



<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Performance and Resources Board</b>	<b>Agenda Item No.</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>29<sup>th</sup> September 2023</b>		
<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Steve Tovey, Head of Resourcing (Additional input from Nikki Hudson, Inclusion Partner; Jac Thorold, Assistant Director – HR &amp; OH)</b>		
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>Colette Black, Director of People Services</b>		
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Positive Action &amp; Inclusion in Recruitment Plan</b>		
<b>Type of Report</b>	<b>Information</b>		

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **OVERVIEW**

The Service has been continuously reviewing and improving our positive action approach since 2020.

- May 2020 - a series of proposals focusing on Wholetime Firefighter recruitment were agreed and the SLT approved a new approach to a culture of inclusion in our recruitment processes.
- May 2021 – this approach was reviewed to understand how the approach had worked in practice, what had gone well, lessons learned, and outcomes.
- Autumn 2021 – AFSA review concluded that there was significant evidence of positive and best-practice approaches to inclusive recruitment practices within ECFRS, and that there was no identified evidence of practices that were not inclusive, or that would be detrimental to any group of applicants of any protected characteristic.
- May 2022 - a positive action plan for both internal and external recruitment practices was updated to run until Summer 2023.
- Summer 2023 - the Service engaged an intern to support the Head of Resourcing in undertaking review of Positive Action work undertaken, to review case studies of similar organisations (including other FRS'), to inform an updated Positive Action & Inclusion approach and planning.

This paper reflects the outcomes of this activity ahead of presenting research and recommendations for 2023-2026.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Service's Recruitment Policy encompasses the following priorities:

- To strengthen the organisation's ability to provide an excellent service by diversifying our staff, promoting inclusion, and creating a fair and equal place in which to work.
- To access the widest possible range of candidates that is made up of individuals who represent the diverse communities that this Service serves.
- To ensure equality of access and exposure to a career in fire, with the purpose of attracting a wide range of the most talented people

When a resource requirement is identified, full consideration will be given to the most effective and efficient way to meet the need. We recognise that valuable diversity of thought, and experience can be achieved through recruitment of talented people who bring with them a background that allows for a diverse workforce.

The Service aims to ensure that it is able to attract and employ staff with the right skills, of the highest calibre, to be in the right place of the organisation and at the right time. This will be achieved through effective and efficient workforce planning, and Positive Action, which may be carried out dependent on local needs.

And defines Positive Action as:

### **Positive action**

Positive action is a range of measures allowed under the Equality Act 2010 which can lawfully be taken to encourage and support people from under-represented groups, helping them to overcome disadvantages in competing with other applicants.

Positive action must not be confused with positive discrimination which is unlawful, or any form of preferential treatment. Where positive action has been taken to encourage applicants from disadvantaged groups to apply, every applicant must be considered on their individual merit and selection for interview and appointment must be based strictly on the agreed selection criteria.

## **OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS**

### **AFSA review**

Following AFSA's report into our recruitment practices, an action plan was implemented. With the exception of one action, this action plan has been completed. The action remaining is a review of all role profiles and person specifications, including reformatting and the language within (in mitigation, all role profiles and person specifications are currently reviewed by the People Partner team prior to advertising). This is a significant project and will be incorporated into the People Strategy Action Plan for 2024 -2025.

## **New joiners**

**Gender** - Our Annual Workforce Report 2022-3 shows an increase in the number of female starters in the Service (21%, up from 16% in 2020-1).

**Ethnicity** – Our Annual Workforce Report shows an increase in starters of a minority ethnicity (6.4%, up from 2.8% in 2020-1).

**Proportionality** - Analysis of our Wholetime recruitment information confirms there is no disproportionate drop off for any individual group with a protected characteristic throughout the processes. For 2021 -2023

- 11% of applicants were female, 11% of offers were to females;
- 8% of applicants were from non-White British ethnicity, 8% of offers were to non-White British candidates.
- 17.5% of applicants were under 25, 14.8% of offers were to under 25.

The Wholetime recruitment information does show that there is still a higher percentage of females who are unsuccessful at the fitness assessment compared to their male counterparts, which is countered by females outperforming their male counterparts at interview.

## **Next steps**

The current approach is making a difference but there is still a long way to go. Informed by research an updated Positive Action Plan for 2023-2026 is being proposed. The research and proposals are being discussed by the SLT on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2023.

## **BENEFITS AND RISK IMPLICATIONS**

This activity is a control measure for SRR150019 and SRR150001.

It supports delivery of:

### Fire and Rescue Plan Priorities

Promote a positive culture in the workplace  
Make Best use of our Resources

### Service priorities

Inclusion: To be an inclusive employer; take proactive steps to recruit a diverse workforce

Transforming the way we work

Data and evidence driven in decision making

Increasing the recruitment, and the retention of, on-call firefighters

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None directly linked to this update.

**EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

The actions being taken will not have a disproportionate impact on individuals with protected characteristics (as defined within the Equality Act 2010), when compared to all other individuals and will not disadvantage people with protected characteristics.

Race	Y	Religion or belief	N
Sex	Y	Gender reassignment	Y
Age	Y	Pregnancy & maternity	N
Disability	Y	Marriage and Civil Partnership	N
Sexual orientation	Y		

There are positive impacts on the groups we are targeting (under-25's, gender – dependent on role, ethnicity, disability & neurodivergence and sexual orientation).

**WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT**

Not required at this time.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

In line with Section 158 Equality Act 159

**HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

Not required