



Department for Communities and Local Government

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To all firefighters in England

Further to my letter of 9 January, I would like to update you on a number of issues which I think will be of interest to you and the fire and rescue service generally.

Partnership Working

One of the recognised strengths of the fire and rescue service is the way it engages with its partners and utilises data. A major development in this field has been that the Chief Fire Officers Association has developed a National Older Persons Strategy, designed to put older people at the heart of fire and rescue service activities and interventions. They did this in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions, Age UK, RNIB and Action for the Blind. As part of this strategy, they have been pursuing a programme of work to ensure that resources are directed where they are needed most. Recently they have been working closely with NHS England to explore the feasibility of using GP data for people over 65 years of age (known as Exeter Health data). If this work is successful, it will enable firefighters to target some of the most vulnerable households. This is just one example of the innovative activities going on with partners around the country which will directly impact upon your work.

Marauding Terrorists

The recent tragic events in Paris are a reminder of the fact that we need to have in place a capability in the fire and rescue service to deal with incidents that are designed to cause mass casualties – not least an attack by marauding terrorists with firearms. The fire and rescue service has been given an important role in assisting the ambulance and police in such an event. Unfortunately, the Fire Brigades Union still maintains its current ban on training for a Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attack as part of the on-going industrial action. It is for this reason that I have written to the General Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union asking that this aspect of the industrial action is called off as soon as possible, enabling the training of the firefighters involved to resume.

Road Traffic Accidents

Dealing with road traffic accidents is a vitally important role for fire and rescue services. There is now a multi-agency national Road Safety Executive established that enables a broader approach to tackling road safety. Partners include police, fire, DoT and Road Safety GB. The executive views road safety from improved engineered solutions through to education programmes for the at risk males 17-24 years of age group. I have asked to be kept up to date with this group, and will feed back to you on its progress. We are also liaising closely with the police and the ambulance service, to see how services can co-operate more closely, and a meeting will be fixed to discuss this shortly at departmental level.

Women in the Fire Service

I was very pleased to be invited to join the Executive Committee of the Women in the Fire Service (WFS) last Monday at East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service in Eastbourne. This was a useful opportunity to discuss issues affecting women employed across all sections of the fire and rescue service. Our discussions focused on some of the tougher issues still affecting female firefighters across the country, such as policies on maternity and flexible working, the provision of work wear, and the decline in the use of effective positive action initiatives to encourage minorities to join the service. WFS highlighted the need to share good practice between services and I have promised to raise the profile of these issues with employers and managers. I know WFS already play a very valuable role in providing and supporting, training and development nationally. I am very pleased that they will be contributing to the work of the Fitness Working Group ensuring that key issues around the continuing fitness of women in the service are considered thoroughly.

UK Fire Service and Police Women's Rugby Team

Finally, last Wednesday I watched the UK women's fire and police combined teams take on the Royal Navy women's team at Imber Court. It was a fast moving game, played with enormous spirit. The result was a 47-0 thrashing of the Royal Navy. I give my heartfelt congratulations to fire and police team, and to all who organised and participated in this excellent event.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Penny Mordaunt', written in a cursive style.

PENNY MORDAUNT MP