

Review of the Race Equality Scheme 2008 - 2009

Workforce data 2008-2009

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

Currently, around 5.9% of our workforce identifies as coming from Ethnic Minority backgrounds and around 3.3% of our operational workforce are women.

What has happened in the last 12 months?

The Action Plan implementing the Race Equality Scheme has been updated. In addition a number of other initiatives and work has been carried out and recorded here.

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.

Targets

Currently, the Service uses demographic data provided by the Labour Force Survey. The data has been compiled and averaged over eight quarters (2007 and 2008). Fire Services have been strongly encouraged to use this format for profiling their local communities by the Communities and Local Government and provides for an up to date estimate of local demographic profiles.

The information detailed below in Table 1 sets out the demographic estimates of the working age (18-54) population.

The Service has set itself a challenging target, committing to achieve 32% of our recruitment figures across the whole of the organisation over the coming 4 years to be people from ethnic minority backgrounds. We have also committed to 18% of our Fire fighter recruits to be women.

Table 1

Mid Beds	Bedford	South Beds	Luton	
1.9	16.1	6.3	48.1	Ethnic Minorities
6.9	9.3	6.3	9.7	Other White
8.9	25.4	12.6	57.8	Total
65,430	79,980	54,540	95,300	Local Population
			295,260	TOTAL

Source: Labour Force Survey averaged over 8 quarters 2006-2007

In working towards our targets we have secured funding from Government for 2009/ 2010 with the potential for further funding 2010/ 2011.

Positive Action and Engagement

Currently; the Service carries out positive action events annually.

Positive Action events ensure we are reaching a diverse range of potential applicants, especially those who have not historically pursued a career in the fire service. These days aim to encourage more applications from candidates who identify as being from groups currently under-represented in the workforce.

Following Positive Action Events, BLFRS analyse equality monitoring data tracking applicants who attend positive action sessions throughout the recruitment process. The Service analyses data collected at the 'open days' to identify any disparity in the percentages of underrepresented groups making application and those securing positions as whole time Fire fighters.

The Service has further developed the existing format of the Positive Action Events to include meaningful input, in particular we identify where people from underrepresented groups are more likely to be unsuccessful in the recruitment process and have developed workshops to address these areas.

The Service ran a positive action event early 2009 to encourage more applications from Minority Ethnic groups currently underrepresented in the Service.

Equality Impact Assessment

The Service has developed an EIA Policy, template and guidance notes to support staff that carry out equality impact assessment. Equality impact assessment training and development for staff is ongoing. In house support is provided by the Diversity Advisor.

All policies have been screened for relevancy under the Duty (including gender and disability).

Monitoring

In order to assess whether our functions and policies are effective in meeting our General Duties including Race we collect equality monitoring data about our personnel.

We collect equality data, described in the categories below, including point of entry to the organisation. All potential employees are asked to provide, on a voluntarily basis, the same information as those who are employed by us. By collecting this information we can target sections of the community who may not be applying to us for employment and are currently underrepresented in our workforce. Additionally we can ascertain whether unsuccessful candidates disproportionately identify as coming from those groups currently underrepresented within the workforce.

All equality monitoring data, which is kept separate to recruitment processes, is used to profile our workforce, to develop action plans, policies and training, and inform positive action.

- Applications for Employment
- Staff in Post
- Training and Promotion
- Applications for Promotion
- Capability
- Discipline and Grievances
- Leavers

Training and Development

Equality Opportunities Awareness (EOA)

All new staff to the organisation undergo an 'Equal Opportunities Awareness' induction course which runs over two days.

Towards Cultural Competency (TOCC)

As part of our ongoing commitment to delivering training and development in relation to Race equality we sourced a local provider who delivers a 'Toward Cultural Competency' one day course. The course by design helps participants to assess some of the realities for local Muslim, African and Caribbean communities against media, peer and own perceptions and beliefs. The 'TOCC' was awarded runner up in the recent Bedford Race Equality Council Equality and Diversity Awards (2008).

Visiting Homes – half day training for Community Fire Safety Staff

Staff from the Community Fire Safety department requested some additional information regarding their role and visiting homes in the community. The course provided for information about etiquette and awareness for delivering home fire safety and for fitting smoke alarms.

Staff had raised their concerns about inadvertently causing offence to the local Muslim Community. A local provider was sourced and a training programme developed in line with staff concerns in effectively carrying the Services' function of Home Fire Safety.

The facility for this provision remains current.

Community Based Engagement

Faith Based Community Football

From December 2007 through to July 2008, the Service engaged with local communities in Luton through a 'Southern Area Youth Education and Intervention Project'.

The aim was to introduce and deliver community safety and an education programme to schools, groups and communities which the service had not traditionally been successful in engaging with and in

particular; Faith Schools, local Mosques and other related groups. A series of objectives were developed to provide some detail to this aim and an action plan put in place to measure our progress.

We have secured further funding to continue this work into 2009/ 2010.

Faith Based Information Calendars

We have circulated faith based information calendars for staff and those we work in partnership. This provides a good opportunity for staff to effectively plan their work around religious and other community related festivals.

Polish Community Engagement

Working in partnership with Media Moguls the Service carried out a Fire Safety Event at Downside Junior School in Luton. The school provides education for the local Polish community. The Fire Safety message was delivered to around 225 students and a number of parents over the course of the day. The Fire Safety training was provided by Local Fire crews and community fire safety staff.

Outstanding Items and Issues

Complete review of Equality Policy, and Harassment and Bullying Policy