



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Human Resources Committee

WHOLETIME RECRUITMENT PROCESS 2022

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 21 April 2023

Purpose of Report:

To inform Members of the outcomes from the recent wholetime firefighter selection process and success rates arising from the positive action programme undertaken between March and September 2022.

Recommendations:

That Members note the contents of this report.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Workforce Plan 2022-24 identified the need to recruit to up to 36 wholetime firefighter vacancies in response to the projected numbers of retirements and turnover during 2022-23. The proposed commencement date for the wholetime campaign was delayed until the autumn of 2022 to support the budgetary situation and to await the outcomes from the ongoing Fire Cover Review. The selection process itself commenced in August and ran for three months.
- 1.2 Positive action took place between March and September 2022, and focused on increasing the number of applications from those under-represented in the operational workforce, namely women, those from BAME and minority ethnic groups, and LGBT candidates.
- 1.3 This report sets out the outcomes from the selection process and reviews the impact of the positive action measures put in place.

2. REPORT

POSITIVE ACTION

- 2.1 In preparation for the wholetime selection campaign and to actively seek to encourage applications from under-represented parts of the operational workforce, the ODI team undertook a programme of positive action events and applicant engagement from March to September 2022.
- 2.2 Activities were promoted via social media, posters and leaflets, and active engagement with targeted groups within the community. 168 people signed up to participate in the group and activities. Activities included:
 - Fitness sessions – open and women only (led by the Fitness Instructor);
 - Park runs;
 - Station open “have a go” days – open to all;
 - Mentoring sessions – open to all;
 - “Yes You Can” website;
 - Targeted posters, banners and leaflet drops;
 - Online Q&A sessions;
 - Use of social media and radio stations to promote to harder to reach groups (Dawn FM, Kennet FM);
 - Use of YouTube and TikTok video;
 - Sponsorship of a women’s football tournament;
 - WhatsApp group created to facilitate messaging and answer any questions.

- 2.3 The programme was co-ordinated through the Inclusion Team and supported by a seconded firefighter and watch manager. However, many other people gave up their time and energy to support the process.
- 2.4 In the event, of the 168 applicants who engaged with the positive action, 40 were women and 49 were from a BAME background.
- 2.5 Of these, 9 (31%) women and four (13.8%) BAME applicants were ultimately successful in the process. This represents a high level of success for those who had engaged with positive action, 18 out of 29 appointments or 62% of successful candidates.
- 2.6 Whilst positive action events were directly aimed at women and BAME applicants, the Service also sought to encourage interest in firefighting as a career to the LGBT+ community – for instance, through work with Stonewall and visits to women’s sports teams and promotional leaflets.
- 2.7 In the event, 10% of all applications were from LGBT+ applicants and they had the highest success rate in terms of appointments. This is a positive outcome and would indicate that the Service is seen as a trusted employer by the LGBT+ community.

SELECTION OUTCOMES

2.8 The assessment process itself comprised of:

- Application sift;
- Bleep test (fitness and deselection tool);
- Job related testing;
- Assessment centre – team exercise, presentation and interview.

2.9 The numbers that fell out at each stage were as follows:

Stage	All Applicants	Female Applicants	BAME Applicants	
Total Applicant Numbers	384	50	55	
Drop Out Stages				% of all applicants
Application (shortlisting)	137	11 (22%)	17 (31%)	35.6
Bleep Test	95	12 (24%)	3 (5.45%)	24.8
Job Related Tests	35	3 (6%)	3 (5.45%)	9.1
Assessment Centre	88	1 (2%)	18 (32.7%)	22.9
Successful	29	9 (18%)	4 (7.3%)	7.55

- 2.10 Most applicants failed at the shortlisting stage, the bleep test saw the highest drop-out rate for female applicants and the assessment centre stage for BAME applicants. An understanding of the areas where applicants fell out of the process is helpful in providing future support as part of positive action and a review of these areas will therefore be undertaken to identify those aspects that can be targeted for future improvement.
- 2.11 In terms of positive action outcomes, the number of high-quality female candidates has been a highlight with 31% success rate, with BAME applicants also representing 13.8% of successful candidates. The number of successful BAME candidates has not been at the level the Service was hoping given the number of people engaging with the positive action team and this will part of the review for the next campaign. The number of LGBT+ candidates who have been successful is also very positive.
- 2.12 Whilst the recruit numbers entering Service during 2023 will maintain the operational establishment for the foreseeable future, the workforce planning forecast indicates that there will be a shortfall before April 2024 based on the current, budgeted establishment. There will therefore be a need to consider future recruitment which will take the Service through to 2025. This will be presented as part of the refresh of the Workforce Plan for 2023-25.
- 2.13 In the same period the Service undertook a transfer and migration process which saw two transferees and six migrants from the on-call move into wholetime roles to maintain ridership numbers. In addition to the 29 new firefighter appointments, this has meant that the Service has been successful in recruiting 36 new wholetime firefighter roles identified in the Workforce Plan.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Human resources implications are set out within the report. The next stage will be to successfully on-board the new recruits and support them whilst they become established in their new roles.
- 4.2 A review of the recruitment process, and outcomes from positive action, will be undertaken prior to planning the next recruitment campaign, which is likely to start in early 2024.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An equality impact assessment was undertaken as part of the planning process for wholetime recruitment. The aim of positive action initiatives is to increase the numbers of applications from under-represented candidates, with the longer term aim of increasing the diversity of the operational workforce, which is under-represented both in terms of women, BAME and LGBT+ employees.
- 5.2 The figures set out in the report reflect some success in the numbers of women (31% of new recruits), BAME applications (13.8% of new recruits) and a high success rate for LGBT+ applicants.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

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

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from the report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The appointment process supports the commitments set out within the Service's Community Risk Management Plan (i) to ensure that the Service has the optimum number of employees to deliver services, (ii) continue with the programme of positive action to encourage those who are under-represented in the workforce to apply for roles and (iii) be a more diverse Service and more reflective of the communities it serves.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from the report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of this report.

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

None.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER