
Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy: 2010

1. The Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy: 2010 consultation was published alongside the National Framework consultation on 14 November 2007. It seeks views on whether the sector wants an Equality and Diversity Strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service in England. Its stated 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.

2. The Strategy is a 10 year high level national strategy which sets out the actions required on leadership, service delivery, employment practice, evaluation and dissemination of good practice, and accountability to ensure that diversity and equality are fully integrated into all aspects of the Fire Service.

The underpinning principle is that staff need to better reflect the diversity in the local community and have the skills and knowledge to work effectively in all communities.

3. The objective of the Strategy is to provide Fire and Rescue Services with direction and guidance on improving their performance on equality, diversity and fairness. The Strategy aims to support the Fire and Rescue Service in developing a culture which supports and embraces diversity and ensures equality of treatment and fairness both internally and in the service they provide to all of our communities.

4. It includes provisions to increase diversity within the workforce to become more representative of communities, supporting improvements in community engagement and consequently the reduction of fire deaths and injuries

The Strategy supports delivery of the Government's commitment to promote equality and diversity, tackle disadvantage, and build cohesive and sustainable communities.

5. Equality and diversity is of particular importance to government. It is felt that whilst progress has been made in this area, there is still a long way to go. Most obviously, very small numbers of staff are from minority ethnic backgrounds and very small numbers of women are operational fire-fighters. Fire also continues to disproportionately impact on certain communities.

6. The consultation particularly seeks views on:

i) 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;

ii) The level at which recruitment targets for minority ethnic staff should be set. Two options are presented. The first option is a target at the same percentage as the minority ethnic representation within the local working population and the second

option is a target 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 (e.g. 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). If option 2 is preferred, views are invited on the level at which the target should be set.

The draft Strategy 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.

7. The consultation invites views on what guidance would be needed to support the implementation of the strategy, in addition to existing guidance in the Service and across the wider public sector.

8. The National Framework will require Fire and Rescue Authorities to implement the Equality and Diversity Strategy.

9. The consultation document can be viewed at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/frsdiversitystrategy>