

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4 FEBRUARY 2013

1. **POSITIVE ACTION STRATEGY FOR RECRUITMENT, PROGRESSION AND RETENTION**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

THAT the Committee considers the current and future proposals for positive action initiatives.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To request that the Committee consider and comment on the positive action work of the Service and provide a strategic approach to positive action focusing on areas of recruitment, development and progression as well as strategies to improve retention.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) has as a key aim to ensure it has effective strategies embedded to support the Service in achieving equality outcomes for its diverse communities and workforce. It also seeks to ensure that its workforce is representative of the community that it serves.

The Equality and Diversity Report and Equality Objectives 2011-2015 provides a detailed overview with regard to the journey the Service has taken and its achievements. The Equality Objectives identify key areas of work to continue moving forward; one of which is Positive Action in recruitment and employment.

Under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010; West Midlands Fire Service has a positive duty to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and to promote different groups working together in its Employment and Service delivery activity'.

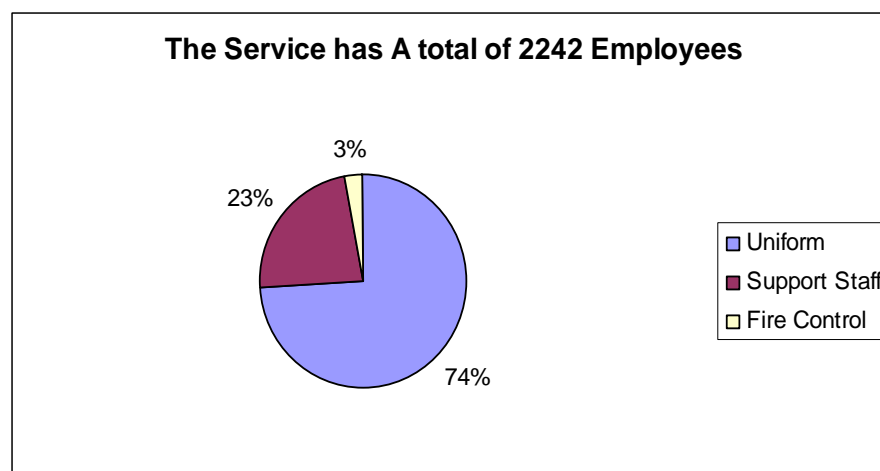
Also under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, S158, in broad terms the Service has the ability to take 'Positive Action' in areas of recruitment, development and retention; where under representation can be evidenced.

The law clearly distinguishes positive action from positive discrimination and the policy of WMFS is to consider all individuals based upon their merit.

3.2 **WORKFORCE EQUALITY PROFILE**

West Midlands Fire Service currently (as at 20 December 2012) employs 2242; of which 1655 (74%) are in Uniformed roles; 522 (23%) employees are in Support roles and 65 (3%) are in Fire Control.

3.2.1 **Current Profile**



The Service is made up of predominantly White British Males. There is under representation from other minority groups such as Black Minority Ethnic (BME) people, women and people with disabilities within the workforce and within management roles.

Gender

	All Staff	Uniform	Support	Fire Control
Male	1795	1582	211	2
Female	447	73	311	63
Total	2242	1655	522	65

80% of the workforce is male and 20% female. 60% of the women are in support staff roles. 75 (4.4%) of the uniformed employees are women, making positive action within recruitment focused on women as a continued priority.

It is worth noting that when compared to other Metropolitan FRSs, WMFS has the highest numbers of women employees outside of London.

Comparator Information with Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Services – whole time uniformed staff as at 31 March 2012.

	% of whole time uniformed staff that are female	Number of whole time uniformed staff that are female
Greater London	5.8	338
Tyne & Wear	5.6	46
South Yorkshire	5.2	38
Merseyside	5.0	41
West Midlands	4.4	75
West Yorkshire	3.6	49
Greater Manchester	1.9	32

Ethnicity

	All Staff	Uniform	Support	Fire Control
White	1927	1442	423	62
BME	315	213	99	3
Total	2242	1655	522	65

14% of the workforce is from Minority Ethnic backgrounds, including White Irish and White other; compared to the West Midlands regional figure which has an average of 30.5% BME population.

Approximately 13% of Minority Ethnic staff are employed in uniform posts and 19% in support staff roles, with 4% within Fire Control. When comparing whole time fire fighter figures, WMFS again has a higher percentage compared to other Metropolitan FRSs.

	% of Black & Minority Ethnic Population	% of whole time uniformed Black & Minority Ethnic Staff
Greater London	41	12
West Midlands	30	7
West Yorkshire	17	3
Merseyside	5	3
South Yorkshire	10	3
Greater Manchester	14	3
Tyne & Wear	8	1

Disability

	All Staff	Uniform	Support	Fire Control
No	1514	1085	378	51
Not Stated	555	443	100	12
Yes	72	39	33	0
Prefer Not To Say	101	88	11	2
Total	2242	1655	522	65

3% of WMFS employees have declared a disability compared to the national average of 18% of working age people with a disability.

A significant number of employees still continue not to declare their disability at 25%, this is despite the recent 'don't be a blank' campaign and 4.5% of employees prefer not to state.

The level of declaration for uniform staff is similar to that of non-uniformed staff with 39 and 33 people declaring their disability respectively. Fire Control declares that there are no employees with a disability.

Age

	All Staff	Uniform	Support	Fire Control
17-24	23	10	13	0
25-35	615	513	88	14
36-45	808	652	138	18
46-55	658	461	168	29
56-65	123	19	100	4
66+	15		15	
Total	2242	1655	522	65

The age profile shows that the majority, 93% of our employees are between the ages of 25 and 55 years, with the highest percentage of employees at 36% between the ages of 36 and 45.

6% of employees are over the age 56; most of these employees are support staff at 21% compared to uniformed staff at 1% and Fire Control at 5%. The low number of uniformed employees aged 55 and above is due to the provisions of the 1992 Firefighters' Pension Scheme which enables retirement from age 50.

1% of employees are between the ages of 17 and 24; the reasons for the reduced number of younger people is the hold on recruitment, particularly of firefighters, which often attracts younger people.

Sexual Orientation

	All Staff	Uniform	Support	Fire Control
Bisexual	11	11	0	0
Gay/Lesbian	9	6	2	1
Heterosexual	514	373	126	15
Not Stated	1553	1130	375	48
Prefer Not To Say	153	133	19	1
Transgender	2	2	0	0
Total	2242	1655	522	65

Less than 1% of employees have declared that they are either Lesbian Gay or Bisexual. 23% declared that they were heterosexual; with the overwhelming majority of employees not stating their Sexual Orientation; suggesting that there needs to be more engagement around the issue.

Religion

	All Staff	Uniform	Support	Fire Control
Christian	393	276	105	12
Muslim	10	5	5	0
None	170	120	45	5
Not Stated	1474	1106	320	48
Prefer Not To Say	127	104	23	0
Buddhist	2	1	1	0
Hindu	7	2	5	0
Sikh	15	4	11	0
Pagan	4	3	1	0
Scientologist	1	1	0	0
Other	39	33	6	0
Total	2242	1655	522	65

67% of employees have not stated their religion. The largest percentage of WMFS employees who have stated their religion are Christians at 16%.

All other religious/faith groups are less than 1% reflective within our workforce profile.

3.3 **Successful Positive Action initiatives 2006 – 2009 (new entrants)**

A range of positive action initiatives have been implemented during previous recruitment campaigns. These have included:

- Women's fitness sessions to support women in reaching specific levels of fitness;
- Awareness sessions – aimed at both women and BME groups to raise awareness of the role of the firefighter, dispel myths and to promote the value of a career with WMFS;
- Sponsorship of Birmingham Women's Football Association and Camp Hill Ladies Rugby Club – attending events, programme and pitch side advertising to promote a career in the Fire Service;
- Targeting local football clubs and cricket clubs to engage with physically active women;
- Using national female role models – England footballers and cricketers;
- Pre recruitment access courses – supporting local Uniformed Service education courses;
- Firefighter challenge – women only team building and fitness events;
- Working with a variety of diverse groups including Black Boys Can, Bordesley Green Girls College, Mosaic, Salehi and other community groups attached to mosques and places of worship.

As a direct result of these initiatives the recruitment rate for women increased from 4% in 2006 to 20% by 2009. The recruitment rate for BME groups rose from 10% in 2006 to 18% by 2009.

3.4 **Progression**

To date the Service has carried out a range of employee engagement activities focusing on learning and development and inspiring people from minority groups to progress. For instance the Employee Opinion Survey; a range of Women's professional development conferences; Black History Month events; work development activities with Networking Women in the Fire Service and the Asian Fire Service Association. A more detailed overview of this can be found in the Equality and Diversity Report & Objectives 2011 -2015 report.

The information below provides an insight into the progression of women and BME people within the Service. Due to the lack of information declared by employees there is little information with regard to other strands when considering progression.

3.4.1 Definitions for management tiers

Leadership	Members of Authority	
	Non-uniform	Uniform
Leadership Corporate Board	Directors	Chief Fire Officer Deputy Chief officer(s) & Assistant Chief Officers
Strategic Managers	Grade 18 upwards to grade 20.	All Area Commanders
Middle Managers	Between grades 13 -17	All Group Commanders & Station Commanders

3.4.2 Gender Equality & Progression

Leadership

- 85% of Authority members are male and 15% female.
All members of Corporate Board are male.

Strategic Management

- 68% of our strategic managers are male showing an under representation of women in senior management roles. One Uniformed strategic manager is female; Fire Control has no strategic manager positions;
- 5 of the 15 strategic managers within Support functions are female.

Middle Management

- There are no female middle managers within Uniform roles.
- 71 (72%) of the 99 non-uniform middle management roles are male compared to 28 (28%) female.
- All Fire control middle managers are female

3.4.3 Race Equality & Progression

Leadership

- Information on ethnicity of Fire Authority members is not available.

- 2 of the 6 members of Corporate Board are from minority ethnic backgrounds;

Strategic Management

- Of the total 18 strategic managers within (uniform and support) roles; 3 are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- There are 6 strategic managers in Uniform roles of which one is from a White Other minority background.
- There are 12 strategic Managers in support roles of which one is White other and one Asian.
- Overall there is an under representation of ethnic diversity in senior roles.

Middle management

- Of the total 179 Middle managers (uniform and support roles), 157 (88%) are White British.
- Within Uniform roles we have 80 managers of which 74 (93%) are White British. Of the 6 ethnic minority employees; 4 are White Other, 1 from Mixed and 1 from Black ethnic backgrounds;
- Within support roles we have 99 Middle managers, 83 employees (84%) are from White British backgrounds of the remaining 16 people, four are White other, 8 Asian, 2 Black and one other backgrounds.
- Fire Control has 4 Group Commander B posts all of whom are occupied by White British women.

3.4 **Retention**

3.4.1 **Uniformed Staff**

In the last three years 256 uniformed staff have left the Service. This is 13% of the uniformed staff that were in post in 2009.

Two of the leavers were female, this is only 3% of those in post. The reasons for leaving were recorded as 'career break' and 'other'. (Both of the female leavers were white).

The gender of uniformed leavers

Gender	Leavers (in the 3 years 1.12.09 - 30.11.12)	Number of Uniformed Staff*	% Leavers
Males	254	1834	13.8%
Females	2	75	2.7%
Total	256	1909	13.4%

* As at 1.12.09 and 28 starters in the three years since then

Twelve of the leavers were black or minority ethnic, this is 9% of those in post; this is lower than the percentage of white leavers (14%):

The ethnicity of uniformed leavers

Ethnicity	Leavers (in the 3 years 1.12.09 - 30.11.12)	Number of Uniformed Staff*	% Leavers
White	244	1767	13.8%
Black or Minority Ethnic	12	142	8.5%
Total	256	1909	13.4%

A quarter of the black or minority ethnic leavers retired, compared to 71% of the white leavers.

Leaver reasons by ethnicity

Leaving Reason	White		Ethnic Min		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Retirement	173	70.9%	3	25.0%	176	68.8%
Employee Transfer (FRS)	23	9.4%	1	8.3%	24	9.4%
Career Break	16	6.6%	6	50.0%	22	8.6%
Employee Transfer	7	2.9%	1	8.3%	8	3.1%
Resignation - Other	6	2.5%	1	8.3%	7	2.7%
Disciplinary - Gross Misconduct	4	1.6%	0	0.0%	4	1.6%
End of Secondment	3	1.2%	0	0.0%	3	1.2%
Capability (Medical)	2	0.8%	0	0.0%	2	0.8%
Deceased	2	0.8%	0	0.0%	2	0.8%
Ill Health Retirement	2	0.8%	0	0.0%	2	0.8%
Early Retirement	1	0.4%	0	0.0%	1	0.4%
Other	3	1.2%	0	0.0%	3	1.2%
Not specified	2	0.8%	0	0.0%	2	0.8%
Total	244	100.0%	12	100.0%	256	100.0%

3.4.2 Support Staff leavers

In the last three years 223 support staff have left the Service.

Similar proportions of males and females left the Service:

The gender of support staff leavers

	Leavers (in the 3 years 1.12.09 - 30.11.12)	Number of Non-Uniformed Staff*	% Leavers
Males	102	313	32.6%
Females	121	433	27.9%
Total	223	746	29.9%

* As at 1.12.09 and 142 starters in the three years since then (incl. temp staff)

Nearly half of the female leavers resigned, compared to a third of male leavers.

Leaver reasons by Gender

Leaving Reason	Female		Male		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Resignation - Other	57	47.1%	29	28.4%	86	38.6%
End of Temporary Employment	15	12.4%	29	28.4%	44	19.7%
Redundancy	15	12.4%	8	7.8%	23	10.3%
Fixed Term Contract Ended	11	9.1%	12	11.8%	23	10.3%
Retirement	12	9.9%	10	9.8%	22	9.9%
Dismissal	2	1.7%	3	2.9%	5	2.2%
Capability (Medical)	3	2.5%	0	0.0%	3	1.3%
Disciplinary - Gross Misconduct	1	0.8%	2	2.0%	3	1.3%
Better Opportunity	0	0.0%	2	2.0%	2	0.9%
Career Break	2	1.7%	0	0.0%	2	0.9%
Deceased	1	0.8%	1	1.0%	2	0.9%
Voluntary	1	0.8%	1	1.0%	2	0.9%
Career Change	0	0.0%	1	1.0%	1	0.4%
Not specified	1	0.8%	4	3.9%	5	2.2%
Total	121	100.0%	102	100.0%	223	100.0%

The ethnicity of non-uniformed leavers

	Leavers (in the 3 years 1.12.09 - 30.11.12)	Number of Non-Uniformed Staff*	% Leavers
White	147	588	25.0%
Black or Minority Ethnic	30	104	28.8%
Not specified	46	54	85.2%
Total	223	746	29.9%

The proportion of BME employees leaving is disproportionately higher at 28.8% than their representation within the workforce which is at 19%.

Leaver reasons by ethnicity

Leaving Reason	White		Black and Ethnic minority		Not known		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Resignation - Other	52	35.4%	12	40.0%	22	47.8%	86	38.6%
End of Temporary Employment	20	13.6%	4	13.3%	20	43.5%	44	19.7%
Redundancy	22	15.0%	1	3.3%	0	0.0%	23	10.3%
Fixed Term Contract Ended	14	9.5%	8	26.7%	1	2.2%	23	10.3%
Retirement	22	15.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	22	9.9%
Dismissal	3	2.0%	1	3.3%	1	2.2%	5	2.2%
Capability (Medical)	1	0.7%	1	3.3%	1	2.2%	3	1.3%
Disciplinary - Gross Misconduct	2	1.4%	1	3.3%	0	0.0%	3	1.3%
Better Opportunity	2	1.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	0.9%
Career Break	1	0.7%	1	3.3%	0	0.0%	2	0.9%
Deceased	1	0.7%	1	3.3%	0	0.0%	2	0.9%
Voluntary	2	1.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	0.9%
Career Change	1	0.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.4%
Not specified	4	2.7%	0	0.0%	1	2.2%	5	2.2%
Total	147	100.0%	30	100.0%	46	100.0%	223	100.0%

3.5 Positive Action Strategy

The aims and objectives of the positive action strategy will be to support the Service in achieving equality outcomes for its diverse communities and workforce. It will provide a strategic approach to positive action focusing on areas of recruitment, development and progression as well as strategies to improve retention. The strategy will develop and strengthen existing links, and to establish

new community contacts with schools, colleges and community resource centres. The plan will continue to address our long, medium and short-term objectives.

The following considerations are identified in order to seek to address the issues identified within this report.

Equality considerations

- to increase representation of women within uniform roles from 4%; therefore targeting activities at women and girls.
- to increase the representation of 17-24 year old young people within the Service from 1%.
- to increase the profile of disabled employees from 3% to the labour force survey national average figures of 18%.
- to increase BME representation within the service from 14% towards the 30.5% of the regional average.

3.5.1 Positive Action within Recruitment – Medium term

With the freeze on recruitment activity our focus is on instilling positive images of WMFS as an employer specifically targeting women; Young people; people from BME communities alongside people with disabilities.

The Service comes into contact with vast numbers of young women and BME people: our Youth Workers, Community Advocates Vulnerable Peoples Officers and firefighters' work at the heart of the community and alongside strong public sector partnerships. With the support of the Resourcing team and the Academy we can embed Positive Action strategies into the day to day activities of the above officers, thereby developing the assets we have.

Graduate Recruitment

Graduate schemes will enable WMFS to target new entrants and bring them quickly into a professional work environment, allowing them to receive relevant skills development and get hands on experience either within a specific role or through working on 'assignments' throughout the organisation. Intern programme which will bring a new talent perspective, whilst at the same time offer the individual valuable work experience. This will be targeted identifying graduates and under graduates who are representative of the core diversity strands.

Fire and Rescue Service already has established relationships with Higher Education Institutes; for instance WMFS is already working with Wolverhampton University in delivering an Undergraduate course and have an ongoing relationship with Birmingham City University for workplacements.

Work Experience Programme

Work experience targeted to students from under represented groups, within schools in our local communities provides the opportunity to prepare them for the challenges of tomorrow. Students familiarise themselves with the skills and attitudes needed by modern business and recognise that the demands of working life are undergoing rapid and constant change. The programme will raise awareness of the wide range of opportunities available for a career in the Fire Service and also give an insight into a specific career pathway that they are considering pursuing. The work experience programme provides a vital way of engaging and inspiring young people as well as offering hands on exposure to the work of WMFS.

During the recruitment phase to becoming a firefighter; candidates have to successfully complete a BTEC level 3 Award. WMFS have targeted 11-16 year olds to complete the level just below which is a BTEC level 2 course. To date over 146 young people have successfully completed the Course from across 20 Schools in the Sandwell Command Area.

Sandwell and Walsall Command are currently working with the Academy to develop this work further so that the Academy can become a provider of BTEC level 2 and for colleges to commission the work and refer young people to us. Embedding positive action strategies within this work would be relatively cost effective and from feedback we know that Education institutes prefer elements as such to be built into programmes.

Coventry Command have already undertaken work with NEETS (a term used for young people Not in Education, Employment or Training) and this is another area of where current funding opportunities are available for us to target

young, BME and female people and Work in Command Areas through Youth Liaison Officers is already been undertaken.

Near Future applicants 11-16 year olds

Candidate attraction strategies capture a diverse range of entry level applicants in preparation for 2015/2016 potential intake. Work already exists at different levels across the Service where we engage with targeting 11 to 16 year old students at the career informative stage. The strategy would tie in positive action to existing activities.

Youth Programmes

The service has a range of Safety Programmes targeting young people, where we can build in Positive Action Strategies.

- 2,275 young people in year 9 are exposed to the '*Your Choice – How are you getting home*' activity.
- Approximately 2000 young people are targeted through requests for programmes at Key Stage 3 and 4 from schools. In Sandwell, over 7,496 children at Key Stage Year 5 and 6 have attended the *Junior Citizen* Safeside programme.
- Sandwell Youth Programme has enabled 570 young people to achieve 30 hours of OCN Level 1 courses in '*understanding firefighting*' from 18 different secondary schools.
- April 2009-2010 we have had 139 referrals for *Fire Safety Tutoring* with young people who have required intervention from pre-school children to convicted serial arsonists. There is a 98% success rate in the course as a first time intervention.
- The *F.I.R.E programme* is aimed at youth offenders which aim to build self-esteem, change behaviours and encourage young people to aspire. Delivered primarily by firefighters. Last year 20 programmes were undertaken supporting 300 young people through the five days of learning and development.
- Youth Services also run one week work experience *OCN programme* that is accredited enabling young people to hold placements at Command Areas. The course is run aimed at giving young people exposure to being a firefighter.
- Firefighters provide safety training as part of the *Prince's Trust programmes* aimed at young people between the ages of 16-25 reaching approximately 1000 young people per year.

- Tipton Fire Station has 20 young people engaging in a regular fit club aiming at young people from diverse backgrounds.

Young Firefighters' Association (YFA)

WMFS has 16 branches of the Young Firefighters' Association each with approximately 15 people; an average total of 240 young people. YFA has on average a 15 week programme that enables young people to gain an OCN accreditation. Three of our branches specifically cater for young people with disabilities and/or learning disabilities such as Stourbridge.

In addition to the above we can look at sharpening our activity around areas such as:

- School and college fairs to raise the profile of WMFS. Events include Careers Fairs; Guess my Job, Practice Interviews. Priority given to schools in highly populated BME areas and girls schools. Development of a career adviser resource pack.

3.5.2 Longer term strategies

The Service has a vast range of contact with children within Schools and we can actively embed positive action strategies into this work by reviewing some of the materials we use in Schools. The Resourcing team can work with these teams to offer placements to older school children within the Service.

Examples of the existing work with Young Children include:

- Approximately 46,140 children in year 5 KS2 have undertaken the Spark pack.
- Each year over 20,475 young people in year 10 and 11 undertake the '*Your Choice – On the Road*' programme.
- 6,400 young people in year 8 are exposed to the '*Your Choice – Could you live with it*' programme addressing arson issues.
- 1,769 nurseries and reception classes attended.
- 1,770 children so far have undertaken the pilot scheme for the Key Stage 1, 'great fire' safety pack.

- 4,400 young people in year 7 undertake the ‘*Your Choice – Your Safety*’ activity.
- Every year WMFS runs a Schools Safety Quiz aimed at Year 5 pupils. Started in 1993 this event has grown bigger year on year. Series of Safety based Quiz Nights culminate in a Brigade Grand Final held at Fire Service Headquarters.
- Safeside provides 16 life-sized scenarios, experiential learning, stimulating environment, interactivity in a safe learning environment. 2010 saw over 10,000th visitors. Throughout the year thousands of Schools children access the facility.
- Black Boys Can – Role Modelling/Mentoring Scheme. Provides a mentor/positive role model from within the Service to a group of predominantly BME school children within their school setting. The project aimed to increase self confidence and life opportunities. The mentor group were given opportunities to see the work WMFS does through visits to Fire Stations, Safeside and observing operational drills. This initiative forms part of our long term positive action plan to encourage more BME children to consider a career in the Fire Service.

3.5.3 Engaging with Diverse Communities

Our Vulnerable People’s Officers, Community Advocates, Local Authority Liaison officers and Safeside Volunteers and indeed Firefighters work at the heart of communities; we can use the existing capability within the organisation to consider ways of engaging young and older candidates from diverse communities for future recruitment, placements and volunteering.

Using a similar approach to that used for attracting women, we will engage with BME communities, linking with existing community based organisations.

In a similar way we will engage with people with disabilities by using the expertise of our staff and inviting people with disabilities to consider work placements; firefighter experience and through targeted advertising.

3.5.4 POSITIVE ACTION IN PROGRESSION & RETENTION

Key issues identified within progression of Women:

- There is an under representation of women in leadership roles with 15% Authority Members who are women and no Corporate Board members.
- Overall, to increase the representation of women in senior management roles
- To increase the representation of women in uniform senior manager posts.
- To increase the representation of men in Fire Control roles.
- To address the attrition rate of women as they move upwards within senior management roles amongst support staff in order to rebalance the gender profile.
- To address gender stereotypes around capability and achievement within the services culture.
- Ensure within our positive action initiatives that we continue to support minority groups as they progress.
- To bridge the development gap of women from supervisory roles to middle management roles in uniform posts.
- To increase the representation of women in middle management positions in support roles.

Key issues identified within progression of ethnic Minority groups

- To collect ethnicity profile data from Authority members.
- To have more representation of employees from Black and Minority ethnic backgrounds in senior management positions on both support and uniform roles.
- To increase the representation of BME employees within middle management.

3.5.5 POSITIVE ACTION IN LEARNING DEVELOPMENT

The Personal Effectiveness Course

This course whilst being a comprehensive personal effectiveness course was unique in its delivery through experiential learning. Delegates not only learned about concepts but actually had to put them into practice over a five week period. The course was designed in consultation with BME employees through the AFSA forum alongside the

We are Women @ WMFS, Senior managers were also consulted in the design and delivery of the course. The course targeted BME and female employees with 26 delegates in total. We intend to run eight more cohorts over this coming year; all candidates will then be supported to engage in the Buddying and Forum schemes detailed below.

Buddy Scheme

The course was further supported by the launch of an internal buddy scheme. This informal method of connecting more experienced and established employees with delegates on the course. The scheme so far has had an excellent take up and will be delivered through the next quarter. We hope that the current delegates will volunteer to be buddies also so that they can continue with their learning cycle and as such continuing to develop a positive cultural change within the organisation.

The current delegates have also expressed an interest to continue receiving support in their personal development and we are planning to deliver a range of development opportunities through the Learning & Development team such as Coaching skills, personnel resilience and self development by establishing a separate employee forum for this group.

Based on the Success of the Course, it is our intention to repeat the course throughout next year with a similar targeting approach and sustainability of progression through the Forum and Buddy Scheme.

ACUA course

This is a natural progression of the Personal Effectiveness Course that gradually shifts the focus from personal development towards professional development and strategic thinking. Again, uniform and support staff have been able to access the ACUA course which has been an excellent pathway towards developing the potential of upcoming talented middle managers towards more strategic management. The course is in its third year and overall around 40 people are undertaking this.

Employee Forums

The Service is continuing with its range of employee engagement initiatives, particularly targeting under representative groups through:

‘We are Women @ West Midlands Fire Service’, women’s group was launched in March 2012. The aims of the group are:

- Professional development and progression (influence leaders and colleagues).

- Personal development and networking such as building confidence through support
- Achieving tangible outcomes (improve policy and facilities)

The regional Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) **group “West Midlands AFSA”** was launched in December 2011. There Objectives include:

- supporting the professional development of AFSA members through engaging with the Service and through partnership approaches.
- Buddying, networking and mentoring opportunities identified for members.

Employee Opinion Survey & Investors in People

We continue to engage with employees with regards to implementing the actions from the Employee Opinion Survey, such as recently carrying out team activities with Fire safety and Hay Mills Fire Station. We intend to further align the strategic approach between the above two areas and consider within this how we positively impact all employees.

Progression Model

Working in partnership with a range of internal stakeholders we have undertaken a review Progression & Selection processes leading to changes in this policy that have considered recommendations made through the Equality Impact Assessment process.

New Initiatives

Using the forums, and wider stakeholders we hope to continue to develop new positive action initiatives and feedback the Scrutiny Committee upon progress. There are many considerations to be made with regard to the sensitivities around delivering positive action and ensuring that initiatives have the appropriate level of support, time and resources to flourish. We also have to ensure that those who benefit from positive action are supported as they move forward.

Role Model – Two Way engagement

There are many accomplished BME, female and people with disabilities living and working within the communities of West

Midlands; many are leaders within their own fields and often own businesses. We could set up a Networking & Mentoring Forum where through group meetings and 121 engagement, both our employees and people from communities can access positive engagement. The benefits of such a scheme will include:

- WMFS employees from minority backgrounds can access positive role models and others can develop their understanding of diversity; instilling the core purpose of role modelling which is to inspire and achieve more. Vice versa people from the community can access strategic or public sector insights and positive role models from within the Service.
- Having external role models, particularly those in leadership positions will challenge any stereotyping that may exist with regard to the capability of people from minority groups.
- WMFS employees will have access to development through mentoring relationships and can also develop commercial insights; an area of work that the service wants to grow.
- The external leaders/people will have a positive perception of WMFS which they will take back into their own communities.
- The networking work and development of the programme can access positive action related publicity for the service which again aligns with our recruitment policies.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

This report and the equality objectives within it respond directly to the general and specific duties of the Equality Act. The strategy considers the equality and diversity issues that are pertinent to the needs of the Service; prioritising those areas identified within the report with a view to considering other strands in the longer term.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is available upon request.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The contact name for this report is David Johnson, Director of Human Resources, 0121 380 6914.

VIJ RANDENIYA
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER