

For Publication

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority
Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group
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Item No. 8

REPORT AUTHOR: DIVERSITY ADVISER

SUBJECT: PROGRESS REPORT ON POSITIVE ACTION

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Background Papers: Positive Action Plan 2017-19

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 Positive Action Plan

RECOMMENDATION:

That the progress report is received.

1. Introduction

The aim of our Positive Action work is to take reasonable and legal steps to increasing the representation of all under-represented groups within the Service, and specifically at this time we are focused on females from across all communities into the operational workforce and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities across the organisation.

Although the Service has not set targets for recruitment, there are a number of performance measures that have been set where progress is monitored by the Fire and Rescue Authority, our intention is to ensure that the Service better reflects the communities we serve and maximises strengths diversity within the workforce provides

2. Why Positive Action?

- A diverse workforce is recognised as greatly improving our ability to deliver safety, prevention and protection activities throughout all communities.
- By inadvertently excluding people we are missing out on the talent, experience and skills that having a diverse workforce brings.
- Redressing the imbalance in workforce representation of public sector organisations is a Government priority, the recent HMICFRS inspections have focused on this issue for all FRS.

- Senior management are supporting this approach and investing in making a difference setting out our inclusion strategy in Our People strategy.
- The staff we employ should be representative of the communities we serve.
- As a public funded organisation we have a moral duty to address this under-representation.

3. Difference between Positive Action and Positive Discrimination

Positive Action is legally defined as *‘an activity, which helps employers identify and remove the barriers and issues to the employment, retention and progression of people from ‘under-represented’ groups’.*

Positive Action initiatives help to inform people from under-represented groups to apply for jobs and promotions and is about ‘levelling the playing field’ and employing people based on merit.

Positive Discrimination generally means employing someone because they come from an ‘under-represented’ group in spite of whether they have the relevant skills and qualifications.

Positive Discrimination is unlawful and we are clear that we will continue to take action that remains legal and delivers the very best candidates for all positions.

4. Summary of progress (report attached)

Previously I have shared a Positive Action report and action plan. The action plan is monitored through the Recruitment Working Group to inform activities and will be assisting the 2018/19 recruitment process for whole time firefighters.

Actions marked as complete

- Sharing best practice with Bedfordshire Police and with the wider fire sector.
- Produce a range of targeted recruitment leaflets, banners & videos (although we continue to explore improved ways of delivering key messages).
- Contribute to the development of the BAME educational and career guide.
- Produce guidance materials for station open days, engagement events, 'have a go' days and On-Call recruitment campaigns.
- Review success from previous recruitment event around positive action initiatives to inform future recruitment campaigns.
- Unconscious Bias training for staff involved in the selection process.
- Reviewed the 2015 and 2017 whole-time recruitment processes and create an Equality Assessment report.
- Created a recruitment working group to support community engagement.
- Advertising vacancies across a wider range of media, specifically attracting an audience from currently under-represented communities.

Actions marked as on-going

- Develop relationships with representatives of a range of faith groups.
- Distribute recruitment messages at community events.
- Hold a series of 'have-a go' events at our Community Fire Stations.
- Maintain communication with people on the positive action list.
- Utilise working with the young such as cadets and Fire Forward.
- Develop a targeted social media approach to promote vacancies.

5. Positive action initiatives in support of the 2018-19 whole time recruitment campaign

PA Initiatives	Expected Outcomes
Revised the whole time entry criteria – this was supported by findings from the Equality Assessment report	Increase in numbers of people from under-represented groups through the recruitment process, minimising proven barriers.
Made a temporary appointment for 6 months into the position following a selection process and seconded a StnC in to assist with recruitment and positive action initiatives for this campaign.	To provide dedicated support to coordinate Positive Action work and engage with communities.
Recruited 19 volunteer Positive Action ambassadors from within our current staff	To engage with and provide follow up support for people from under-represented groups up to the stage of application.
Promote the recruitment campaign opportunities through Asian Fire Service Association and Women in the Fire Service sites	To ensure that members of both organisations are informed about the revised entry criteria and recruitment campaign.
Advertise on the local BAME radio stations & news outlets	To be more effective in reaching a diverse audience.
Provide support up to application stage for people who are under-represented as firefighters.	To help maintain levels of interest and encourage people who have shown an interest to complete the application process.
Targeted billboard advertising in sites across Bedford, Luton and Dunstable.	To be more effective in reaching a diverse audience.
Recruitment flyers/posters distributed to BAME businesses across Bedford, Luton and Dunstable.	To be more effective in reaching a diverse audience.
Participate in Luton Employment Training and Skill's Fair.	To be more effective in reaching a diverse audience.
Community information events to be held at local community centres in Bedford and Luton.	To inform under-represented communities about the process for applying
Targeted leaflet drop across areas of Bedford, Luton and Dunstable	To be more effective in reaching a diverse audience.
Targeted Have A Go events at Bedford, Luton and Dunstable Fire Stations.	To give people from under-represented groups an opportunity to experience some firefighter activities

6. Background to Positive Action

The national fire and rescue operational workforce is reported as predominately White British and male, the Service has recognised the need to diversify the workforce in order to better represent the communities it serves.

The work identified in the Positive Action plan are aligned to recommendations in the Inclusive Fire Service Group and those of the Thomas Review and forms part of the work within the Services equality objectives.

BFRS is working hard to ensuring it is an employer of choice within all communities and has a workforce that reflects its appeal and commitment to a safer Bedfordshire.

**ROBERT JONES
DIVERSITY ADVISER**