



DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	HRMDC/13/2
MEETING	HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT
DATE OF MEETING	26 JULY 2013
SUBJECT OF REPORT	EQUALITY STRATEGY – ‘SAFER LIVES, BRIGHTER FUTURES’ 6-MONTHLY MONITORING REPORT: NOVEMBER 2012 TO APRIL 2013
LEAD OFFICER	DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE & ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That the report be noted</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The 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>The Strategy is monitored by the cross-departmental Equality Steering Group and a six-monthly monitoring report is prepared for Human Resources Management and Development Committee. This report provides an update on actions between November 2012 and April 2013. 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	None
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	Equality Strategy 2012-2016 ‘Brighter Lives, Safer Futures’

1. **BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Equality Strategy 2012-2016 – ‘Safer Lives, Brighter Futures’ was approved by the Authority in May 2012. The objectives and action plan that form part of the strategy 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.
- 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 We also have responsibilities to publish information to show how we are complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Act and to prepare, publish and monitor equality objectives.
- 1.4 In December 2011, following an evidence gathering exercise and a peer assessment, we 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. We are now working towards the final ‘excellent’ level of the framework which we aim to achieve by 2014. The actions required in order to reach that goal are built into the Equality Strategy.

2. **MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS**

- 2.1 Internally, the strategy is monitored by the Equality Steering Group which 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).
- 2.2 Externally, we consult and seek advice on the strategy from Community Advisory Groups. Twice a year we facilitate discussion groups with members of community and voluntary sector organisations in north Devon, Taunton, Exeter and Plymouth.

3. **EQUALITY STRATEGY MONITORING NOVEMBER 2012 – APRIL 2013**

3.1 Progress on the strategy continues to be very good with significant progress in a number of areas as can be seen in the commentary below.

Monitoring Report November 2012 – April 2013

	Action	Notes/Comments
1	Continue to provide support and attendance for Respect, Pride, Networking Women in the Fire Service and consider other annual festivals and events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2012 DSFRS hosted the NWFS annual development weekend, and this year we are funding 4 places to attend the development weekend in June. • The service provided a significant presence at Exeter Pride 2013 with the Fire Pride network this year, including two appliances and the CFO, the Chair of the Authority and other staff marching in the parade, and an opportunity to dress up as a Fire-fighter. • Exeter and Plymouth Respect festival attendance is already in the planning stages • Members of the Fire Pride network attended and delivered a workshop at the Annual Stonewall conference • The Plymouth and Devon Race Equality Council secondment post holder and the Equality Manager are attending the Asian Fire Service Association annual development event
2	Review Core Values with employees	Work has begun on planning the involvement of all staff in an initiative to review our culture and values, as announced by CFO Lee Howell in the March Service update. The outcome we want to achieve is a framework of values that allows staff and managers at all levels to know what is expected of them and what they can expect from the organisation.
3	Ensure action plans are developed under each theme following staff survey analysis	Initial results on the staff survey were published in June. Work is underway on the action plan in conjunction with the cultural review project.

	Action	Notes/Comments
4	Review and promote bullying and harassment policy and procedures	This is to be completed during 2013/14
5	Continue to be Stonewall Diversity champions and enter the workplace index annually	Achieved top 100 employer status in the index this year and aim to improve our ranking next year.
6	Develop a forward plan for the women's network, WANDS	An action plan is being put together and a development day is being considered. The WANDS steering group will be involved in the Equal Pay action plan actions which include developing a strategy to aid the progression of more women into senior uniformed roles.
7	Develop annual action plan for lesbian, gay and bisexual staff following Stonewall feedback	The action plan has been developed and is in progress.
8	Review and promote all aspects of Dyslexia support	The dyslexia support group continues to investigate and promote dyslexia support in terms of offering initial screening and visual aids, and championing dyslexia friendly resources. More work is to be done in promoting awareness of the group and developing guidance for managers around dyslexia.
9	To develop, launch and promote a community and voluntary sector partnership policy, protocol and register	Work has begun to map the partnerships across the organisation which is the first step in developing a new protocol fit for CVS partnerships. Work has also started on a community engagement strategy.
10	To evaluate all agency Partnerships using a new Community and Voluntary Sector partnership protocol	Work has begun to map the partnerships across the organisation which is the first step in developing a new protocol fit for CVS partnerships.
11	To review consultation arrangements to allow for more creative solutions	The consultation on the corporate plan this year involved face to face engagement with a range of reflective groups through the Equality team Community Advisory Groups, in addition to the open public and staff meetings

	Action	Notes/Comments
12	Develop an 'Engaging with the community and voluntary sector' workshop for service delivery	A workshop was designed and delivered with members of the community and voluntary sector at the Networking Women in the Fire Service Development weekend event held at DSFRS SHQ last year. This is planned to be set up and delivered as an open seminar for staff later this year.
13	Develop Group level relationships with community and voluntary sector organisations representing Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities	<p>A secondment with the Plymouth and Devon Race Equality Council is underway and is achieving against its objectives to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance engagement and foster good relations with BAME people in Plymouth and demonstrate DSFRS support for diversity • Identify opportunities to empower and train community members and support workers in Fire Safety and prevention • Advance organisational learning with regard to race relations, hate crime, race equality and community cohesion Exeter group are engaging with BME communities through extensive attendance at the 2013 Respect Festival.
14	Develop a Community Use strategy for stations	Consultation has commenced on developing the strategy to allow improved use and promotion of community stations.
15	Develop a process for involving target community and voluntary sector groups in campaign and intervention design and delivery	A community engagement strategy is currently being drafted which will facilitate this action. Further details to follow in subsequent update when the strategy is finalised.
16	Recruit and train volunteer Fire Safety advocates including from BME communities, disabled and Deaf communities	A policy for volunteering has been developed and a pilot is to be run in Exeter Group. The pilot will be evaluated after three months to determine its future development.

	Action	Notes/Comments
17	Review our instant translation services	The instant translation service is in place for control and operational crews to be able to access the service, but there are possible improvements to be made. A meeting will be set up with control managers and response and resilience to ascertain where the current facility is accessible and is used.
18	Develop and roll out British Sign Language and Makaton emergency response flash cards	This is completed, and has been rolled out to groups, with a copy for each appliance. Early feedback indicates they are well received by crews, with further copies being requested for co-responder vehicles. There is much interest from other Services and agencies, and the licence for the images will be negotiated for perpetuity to allow us to share the cards, either as good practice at cost or as a commercial opportunity.
19	Regularly communicate equality priorities, commitments and activities to our people and local communities	An overview of the Equality plan, Safer Lives, Brighter Futures has been developed and promoted across the service and into communities via events and networks. It is also used in the Equality Training for Managers classroom session as an exercise in leadership in equalities. Regular articles on equality topics are published in Your Shout and via Alerts and press releases.
20	Establish regular use of our website for sharing good practice and the Chief Fire Officers' Association notable practice site and forums	The Equalities team use the CFOA site to share good practice and knowledge with other practitioners, for example the ERBA process we have developed but this is still to be expanded across the service and embedded.
21	Ensure key corporate publications are converted to an Easy Read format (to assist people with learning disabilities and/or limited English	Although a plain English version of the Equality plan has been developed and promoted, an easy read version has not yet been completed. An easy read fire safety leaflet is being produced.

	Action	Notes/Comments
22	Provide signposting to counselling services and support networks on website following large incidents	Discussions are underway as to the best sources of advice and support to promote through the website.
23	Maintain our Two Ticks status and promote key messages about disability and operational roles in recruitment	Our Two Ticks status is currently maintained and a recruitment code of practice has been rolled out which includes messages around positive action. The positive action toolkit also includes messages to promote a wider attraction pool for each opportunity available, including people with disabilities.
24	Implement positive action aimed at increasing the number of women in senior roles	This is being taken forward by workforce development this year, and will be developed using evidence from the Equal pay audit, WANDS feedback and a report on the progression of uniformed women in the workplace.
25	Review positive action strategy and investigate high performing Fire and Rescue Services in workforce diversity and incorporate benchmarked targets and good practice	A positive action toolkit has been developed and is in place, but as yet the strategy has not been reviewed in the light of limited recruitment. Performance will be analysed this year to determine the best use of resource in reviewing the strategy.
26	Embed positive action toolkit for retained recruitment	This has been completed and is being used for each Station recruiting. Every station now holds an open event and using the toolkit, attracts a wide range of interested people from varied backgrounds. Recruitment figures will be monitored by the next six monthly update.
27	Roll out and promote Recruitment Code of Practice to managers	This code of practice is a comprehensive guide for managers underpinned by the Equality Act 2010.

	Action	Notes/Comments
28	Develop an interview skills workshop for communities where we are recruiting and target in conjunction with positive action toolkit	This is an action brought forward from Making the Connections the 2009-2012 Equality Scheme and there is not currently sufficient recruitment to prioritise this piece of work. It is currently parked.
29	Develop a strategy for engaging local employers in retained recruitment	Currently in development
30	Investigate and report retention demographically	This is part of the Equal pay action plan and is primarily aimed at analysing whether there is any one equality group disproportionately leaving the service. A previous report in 2012 had promoted the exit interview policy, but as yet the exit interview results have not been analysed. A report will be delivered in detail in the next six monthly update.
31	Review efficacy of exit interview policy	As above
32	Develop a dyslexia policy/guidance	The Dyslexia support group and sub groups are working to integrate good practice in dyslexia friendly resources and awareness throughout the service. Guidance for managers is still to be developed.
33	Implement the Equal Pay action plan	This has been approved by SMB and is on the HRMD agenda for information.
34	Equality Risks and Benefits Analysis methodology used to review each training school offering	The Equalities team will be working with workforce development this year to develop an overarching Equality Risks & Benefits Analysis (ERBA) on training delivery, to be translated into guidance. The training team involved will undertake ERBA workshops in July and a meeting to develop an initial ERBA, which will then be consulted on with the Equality Steering Group, Staff Networks and Rep bodies.

	Action	Notes/Comments
35	To establish and maintain a community/workforce data hub for employee access	The data team has been relocated and the responsibility for this action is to be clarified. The range of information collected and published is to be reviewed. A recent example of this is the data provided to those carrying out ERBAs on the corporate plan proposals.
36	Develop data sharing protocols with key agencies and voluntary sector to enable more targeting of those at risk	This forms part of the information governance project. A comprehensive update will be provided at the next six monthly review.
37	Review Employment data collected to address any gaps	Data is being requested from the performance team to ensure a comprehensive range of information is published.
38	Standardise equality monitoring collection	This has been standardised for Staff survey and equality monitoring forms used in the application process.
39	Re-run diversity monitoring for all staff	A new HR Self Service portal will allow us to re-run diversity monitoring in stages later this year.
40	Develop electronic process for collecting diversity monitoring	This has been developed and a new 'self-service' system will be launched in stages this year to allow employees to update personal details.

3. **RECOMMENDATION**

3.1 That the report be noted.

JANE SHERLOCK
Director of People and Organisational Development