

<b>REPORT REFERENCE NO.</b>	<b>HRMDC/15/2</b>
<b>MEETING</b>	<b>HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT &amp; DEVELOPMENT</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	<b>11 JUNE 2015</b>
<b>SUBJECT OF REPORT</b>	<b>EQUALITY STRATEGY – ‘SAFER LIVES, BRIGHTER FUTURES’ MONITORING REPORT</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>Director of Operations</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<p><i>(a) That the decision not to undertake the planned peer assessment against the Excellent level of the Equality Framework in 2015/16 be approved; and</i></p> <p><i>(b) Subject to (a) above, the report be noted.</i></p>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<p>Implementation of the Equality – “Strategy, Safer Lives, Brighter Futures” 2012-2016 helps to ensure that the Service is meeting its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty. The Equality Strategy is regularly monitored by the corporate Equality Steering Group.</p> <p>Highlights since the last report include; work to improve gender diversity, embed the new core values and behavioural framework, and the Service is again a national Stonewall top 100 employer for the third consecutive year. Whilst the Service continues to use the FRS Equality framework as a guide for good practice in considering the different needs of people in all the Service’s work, as supported by CFOA, a decision has been taken by the Executive Board not to proceed with the resource intensive peer assessment against the Excellent level of the framework in this financial year.</p>
<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>	No additional resource implications
<b>EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS (ERBA)</b>	There is no requirement to carry out an ERBA on this report.
<b>APPENDICES</b>	Improving gender diversity – positive action plan
<b>LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>	Equality Strategy 2012-2016 ‘Brighter Lives, Safer Futures’

## 1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Equality Act 2010 provides legal protections for people based on their 'protected characteristics' which are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 1.2 The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty which, in relation to the protected characteristics, requires the Service to give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people.
- 1.3 The Service's Equality Strategy 2012-2016 – "Safer Lives, Brighter Futures", sets out the objectives and action plan that assist it in meeting the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 1.4 The Equality Strategy is regularly monitored by the cross-functional Equality Steering Group which has a membership of fifteen employees and includes the representative bodies and a member of the Fire Pride (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) network and WANDS (Women's Action Network). The group is now chaired by Area Manager Chris Blackburn, a member of the Service Leadership Team and the Service's Equality Champion.
- 1.5 This report provides an update on the following areas of the Equality Strategy:
- Peer assessment against the Excellent level of the Equality Framework
  - The Stonewall equality index
  - A plan for improved gender diversity
  - Core Values
  - Dyslexia awareness
  - Secondment to the Race Equality Council
  - Planned work for 2015/16

## 2. **PEER ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE 'EXCELLENT' LEVEL OF THE EQUALITY FRAMEWORK**

- 2.1 In addition to assisting the Service in meeting the Public Sector equality duty and improving inclusion in working practices and the delivery of services, the equality strategy also assists us in working towards achieving the 'Excellent' level of the national Fire & Rescue Service (FRS) Equality Framework, (the Service attained the 'Achieving' level following a peer assessment in 2011). The framework provides a way of measuring and evidencing both good practice and a thorough consideration of the different needs of people in the Service's work.
- 2.2 Whilst the Service continues to use the FRS Equality framework as a guide for sound practice in diversity, equality and inclusion, as supported by the Chief Fire Officer's Association, (CFOA), following careful consideration the Executive Board recommends that the Service does not proceed with the previously planned, resource intensive, peer assessment against the Excellent level of the framework in this financial year.

- 2.3 It is felt that, at this time, employee time used to collect, assess and present evidence against the framework can be better deployed into priority areas aimed at both practical work to improve inclusion and in supporting our key priorities. The work towards fulfilling the 'Safer lives, brighter futures' strategy will continue and the framework will still be used to ensure the Service's progress in equality, diversity and inclusion continues. The Equality Steering Group and the Executive Board will review this decision at the end of this financial year and a peer assessment will be considered at another point in the future.

### **3. STONEWALL EQUALITY INDEX – TOP 100 EMPLOYER**

- 3.1 The Service was successful again in the Stonewall top 100 employer's index this year, despite a change in criteria and standards. This is a significant achievement to be a top 100 employer over three consecutive years, competing with nearly 400 public and private organisations.
- 3.2 The result is based on the evidence submitted about the Service's gay-friendly policies and procedures, equality training for employees, development of new core values, regular internal and external communications on relevant issues and the important role played by Fire Pride, the service's lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) network. Fire Pride can provide support and confidential advice for LGB employees, as well as raising awareness of the need for a diverse, inclusive and friendly work place culture for all.
- 3.3 The Executive Board supports the Service's position as Stonewall Diversity Champions and inclusion in the annual index. The index provides a comprehensive measure of how inclusive the service culture, policies and support is for lesbian, gay and bisexual employees, and consequently our general workplace diversity performance. The Service is at position 85 and there are only three other Fire and Rescue Services in the index.
- 3.4 The Service will be demonstrating its support for lesbian, gay bisexual and transsexual colleagues and communities at the Exeter pride event on Saturday 16 May 2015. Members and Officers will be receiving invitations to join the parade from Fire Pride.

### **4. IMPROVING GENDER DIVERSITY - POSITIVE ACTION PLAN**

- 4.1 A diverse, more representative workforce can bring many benefits in terms of better services, more satisfied, engaged employees and a positive workplace culture. To achieve this, the Service needs to take action to increase the representation of women, particularly in operational roles at all levels.
- 4.2 Largely due to low levels of wholetime recruitment in recent years and despite efforts to improve awareness and provide support, there has been no significant increase in the number of female operational employees in the Service, currently just below the national average of 5% at 3.4% (excluding Control). Additionally, the number of women in operational senior management roles remains low.
- 4.3 Recent research by Women in the Fire service and our own Women's Action Network (WANDS) demonstrates that other FRSs experience a similar gender imbalance. Comparisons are difficult due to different crewing arrangements and duty systems, but some are starting to make progress. A number of actions have been taken to start to address these issues including the establishment of the WANDS group, organising several personal development days primarily aimed at women and producing more inclusive recruitment materials.

- 4.4 The Chief Fire Officer recently took part in a national round table discussion on improving gender diversity in the Service. In preparation for this he met with a number of operational women to discuss issues, concerns and ideas. A recent conference hosted by South Yorkshire FRS also demonstrates a renewed FRS national interest in improving gender diversity in the sector, and the Service has been able to contribute to that purpose by pooling ideas and sharing its positive action plan.
- 4.5 The Executive Board recognises the benefits of a diverse workforce and the need for action in this area and has approved a proportionate, practical long term plan to improve gender diversity. This plan has drawn together existing actions and added some new ideas to create a cohesive approach to demonstrating leadership in the support and encouragement of women in the Service to meet their desired potential.
- 4.6 The WANDS steering group and the Equality steering group will be involved in monitoring the plan.

## 5. **CORE VALUES**

- 5.1 Since the launch of the new employee developed core values and behavioural framework, a number of actions are underway to progress and raise awareness of the values and encourage employees to integrate them into their daily working practices. This includes articles in Your Shout, the employee magazine, demonstrating the values in action, and a new core values workshop section in the managers' equality training, which has received excellent feedback.
- 5.2 As processes are reviewed, the core values will also be integrated into existing processes such as recruitment, progression and personal performance and development reviews. The core values will be integrated into a forthcoming review of the current Bullying and Harassment policy - also an action in the "Safer Lives, Brighter Futures" strategy - which will broaden the policy to promote the behavioural framework.
- 5.3 The equalities team has had positive feedback from managers and employees about the values and the framework. Many ideas and examples of how the framework can be used to support a healthy working environment have been offered by employees themselves and these are shared in the workshops.

## 6. **DYSLEXIA AWARENESS TRAINING**

- 6.1 Around 10% of the population are dyslexic which leads to difficulties with understanding words and, often, numbers. It is likely that the proportion of dyslexics is even higher in the fire service as the role of firefighter is more focused on tasks and problem solving and therefore appeals to people who struggle to make sense of written words. At present, around 2% of employees have been identified, through professional assessment, as being dyslexic. We know there will be more dyslexics in the Service, some of whom will be getting by using their own coping strategies and others who do not feel able, or choose not, to ask for support. There are risks associated with dyslexia as many of the policies and procedures put in place to keep people safe are written documents.

6.2 Dyslexics have protection under the Equality Act 2010 and the Service must put in place reasonable adjustments to allow the individual to carry out their role. It is essential to consider and plan for the implications of dyslexia, both for our employees and for the public. This includes thinking about dyslexia in relation to recruitment, progression, communications, design, training delivery, policy preparation and in developing systems and processes. We also need to ensure that there is sufficient awareness of the nature of dyslexia to help support a workplace culture where dyslexics feel able to seek support when necessary.

6.3 The equalities team recently arranged an 'Understanding Dyslexia' training course attended by employees representing the main sections of the Service. The training helped participants to understand more about dyslexia, the challenges and opportunities it creates and some of the adjustments we can put in place. As part of the day, the group discussed what support we provide for dyslexia at present and prepared an action plan to help us improve.

## 7. **SECONDMENT TO THE RACE EQUALITY COUNCIL**

7.1 A two year secondment with the Plymouth and Devon Race Equality Council concludes as a formal arrangement in March 2015. This secondment has achieved many successes in engagement, fire prevention and life skills with black and minority ethnic (BME) communities in Plymouth. In particular, there has been success with asylum seekers and refugees who are from countries in which codes and conventions may be different in relation to fire safety and the law. Whilst the secondment will cease, the relationship is set to continue and work will be carried out on an ad hoc basis. A full presentation on the work achieved will be scheduled with the Community Safety and Corporate Planning Committee in due course.

## 8 **PLANNED WORK FOR 2015/16**

8.1 The actions in the Equality strategy are embedded in department business plans. The Equality Steering group scrutinised all the outstanding actions in the strategy in line with our priorities of Public Safety, Employee Safety and Efficiency and Effectiveness. Some of the actions were adjusted in line with this, and work underway and planned for 2015/16 includes:

- An evaluated partnership protocol and register for Community and Voluntary Sector partnerships
- Develop data sharing protocols with key agencies and voluntary sector to enable more targeting of those at risk
- Develop an 'Engaging with the community and voluntary sector' toolkit' to support service delivery
- Develop hate crime awareness guidance
- Develop employee information around reasonable adjustments
- Involve communities in prevention campaign development
- Evaluate community safety activities incorporating Equality Risks and Benefits Analysis principles
- Ensure key corporate publications are converted to an Easy Read format
- Promote additional community specific training to relevant teams

- Ensure workforce planning decisions use Equality Risks and Benefits Analysis methodology
- Refresh diversity monitoring for all staff
- Review the bullying and harassment policy
- Review and implement a revised employee survey

9. **CONCLUSION**

9.1 The Equality Strategy, 'Safer Lives, brighter futures', is regularly monitored by the Corporate Equality Steering Group. The strategy was developed using evidenced based feedback from the 2011 peer assessment against the Achieving level of the Equality Framework for Fire and Rescue Services. The Executive Board has decided to continue to support the strategy and the national Equality Framework, however, whilst many improvements have been made, it will continue this practical work across equality and diversity objectives linked to key priorities rather than take part in a resource intensive peer assessment against the 'Excellent' level during 15/16.

10. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 That the decision not to undertake the planned peer assessment against the Excellent level of the Equality Framework in 2015/16 be approved; and

10.2 Subject to the above, the report be noted.

**TREVOR STRATFORD**  
**Director of Operations**

DEVON AND SOMERSET FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

January 2015

**POSITIVE ACTION PLAN**

**Executive Summary**

A diverse, more representative workforce can bring many benefits in terms of; better services, more satisfied, engaged employees and a positive workplace culture. To achieve this, the Service needs to take action to increase the representation of women, particularly in operational roles at all levels.

Partly to due to a lack of wholetime firefighter recruitment, there has been no significant increase in the number of female operational employees in the Service, and this remains low at 3.4%.

Additionally, the number of women in operational management roles, continues to remain low.

A number of actions have been taken to start to address these issues including the establishment of the WANDS (women’s action) group, organising development days primarily aimed at women and producing recruitment materials that reflect women in the role. Though these actions have assisted some individuals, they have made very little difference to the overall representation.

Other FRSs experience a similar gender imbalance though some are starting to make progress. The Service is engaging with other Fire and Rescue Services and CFOA in an effort to pool ideas and share good practice.

This positive action plan has drawn together existing actions and added some new ones to create a cohesive approach to revitalising positive action and demonstrating leadership in the support and encouragement of women in the Service.

<p><b>Key Communication Messages</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A diverse, more representative workforce brings many benefits in terms of; better services, more satisfied, engaged employees and a positive workplace culture</li> <li>• The Executive Board is committed to improving the representation of women in the Service</li> <li>• The Executive Board supports positive action to improve the situation and to support women to progress into more senior operational roles</li> </ul>
--	---

<p><b>Financial and Other Resource Implications</b></p>	<p><b>Resources</b></p> <p>The majority of the actions can be met from within existing resources. Where this is not the case, a business case will be made through the Improvement Framework.</p> <p>We will need to involve employees in identifying ideas for improvements which could include some participation in discussion and working groups.</p> <p><b>Monitoring</b></p> <p>The action plan will be monitored by the corporate Equality Steering Group which already monitors the Equality Strategy and provides update reports to HRMD committee. This is a long term ongoing plan and some actions are already underway. The plan will be monitored by the Equality Steering group using both qualitative and quantitative measures.</p>
---	--



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

A diverse, more representative workforce can bring many benefits in terms of; better services, more satisfied, engaged employees and a positive workplace culture. To achieve this, the Service needs to take action to increase the representation of women, particularly in operational roles at all levels.

There is no shortage of ideas for improvements we can make in the Service and we have people to lead on this in equalities, HR and the Academy, together with the Women's Action Network group.

Work is being revitalised with clear senior commitment to taking positive steps to increase the number of female firefighters and to support women to progress into management and senior roles across the Service.

This commitment is key to engaging and encouraging employees and managers, both men and women, to get involved in delivering the action plan.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

Women are in a significant minority in the Service and are particularly under-represented in operational roles including at a senior level. As an organisation that continuously works to improve, we need to monitor our processes and ways of working to find ways of reducing the gender imbalance, thereby increasing diversity in the organisation and benefiting from a more representative workforce.

This positive action plan will help ensure that we do not inadvertently disadvantage women or fail to address some of the barriers they face. It will also allow us to set out some positive steps we can take to reduce the gender gap. It will help to keep us focused on doing whatever we can to attract women to the Service and support them to progress.

The purpose of this plan is to bring together a number of existing actions and objectives around positive action for women and to incorporate some new ideas, many of which were put forward at the WANDS Development Day in May 2014.

Many women say that they do not want to be treated differently from men or receive 'special' treatment. However, the gap between men and women in terms of numbers and seniority of role means that additional, proportionate and realistic, steps need to be taken if the gap is to be narrowed.

### **3. Steps to revitalise positive action**

#### **The evidence**

At May 2014, women made up 11% of the total DSFRS workforce. Women working in wholetime and retained roles (excluding Control) were 3.4% of the workforce and this increased to 5% if female Control staff were included.

Very few wholetime and retained women are in management grades. 3.5% of crew managers are female and 1% of watch managers. (5.8% and 3.6% including women in Control).

In July 2014, data was gathered from the majority of Fire & Rescue Services in the UK on the number of female employees and their ranks and roles. This was to provide evidence for a discussion report for WANDS and Women in the Fire Service (UK). The results highlighted the low numbers of women in FRSs across the country in any roles, with the average being around 15% of the workforce but with some well under 10% (DSFRS is 11%). On average, less than a third of the women in the services are employed in operational roles (wholetime and on-call). The majority of operational women are firefighters and generally low numbers have progressed into more senior roles.

A renewed impetus is now emerging for the recognition of women as a minority in the Service, supported in particular by the Fire Minister, Penny Mordant MP. Momentum is needed to empower and allow individual Services to prioritise and examine the working environment and conditions they provide in relation to women and to provide practical positive action initiatives to help all women in the FRS, in both operational and non-operational career paths to reach their desired potential and career aspirations.

#### **Taking positive action**

Positive action is a way for employers to encourage people from particular groups, or with a particular disadvantage or where there is low-participation to take up employment-related opportunities. This could be around recruitment, training, development or promotion.

Equality law permits organisations to use positive action if they reasonably believe that a group of people who share a protected characteristic (in this case 'sex') is under-represented, disadvantaged or has different needs. They would need to have some evidence to show that this belief is reasonable and any actions taken must be proportionate so must be related to the level of disadvantage or under-representation that exists.

There is a large under-representation of women in the Service so it is lawful to take positive action to address this.

Positive action is not the same as positive discrimination which is unlawful.

### **Earlier positive action**

A number of actions have been completed, for example:

- establishing WANDS, the women's action network
- producing a recruitment video and marketing materials showing female firefighters
- developing a positive action recruitment toolkit for retained stations
- producing a community version of equality strategies to help publicly demonstrate our commitment to equality in the Service

### **Existing actions/objectives**

There is already evidence to draw upon regarding the barriers to female recruitment, retention and progression. This comes from both external and internal reports and from discussions with the WANDS network. These identified barriers include:

- Recruitment - public perception of the nature of the firefighter role, ability to reach the fitness standards
- Appointment – working in a male dominated environment, dealing with banter and cultural issues, caring responsibilities
- Progression – lack of role models, self-confidence, managing mainly male teams, additional pressures that minority status brings.

There are a number of existing actions which are underway and are relevant to this positive action plan. These are contained in the Equality Strategy – Safer Lives, Brighter Futures, Equal Pay Audit, Community & Workplace Equalities Business Plan and Human Resources Business Plan.

These actions can be summarised into two broad objectives. A number of new actions, mainly from the WANDS Development Day in May 2014, have also been incorporated.

The two broad objectives are:

- A. Increasing the number of female on-call firefighters. (Women are particularly under-represented in the operational workforce and the Service priority at present is to recruit on-call.)
- B. Increasing the number of women in management positions and other senior roles across the Service.

4. **Most of these actions are already in various department plans**

**Positive Action Plan**

**Objective A - Increasing the number of female on-call firefighters.**

Actions:

1. Review the on-call contract to introduce greater flexibility and the opportunity to offer fewer contracted hours than currently available.
2. Review all stages of the on-call attraction, recruitment and induction process to identify where it can be adjusted to support positive action for women. To include:
  - Reviewing the on-call positive action toolkit including how it is currently used, reviewing the contents and supporting materials and obtaining feedback from stations.
  - Improving the recruitment sections of the website, in particular, emphasising that firefighting is a role for women.
  - Exploring how social media can be used more effectively to target female applicants.
  - Reviewing station open days/evenings to see how they can be developed to increase female participation.
  - Consider holding women-only recruitment events/taster evenings with associated PR to promote female firefighters more widely.
  - Consider running a female recruitment campaign with local employers in areas of on-call shortage.
  - Encouraging more operational women to attend technical assessments to advise and support women who attend.
  - Regularly analysing the data on how many women attend and participate in each stage of recruitment and, where known, the reasons they drop out.

3. Review the induction process to ensure female recruits have access to appropriate support and contacts during their first few months in the Service.
4. Regularly analyse the exit interview feedback to provide detailed reasons why women leave the service.
5. Review family leave and flexible working provision to ensure policies are robust and assist in the attraction and progression of women. To include a review of attitudes towards flexible working, application of policies across the service and evidence of take-up.
6. Investigate high performing Fire and Rescue Services and other emergency services in workforce diversity and incorporate benchmarked targets and good practice.
7. Work with Women in the Fire Service (UK) and the Fire Minister to lobby for national campaigns and actions to increase female recruitment.
8. Consider how best to raise awareness amongst girls and young women that working as an on-call firefighter may be something they wish to consider in the future.

**Objective B - Increasing the number of women in management positions and other senior roles across the Service.**

Actions:

1. Identify and raise awareness of senior female role models in our Service and other services.
2. Introduce coaching, mentoring, secondment, shadowing and 'taster' sessions to allow participants to assess their suitability for roles.
3. Ensure that informal methods of advice, support, buddying and networking are available for women.
4. Consider bespoke training options for those interested in progression.
5. As part of the ADC review, ensure there are no barriers to women applying, participating and achieving success.
6. As part of the PPD review, consider how the process can be used consistently and effectively to encourage women to prepare and apply for promotion and be offered relevant support.
7. Offer command and control training for women in development or who are considering promotion.
8. Encourage more women to apply for instructor posts.

9. Continue to develop the role of WANDS across the Service as a supportive network for women.
10. Continue to organise local and regional development and 'have a go' days aimed primarily at women.