



Bedfordshire
Fire and Rescue Service

**POSITIVE ACTION REPORT
AND
2017-19 ACTION PLAN**

CONTENTS

Foreword	1
Attraction and Sustainability Strategy.....	1
Background.....	2
Aims and Objectives	2
Staff Profile.....	3
Positive Action Report	5
Summary of all Positive Action work undertaken between 1st April 2015 – 31st March 2017	5
Action Plan 2017-19.....	8
Abbreviations.....	10

Foreword

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) have developed a Positive Action Plan, to support its ambition to have a workforce that is representative of the communities it serves.

The Positive Action plan incorporates the shared learning from the Inclusive Fire Service Group (IFSG) – Improvement Strategies, which identifies a number of initiatives around recruitment, these have been captured in the actions identified for 2017-2019.

The Plan takes into account the recruitment rates for all positions and is supported by the following equality performance measures (Table 1).

No	Description	Frequency of reporting	Full year Target
Eq1a	Percentage of new entrants to the Retained Duty System to be women	Quarterly	6.6%
Eq1b	Percentage of new entrants to the whole-time duty system to be women	Quarterly	6%
Eq2	Recruitment of minority ethnic staff across the whole organisation	Quarterly	14%
Eq3	Parity in retention rates between BAME and white employees (all staff)	Annually	14%
Eq4	Parity in retention rates between men and women (operational staff)	Annually	4%

Table 1 – Equality Performance Measures 2017-18

Attraction and Sustainability Strategy

BFRS continues to ensure that that it progresses attraction from all current under-represented groups and ensure that it is seen as a truly inclusive employer of choice.

To increase the representation of women, and both men and women from Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, the Service needs to continually review and identify more ways of attracting potential candidates to join BFRS and become valued members of staff throughout their careers.

Recruitment strategies are supported and informed from effective collaboration with other FRS, local Police and national notable practices through IFSG.

Continued focus must be to attract talented individuals from the whole community. This can be supported by emphasising the unique offer the fire and rescue service presents, and highlighting the diversity of career opportunities through promotion and specialist posts.

Sustainable recruitment strategies need to be imbedded into workforce planning to ensure talented members of the community are encouraged to join the Service when the application process is 'live'. This avoids short-term measures that are less likely to improve diversity in the Fire and Rescue Service.

Background

The National Fire and Rescue operational workforce is reported as predominately White British and male. The Service recognises the need to have a diverse workforce to strengthen its service delivery activities as well as to better represent the communities it serves. The information below summarises the makeup of BFRS workforce and where possible, benchmarks it against the national (England) average, as well as the average of all English non-metropolitan Services.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of the Positive Action work is to increase diversity across the workforce. At this time the focus is toward improving the representation of females from across all communities and to increase the numbers of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in the operational workforce. Although we have not set rigid targets for each campaign, we are set performance measures by the Fire and Rescue Authority and our intention is to ensure that, by striving for these, the Service better reflects the communities we serve.

The objectives of the strategy will be:

- Implement a range of sustainable and measurable Positive Action initiatives and approaches targeting women throughout Bedfordshire to increase the number of female applicants and to see improved numbers of appointments as measured by our Performance Indicators.
- Implement a range of sustainable and measurable Positive Action initiatives and approaches targeting BAME communities throughout Bedfordshire to increase the number of BAME applicants and to see improved numbers of appointments as measured by our Performance Indicators.

Staff Profile

Percentage of female staff

Table 2 illustrates that BFRS, as at 31/3/2017, had more female staff when compared to National FRSs, particularly of those working in support and control.

	WT FF	Ret FF	TOTAL FF	Control	Support	All Staff
BFRS	5.4%	7.9%	6.2%	88%	59.1%	22.9%
England average	5.2%	4.5%	5.0%	75.7%	51.3%	14.6%
Non – Met average	4.9%	4.5%	4.7%	74.5%	51.7%	14%

Table 2 – % of female staff

Percentage of BAME staff

Table 3 shows the proportion of BAME staff for BFRS and for England and non-mets. BFRS exceeds the national average for all staffing sectors. It should be noted that whilst these comparisons are useful, BFRS are committed to reflecting our local communities rather than aligning alongside other Fire and Rescue Services.

	WT FF	Ret FF	TOTAL FF	Control	Support	All Staff
BFRS	5.5%	3.5%	6%	7.7%	10.5%	6.3%
England average	4.7%	1.11%	3.47%	2.75%	6.51%	3.96%
Non – Met average	1.99%	1.03%	1.53%	2.04%	2.89%	1.76%

Table 3 – % of BAME staff

Numbers of people across the Borough and percentages of female, male who are White or from a BAME background (From the 2011 Census data)

Area	Population	Male	Female	White	BAME
Central Bedfordshire	274,020	49.5%	50.5%	88.7%	10.3%
Bedford	157,479	51%	49%	71.5%	28.5%
Luton	203,201	50.2%	49.8%	55%	45%

Table 4 – Local population data

Breakdown of BFRS employees (as at 31/03/2017)

Area	Total	Male	Female	White	BAME	Ethnicity Not Declared
Whole time Firefighters	279	94.6%	5.4%	88.5%	6.5%	5%
Retained Firefighters	140	92.1%	7.9%	91.4%	5%	3.6%
Control	25	12%	88%	92%	8%	0%
Support	137	40.9%	59.1%	88.3%	11.7%	0%
Total	550	77.1%	22.9%	89.3%	7.3%	3.4%

Table 5 – Breakdown of BFRS employees

Positive Action Report

BFRS has seen success from previous Positive Action activity. Positive Action initiatives held in 2015 led to 4 people being successfully recruited as Whole time Firefighters from the Positive Action List in the 2016 recruitment campaign.

Summary of all Positive Action work undertaken between: 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2017

The strategy and action plan are based on a framework which covers the process prior to an individual engaging with BFRS with an interest in Firefighting opportunities through to requesting an application form. The following detail records what we said we would do as part of Positive Action toward improving diversity within the Service and what we have done towards achieving those goals.

	What we said we would do	What we did
1.	Deliver a minimum of one Coffee Morning Event per year at stations where there are RDS vacancies, focussed at engaging with women in the community.	<p>A coffee morning toolkit was developed to support this action.</p> <p>In 2016, coffee morning events were held at Toddington, Ampthill, Kempston, Biggleswade, Sandy, Shefford and Woburn Fire Stations.</p> <p>The interest generated through these activities directly led to 4 females progressing through the RDS recruitment stages during this period.</p>

	What we said we would do	What we did
2.	Produce an employer's handbook for use in RDS recruitment which highlights the benefits to employers of releasing staff for RDS and emphasises that BFRS welcomes female and BAME applicants.	<p>The Employers Guide to RDS has been produced that includes local case studies and promotes images reflecting our desire to attract BAME and female candidates.</p> <p>The guide is distributed at RDS recruitment events and is available from the Service's website for viewing and download.</p>

	What we said we would do	What we did
3.	Evaluate the effectiveness of the workshop/focus group for existing female operational staff and review and implement relevant recommendations to improve recruitment, retention and career progression opportunities for females.	A review was undertaken, the detailed outcomes of which were reported to CEG in 2016. A number of recommendations were taken forward and those participating in the focus group continue to be invited to participate in positive action events.

	What we said we would do	What we did
4.	Use a variety of Community Safety activities to promote BFRS and raise the image of BFRS to BAME as an employer of choice.	<p>The Faith Based Football initiative with Luton United Football Club continues to raise Service profile to a large number of young people from BAME communities in Luton.</p> <p>Recruitment and safety leaflets handed out (face to face activity) at Luton Carnival.</p> <p>Two community-based recruitment events held in Bedford and Luton.</p>

	What we said we would do	What we did
5.	<p>Promote BFRS and raise the image of BFRS as an employer of choice encouraging young people into the Service and developing their skills through:</p> <p>The introduction of a pilot scheme for the new National Fire Cadet Scheme. Subject to the pilot, extend the scheme and introduce targets for underrepresented groups.</p>	<p>The Cadet Scheme is a popular program which attracts a diverse range of cadets, currently 57 in total: 35% of Cadets are female 17.5% of Cadets are from BAME communities</p> <p>A policy position has been developed to support recruitment of cadets to firefighter positions. Further opportunities to support recruitment into cadets and beyond to be developed.</p> <p>In 2017, one new wholetime firefighter came from our current cadet programme and another who had benefitted from an earlier cadet scheme.</p>

	What we said we would do	What we did
6.	<p>Through Community Safety utilise a range of community links to publicise the Service, specifically the whole-time recruitment campaign and RDS vacancies, focussing on underrepresented groups of the community.</p> <p>Include: Diverse FM radio (community based radio) and the Community Safety House.</p>	<p>Community Safety Delivery includes the promotion of BFRS recruitment for whole time and on call firefighters. This is intrinsic to participation and delivery whenever it is appropriate, linked to the subject matter and target audience.</p> <p>Use of social media messaging has been expanded and specifically targeted at underrepresented groups.</p> <p>Recruitment messages/literature has been developed aimed at women from across all communities and men and women from BAME communities.</p>

	What we said we would do	What we did
7.	Maintain quarterly contact with females/BAME who have expressed an interest in a career as a Firefighter and provide them with editions of relevant fire service publications, and an initial contact package.	Success with over 100 people on the Positive Action list. Regularly contacted to maintain interest and informed about recruitment opportunities. The positive action list is dynamic and grows as people contact the Diversity Department to register an interest.

	What we said we would do	What we did
8.	Utilise the CRMP process of community engagement to help determine how the CRMP process can contribute to the recruitment of underrepresented groups.	Formally incorporate recruitment messages in the community engagement process linked to CRMP, to promote intelligence led targeting of messages and allow for evaluation of success to further develop appropriate mediums and targeting strategies that are likely to work and build on success.

	What we said we would do	What we did
9.	Monitor recruitment attraction rates and the possibility of advertising in different media in order to reach underrepresented groups.	<p>Learning from Police has focused more attention to social media publicity as well as establishing community based events.</p> <p>For 2015 – 2017 the Service placed a recruitment advert on the Black History month website and magazine.</p> <p>In addition to this, the Service has also produced an advert for the 2017 BAME Career and Educational Guide.</p> <p>The impact of these adverts will take time to assess; the application system for the whole time recruitment asks where people have seen the advert which will assist to assess the impact of targeted media.</p>

	What we said we would do	What we did
10.	Engage with the Women in the Fire Service organisation (WFS) and the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) in order to advance recruitment and retention opportunities within the service for females/Asian workers and community groups.	<p>Regular engagement is maintained with both AFSA and WFS.</p> <p>Vacancies for operational posts are routinely circulated to AFSA and WFS.</p> <p>The Service continues to support WFS development events and sent 6 female staff to the WFS National Training & Development weekend.</p>

	What we said we would do	What we did
11.	Deliver Unconscious Bias training across the Service; those involved in recruitment and selection undertakes this training.	We reviewed a number of unconscious bias training packages and chose one which met the Service's needs from Skillboosters. The training delivery is online and is initially targeted at management and staff with recruitment responsibilities.

Action Plan 2017-19

The following actions list areas of work that the Service has committed itself to deliver over the next two years to ensure that the workforce is reflective of the communities we serve.

	Objective / Actions	Expected Outcomes	CMT Lead	Time
1.	Work with Bedfordshire Police and with the wider fire sector through CFOA / NFCC to share good practice around Positive Action work and where appropriate share contacts and other resources.	To continually build on our Positive Action engagement and drive improvement.	HSP	On going
2.	Produce a range of recruitment leaflets, banners, videos which promote women across all communities and men and women from Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic Communities.	To have a stock of Positive Action recruitment material for use across the Service, recruitment fairs for distribution at community events.	HOA	May 2018
3.	<p>Contribute to the development of the BAME educational and career guide.</p> <p>The aim of the guide is to provide young people from BAME backgrounds with relevant information to becoming leaders of tomorrow and is produced by the Black Solicitors Network.</p> <p>Support other local, regional and national career information sources as these are identified.</p>	<p>BFRS is currently only FRS to contribute to the Emergency Services section of the Career Guide</p> <p>Have sufficient quantities for distribution at career fairs and other recruitment events.</p> <p>Continually seek opportunities to develop other career guidance through networks.</p>	HSP	<p>June 2018</p> <p>On going</p>
4.	The Service will undertake early engagement with specific communities throughout the year and not just when recruitment is on the horizon: i.e. Universities, Further Education establishments, black majority churches, Mosques, community groups and businesses.	Contacts generated and relationships established to support recruitment Service wide.	HSD + HSP	On going

5.	Produce guidance materials and Positive Action tool kit for operational personnel to use at open days, community engagement events, have a go days and RDS recruitment campaigns.	Positive Action tool kit and recruitment literature available at every station.	HSP + HOA	May 2018
6.	Support the development of national toolkit – through Home Office - to support recruitment to all FRSs	Benefit from notable practice, national promotion and media exposure.	HSP + HOA	Mar 2019
7.	Distribute recruitment messages, alongside safety campaigns at key community events: i.e. Luton Carnival, Eid festival and Bedford River festival.	Encourage people from under-representative groups to sign up to the Positive Action list.	HSD	On going
8.	Continue to roll out Unconscious Bias training aimed at management and staff involved in the selection process.	Addressing issues of unconscious bias in recruitment decisions.	HSDS	May 2018
9.	Hold 'have-a go-events' at our Fire Stations targeted at all under-represented groups (for 2017-2019 this is specifically focused toward Women and BAME Communities).	To provide information to under-representative groups about the recruitment process and provide opportunities for a better insight of the physical requirements of being a firefighter.	HSD	Sep 2018
10.	Maintain contact with people who have expressed an interest in a career as a firefighter, maintain the Positive Action list and maintain communication and engagement with those on the list.	Ensure that people are kept up-to-date about any recruitment campaigns, community events and 'Have a go days'.	HSP	On going
11.	BFRS will look at developing recruitment opportunities such as apprenticeships and Fire Cadets and Fire Forward to improve attraction to careers. (This links with recommendations within the IFSG report).	Maximise recruitment opportunities from within existing youth development strategies. Continue to attract to these from diverse groups.	HSD	On going

12.	<p>Develop the Service's social media approach to promote vacancies, support Positive Action initiatives and</p> <p>Positive Action approach, events and activities should be promoted via the Service's website, Images and style of recruitment campaigns should focus on positive images that all communities/ gender can relate to.</p>	<p>Growth of Positive Action list by increasing the reach of our campaigns.</p> <p>New website will assist to promote opportunities.</p> <p>Share recruitment opportunities with Police (e.g. media messaging and event promotions).</p>	CEM	Sep 2018
13.	<p>Develop Positive Action awareness within the Service to ensure the difference between Positive Action and Positive Discrimination is understood.</p>	<p>Have a workforce which understands and supports Positive Action initiatives.</p>	HSDS	May 2018
14.	<p>Deliver an annual program of visible engagement with community, faith groups, school, colleges and career fairs, delivered by operational and support staff.</p>	<p>Raise the profile of the Service amongst diverse and younger communities.</p> <p>Use of community based facilities such as Bury Park Community Centre.</p>	HSP	Sep 2018
15.	<p>Recruit to a recruitment officer who can lead on Positive Action work across all work areas.</p>	<p>A dedicated role to develop strategies as appropriate for appointments to all areas of the Service.</p>	HHR	Sep 2018

Abbreviations

CEM	Communications & Engagement Manager
HSD	Head of Service Delivery
HOA	Head of Organisational Assurance
DA	Diversity Advisor
HSDS	Head of Service Delivery Support
HSP	Head of Special Projects
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
IFSG	Inclusive Fire Service Group