

For Publication

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority
Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group
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Item No. 12

REPORT AUTHOR: DIVERSITY ADVISER

SUBJECT: SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME REVIEW

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Background Papers: SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME ACTION PLAN 2017 – 2020

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 (2017-20)

RECOMMENDATION:

That the progress 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, showing how the organisation intends to meet its Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED).

1.2 In compliance with the PSED, BFRS published its latest Single Equality Scheme (SES) in 2017, following a period of consultation in 2016.

The SES outlines 21 specific actions against the following 6 objectives:

1. Measure performance against equality frameworks
 2. Public access and recruitment
 3. Equality and diversity training
 4. Equality monitoring
 5. Equality in commissioning and procurement, and
 6. Improving standards and developing new partnerships
- 1.3 BFRS Corporate Equality Group (CEG) receives reports and monitors progress against the SES.
- 1.4 The attached Single Equality Scheme report summaries progress made against the 21 actions
2. Summary of the SES 2017-2020 progress report (attached)
- 2.1 Objective 1: 2 out of the 3 actions linked to the reports for the equality framework have been completed, the 3rd action is linked to the evidence gathered in preparation for the coming HMICFRS Inspection and identifies any information gaps relating to our peer assessment that will take place after the HMICFRS Inspection.

Objective 2: Work on improving public access and recruitment is progressing well; with the Positive Action plan, the new website, use of targeted social media and on-line translation facilities, the new on-line recruitment process for support staff is on schedule for completion.

Objective 3: staff are up to date with equality, diversity and the unconscious bias training. The Service has launched VOICES+, an online support group for LGBT staff, friends and allies. The project to support staff with Service policies is scheduled to be recruited to by mid-July.

Objective 4 Risk reduction actions against protected groups is in place, this action is complete but will be monitored.

Objective 5: Equality information and questions to ensure that businesses tendering for work with BFRS are complying with equality legislation is in place.

Objective 6: In line with legislation, the gender pay report has been published and a quality assured equality assessment process is in place. Partnership arrangements across disability groups is on-going.

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 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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