



DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	HRMDC/12/10
MEETING	HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	15 NOVEMBER 2012
SUBJECT OF REPORT	EQUALITY STRATEGY – 6 MONTHLY MONITORING REPORT: MAY TO OCTOBER 2012
LEAD OFFICER	Director of People and Organisational Development
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That the report be noted</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The new Equality Strategy 2012-2016 – ‘Safer Lives, Brighter Futures’ was approved by the Authority in May 2012. The objectives and action plan show what we must achieve in order to meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and the ‘Excellent’ level of the Fire & Rescue Service Equality Framework.</p> <p>In July 2012, Senior Management Board agreed new arrangements for monitoring performance on the Equality Strategy. A six-monthly monitoring report will be prepared for Human Resources Management and Development Committee and this is the first such report. Progress on the strategy is very good with no areas for concern at present.</p>
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	No additional resource implications
EQUALITY RISK & BENEFITS ASSESSMENT	Monitoring Equality Strategy objectives and actions includes reviewing the Equality Risk & Benefits Analysis process.
APPENDICES	Appendix A – Equality Strategy Monitoring Report October 2012
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	Equality Strategy 2012-2016 ‘Brighter Lives, Safer Futures’

1. **BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The new Equality Strategy 2012-2016 – ‘Safer Lives, Brighter Futures’ was approved by the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority (DSFRA) in May 2012 (Minute DSFRA/x refers). The objectives and action plan that form part of the strategy show what the Service must achieve in order to meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and the ‘Excellent’ level of the Fire & Rescue Service Equality Framework.
- 1.2 The Equality Act 2010 provides legal protections for people based on their ‘protected characteristics’. These are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty which states that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions and in relation to the legally protected characteristics, give due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct.
 - Advance equality of opportunity (i.e. remove or minimise disadvantage; meet people’s needs; take account of disabilities; encourage participation in public life).
 - Foster good relations between people (i.e. tackle prejudice and promote understanding).
- 1.3 The Service also has responsibilities to publish information to show how it is complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Act and to prepare, publish and monitor equality objectives.
- 1.4 The Equality Strategy was approved following extensive internal and external consultation. The objectives and actions were drawn from a review of the previous strategy, feedback from last year’s peer assessment and the requirements of the national Fire & Rescue Service Equality Framework ‘Excellent’ level.
- 1.5 In December 2011, following an evidence gathering exercise and a peer assessment, the Service reached the ‘Achieving level of the Fire & Rescue Service Equality Framework. This national framework provides a focus for improving our equalities work and helps us to measure our performance.
- 1.6 There are three levels - Developing, Achieving and Excellent. In ‘Towards 2014’, the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS) strategy document, one of the indicators of success in the ‘work hard to be an excellent organisation’ strategic principle is to reach the Excellent level of the framework by 2014. The actions required in order to reach that goal are built into the Equality Strategy.

2. **MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS**

- 2.1 In July 2012, Senior Management Board agreed new arrangements for monitoring performance on the Equality Strategy. A six-monthly monitoring report will be prepared for Human Resources Management and Development Committee. The report will be informed by other monitoring mechanisms, as follows:
- Senior Management Board
 - Service Delivery & Service Improvement Groups

- Equality Steering Group – this new, corporate group has a membership of fifteen employees drawn from the main work areas and includes representative bodies and a member of the Fire Pride (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) network and WANDS (Women’s Action Network). The group’s role is to monitor progress on the Equality Strategy, to advise on high risk Equality Risks and Benefits Analyses and to make recommendations for improving and developing equality performance and practices. The group meets for the first time on 6 November.
- Community Advisory Groups – as part of the draft Equality Strategy consultation we held four community discussion groups in Bideford, Taunton, Exeter and Plymouth. These events were very successful and participants said they would like to remain involved. We are holding the next discussion groups in weeks commencing 12 and 19 November and have sent invitations to community contacts.

3. **EQUALITY STRATEGY MONITORING MAY – OCTOBER 2012**

- 3.1 This is the first six-monthly monitoring report of the new Equality Strategy. Actions in the strategy are due for completion at various times between 2012 and 2016. Actions due for completion by the end of 2012 and those due to start in 2012 and be ongoing have been reviewed and a commentary is available in Appendix A of this report.
- 3.2 Progress on the strategy is very good with no areas for concern at present. There are a number of areas where the Service has made significant progress and two of these have been highlighted as case studies set out at paragraph 4.1 and 4.2 respectively below.

4. **GOOD PRACTICE**

Case Study 1 – Equality Risks & Benefits Analysis (ERBA) – providing evidence of ‘due regard’ and a proper consideration of risk

- 4.1 The Equality Risks & Benefits Analysis (ERBA) process was introduced last year to replace Equality Impact Assessments which were found to have little effect. The ERBA uses the service’s strong risk management approach to consider potential equality impacts on people with ‘protected characteristics’ e.g. race, disability, sexual orientation. Recording the thought processes and actions on the ERBA form provides us with evidence that we have given ‘due regard’ to the Public Sector Equality Duties in case of legal challenge.

Around 80 employees have attended ERBA training provided by the Community & Workplace Equalities team and the feedback has been very positive. A process is in place for completion of ERBAs as part of project and policy development and is working well.

The process has developed a great deal in the past year and is allowing us to demonstrate a good consideration of equality risks and benefits and leading to improved services and employment practices. Examples of where ERBAs have led to improvements include removing the potential for age-related discrimination in safer recruitment, ensuring that employees on maternity leave or long term sickness absence had the opportunity to complete the staff survey and ensuring that the needs of employees with dyslexia are taken into consideration in training and communication materials.

Case Study 2 – launch of Fire Pride, DSFRS’s lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) network

- 4.2 In September, the Fire Pride staff network was launched to provide support and guidance to individual employees and to the organisation on lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender issues. It aims to increase the number of employees who feel able to be themselves at work and be open about their sexual orientation and gender identity if they choose. Research shows that employees are more productive if they can be themselves at work and not feel they have to censor their lives.

Fire Pride has produced an information leaflet and provided extensive information on the service’s Intranet. They have developed a Terms of Reference and Action Plan which is progressed by the steering group. All fire & rescue services in the country have been notified of the launch and, so far, we have received requests for further information and joint-working from two services.

Recently, Stonewall, the national LGB support and campaign group, said they were using Fire Pride’s information on ‘straight allies’ as best practice and sharing this with public and private sector organisations.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 That the report be noted.

JANE SHERLOCK
Director of People and Organisational Development

Equality Strategy – Progress Report October 2012

Actions for 2012 completion:

	Action	Progress at mid-October 2012
1	Develop the Corporate Equalities Group to include a challenge and review function	Membership of the new Equality Steering Group is almost complete and includes representatives from the key work areas, from Fire Pride and WANDS. Rep bodies have been invited to be part of the group. The remit is to review the Equality Strategy actions, advise on high-risk ERBAs and develop equality performance and practices. First meeting is on 6 November.
2	Establish four Community Forums, geographically spread across the two counties, for monitoring equality progress and for ongoing consultation	Equality forums are being developed based on the model used for the Equality Strategy consultation in February 2012. An open invitation is sent to all community contacts to attend one of four discussion groups to discuss issues arising from the Equality Strategy. The meeting structure will remain relatively informal but a Charter will be developed so all parties are clear about the purpose and outcomes. Four meetings in Plymouth, Taunton, Barnstable and SHQ have been scheduled for November.
3	Ensure representative bodies, WANDS and the lesbian, gay and bisexual support network are included on the Equality Steering Group	Completed

	Action	Progress at mid-October 2012
4	Embed Equality Risks and Benefits Analysis methodology in Project development, process design, policy development through training, coaching and example articles	The ERBA process has developed a great deal in the past year and is allowing us to demonstrate a good consideration of equality risks and benefits and leading to improved services and employment practices. A process has been introduced for completion of ERBAs as part of project and policy development and this is working well. All ERBAs and draft policies are sent first to the Community & Workplace Equalities team for quality assurance. Around 80 people have attended the ERBA workshop.
5	New policy design process with ERBA embedded as a sub process	A review of current policy arrangements has taken place and a Policy Framework has been developed. A new process and associated documentation has also been drafted and is being circulated to key stakeholders for consideration.
6	Embed 2012 new procurement policy and equality guidance	New equality guidance for suppliers has recently been produced and is available on the Intranet.
7	Deliver specific race training to local staff in areas of increased diversity in partnership with Race Equality Councils	This will be delivered as part of the Service Level Agreement with Plymouth & Devon Race Equality Council. The partnership is being delivered and a second recruitment process for a secondment to work with PDREC will shortly be advertised.
8	Design and rollout multi-lingual welcome posters for community stations	This work is scheduled in the Communications Team work plan for November.
9	Standardise equality monitoring collection	This has taken place within the Community and Workplace Equalities team and plans are being put in place to roll this out across the organisation.

	Action	Progress at mid-October 2012
10	Embed positive action toolkit for retained recruitment	The recruitment process has been revised and we are seeing larger numbers of candidates attending the open evenings. We can establish from a list of attendees whether they are male or female. We will then have the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form, which is completed by those who make a formal application. The number of applicants for each post has also increased. The advertising is undertaken across a much wider range of media.
11	Roll out and promote Recruitment Code of Practice to managers	The Code of Practice has been to Service Improvement Group and further consultation and changes were requested. This has led to a delay in its completion.
12	Investigate and report retention demographically	The exit interview process has been put in place and this has subsequently been refined.
13	Review efficacy of exit interview policy	See above
14	Re-run diversity monitoring for all staff	Early work on this has begun, in particular, considering the best method of collecting the data.
15	Develop electronic process for collecting diversity monitoring	See above
16	Develop a forward plan for the women's network	The Women's Action Network (WANDS) has recently developed a steering group which is working on a Terms of Reference (to define purpose and outcomes) and an Action Plan. This will be complete by end of this year.

	Action	Progress at mid-October 2012
17	Develop 2012-13 action plan for lesbian, gay and bisexual staff following Stonewall feedback	Fire Pride was launched in September and this included an Action Plan to March 2013 which the network is currently working on.
18	Develop a dyslexia policy/guidance	Support for people with dyslexia has developed greatly including the establishment and involvement of the Dyslexia Support Group. This has not yet been formalised into a policy.
19	Evaluate Welfare vehicle for equality considerations	The Community & Workplace Equalities team have worked with Response & Resilience on the Equality Risks & Benefits Analysis for Catering & Welfare and this is almost complete.
20	Review and promote bullying and harassment policy	Preliminary work on this has begun.
21	Promote additional community specific training to relevant teams	This has been achieved.

Actions for 2012 and ongoing completion:

	Action	Progress at mid-October 2012
22	Develop, maintain and report progress on the equality priorities in the Equality plan 2012-16	Ongoing
23	Continue to deliver quarterly open house awareness seminars on specific equality issues	Various ideas for the next seminar have been discuss and one will be arranged for Spring 2013. The Community & Workplace Equalities team recently co-ordinated a 'community awareness' workshop as part of the Networking Women in the Fire Service weekend.
24	Develop, with community and voluntary sector involvement, a range of guides and contacts for key communities for service delivery/support and partners	A guide to the Deaf community has recently been completed and one on Migrant Workers is almost complete.
25	Maintain our Two Ticks status and promote key messages about disability and operational roles in recruitment	We continue to promote the two ticks symbol in recruitment.
26	Regularly communicate equality priorities, commitments and activities to our people and local communities	The Community & Workplace Equalities team regularly use internal and external communication methods to communicate key messages.

	Action	Progress at mid-October 2012
27	Continue to be Stonewall Diversity champions and enter the workplace index annually	A great deal of work went into the Index evidence this year to try to boost our placing. The evidence was submitted in mid-September. The further development of Fire Pride, the LGBT Champions role and new equality training should help with this. Results should be available in January 2013
28	Continue to provide support and attendance for Respect, Pride, Networking Women in the Fire Service and consider other annual festivals and events	The service has been represented at Exeter Pride and Respect and two members of Fire Pride attended Newcastle Pride at the invitation of Tyne & Wear FRS. Next year, Fire Pride will assist in developing our presence at Pride events.
29	Promote suitably sized and positioned community stations for religious festival celebrations	Work is ongoing
30	Review satisfaction data collected	Work is ongoing
31	Establish regular use of our website for sharing good practice and the CFOA notable practice site and forums	This happens through FirePro on the Chief Fire Officers Association pages. We also update all our press releases through the website, which are in effect case studies.
32	Ensure key corporate publications are converted to an Easy Read format	Our documents should be written in a Plain English format. However, some key information needs to be prepared in Easy Read guides for people with learning disabilities, limited English or poor literacy.

	Action	Progress at mid-October 2012
33	Ensure workforce planning decisions use Equality Risks and Benefits Analysis methodology	Recent strategic discussions, aimed at providing a response to the service's budget reduction, have taken place with consideration of the potential equality impacts on employees and service delivery. This will be formalised by a small team carrying out an Equality Risks & Benefits Analysis on the draft proposals and the Community & Workplace Equalities Manager is involved in this process.
34	Personnel officers and senior managers/policy authors to complete Equality Risks and Benefits Analysis training	All the HR Officers have attended the ERBA training and many other managers and policy developers. Further training is provided on a one-to-one basis and more ERBA workshops will be provided next year.
35	Continue to support the well@work group	The well@work group continue to meet and actions include the Stress Awareness day and training for managers in stress awareness.