

Response to the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018 Consultation Document

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report provides a brief summary of the content of the draft Equality and Diversity Strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), which is attached as an appendix, and details the proposed response from Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority to the questions set out within the consultation.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to approve the response to the consultation questions, as set out at section 5 of this report.

3 Background

The first ever draft Equality and Diversity Strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service has been drafted and issued for consultation. The Strategy aims to create a Service, which both reflects and effectively serves the local community.

The consultation document explains that the objective of the Strategy is:

‘.to provide a framework for action that will enable the Fire and Rescue Service to tackle current inequalities, promote equality between different groups in line with legislative requirements and, importantly, establish a climate that enables a supported, diverse workforce to provide a service that is closer to, and has an effective relationship with, the public in order to improve the service provided to all sections of our community.’



In order to fulfil this objective the Strategy requires action in five priority areas. These areas are directly linked to the Core Values and to the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG):

Leadership and Promoting Inclusion

Positive leadership at all levels is essential to drive change, maintain commitment and ensure accountability. Members of Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) and senior managers need to demonstrate their commitment to equality and diversity by making resources available to make the necessary changes, and must ensure all staff are clear about their role in making the Service a fair and inclusive organisation.

Effective Service Delivery and Community Engagement

Effective planning and engagement are key to improving service delivery to all our communities. We will aim to tailor our services to meet the needs of all those we serve through sustained dialogue with all our communities. We will rigorously assess and review our policies, plans, processes and procedures through the effective use of the Equality Impact Assessment process.

Employment and Training

To recognise, understand and respond to the needs of all communities we must recruit, develop and retain a workforce, which reflects the local community and respects difference. We will ensure open and fair selection and progression processes. We will provide sustained commitment to staff development. We will promote staff awareness of the need for equality, diversity and fairness, and robust action on bullying and harassment.

Evaluation and Sharing Good Practice

Monitoring, evaluation and recognition for good practice are essential to ensure continuous improvement and make best use of resources. We will collect and analyse the evidence of improved performance and good practice, share it with others, celebrate successes and address failure.

Accountability

Driving change and developing confidence among staff and the public require the accountability of everyone in the organisation. We will ensure that all staff and all Members of Fire and Rescue Authorities are held accountable for delivering this Strategy.

4 How will the Requirements of the Strategy be Implemented?

The consultation document makes it clear that the new National Framework will require Fire and Rescue Authorities to implement the Equality and Diversity Strategy. The Audit Commission will assess performance in implementing the requirements of the Strategy through the performance assessment framework.



The consultation document states, at paragraph 6.5, that:

‘The Commission’s scored Direction of Travel Assessment will state how well the Authority has performed since the last assessment and whether it is considered that it will continue to improve. Scores will be linked to progress on equality and diversity and achievement of the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG). For example Fire and Rescue Authorities *will not normally be assessed as improving strongly without reaching ESLG Level 3* (my italics).’

5 Consultation Questions and Responses

The questions set out in the consultation document are listed below along with the suggested response from Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority.

The Strategy

**Do you consider that the Strategy sets out the actions which will together drive change?
If not, why not? And what would you wish to change?**

We are pleased to see such high-level direct commitment to the issue of Equality and Diversity across the Fire and Rescue Service. We consider the action plan overall to be helpful in focussing activity and resources clearly and at the national, local and individual level.

Whilst there is also clearly an intention to monitor performance in terms of Priority 2 (Service Delivery and Community Engagement), the vast majority of planned measurement is focused in employment-related statistics. We accept that this is a key area, however, legislation and associated public sector duties already dictate that Services must step up to the mark in this area. In contrast to this it would be helpful to have more measurable targets across the other priority areas. This will also help to reinforce to all that the strategy is not just about recruitment targets.

Targets and monitoring

**Do you support the principle of recruitment, retention and progression targets and consider that they will drive improvement on workforce diversity?
If not, why not? And what would you propose should be put in place?**

We support the principle of recruitment, retention and progression targets but do not feel that they alone will drive improvement in workforce diversity. To effect real change behavioural and cultural change is needed, which can require considerable investment in training throughout an organisation. This obviously raises a question of cost and there may be considerable cost associated with achieving such outcomes, which cannot quickly be met from FRA budgets.



What are your views on the level at which recruitment targets for women in operational roles and ethnic minority staff should be set (within the ranges proposed), in order to be challenging but achievable, and likely to motivate action?

The key to motivating action with targets is to ensure that they are stretching but achievable and, therefore, in our view, recruitment for women in operational roles should be put at 12% or towards the lower end of the band. Many FRSs are still having difficulty increasing numbers of applications from women, even though positive action is being undertaken. We are also in agreement with the idea of setting a target in terms of the number of individuals recruited over a five-year period.

We are concerned that brigades, such as this one, with a large proportion of Retained Duty System staff will find it difficult to meet the targets set due to the restricted geographical area from which we are able to select employees to the Retained Duty System. For minority ethnic targets, Option 1 is, therefore, the only viable option for a Service, such as ours, with low numbers of people from Black and Ethnic Minority communities within the population local to our (predominantly retained) stations.

In order to avoid misinterpretation of the activity to achieve targets, Option 1 is also more transparent to stakeholders, whereas, if we were to try to recruit in excess of being representative of the local population, it could be interpreted as trying to encourage positive discrimination.

We are concerned that Option 2 (which adds 5%) would create targets, which are locally unachievable and in the long term would potentially make us unrepresentative of the community we serve.

The minority ethnic targets should clearly state whether this is for operational roles or all staff, as this is clearly stated in the targets for women.

Do you consider robust monitoring of all strands of diversity achievable, and likely to motivate action?

Robust monitoring raises the profile and can help to motivate action, however, as explained above, Services must comply with the statutory requirements placed upon them in employment law and adding further targets/statistical returns takes time and resources away from creating real improvements. It is also more difficult to define those measurements for areas of service delivery.

In some instances resources (financial or people, e.g. training) will need to be made available and, as the strategy is not supported with financial commitment, this will need to be met from within FRA budgets. Many are already set from 2008/09 for 3 years and so the will to undertake some new activities to push forward may be compromised by competing budget pressures.



Monitoring alone will not motivate action on all strands but transparency and promoting the business case for action is required to motivate stakeholders

Guidance

Are there areas covered by the Strategy for which you consider specific guidance for the Fire and Rescue Service is required (in addition to existing guidance developed for the Service or for the public sector in general)?

We would welcome recognition of the need for the Equality Standard for Local Government to be aligned more directly to the Fire and Rescue Service and wider sharing, and willingness to share good practice and action plans.

Within the Fire and Rescue Service, a central portal, where such information could be posted / accessed by practitioners, would be helpful and data collection on service delivery would be easier, if more national documentation or standardised forms were produced.

We would also welcome any comments that you may have on the accompanying Impact Assessment (ie is there anything specific you want Communities and Local Government to collect additional information on ie costs/benefits?)

We have no comment to make on the Impact Assessment.

General comments

Point 4.8

Monitoring of women in non-operational roles is referred to here and we feel this should be changed to men and women as many non-operational roles are performed by women.

Point 5.4

The impact that Local Area Agreements will have on the introduction of this strategy will depend on the priority for all members, as each will have their own priority areas.

Point 5.5

Regional Management Boards are already undertaking good work and sharing practice, however it should be noted that not all aspects of work will benefit from a regional perspective, in particular positive action in local areas.

6 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this consultation response.

7 Legal Comment

As this a consultation response, legal comment is not required.



8 Equality Impact Assessment

This report details the draft response to the national draft Equality and Diversity Strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service from Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority to the questions set out within the consultation and so the recommendations within the report have no impact on people.

9 Appendix

Draft Equality and Diversity Strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service

10 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk), the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Balanced Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	
Capacity		Member Involvement	*
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	*
Comprehensive Performance Assessment		Operational Assurance	
Efficiency Savings		Retained	
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	
Financial		Staff	*
Fire Control/Fire Link		Strategic Planning	*
Information Communications and Technology		West Midlands Regional Management Board	
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	*





Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy:
2008-2018
Consultation



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2008-2018
Consultation

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Introduction

Purpose of the consultation

This consultation seeks views on whether Fire and Rescue Authorities, stakeholders and other groups want an Equality and Diversity Strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service in England.

The objective of the Strategy is to provide a framework for action that will enable the Fire and Rescue Service to tackle current inequalities, promote equality between different groups in line with legislative requirements and, importantly, establish a climate that enables a supported, diverse workforce to provide a service that is closer to, and has an effective relationship with, the public in order to improve the service provided to all sections of our community.

It supports delivery of the Government commitments to promote equality and diversity, tackle disadvantage, and build cohesive and sustainable communities.

Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008–2018

The Fire and Rescue Service must engage with and understand the needs of the diverse communities it serves and plan and deliver its services to take account of those needs. Equality and diversity is therefore central to the effective protection of the public through fire prevention and emergency response. Progress has been made in recent years, particularly on community engagement, but the workforce remains overwhelmingly white and male and equality and diversity have yet to be embedded in all areas of the work of the Service.

The draft Equality and Diversity Strategy aims to deliver a step change. Its vision is to create by 2018 a Service which can demonstrate that it serves all communities equally to the highest standards, building on a closer and more effective relationship with the public and creating a more diverse workforce which better reflects the local working population in each area. The Strategy requires action by Fire and Rescue Authorities, supported by Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association and other partners, in five priority areas: leadership, service delivery, employment practice, evaluation and dissemination of good practice and accountability.

As part of the development of the draft Strategy we have also considered with the Local Government Association, the Chief Fire Officers' Association, representative bodies and other stakeholders the existing workforce composition targets for women in operational roles (15 per cent by 2009) and ethnic minority staff (7 per cent by 2009), with local targets in line with local working population. The aim of these targets was to motivate and measure change in the overall composition of the workforce. This remains the goal to which we are absolutely committed.

But at 31 March 2006 (the most recent published statistics) 2.8 per cent of staff in operational roles were women and 3 per cent of all staff were of minority ethnic background. The existing targets are plainly not achievable.

We concluded that there was an urgent need to change our approach while maintaining a very high level of ambition and challenge. Progress towards the existing targets depended on a very wide range of factors, including leadership and culture as well as employment practices and public awareness, over a ten year period. In addition, recruitment had been low over the last few years, making it more difficult to alter workforce composition. As a result, the targets failed to unite the whole Service in the urgent change required. We have therefore considered what targets would focus effort across the whole Service on a small range of factors which require immediate action, can be significantly changed in the short term and will make a real difference to workforce composition.

Positive action in recruitment, including awareness campaigns, taster days, mentoring and other support has been shown to make a difference to the success of applicants from traditionally under represented groups, and to public perceptions. We are therefore proposing targets for recruitment, retention and progression by 2013. Our intention is to make a visible change to the style of recruitment and to the people joining the Service which will build momentum and support change under the wider Strategy, especially on leadership and culture.

Your views are requested in particular on:

- the level at which the recruitment target for women in operational roles should be set for all Fire and Rescue Authorities, within the range from 12 per cent up to 18 per cent (by 2013); and
- the level at which recruitment targets for minority ethnic staff should be set:
 - either (option 1) at the same percentage as the minority ethnic representation within the local working population,
 - or (option 2) within the range from the same percentage as the minority ethnic representation within the local working population up to 5 per cent above that level (eg for a Fire and Rescue Authority where the minority ethnic percentage of the local working population is 10 per cent the possible range would be 10 per cent to 15 per cent) (by 2013),
 - and, if option 2 is preferred, the level at which the target should be set;
 - whether, in order to ensure targets are meaningful, Fire and Rescue Authorities with very low minority ethnic working age populations (eg below 2 per cent) and low recruitment requirements (eg less than 20 people

a year) should set a minority ethnic recruitment target in terms of individuals recruited over the five year period rather than a percentage of total recruitment.

It also proposes a third target, to reach parity in rates of retention and progression between minority ethnic and white employees, and between men and women, by 2013. Performance on recruitment, retention and progression in relation to the other equality strands (disability, faith and belief, sexual orientation, gender identity and age) and to women in non-operational roles would be monitored.

The aim in the long term would be to change the composition of the Fire and Rescue Service workforce in England so that it includes the same percentage of minority ethnic staff as in the working age population (currently 12 per cent) and 12 per cent women in operational roles (as an achievable basis for further action). Targets above the bottom of the ranges proposed would enable this aim to be achieved more quickly. New targets for the second half of the Strategy's life would need to be set depending on progress.

The draft National Framework requires Fire and Rescue Authorities to implement the Strategy, to report progress to elected members and to Communities and Local Government at least annually, and to review all areas of their work over the lifetime of the Framework to ensure that they promote equality and diversity in the workplace and in service delivery. Your views are also invited on what guidance is needed to support implementation in addition to guidance already available for the Service or for the public sector generally.

You are invited to comment on the draft Equality and Diversity Strategy, and in particular to respond to the following questions:

The Strategy

- **Do you consider that the Strategy sets out the actions which will together drive change? If not, why not? And what would you wish to change?**

Targets and monitoring

- **Do you support the principle of recruitment, retention and progression targets and consider that they will drive improvement on workforce diversity? If not, why not? And what would you propose should be put in place?**
- **What are your views on the level at which recruitment targets for women in operational roles and ethnic minority staff should be set (within the ranges proposed), in order to be challenging but achievable, and likely to motivate action?**

- **Do you consider robust monitoring of all strands of diversity achievable, and likely to motivate action?**

Guidance

- **Are there areas covered by the Strategy for which you consider specific guidance for the Fire and Rescue Service is required (in addition to existing guidance developed for the Service or for the public sector in general)?**
- **We would also welcome any comments that you may have on the accompanying Impact Assessment (ie is there anything specific you want Communities and Local Government to collect additional information on ie costs/benefits?)**

How to respond to the consultation

You are invited to submit any comments or suggestions you have on these proposals by 6th February 2008. Please e-mail them clearly marked E&D Strategy Consultation to the National Framework Team at:
national.framework@communities.gsi.gov.uk:

A summary of responses to this consultation will be published on Communities and Local Government website by 30th April 2008.

Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy: 2008–2018

1. Introduction

- 1.1** Valuing and promoting equality and diversity are central to the effectiveness of the Fire and Rescue Service in England. Our ability to protect the public through fire prevention, fire protection and emergency response depends on understanding the diverse communities we serve, and planning and delivering our services to take account of their needs.
- 1.2** If we can fully engage with our local communities they will have greater confidence in us and be more likely to accept our professional support and advice. An effective relationship with our communities will help to prevent fire, reduce the risk of death and injury, and the loss of property. It will also help to prevent arson and attacks on firefighters.¹
- 1.3** Our staff needs to better reflect the diversity in the local community and have the skills and knowledge to work effectively in all communities. To be efficient and effective we must attract and retain people from the widest pool of talent and develop them to achieve their full potential. The proportion of the working age population from the traditional recruiting pool for the Service (white, male, able-bodied and under 45) is falling. It will therefore be increasingly important for the Service to become a career of choice within all communities.
- 1.4** All Fire and Rescue Authorities must abide by the requirements of equalities legislation which at present cover age, disability, gender, gender identity, religion and belief, race and sexual orientation (see Annex B – Equality and Diversity Legislation). We must also meet the requirements of the public sector equality duties by which we are legally obliged to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination for service users and staff. Penalties for breaking the law, as individuals or as an organisation, are severe and failure to comply with legal requirements will:
- reduce our ability to serve the community because we will have a poorer understanding of their needs;
 - harm our staff, who may not have the equality of opportunity to develop their potential, and
 - damage the standing and reputation of the Service.

¹ Eg Threat Response Group (Merseyside) and LIFE (London)

1.5 We deliver a public service and have a duty to ensure equality of access, equality of impact and equality of outcome for all; in other words a service which equally meets the needs of all the people we serve. For our staff, it is right to ensure equality of opportunity for all, to treat people with dignity, respect and fairness, and to create a culture which benefits everyone because bullying, harassment, unfair discrimination and unacceptable behaviour are not tolerated.

2. Why do we need a national Strategy?

2.1 We fully recognise the contribution of all those throughout the Service who have worked hard to develop an organisation which is fair to everyone, values and supports equality and diversity and demonstrates real commitment to the Fire and Rescue Service Core Values (See Annex A – Our Values). Significant progress has been made on improving service delivery to diverse communities and on community engagement. But we still have a long way to go:

- the impact of fire is grossly disproportionate on some communities (for example 39 per cent of fire deaths are people with disabilities)
- very small numbers of staff are from minority ethnic backgrounds (3 per cent compared to a national average working population of over 12 per cent – among senior staff this falls to 1 per cent)
- very small numbers of women are operational firefighters (2.8 per cent dropping to 1 per cent for senior positions)
- women and staff from minority ethnic backgrounds are less likely to be promoted (3.8 per cent of the white men in the operational sector of the Service in March 2006 were at station manager level compared to only 1.0 per cent of the operational women and 1.9 per cent of ethnic minority men)
- the number of gay or lesbian Fire and Rescue Service staff who feel able to be open about their sexuality at work is less than 10 per cent of the national average.

3. How was the Strategy developed?

3.1 The development of the Strategy has been informed by:

- The Thematic Review on *Equality and Fairness in the Fire Service* (1999)
- The two National Action Plans, *Toward Diversity I and 2* (2000 and 2001)
- The scoping study on leadership *Bridging the Gap* (2002)
- Fire and Rescue Service Core Values

- Fire and Rescue Shared Vision Towards 2017
- The Equality Standard for Local Government
- Direct input from a broad range of Service stakeholders
- Evidence from other organisations².

3.2 The Strategy was also informed by an extensive programme of stakeholder workshops involving a wide cross section of Fire and Rescue Service staff, stakeholder organisations and representatives of the wider community. As the Strategy has evolved it has been revised in the light of input from these groups.

4. What is the National Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy?

- 4.1** The Equality and Diversity Strategy is a 10 year high level national Strategy which seeks to meet the challenge to bring real, radical, lasting change to the Fire and Rescue Service in England. The Strategy's aim is to improve not only the way we treat each other within the Service but also the effectiveness of the relationship we have with the public. It seeks to draw together and build on existing work, both within the Service and elsewhere. It supports delivery of the Government commitments to promote equality and diversity, tackle disadvantage, and build cohesive and sustainable communities.
- 4.2** The Strategy sets out a vision for the Fire and Rescue Service and the goals which must be met by 2018 to achieve this vision. It is designed to guide and support every Fire and Rescue Authority to deliver an effective service to everyone in the community and to treat all their staff with fairness, dignity and respect. It also sets out our commitment, direction and goals for:
- staff
 - local partners, including local authorities, other emergency services, and Local Strategic Partnerships
 - local communities, especially the disadvantaged.
- 4.3** The Strategy builds on the Equality Standard for Local Government which sets out how local authorities can mainstream equality and diversity in policy, planning, service delivery and employment practice. It also incorporates the Core Values for the Fire and Rescue Service agreed in 2005 by the Local Government Association, the Chief Fire Officers' Association, Communities and Local Government and the representative bodies.

² Met Police, Prison Service, Crown Prosecution Service, MOD, IDeA, BT, British Gas, NHS Scotland, Tesco, National Police Improvement Agency and Aviva.

They set out clear expectations for all staff on attitudes and behaviours, including valuing service to the community by working with all groups to reduce risk, and valuing diversity by treating everyone with fairness and respect (See Annex A – Our Values).

- 4.4** The Strategy requires action in five priority areas, linked to the Core Values and to the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG):

LEADERSHIP AND PROMOTING INCLUSION

Positive leadership at all levels is essential to drive change, maintain commitment and ensure accountability. Members of Fire and Rescue Authorities and senior managers need to demonstrate their commitment to equality and diversity by making resources available to make the necessary changes, and must ensure all staff are clear about their role in making the Service a fair and inclusive organisation.

EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Effective planning and engagement are key to improving service delivery to all our communities. We will aim to tailor our services to meet the needs of all those we serve through sustained dialogue with all our communities. We will rigorously assess and review our policies, plans, processes and procedures through the effective use of the Equality Impact Assessment process.

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

To recognise, understand and respond to the needs of all communities we must recruit, develop and retain a workforce which reflects the local community and respects difference. We will ensure open and fair selection and progression processes. We will provide sustained commitment to staff development. We will promote staff awareness of the need for equality, diversity and fairness, and robust action on bullying and harassment.

EVALUATION AND SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

Monitoring, evaluation and recognition for good practice are essential to ensure continuous improvement and make best use of resources. We will collect and analyse the evidence of improved performance and good practice, share it with others, celebrate successes and address failure.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Driving change and developing confidence among staff and the public require the accountability of everyone in the organisation. We will ensure that all staff and all Members of Fire and Rescue Authorities are held accountable for delivering this Strategy.

- 4.5** Improving workforce diversity is a key area for action through recruitment and retention. Previous targets for women in operational roles and minority ethnic staff have aimed to measure change in the overall composition of the workforce, which remains our goal. But to focus effort on factors which can be significantly changed in the short term we have adopted targets on recruitment, retention and progression to be met by 2013. We will consider new targets for the second half of the Strategy's life depending on progress.

Targets

- 4.6** *[subject to consultation]* The targets to be met by each Fire and Rescue Authority are:

- women (operational roles) to reach [from 12 per cent up to 18 per cent] of recruits by 2013 [comments on the appropriate level within this range are sought from consultees]
- minority ethnic staff to reach *[either option (1) the same percentage as in the local working population or option (2) the percentage in the local working population plus up to 5 per cent]* as a percentage of recruits by 2013³ [comments on whether the first or second option should be adopted, and if option (2) is preferred, the appropriate level within this range, are sought from consultees]
- Fire and Rescue Authorities with very low minority ethnic working age populations (eg. below 2 per cent) and low recruitment requirements (eg. less than 20 people a year) may set a target in terms of individuals recruited over the five year period rather than a percentage of total recruitment.
[comments on this proposal are sought from consultees]
- parity in rates of retention and progression between minority ethnic and white employees, and between men and women, by 2013.

- 4.7** By adopting these targets we aim in the long term to change the composition of the Fire and Rescue Service workforce in England so that it includes the same percentage of minority ethnic staff as in the working age

³ For example, for a Fire and Rescue Authority where the minority ethnic percentage of the local working population is 10 per cent the target would be 10 per cent or at a level between 10 per cent and 15 per cent, depending on which proposal is adopted following consultation.

population (currently 12 per cent) and 12 per cent of women in operational roles (as an achievable basis for further action).

- 4.8** In addition, whilst specific targets have not been set to measure performance on recruitment, retention and progression in relation to the other equality strands (age, disability, gender identity, religion and belief, and sexual orientation) and for women in non-operational roles, monitoring progress in these areas will be a key method of identifying progress. The resulting statistical information will, along with information on performance against the workforce diversity targets, be required to be published as part of an annual Equality and Diversity Report to be published by Communities and Local Government (see paragraphs 6.2 & 6.6).
- 4.9** To support and encourage the necessary improvement in workforce diversity at all levels, Communities and Local Government and partners will develop the following initiatives:
- Graduate Entry scheme
 - High Potential Development scheme
 - Awareness raising campaigns to encourage people from under-represented groups to consider the Fire and Rescue Service as a career

5. Who is responsible for delivery against the Strategy?

- 5.1** The responsibility for achieving change and accountability for delivery is accepted by:
- At national level: Local Government Association, Chief Fire Officers' Association, representative bodies, Audit Commission and Communities and Local Government
 - At local level: the Members of each Fire and Rescue Authority, Chief Fire Officer, senior staff and representative bodies
 - Individual Fire and Rescue Service staff

The Strategy sets out actions at each level for each priority area.

- 5.2** Most Fire and Rescue Authorities (Combined Fire Authorities and Metropolitan Fire Authorities) are autonomous local authorities, but 14 Fire and Rescue Authorities form part of a County Council. County Councils like all local authorities, have public duties under equalities legislation which their structures and reporting arrangements will be designed to help deliver. But it is recognised that there may be some difficulties for County

Fire and Rescue Authorities in meeting some requirements of the Strategy particularly on monitoring and reporting separately on implementation.

- 5.3** Fire and Rescue Authorities will need to work with partners to deliver the Strategy. *The Local Government White Paper: Strong and Prosperous Communities*, published in October 2006, sets out how local public services are expected to work together in the future. In particular there will be new requirements in the Local Government and Public Health Bill, if enacted, to ensure that all partners engage in and deliver on a shared agenda for their communities.
- 5.4** The Local Strategic Partnership brings together local authorities, Fire and Rescue Authorities, and other partners in each upper tier local authority area. Local Strategic Partnerships provide the forum for setting the strategic vision for an area, for capturing that vision in the Sustainable Community Strategy, and for agreeing a set of priorities for improvement in the action plan, known as a Local Area Agreement (LAA), which will reflect the needs of their communities. LAAs can be an effective way for Fire and Rescue Authorities to implement the requirements of the National Framework and the Equality and Diversity Strategy on service delivery to diverse communities. From 2008, local authorities will also have a duty to consult partners and stakeholders, including Fire and Rescue Authorities, when compiling their Sustainable Community Strategies and in determining LAA targets.
- 5.5** At regional level, Fire and Rescue Authorities will need to work together through Regional Management Boards (RMBs) to deliver the Strategy. Many RMBs already have regional equality strategies and action plans, and co-ordinate work in their regions on joint awareness raising, outreach work and community engagement. RMBs can contribute to improved performance on equality and diversity in many ways including:
- Undertaking an annual progress review on equality and diversity across the region;
 - Requiring all proposals to the Regional Management Board to be equality impact assessed and appropriate action to be taken on the outcomes;
 - Ensuring all shared services such as training and procurement are equality impact assessed;
 - Supporting regional collaboration on national processes for recruitment, development and progression;

- Co-ordinating awareness campaigns, positive action and recruitment to reduce costs and reach widest pool of talent;
- Consulting and involving community groups and representative bodies where appropriate;
- Supporting the development and dissemination of good practice on community engagement and service delivery; and
- Co-ordinating and supporting regular peer review.

6. How will the requirements of the Strategy be implemented?

- 6.1** From April 2008 the National Framework will require Fire and Rescue Authorities to implement the Equality and Diversity Strategy. Fire and Rescue Authorities are required to have regard to the National Framework by section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.
- 6.2** In addition to implementing the Strategy as a whole the key requirements of the National Framework are that Fire and Rescue Authorities:
- ensure that their Integrated Risk Management Plans and all other plans, policies, practices and procedures are effectively equality impact assessed and appropriate action is taken to remove or mitigate any adverse impact;
 - produce and at least annually review an action plan for implementation of the Strategy, and report to the Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority on progress;
 - provide annually to Communities and Local Government evidence of progress on equality and diversity for publication in the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Report including:
 - statistical information on recruitment, progression and retention of staff across all diversity strands, and
 - qualitative information on policies, procedures, practices and processes which support equality and diversity as evidence of progress made;
 - carry out and record individual performance reviews annually for each member of staff which include an assessment of performance against agreed annual objectives, including equality and diversity objectives.
- 6.3** Guidance will be provided, including on action planning, annual appraisal and reporting requirements [subject to views expressed in consultation] (See Annex C – Supporting Guidance For The National Equality & Diversity Strategy).

- 6.4** The Strategy requires action planning, monitoring and reporting on all strands of equality, in order to ensure that Fire and Rescue Authorities have taken into account the full breadth of action open to them to improve their performance on equality and diversity. But the requirements of the National Framework and the Strategy are not intended to create new or separate processes of planning, monitoring and reporting, with implications for resources. They build on the existing statutory duties of Fire and Rescue Authorities to produce race, gender and disability equality schemes, including action plans, and to monitor and report on progress in these areas. Fire and Rescue Authorities will also be able to draw on self assessments submitted to the Audit Commission. For Fire and Rescue Authorities which seek the Equality Standard for Local Government, monitoring and reporting on all equality strands is already required to provide evidence for assessment and those already involved in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index will have a further source of evidence on which to draw for the reporting process.
- 6.5** The Audit Commission will assess performance in implementing the requirements of the Strategy through the Fire and Rescue Service performance assessment framework. The Commission's scored Direction of Travel Assessment will state how well the Authority has performed since the last assessment and whether it is considered that it will continue to improve. Scores will be linked to progress on equality and diversity and achievement of the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG). For example Fire and Rescue Authorities will not normally be assessed as improving strongly without reaching ESLG Level 3.
- 6.6** Communities and Local Government will review progress on equality and diversity by each Fire and Rescue Authority annually, including against the workforce diversity targets. The review of progress will be based on reports submitted by every Fire and Rescue Authority and annual assessment by the Audit Commission. The review, including evidence on progress in each Fire and Rescue Authority, will be published annually as the national Equality and Diversity Report for the Fire and Rescue Service.
- 6.7** Finally, as individuals and as organisations we remain subject to the full range of equalities legislation set out in Annex B. Breaches of the legislation can lead to penalties which range from formal warning to significant fines or imprisonment. But our ambition as set out in this Strategy is not merely to meet the legal requirements, but to create a truly inclusive Service which serves all communities to the highest standards.

Draft of the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy: 2008-2018

This Strategy sets out how we will make fairness and inclusion fundamental to everything we do:

- to ensure that we reduce the impact of fire on all our communities, by effective prevention, protection and emergency response
- to ensure that our staff reflect the communities we serve and are respected and valued

Our vision for 2018

We are committed to deliver a transformed, effective and modern service which:

- Works in partnership with all our communities and other local services to contribute effectively to the development of safer communities
- Understands and meets the needs of all our communities
- Engages staff and the community in the development of its services and functions
- Ensures that equality and diversity are fully mainstreamed in all aspects of our organisation
- Encourages talented people from all parts of our community to join us and achieve their potential
- Has an inclusive culture in which everyone within our organisation treats all colleagues and the public with dignity and respect
- Values and supports our diverse workforce through our commitment to fair and transparent recruitment and employment practices
- Ensures all policies, processes and practices are open and transparent and have undergone robust equality impact assessment processes.

By 2018 we want to ensure:

- We serve all communities to the highest standards tailored to their needs
- All communities feel that the Service understands their needs and respects differences
- We encourage and value greater diversity of staff within the organisation and treat everyone with dignity and respect

- All staff feel respected, supported and valued regardless of their age, disability, race, religion/belief, sexual orientation, gender or gender identity
- Instances of bullying, harassment and unfair discrimination are not tolerated in any part of the organisation and are dealt with effectively, fairly and swiftly.
- We share understanding, commitment and action with our local regional and national partners.

We will know we have succeeded when:

- The rate of injury and death by fire among more vulnerable groups in society such as people with disabilities is falling and is closer to that among the population as a whole
- Malicious calls and attacks on firefighters are falling
- Staff and community surveys reflect positive attitudes about Fire and Rescue Service culture and service provision
- Gay, lesbian and bisexual staff have no concerns about being open about their sexuality at work
- Recruitment of minority ethnic staff is at the same percentage or higher than the representation in the working age population
- Recruitment of women in the operational sector is at least 12 per cent and rising
- Levels of retention and progression for staff from all backgrounds, men and women, are comparable.

PRIORITY 1

LEADERSHIP AND PROMOTING INCLUSION

(i) At a national level:

- Communities and Local Government will provide, through the National Framework, clear direction to the Fire and Rescue Service on fairness, equality and diversity
- Communities and Local Government will monitor and review progress in the annual national report on equality and diversity
- Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association and the Chief Fire Officers' Association will ensure that a national champion for equality and diversity is identified and supported
- the Local Government Association, the Chief Fire Officers' Association and Communities and Local Government will ensure the provision of appropriate leadership training informed throughout by equality and diversity is developed and implemented for senior Fire and Rescue Service staff and members of the Fire and Rescue Authority
- the Local Government Association, the Chief Fire Officers' Association and Communities and Local Government, in partnership with representative bodies, will ensure provision of national guidance as needed to support action on equality and diversity
- Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association and the Chief Fire Officers' Association and representative bodies will ensure that all national plans, policies, practices and procedures are equality impact assessed
- The Fire Service College will ensure that all training delivered or procured by the College is equality impact assessed and promotes equality, diversity and fairness
- FireBuy will ensure that equality issues are fully considered in the procurement of goods and services.

(ii) Each Fire and Rescue Authority will:

- Develop an equality and diversity action plan for implementation of the Strategy, which is compatible with current equalities legislation, covers all the strands of diversity and all Fire and Rescue Authority business (including employment practice, procurement and service delivery) and review it at least annually
- Report to Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority on progress on equality and diversity at least annually

- Review progress against statutory equality schemes as required by legislation
- Ensure all staff are aware of and understand the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service Core Values
- Ensure Members of Fire and Rescue Authorities and Chief Fire Officers undertake appropriate training in order to undertake their role in promoting equality, diversity and fairness and providing leadership to others
- Ensure that those with leadership responsibilities or potential have the opportunity and encouragement to develop their skills
- Provide all staff with training and development on fairness, equality and diversity issues including harassment and bullying
- Ensure resources for HR and equality and diversity functions are sufficient to deliver fair and effective employment practices
- Ensure all managers across the organisation are aware of their role in promoting equality and their obligation to ensure all Fire and Rescue Authority reports, plans, practices and procedures relating to any Fire and Rescue Service function undergo effective equality impact assessment
- Ensure that equality issues are fully considered in the procurement of goods and services
- Fully consult with representative bodies with regards to all fairness, equality and diversity issues in order to develop a partnership approach.

(iii) Each individual will:

- Treat others with dignity and respect in accordance with the Core Values
- Undertake their role in promoting equality and diversity and ensure any practice or procedure they have responsibility for is effectively equality impact assessed
- Challenge and report inappropriate behaviours.

(iv) Outcomes will include:

- The culture of the Fire and Rescue Service is open and inclusive, evidenced, for example, by the results of staff and community surveys, statistical evidence on recruitment, progression and retention, and qualitative evidence on Fire and Rescue Service policies practices and procedures
- Everyone, from Members of Fire and Rescue Authorities and Chief Fire Officers to the most junior member of staff, will be committed to equality and diversity and understand what is required of them demonstrated, for example, through the outcomes of personal performance and identified through performance appraisal

- All our communities will have confidence in the leadership of the Fire and Rescue Service and their commitment to equality indicated, for example, through reduction in levels of complaints, outcomes of community surveys and parity in performance on fire safety provision/ community engagement across all sections of the community
- All staff will have confidence in the leadership of senior managers and their commitment to equality evidenced, for example, through outcomes of staff surveys.

PRIORITY 2

EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

(i) At a national level:

- Communities and Local Government will involve community and voluntary groups in policy development including members of minority ethnic, religious, disabled, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities, men and women, and all age groups
- Communities and Local Government and the Chief Fire Officers' Association will ensure provision of guidance on developing and reviewing policies, practices and procedures, including Integrated Risk Management Planning, to ensure effective service delivery to all communities tailored to their needs
- Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association, the Chief Fire Officers' Association, and representative bodies will ensure that all national policies, plans, and procedures are equality impact assessed.

(ii) Each Fire and Rescue Authority will:

Planning

- Ensure equality of service to all sections of the community
- Identify and take account of the needs of the full range of communities it serves
- Assess the impact of all new policies, plans, procedures and practices to ensure effective service delivery to all communities tailored to their needs
- Review all policies, plans, procedures and practices regularly
- In particular, ensure that the Integrated Risk Management Plan takes full account of the needs of local communities and that all aspects of the planning process have been effectively equality impact assessed
- Implement procedure to ensure progress review for service delivery in its Integrated Risk Management Plan.

Engagement

- Consistently communicate progress on service delivery to all local communities, including targeted communication
- Ensure complaints are dealt with quickly, fairly and transparently
- Work with partner agencies and community advocates within local communities to improve/create new ways of communicating with community groups

- Monitor and take action on community perceptions and satisfaction identified through surveys, complaints procedures etc.

Training and Awareness

- Provide all staff with appropriate training and development to build skills and confidence in delivering a service which is effective in meeting the needs of local communities and is in accordance with legal requirements
- Communicate consistently with staff to raise awareness and understanding of local community issues and the action needed to address them.

(iii) Each individual will:

- Access training appropriate to their role to enable them to deliver services effectively
- Behave appropriately and respectfully to colleagues and members of the public.

(iv) Outcomes will include:

- Informed, aware, listening, open and approachable Fire and Rescue Service
- Reduction of fire incidents, deaths and injuries across all communities with emphasis on bringing comparable success rates within vulnerable and hard to reach communities
- Reduced malicious calls and attacks on firefighters
- All communities value and engage with the Fire and Rescue Service equally.

PRIORITY 3

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

(i) At a national level:

- Communities and Local Government will monitor and report annually on progress on recruitment, retention and progression across all the equality strands, including the workforce diversity targets
- Communities and Local Government will keep the workforce diversity targets under review
- Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association and the Chief Fire Officers' Association will support the implementation and development, as necessary, of national procedures for recruitment, development and progression
- Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association and the Chief Fire Officers' Association will work together with representative bodies to ensure a partnership approach.

(ii) Each Fire and Rescue Authority will:

- Undertake awareness campaigns and positive action to support and encourage applicants from under represented groups
- Use national processes for recruitment, development and promotion of staff
- Review and equality impact assess employment practices and policies to ensure they are robust, fair and effective, using monitoring data including information derived from exit interviews
- Assess all aspects of the working environment (including equipment, travel, training, clothing, facilities, food) to ensure all staff receive the support and tailored resources necessary to work to the best of their ability
- Carry out annual individual performance reviews based on the relevant role maps for all staff (up to and including Chief Fire Officers), including an equality objective, to provide evidence for fair progression
- Provide training for all managers, and where necessary fire authority members of fire and rescue authorities, on handling grievances and disciplinary cases and on tackling bullying and harassment
- Communicate regularly with staff to raise awareness and understanding of workforce equality issues for the Fire and Rescue Authority and the actions needed to address them.

(iii) Each individual will:

- Engage constructively with managers and colleagues in undertaking the annual performance review process
- Challenge and report bullying, harassment and unacceptable behaviour.

(iv) Outcomes will include:

- Improved diversity of recruits
- Greater equality in promotion and retention across staff of all backgrounds
- Progression based on merit and requiring applicants to demonstrate evidence of promoting equality.
- Increase in numbers of staff returning to work after maternity leave
- Comparable retention rates across staff of all backgrounds
- Reduced bullying and harassment (based on staff surveys) and stress related sickness absence
- All aspects of the workplace support all staff to work to the best of their ability.

PRIORITY 4

EVALUATION AND SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

(i) At a national level:

- Communities and Local Government will collect data on recruitment, progression and retention and qualitative information on progress in equality, diversity and fairness from all Fire and Rescue Authorities in England
- Communities and Local Government will review progress annually and publish an annual Equality and Diversity Report for the Fire and Rescue Service
- The Practitioners' Forum will review progress by the Fire and Rescue Service on equality and diversity annually
- Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association and the Chief Fire Officers' Association will jointly sponsor the annual Equality and Diversity Awards, which recognise outstanding performance and practice
- Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association and the Chief Fire Officers' Association will co-ordinate and support the evaluation and dissemination of good practice.

(ii) Each Fire and Rescue Authority will:

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Collect and submit to Communities and Local Government evidence of improvements to service delivery for inclusion in the annual Equality and Diversity Report for the Fire and Rescue Service
- Collect and submit to Communities and Local Government evidence of improvements to employment practice, including progress against the employment targets, for all equality strands for inclusion in the annual Equality and Diversity Report for the Fire and Rescue Service
- Review, monitor and evaluate policies, practices, plans and procedures to assess their impact on equality, diversity and fairness, ie undertake robust equality impact assessment
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of processes and procedures for dealing with bullying, harassment and unacceptable behaviour
- Undertake in partnership with representative bodies staff and community surveys to measure perceptions of the Fire and Rescue Service as an employer and service provider and to assess the level of effective engagement with staff and community representatives.

Reporting and Recognition

- Recognise and celebrate local and national achievements
- Work with local, regional and national partners to promote and share good practice
- Communicate consistently with staff to raise staff awareness, including on the rationale for action, information on progress made and details of successes.

(iv) Each individual will:

- Draw attention to potential good practice
- Seek support and advice as needed to deal with diversity issues in their day to day work
- Complete frankly and return promptly workforce monitoring and staff survey questionnaires.

(v) Outcomes will include:

- Greater efficiency and effectiveness through sound evidence and dissemination of good practice
- Public, stakeholders and staff informed and involved at local, regional and national levels.

PRIORITY 5

ACCOUNTABILITY

(i) At a national level:

- Communities and Local Government will keep the provisions within the National Framework referring to Equality and Diversity under review
- The Audit Commission will assess performance of Fire and Rescue Authorities against the requirements of the National Framework
- Communities and Local Government will review progress annually and publish an annual report, including progress on targets by Fire and Rescue Authorities
- Communities and Local Government will make the report available on its website
- The Local Government Association and the Chief Fire Officers' Association will co-ordinate and support regular peer review for all Fire and Rescue Authorities, involving other public, private or voluntary bodies as appropriate.

(ii) Each Fire and Rescue Authority will:

- Require an annual report to members on the implementation of the Equality and Diversity Strategy and statutory equality schemes
- Report to Communities and Local Government annually by end September on improvements to service delivery and employment practice, including progress against the employment targets
- Make evidence available to the public annually on improvements to service delivery and employment practice, including progress against the employment targets through its website
- Ensure that all staff including Chief Fire Officers have annual performance appraisals with annual objectives including equality objectives
- Demonstrate compliance with employment and equalities legislation and specifically the public duties for disability, gender and race and review progress in its Integrated Risk Management Plan
- Ensure that bullying and harassment are dealt with fairly, quickly and transparently
- Seek regular peer review (at least once every three years).

(iii) Each individual will:

- Meet his or her equality objective
- Understand and comply with legal requirements on age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion and belief and sexual orientation.

(iv) Outcomes will include:

- Audit Commission holds Fire and Rescue Authorities accountable for progress against National Framework requirements
- All staff held accountable for specific action to promote equality through annual appraisal
- Fire and Rescue Authorities hold Chief Fire Officers accountable for progress against Equality Action Plan
- Public and stakeholders hold Fire and Rescue Authorities accountable for progress reported in the Integrated Risk Management Plans
- Staff hold Fire and Rescue Authorities accountable for progress in Equality Action Plan.

Annex A

FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE CORE VALUES

Our Values⁴

We value...

- Service to the community
- People
- Diversity
- Improvement

SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

We value service to the community by...

- Working with all groups to reduce risk
- Treating everyone fairly and with respect
- Being answerable to those we serve
- Striving for excellence in all we do

PEOPLE

We value all our employees by practicing and promoting...

- Fairness and respect
- Recognition of merit
- Honesty, integrity and mutual trust
- Personal development
- Co-operative and inclusive working

DIVERSITY

We value diversity in the service and the community by...

- Treating everyone fairly and with respect
- Providing varying solutions for different needs and expectations
- Promoting equal opportunities in employment and progression within the service
- Challenging prejudice and discrimination

⁴ Developed and agreed by a stakeholder group led by CFOA and published in 2006.

IMPROVEMENT

We value improvement at all levels of the Service by...

- Accepting responsibility for our performance
- Being open-minded
- Considering criticism thoughtfully
- Learning from our experience
- Consulting others

Annex B

Equalities Legislation

Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999

The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999 prevent discrimination against transsexual people on the grounds of sex in pay and treatment in employment and vocational training, and include discrimination on gender reassignment grounds.

Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

These regulations make it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against or harass a job applicant or employee on the grounds of religion and belief (defined as any religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief)

Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003

These regulations make it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against or harass a job applicant or employee on the grounds of their sexual orientation (defined as sexual orientation towards persons of the same sex, opposite sex or same sex and opposite sex).

Gender Recognition Act 2004

The Gender Recognition Act 2004 allows transsexual people to apply for full legal recognition in their acquired gender. The GRA also defines an individual's gender history as protected information, prohibiting employers from disclosing it.

Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

These regulations prohibit discrimination on the grounds of age in employment and training and provide greater right for employees with regard to requesting to work beyond the compulsory age for retirement.

Equality Act 2006 (operational April 2007)

The main provisions of the Equality Act include the creation of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. It will make it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of religion and belief in education and in the provision of goods, facilities, service and premises. It will also place a positive duty on public authorities to promote equality between genders throughout all their functions.

Amendment to the Sex Discrimination Act 1975

The Sex Discrimination Act will be amended before the end of December 2007 to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of gender reassignment in the provision of goods and services.

Gender and Gender Identity

The Equality Act 2006 places a duty on public authorities to promote gender equality in all their functions.

The general duty includes the requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, eliminate harassment, and promote equality of opportunity.

The specific duties include:

- The requirement to publish a Gender Equality Scheme which is the central framework to help them achieve the general duty.
- Conduct impact assessments for gender equality.
- *Employment duty:* public authorities need to ensure that they have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment in their employment practices and actively promote gender equality within their workplace. This includes discrimination on grounds of gender reassignment. They also need to consider the need to include objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap (Equal Pay Act 1970).
- Public Authorities are responsible for ensuring all functions carried out by external suppliers meet the general duties of the Act.

The first scheme had to be published by 30th April 2007, and should be reviewed and revised every three years. Public Authorities must report on progress annually.

Race

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places a duty on public authorities to promote race equality in policy making, service delivery, regulation and employment.

The general duty is a requirement to: eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and promote good race relations between different racial groups.

The specific duties include:

- Public authorities within England and Wales to publish a Race Equality Scheme.
- The requirement to conduct an assessment of the impact of their current or intended policies, programmes and service delivery for any disadvantageous experiences or outcomes of Black and Minority ethnic groups and to take action to remove inequalities.

- Public Authorities are responsible for ensuring all functions carried out by external suppliers meet the general duties of the Act.
- *An employment duty*: to monitor the numbers of staff by reference to racial groups in relation to: staff in post, applicants for employment, training and promotion, those in receipt of training, benefit or suffer detriment as a result of performance assessment procedures, are involved in grievance procedures, are subject to disciplinary procedures, cease employment. Authorities should analyse the data to find patterns of inequality, take necessary action to remove barriers and promote equality of opportunity, publish the results of the monitoring each year.

The first scheme had to be published by 31st May 2002, and should be reviewed every three years. There is no statutory requirement to report annually on race equality, however, it is good practice to do so. Annual publication of employment monitoring statistics is however required.

Disability

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 places a duty on public authorities to promote disability equality in policy making, service delivery, regulation and employment.

The general duty includes: promotion of equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons, elimination of unlawful disability discrimination, elimination of unlawful disability harassment, promotion of positive attitudes towards disabled persons, encouraging participation of disabled persons in public life, and taking steps to account of disabled person's disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

The specific duties require:

- Public sector authorities to have published a Disability Equality Scheme by December 2006. This should form the main framework to help them in achieving the general duty.
- This should include arrangements for impact assessment with regards to disadvantageous experiences or outcomes of people with disabilities.
- *Employment*: Public authorities must also set out arrangements for gathering information on the effect of their policies and practices on the recruitment, development and retention of their disabled employees. They are required to collect statistics on disabled applicants for employment, staff in post, employees who cease employment, those who receive training, suffer detriment as a result of performance assessment, are involved in grievance

procedures, are subject to disciplinary procedures. Authorities should analyse the data and consider where there are differences between disabled and non-disabled staff, investigate the reasons for this, and take action to remedy it.

- Public Authorities are responsible for ensuring all functions carried out by external suppliers meet the general duties of the Act.

The first scheme had to be published by 4 December 2006, and should be reviewed every three years. Public Authorities are required to publish a report annually.

There is a requirement that public authorities involve disabled people in all key aspects of the development of their schemes.

The DDA 1995 also sets out the requirement of public authorities to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled people where a provision, criterion or practice applied by the employer places a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with people who are not disabled.

Annex C

SUPPORTING GUIDANCE FOR THE NATIONAL EQUALITY & DIVERSITY STRATEGY

Introduction

A variety of guidance is already available to Fire and Rescue Authorities relevant to meeting the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy. It is intended that as part of the supportive documentation to be made available alongside the Strategy information will be provided on accessing guidance which already exists. Where appropriate guidance does not already exist it is proposed that the necessary material will be developed in partnership with key stakeholders and in consultation with equality and diversity practitioners.

The purpose of this annex is to indicate the kind of guidance which it is proposed will be made available. Consultees are asked as part of the consultation process to inform Communities and Local Government where they feel guidance material may be necessary.

Proposed Guidance

Statutory Requirements

- *(brief descriptions of equality strands and specific duties):*
- Age, Disability, Gender, Gender Identity, Race, Religion/belief, Sexual Orientation

Practical guidance for managers, equalities and HR practitioners in delivering the organisational responsibilities set by the Strategy eg

- Setting out the requirements of current [and forthcoming] equalities legislation
- Providing a check list of actions/duties against the requirements of equalities legislation
- Highlighting good practice [through hypothetical examples]

Equality Impact Assessment

- Equality Impact Assessing all policies etc against all the equality strands – good practice guidance
- Impact Assessment as part of Integrated Risk Management Planning

Action Planning

- Good practice
- Practical examples

Data Collection, Reporting on Progress

- Data collection: what is needed and what is required. Collecting and collating comprehensive statistical information:
 - (i) about the workforce
 - (ii) about the local community
- Qualitative information on progress including links to Equality Standard For Local Government, Stonewall Workplace Equality Index etc.

Annual Appraisal and Reporting

- Good practice guidance
- Methodology and examples

Where To Find....

- Pointers to accessing tools and guidance
- Identifying relevant guidance
- Where to find existing guidance, eg website addresses, details of reports, other documents such as guidance (eg Equality Standard for Local Government)

Annex D

List of Consultees

(the list is not comprehensive)

Asian Fire Service Association

Association of Principal Fire Officers (APFO)

Audit Commission

a:gender

Age Concern

Business and Community Safety Forum (BCSF)

Cabinet Office

Chairs of the Fire & Rescue Authorities

Chairs of the Regional Management Boards

Chief Fire Officers

Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA)

Chief Executive, County Councils

Clerk to the Combined Fire and Rescue Authorities

Clerk of the Fire & Rescue Authority

Confederation of British Industries

Communities and Local Government:

- LGB network

- Flexible workers network

- BMEnet

- DisAbility Network

Civil Service Islamic Society

Commissioner of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority

Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform

Department for Children, Schools and Families

Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

Diabetes UK

Emergency Planning College

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Employers' Forum on Disability

Employers' Forum on Age

Federation of Small Businesses
Fire Brigades Union (FBU)
Firebuy
Fire Industry Association (FIA)
Fire Officers' Association (FOA)
Fire Protection Association (FPA)
Fire, Rescue and Safety Vocational Standards Group (FRSVSG)
Fire Service College
Faith Communities Consultative Council
GMB
Government Offices
Gypsies and Traveller
HM Treasury
Health & Safety Executive
Help the Aged
Home Office
Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA)
Institute of Fire Engineers
Interfaith Network Faith Forum
Inter Faith Council
Local Government Employers (LGE)
Learning and Skills Council
Local Government Association (LGA)
Ministry of Defence
National Assembly for Wales
National Disabled Fire Association
National Joint Council for Local Authorities' Fire Brigades
National Police Improvement Agency
Networking Women in the Fire Service
Northern Ireland Office
Opportunity Now
Practitioners' Forum
Prospect
Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

Retained Firefighters Union (RFU)

Race for Opportunity

Regional Management Board

Scottish Executive Justice Department

Scottish Fire Service Inspectorate

Scottish Fire Services College

Stonewall

Third Sector Stakeholders

TUC

Unison

Annex E

The consultation criteria

This consultation confirms to the criteria set out in the Code of Practice on Written Consultations.

The Government has adopted a code of practice on consultations. The criteria below apply to all UK national public consultations on the basis of a document in electronic or printed form. They will often be relevant to other sorts of consultation. Though they have no legal force, and cannot prevail over statutory or other mandatory external requirements (eg under European Community Law), they should otherwise generally be regarded as binding on UK departments and their agencies, unless Ministers conclude that exceptional circumstances require a departure.

1. Consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of the policy.
2. Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses.
3. Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.
4. Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.
5. Monitor your department's effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated consultation co-ordinator.
6. Ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including carrying out an Impact Assessment if appropriate.

The full consultation code may be viewed at
www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/Consultation/Introduction.htm

Are you satisfied that this consultation has followed these criteria? If not, or you have any other observations about ways of improving the consultation process please contact:

Albert Joyce
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Communities and Local Government
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London
SW1E 5DU
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Freedom of information

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on Communities and Local Government.

Communities and Local Government will process your personal data in accordance with the DPA and in the majority of circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Regulatory Impact Assessment of the the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy: 2008–2018

Summary: Intervention & Options		
Department /Agency: Communities and Local Government	Title: Impact Assessment of the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008–2018	
Stage: Consultation	Version: 1	Date: 31 October 2007
Related Publications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Thematic Review on Equality and Fairness (1999), • The Two National Action Plans, “Toward Diversity 1” and “Toward Diversity 2” (2000 & 2001) • The scoping study on Leadership “ Bridging the Gap” (2002) • Fire and Rescue Service Core Values • Fire and Rescue Shared Vision Towards 2017 		
Available to view or download at: http://www.communities.gov.uk		
Contact for enquiries: Gill McManus/John Dackombe		Telephone: 020 7944 8640/5707
What is the problem under consideration? Why is government intervention necessary? <p>The Government’s Thematic Review on Equality and Fairness (in 1999) identified significant deficiencies in the performance of the Fire and Rescue Service and made a number of recommendations. Despite a series of subsequent national initiatives, including employment targets for women and ethnic minorities, publishing national action plans, and delivering a national campaign (in 2006) to raise women’s awareness about a career in firefighting, the progress achieved by the Service has not kept pace with Government expectations or those of the key Service stakeholders. In its 2006 report, the Communities and Local Government Select Committee was critical of the Service performance on equality and diversity and of Central Government’s lack of leadership on these issues. The Government’s response to the Report proposed a series of measures to support the Service to make a step change in its performance. In particular, it committed to publish a national Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy by the end of 2008.</p>		

What are the policy objectives and the intended effects?

The objective of the Strategy is to provide a framework for action that will enable the Fire and Rescue Service to tackle current inequalities, promote equality between different groups in line with legislative requirements and, importantly, establish a climate that enables a supported, diverse workforce to provide a service that is closer to, and has an effective relationship with, the public in order to improve the service provided to all sections of our community. The Strategy's aim is to improve the way that people treat each other within the Service and the effectiveness of the relationship it has with all parts of the community it serves. It will also support delivery of Government commitments to promote equality and diversity, tackle disadvantage, and build cohesive and sustainable communities. Improving workforce diversity through recruitment and retention is a key area for action proposed by the Strategy. A key change is a proposal to revise the existing employment targets. The current targets of 7 per cent for minority ethnic staff and 15 per cent for women (operational sector only) by 2009 will clearly not be achieved on the present rate of progress (current representation: 3 per cent for minority ethnic staff and 2.8 per cent for women). Modernisation of the Service together with demographic changes provide an opportunity to re-visit the targets to ensure that they are more relevant, stretching, yet achievable, therefore gaining buy-in and support from the wider community, prospective candidates, current employees, Local Government Partners and other stakeholders.

What policy options have been considered? Please justify any preferred option.

1. Do nothing
2. Development and implementation of a ten year national Strategy to improve workforce diversity and create a more inclusive Service culture and effective community engagement.

To do nothing will fail to change at an acceptable pace the diversity of the Service's workforce or its culture; nor will it lead to significant improvements in engagement with all parts of the community and more effective service delivery. The preferred option (2), supported by the Fire and Rescue Service key stakeholders, will provide a framework for action that can be implemented at national, regional and local levels, with measures to monitor and report on performance and clear indicators of what success should look like. It will support the Service in improving its engagement with, and understanding the needs of, all the communities it serves. It will drive progress in achieving greater workforce diversity, creating a Service that attracts and appoints talented people from diverse backgrounds at all levels of the organisation, where **all** staff are treated fairly and with respect in a culture that does not tolerate bullying or harassment.

When will the policy be reviewed to establish the actual costs and benefits and the achievement of the desired effects?

Progress will be reviewed annually; an annual report will be published which would include quantitative and qualitative evidence of performance on equality and diversity against a range of measures.

Ministerial Sign-off For Consultation STAGE Impact Assessments:

I have read the Impact Assessment and I am satisfied that, given the available evidence, it represents a reasonable view of the likely costs, benefits and impact of the leading options.

Signed by the responsible Minister:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ranjit Dhillon', is written over a faint, illegible stamp.

Date: 31 OCTOBER 2007

Summary: Analysis & Evidence

Policy Option:	Description:		
COSTS	ANNUAL COSTS		<p>There are no additional quantified costs to Fire and Rescue Authorities that have been identified as a consequence of the good practice contained in the Strategy.</p>
	One-off (Transition)	Yrs	
	£		
	Average Annual Cost (excluding one-off)		
	£		
Other key non-monetised costs by 'main affected groups'			
BENEFITS	ANNUAL BENEFITS		<p>The introduction of the Strategy and the actions it requires in each of the key priority areas are unlikely to adversely impact any groups within the Service or in the community. Actions related to recruitment, retention and progression will have a positive impact, thereby creating a more diverse workforce that better reflects the communities served. Actions related to leadership, retention, effective service delivery, measuring action and accountability will impact on the understanding of all staff of equalities issues, raising awareness levels, reducing negative behaviours in the workplace and negative experiences of Service users. Groups that are currently under-represented in the workforce are likely to experience a positive impact. Improved, more effective engagement with the community will increase their confidence in the Service and they will be more likely to accept the professional support and advice which the Service offers. An effective relationship with the communities will help to prevent fire, reduce the risk of death and injury, and the loss of property. It will also help to prevent arson and attacks on firefighters. Not possible to quantify costs.</p>
	One-off	Yrs	
	£		
	Average Annual Benefit (excluding one-off)		
	£		
Other key non-monetised benefits by 'main affected groups'			

Key Assumptions/Sensitivities/Risks
 The development of the Strategy has been shaped by input from the key stakeholders, representative groups within the Service, equalities and HR professionals, and members of the wider community. However, its success in delivering real change will be dependent on the commitment and positive engagement with the issues across all parts of the Service.

Price Base Year	Time Period Years	Net Benefit Range (NPV) £	NET BENEFIT (NPV Best estimate) £
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What is the geographic coverage of the policy/option?	England			
On what date will the policy be implemented?	1 April 2008			
Which organisation(s) will enforce the policy?	CLG			
What is the total annual cost of enforcement for these organisations?	£			
Does enforcement comply with Hampton principles?	Yes/No			
Will implementation go beyond minimum EU requirements?	No			
What is the value of the proposed offsetting measure per year?	N/A			
What is the value of changes in greenhouse gas emissions?	N/A			
Will the proposal have a significant impact on competition?	Yes/No			
Annual cost (£-£) per organisation (excluding one-off)	Micro	Small	Medium	Large
Are any of these organisations exempt?	Yes/No	Yes/No	N/A	N/A

Impact on Admin Burdens Baseline (2005 Prices)	N/A			(Increase – Decrease)
Increase of	N/A	Decrease of	N/A	Net Impact N/A

Evidence Base (for summary sheets)

Proposed Strategy

In 2006 the Government established an Equality and Diversity Project Board, chaired by the Director of Fire and Resilience in Communities and Local Government and including key stakeholder organisations. The key output for the Project Board has been the development and implementation of a ten year national Equality and Diversity Strategy which is relevant to all sections of the Service, easily understood by those responsible for its delivery and leads to sustained and positive change.

The structure for the draft Strategy sets out the current position, the case for change and priority areas for action:

1. Providing leadership and promoting inclusion
2. Attraction, recruitment, progression and retention
3. Effective service delivery and community engagement
4. Measuring action and sharing success
5. Accountability

These priority areas are informed by evidence from a study undertaken by Communities and Local Government to identify what has worked elsewhere.

The Strategy has been drafted as a high level action plan to emphasise the need for action from all sections of the Service, from individual employees to elected members as well as national bodies. It provides examples of how the Service might achieve a goal and examples of what achievement would look and feel like.

In particular, it focuses on areas where statistics tell us that there appear to be inequalities in outcomes for particular groups. Similarly it highlights areas where action is required to inform understanding and proposals for action to address other areas of potential inequality. Informed by available statistics and evidence from published research we have conducted an impact assessment considering the needs of the people that the Strategy is intended to benefit to determine if there is a likelihood that (a) the proposals will result in detriment for a particular group and (b) will not improve relations between groups. The results indicate that no group is likely to be adversely affected by the introduction of the Strategy and that groups that are currently under represented in the workforce are likely to experience a positive impact.

The actions and goals contained within the Equality and Diversity Strategy are not expected to have a detrimental impact on any recognised 'equality group'.

Actions related to recruitment and progression will have a positive impact on employment outcomes for women and people from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities thereby creating a diverse workforce that reflects the communities the Service serves.

Actions related to leadership, retention, effective service delivery, measuring action and accountability will impact on the understanding of all staff of equalities issues, raising skill levels and reducing negative behaviours in the workplace and negative experience of Service users.

A renewed focus on equality issues and the need to impact assess locally, will help ensure decisions taken for the benefit of one group are not to the detriment of another. We would therefore expect to see positive outcomes for people (whether staff or users) from the following recognised equality groups (recognising always that individuals are identified by more than one 'group')

- Black and Minority Ethnic Communities (including Gypsy/Travellers and Refugees & Asylum Seekers, migrant population and others)
- Women and Men
- Religious/Faith Groups
- Disabled People
- Older People
- Children and Young People
- The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community.

The impact of the Strategy will be monitored through these actions and if adverse impact is detected, remedial action will be instructed. No adverse impact however is anticipated.

The impact of Recruitment, Progression and Retention Activity is designed to have a positive impact on Target Groups without adverse impact to any other equality 'group'.

The impact of activity relating to Effective Service Delivery and Community Engagement is not anticipated to have any adverse impact on any equality group.

The impact of activity relating to sharing success and measuring action is not anticipated to have any adverse impact on any equality group.

The impact of actions relating to Accountability are not anticipated to have any adverse impact for any equality group.

Workforce Diversity Targets

The current workforce composition targets require that by 2009 7 per cent of all staff should be from minority ethnic background and 15 per cent of all operational staff should be women (women are well represented elsewhere in the Service). These have proved difficult for the Service to achieve because of:

- Low turnover: favourable pay, terms and conditions encourage operational staff to remain in service for the full 30 years, leading to average firefighter wastage of 6.7 per cent p.a. (as a percentage of total staff)¹
- Low recruitment: recruitment nationally between 2008-2018 is expected to be around 35,000, and may fall further under pressure from the proposed efficiency target.
- Improved employment protection: the Disability Discrimination Act provides greater job security and age legislation has provided staff with the right to stay on beyond thirty years service.

New Workforce Diversity Target Proposals

We are proposing to refresh the targets as part of the new Strategy. The headlines to focus on are:

- (i) **recruitment figures** – rather than workforce composition, on the basis that performance in this area cannot be blamed on low turnover as at present. In addition this target will encourage improvements in positive action and community engagement.
- (ii) **local targets** – targets for minority ethnic representation based on the representation within the local working population of each Fire and Rescue Authority area.
- (iii) **revitalising the targets on progression and retention** on the basis that:

¹ Wastage is also low in the police service (6%) though the figure is reduced by rising numbers overall, and the police have achieved a similar rate of progress though from a higher base (3 per cent BME in 1999, 5 per cent in 2006). The Prison Service have higher wastage (9%) but have also progressed at a similar rate (3.2 per cent BME in 1999, 5.7 per cent in 2006).

- progression targets will encourage fairer more transparent application of the assessment and development centre and promotion processes, and
- retention targets will encourage services to look at their employment practices and procedures and their internal culture.

Benefits of revising the targets will ensure there is a focus on considering the needs of women and minority groups in all aspects of service planning and employment. This will have a positive impact on employment outcomes for women and people from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities.

Race Equality Impact Assessment

Even though the Fire and Rescue Service has worked hard to develop an organisation which is fair to everyone, values and supports equality and diversity and demonstrates real commitment to the Fire and Rescue Service Core Values it still has a long way to go:

- *very small numbers of staff are from minority ethnic background (3 per cent compared to a national average of over 12 per cent – among senior staff this falls to 1 per cent).*

The Strategy aims to promote equality throughout all parts of the Service for **all** staff and the public they serve and supports the requirements of Race Equality legislation. It requires Fire and Rescue Services to meet targets on recruitment, progression and retention of minority ethnic staff across the whole workforce and to undertake robust monitoring of the workforce in terms of recruitment, progression and retention, on the basis of age, disability, race, gender, gender identity, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

The Strategy is developed in consultation with representatives of the Fire Brigades Union representative Groups (Black & Ethnic Minority, Women, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Members), Minority Ethnic Communities and other representative bodies. No adverse impact in relation to Race has been identified at this stage but progress and outcomes will be continually monitored.

Disability Equality

The Strategy aims to promote equality throughout all parts of the service for **all** staff and the public they serve. It requires Fire and Rescue Services to undertake robust monitoring of the workforce in terms of recruitment, progression and retention, on the basis of age, disability, race, gender, gender identity, religion or belief and sexual orientation. No expected adverse impact is anticipated. The consultation phase will ensure people with disabilities are involved.

Gender equality

Even though the Fire and Rescue Service has worked hard to develop an organisation which is fair to everyone, values and supports equality and diversity and demonstrates real commitment to the Fire and Rescue Service Core Values it still has a long way to go:

- very small numbers of operational firefighters are women (2.8%), with less than 1 per cent in senior positions.
- women are much more likely to resign from the Service than men (77 per cent operational women leave before completing 10 years of service – compared to 47 per cent of men)

The Strategy aims to promote equality throughout all parts of the service for **all** staff and the public they serve. It requires Fire and Rescue Services to meet targets on recruitment, progression and retention of women in the operational sector and to undertake robust monitoring of the workforce in terms of recruitment, progression and retention, on the basis of age, disability, race, gender, gender identity, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

The Strategy is developed in consultation with representatives of bodies including the Fire Brigades Union's National Women's Committee, National Lesbian and Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Committee and the National Women's Committee, UNISON and, Networking Women in the Fire Service. No adverse impact in relation to gender has been identified at this stage but progress and outcomes will be continually monitored.

Competition Assessment

There is no adverse impact on business.

Small Firms Impact Assessment

There is no adverse impact on small firms.

Legal Aid

There are no implications for the Legal Aid budget.

Sustainable Development

We do not anticipate any impact on sustainable development.

Carbon Assessment

There is no impact on carbon emissions.

Other Environment

We do not anticipate any other environmental impacts.

Health Impact Assessment

We do not anticipate any adverse impact on health. We would expect to see a reduction in fire related deaths, injuries, risk taking behaviours through effective community engagement. We would expect to see a healthier workforce as a result of decreased stress related illness through reduced incidences of bullying and harassment. Resulting improvements for health and well being of staff and reduction in fire related deaths and arson in the community.

Human Rights

We do not anticipate any adverse impact, information required for monitoring will be requested, collected and stored in line with Data Protection Requirements and identifiable information will not be shared or be accessible in a way which would impact on an individuals human rights.

Rural Proofing

We do not anticipate any impact.