

For Publication

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority
Human Resources Policy and Challenge
Group
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Item No. 14

REPORT AUTHOR: DIVERSITY ADVISER

**SUBJECT: DRAFT PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY SCHEME
REVIEW**

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Background Papers: Single Equality Scheme 2016 Report

Implications (tick ✓):

LEGAL	✓	FINANCIAL	
HUMAN RESOURCES	✓	EQUALITY IMPACT	✓
ENVIRONMENTAL		POLICY	
CORPORATE RISK	Known	✓	OTHER (please specify)
	New		CORE BRIEF

Any implications affecting this report are noted at the end of the report.

PURPOSE:

To report on progress made against the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan (2012-16) and outline a new set of objectives/actions for the next four years (2016-20).

RECOMMENDATION:

That the submitted draft report is received.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Public Sector Organisations are required under the Equality Act 2010. To publish and report on a set of Equality Objectives every four years, which show how the organisation intends to meet its Public Sector Equality Duties.
- 1.2 In compliance with the PSED, BFRS published it's Single Equality Scheme (SES) in 2012, which sets out 25 specific actions that we hoped to deliver on over a 4 year period (2012-2016).

- 1.3 BFRS Corporate Equality Group receives reports and monitors progress against the Single Equality Scheme (SES).
- 1.4 This Single Equality Scheme Report closes the 2012-2016 SES; summaries progress made against the 25 actions and identifies a further set of objectives and actions for the next four years (2016 – 2020).
- 1.5 Objectives and the actions identified for 2016 – 2020 will be subject to a period of consultation with staff, representative bodies and interested external stakeholders before it can be formally adopted and published.

2. Summary of the SES 2016 Report

- 2.1 Over the past four years, 23 of the 25 areas of work that the Service said that it would focus on have been completed.
- 2.2 The 2 areas of work which were not completed or were looked at but require more work (Website accessibility and Procurement) have been merged into the following 6 objectives to be completed over the next 4 years:

Objective 1: Measuring performance against equality framework(s)

Objective 2: Improve public access

Objective 3: Equality and diversity training

Objective 4: Improve equality monitoring

Objective 5: Embed equality in commissioning and procurement activity

Objective 6: Improving standards and develop new partnerships

Under these 6 Objectives there are 17 specific actions for the Service as a whole to embrace and deliver on.

3. Background to the Single Equality Scheme

- 3.1 The SES and Action Plan was created to support the Service in meeting its duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011 and provide focus in planning, monitoring and developing services and practices designed to deliver equitable outcomes for communities and members of staff.
- 3.2 The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires public bodies to pay 'due regard' to the requirements of the Duty; which must be exercised in substance, with rigor and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.
- 3.3 Not all Service business will be relevant to the PSED and the Service has an Equality Assessment process in place to ensure all business is screened for relevancy. Due Regard is a matter of serious consideration as part of the process of policy and decision-making.
- 3.4 The weight given to the PSED compared to other factors will depend on how much that function, policy or practice can be utilised to effectively eliminate

discrimination, further equality, promote good relations between groups and the extent of any disadvantage that needs to be addressed.

3.5 The PSED must be complied with before and at the time that a particular policy, decision or action is under consideration, including the development of options and in making the final decision. The Service cannot satisfy the PSED by justifying a decision after it has been taken.

3.6 **The General Duties:**

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

3.7 **The Specific Duties:**

- Set out in SMART form and publish equality objectives at least every four years; and
- Publish information annually to demonstrate compliance with the PSED; in particular information relating to their employees and others affected by their policies and practices (such as service users).

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