

Fire and Rescue Service
Equality and Diversity
Strategy 2008 - 2018



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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.

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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

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.

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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

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.
- 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.

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- 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*)

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