

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	HRMDC/15/9
MEETING	HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT
DATE OF MEETING	7 DECEMBER 2015
SUBJECT OF REPORT	EQUALITY STRATEGY – ‘SAFER LIVES, BRIGHTER FUTURES’ MONITORING REPORT JUNE 2015 to NOVEMBER 2015
LEAD OFFICER	Director of Operations
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That the report be noted.</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	Implementation of the Equality Strategy 2012-2016, Safer Lives, Brighter Futures, 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 monitored regularly by the Strategic Equalities Group. Highlights since the last report include the employee survey, dyslexia awareness, review of the bullying and harassment policy and a pilot recruitment of Plymouth advocates with specific language skills and these are explored further within this report.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	No additional resource implications
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS (ERBA)	There is no requirement to carry out an ERBA on this report
APPENDICES	Appendix A – Strategic Equalities Group Terms of Reference Appendix B – Employee Survey 2015 Headline Results
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	Equality Strategy 2012-2016 ‘Safer Lives, Brighter Futures’ Business case for the pilot project to recruit community advocates in Plymouth with specialist language skills.

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 Equality Strategy 2012-2016, Safer Lives, Brighter Futures, sets out the objectives and action plan that assist the Service in meeting the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty. This report provides an update on progress over the past five months.

2. **MONITORING THE STRATEGY**

- 2.1 Since the Strategy was approved in 2012 by the Fire and Rescue Authority (Minute DSFRA/12(b)(ii) refers), it has been monitored regularly by a cross-functional steering group which has a membership of fifteen employees. This 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 guided by the Equalities Manager and is chaired by Area Manager Chris Blackburn, a member of the Service Leadership Team and the Service's Equality Champion.
- 2.2 The group has recently reviewed its terms of reference to ensure that it continues to provide an effective role in both monitoring the Strategy and embedding equality and diversity across the Service. Best practice from other Fire and Rescue Services was considered as part of the review.
- 2.3 The revised terms of reference (see Appendix 1):
- provides a greater emphasis on using data and evidence to make recommendations for improvements;
 - clarifies that the scope of the group includes legislative and organisational issues; the latter including core values, expected behaviours and respect and dignity at work;
 - provides for closer links with the Executive Board.
- 2.4 The group also amended its title to the Strategic Equalities Group.

3. **A NEW EQUALITY STRATEGY FOR 2016-2020**

- 3.1 The current Strategy has a life of four years and will come to an end in March 2016. There is a requirement under the Public Sector Equality Duty to publish equality objectives at least every four years to help focus attention on priority equality issues in order to further improve service planning and delivery and employment practices.

- 3.2 The Service is in the process of planning for the new Strategy which will involve:
- a review of the action plan in the current strategy;
 - consideration of the equality aspects of corporate priorities;
 - seeking guidance from the national Equality Framework for Fire and Rescue Services;
 - internal and external consultation.
- 3.3 A draft of the revised Strategy will be brought to the Human Resources Management and Development Committee for consideration.

4. EMPLOYEE SURVEY 2015

4.1 An employee survey is one of the key tools for measuring and improving employee engagement and satisfaction and the Service has carried out such surveys for a number of years. This year, a steering group, led by the Equalities Manager, reviewed the approach to the survey as it was increasing in length (it took around 45 minutes to complete) and there had been a reduction in response rates.

4.2 The steering group took into account the accessibility and time constraints of our workforce and carried out research into the primary indicators of employee satisfaction. Based on this research, employees were invited to indicate their strength of agreement or disagreement with nine core questions. These were:

- I understand how my role contributes to the work of the Service;
- I am satisfied with the level of personal control and influence I have in my role;
- If I put forward ideas and opinions I know they will be listened to and taken seriously;
- My line manager's leadership and management style encourages me to do a good job.;
- I receive the right level of communication about what is happening across the Service;
- If I want to develop I have the opportunity;
- My day to day experience at work is consistent with the Service's Core Values;
- I am able to achieve a good work / life balance;
- I am satisfied with my overall experience of working for DSFRS.

Employees were also invited to provide additional comments against each question.

4.3 The survey closed in September 2015 and the overall response rate was 28.2% which was a 10% improvement on the previous survey. Response rates were fairly high for some parts of the Service (over 50% for Control and support staff), however, the response rate from retained employees was particularly low at 10% and the reasons for this will be explored in more detail.

4.4 The headline results were communicated to employees shortly after the survey closed and these are attached at Appendix 2 for information. The steering group is now analysing and theming the many additional comments that were made and a final report with an action plan for improvements will be published in January 2016.

5. DYSLEXIA AWARENESS

5.1 This year the Service has carried out more work to support its dyslexic employees. Around 10% of the population is dyslexic which, for most, causes difficulties with reading, writing and spelling. In the fire service, it is thought to be a higher percentage as the firefighting role requires many of the strengths that dyslexics demonstrate such as completion of physical tasks, problem solving, visualising, creative problem solving and empathy. However, most roles now require the ability to read and write to a reasonable standard, for example to understand bulletins and policies and when in training.

5.2 At present, around 2% of employees have been identified, through professional assessment, as being dyslexic. It is known that there will be more dyslexics in the Service, some of whom will be using their own coping strategies and others who do not feel able, or choose not, to ask for support. The Service needs to ensure that there is sufficient awareness of the nature of dyslexia so that the workplace culture encourages dyslexics to seek support when necessary.

5.3 Earlier in 2015, the Equalities Manager arranged an 'Understanding Dyslexia' training course to help participants develop greater awareness of dyslexia, the challenges and opportunities it creates and some of the adjustments the Service can put in place to assist.

5.4 In October 2015, the Service marked Dyslexia Awareness Week with a number of activities. These included information displays at Academy Plympton and Service Headquarters; commissioning photography for a new poster campaign; a demonstration of dyslexia support software and awareness-raising sessions through station and team visits. The Service's Dyslexia Support Network participated in the week and contact details for some of the members were included in publicity materials for anyone seeking support and advice.

5.5 The Service also had the support of a dyslexia advisor, Denis McCann, during the week. Denis is a recently retired Area Commander with over thirty years' service with Lancashire and Avon. He is also dyslexic and is an excellent role model, demonstrating that dyslexia doesn't have to be a barrier to progression. During the week he spoke to various teams, providing advice and answering questions and met members of the Dyslexia Support Network. He also gave a presentation to the Executive Board and visited a couple of drill nights.

5.6 During and shortly after the awareness week a further four dyslexic employees came forward to seek advice and support.

6. REVIEW OF THE BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

6.1 One of the actions in the Equality Strategy was to review the Bullying and Harassment policy and this has been taking place this year. The policy emphasises the Service's zero tolerance approach to bullying and harassment and sets out the procedures to be followed when reporting and investigating incidents.

6.2 Employees were involved in the review and were invited to complete a questionnaire. Individual and group discussions were held and initial conversations took place with representative bodies. Best practice was also researched and drawn upon. Key changes in the draft policy include:

- Retitling the policy to 'Respect and Dignity in the Workplace' in order to focus on the desired behaviours;
- More emphasis on the core values and behavioural framework with the expectation that these will form an important part of general monitoring of behaviours as well as resolution of issues;
- Setting out the expectation that employees will have made their feelings known to the person concerned (via an intermediary if necessary) and attempted a resolution before a grievance will be heard (except in serious cases).

6.3 The draft policy will shortly be going out for formal consultation.

7. RECRUITMENT OF COMMUNITY ADVOCATES IN PLYMOUTH WITH LANGUAGE SKILLS

7.1 A pilot project is currently underway to recruit community advocates in Plymouth with particular language skills in Arabic, Farsi, French, Kurdish, Polish or Tigrinya. These advocates will help the Service to reach some vulnerable communities who are likely to have a limited understanding of English.

7.2 Particular risks for some communities were identified including:

- limited understanding of fire safety legislation;
- limited awareness of fire prevention/protection devices and plans e.g. smoke detectors, planning escape routes;
- overcrowding in some accommodation;
- different cultural practices e.g. cooking methods using oil and flames, use of candles and fireworks;
- wearing of flowing traditional garments when cooking.

7.3 The ability to converse with someone in their own language, allowing the exchange of information and opportunity for questioning and clarifying is important to ensure that key safety messages are conveyed, understood and acted upon. It also allows trust and rapport to be developed.

7.4 The pilot is being run for Plymouth advocates with one of the essential requirements for the job being to have good conversational skills in at least one of the top five languages in Plymouth in addition to English.

7.5 The recruitment is open to people of any nationality/ethnic background; the specific language requirement is the key skill that distinguishes this recruitment from the general advocate person specification. The role has recently been advertised and it is anticipated that interviews will take place in the new year.

8. ASIAN FIRE SERVICE ASSOCIATION DEVELOPMENT DAY 2016

8.1 The Service was recently honoured to be approached by the Asian Fire Service Association with a request to host a national Development Day in May 2016 for Fire and Rescue Services. Discussions are now underway to agree themes, workshops and case studies.

8.2 The main focus of the Asian Fire Service Association is to mainstream equality and diversity issues, both in service provision and employment practices. The development days provide an opportunity for Fire and Rescue Services to share ideas and best practice on, for example, keeping communities safe, considering individual needs, fostering good relations (including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding) and supporting community cohesion.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 The Service's Equality Strategy continues to be implemented and regularly monitored by the Strategic Equalities Group. Work is now underway to plan for a new Equality Strategy which will be effective from 2016 to 2020.

9.2 It is recommended that the report be noted.

TREVOR STRATFORD
Director of Operations

Strategic Equalities Group

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The role of the Strategic Equalities Group is to provide independent assurance of the Service's performance in relation to a range of specific people factors.

These factors include those that apply to staff and the Service's interactions with the community and voluntary sector.

A crucial role is played by the Group in ensuring that the Service complies with the Public Sector Equality Duty and maintains the principles of working to the national FRS Equality Framework. The Group will monitor the Equality Strategy and will also collect and monitor information (e.g. data, statistics, feedback) within its scope, specifically that relating to the protected characteristics within the Equality Act 2010, in order to identify issues, patterns and gaps. The Group will then make, as appropriate, recommendations for improving and developing performance and practices.

Examples of the measures that will be monitored include:

- Number of women employed in the Service
- Number of women employed in a supervision role
- Staff ethnicity within the Service
- Community demographics.

The Group will also provide a service to the Executive Leadership Team of reviewing and commenting on national and sector specific direction setting and guidance documents for equalities where feedback has been invited.

Scope

The scope of the Group covers the following:

Legislative

- Public Sector Equality Duty
- Equality Strategy
- Equality Risks and Benefits Analyses (ERBAs)
- Equalities and Diversity

Organisational

- Behaviours
- Core Values
- Respect and dignity at work

The Group will not have:

- Ownership of strategies or policies
- Ownership of performance indicators
- Day to day management of people

Our commitment

We will:

- be an influential group for positive change
- act as Equality Champions both inside and outside the organisation
- assist in promoting and embedding Core Values
- communicate effectively
- recognise and celebrate achievements.

Accountability

Following each meeting, feedback will be provided to the Senior Leadership Team, to include:

- any issues arising from the review of the Equality Strategy
- latest figures/data being monitored and recommendations arising
- other equality or people-related issues arising.

Feedback, as described above, will also be provided to the Group's Executive Board lead who will discuss, as required, with other members of the Executive Board.

The Group will report progress on the Equality Strategy and other related matters to the Human Resources Management & Development Committee every six months.

Membership

The membership of the Strategic Equalities Group will comprise of:

- Community Safety – AM Community Safety (Chair)
- Community and Workplace Equalities – CWE Manager (Vice Chair)
- Human Resources – HR Manager
- Community Safety – Communities Manager
- Analysis and Development – Corporate Planning Manager
- Service Delivery
- Control
- Training Academy
- Representative bodies
- Fire Pride representative
- WANDS representative
- Dyslexia representative.

In addition, the Executive Board lead will be invited to attend each meeting.

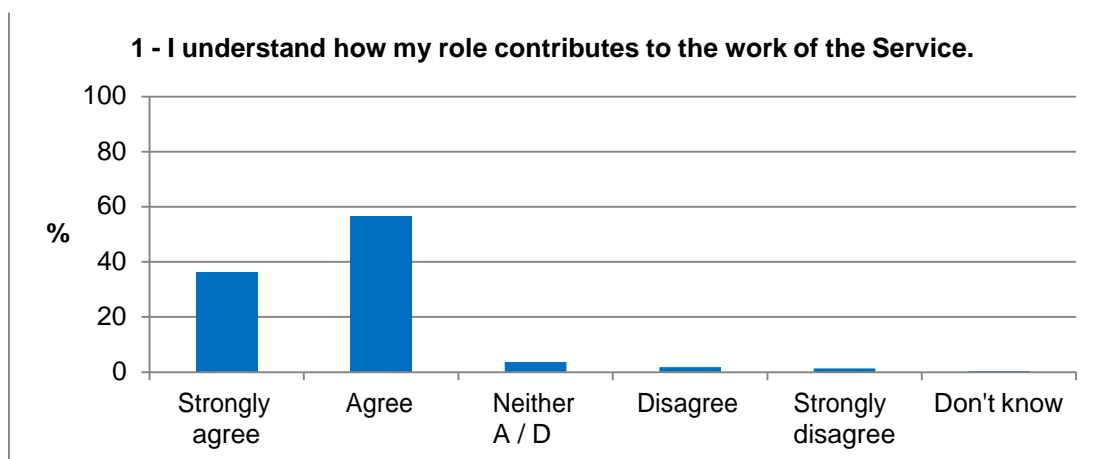
Meeting organisation

A minimum of two group meetings but normally three will be held each year.

Agendas are distributed prior to each meeting and minutes are taken. If issues arise between meetings, these will be dealt with by email communication

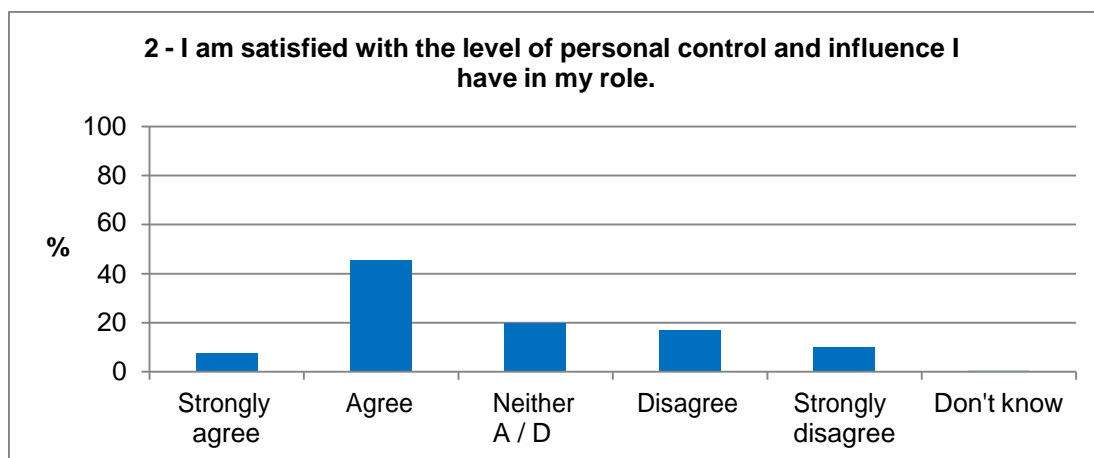
Question 1 - I understand how my role contributes to the work of the Service.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither A / D	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Total	Text Responses
#	199	309	20	10	7	2	547	132
%	36.4	56.5	3.7	1.8	1.3	0.4	100.1	24.1



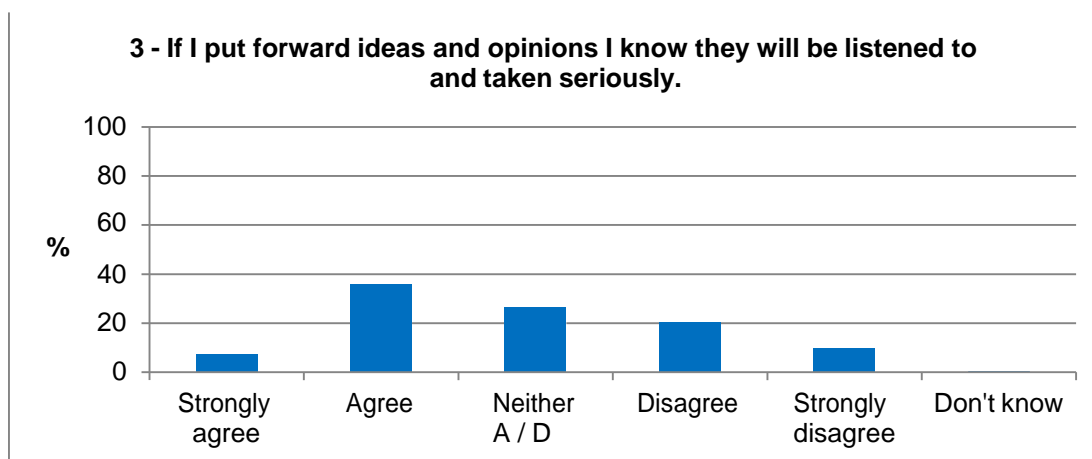
Question 2 - I am satisfied with the level of personal control and influence I have in my role.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither A / D	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Total	Text Responses
#	40	246	106	92	53	2	539	158
%	7.4	45.6	19.7	17.1	9.8	0.4	100.0	29.3



Question 3 - If I put forward ideas and opinions I know they will be listened to and taken seriously.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither A / D	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Total	Text Responses
#	39	192	142	109	52	2	536	195
%	7.3	35.8	26.5	20.3	9.7	0.4	100.0	36.4



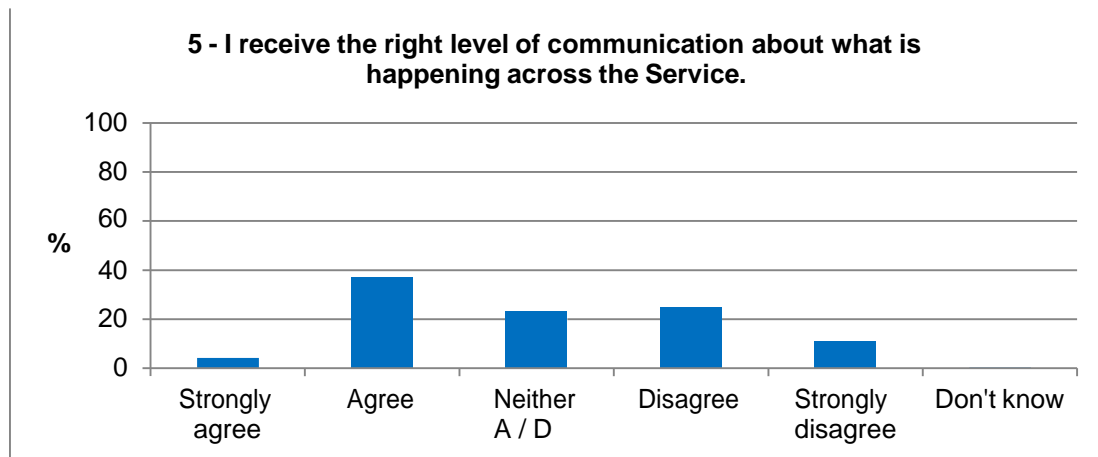
Question 4 - My line manager's leadership and management style encourages me to do a good job.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither A / D	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Total	Text Responses
#	115	221	87	63	34	3	523	170
%	22.0	42.3	16.6	12.0	6.5	0.6	100.0	32.5



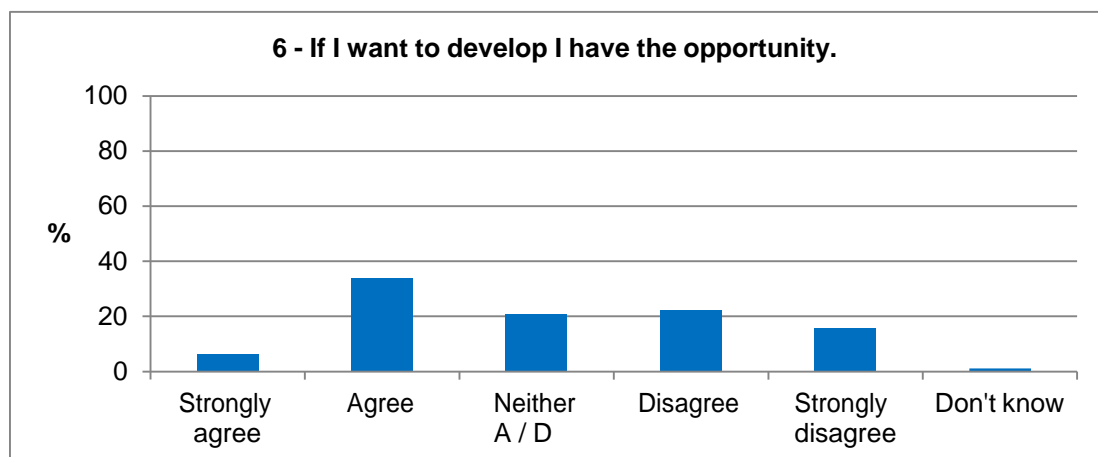
Question 5 - I receive the right level of communication about what is happening across the Service.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither A / D	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Total	Text Responses
#	22	193	120	129	57	1	522	194
%	4.2	37.0	23.0	24.7	10.9	0.2	100.0	37.2



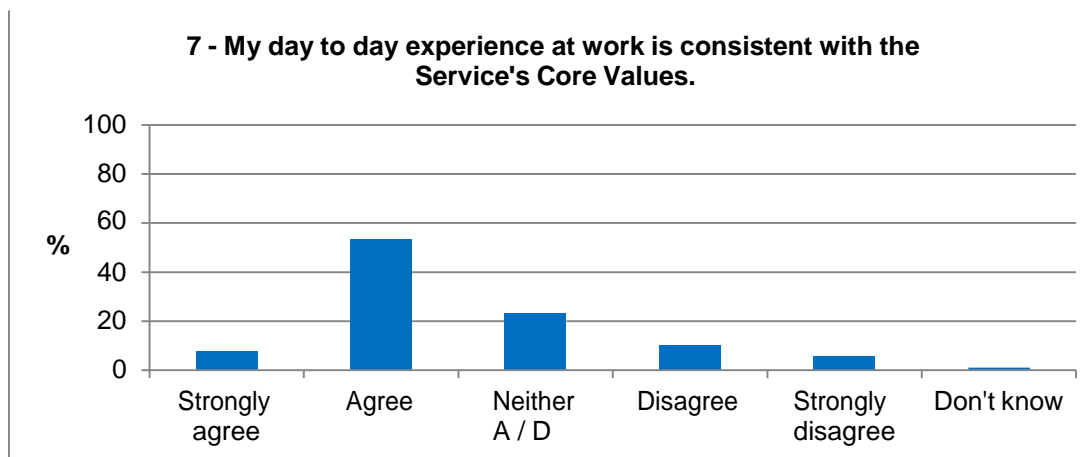
Question 6 - If I want to develop I have the opportunity.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither A / D	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Total	Text Responses
#	33	176	109	117	82	6	523	218
%	6.3	33.7	20.8	22.4	15.7	1.1	100.0	41.7



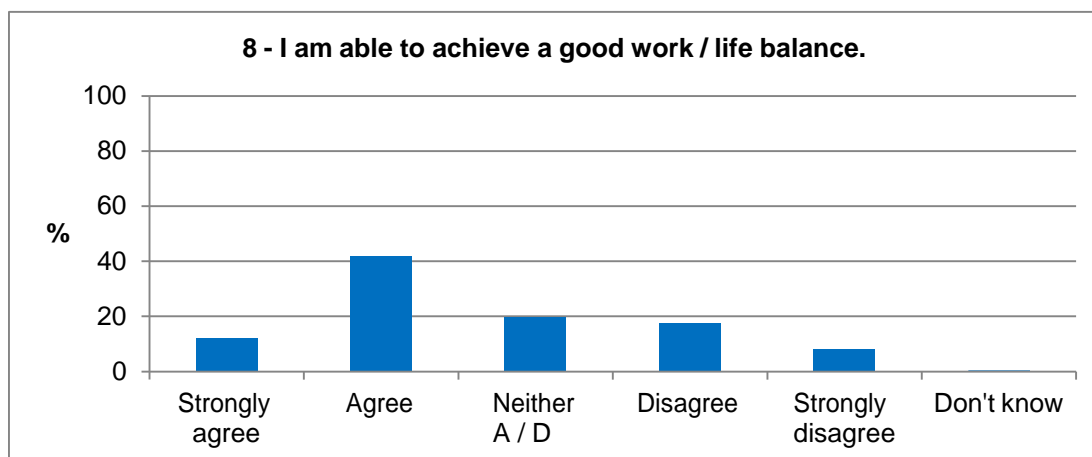
Question 7 - My day to day experience at work is consistent with the Service's Core Values.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither A / D	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Total	Text Responses
#	39	275	118	51	28	5	516	127
%	7.6	53.3	22.9	9.9	5.4	1.0	100.1	24.6



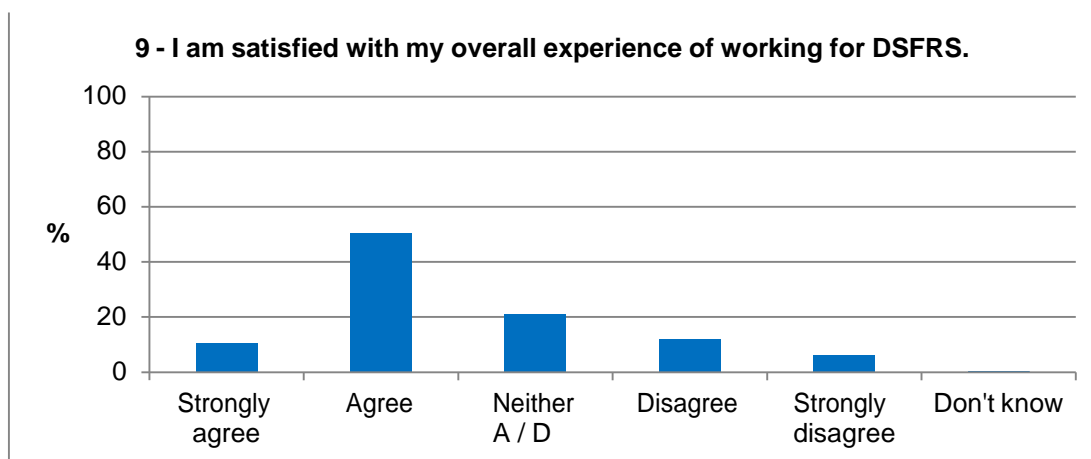
Question 8 - I am able to achieve a good work / life balance.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither A / D	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Total	Text Responses
#	63	215	102	91	41	2	514	216
%	12.3	41.8	19.8	17.7	8.0	0.4	100.0	42.0



Question 9 - I am satisfied with my overall experience of working for DSFRS.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither A / D	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Total	Text Responses
#	54	258	108	61	31	2	514	179
%	10.5	50.2	21.0	11.9	6.0	0.4	100.0	34.8



Question: For your main job with DSFRS are you...?

	Uniformed - Wholetime duty system	Uniformed - Retained duty system	Uniformed - Control	Support Staff	Not answered	Total
#	221	106	24	157	44	552
%	40.0	19.2	4.3	28.4	8.0	99.9

The overall response rate to the 2015 survey was 28.2%

Question: Where do you work for your main job with DSFRS?

	Central Command - Fire Station	Somerset Command - Fire Station	Western Command - Fire Station	Group HQ / STC / Workshops	Service Headquarters / Control	Not answered	Total
#	95	81	96	89	144	47	552
%	17.2	14.7	17.4	16.1	26.1	8.5	100.0