

## **REVIEW of the GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME (GES) 2008 - 2009**

### **Consultation**

A summary of the GES consultation is attached at Appendix A

### **Leadership and Corporate Commitment**

Authority members and principal managers have committed to the Gender Equality Duty. Service commitment to equality and diversity is indicated in our Community Risk Management Plan which can be located on our website [www.bedsfire.com](http://www.bedsfire.com)

All staff are made aware of their responsibility under the duties through a range of media such as Managers Briefing Sessions, presentations, publications in the Blue Bulletin (weekly in house newsletter), and currently information concerning all three Statutory Duties are included in the two day induction course for new members of staff.

### **What has happened in the last 12 months?**

#### **National Equality and Diversity Strategy**

The Communities and Local Government (CLG) has delivered to Fire and Rescue Services nationally; Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018. This strategy aims to support Fire Services in tackling current inequalities, promoting equality, diversity and fairness and establishing a culture of inclusion enabling the Service to meet local needs. The Service has welcomed this document, seeing it as an opportunity to build on our existing high quality of service to the community.

#### **Workforce data 2008-2009**

All workforce data for 2008 – 2009 referred to here and elsewhere will be available on the website in due course.

#### **Positive Action and Engagement**

The Service ran two positive action events 2007 and 2008 (linked) to encourage more women to apply as fire fighters. The events enabled familiarization with equipment, provided workshops aimed at raising awareness and provided an understanding of the role of Fire fighter including physical and stamina requirements. The day also provided an explanation of the recruitment process.

We continue to monitor potential candidates and have now developed

process to capture information relating to candidates who do not follow through with an application to the Service to become a Fire fighter after attending a positive action event. The information gathered here helps us to understand and where possible dismantle the barriers that women may face in applying to become a Fire fighter.

In addition a Positive Action Planning Process is currently being developed to allow for a greater service wide approach to positive action and community engagement.

Women currently make up 3.28% of our operational workforce as fire fighters and people who identify as from Minority Ethnic groups make up 5.83% of the whole workforce.

### **Funding and Targets**

We have secured funding from the Government to further our work in encouraging more women to apply to become Fire fighters, and to support and retain those who are successful in becoming Fire fighters. We have committed to achieving a target of 18% of all new Fire fighter trainees to the Service to be women.

### **Policy and Procedure**

A suite of 'family friendly' policies such as; Flexible Working, Parental Leave, Dependants' Leave and Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave and Special Leave have been developed and implemented across the Service. Ongoing provision for monitoring and analyse is carried.

We monitor disciplines, grievances, recruitment, workforce profiles, and applications for employment, training and promotion. We also monitor those who leave the organisation and exit interviews. All monitoring data is currently prepared and analysed against race, gender and disability, and reported to Senior Managers in order to identify any discrepancies or patterns which may indicate indirect discrimination resulting from the application of policies and procedures.

### **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

All existing policies have been screened for relevancy against gender and prioritized against the requirements of the Gender (Race and Disability) Duty(ies). EIA is carried out on all new policy, with existing policy being assessed within a three year time frame.

All policies have been screened against Transgender as part of the Gender section within the EIA template.

### **Equal Pay**

An equal pay health check has been carried out and will be translated

into an action plan ready to be rolled out over the forthcoming years.

## **Training and Development**

### Current Service Provision

Currently, all staff members receive a number of training opportunities throughout their career with us. We provide a two day Equal Opportunities Awareness Induction Course for all new members of staff. Other training such as 'Towards Cultural Competency' and Equality Impact Assessment Training is available, staff are encouraged to attend. Development training opportunities which include equality and diversity modules are also available.

### Raising Awareness of Gender Equality

A number of articles aimed at raising awareness of gender related issues are published in our in-house newsletter. This is an informal yet effective way of reaching the workforce on a regular basis. The Blue Bulletin is published weekly and is read by the vast majority of staff. Members of staff who are away from the workplace receive this publication on a weekly basis which provides for keeping 'in touch'.

The range of information provided through this media includes information related to all groups currently covered by legislation including Trans, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race, Age, Disability and Religion or Belief.

## **Maintaining the Dignity of Men and Women**

We have improved accommodation at our fire stations providing separate rest facilities including toilets and showers for men and women. In addition to this our new community Fire Station at Dunstable has prayer and reflection facilities.

## **Networking Women in the Fire Service**

We are members of the Networking Women in the Fire Service and seek to encourage staff to attend NWFS events. We budget annually providing staff the opportunity to attend events such as the Annual Networking Event which provides a range of activities for participants including the opportunities to network with staff from other Services.

## **Equality and Diversity Awards**

Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service are very pleased to announce that they have been awarded with several Equality and Diversity awards some of which are directly related to gender equality.

## Bedford Race Equality Council

The Service secured first place for its 'Why Women should be Fire fighters' Fly on the Wall work in the National Research category in the Bedford Race Equality Council Equality Awards 2008. The project looked at the subject of recruiting women into the Service as Fire fighters.

The Service was also recommended for excellence in the Bedford Equality Council 'partnership working' category. Here the Service was recognised for its work with other Bedfordshire Service providers in developing and running a Consultation Event for the Transgender Community; reportedly the first of its kind in the UK.

## East of England Regional Council

First place was awarded to the Service by the East of England Regional Council for Local Government Services Equalities Award 2008. This was in recognition of the Transgender Consultation Event that took place early 2008. The full report is available on our website.

## **Transgender People**

February 2008 the Service; working collaboratively with other Bedfordshire Service providers as the Bedfordshire Trans Agenda Partnership, provided for a Transgender Consultation Event. As a result of this engagement the Service was able to further develop an understanding of the needs of the Trans community.

The full report is available on our website.

Following on from the consultation event, the Bedfordshire Partnership developed and delivered to other service providers across Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire a 3 hour training session. This session introduced the main themes and findings of the consultation and provided a networking environment in which participants could discuss issues with members of the Trans Community and the Bedfordshire Partnership.

In line with the findings of the consultation we have made a number of changes to our practices in house. For instance we have introduced a Transgender module to our current 2 day induction course for all new members of staff to the organisation. We will continue to engage with members of our Transgender community as we further develop policy and gender objectives.

We have continued to work to a separate action plan for Transgender people and will continue to do until issues are considered mainstreamed and therefore appropriate to integrate the plan within the main Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan

## **Customer Satisfaction**

The Service carries out satisfaction surveys on a regular basis and collects information against gender, race, disability and age. The information is collated and analysed quarterly and used to develop services in line with community needs. No adverse impact has been found in relation to gender.

## **Community Risk Management Plan**

The Service is currently undergoing a widespread engagement exercise with the community in relation to the development of our Community Risk Management Plan.

Further information will be available on the website in the near future

## **Procurement**

We have undertaken recently correspondence with all our procurement partners detailing our commitment to equality and diversity and our expectations that our partners work towards these goals. We have requested that our partners submit to us their commitment to these ends.

## **Outstanding items and issues**

1. Development of Domestic Violence Policy
2. Continued development and implementation of Positive Action Plan
3. Development of Equal Pay Health Check into Action Plan/ implement
4. Complete reviews and publication of Equality Policy, and Harassment and Bullying Policy
5. Development of 'Transition' Policy

## Consultation with Stakeholders

The Service asked for your views and comments during 2007 which have been summarized here.

You considered our priorities to be clear with clearly defined responsibilities and that our arrangements were clear and easy to understand. There was some concern as to whether some of the priorities were 'realistic'.

You considered that the scheme was clear and introduced guidelines that addresses inequality in many areas. You also considered that the Action Plan was clear to understand and followed throughout. However there was some concern about the deliverability in terms of time frames and other pressures experienced by the Service.

Although you considered that generally we had included all gender related issues within the Action Plan you did consider that we ought to be mindful of future requirements related to 'Single Equality' and how we might cross reference all the equality strands.

You indicated several concerns in relation to measuring some of our identified outcomes. Generally, you considered that we might spend more time measuring than delivering on some of the outcomes and that some of the actions were not SMART in terms of times for delivery. You considered that outcomes would be hard to measure unless we clearly identified specific areas we wanted to focus on. You commented that we should be mindful of long term outcomes and that they should be written into the scheme to allow for the ongoing collection and monitoring of data rather than quick wins.

You believed that our GES would address inequality in employment and goods and services and that we are leading challenges and addressing stereotyping and oppressive behaviours. You also considered that our scheme was likely to raise the profile of women into traditionally male roles, however there was some concern relating to conflicting priorities with other priorities and workloads.

There was some concerns relating to training wherein you commented that training is always a requirement, and that we should budget and plan ongoing training to enable a clear message of change. Some of your comments however conflicted with this and there was some consideration that the Service did not need to carry out any further training in relation to gender equality.

There was a specific concern relating to the Transgender Action Plan

questioning whether the issues and needs associated with Trans people were actual or perceived, enquiring as to local impact.

Additionally, you indicated some concern about including the Equal Pay Audit in the introduction to requirements for the Gender Equality Scheme.