

Employers' Secretary, Simon Pannell
 Local Government Association,
 18 Smith Square, Westminster,
 London, SW1P 3HZ
 e-mail: firequeries@local.gov.uk

Employees' Secretary, Matt Wrack
 Bradley House, 68 Coombe Rd
 Kingston upon Thames KT2 7AE
 Telephone 020 8541 1765

NATIONAL JOINT COUNCIL FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

**To: Chief Fire Officers
 Chief Executives/Clerks to Fire Authorities
 Chairs of Fire Authorities
 Directors of HR (Fire Authorities)**

Members of the National Joint Council

25th January 2018

CIRCULAR NJC/1/18

INCLUSIVE FIRE SERVICE GROUP

Improvement Strategies

1. As you are aware a group led by the NJC, the Inclusive Fire Service Group, undertook a comprehensive piece of work engaging directly with fire and rescue services and their employees to consider equality, diversity, cultural and behavioural issues with the purpose of developing improvement strategies which could be supported across the board and used at local level to deliver improvement.
2. The group, which is independently chaired by Professor Linda Dickens, includes employer and employee representation from the National Joint Council and representation from the National Fire Chiefs Council, the Fire Officers Association and the Retained Firefighters Union. It has also engaged with special interest groups such as Stonewall, Asian Fire Service Association, Women in the Fire Service, Women in the Police Service, FBU women's, BME and LGBT groups, Unison, GMB etc.
3. You will recall issue of the improvement strategies last year. As set out in the **attached** report, the strategies were very well received and responses indicate substantial support.
4. The attached report also indicates the actions FRSs intend to take and expected outcomes. Should you be interested in further information on any of the initiatives/approaches happening in services please contact rachel.stevens@local.gov.uk who will be able to put you in touch with the FRS concerned.

Guidance on data collection

5. The group will now move into a monitoring phase, which may then also involve adjustment to, replacement of, or addition to, the improvement strategies as lessons are learned.

6. It is keen to minimise the burden of data collection on FRAs and therefore continues to endeavour to progress a 'single' collection approach (whenever possible) with both government departments and the 'new' Inspectorate in England.
7. That work is continuing and once the outcomes are known the group will be able to issue guidance in respect of the data that will be required to inform its monitoring role.

Yours faithfully

SIMON PANNELL
MATT WRACK
Joint Secretaries

INCLUSIVE FIRE SERVICE GROUP

Improvement strategies: introduction

Improving diversity, inclusion, and issues around behaviour is a high priority for fire and rescue services across the UK.

The Inclusive Fire Service Group was set up by the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services who invited a number of other fire service related organisations to work with it in developing ways to secure this improvement. Accordingly the following bodies are represented on the group - NJC employer and employee interests (covering the Local Government Association, Welsh Local Government Association, Board of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Board of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and the Fire Brigades Union); the National Fire Chiefs Council; Fire Officers Association and the Retained Firefighters Union.

The group has engaged with special interest groups from within and beyond the fire service and with other trade unions. These include Women in the Fire Service, Women in the Police Service, the Asian Fire Service Association, Stonewall, Quiltbag, MIND, FBU women, BME and LGBT groups, UNISON and GMB.

In addition the group has worked directly with equality and diversity specialists and fire and rescue service employees at all levels across all fire and rescue services in the UK to understand their views of what works well but also how best to improve the service as an inclusive place to work and to attract a more diverse workforce. In undertaking this work the group conducted a comprehensive survey of fire and rescue services to ascertain the baseline position. Focus groups were held with a number of women, BME and LGBT employees, which was followed by a confidential survey of all staff. The findings were then discussed through two forms of workshops. The first involved equality and diversity officers from fire and rescue services as well as local union representatives. The second workshop involved senior fire service management at chief fire officer level.

Building upon all of that work, a number of practical improvement strategies were identified. These were circulated to fire and rescue services who were asked to consider them at both officer and member levels. This report indicates the responses received from services, to what extent it is intended to use each of the strategies (or if they already happening), the improvements services expect to see and, if appropriate, expected timescales.

We look forward to the positive outcomes indicated.

Professor Linda Dickens
Independent Chair

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

49 out of 50 Fire and Rescue Services responded to the survey, with 2 of those submitted as a joint return. 1 service responded that it would not be able to submit a return.

There were very few strategies under each section where services responded that they would not take the particular strategy forward. In these few instances, some said they would consider it for the future or, in some cases it was because it was in place already. Where a particular strategy reflected work happening already in a specific FRS, those FRSs were keen to describe the extensive work that has been taking place.

The tables in the report show timescales as grouped as year-end so as to capture all deadlines that fall across different months of each year.

Findings are summarised as below.

Inclusivity should be embedded in every aspect of the fire and rescue service

Many FRSs have internal equality and inclusion focused groups and encourage staff viewpoints via forums or surveys, for example. Training is widely encouraged and this runs as a common thread throughout the report. FRSs are actively engaged with their communities in exploring the changing role of the firefighter and are motivated around the breaking down of barriers to entering the role.

There is a need for visible senior ownership and leadership - to lead by example and to ensure that local strategies and initiatives become reality on the ground, thereby embedding inclusion as the norm. Within a service this should be at chief officer level. Within a fire authority a specific member of the authority should hold the portfolio.

88% of FRS stated the CFO/ACFO/DCFO was the senior officer lead. 8% mentioned 'senior leadership team' but were not specific regarding which senior officer lead. 4% did not mention a reference at all to a CFO / ACFO / DCFO nor to the senior team but listed instead another officer or listed only an elected member. 59% indicated they had a single elected member lead with some others referring to the fire authority in general. Many responses additionally said they have focused ED&I teams or Champions specifically to advance and monitor issues on equality, diversity and inclusion.

Union involvement should be recognised as an important factor in delivering improvement, particularly in respect of peer to peer involvement.

All agreed that union involvement is an important factor in delivering improvement and much is being progressed locally. Unions were found to be involved in meetings and decisions on inclusion issues, they have a prominent place in training and learning from case studies, and representative bodies sit on a spectrum of staff forums and ED&I groups / teams.

Fire and Rescue Services should ensure the workplace is fit for purpose for all groups of employees including correct Personal Protective Equipment and gender specific station and fireground facilities.

80% of responses showed that work is currently in progress. There has been improvement in providing PPE as bespoke and tailored to meet diversity in the workforce. Some services have upgraded their station facilities. All FRSs agreed that this was an important recommendation, with some illustrating their awareness that improvement is needed for facilities at some of their on-call stations and acknowledging there are difficulties in upgrading, such as costs.

Promoting an inclusive culture

There were seven recommendations. All received a positive response.

Fire and Rescue Services should ensure that all managers are trained in people management including skills such as how to have difficult conversations and that all managers recognise their responsibilities in promoting an inclusive culture.

45% said there is training taking place for new and existing managers, including around people skills and how to have difficult conversations. 49% have confirmed they are implementing this strategy. 6% did not allude to specific training or said their process is currently under review. Both internal and external provision is used for training.

Senior managers should lead by positive example. They should challenge bullying and harassment behaviours at every level, ensuring where necessary that management styles change in order to drive a different and improved culture.

Services also supported the recommendation that senior managers should lead by positive example, challenging bullying and harassment behaviours at every level. Unconscious bias training is being undertaken in many services, and there are plans to implement – or continue to progress – the recording and monitoring of data of informal disciplinary cases given the wish to see a reduction of discipline and grievance cases.

Fire and Rescue Services should promote a culture where challenge is accepted and welcomed as a positive contribution. This should be in both directions.

Fire and Rescue Services responded positively on the recommendation to promote a culture where challenge is accepted and welcomed. Open forums with senior management and staff suggestion schemes were a common theme.

Fire and Rescue Services should ensure that all employees are aware of, and understand, the relevant policies. Where an incident is reported and found to be accurate it is important that action is taken and is seen to be taken as a result. Everyone needs to be confident in the process.

Fire and Rescue Services are ensuring that all employees are aware of, and understand, the relevant policies. Training on this takes place regularly as well as access on the intranet.

Fire and Rescue Services should monitor the use of discipline and grievance procedures in order to identify and correct any problematic trends. This should also include an element of monitoring at the informal level in order to pick up issues at an early stage.

All FRSs will monitor the use of discipline and grievance procedures. Many are monitoring for trends on an ongoing basis to inform learning, and some will review communications to ensure there is staff awareness.

Fire and Rescue Services should consider the creation of trained Equality and Diversity champions. These are voluntary roles based on enthusiasm and commitment and irrespective of seniority. Champions play a central role in actively supporting the mainstreaming of equality and diversity initiatives and disseminating equality and diversity good practice, whilst also supporting the strategic development of initiatives to create an inclusive culture. Consideration should also be given to the role Allies can play. In relation to LGBT for example, 'allies' is a term used to describe heterosexual people who believe that lesbian, gay and bisexual people should experience full equality in the workplace and use their role within the organisation to create a culture that is inclusive of everyone.

FRSs received this well and have either implemented this strategy or intend to. There is a degree of collaboration with other blue light services who use Champions, in order to share learning. Only one FRS responded 'no' and said they would not take this area forward as they had utilised Champions in the past but feel that responsibility sits with *all* staff and places this expectation on all to be accessible.

Fire and Rescue Services should also consider the creation of mediators (and may wish to consider whether they should be provided externally as well as internally).

FRSs indicated access to mediators, both internal and external. Some of the training that has taken place on this subject has come from external sources and there is collaboration with partner organisations or the local council.

Recruitment

The recommendations are as below:

There should be a national media campaign covering the full range of the modern firefighter role (similar to the current Army campaign) and what the fire service does in order to inform perception. It should be supported by a website which would also include information on recruitment and potentially divert the interested person to their 'home' fire and rescue service; include information on selection (based on national guidance, not prescription) recognising that the skill set needs to be wider than operational ie people skills, and provide information on fitness requirements. This suggestion was seen, by far, as the most influential way to alter perceptions and improve diversity. It would be useful in terms of recruitment and retention. Recruitment because it would dispel the myth that the job is just about fighting fires and retention to avoid the job not living up to expectations. Note: This recommendation is included here for completeness. However it is recognised that this is something to largely be progressed on a national level initially. Therefore the questions under (i) below have been amended accordingly.

This was firmly supported. Many services commented that this would benefit them in terms of communicating greater awareness of what the role of the firefighter entails and consistency in recruitment processes all round. Many FRSs are undertaking local campaigns themselves, intending to see a greater diversity within the workforce. A number of FRSs highlighted the role of retained duty system employees and the particular recruitment challenges.

Fire and Rescue Services should explore, and where appropriate utilise, recruitment opportunities such as apprenticeships and cadets in order to increase diversity in the workforce.

Work is taking place on utilising cadets and apprentices and services hope the outcomes from this work will increase both diversity in the workplace and widen the talent pool. The intention is to be seen as the employer of choice.

Fire and Rescue Services should undertake greater and early engagement with specific communities/schools/colleges and not just when recruitment is on the horizon. This would further reinforce understanding of the role as it is today. This should utilise employee role models whilst being careful to maintain a balance with their core work.

FRSs have links with schools and colleges, and also various schemes such as the young firefighters programme, Firebreak, Firesetters and the Princes Trust. FRSs hope this will engage young people early and offer a wider talent pool. Again, the intention is for the fire service to be seen as the employer of choice.

Fire and Rescue Services should ensure they have visible family friendly working policies supported by a greater use of flexible working arrangements.

Many Fire and Rescue Services now have flexible working arrangements in place and felt that this would increase/maintain diversity of the workforce. With the exception of one FRS who did not respond on this point all were supportive of this strategy.

Fire and Rescue Services should develop an internal communications strategy to explain the difference between positive action and positive discrimination in order to counteract the view of some that an individual has only been employed/promoted because they are female/BME/LGBT. This would be supportive to such individuals and also be helpful in terms of encouraging progression.

FRSs were very supportive of this strategy. Work is being done on intranet resources, training, workshops – including on unconscious bias – and various literature such as staff handbooks. Some mentioned it forms part of the induction process.

Fire and Rescue Services should consider commissioning work in their own areas to identify any obstacles that local communities feel there are to applying to work with the service.

31% said this has been done or is on-going via work in the local community, working with community leaders, working in partnership with local groups (such as hate-crime groups) and other blue light services or the local council. 47% said this strategy will be taken forwards. 22% either did not respond, entered as NA or answered they would not take this forward. In this latter group, their reasons varied and details can be found in the main body of this report. For example, they may not have had the capacity or in one case they are instead concentrating on the positive reasons why people joined the service.

Progression

Under this section there were four strategies.

Fire and Rescue Services should ensure that promotion processes which are fair and transparent are applied consistently and clearly explained to all employees.

All FRSs supported this strategy. Some FRSs said that a panel or assessment board ensures there is a fair process for promotion – and unconscious bias training is given to selection panel members or assessors. The panel may consist of staff from across the service and processes involve HR. There are reviews of processes and policies or identification of barriers including for under-represented groups. Some also mentioned the importance of union involvement in review of the promotion processes.

Fire and Rescue Services should develop support networks and meaningful mentor/coaching programmes. (Note - mentors/coaches do not need to come from the particular group e.g. a BME mentor for a BME crew manager).

All FRSs support this strategy. 40% of FRSs already have this in place or are currently in the process of implementing this. Another 40% will have this in place by the end of 2018 and the rest thereafter.

Fire and Rescue Services should encourage interest in promotion in general and through talent spotting by including leadership training, opportunities for development such as job swaps, taster weeks and acting-up/temporary promotion (so that an individual can experience the different role). This should be underpinned by a fair and transparent policy which sets out clearly the criteria by which such opportunities will be offered.

43% of FRSs responded that they are already progressing this (3 stated they have this in place). For the remainder, while responding 'no' to implementing this strategy, the detailed response indicated that was because it was already in hand rather than rejected. The strategy was therefore effectively supported.

Fire and Rescue Services should explore the greater use of flexible working arrangements which may also assist with improving e.g. the bottle neck at Station Manager level given the extent of on-call commitment which for some may conflict with caring responsibilities.

Most services are positive about taking this on board and 14% have this in place or are currently implementing / progressing this. A small number stated they could not do so, for individually given reasons. A number felt the on-call commitment of the role at Station Manager level is role specific – and thus a genuine occupational requirement. But it may be that austerity and cuts at manager levels are affecting leeway in this area.

Retention

Introduction of a national media campaign as set out under 'recruitment' should ensure that recruits are fully aware of the work of the service and the part they will play in that. Therefore they should not become disappointed or disengaged as they progress in their career. Note: This recommendation is included here for completeness. However it is recognised that this is something to largely be progressed on a national level initially. Therefore the questions under (i) below have been amended accordingly.

This was supported. FRSs would like to see a consistency of approach resulting in applicants having a greater understanding of the role of the firefighter at the outset. Some referenced their answers to Recruitment recommendation (i) and again noted there may be particular challenges with retained duty system employees.

Fire and Rescue Services should ensure that expectations around fitness levels are clearly explained, and support provided, including the potential impact of female only issues such as maternity or the menopause.

This was supported. Many FRSs said they offer bespoke advice to candidates and existing personnel whether or not operational. FRSs are / will be looking at guidance around breastfeeding and support to female staff around the menopause, with input from female operational staff and union representatives. It was also noted that there is a degree of partnership working with other blue light services, NFCC, ACAS, or even in one case the local university. Reviews are taking place on fitness in an ageing workforce.

As with recruitment and progression, Fire and Rescue Services should explore greater use of flexible working arrangements.

49% of FRSs are implementing or currently progressing flexible working policies with all those who replied 'yes' to this implementing by the end of 2019.

Where Fire and Rescue Services do not already conduct exit interviews they should now do so. The outcomes from such interviews should be recorded and monitored to ensure early identification of any themes which can then be resolved for the future.

This recommendation had a positive response. With the exception of 1 FRS that did not respond on this point, all FRSs support this strategy. 45% have this in place or are currently progressing.

Fire and Rescue Services should consider how best to maintain the interest and commitment of employees through the variety of the work undertaken within the role.

On the whole this strategy was supported. A very small minority said this would not be taken forward at this time. Examples given was the expanding work within communities, volunteer opportunities working with young people on the Firebreak scheme or Princes Trust programmes. This included RDS employees. One FRS commented that it is an Investors in People Gold Award winner with "Champion Status".

Detailed survey response

The Inclusive Fire Service Group set out a number of general strategies at the start of its report. A number of specific strategies were then included in the document. FRSs were asked to indicate whether they would be acting upon a strategy and, if so, within what timescale, the improvement expected to be seen and by when. The summary of each section is shown below.

(i) Inclusivity should be embedded in every aspect of the fire and rescue service

All responses agreed that inclusivity should be embedded in every aspect of the fire and rescue service. The table below shows there are more timescales quoted than there were responses. This is because some FRSs chose to list more than one description of how the strategies will be taken forward and gave timescales accordingly.

Table reflecting timescales as to when this strategy will be taken forward - point (i)

Timescales	FRS numbers
Currently takes place	31
By end 2017	10
By end 2018	8
By end 2019	1
By end 2020	4
By end 2021	1
By end 2022	4

In this section, many Fire and Rescue Services also highlighted their successes and action points in this area. A significant number, as illustrated in the table above, have been working on inclusivity for a while. The positive action taken includes the commonalities below:

- Speaking with community leaders
- Positive action with the community on recruitment/barriers to recruitment
- Training for staff: unconscious bias, equality and diversity training – for councillors also
- HR monitor bullying and harassment
- FRSs are aligning their values with the NFCC
- FRSs are revising their IRM
- Unions are involved in implementing change
- The use of inclusion champions / inclusion officer
- Staff cultural surveys are undertaken
- Implementation of strategies – such as inclusion, people strategy, EDI
- There was mention of the LGA Memo of Understanding and the 21st Century FRS
- Implementation of equality assessments and frameworks
- Staff forums on equality and diversity
- Cross-FRS work on improvement in this area
- Partnership work with health groups and emergency services to share learning
- Mental health support
- Focused teams on this subject area such as: E&I Leadership teams, equality steering groups
- The CFO, councillor and / or members of the local community together working to break down barriers
- The use of guest speakers for FRS colleagues

One FRS mentioned Stonewall Champions and another advised that it has a structured ten-year inclusion plan.

(ii) There is a need for visible senior ownership and leadership - to lead by example and to ensure that local strategies and initiatives become reality on the ground, thereby embedding inclusion as the norm. Within a service this should be at chief officer level. Within a fire authority a specific member of the authority should hold the portfolio.

All responses agreed that there is a need for visible senior ownership and leadership. The table below shows there are more management and authority leads quoted than there were responses. This is because some FRSs chose to list more than one officer lead. Other leads such as Equality / Diversity Champions, Heads of Organisational Development, Area Managers and E&D Steering Groups were also mentioned by many in *addition* to the management and authority leads. Further details on these are discussed below.

Table reflecting management and authority leads as given for point (ii)

Management / authority lead	FRS numbers
CFO	36
DCFO	14
ACO / ACFO	8
Member / Mayor	29*
Other leads and teams	28

** An additional 20 responses referred to the Fire Authority/Board more generally

The answers in this section also reveal that a number of FRSs are *additionally* using leads other than the Chief Officer, Deputy Chief Officers and members. There are other departments and officers involved:

- Equality / Diversity Champions
- Groups focused on this area: Corporate Equality Group
- Directors and Heads of Department (of Transformation, Corporate Services, Communications, Organisational Development, HR)
- Area Manager, Area Commander
- Steering groups have trade union representation
- District Commander involved in positive action at a local level

(iii) Union involvement should be recognised as an important factor in delivering improvement, particularly in respect of peer to peer involvement.

All responses agreed that Union involvement should be recognised as an important factor in delivering improvement, particularly in respect of peer to peer involvement.

Table reflecting timescales as to when this will be taken forward - point (iii)

Timescales	FRS numbers
Currently takes place	45
By end 2017	3
By end 2018	1
By end 2019	0
By end 2020	0
By end 2021	0
By end 2022	0

There was a wide breadth of work being done jointly with union representatives including:

- Trade unions are involved in meetings and decisions on inclusion issues
- Learning from bullying and harassment cases is addressed together with union involvement
- Representative bodies are consulted in shaping strategies, policies, staff surveys and action plans
- Representative bodies may be involved in equality / inclusion focused groups
- There are joint forums (on equality, disability, LGBT for example)with representative bodies, staff and senior management
- Discussions have taken place with union members on fitness policy (including female specific issues)
- Peer to peer involvement – on events / activities
- Union representatives have been active in staff or community events such as Northern Pride, Dyslexia Awareness, Black History Month, International Women’s Day and LGBT History
- Union representatives are involved in training and additionally the feedback on this

Additional points included:

- One FRS had a trade union secondment into a day duty role to improve communications and employee relations
- Another FRS mentioned that discussions had taken place with unions around absence policy in terms of transgender employees and elective surgery
- There was also mention in this section of exploration of training opportunities via the FBU on mental health, ED&I awareness and sign language
- Another FRS noted the FBU Learning Centre for delivery of in-house training
- Six FRSs mentioned timelines on meetings to monitor equality, diversity and inclusion. These take place monthly, between 6-12 weeks or yearly
- One FRS was not aware of any firefighters who are members of either the FBU or RFU. Some work may cross over with their airport firefighters who are members of Unite and the FRS will engage and consult with unions where relevant
- One FRS mentioned that a number of middle and senior managers had completed postgraduate certificates in industrial relations

(iv) Fire and Rescue Services should ensure the workplace is fit for purpose for all groups of employees including correct Personal Protective Equipment and gender specific station and fireground facilities.

All responses agreed that Fire and Rescue Services should ensure the workplace is fit for purpose for all groups of employees. The table below shows there are more timescales quoted than there were responses. Again, as with (i), some FRSs chose to list more than one description of how the points will be taken forward and gave timescales accordingly.

Table reflecting timescales as to when this strategy will be taken forward - point (iv)

Timescales	FRS numbers
In progress / current	39
By end 2017	2
By end 2018	8
By end 2019	3
By end 2020	2
By end 2021	0
By end 2022	0

Recognising the need in some cases to do more, FRSs made reference to a number of positive actions taking place, in respect of PPE and fireground facilities, which included:

- In many cases present PPE has been reviewed or is under review
- In some FRSs the provider measures all operational firefighters individually
- Station facilities to have gender specific toilet, shower and changing facilities and/or single pod to ensure privacy
- Workplaces audited regularly with reviews and health / wellbeing action plans to address ageing workforce, musculoskeletal problems, absence issues and mental health
- Staff uniform surveys to assess needs
- People Impact Assessments at start of any research or procurement of new equipment or developing property or facilities solutions
- A welfare vehicle or unit to cater for and maintain dignity on the incident ground
- Provision of standing desks if needed and lifts for accessibility
- Staff have access to a baby-changing or breastfeeding area
- Staff have access to a prayer room
- Female firefighters, Women in the Fire Service and FBU Women's representatives to be involved in implementing change
- There is a large PPE project underway in the South East region and rigorous trials have taken place in order to choose an appropriate supplier.

Action points to take forward in this area included:

- To look at flexible working arrangements
- To consider EDI issues within each review of existing equipment or workwear as well as new
- Provision of female specific PPE
- Contract arrangements with the county council on showers/toilets at larger protracted incidents
- Staff support network for people with a disability, long-term health conditions or who are carers.
- Investment in training to cover E&D issues and any related employment law matters
- Increasing the number of toilets specifically for women
- Provide a breastfeeding area
- Appropriate language signage and heightened visibility of room and privacy provisions for staff
- Partnership working with other emergency services to identify fireground needs

A small number of FRSs mentioned that their on-call stations need improvement in terms of catering for a diverse workforce, with one stating that their on-call stations have mixed-gender toilet facilities and mostly no separate changing areas. Locker facilities are planned for these. Cost was a factor in upgrading but the stations are being reviewed on a case by case basis to refurbish or replace them.

Promoting an inclusive culture

The majority of FRSs agreed that the strategies in this section would be taken forward. The table below illustrates the numbers across the board.

Table reflecting whether to be taken forward – points (i)-(vii)

Will be taken forward Y / N							
	i	ii	iii	iv	v	vi	vii
Yes	48	48	47	45	46	45	45
No	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Not applicable	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
Not answered	0	1	1	3	3	2	2

(i) Fire and Rescue Services should ensure that all managers are trained in people management including skills such as how to have difficult conversations and that all managers recognise their responsibilities in promoting an inclusive culture.

FRSs are implementing or currently progressing a number of initiatives including:

- People management / soft skills training for new and current managers / Chief Fire Officer
- Difficult conversation training for all staff
- Learning and Development strategies revised to encompass national strategies and reviews
- A focus on continuous development and measurement of the impact
- Equality and inclusion training for elected members
- Managers support Allies and Champions schemes
- The PDR process should include discussion and objectives on inclusion issues
- Cultural confidence training for Watch Managers and equivalent
- Collaboration with other blue light services, e.g. RNLI
- E-learning packages in existence
- Training for managers as included within the competency framework
- Succession planning to enable future managers to have the skills and attributes to lead and manage people to create an inclusive culture
- Employees actively involved in creating / revising new core values
- Feedback from staff surveys to inform manager training
- External training providers – Stonewall (unconscious bias), ACAS, MIND, Department of Health

One FRS referred to working with Innovation Central this year, to develop workshops and resources to support and develop the skills of both operational and non-operational managers in having difficult conversations.

Expected improvements include:

- Discipline and grievances dealt with informally at local management level where appropriate
- Fewer informal and formal disciplinary cases
- Managers better equipped to support staff
- Staff feel more valued and confident their manager will address issues appropriately
- Managers to recognise their responsibility to promote a more inclusive culture
- Recruitment of a more diverse workforce
- Improved employee morale – measured by staff survey
- More harmony in the workplace
- Issues dealt with at an early stage – less escalation

On qualifications, one FRS aims to have all staff with a Level 2 certificate in Equality and Diversity. Another is enrolling a number of senior managers on CIPD level 5 and level 7 qualifications.

(ii) Senior managers should lead by positive example. They should challenge bullying and harassment behaviours at every level, ensuring where necessary that management styles change in order to drive a different and improved culture.

In this section respondents have used wording such as ‘they have a culture of challenge already’; wish to ‘promote a culture of challenge’ or ‘all managers have a responsibility to challenge’. Some responses expressed there is a ‘need to challenge’ or that managers are ‘expected to challenge’. Some suggested managers should encourage others to do so too, or they should develop the skills to do so. Two responses said that bullying and harassment is challenged at every level. A further two FRSs said that manager ‘styles need to change’ in order to drive change. One FRS is implementing a Standards document to state that managers must challenge the unacceptable, and another wishes to have recorded evidence of challenge. One FRS stated it had a zero tolerance to bullying and harassment.

FRSs are implementing or have in progress:

- Training - unconscious bias, emotional intelligence, self-awareness
- Promotion processes include questions on manager role in changing culture and challenging inappropriate behaviour and supporting evidence required
- Review how to record and monitor informal issues and action taken to aid wider learning and consistency of approach. Discipline and grievance policy may be aligned with the county council
- Policy in place on bullying and harassment and key staff whose role it is to support employees in understanding the policy
- External facilitator to chair focus groups
- Employee voice groups
- Succession planning to enable future senior managers to have the correct skills and attributes to ensure bullying and harassment is challenged at every level
- Action plans strengthened by partnership working with trade unions

Expected common improvements are below:

- Reductions in bullying and inappropriate behaviour – can be monitored via staff survey / cultural audit
- Increased manager competence and accountability, and a staff perception of fair treatment to all
- Reduction in discipline and grievance cases and a more informed workforce on bullying and harassment
- Positive cultural shift
- Improved diversity
- Improved staff morale, engagement and wellbeing
- More challenge at all levels
- Staff to be aware of impact of negative behaviour
- Improved organisational performance and effectiveness
- A learning culture embedded that promotes fairness, trust and open information sharing.
- Managers understanding needs and differences of staff and the local communities

One FRS made reference to Kouzes and Posner’s five core leadership practices, which is based on an inclusive, integrated and social leadership model. One practice described is “challenge the process” which asks colleagues to take action in a number of ways not always accepting the status quo and to think differently and accept difference and challenge.

(iii) Fire and Rescue Services should promote a culture where challenge is accepted and welcomed as a positive contribution. This should be in both directions.

Common findings show that FRSs are implementing or currently progressing:

- Whistleblowing policy and the communication of this to employees
- Communication channels as a two-way process via information cascade, station or team visits, consultations – a focus on “one team” or “employee voice”
- Staff support networks on the intranet
- Existing open forums to air staff views, for example: Breakfast with the Chief, Brew with the Boss, trade union meetings, Working Together
- Key focus / steering groups on ED&I and recruitment of an Engagement Lead
- Staff behaviours agreed by all staff including seeking and acting on feedback

- IRMP survey and workshops to engage with staff and gain multiple perspectives
- Suggestion system for staff to give their ideas
- Development of two-way suggestion / action schemes e.g. “you said we listened” scheme

FRSs expect the following improvements:

- Reduction in blame-culture
- Greater transparency
- Anonymous staff surveys to monitor impacts
- Continuous improvement
- Improved organisational performance and effectiveness
- Encouragement of individuality
- Inappropriate behaviour to be challenged

(iv) Fire and Rescue Services should ensure that all employees are aware of, and understand, the relevant policies. Where an incident is reported and found to be accurate it is important that action is taken and is seen to be taken as a result. Everyone needs to be confident in the process.

One FRS said research within its service had identified more needs to be done to ensure all staff feel confident in the processes. Their last survey had shown that 71% of staff were confident so there is room for improvement. Another service felt their staff confidence in the process was low and are now reviewing all relevant policies. A number of services made reference to their Dignity at Work policies to ensure that individuals have the confidence to deal with and challenge bullying and harassment without fear of ridicule or reprisals. Policies are being reviewed or training is being undertaken where a policy is in place. Staff surveys are used in a number of FRSs to gain feedback on how staff feel.

FRSs are currently progressing or implementing these action points:

- Recruitment of an Engagement Lead / Inclusion and Diversity Lead to ensure the culture is embedded
- Reference to policies is part of the mandatory training for staff and referred to in development programmes
- HR monitors trends on case studies so as to learn from these
- Policies available on intranet and via tablets and mobile phones
- A consultation process with all staff / trade unions to comment on draft papers
- Policies transparent via newsletters and campaigns
- Staff briefing sessions undertaken

FRSs' expected improvements include these commonalities:

- Events should be used to learn from and share as case studies in training and to raise awareness amongst staff of how such matters are addressed. Obtain confidential feedback from employees to assess where progress can be made.
- Staff to have better awareness / confidence of processes, relevant policies and sources of support
- Learning organisation – a cultural shift
- Greater transparency
- Understanding of policies can be monitored via team meetings and appraisals
- Support and policies for under-represented groups
- Improvement can be monitored via staff surveys and exit interviews

(v) Fire and Rescue Services should monitor the use of discipline and grievance procedures in order to identify and correct any problematic trends. This should also include an element of monitoring at the informal level in order to pick up issues at an early stage.

FRSs are implementing the following actions:

- To review communications to ensure staff awareness of the importance of raising issues (to prevent escalation) – staff to be involved in an action plan
- Ongoing monitoring for trends including around protected characteristics – by HR or Wellbeing Support (the latter at an informal level)
- Learning from case studies to be used in workshops
- To improve the collation of data for analysing patterns / trends

- The Inclusion and Diversity Lead to work with managers if unacceptable behaviour is identified – and to use a bespoke approach.
- Union representatives to be involved in looking at mechanisms to monitor at an informal level

One FRS mentioned they would be looking to the IFSG to help identify areas for standardised monitoring indicators.

A summary of expected improvements are:

- Issues are dealt with promptly
- A reduced need for formal action
- Staff feel safe and supported in raising concerns
- Staff able to raise complaints but the numbers being low due to having a healthy workplace
- Managers to have the confidence to deal with conflict
- People who raise challenge to be supported
- Improved staff morale and performance
- Managers to have increased competence and management of performance
- To have policies and support for under-represented groups

(vi) Fire and Rescue Services should consider the creation of trained Equality and Diversity champions. These are voluntary roles based on enthusiasm and commitment and irrespective of seniority. Champions play a central role in actively supporting the mainstreaming of equality and diversity initiatives and disseminating equality and diversity good practice, whilst also supporting the strategic development of initiatives to create an inclusive culture. Consideration should also be given to the role Allies can play. In relation to LGBT for example, ‘allies’ is a term used to describe heterosexual people who believe that lesbian, gay and bisexual people should experience full equality in the workplace and use their role within the organisation to create a culture that is inclusive of everyone.

FRSs were keen to take this area forward and many are currently implementing (as evidenced in the tables below this section) or taking on board the action points below:

- To implement the appointment and training for Allies and Champions (many were listed including Allies and Champions in LGBT, Fire Pride, Limitless Women’s Network, MIND Bluelight, Stonewall, mental wellbeing, disability awareness)
- An intranet page for Champions – to illustrate why become one and what support can be expected
- To collaborate with other blue light services who use Diversity Champions
- The ED&I forum can encourage enthusiasm in this area
- Senior managers to be an Inclusion Ally or Champion and to be involved with mentoring and challenge

One FRS did mention that they previously piloted the training of Inclusion mentors but over time the pool has declined and given the cost and resource intensive nature of training, a decision was taken to focus on best utilising members of the Equality Network as Champions.

Another FRS said they would not take this area forward as they had utilised Champions in the past but feel that responsibility sits with *all* staff and places this expectation on all to be accessible.

FRSs envisage the expected improvements below:

- Colleagues, particularly from under-represented groups will be supported
- Better retention of staff from under-represented groups
- Improved staff engagement and morale and thus performance
- Champions who represent a diverse workforce
- Greater challenge on policy and practice.
- More involvement in equality impact assessment
- Cultural change
- Reduction in grievances and mental health absences measured against past benchmarks

(vii) Fire and Rescue Services should also consider the creation of mediators (and may wish to consider whether they should be provided externally as well as internally).

A number of FRSs stated they have access to mediators in place. A majority said they would take this area forward and that they agreed with this improvement strategy, except for 1 service which said it would consider this for the future. Another answered this point as a “No” as they have this already in place. Therefore they do actually support such a strategy.

Below is a summary of the common findings:

- Relevant HR policies have information on mediation and managers are aware of the process
- Some FRSs use ACAS training for staff. FRSs stated they had access to mediators such as trained internal mediators, or regional approaches to mediation are monitored through the Bluelight HRD Collaboration Group. There are reciprocal arrangements with partner organisations, mediators from across the Council, and mediators available in Serco.
- External experience is sourced if / when greater skills are needed

Expected outcomes for this strategy are below:

- Improved management of performance
- Improved staff morale, relationships and performance
- Resolution of disputes and grievances without the need for formal or legal interventions
- Staff feel they are able to access support when required
- Reduction in mental health absences – to measure against past benchmarks
- A better working environment
- Confidence that issues are addressed at an early stage before they escalate

Tables for this section

The table on timescales for taking the area forward shows there are more timescales quoted than there were responses. This is because a small number of FRSs chose to list more than one description of how the points will be taken forward and gave timescales accordingly.

Table reflecting the timescale for taking these areas forward, from points (i) – (vii)

	Promoting an inclusive culture – timescales to take the area forward						
	i	ii	iii	iv	v	vi	vii
In place	6	6	7	10	13	6	21
In progress / current	15	19	19	15	17	16	10
By end 2017	6	3	3	4	3	7	4
By end 2018	21	14	12	8	10	11	5
By end 2019	6	2	3	3	1	3	2
By end 2020	0	1	1	2	0	1	1
By end 2021	2	1	0	0	1	0	0
By end 2022	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table reflecting the timescale for the improvement expected, from points (i) – (vii)

	Promoting an inclusive culture – improvement expected to result – by when						
	i	ii	iii	iv	v	vi	vii
In place	2	2	2	2	2	2	21
In progress / current	8	7	8	8	10	10	6
By end 2017	3	5	6	3	4	4	4
By end 2018	9	11	9	10	10	13	2
By end 2019	6	5	5	5	1	2	3
By end 2020	3	3	0	2	0	0	1
By end 2021	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
By end 2022	1	1	1	0	1	1	0

Recruitment

Most responses agreed that the points in this section would be taken forward. The table below illustrates the numbers across the board.

Table reflecting whether to be taken forward – points (i)-(vi)

Will be taken forward Y / N						
	i	ii	iii	iv	v	vi
Yes	48	49	48	48	49	39
No	1	0	1	0	0	7
Not applicable	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not answered	0	0	0	1	0	3

(i) There should be a national media campaign covering the full range of the modern firefighter role (similar to the current Army campaign) and what the fire service does in order to inform perception. It should be supported by a website which would also include information on recruitment and potentially divert the interested person to their 'home' fire and rescue service; include information on selection (based on national guidance, not prescription) recognising that the skill set needs to be wider than operational ie people skills, and provide information on fitness requirements. This suggestion was seen, by far, as the most influential way to alter perceptions and improve diversity. It would be useful in terms of recruitment and retention. Recruitment because it would dispel the myth that the job is just about fighting fires and retention to avoid the job not living up to expectations. Note: This recommendation is included here for completeness (this was something to largely be progressed on a national level initially).

Given the need for national co-ordination, the response for this strategy did not require indication of a local timescale. All but one FRS agreed to support this strategy. The FRS who answered this question as a "no" said that a national campaign would not benefit them as they have unique challenges in terms of their overall community population being very low. Another FRS also noted that although they support the national campaign, they could not do so financially.

Some FRSs said they liked the concept of a link between the national campaign and local recruitment campaigns. They will use information websites and videos, career events, positive action in the local community and there is information sharing between services on recruitment ideas and materials – some FRSs are undertaking recruitment drives of this nature already, locally. One FRS is developing a 4 year marketing and communication strategy to identify their target audience.

A small number of services put forward their comments on the shaping of the national campaign. There was one suggestion that the national campaign could be actioned via the NFCC Workforce Committee, and there was also an offer to assist in a national campaign by another. A number of FRSs referred to the need for a campaign or at least a tailoring to the recruitment needs for retained firefighters as there are specific challenges there. There also needs to be a mindfulness to avoid duplication or conflict with local campaigns and to be inclusive where languages are concerned (a national campaign needs to be supportive of the requirement to meet the Welsh Language Standards). One FRS mentioned they had met with the Home Office to discuss a process overview and provide copies of their recruitment videos.

Expected improvements are as below:

- FRSs would see an increase in diversity in applicants and consequently of the workforce. One FRS stated they wished to see a minimum 10% increase in diversity of applicant within 2 years
- FRSs would have a more joined up approach / package to recruitment
- Barriers would be reduced at a local level
- Applicants would be better informed on the role of the firefighter and the wider roles available – myths dispelled
- Improvements can be monitored by data collation on applicants and monitoring deliverables through the IRMP
- A better age balance within the workforce
- Increased motivation and enthusiasm
- Greater resilience and flexibility

(ii) Fire and Rescue Services should explore, and where appropriate utilise, recruitment opportunities such as apprenticeships and cadets in order to increase diversity in the workforce.

All FRSs are taking this forward (one service did answer “Yes and No” because whilst they support this opportunity, they are unlikely to recruit in the near future due to financial savings needed or to support a cadet scheme but will consider options to support and work with local FRSs). Two more services made points about the financial constraints but support the benefits of the work. It was noted by another service that where the majority of staff are of the RDS, it is difficult to utilise apprenticeships as they cannot meet the terms of the apprentices.

A couple of services mentioned that their cadet or apprenticeship schemes do not feed into the recruitment process or that the cohorts do not necessarily enter firefighter roles. Nonetheless, this is still regarded as a beneficial way forward. Another benefit pointed out by a service was that a nationally recognised sector qualification would enhance the status of firefighting as a career of choice and this would be transferable.

A summary of the points is shown below. FRSs will be undertaking, or are currently progressing:

- To explore use of work experience and work placement schemes for under-represented groups
- Building upon links with schools and colleges including in diversity-rich areas – engaging with young people on interview techniques and employability for a role in a FRS
- Collaborating with other blue light services to explore schemes and ideas
- To have (or already have) an established cadet and / or apprenticeship scheme
- To be fully engaged in the national work being done around apprenticeship
- To link this to the young firefighters programme
- Plans for cadets and apprenticeship schemes are built into the IRMP
- To continue to use their links with the Princes Trust or Firebreak schemes
- To continue to implement and improve on their internal schemes – a number of services have achieved diverse cohorts on their programmes and continue to monitor this. There was also reference to opportunities via the Trailblazer scheme

The expected improvements are shown below:

- To have a more diverse workforce
- The schemes help develop citizenship
- These programmes will promote community development
- There would be an improved organisational image with the fire service as a career of choice
- Identification of barriers to a career in the fire service
- A better age balance of workforce
- Increased motivation in the workforce
- To have a larger recruitment pool
- Cohorts to enter roles as a firefighter or the wider roles within the fire service

(iii) Fire and Rescue Services should undertake greater and early engagement with specific communities/schools/colleges and not just when recruitment is on the horizon. This would further reinforce understanding of the role as it is today. This should utilise employee role models whilst being careful to maintain a balance with their core work.

The majority of FRSs support this strategy. Only two answered this question as a “No”. One service said they may do in future but they are currently unable to support greater and early engagement with specific communities, schools or colleges as they do not have staff regularly going into schools. They are working with other agencies to develop a new multi-agency schools team but there is not presently an agreement nor timescale for this. A second FRS who answered this question as “No” said they are not doing this as a specific workstream but it is included as a current prevention strategy and they made a positive note that they could do this and involve their employees in it - therefore effectively supporting this strategy.

One FRS mentioned that apprenticeships could ideally be extended for RDS firefighters. There is a 33hr minimum commitment but it could be achieved for the training and operational commitment if the development programme is looked at.

Common findings in the steps being taken (or that services currently have in place) are:

- A social media campaign including positive promotion by personnel from under-represented groups
- Work in communities to promote the RDS opportunities
- Use of data and profile tools and stakeholder groups to support recruitment and engagement of individuals into RDS
- Youth engagement schemes, supporting young people moving into independent living
- On fitness - working with schools to identify young people who would benefit from the physical activity
There was also mention of a plan to work with sports clubs / gyms to raise awareness
- Encouragement of crews to be more involved in the community and also to gain feedback from crews on how to support them in this
- To proactively target diverse areas of the community
- Job fairs, school and community events and potential to link with public sector university courses
- Working with other blue light services at events and schools / colleges and work around under-represented groups

Expected improvements showed commonalities such as:

- Increased diversity in the workforce
- Literature to depict a diverse operational workforce
- To have a more integrated strategy in the area of work
- A raised profile of the fire service at an early stage of career
- Identification of career barriers
- Potential to have community focus groups for under-represented and harder to access groups
- Maximisation of recruitment pool
- Better age balance of workforce
- Potential for use of young people in the fire service

(iv) Fire and Rescue Services should ensure they have visible family friendly working policies supported by a greater use of flexible working arrangements.

The majority of FRSs will take forward this strategy to ensure they have visible family friendly working policies supported by a greater use of flexible working arrangements. The one who answered this as “No” said that this currently exists in their service. They do recognise though that further publicity on this matter to the workforce and management would be beneficial.

One FRS indicated that it had a pipeline discussion with an external not-for-profit organisation who would be working with a FRS for the first time on flexible working accreditation. It would cover job design and requirements, flexible hours / patterns and that if it is effective, this may be something that other services may wish to explore.

Reference was also made to the Working Forward initiative, which supports pregnant women and new mothers in the workplace.

Commonalities and themes being taken forward in terms of visible family friendly working policies and greater use of flexible working arrangements are:

- A number of services have flexible working options in place or are currently making progress in this area
- Day crewing can assist with work-life balance / childcare
- To continue to review the existing flexible working procedures for effectiveness
- Involvement in reviewing policies and procedures - union representatives, HR, senior management
- More visibility and clarity on family friendly policies in place
- To review policy with other FRSs
- Job share arrangements – covering wholetime and RDS

Expected improvements to be seen are:

- Increased flexibility in working arrangements – leading to greater diversity in terms of recruitment and retention
- Work opportunities for under-represented groups – a more diverse workforce
- Increased staff morale
- Improved career options and pathways for current and future staff

(v) Fire and Rescue Services should develop an internal communications strategy to explain the difference between positive action and positive discrimination in order to counteract the view of some that an individual has only been employed/promoted because they are female/BME/LGBT. This would be supportive to such individuals and also be helpful in terms of encouraging progression.

All FRSs agreed to take this area forward. The commonalities in the action points are summarised below:

- Intranet resources and positive action statements to explain the differences
- Joint work on communications by senior management and union representatives
- Training and workshops – including unconscious bias
- Review of ADC and promotion process
- To encourage employees to challenge incorrect views and for this challenge to be accepted
- Cultural survey to inform change and success rates
- Confidential feedback from new recruits
- Use of staff handbook, recruitment literature, induction process, FAQs, campaigns
- Involvement from Champions and Equality & Diversity Officers
- Staff to promote the role beyond own social circles

The expected improvements that FRSs would expect to see include common themes such as:

- Increased understanding of positive action amongst workforce
- Improved relationship building in the workforce
- Benefits to community safety activities
- Benefits to recruitment – a more diverse workforce
- Positive action to be viewed as the “norm”
- Under-represented groups to have confidence that they are supported and that negative and unfounded perceptions are addressed

(vi) Fire and Rescue Services should consider commissioning work in their own areas to identify any obstacles that local communities feel there are to applying to work with the service.

39 out of 49 responses indicated FRSs would take this strategy forward. Upon analysis, services who said they would not take this forward, or who had specifically commented in this box indicated:

- Two had no plans to progress this at this time
- External commissioning will not be undertaken at this time...progress can be made via (the service) and partners (the council) to identify barriers
- Capacity to undertake this work is not available and will be done via service or volunteer led community engagement due to funding constraints
- That as part of the current recruitment campaign, they are looking into reasons that attracted the applicants. They will give the recommendation further thought but a national piece of research may be more beneficial than themselves repeating the exercise
- The current answer was “No” but this will be considered in advance of any targeted recruitment activities
- Will “consider as necessary”
- One did not give a reason

Positive action points in taking this strategy forward are summarised below:

- Positive action campaigns involving the local community and community leaders to increase FRS understanding of potential barriers
- Partnership with local groups - community radio interviews, hate-crime groups, regional equalities forums - to dispel myths, raise awareness and sense-check FRS perceptions on obstacles
- Social media campaign
- Work with other blue light services to broaden understanding
- Using market research companies / working with university students to identify obstacles
- Surveying unsuccessful applicants and identifying obstacles
- Working with the Council – sharing learning, looking into outreach work
- Focus groups to look at challenges and learning from this, and to take further action

One FRS referred to research and findings from “Future Thinking” commissioned by the London Fire Brigade in November 2016 which had provided a useful insight to attraction, recruitment and retention of female firefighters particularly.

Expected outcomes commonly included:

- Improved understanding of barriers and how these can be overcome
- A greater understanding of the needs of the community
- Increased number of women to enter operational roles
- Increase in applications for all job roles from a greater diversity of applicants

It was commonly understood that these actions would lead to improved community engagement and an understanding of community issues and could result in more diversity in recruitment.

Tables for this section

The table on timescales for taking the area forward shows there are more timescales quoted than there were responses. This is because a small number of FRSs chose to list more than one description of how the points will be taken forward and gave timescales accordingly.

Table reflecting the timescale for taking these areas forward, from points (i) – (vi)

	Recruitment - timescales to take the area forward					
	i (section set as N/A)	ii	iii	iv	v	vi
In place	-	4	4	10	9	4
In progress / current	-	16	16	13	12	11
By end 2017	1	4	4	5	7	5
By end 2018	1	9	8	14	13	4
By end 2019	-	5	3	1	0	4
By end 2020	-	3	5	1	2	2
By end 2021	-	0	0	0	0	1
By end 2022	-	0	0	0	0	0

2 FRSs in the above table mention timescales for taking forward point (i). One relates to local work being done, and another relates to the fact that one of their station managers is leading on the NFCC’s national re-branding workstream for on-call (RDS) firefighters.

Table reflecting the timescale for the improvement expected, from points (i) – (vi)

	Recruitment - improvement expected to result – by when					
	i	ii	iii	iv	v	vi
In place	-	0	1	1	1	0
In progress / current	-	4	5	5	4	6
By end 2017	-	4	2	2	3	0
By end 2018	2	6	3	5	6	3
By end 2019	2	2	0	3	1	2
By end 2020	0	1	3	2	2	1
By end 2021	0	0	0	0	0	0
By end 2022	0	0	0	0	0	0

Progression

The majority of responses supported the strategies, in some cases unanimously in this section. The table below illustrates the numbers across the board.

Table reflecting whether to be taken forward – points (i)-(iv)

Will be taken forward Y / N				
	i	ii	iii	iv
Yes	49	49	47	43
No	0	0	2	6
Not applicable	0	0	0	0
Not answered	0	0	0	0

(i) Fire and Rescue Services should ensure that promotion processes which are fair and transparent are applied consistently and clearly explained to all employees.

Fire and Rescue Services are implementing or progressing:

- HR being involved in the promotion processes to ensure fairness and transparency
- Review of processes and policies to identify barriers including for under-represented groups
Equality Impact Assessment on the career development procedure
- Career pathway for moving from firefighter to supervisory manager and beyond
- Feedback to candidates
- Use of temporary promotions
- Qualifications such as ILM courses for management roles, IFE exams
- Staff awareness - online recruitment system, station packs, staff handbooks
- Talent recognition and support, bespoke / individual coaching
- Union involvement in review of the promotion processes
- A panel or assessment board to ensure there is a fair process for promotion– and unconscious bias training is given to all selection panel members or assessors. The panel may consist of staff from across the service and will include HR. One FRS mentioned a tri-service collaboration for assessment, development and training centres

One FRS mentioned use of the apprenticeship levy to create leadership development opportunities for existing and aspiring managers.

Expected outcomes for this section are:

- A reduction in appeals from applicants
- Increased confidence in the promotion processes
- A more engaged workforce
- The progression process benefits those who work to promotion, temporary or otherwise
- Improved competence of managers
- Increase in diversity of workforce – including in management roles
- Increased retention figures
- Improved morale of staff / reduced dissatisfaction
- Positive feedback from applicants

(ii) Fire and Rescue Services should develop support networks and meaningful mentor/coaching programmes. (Note - mentors/coaches do not need to come from the particular group eg a BME mentor for a BME crew manager).

All FRSs supported this strategy and the common findings are:

- Use of buddie, mentors, coaches including union involvement in establishing this
- Gathering of feedback from staff of the coaching / mentoring process
- New recruits and apprentices to have mentoring / coaching
- Continuous review of the processes
- Partnerships with other fire services, other emergency services, council, support networks
- Coaches and mentors may have a professional coaching qualification
- Coaching and mentoring embedded in policy
- Engagement with under-represented groups to find out what support is needed for new employees

One service has a pilot internship for graduates with a disability and this pilot is supported by mentors in the workplace

Expected improvements show commonalities in the outcomes such as:

- Better peer support – via action learning / facilitated development programmes
- Members of under-represented groups will feel better supported
- Improved retention of staff
- Interest in promotion opportunities
- Improved manager competency
- A more diverse workforce
- Improved staff morale
- A coaching “culture” and evaluation of this

(iii) Fire and Rescue Services should encourage interest in promotion in general and through talent spotting by including leadership training, opportunities for development such as job swaps, taster weeks and acting-up/temporary promotion (so that an individual can experience the different role). This should be underpinned by a fair and transparent policy which sets out clearly the criteria by which such opportunities will be offered.

This had a very positive reaction. 47 of the 48 responses supported this strategy. The one response of “No” was purely on a technicality because it was felt that this was in place already. Effectively therefore this was full support across the board.

A couple of FRSs in support of this area of work did point out that the opportunities for job swaps / taster weeks and similar are difficult for them due to tight resources. However, they intend to take this area forward although one of them made reference to making use of the apprenticeship levy for leadership development opportunities.

A summary of the commonalities in the findings are shown below:

- Ongoing monitoring of diversity of applicants for the promotion process
- Opportunities to develop through succession planning and talent management approaches, work shadowing, acting up, workshops, secondments, qualifications to gain.
- Apprenticeship opportunities for those already employed
- Support of the NFCC mentoring scheme
- Working with partner organisations (for example, the Police Women’s Network), national groups (AFSA, Women in the Fire Service, Stonewall), other blue light services
- Talent management or leadership frameworks
- Multi-tier entry

A summary of the themes found in the expected outcomes is as follows:

- Increased understanding of staff career aspirations to enable appropriate support to be allocated
- Staff to develop their self-confidence
- A more diverse workforce
- Trust and confidence by all in the promotion process
- More applications for promotion and development from across different levels
- Improved manager competency
- Improved diversity of the workforce at all levels and the breaking down of barriers – more women and people with BME backgrounds in management roles
- Increased retention rates
- Improved staff morale and enthusiasm

(iv) Fire and Rescue Services should explore the greater use of flexible working arrangements which may also assist with improving e.g. the bottle neck at Station Manager level given the extent of on-call commitment which for some may conflict with caring responsibilities.

All except 6 FRSs are supportive of this strategy. Comments from the 6 are shown below:

- One service said they do not have evidence this is a current issue for them
- Another stated - not at this time; discussion has taken place at senior management level and the FDO on-call commitment will need to remain for now but they will continue to discuss on a case by case basis any issues which may arise where personnel feel their ability to seek promotion is restricted or if there are performance difficulties in their current role
- One FRS said: No – the on-call commitment of the role at Station Manager level is role specific and a genuine occupational requirement – or the postholder would not be able to maintain operational competence in the role
- Three did not say why

A service which intends to take this forward made the point that there are difficulties in achieving flexible working practices alongside austerity and reduction in management posts. But this is kept under regular review to assess where changes can be made to be more inclusive.

For some FRSs, not every Station Manager is required to be on the flexi duty system rota, which may provide opportunities where on-call at this level is not required. But it was pointed out by one that this may pose a challenge of maintaining operational competence required for future promotion and so there will be further consideration of this. Another service said that their bottleneck is Crew Manager to Watch Manager due to service structure and pay.

Other positive points made included:

- An FRS which has a reform project assessing the ability to split operational and management time and creating a 24hr shift rota with the remaining positive hours flexible across the working week.
- An FRS with a flexible duty system for Watch Managers seeking promotion to enable them to gain the required skills through formal training and work shadowing. When they are promoted, they will be able to join the FDS immediately.

Of the 43 FRSs who provided a 'Yes' response, a summary of the commonalities is set out below:

- A day crew station may assist firefighters and junior officers to balance work and caring responsibilities
- Successful flexible working arrangements in place (as per the figures in the below table)
- Family-friendly policies in place – continuous review of these
- Continuous review of flexible working options and to include Station Manager roles and above
- 24 hour shift pattern for uniformed staff through local agreement
- Implementing and monitoring a RDS project to optimise the working model
- Flexible options for RDS staff - to work temporarily at another station or split day and night cover, or potential for more flexible contracts on an hourly rate rather than specific contractual hours
- Use of the council policy or model for options for staff
- Smart / agile working at different locations or opportunity to undertake activities in other roles
- Union in support of the specific local flexible working arrangements

The expected improvements can be summarised as follows:

- To attract, support and retain employees with caring responsibilities
- Staff to be more effective at work
- Improved staff morale
- To increase on-call recruitment and retention
- Better work-life balance all round
- Flexible working could attract a more diverse workforce

Tables for this section

The table on timescales for taking action forward shows there are more timescales quoted than there were responses. This is because a small number of FRSs chose to list more than one description of how the points will be taken forward and gave timescales accordingly.

Table reflecting the timescale for taking these strategies forward, from points (i) – (iv)

	Progression - timescales to take the area forward			
	i	ii	iii	iv
In place	6	4	3	6
In progress / current	14	16	18	14
By end 2017	11	9	4	1
By end 2018	9	11	10	11
By end 2019	3	6	7	6
By end 2020	2	1	1	1
By end 2021	0	1	0	0
By end 2022	0	0	0	0

Table reflecting the timescale for the improvement expected, from points (i) – (iv)

	Progression - improvement expected to result – by when			
	i	ii	iii	iv
In place	5	4	3	5
In progress / current	0	1	2	2
By end 2017	4	4	2	0
By end 2018	3	3	10	4
By end 2019	3	2	4	5
By end 2020	3	3	3	2
By end 2021	0	0	0	0
By end 2022	0	0	0	0

Retention

The majority of responses supported the strategies in this section. The table below illustrates the numbers across the board.

Table reflecting whether to be taken forward – points (i)-(v)

	Will be taken forward Y / N				
	i	ii	iii	iv	v
Yes	43	49	45	48	45
No	0	0	1	0	2
Not applicable	0	0	0	0	0
Not answered	6	0	3	1	2

(i) Introduction of a national media campaign as set out under ‘recruitment’ should ensure that recruits are fully aware of the work of the service and the part they will play in that. Therefore they should not become disappointed or disengaged as they progress in their career. Note: This recommendation is included here for completeness. However it is recognised that this is something to largely be progressed on a national level initially. Therefore the questions under (i) below have been amended accordingly.

A small number of FRSs repeated statements on the positive local work they are doing, as mentioned under Recruitment. However, some added extra information in this section as below:

- Local work using the involvement of female firefighters and the intention of a “buddy” scheme
- Taster sessions for under-represented groups

- Staff satisfaction measurable by staff surveys and exit interviews
- The perception of the retained firefighter role as it used to be, is detrimental to the retention of them

In this area, it was recognised that although this will need national co-ordination FRSs could state their expected outcomes. These are summarised below:

- An increase in applicants with greater understanding of the changing role of the firefighter (education, emergency medical response)
- Local campaigns linked in with the national work – for wholetime and RDS
- Increased recruitment levels
- Stability and retention particularly across the RDS workforce as there are challenges associated with a full understanding of this
- Better retention rates particularly during the first few years
- Greater satisfaction in the workforce
- A more joined up recruitment process
- Reduce barriers at a local level
- More diversity in the workforce
- Greater staff morale and increased engagement as people will have a clearer concept of the nature of the role – attracting the right skill and mind-set
- A greater understanding of the workforce amongst staff in different uniformed and non-uniformed roles and the opportunities available

(ii) Fire and Rescue Services should ensure that expectations around fitness levels are clearly explained, and support provided, including the potential impact of female only issues such as maternity or the menopause.

This improvement area was welcomed by all. 49% of Fire and Rescue Services provided a detailed response on fitness in general referring to bespoke training and advice (including to address female only issues), the use of (or planned use of) a fitness adviser to tailor to individuals, regular workshops and monitoring or promoting awareness of fitness to all staff. Most of these FRSs were looking to (or currently implementing) review of processes and the issue of guidance around maternity and breastfeeding. A number had done so with input from female operational staff or trade unions. 53% of FRSs described support to female staff.

Of the remainder of the responses, many mentioned review of policies aligning with national fitness standards and made points including those below.

FRSs are implementing or currently progressing:

- Implementation of new national fitness standards and procedures / the NFCC treadmill test which an FRS indicated had been proven not to be gender biased
- Bespoke advice to candidates and existing personnel from a Fitness Advisor on cardiovascular exercises and strength training – use of social media, videos and practical demonstrations – buddying, open evenings to try out the tests
- Maintaining contact with applicants from under-represented groups who did not meet the fitness requirements so they can be ready for the next campaign
- Review and assess impact of tests on under-represented groups and how barriers can be removed / minimised – identify trends and take action
- Review of processes and guidance around maternity and breastfeeding, with input from female operational staff
- Review fitness in an ageing workforce
- Address issues and support around menopause and the impact on retention of female staff including use of external support and internal focus groups
- Resources available via Occupational Health
- Use of an equality impact assessment
- Partnership working with other blue light services, ACAS, local university
- Working with trade unions to support this area of work
- Gyms at all stations, HQ, training centres and equipment purchased to increase diversity of training available to operational staff
- Mental wellbeing as tied in with physical fitness and the benefits of exercise

One Fire and Rescue Service said that consideration should be given to the future. Transwomen are potentially at risk of osteoporosis because of oestrogen taken during their life, and also consideration around menopause for transmen who have only socially changed.

One FRS said that one of its female firefighters had used a post-natal fitness specialist and they will look into whether this support can be provided by the organisation in order to support other female firefighters.

Expected outcomes are summarised below:

- Increased numbers of applicants passing fitness tests – including from under-represented groups
- More support and advice available on fitness for existing staff / an ageing workforce
- Decrease in sickness absence
- The workforce to have a better understanding of fitness on the whole
- Better support to female staff - focused discussion and breaking down of stigma.
- Staff to be supported in fitness until retirement
- Improved PPE and on site facilities

(iii) As with recruitment and progression, Fire and Rescue Services should explore greater use of flexible working arrangements

49% of services have embedded or are implementing this currently. Many use ongoing reviews of policy to ensure this is properly in place and fit for purpose. One FRS made reference to developing a 'Carer's Leave' procedure. FRSs also mentioned ongoing discussion with female operational firefighters, a flexible working panel or discussions with union representatives to ensure procedures support staff. Reference was also made to support a 'Dying to Work' campaign. Other mechanisms to support flexible working include jobshare (including for retained roles), other leave, enhanced leave, career break, flexible retirement. Three FRSs mentioned extension of support around flexible working to RDS.

FRSs are implementing or currently progressing the below, with a number of them referring to their answers from an earlier section on Recruitment in point (iv):

- Flexible working policies in place or planned
- Flexible working arrangements embedded in strategies and policies. One FRS notes expectant, new and nursing mothers to have reasonable work adjustments and access to private rest areas
- To continue to monitor working arrangements
- Engagement with internal focus groups to inform learning and make changes – gender forum, female operational firefighters
- Other options also available – jobshare (including for retained roles), other leave, enhanced leave, career break, flexible retirement
- Partnership working with trade unions

One Service answered this question as "No" unless there is a change to national CoS (but did not provide an explanation). They said they have flexible working arrangements in place and that discussion had taken place at senior management level and the Flexible Duty Officer on-call commitment will need to remain for now. They would continue to discuss on a case by case basis any issues which may arise.

Expected outcomes are summarised below:

- Removal or minimisation of potential barriers caused by working arrangements
- Attract, support and retain staff with caring responsibilities
- Improves staff morale
- To have a more diverse workforce
- A better work-life balance for the workforce
- More potential for promotion opportunities
- Reduction in absence levels
- More understanding of retention issues around on-call firefighters

(iv) Where Fire and Rescue Services do not already conduct exit interviews they should now do so. The outcomes from such interviews should be recorded and monitored to ensure early identification of any themes which can then be resolved for the future.

A number of FRSs (as per the table below) are conducting exit interviews or are progressing this area:

- An exit process can include a questionnaire (online options were quoted as available by some) and option for interview with a range of managers / CFO
- Information obtained is used for future learning – trends are analysed and trigger interventions used (some services with quarterly reporting on trends) and involvement in the process is through HR, Service Management Boards and Heads of Department (the latter to understand trends for leavers)
- Review of exit questionnaire and process – to ensure it is fit for purpose
- Review of the exit process to ensure equality and fairness is embedded

Of those who already conduct exit interviews a small number felt that they could do more to record or analyse the findings.

One FRS said they have recently appointed an Improvement Manager for RDS and as part of their role, they will be conducting a survey amongst RDS leavers.

Expected outcomes are summarised below:

- A culture where issues are openly raised during employment
- Ongoing improvement of people policies and processes
- Increased awareness of employee issues
- Understand, improve and address perceived and actual organisational issues, barriers and cultural issues
- To have a better understanding as to why staff leave (including those on RDS)
- Better retention rates

(v) Fire and Rescue Services should consider how best to maintain the interest and commitment of employees through the variety of the work undertaken within the role.

On the whole this was embraced with enthusiasm. However the joint response FRSs said this would not be taken forward at this time. They did not explain further. . The majority of FRSs are implementing the below:

- Encouraging staff to take on wider responsibilities to increase job satisfaction – can also be done as pilots and can lead to career progression
- Wider work can extend into the community – such as volunteer opportunities working with young people on the Firebreak scheme or Princes Trust programmes, road safety partnership
- Internal professional development opportunities includes being a Champion, mentoring, doing co-responding work, being a TRiM practitioner or being a coach on a firesetter programme or gain qualifications
- Review of existing opportunities and career pathways
- Asking viewpoints from staff: focus group for sharing ideas, suggestion schemes, sounding boards, staff cultural surveys to understand more depth on this subject / ADC review from all employees
- Opportunities for RDS staff (including on co-responding work)
- RDS to work alongside wholetime counterparts and to cover specific areas of work rather than just incident response
- Apprentices spend time in key departments to enable holistic understanding of the firefighter role and opportunities for progression / specialism
- Rewards and recognition schemes – one FRS advised that they are an Investors in People Gold Award winner with “Champion Status”

An FRS made reference to use of “One Team Value”. For example, the recent high rise reassurance work following the Grenfell Tower fire was done by a cross-section of the workforce. Staff were encouraged to support fire crews and community teams and given time from their other roles.

Another made referenced to exploring a model used by Kent FRS - if it is your idea, progress it, and you will be supported.

Expected outcomes are summarised below:

- Staff feel valued, within themselves and to the community and organisation
- More staff engagement and motivation
- Increased retention of all staff – several services noted for RDS in particular
- Increased utilisation of a talented workforce
- Broadening staff skills set
- Resilience in the workforce
- Attracting a range of applicants to a varied and interesting career option

One CFO holds a monthly “birthday forum” where staff whose birthday falls in that month are invited to an open forum to ask questions directly and hear the latest views and messages. Thus, over a twelve month period, all staff have been invited.

Tables for this section

The table on timescales for taking these areas forward shows there are more timescales quoted than there were responses. This is because a small number of FRSs chose to list more than one description of how the points will be taken forward and gave timescales accordingly.

Table reflecting the timescale for taking these strategies forward, from points (i) – (v)

	Retention - timescales to take the area forward				
	i (section is NA)	ii	iii	iv	v
In place	-	3	6	8	5
In progress / current	-	19	18	14	16
By end 2017	-	11	5	7	6
By end 2018	-	4	8	6	4
By end 2019	-	3	2	2	4
By end 2020	-	1	0	1	1
By end 2021	-	0	0	0	0
By end 2022	-	0	0	0	0

Table reflecting the timescale for the improvement expected, from points (i) – (v)

	Retention - improvement expected to result – by when				
	i	ii	iii	iv	v
In place	0	0	2	3	2
In progress / current	0	2	1	2	0
By end 2017	2	5	1	3	0
By end 2018	2	5	5	6	6
By end 2019	2	3	1	1	3
By end 2020	0	2	2	1	5
By end 2021	0	0	0	0	0
By end 2022	0	0	0	0	0