

**FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES RECRUITMENT
TARGETS - UPDATE**

Report Of The Chief Fire Officer

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1. Purpose of Report

This report is in response to the request of the October 2001 Select Committee to be updated on Fire and Rescue Service performance against equality targets.

2. Summary

- 2.1 This report updates Members on progress the Fire Service has made against the recruitment targets for women and people from ethnic minority communities set by the Fire Service Inspectorate since the last report in October 2001. In addition, at the request of members, it provides a profile of the non-uniformed workforce by gender, ethnicity and disability.
- 2.2 Members will note from the report that progress against targets in the equalities arena is a long term process. Positive Action initiatives, both in-house and with specialist partners, are underway and their effectiveness will be reviewed once a full recruitment campaign is completed.
- 2.3 Data is submitted regularly to the County Equal Opportunities Strategy Group. In addition, the Equal Opportunities Panel publishes in depth reports of performance across the various County Council departments.

3. Conclusion

Members are invited to decide whether or not to undertake further scrutiny of this issue.

1. Background

- 1.1 Members will be aware that following a directive from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services and the Home Office Thematic Review into Equality and Fairness in the Fire Service during 1999, recruitment targets for women and people from ethnic minorities were set for the Service. These targets have neither been endorsed nor changed by DTLR.
- 1.2 The targets set for Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service are:

Table 1: **Recruitment Targets for Women Firefighters**

	1 April 2002	1 April 2004	1 April 2009
% of workforce	4% (34)*	9% (76)	15% (127)

Table 2: **Recruitment Targets for Ethnic Minority Firefighters and Command and Control staff**

	1 April 2002	1 April 2004	1 April 2009
% of workforce	1.16% (10)	1.9% (16)	5% (43)

(* The figures in brackets indicate actual number of personnel)

- 1.3 In addition the Service has a corporate target for the recruitment of people with disabilities into non-uniformed roles and for maintaining that proportion of staff. This is as follows;

Table 3: **Recruitment Targets of People with Disabilities (Non-uniformed)**

	1 April 2002	1 April 2004
% of workforce	3% (4)	3%(4)

2. Progress Against Uniformed Targets

- 2.1 The current workforce profile is based on 831 firefighters and 27 command and control staff;

Table 4: **Women Firefighters**

Actual	2002 Target	Variance
1.7% (14)	4% (34)	(2.3%) (20)

This is as reported in October 2001.

Table 5: **Ethnic Minority Staff in Uniformed Jobs**

Actual	2002 Target	Variance
1.28% (11)	1.16% (10)	0.12%

- 2.2 Since the last report the Service has not recruited any new firefighters nor have there been any leavers during this period. Consequently the number of women firefighters has remained the same. Positive Action initiatives have continued in various locations. The profile for ethnic minority staff in uniformed jobs includes both firefighters and command and control staff. Since the last report a staff member from an ethnic minority background has joined the Command and Control Centre thereby increasing the proportion by 0.12% compared to October 2001.
- 2.3 The Fire & Rescue Service is now in the middle of a firefighter recruitment campaign. The closing date for applicants who wish to be considered for the June 2002 training squad is 28 February 2002.

3. Current Recruitment Campaign

- 3.1 The October report highlighted that overall the Service has seen a steady increase in the number of women applying to be firefighters compared to the previous year (124 from 93) and the same in the number of ethnic minority applicants compared to the previous year (72 from 57).
- 3.2 In addition the report highlighted the following differences in performance between men and women;
- Higher success rates for women at the shortlisting stage when compared to men.
 - Significantly higher failure rates for women at the fitness testing stage when compared men.
 - Women having a 98% success rate at the interview stage.

With regard to differences in performance between white and ethnic minority applicants further analysis appeared to indicate comparable pass rates at all the stages between white and ethnic minority applicants.

- 3.3 To date 80 application forms have been received and the breakdown is as follows;

Table 6: **Breakdown of application forms received by 26 February 2002**

Total Applications	Male	Female
169 (100%)	161 (95.3%)	8 (4.7%)

Total Applications	White	Ethnic Minority
169 (100%)	161 (95.3%)	8 (4.7%)

- 3.4 To date the current proportion of applications received from ethnic minority applicants is 0.7% higher than reported in October 2001 and the current proportion of female applicants is 2.3% lower than reported in October 2001.
- 3.5 Based on previous experience the Personnel Department is predicting that of the 1000 application packs issued a total of 500 will be returned. Members may also find it helpful to note that at the point at which these snapshot figures were taken there was insufficient time for those individuals who attended the recruitment event in Watford to return their application forms. This may be significant as the Watford area has been heavily targeted for positive action work.

Consequently, until the closing date by which all applications must be received such provisional figures must be treated with extreme caution

4. Positive Action examples

- 4.1 The Service continues to take positive action to encourage interest and applications to be firefighters from women and people from ethnic minorities. These activities are aimed at both young people making career choices and those already in the labour market. Examples of activities to date include;
- Awareness days for people who are interested in finding out more about what a career in the Service involves before considering applying to the Service.
 - Workshops for women and people from ethnic minorities to receive targeted help in building their fitness and preparing for each of the elements of the recruitment process.
 - Filming of video footage to update careers information on a national Careers Information Database which is available in all Hertfordshire secondary schools.
 - Advertising in local and national sector magazines aimed at young women, people from ethnic minorities, young people making careers choices and careers advisors.
- 4.2 In addition the race equality ‘Connecting Communities’ project, in which the Service is a key partner is becoming a more important part of the Service’s positive action work. The project is currently in the consultation phase and is actively seeking views from ethnic minority communities about their view of the Service as an employer.

5. Profile of non-uniformed workforce

- 5.1 The figures below profile the non-uniformed workforce as at 15 February 2002.

Table 7

Total	Male	Female	White	Ethnic Minority	Ethnic origin not known	People with a disability
124 (100%)	44 (35.5%)	80 (64.5%)	119 (96.%)	2 (1.6%)	3 (2.4%)	3 (2.4%)

- 5.2 The Service is currently below its target of 3% for the recruitment of people with disabilities. With colleagues from other departments the Service aims to continuously improve the promotion of vacant jobs to people with disabilities. An example of this is the Service hosting a jobs fair for job seekers with disabilities at the training centre in Stevenage in the Summer of 2001.

6. Summary

- 6.1 A summary of the progress the Service has made against its 2002 recruitment targets is set out in table 8 below.

Table 8

Women Firefighters			Ethnic Minority Staff (Uniform)			Staff with Disabilities (Non-Uniform)		
Target	Actual	Variance	Target	Actual	Variance	Target	Actual	Variance
4%	1.7%	(2.3%)	1.16%	1.28%	0.12%	3%	2.4%	(0.6%)

7. Future Plans

- 7.1 The Service proposes to maintain its commitment to the positive action campaign and to identify ways to enhance it by considering the recommendations from the race equality consultation work when they are published.
- 7.2 In addition, via the County Equal Opportunities Strategy Group, the Service will work with the Recruitment Centre to find ways of encouraging people with disabilities to apply for vacant posts and to register themselves on the database.

8. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Background Papers used by the author when compiling this report

Report of Her Majesty's Inspector A R Currie – Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service – 14 – 15 February 2001.

Report to Community Information and Protection Select Committee 30 October 2001 item 7.