their potential
- Has an inclusive culture in which everyone treats all colleagues and the public with equal dignity and respect
- Ensures all its policies, processes and practices are open and transparent and have undergone robust equality impact assessment
- Values and supports a diverse workforce through our commitment to fair and transparent recruitment and employment policies, practices and processes.

Our goals

By 2018 we want to ensure:

- We serve all communities to the highest standards tailored to their needs
- All communities know that the Service understands their needs and respects difference
- We encourage and value greater diversity and treat everyone with dignity and respect
- All employees know they are respected, supported and valued regardless of their age, disability, race, religion, belief, sexual orientation, gender or gender identity
- Instances of bullying, harassment, unfair discrimination or unacceptable behaviour are not tolerated in any part of the organisation and are dealt with effectively, fairly and swiftly
- We share understanding, commitment and action with our local, regional and national partners.

We will know we have succeeded when, for example:

- The rate of injury and death by fire among more vulnerable or high risk groups in society is falling and is closer to that within the population as a whole
- Employee and community surveys reflect positive attitudes about Fire and Rescue Service culture and service provision
- Gay, lesbian and bisexual employees have no concerns about being open about their sexuality at work
- Recruitment of minority ethnic employees is at the same percentage or higher than the representation in the working age population
- Recruitment of women in the operational sector is at least 15 per cent and rising
- Levels of retention and progression for employees from all backgrounds, and between men and women, are comparable
- Malicious calls and attacks on firefighters are falling.

Our core values

OUR VALUES

We value:

- Service to the community
- People
- Diversity
- Improvement.

SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

We value service to the community by:

- Working with all groups to reduce risk
- Treating everyone fairly and with respect
- Being answerable to those we serve
- Striving for excellence in all we do.

PEOPLE

We value all our employees by practicing and promoting:

- Fairness and respect
- Recognition of merit
- Honesty, integrity and mutual trust
- Personal development
- Co-operative and inclusive working.

DIVERSITY

We value diversity in the service and the community by:

- Treating everyone fairly and with respect
- Providing varying solutions for different needs and expectations
- Promoting equal opportunities in employment and progression within the Fire and Rescue Service
- Challenging prejudice and discrimination.

IMPROVEMENT

We value improvement at all levels of the service by:

- Accepting responsibility for our performance
- Being open-minded
- Considering criticism thoughtfully
- Learning from our experience
- Consulting others.

1. Why Equality and Diversity are important to the Fire and Rescue Service

1.1 Equality and Diversity are key issues for the Fire and Rescue Service. They must drive how we treat each other as members of the Service; how we treat each of our customers; how we interact with the diverse communities we serve, and how we deliver our services to those communities. To be an effective Service our policies, practices and procedures must be fair, providing equality of opportunity to all employees and an appropriate and effective service to all parts of the community.

Equality

- 1.2 As a public service provider we have a duty to strive to achieve equality of access, equality of impact and equality of outcome for all; in other words a service which equally meets the needs of all the people we serve.
- 1.3 As a public service employer we are more effective and efficient when all our staff feel valued and there is a culture of inclusion. Where people are encouraged and enabled to achieve their potential within the organisation they will be more motivated and more likely to want to stay. Consequently, we continue to benefit from the talent they bring to the organisation, increasing the Service's efficiency and effectiveness and reducing the costs of sickness absence, recruitment and training.

vision commitment goals values

1.4 It is also right to ensure that equality of opportunity exists for everyone; that people are treated with dignity, respect and fairness; that the working culture includes and benefits everyone, and that bullying, harassment, unfair discrimination and unacceptable behaviour are not tolerated.

Diversity

- 1.5 To protect the public effectively through prevention and emergency response we must fully understand the needs of the diverse communities we serve and plan and deliver our services to take account of those needs.
- 1.6 To develop this understanding we have to closely engage and communicate effectively with all our communities. This will not only help us to deliver a better quality of service but also create greater understanding of our preventative role and the support and advice we can provide. An effective relationship with all communities will help to prevent fire, reduce the risk of death and injury and the loss of property, and improve the Service's ability to respond to a wide range of emergencies. Effective engagement with all sections of the community is also likely to help in reducing instances of fire setting and attacks on firefighters.¹

¹ Evidence drawn from a number of Fire and Rescue Service initiatives including Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service's Threat Response Group and London Fire Brigade's Life Project.

- 1.7 By employing and retaining a workforce which better reflects the diversity of the local working population, we are not only gaining a greater understanding of their differing needs but also tapping into a much wider pool of skills, enabling us to compete with other employers in attracting the most talented people from across our communities.
- 1.8 The demographic make-up of our society is changing significantly. The proportion of the working age population from the Service's traditional recruitment pool (white, male, able-bodied and under 45) is falling. It will therefore become increasingly important for the Service to appeal as a career of choice to a far wider cross section of society, in order to attract the calibre of employees required to deliver a first-class service to all parts of the community.

Legal compliance

- 1.9 As public bodies, all Fire and Rescue Authorities have both general and specific legal duties to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination for service users and employees (see Annex – Key equalities legislation). Penalties for breaking the law, whether as individuals or as an organisation, can be severe. Failure to comply with the legal requirements will:
 - Reduce our ability to protect and serve the community because we will have a poorer understanding of its needs
 - Cause detriment to our employees, who may not have the equality of opportunity to develop their potential, and
 - Damage the standing and reputation of the Service.

2. Why do we need a National Strategy?

- 2.1 We fully recognise the contribution of all those throughout the Service who have worked hard to develop an organisation which is fair to everyone, values and supports equality and diversity and demonstrates real commitment to the Service's Core Values. Significant progress has been made on improving service delivery to diverse communities and on community engagement. However, equality and diversity have yet to be embedded within all the policies, procedures and practices of our organisation, and across all functions, from employment provisions to procurement and across all aspects of our service delivery.²
- 2.2 We still have a long way to go:
- The impact of fire is grossly disproportionate in some communities (for example we estimate that 30 per cent of fire deaths are people with limited mobility)³
 - Very small numbers of employees are from minority ethnic backgrounds (3.2 per cent compared to a national average working population of over 12 per cent – among senior staff this falls to 1 per cent as at March 2007)

² Updated Integrated Risk Management Planning guidance provides advice on ensuring equality and diversity issues are embedded within Fire and Rescue Service planning processes.

³ Department for Communities and Local Government Arson Control Forum Research Bulletin no. 9 Learning Lessons from Real Fires: Findings from Fatal Fire Investigation Reports – June 2006.

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- Very small numbers of women are operational firefighters (3.1 per cent dropping to 1 per cent for senior positions as at March 2007)
- Women and staff from minority ethnic backgrounds are less likely to be promoted (3.8 per cent of the white men in the operational sector of the Service in March 2007 were at station manager level compared to only 1 per cent of the operational women and 1.9 per cent of ethnic minority men)
- The number of gay, lesbian and bisexual Fire and Rescue Service staff who feel able to be open about their sexuality at work is less than 10 per cent of the national average.⁴

⁴ Drawn from information supplied by the Gay and Lesbian Committee of the Fire Brigades Union.

3. How was the National Strategy developed?

3.1 The Strategy has been developed under the leadership of the Equality and Diversity Project Board⁵, set up specifically to drive its delivery and implementation. The Strategy's content was informed by input from an extensive programme of stakeholder workshops involving a wide cross-section of Fire and Rescue Service employees and organisations and representatives of the wider community. As the Strategy has evolved it has been revised in the light of views from these groups and responses to the national consultation process.

3.2 The development of the Strategy has also been informed by:

- The Thematic Review on Equality and Fairness in the Fire Service (1999)
- The two National Action Plans, Toward Diversity I and 2 (2000 and 2001)
- The scoping study on leadership Bridging the Gap (2002)
- Fire and Rescue Service Core Values

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- Fire and Rescue Shared Vision towards 2017
- The Equality Standard for Local Government
- Direct input from a broad range of Service stakeholders
- Evidence from other organisations.⁶

⁵ Equality and Diversity Project Board membership: Communities and Local Government, Local Government Association, Chief Fire Officers' Association, Fire Brigades Union, UNISON, Equality and Diversity Stakeholder Group.

⁶ Met Police, Prison Service, Crown Prosecution Service, MOD, IDeA, BT, British Gas, NHS Scotland, Tesco, National Police Improvement Agency and Aviva.

4. What is the National Strategy?

- 4.1 This is a ten year high level Strategy which aims to meet the challenge to bring real, radical, lasting change to the Fire and Rescue Service in England. Progress will be assessed at least annually. The requirements of the Strategy will be kept under regular review.
- 4.2 The Strategy will improve not only the way we treat each other across all parts of the Service but also the effectiveness of the relationship we have with the public. It draws together and builds on existing work, both within the Service and elsewhere. It supports delivery of government commitments to promote equality and diversity, tackle disadvantage, and build cohesive and sustainable communities.

vision commitment goals values

- 4.3 The Strategy sets out a Vision for the Fire and Rescue Service and the Goals which must be met by 2018 to achieve this vision. It is designed to guide and support every Fire and Rescue Authority to deliver an effective service to everyone in the community and to treat all employees with fairness, dignity and respect. It also sets out our commitment, direction and goals for:
 - Employees
 - Local partners, including local authorities, other emergency services, and Local Strategic Partnerships
 - Local communities, especially the disadvantaged.
- 4.4 The Strategy builds on the Equality Standard for Local Government which sets out how local authorities can mainstream equality and diversity in policy, planning, service delivery and employment practice. It also incorporates the Fire and Rescue Service Core Values, (see page 8). These set out clear expectations for all employees and Authority Members on attitudes and behaviours, including valuing service to the community by working with all groups to reduce risk, and valuing diversity by treating everyone with fairness and respect.

- 4.5 The Strategy requires action in five priority areas, linked to the Core Values and to the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG):

Priority 1: Leadership and promoting inclusion

Positive leadership at all levels is essential to drive change, maintain commitment and ensure accountability. The role of Fire and Rescue Authority members and senior Fire and Rescue Service managers in promoting and championing equality and diversity is crucial to delivery. Members of Fire and Rescue Authorities and senior managers need to demonstrate their commitment to equality and diversity both through the impact of their personal behaviour and by making resources available to deliver the necessary changes. They must ensure all staff are clear about their role in making the Service a fair and inclusive organisation. Partnership between employers, representative bodies, staff associations, government and other agencies will be essential to provide effective support in achieving the required improvement in performance on equality and diversity.



Priority 2: Accountability

Driving change and developing confidence among employees and the public requires the accountability of everyone in the organisation. We will ensure that all Members of Fire and Rescue Authorities and all employees are held accountable for delivering this Strategy.

Priority 3: Effective service delivery and community engagement

Effective planning and engagement are key to improving the quality and effectiveness of service delivery to all communities. We will aim to tailor our services to meet the needs of the people we serve through sustained dialogue with them. We will rigorously assess and review our policies, plans, processes and procedures through the effective use of the Equality Impact Assessment process.

Priority 4: Employment and training

To recognise, understand and respond to the needs of all communities we must recruit, develop and retain a workforce which better reflects the diversity of the local community and respects difference. To demonstrate that we value and support our diverse workforce we will ensure open, transparent and fair selection and progression processes. We will provide sustained commitment to staff development. We will promote staff awareness of the need for equality, diversity and fairness, and robust action to eradicate bullying, harassment, unfair discrimination and unacceptable behaviours within our workforce. We will ensure that issues affecting culture, working practices, facilities, equipment, clothing etc are addressed so that all staff can work in a safe and supportive environment, in order to promote equality, diversity and fairness and maximise employee retention.

Priority 5: Evaluation and sharing good practice

Monitoring, evaluation and recognition of good practice are essential to ensure continuous improvement and make best use of resources, We will collect and analyse the evidence of improved performance and good practice, share it with others, celebrate successes and address failure.

5. Who is responsible for delivery against the Strategy?

5.1 The responsibility for delivering change rests with:

- At national level: Local Government Association, Chief Fire Officers' Association, representative bodies, Audit Commission and Communities and Local Government
- At local level: the Members of each Fire and Rescue Authority, the Chief Fire Officer, senior employees, and representative bodies
- Individual Fire and Rescue Service employees.

The Strategy sets out actions at each level for each of the five priorities.

5.2 Most Fire and Rescue Authorities (Combined Fire Authorities and Metropolitan Fire Authorities) are autonomous local authorities, but 14 Fire and Rescue Authorities form part of a County Council. County Councils like all local authorities, have public duties under equalities legislation which their structures and reporting arrangements will be designed to help deliver. However it is recognised that County Fire and Rescue Authorities may have difficulties in reporting in the same format, as other Fire and Rescue Authorities.

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- 5.3 Fire and Rescue Authorities will need to work with partners to deliver the Strategy. The Local Government White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, published in October 2006, sets out how local public services are expected to work together in the future. In particular there will be new requirements in the Local Government and Public Health Bill, if enacted, to ensure that all partners engage in and deliver on a shared agenda for their communities.
- 5.4 The Local Strategic Partnership brings together local authorities, Fire and Rescue Authorities, and other partners in each upper tier local authority area. Local Strategic Partnerships provide the forum for setting the strategic vision for an area, for capturing that vision in the Sustainable Community Strategy, and for agreeing a set of priorities for improvement in the action plan, known as a Local Area Agreement (LAA), which will reflect the needs of their communities. LAAs can be an effective way for Fire and Rescue Authorities to implement the requirements of the National Framework and the Equality and Diversity Strategy on service delivery to diverse communities. From 2008, local authorities also have a duty to consult partners and stakeholders, including Fire and Rescue Authorities, when compiling their Sustainable Community Strategies and in determining LAA targets.

The role of Regional Management Boards

5.5 At regional level, Fire and Rescue Authorities will need to work together through Regional Management Boards (RMBs) to support delivery of the Strategy's goals. Many RMBs already have regional equality strategies and action plans and co-ordinate work in their regions on joint awareness raising, outreach and community engagement. RMBs can contribute to improved performance on equality and diversity in many ways including:

- Undertaking an annual progress review on equality and diversity across the region
- Requiring all proposals to the Regional Management Board to be equality impact assessed and appropriate action to be taken on the outcomes
- Ensuring all shared services such as training and procurement are equality impact assessed
- Supporting regional collaboration on national processes for recruitment, development and progression
- Co-ordinating collaboration on awareness campaigns, positive action and recruitment to reduce costs and reach the widest pool of talent

- Consulting and involving community groups and representative bodies
- Supporting the development and dissemination of good practice on community engagement and service delivery, and
- Co-ordinating and supporting regular peer review.

6. How will the requirements of the Strategy be implemented?

6.1 The National Framework will require Fire and Rescue Authorities to implement the Equality and Diversity Strategy. Fire and Rescue Authorities are required to have regard to the National Framework by section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

6.2 In addition to implementing the Strategy as a whole the key requirements of the National Framework are that Fire and Rescue Authorities:

- Ensure that their Integrated Risk Management Plans and all other plans, policies, practices and procedures are effectively equality impact assessed and appropriate action is taken to remove or mitigate any adverse impact
- Produce and at least annually review an action plan for implementation of the Strategy, and report to the Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority on progress
- Carry out and record individual performance reviews annually for each member of staff which include an assessment of performance against agreed annual objectives, including equality and diversity objectives.

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- Provide annually to Communities and Local Government evidence of progress on equality and diversity for publication in the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Report including:
 - statistical information on recruitment, progression and retention of employees across all diversity strands, and
 - qualitative information on policies, procedures, practices and processes which support equality and diversity as evidence of progress made.

6.3 The Strategy requires action planning, monitoring and reporting on all strands of diversity, in order to ensure that Fire and Rescue Authorities have taken into account the full breadth of action open to them to improve their performance on equality and diversity. But the requirements of the National Framework and the Strategy are not intended to create new or separate processes of planning, monitoring and reporting, with implications for resources. They build on the existing statutory duties of Fire and Rescue Authorities to produce race, gender and disability equality schemes, including action plans, and to monitor and report on progress in these areas. Fire and Rescue Authorities will also be able to draw on self assessments submitted to the Audit Commission.

6.4 For Fire and Rescue Authorities which seek the ESLG, monitoring and reporting on all diversity strands is already required to provide evidence for assessment. Those already involved in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index will have a further source of evidence on which to draw for the reporting process.

Role of the Audit Commission, Communities and Local Government and the Equalities and Human Rights Commission

6.5 The Audit Commission will assess Fire and Rescue Authorities' performance in implementing the requirements of the Strategy through the Fire and Rescue Service performance assessment framework. The Commission's scored Direction of Travel Assessment will state how well the Authority has performed since the last assessment and whether it is considered that it will continue to improve. Scores will be linked to progress on equality and diversity and achievement of the ESLG. For example Fire and Rescue Authorities will not normally be assessed as improving strongly without reaching ESLG Level 3.

6.6 Communities and Local Government will review progress on equality and diversity by each Fire and Rescue Authority annually, including against workforce diversity targets. The review will be based on reports submitted by every Fire and Rescue Authority and annual assessment by the Audit Commission. The review, including evidence on progress in each Fire and Rescue Authority, will be published annually as the national Equality and Diversity Report for the Fire and Rescue Service.

6.7 As mentioned at paragraph 1.9, as public sector organisations and employees we remain subject to the full range of equalities legislation. Breaches of the legislation can lead to penalties which can include significant fines or imprisonment. But our ambition, as set out in this Strategy, is not merely to meet the legal requirements but to create a truly inclusive Service which serves all communities equally and to the highest standards.

6.8 To encourage and promote the requirements of the wide range of equalities legislation the Equality and Human Rights Commission was established under the provisions of the Equality Act 2006. The Commission has new powers to enforce legislation and to encourage and promote equality for all.

6.9 As an integrated and independent single body with new powers, it brings together and adds to the work of the Commission for Racial Equality, Disability Rights Commission and Equal Opportunities Commission.

6.10 The Equality Act empowers the Commission to carry out a number of functions and to enforce the law. The general powers conferred on the Commission are to provide information, advice, undertake research, and provide education and training. Specifically the Commission may:

- Issue codes of practice, to help others interpret and abide by laws relating to discrimination and human rights [Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976, Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003]
- Carry out inquiries into any matters relating to their statutory duties or give grants or legal assistance in order to take cases forward
- Enforce the law by carrying out investigations. If an investigation is set to find that an unlawful act has taken place the Commission can require an individual to carry out an action plan to remedy the situation. This requirement can be backed up through a county court (in England and Wales) or sheriff (in Scotland)
- Assess compliance with public sector duties, to ensure public authorities comply with the duties to eliminate discrimination under the main anti-discrimination acts.



7. Monitoring and Reporting of Performance

- 7.1 As set out at paragraph 6.2, Fire and Rescue Authorities will need to provide evidence of progress with regard to service delivery, employment practices and corporate provisions (procurement etc). This evidence will need to be submitted to Communities and Local Government annually for inclusion in the published Equality and Diversity Report. Details of the information required and how this is to be supplied will be issued in separate guidance. The information required will be both qualitative (eg how changes in policies, practices and procedures are making a material difference to staff and/or community groups) and quantitative (eg statistics showing improvements in the numbers of staff with disabilities who have achieved promotion during the year).
- 7.2 One of the quantitative indicators of progress will be the performance of Fire and Rescue Authorities against specific employment targets. The employment targets (set out at paragraphs 7.4 to 7.7) have been set following national consultation. They are intended to focus Authorities on action required in areas of particular concern because of evidence of exceptionally low representation, notably women in the operational sector and minority ethnic staff across all sectors of the workforce.

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- 7.3 Whilst specific targets have not been set to measure performance in relation to the other equality strands (age, disability, gender identity, religion or belief and sexual orientation) and for women in non-operational roles, monitoring progress in these areas will nonetheless be a key method of identifying improvements across the organisation. The resulting statistical information, as with information on performance against the workforce diversity targets, will be required to be included in the annual Equality and Diversity Report to be published by Communities and Local Government.

Employment targets

- 7.4 Previous targets for women in operational roles and minority ethnic employees have aimed to measure change in the overall composition of the workforce, which remains our goal. But to focus effort on factors which can be significantly changed in the short term we have adopted targets on recruitment, retention and progression to be met by 2013. We will consider new targets for the second half of the Strategy's life depending on progress.

- 7.5 The targets to be met by each Fire and Rescue Authority are:
- a) By 2013, a minimum of 15 per cent of new entrants to the operational sector to be women.
 - b) By 2013, recruitment of minority ethnic staff across the whole organisation to be at the same percentage as the minority ethnic representation in the local working population.⁷
 - c) Fire and Rescue Authorities with very low minority ethnic working age populations and low recruitment requirements may set a target in terms of individuals recruited over the five year period rather than a percentage of total recruitment.
 - d) By 2013 parity in rates of retention and progression between minority ethnic and white employees, and between men and women.
- 7.6 In addition, Fire and Rescue Authorities may set their own target or targets to measure the proportion of all applications received which come from under-represented groups (attraction targets).
- 7.7 Each Fire and Rescue Authority will be responsible for setting its own minority ethnic recruitment targets⁸ based either on the provisions at 7.5 b) or c). Guidance on setting targets will be provided.
- 7.8 By adopting these targets we aim in the long term to change the composition of the Fire and Rescue Service workforce so that it includes the same percentage of minority ethnic employees as in the working age population (currently 12%) and 15 per cent of women in operational roles (as an achievable basis for further action).

⁷ A series of regional workshops will take place in Summer 2008 to provide guidance and support to Fire and Rescue Authorities in identifying and setting appropriate employment targets for their area.

⁸ "Minority ethnic" targets include all applicants, recruits and employees who identify themselves as falling within Other White, Mixed, Asian or Asian British, Black or Black British, Chinese or other ethnic group (National Census Classifications).

7.9 The targets set out at paragraph 7.5 are the minimum required under the National Framework. To encourage Fire and Rescue Authorities to strive for more rapid improvement in the diversity of their workforce, Communities and Local Government will allocate an additional capital grant payment to those Fire and Rescue Authorities that commit to the achievement of higher recruitment targets. Those higher targets will be 18 per cent for women in the operational sector and between 2 and 5 per cent above the local working age population for minority ethnic staff across all sections of the Service.⁹

7.10 To provide additional support and encouragement to make the necessary improvement in workforce diversity at all levels, Communities and Local Government and partners will develop the following initiatives:

- Graduate Entry and High Potential Development schemes
- Awareness raising campaigns to encourage people from under-represented groups to consider the Fire and Rescue Service as a career.

Further information on these initiatives will be published in due course.

⁹ A minimum of £42,000 in capital grant will be allocated in 2009/10 or 2010/11 to those Fire and Rescue Authorities which make a commitment to achieving the following targets:

- By 2013 a minimum of 18% of new entrants to the operational service to be women.
- By 2013 recruitment of minority ethnic staff across the whole organisation to be at 2 to 5% above the minority ethnic representation in the local working population.

Details of how FRAs can apply for this additional grant and the method by which it will be allocated will be announced shortly.

Priority 1

Leadership and promoting inclusion

(i) At National level:

- Communities and Local Government will provide, through the National Framework, clear direction to the Fire and Rescue Service on equality, diversity and fairness
- Communities and Local Government will monitor and review and publish progress in the annual national report
- Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association and the Chief Fire Officers' Association will ensure that a national champion for equality and diversity is identified and supported
- the Local Government Association, the Chief Fire Officers' Association and Communities and Local Government will ensure the provision of appropriate leadership training, informed throughout by equality and diversity, is developed and implemented for senior Fire and Rescue Service employees and members of the Fire and Rescue Authority
- the Local Government Association, the Chief Fire Officers' Association and Communities and Local Government, in partnership with representative bodies, will ensure provision of national guidance as needed to support action on equality and diversity¹⁰
- Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association, the Chief Fire Officers' Association and representative bodies will ensure that all national plans, policies, practices and procedures are equality impact assessed
- The Fire Service College will ensure that all training delivered or procured by the College is equality impact assessed and promotes equality, diversity and fairness
- FireBuy will ensure that equality issues are fully considered in the procurement of goods and services.

¹⁰ Eg forthcoming guidance on Integrated Risk Management will provide guidance on ensuring equality and diversity issues are mainstreamed across the organisation.

(ii) Each Fire and Rescue Authority will:

- Develop an equality and diversity action plan for implementation of the Strategy, which ensures that equality and diversity are embedded in all parts of the organisation, is compatible with current equalities legislation, covers all strands of diversity and all Fire and Rescue Authority business (including employment practice, procurement and service delivery) and is reviewed at least annually
- Report to Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority on progress on equality and diversity at least annually
- Review progress against statutory equality schemes as required by legislation
- Ensure all employees are aware of and understand the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service Core Values
- Ensure Members of Fire and Rescue Authorities and Chief Fire Officers undertake appropriate training in order to perform their role effectively in promoting equality, diversity and fairness and providing leadership to others
- Ensure that those with leadership responsibilities or potential have the opportunity and encouragement to develop their skills
- Ensure resources for Human Resources and equality and diversity functions are sufficient to deliver fair and effective employment practices

- Ensure all managers across the organisation are aware of their role in promoting equality and diversity and of their obligation to ensure that all Fire and Rescue Authority plans, practices and procedures relating to any Fire and Rescue Service function undergo effective equality impact assessment
- Ensure that equality and diversity issues are fully considered in the procurement of goods and services
- Fully consult with representative bodies with regards to all equality, diversity and fairness issues in order to develop a partnership approach.

(iii) Each individual will:

- Treat others with dignity and respect in accordance with the Core Values
- Undertake their role in promoting equality and diversity and ensure any practice or procedure they have responsibility for is effectively equality impact assessed
- Challenge and report inappropriate behaviours.



(iv) Outcomes will include:

- The culture of the Fire and Rescue Service is open and inclusive, evidenced, for example, by the results of employee and community surveys, data on recruitment, progression and retention, and qualitative information on Fire and Rescue Service policies, practices and procedures
- Everyone, from Members of Fire and Rescue Authorities and Chief Fire Officers to the most junior member of staff, will be committed to equality, diversity and fairness and understand what is required of them, demonstrated, for example, through the outcomes of personal performance and identified through performance appraisal
- Equality and diversity considerations are routinely taken into account as part of the decision making process at all levels
- All our communities will have confidence in the leadership of the Fire and Rescue Service and its commitment to equality, diversity and fairness, indicated, for example, through a reduction in complaints, outcomes of community surveys and parity in performance on fire safety provision/ community engagement across all sections of the community
- All employees will have confidence in the leadership of senior managers and their commitment to equality, diversity and fairness, evidenced, for example, through the outcomes of staff surveys.

Priority 2

Accountability

(i) At National level:

- Communities and Local Government will keep the provisions within the National Framework referring to Equality and Diversity under review
- The Audit Commission will assess performance of all Fire and Rescue Authorities against the requirements of the National Framework
- Communities and Local Government will review progress annually and publish an annual report, including progress against targets by all Fire and Rescue Authorities
- Communities and Local Government will make the annual Equality and Diversity report available on its website
- The Local Government Association and the Chief Fire Officers' Association will co-ordinate and support regular peer review for all Fire and Rescue Authorities, involving other public, private or voluntary bodies as appropriate.

(ii) Each Fire and Rescue Authority will:

- Require a report to be made to Authority Members, at least annually, on the implementation of the Equality and Diversity Strategy and statutory equality schemes
- Report to Communities and Local Government annually by the end of September on improvements to service delivery and employment practice, including progress against the employment targets
- Make evidence available to the public annually on improvements to service delivery and employment practice, including progress against the employment targets through its website
- Ensure that all employees including Chief Fire Officers have annual performance appraisals with annual objectives including for equality and diversity
- Demonstrate compliance with employment and equalities legislation and specifically the public duties for disability, gender and race and review progress in its Integrated Risk Management Plan
- Ensure that bullying, harassment, unfair discrimination and unacceptable behaviours are dealt with fairly, quickly and transparently
- Seek regular peer review (at least once every three years).

(iii) Each individual will:

- Meet his or her equality and diversity objectives
- Understand and comply with legal requirements on age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

(iv) Outcomes will include, for example:

- Audit Commission holds Fire and Rescue Authorities accountable for progress against National Framework requirements
- All employees are held accountable for specific action to promote equality and diversity through annual appraisal
- Fire and Rescue Authorities hold Chief Fire Officers accountable for progress against Equality Action Plan
- Public and stakeholders hold Fire and Rescue Authorities accountable for progress reported in the Integrated Risk Management Plans
- Employees hold Fire and Rescue Authorities accountable for progress in Equality Action Plan.



Priority 3

Effective service delivery and community engagement

(i) At National level:

- Communities and Local Government will involve community and voluntary groups in policy development including members of minority ethnic, religious, disabled, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities, men and women, and all age groups
- Communities and Local Government and the Chief Fire Officers' Association will ensure provision of guidance on developing and reviewing policies, practices and procedures, including Integrated Risk Management Planning, to support Fire and Rescue Service in providing effective service delivery to all communities tailored to their needs
- Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association, the Chief Fire Officers' Association, and representative bodies will ensure that all national policies, plans, and procedures are equality impact assessed.

(ii) Each Fire and Rescue Authority will:

PLANNING

- Ensure equality of service to all sections of the community
- Identify and take account of the needs of the full range of communities it serves
- Assess the impact of all new policies, plans, procedures and practices to ensure effective service delivery to all communities, tailored to their needs
- Review all policies, plans, procedures and practices regularly
- In particular, ensure that the Integrated Risk Management Plan takes full account of the needs of local communities and that all aspects of the planning process have been effectively equality impact assessed
- Implement procedures to ensure progress review for service delivery in its Integrated Risk Management Plan.

ENGAGEMENT

- Consistently communicate progress on service delivery to all local communities, including targeted communication
- Ensure complaints are dealt with quickly, fairly and transparently

- Work with partner agencies and community advocates within local communities to improve/create new ways of communicating with community groups
- Monitor and take action on community perceptions and satisfaction identified through surveys, complaints procedures etc.

TRAINING AND AWARENESS

- Provide all employees with appropriate training and development to build skills and confidence in delivering a service which is effective in meeting the needs of all local communities and is in accordance with legal requirements
- Communicate clearly and consistently with staff to raise awareness and understanding of local community issues and the actions needed to address them.

(iii) Each individual will:

- Access training appropriate to their role to enable them to deliver services effectively
- Behave appropriately and respectfully to members of the public and colleagues.

(iv) Outcomes will include for example:

- An informed, aware, listening, open and approachable Fire and Rescue Service

- Reduction of fire incidents, deaths and injuries across all communities with emphasis on bringing comparable success rates within at risk and/or hard to reach communities
- Reduced malicious calls and attacks on firefighters
- All communities value and engage with the Fire and Rescue Service.

Priority 4

Employment and training

(i) At National level:

- Communities and Local Government will monitor and report annually on progress on recruitment, retention and progression across all the diversity strands, including the workforce diversity targets
- Communities and Local Government will keep the workforce diversity targets under review
- Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association and the Chief Fire Officers' Association will support the implementation and development, as necessary, of national procedures for recruitment, development and progression

- Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association and the Chief Fire Officers' Association will work together with representative bodies and staff associations to ensure a partnership approach.

(ii) Each Fire and Rescue Authority will:

- Undertake awareness campaigns and positive action to support and encourage applications from currently under represented groups
- Use national processes for recruitment, development and promotion of staff
- Review and equality impact assess employment policies, practices and procedures to ensure they are robust, fair and effective, using monitoring data including information derived from exit interviews
- Assess all aspects of the working environment (including equipment, travel, training, clothing, facilities, food etc) to ensure all employees receive the support and tailored resources necessary to work to the best of their ability
- Where necessary, Fire and Rescue Authorities will undertake equal pay audits as required by the Equal Pay Act and take steps to ensure staff are paid appropriately for undertaking work of equal value
- Carry out annual individual performance reviews based on the relevant role maps for all employees (up to and

including Chief Fire Officers), including equality and diversity objectives, to provide evidence of fair progression

- Provide all employees with training and development on equality, diversity and fairness issues including those relating to harassment, bullying, unfair discrimination and unacceptable behaviours
- Provide training for all managers, and where necessary Fire and Rescue Authority members, on handling grievances and disciplinary cases and on tackling bullying, harassment, unfair discrimination and unacceptable behaviours
- Communicate regularly with employees to raise awareness and understanding of workforce equality and diversity issues for the Fire and Rescue Authority and the actions needed to address them.

(iii) Each individual will:

- Engage constructively with managers and colleagues in undertaking the annual performance review process
- Challenge and report bullying, harassment, unfair discrimination and unacceptable behaviours.

(iv) Outcomes will include, for example:

- Improved diversity of applicants and recruits
- Greater equality in promotion and retention for employees across all backgrounds

- Progression based on merit, including a requirement for applicants to demonstrate evidence of promoting equality
- Increase in numbers of employees returning to work after maternity leave
- Comparable retention rates for employees across all backgrounds (age, ethnicity, disability, gender, religion and sexual orientation)
- Reduced bullying and harassment (based on employee surveys) and related sickness absence
- All aspects of the workplace support all employees to work to the best of their ability.

Priority 5

Evaluation and sharing good practice

(i) At National level:

- Communities and Local Government will collect data on recruitment, progression and retention and qualitative information on progress in equality, diversity and fairness from all Fire and Rescue Authorities
- Communities and Local Government will review progress annually and publish an annual Equality and Diversity Report for the Fire and Rescue Service

- The Practitioners' Forum will review progress by the Fire and Rescue Service on equality and diversity at least annually
- Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association and the Chief Fire Officers' Association will jointly sponsor the annual Equality and Diversity Awards, which recognise outstanding performance, practice and innovation
- Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association and the Chief Fire Officers' Association will co-ordinate and support the evaluation and dissemination of good practice.

(ii) Each Fire and Rescue Authority will:

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- Collect and submit to Communities and Local Government qualitative and quantitative evidence of improvements to service delivery for inclusion in the annual Equality and Diversity Report for the Fire and Rescue Service
- Collect and submit to Communities and Local Government evidence of improvements to employment practice in relation to all staff, including progress against the employment targets and in respect of all other roles where monitoring is required, for all diversity strands for inclusion in the annual Equality and Diversity Report

- Review, monitor and evaluate policies, practices, plans and procedures to assess their impact on equality, diversity and fairness (ie undertake robust equality impact assessment)
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of processes and procedures for dealing with bullying, harassment, unfair discrimination and unacceptable behaviours
- Undertake employee and community surveys, in partnership with representative bodies, to measure perceptions of the Fire and Rescue Service as an employer and service provider and to assess the level of effective engagement with employee and community representatives
- Ensure that the provisions for collection and storage of personal information are secure and that the organisational culture encourages and supports members of staff to disclose personal diversity data.

REPORTING AND RECOGNITION

- Recognise and celebrate local and national achievements
- Work with local, regional and national partners to promote and share good practice
- Communicate clearly and consistently with employees to raise their awareness, including on the reasons for action on issues of equality and diversity, on progress made and of successes.

(iv) Each individual will:

- Draw attention to potential good practice
- Seek support and advice as needed to deal with equality and diversity issues in their day to day work
- Complete frankly and return promptly workforce monitoring and employee survey questionnaires.

(v) Outcomes will include, for example:

- Greater efficiency and effectiveness through sound evidence and dissemination of good practice
- Public, stakeholders and employees informed and involved at local, regional and national levels.

Annex

Key equalities legislation

Equal Pay Act 1970

Entitles an individual to the same contractual pay and benefits as a person of the opposite sex working in the same employment and doing equal work or work of equal value.

Sex Discrimination Act 1975

Prohibits sex discrimination against individuals in the areas of employment, education, and the provision of goods, facilities, services and premises.

Race Relations Act 1976

Makes discrimination on grounds of race unlawful in the areas of employment, education, and the provision of goods, facilities, services, and premises.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Prohibits discrimination against disabled people in the areas of employment, provision of goods, facilities, services and premises, education and transport.

Human Rights Act 1998

Anyone who feels that their rights have been breached by a public authority under the Act can take the authority to court.

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Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999

Provides protection from discrimination to those who have undergone, are currently undergoing, or intend to undergo, gender reassignment on the grounds of sex, in matters of pay and treatment in employment and vocational training.

Race Relations Amendment Act 2000

Places a general duty on public authorities to promote race equality throughout all their functions.

Part time Workers Regulations 2000

Ensures that all part time workers are entitled to equal terms and conditions of employment as full time workers.

Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

Make it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against or harass a job applicant or employee on grounds of religion or belief (defined as any religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief).

Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003

Make it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against or harass a job applicant or employee on grounds of their sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation (defined as sexual orientation towards persons of the same sex, opposite sex or same sex and opposite sex).

Disability Discrimination Act (Amendment) Regulations 2003

All employers and service providers have to make reasonable adjustments to physical features of their premises to overcome any barriers to access.

Civil Partnership Act 2004

Allows same-sex couples to make a formal, legal commitment to each other by forming a civil partnership providing them with the same rights and responsibilities as opposite sex couples who enter into a civil marriage.

Gender Recognition Act 2004

Allows transsexual people to apply for full legal recognition in their acquired gender. The Act also defines an individual's gender history as protected information, prohibiting employers from disclosing it.

Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

Prohibits discrimination on grounds of age in employment and training and provide greater rights for employees with regard to requesting to work beyond the normal age for retirement.

Equality Act 2006

Includes the creation of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of religion or belief or sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities and services the management of premises, education and the exercise of public functions. It also places a positive duty on public authorities to promote equality between genders throughout all their functions.

Gender and Gender Identity

The Equality Act 2006 places a duty on public authorities to promote gender equality in all their functions.

The *general duty* includes the requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, eliminate harassment, and promote equality of opportunity.

The *specific duties* include the requirement to:

- Publish a Gender Equality Scheme, which is the central framework to help achieve the general duty
- Conduct impact assessments for gender equality.

Employment duty: public authorities need to ensure that they have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment in their employment practices and actively promote gender equality within their workplace. This includes discrimination on grounds of gender reassignment. They also need to consider the need to include objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap (Equal Pay Act 1970).

Public Authorities are responsible for ensuring that all functions carried out by external suppliers meet the general duties of the Act.

The first scheme had to be published by 30 April 2007 and must be reviewed and revised every three years.

Public Authorities must report on progress annually.



Race

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places a duty on public authorities to promote race equality in policy making, service delivery, regulation and employment.

The *general duty* is a requirement to: eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and promote good race relations between different racial groups.

The *specific duties* include:

- Public authorities within England and Wales to publish a Race Equality Scheme
- The requirement to conduct an assessment of the impact of their current or intended policies, programmes and service delivery for any disadvantageous experiences or outcomes of minority ethnic groups and to take action to remove inequalities
- Public Authorities are responsible for ensuring all functions carried out by external suppliers meet the general duties of the Act

- An *employment duty*: to monitor the numbers of staff by reference to racial groups in relation to: staff in post, applicants for employment, training and promotion, those in receipt of training, benefit or detriment suffered as a result of performance assessment procedures, those involved in grievance procedures, being those subject to disciplinary procedures, and those who leave. Authorities should analyse the data to find patterns of inequality, take necessary action to remove barriers and promote equality of opportunity and publish the results of the monitoring each year.

The first scheme had to be published by 31 May 2002, and is required to be reviewed every three years. There is no statutory requirement to report annually on race equality; however, it is good practice to do so. Annual publication of employment monitoring statistics is, however, required.

Disability

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 places a duty on public authorities to promote disability equality in policy making, service delivery, regulation and employment.

The *general duty* includes: promotion of equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons, elimination of unlawful disability discrimination, elimination of unlawful disability harassment, promotion of positive attitudes towards disabled persons, encouraging participation of disabled persons in public life, and taking steps to take account of disabled person's disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than others.

The *specific duties* require:

- Public sector authorities are required to publish a Disability Equality Scheme. This should form the main framework to help them in achieving the general duty
- Schemes are required to include arrangements for impact assessment with regards to disadvantageous experiences or outcomes of people with disabilities
- **Employment:** Public authorities must also set out arrangements for gathering information on the effect of their policies and practices on the recruitment, development and retention of their disabled employees. They are required to collect statistics on disabled applicants for employment, staff in post, employees who cease employment, those who receive training, suffer detriment as a result of performance assessment, are involved in grievance procedures, are subject to disciplinary procedures. Authorities should analyse the data and consider where there are differences between disabled and non-disabled staff, investigate the reasons for this and take action to remedy it
- Public Authorities are responsible for ensuring all functions carried out by external suppliers meet the general duties of the Act.

Disability Equality Schemes must be reviewed every three years. Public Authorities are required to publish a report annually.

There is a requirement on public authorities to involve disabled people in all key aspects of the development of their schemes. There is also a requirement to involve (not just consult) disabled people in the development of policies, practices, procedures etc which may have an impact upon them.

The DDA 1995 also sets out the requirement of public authorities to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled people where a provision, criterion or practice applied by the employer places a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with people who are not disabled.

Note: Although the specific duties require public authorities to conduct impact assessments for race, disability and gender it is good practice to assess for an adverse impact across all equality strands (ie to include Age, Religion or Belief and Sexual Orientation). It is also good practice to monitor employment data across all equality strands, exceeding the statutory requirements of just Race, Disability and Gender.



Photo credits

Thank you to those Fire and Rescue Services who responded to our request for images for inclusion in this strategy document.



West Yorkshire Fire Service (*Front Cover*)



The Fire Service College (*Page 14*)



West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service Photographic (*Page 20*)



West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service Photographic (*Page 26*)



Merseyside Fire Service (*Page 28*)



West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service Photographic (*Page 36*)



West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service Photographic (*Page 38*)

vision commitment goals values



Appendix C

A survey of current and ex-firefighters in England

In November 2006 the Department for Communities and Local Government commissioned an external research company (ICM Research) to undertake a survey of serving firefighters and those that had recently left the Fire and Rescue Service.

In order to undertake the project a strategy was devised that sampled all serving women firefighters in England and a random sample of serving men, as well as all women firefighters leaving the Service in the past three years and all men that left the Service in the past year.

A total of 8,901 questionnaires were sent out in June 2007 and 1,869 usable returns were received, which gives a response rate of 21 per cent and a profile of respondents that closely matched the actual profile of the current workforce in England..

Joining the Fire and Rescue Service

Academic qualifications of firefighters

More than one-half of the respondents (53%) possessed CSE/GCSE/GCE/O levels/NVQ 1-3 qualifications. However, women tended to have higher qualifications than men and those recruited in the preceding nine years were more likely to have higher qualifications than those with ten or more years' service.

Job prior to joining the Service

Almost nine out of ten respondents (87%) worked in another job before they joined the Fire and Rescue Service.

Reasons for joining the Service

Almost two-thirds (64%) of respondents joined the Service because they wanted to do a worthwhile job; more than one-half (56%) wanted a job that the community valued.

New recruits' links to existing staff in the Service

Almost three-fifths of respondents (58%) reported that when they joined the Service, either a family member (23%) or a friend (42%) was a member of the Service.¹

Staying in the Service

Almost two-thirds (65%) expected to stay in the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) for their whole career when they first joined the Service, while a further 9 per cent expected to spend more than 20 years. Across the survey, men (66%) were more likely to expect to spend their entire career in the Service compared to women (50%).

Equality and diversity

Just over one-quarter of respondents (28%) believed that attracting a diverse workforce to the Service was important, compared to 26 per cent that believed it was not important, with 46 per cent believing it was neither important nor unimportant. Women and those aged 18-34 years were more likely to believe that attracting a diverse workforce was important. However, 31 per cent of senior managers and 73 per cent of managers responding to the survey believed that attracting a diverse workforce was either unimportant or neither important or unimportant.

Being a firefighter

Skills needed to be a firefighter

Respondents across a range of demographic characteristics, such as gender and age typically agreed about the skills needed to be a firefighter. While sense of humour (79%), being emotionally strong (70%) and being brave (52%) were important, around nine out of ten respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that the ability to work in a team (98%), good decision-making (94%), self discipline (94%), problem solving (91%), manual dexterity (90%) and physical strength (89%) were seen as more important skills or attributes.

Promotion

A greater proportion of respondents reported that promotion was more important to them now (40%) than it was when they originally joined the Service (27%).

¹ Respondents could select more than one answer category.

Applying for promotions

Almost three-fifths of respondents (59%) had applied or considered applying for promotion, with higher proportions of day duty, flexible duty and day crew staff applying compared with shift duty and retained duty system staff. The data shows that when men and women applied for promotion, they were equally likely to be successful. However higher proportions of men (59%) had applied for promotion when compared to women (36%).

Of those that had not applied for promotion or assessment centres, almost three-fifths (59%) reported that the reason for this was that they were happy in the job they were currently employed to do. However almost one-quarter of respondents (24%) reported that the reason they had not applied for promotion was that they had no confidence in the promotion process.

Working as a firefighter

Seven in ten (70%) respondents were “happy” at work, with retained duty system staff, those with up to four years’ service, those aged 18-34 years and those aged 55 years and over the happiest at work.

Almost two-thirds of respondents (64%) found the work of a firefighter “challenging”.

However 14 per cent of respondents did not find their work “enjoyable”, with slightly higher proportions of those with 10 or more years’ service and 45-54 year olds reporting this. In contrast, men were more likely than women to not enjoy their work.

One in six respondents (15%) did not feel “valued” by their colleagues at work, with women more likely to state this than men.

More than one-quarter of serving respondents (26%) were thinking about leaving the Service. Among this group, disabled staff, senior managers, 45-54 year olds and flexible duty staff were most likely to be thinking about leaving.²

Working relationships

The majority of respondents enjoyed good working relationships with their peers. Four-fifths of respondents (80%) reported that the working relationship they had with others on their watch was either “very good” or “good”.

Two-thirds of respondents (66%) rated the working relationship with control staff as either “very good” or “good”, while just over two-fifths of respondents (44%) rated the working relationship with headquarters staff as either “very good” or “good”.

However, there were some issues regarding how line and senior managers were viewed by the staff they manage, with firefighters more likely to report that their relationships with these people are “poor” or “very poor”. Just under two-fifths of respondents (37%) rated the working relationship with their principal officers as “very good” or “good”.

² The was asked as part of a general attitudinal question. Different more detailed questions on leaving and transferring were asked later in the questionnaire.

Behaviours

The qualitative and quantitative data from the survey highlights unacceptable behaviours³ at all levels across the FRS, as well as a significant proportion of managers and senior operational staff that saw or heard or even experienced these behaviours.

Witnessing behaviours

The data shows that respondents saw or heard the following behaviours between FRS staff at work at least once in the 12 months preceding the survey: verbal assaults (witnessed by 58%); bullying and harassment (51%); the use and distribution of pornography (39%); age discrimination (23%); gender discrimination (21%); discrimination on grounds of sexuality (14%); racial discrimination (13%); and physical assaults (11%). In all cases, women and other under-represented groups in the Service saw or heard these behaviours more often than their colleagues.

The data also showed that these behaviours were happening frequently for a significant proportion of respondents, with around one-quarter of all respondents (23%) saw or heard any one of these behaviours “all the time” or “often”. Again, women, those with a disability and lesbian, gay and bisexual staff were most likely to see or hear these behaviours at work ‘all of the time’.

Directly experiencing behaviours

The data showed that more than one-fifth of respondents reported that they had been bullied or harassed (32%), received unwelcome comments about their appearance (28%) or were verbally abused at work (25%) in the previous 12 months.

More than one-half of respondents (53%) reported that they had directly experienced at least one of the unacceptable behaviours in the previous 12 months, with 16 per cent experiencing four or more of these behaviours. Again, women, those with a disability and lesbian, gay and bisexual staff were most likely to have experienced these behaviours at work.

The data showed that managers were seeing or hearing and experiencing these behaviours at the same levels as firefighters and respondents reported that a significant proportion of managers were committing these behaviours in the workplace. In more than one-half of cases (51%) the behaviours detailed were committed by either senior colleagues (38%) or line managers (29%).⁴

For women experiencing these behaviours, it was most likely to be firefighters on their watch that were committing the behaviours, while for men experiencing the behaviours it was most likely that managers and senior colleagues were the perpetrators.

³ These include: unwelcome comments about appearance; gestures; physical contact; verbal assaults; bullying or harassment; pornographic or sexually explicit material; age, gender, religious, disability or racial discrimination; physical or sexual assaults; unwelcome attempts to establish a sexual relationship; better treatment in return for a sexual relationship.

⁴ Respondents could select more than one answer category.

For wholetime duty system staff, managers were typically committing the behaviours, while for retained duty system staff it was other firefighters at their station who were committing the behaviours. Finally, for managers and senior managers, it was their managers that were most likely to be committing the behaviours.

The effect of the behaviours on individuals

Of those that personally experienced the behaviours described earlier, more than one-third (36%) reported that the behaviour “did not bother them”, with men and women aged 45 years and over least affected by the behaviours. However, almost three-fifths (56%) of those that experienced these behaviours reported that the behaviours “affected” or “bothered” them. Again, those from minority backgrounds were most affected by these behaviours.

Typically, respondents reported that the behaviours they had experienced had affected their confidence at work (25%), their enjoyment of their work (29%) and their ability to do their job as well as before. Furthermore, almost one-fifth (19%) had not wanted to go to work as a result of the behaviours and more than one-quarter had thought about leaving the Service.

Reporting the behaviours

Three-quarters of respondents had not reported the behaviour to their line manager, while 83 per cent had not reported it to a senior manager. Of those that had not told anyone about the behaviours they were experiencing, almost one-half (48%) felt “it was not that important”, almost one-third (30%) believed they could handle the situation themselves while just under one-fifth (18%) did not think that anything would be done about it.

Of those reporting the issue to their line manager, only 33 per cent saw the situation handled either “well” or “very well”. In contrast, 45 per cent rated it as being handled either “poorly” or “very poorly”.

Of those that reported the behaviours, 15 per cent of respondents were bullied and harassed as a result of making a complaint, 9 per cent were ignored by colleagues at work and 9 per cent suffered a “backlash” at work.

Trying to get the behaviours to stop

Respondents that experienced the behaviours detailed earlier were asked if they had taken any action themselves to stop the behaviour. In total, almost three in ten (29%) had not done anything to stop the behaviour, while a further one-quarter (24%) ignored the behaviour

Of those taking some action to stop the behaviour, almost two-fifths (38%) reported that the behaviour stopped. As a result of more women than men taking action to stop a behaviour, women were more likely to see the behaviour stop when compared with men.

Leaving the Service

Thinking about leaving or transferring from the Service

More than three in ten (31%) respondents reported that they had thought about transferring from their Fire and Rescue Service in the previous 12 months. In contrast, two-fifths (41%) reported that they had thought about leaving the Service. Across the survey, higher proportions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and minority ethnic staff has thought about transferring or leaving their Fire and Rescue Service.

Reasons for wanting to leave or transfer

Respondents gave a variety of reasons why they wanted to leave or transfer from their Fire and Rescue Service. Issues surrounding the management of the Service were strongly represented in the data and verbatim comments. Of those responding to the survey who had thought about leaving or transferring, almost two-thirds of serving respondents (65%) did not feel valued by their Service, more than one-half (51%) reported that the job was “not what it used to be”, and almost one-third (32%) were not satisfied with their job.

What happened to those that left the Service

On leaving the Service, two-thirds of respondents (67%) either went into other employment (48%) or self-employment (19%).

Of those that left the Service, only 30 per cent would like to come back and work for the Service in the future, 27 per cent would consider coming back to work if things were different, while 15 per cent were unlikely to do so and 12 per cent would never consider working for the Service again.

Exit interviews

Only 37 per cent of leavers responding to this survey received an exit interview when they left the Service, with senior managers most likely to receive the interview. The vast majority of those not receiving an interview (65%) reported that they did not know why they were not offered one. Those that received exit interviews reported that these were typically conducted by a senior officer (56%), line manager (23%) a HR manager (12%) or chief fire officer (7%).

Gender issues

Workplace facilities

The data collected in this survey showed that the proportion of women with access to separate workplace facilities was as follows: toilets (91%), showers (79%) and changing rooms (50%). Of the women responding to the survey, wholetime duty system respondents were more likely to have access to separate facilities at their workplace than retained duty system staff.

In contrast, the following proportion of women reported they had access to separate facilities when they last worked temporarily at another station: toilets (88%), showers (78%) and changing rooms (54%). Finally, when women last attended a Fire and Rescue Service training venue, the following proportions reported that they had access to separate facilities: toilets (90%), showers (84%) and changing rooms (71%).

Clothing

The data showed that only 45 per cent of respondents believed they had Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that was specifically designed for women. In addition, only 15 per cent had boots and 14 per cent had gloves that they believed were specifically designed for women.

Experience of pregnancy

Of the 418 women responding to the survey, 91 (22%) reported that they had been pregnant while being an operational firefighter. Only three-fifths of these women (64%) thought that their manager followed the correct procedure when they told them they were pregnant. In addition only 63 per cent had a risk assessment carried out on their duties. Almost three in 10 reported they were put under pressure to take a non-operational job in the Service (29%) and 13 per cent reported that managers were “unsupportive”.

Discussion

A complex picture of the Fire and Rescue Service in England has emerged from this detailed analysis. No doubt there will be those who believe that the findings in this report are not applicable to the views held by their staff or colleagues nor reflect the situation in their own organisation. However, the sampling strategy applied to this study was robust and the degree to which the data is consistent across the many independent variables (such as geographic areas, gender, rank/role of respondents, length of service) suggests that the issues raised by this report and its findings have implications for the whole Fire and Rescue Service.

Given that this was a postal survey and that there were difficulties in distributing the questionnaires the survey attracted a high response rate, which may in itself be a reflection of the need felt by many respondents to take this opportunity to relate their experiences – both good and bad – of life in the Fire and Rescue Service. Responses came from firefighters representing every Fire and Rescue Service in England, plus a significant number who had left the Service in the last few years. The survey’s findings reflect the opinions of a broad range of individuals and are not strictly limited to the views of any particular group or groups.

The quantitative data set out in this report, supported and illustrated by a number of verbatim comments, suggests that the Service is, for many people, still some way from being an inclusive workplace. Although the majority of respondents are clearly happy at work and enjoy their job, many evidently are not.

While on the one hand Fire and Rescue Services are seeking to recruit people from a wider range of diverse backgrounds, the data shows that significant proportions of firefighters and managers at all levels of the organisation appear unconvinced that diversity is important to the Service as an employer and service provider. The relatively low importance attached to equality and diversity by a number of the respondents may simply be a reflection of an opinion within the organisation that there are a number of other, more important, issues associated with being a member of the Fire and Rescue Service or with the way in which the Service conducts its business. It may also reflect a misconception of two different, but connected, issues – diversity and equality – and how these are being promulgated to the workforce. There is certainly evidence to indicate that, for some, issues of diversity and equality have little relevance. Consequently, many of the issues identified nearly a decade ago (in the “Thematic Review on Equality and Fairness in the Fire Service” published by the Home Office in 1999) are just as pertinent today.

The qualitative data suggests that the way in which diversity and equality policies, procedures and practices are delivered within the organisation may in itself be having a negative effect on attitudes and may limit understanding or appreciation of the real issues involved. If, for example, diversity training is delivered along the lines of “do” and “don’t” it may perhaps account for the negative and quite narrow view of equality and diversity held by a number of people in the Service. There is undoubtedly a perception that equality and diversity are being “done” to the workforce; that the positive effects and benefits of equality and diversity are limited; and that these are exclusive issues relevant to “minority groups” which do not apply to, or have relevance for, everyone in the organisation or those looking to join it. Some respondents clearly believe that positive discrimination exists in the Service and that certain groups receive special treatment: for example, that recruitment standards have been lowered in order to make progress against the employment targets to improve the representation of ethnic minorities and women.

Overall, it appears that the reluctance of a number of respondents to view diversity as core to Service business and its functions, both as employer and service deliverer, may be based on a variety of reasons, often more complicated than the statistics suggest. For example, although there are those who believe that women should not be employed on operational duty, the verbatim comments suggest that this is a gross simplification of a range of interlinking issues.

While the race and gender diversity targets, set in 1999 and 2000 respectively, were designed to support the Service’s objective to create a workforce that better reflects the diversity of the communities it serves, it may be an unintended consequence that the actions by some Fire and Rescue Services in attempting to meet the targets have accentuated the differences between currently under-represented groups and the majority workforce. Not only do the verbatim comments suggest that this is causing resentment among the white/male majority, but it is also making it difficult for people from currently under-represented groups who are either already in the Service or are joining it.

Joining the Service

People join the Fire and Rescue Service for a variety of reasons, but for the majority the principal attractions are that firefighting is seen as a worthwhile profession which is held in high regard by the community. Just over one-quarter of respondents cited “a job with career prospects” as a factor which determined their choice, while for about a quarter it was the “image” of the firefighter that appealed – although within the parameters of this research it was not possible to examine what that image was perceived to be.

Most people joined the Service from other employment. Few came into the Service straight from school or university. Curiously, while many respondents had family or friends already in the Service, the majority said they knew little or nothing about the organisation before joining. Clearly, the “family and friends” informal recruitment channel continues to provide a significant source of applicants.

The data suggests that the experiences of individuals during initial training, in terms of focus on particular policies and procedures, tends to differ according to gender. For example, significantly more women than men received training on issues such as bullying and harassment. A significant proportion of recruits joining the Service in the last few years, whether male or female, appear to have received no diversity training in the initial period. Subsequent to the initial firefighter training, far more men evidently received training on issues of diversity, bullying and harassment policies and procedures.

Being a firefighter

Generally respondents say they enjoy the job, find it challenging and rewarding and have good working relationships with colleagues. Nonetheless, many report that they do not feel valued by the Service. And a significant proportion have considered leaving in the preceding twelve months. The data also shows that women are more likely than men to be “happy” at work, despite findings presented elsewhere in the report that women are more likely to have seen or heard and experienced a wide range of unacceptable behaviours in the workplace. Men and women are in broad agreement about the skills and attributes required to be a firefighter (team working, decision making, self discipline and problem solving are considered to be the most important).

For many, expectations about the promotion prospects offered by a career in the Fire and Rescue Service significantly increased once they joined. The data from the survey reveals that when men and women apply for promotion they are equally likely to be successful. However, the data also shows that proportionately far more men than women apply for promotion.

It should be of concern that nearly a quarter of all respondents say they have been deterred from applying for promotion because they have no confidence in the promotion process. Their supporting comments reveal a belief that the process lacks transparency, or that it offers more favourable treatment to individuals or groups, or that a glass ceiling still exists.

The majority of respondents report that they have good working relationships with their peers (which is somewhat at odds with the findings elsewhere in this report on unacceptable behaviours in the workplace). However, while firefighters generally rate the working relationship with their immediate or intermediate managers as good to very good, the relationship with principal officers is, for many, regarded as much poorer.

Behaviours

The findings indicate that the Fire and Rescue Service is still some way from becoming an inclusive organisation which welcomes under-represented groups and has a culture that readily accepts difference. Although the Service seeks to mainstream nationally agreed Core Values, which clearly set out organisational expectations about the attitudes and behaviours of all staff, a number of unacceptable workplace behaviours are, according to the data presented by this report, nonetheless in evidence.

The quantitative and qualitative data demonstrates that the behaviours described in this report are typical of the experience of many firefighters at work. As a public sector organisation the Fire and Rescue Service has a duty to promote equality, diversity and fairness and deal with discrimination, bullying and harassment in the workplace.

Of those respondents who had personally experienced one or more unacceptable behaviours, a significant proportion said they were not bothered by it. It may be that such acceptance is rooted in the sense of workplace “camaraderie” or “banter”. However, the analysis shows that for a high proportion of respondents who experienced these behaviours there was a negative impact, affecting their confidence and their ability to do the work.

The evidence from this research indicates that unacceptable behaviours are being seen and heard, and even directly experienced, by managers, at the same level as that of firefighters. Those managers who witness unacceptable behaviours and fail to deal with them, or are responsible for committing them, are likely to be seen as legitimising the existence of such activity in the workplace in the eyes of co-workers.

A significant number of respondents who had experienced unacceptable behaviours reported that they were likely to ignore it or do nothing to stop it. The research suggests that where individuals have tackled the problem at source it is more likely to stop the behaviour than it is by attempting to ignore it. But the fact that in a number of cases individuals on the receiving end are prepared to act should not absolve managers of the responsibility to take effective remedial action.

The prevalence of unacceptable behaviours identified by this research requires a positive response from the Service. All employees need to have confidence that procedures are in place which will treat complaints seriously and resolve them fairly. Employers need to consider the steps they would wish to take against those committing such behaviours or

failing to fulfil their responsibilities. Where appropriate, the system should enable complaints to be processed without the direct involvement of line management (if, for example, those individuals are the alleged perpetrators or it is believed they will not act to deal appropriately with issues brought to their attention). One method might be for Fire and Rescue Services to use the existing HR structures in local authorities to provide a system for handling complaints about workplace issues.

Leaving the Service

Those that leave the Service because of negative experiences often take with them significant levels of professional skills and expertise. In view of the resources and time involved in recruiting and training replacements, it makes sound business sense for Fire and Rescue Services to have effective mechanisms and interventions in place to identify and tackle issues linked to negative culture and behaviours. Unfortunately, however, the research findings suggest that the overwhelming response when someone is looking to leave is that no action is taken by the employer.

Given the reasons cited in this research why a number of firefighters leave the Service it is important that exit and post-exit interviews be conducted, preferably by an organisation or individual independent of the Fire and Rescue Service, and that the information collected from such interviews is analysed and, where appropriate, acted on.

There is long-standing nationally agreed guidance (in *Toward Diversity II – Commitment to Cultural Change* published by Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions 2001) that all Fire and Rescue Services should undertake exit and post-exit follow-up interviews with people who have left the Service voluntarily. The relatively small number of staff leaving each year (an average of 7 per cent of all staff over the past five years) should not make this a resource intensive exercise. In line with the guidance such interviews should not be undertaken by managers or senior officers in the Service.

Gender issues

The *Thematic Review on Equality and Fairness in the Fire Service* recommended the provision of dedicated dignity facilities, such as toilets, showers and changing rooms for men and women on fire stations. Government funding, released to the Fire and Rescue Service in 2001 specifically to progress local equality and diversity programmes, allocated the greatest proportion to the provision of such facilities. Yet the data collected by this research indicates that a number of women still do not have access to separate facilities at work and again highlights the need to address the issue of clothing and Personal Protective Equipment appropriate to physiology. Even in fire stations where women are posted, a number report that separate facilities still do not exist. In addition, when women are required to work at other stations, or undertake training, or work as retained duty system firefighters, these facilities are often lacking. There is also evidence indicating that not all Fire and Rescue Services are following appropriate procedures and carrying out risk assessments for pregnant firefighters.

Further Information

Further information is contained in the full report, *A survey of current and ex-firefighters in England – Fire Research Technical Report 8/2008*, ISBN 978-1-8511-2945-4, £20 available via the Communities and Local Government website or from:

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**TERMS OF REFERENCE
AD HOC EQUALITIES GROUP**

To consider, monitor and make recommendations in relation to the following areas:

1. Issues relating to equal opportunities and diversity within the Fire & Rescue Authority and the Service.
2. The Authority's Action Plan attached to its Race Equality Scheme and to ensure that these are implemented in a timely manner.
3. To ensure that any and all consultations and communications carried out by the Fire & Rescue Authority engage with, and reflects the views of, Nottinghamshire's diverse communities.
4. To ensure that Equality Impact Assessments are carried out by the Fire & Rescue Authority and any outcomes are actioned.
5. The development of performance indicators and target setting for the Service in relation to diversity issues.
6. To have due regard to Equal Opportunities and, in particular, the Authority's responsibilities under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.
7. To ensure that the Fire & Rescue Authority meet its requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).
8. To report, as required, to the Policy & Strategy Committee on the Services' progress with regard to Equalities issues (added by Fire & Rescue Authority at its meeting on 9 June 2006).

Strategic Equalities Board Terms of Reference

Frequency of meetings; Quarterly

Overall Objective

To ensure that Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City Fire and Rescue Authority sets and maintains its strategic direction in relation to equality and diversity in order to reduce disadvantage, discrimination and inequality of opportunity, and to promote equality in terms of the people it serves, its workforce, the partners it works with and the services it delivers.

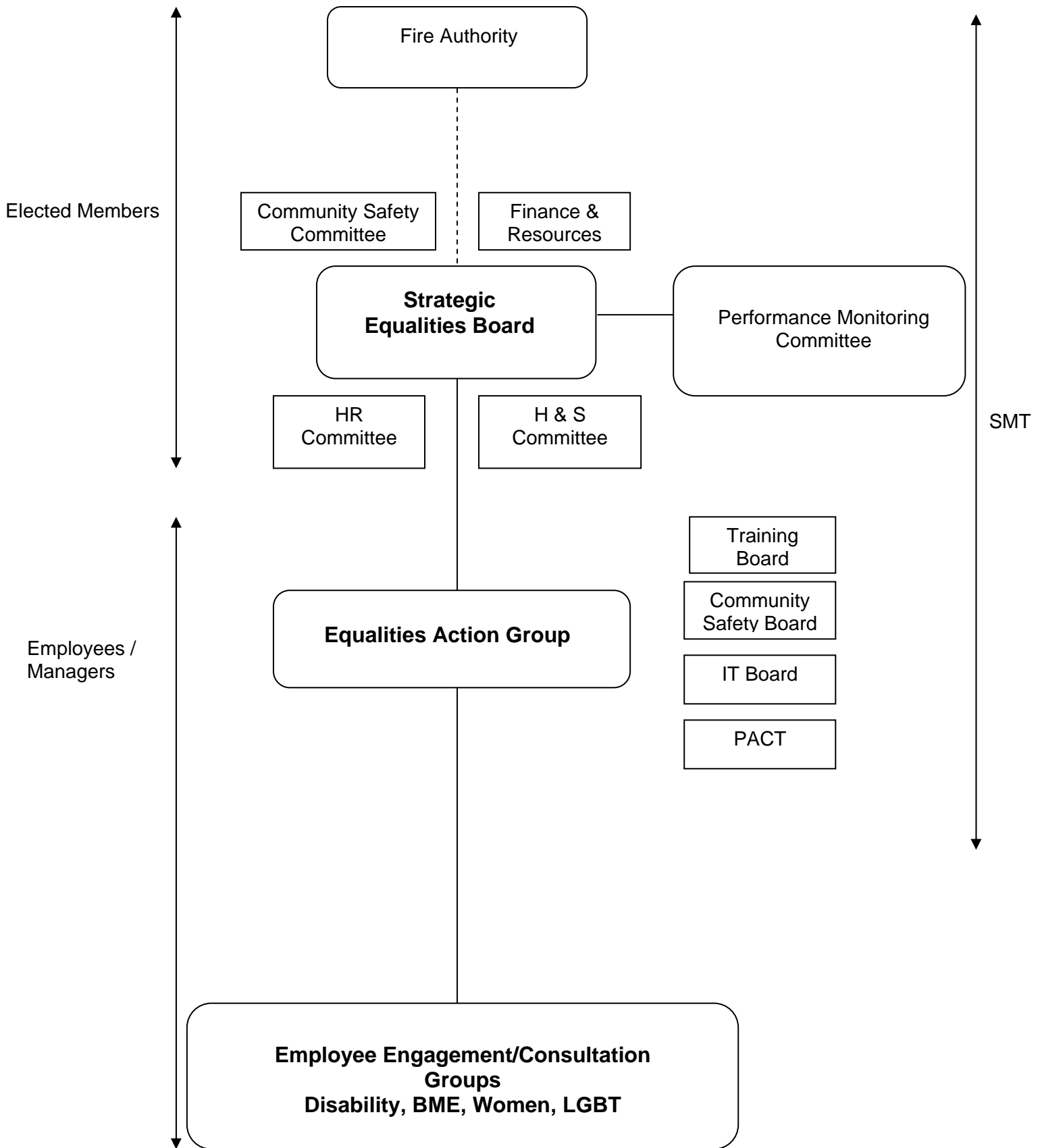
Proposed Role and Function

- To oversee NFRS’s discharge of its statutory responsibilities in relation to race, disability and gender and other relevant areas of equalities legislation and/or guidance that may arise in future.
- To set the strategic direction of the equalities agenda at NFRS through assessment of national strategy and local need
- To act as a group for consultation at member level.
- To forge effective relationships with ONE Nottingham (LSP) and community group leaders in order to support achievement of corporate NFRS objectives and those of our partners
- To inform and support the work of the Equalities Action Group
- To report progress back to the Policy and Strategy and Performance Committees.

Proposed Membership

Counc (Chair of group)
Counc. (Vice Chair of group)
Counc.
Counc.
Chief Fire Officer
Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Equality and Diversity Officer

Appendix F



INITIAL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Section	Manager	Date of Assessment	New or Existing
SMT	CFO Swann	27 May 2008	N/A
Name of Report to be assessed		EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	
1. Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the report.		To present to Members the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018, the outcomes of a national survey of current and ex-firefighters in England and to propose a revision to the governance arrangements for responding to the equality and diversity agenda within Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.	
2. Who is intended to benefit from this report and what are the outcomes?		Fire & Rescue Authority Members, Employees, Trade Unions, stakeholders. The outcomes would be measured by the Service being of greater diversity than at present.	
3. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the report?		Fire & Rescue Authority Members, Employees, Trade Unions, CLG.	
4. Who implements and who is responsible for the report?		Senior Management and Policy & Strategy Committee will be responsible for ensuring its delivery.	

Please identify the differential impact in the terms of the six strands below. Please tick yes if you have identified any differential impacts. Please state evidence of negative or positive impacts below.

STRAND	Y	N	NEGATIVE IMPACT	POSITIVE IMPACT				
Race		X						
Gender		X						
Disability		X						
Religion or Belief		X						
Sexuality		X						
Age		X						
6. Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group?			Y	N	7. Should the policy/service proceed to a full impact assessment?		Y	N
								X

I am satisfied that this policy has been successfully impact assessed. I understand the impact assessment of this policy is a statutory obligation and that, as owners of this policy, we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this process.

Signed (completing person) CFO Swann

Date 03 June 2008