

MEETING: 19 JULY 2010

SUBJECT: REGIONAL FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY,
THE FINANCE OFFICER AND PERSONNEL ADVISOR**

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report considers the outcomes from the recent Regional Firefighter Recruitment Campaign which commenced on 4 November 2009. All four Fire and Rescue Services in the North East participated in the campaign and this report includes the effectiveness of the Positive Action Programme, brand campaign and outcomes of the process relating to the diversification of our workforce.

2 MARKETING AND POSITIVE ACTION

2.1 From January to October 2009 a Positive Action (PA) programme was implemented and included recruitment process workshops and fitness sessions.

2.2 A variety of marketing initiatives using the new brand campaign was launched in October 2009 to promote the role of Firefighter to our underrepresented groups. The marketing initiatives included advertising via Real Radio and Spice FM, leaflet drops to underrepresented groups plus online advertising to specifically target females. A bespoke microsite was developed and was promoted via a new Internet address www.fireservicesnortheast.com as well as the production of a recruitment DVD and relevant literature.

3 AMENDMENT TO THE NATIONAL FIREFIGHTER SELECTION (NFS) PROCESS

3.1 The North East continues to support the structure and ethos of the National Firefighter Selection (NFS) process and the principles of the system were applied. However following a comprehensive review of previous recruitment campaigns relevant amendments were made to the process to refresh it and make it more efficient and cost effective.

4 CURRENT WORKFORCE

4.1 In order to provide a statistical base line for this campaign, the current breakdown of the workforce is highlighted as follows, with figures from the 2009/2010 year shown in brackets:

- 21.3% (19.8%) of the workforce are female of which 4.84% (4.82%) are in the operational sector;
- 2.2% (1.95%) of the workforce are from a black or minority ethnic background (which now includes 'other white') of which 1.7% (1.66%) are in the operational sector;

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- 14.7% (6.7%) of new entrants employed across the whole organisation were from a black or minority ethnic background;
- 3.7% (2.6%) of the workforce have some form of disability of which 2.4% (1.4%) are from the operational sector.

4.2 Clearly there is an expectancy that the recruitment campaign will provide enough suitable candidates to continue the improvement cycle and therefore further diversify the workforce.

5 RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN

5.1 The recruitment campaign commenced in November 2009 with application packs being made available for a six day period. In total 10,648 application packs were requested during this period of which 96% were downloaded from the internet site. Comprehensive data collection methodologies were used for those 10234 potential applicants who downloaded the pack from the Internet.

5.2 A measure was put in place to identify from each candidate where they had found out about the recruitment and the results show that the majority of people (39%) found out about the campaign from the Fire Services North East microsite followed by a Fire Service employee (20%).

5.3 Information collated from those potential applicants that downloaded an application pack from the microsite showed the following:

Age profile: 46% were aged 17-24; 43% were aged 25-35; the remainder were all aged over 36 years. Seven packs were requested by members of the public over 66 years of age.

Gender profile – 91% described themselves as ‘Male’ and 9% of all potential applicants described themselves as ‘Female’.

Ethnicity profile - 93.5% of applicants described themselves as ‘White British’, 1.1% described themselves as ‘White Other’, making it the second most represented ethnic group of the potential applicants. The rest of the ethnicity statistics are detailed below.

	Total White British	Total White Irish	Total White Other	Total White and Black Caribbean	Total White and Asian	Total White and Black African	Total Other Mixed	Indian	Bangladeshi	Pakistani
Totals	9576	92	113	59	41	26	24	14	29	64

	Other Asian	Caribbean	African	Other Black	Chinese	Other ethnic	Prefer not to say
Totals	17	23	33	13	8	18	84

Disability profile - The vast majority (99%) of potential applicants stated they did not have a disability.

Sexuality profile – The majority of potential applicants were heterosexual (92%) followed by those who preferred not to say.

Religion or faith profile - The majority of potential applicants were Christian (39%) followed by none (38%).

5.4 Of the 10648 potential candidates, 4379 applicants submitted a completed application form which equates to a 41% application return rate. This is an 80% on the 2008 campaign. Of these applicants 86.5% were male, 7.9% were female and 5.2% described themselves as from a 'black or minority ethnic background' (BME).

6 RECRUITMENT ANALYSIS

6.1 The appendices attached to this report provide the full statistics for the campaign, with the following points being worthy of note:

- The application stage saw a significant increase in the number of female and BME candidates applying compared to the 2008 campaign, 342 (76%) and 222 (122%) respectively.
- Across all categories there were similar proportions of candidates who failed at the first sift - incomplete application form, unspent convictions etc.
- At the first sift BME candidates achieved a lower pass rate than white males and females, although white male applicants for this Authority demonstrated a lower pass rate compared to the other categories.
- On average 71% of candidates failed at second sift which is the assessment of the responses to questions on the application form. It is worth noting that BME and white male candidates had very similar failure rates with females being slightly more successful at this stage. Unfortunately due to the relatively small number of underrepresented groups at the beginning of the process this meant that there were significantly less numbers of these individuals still in the process by the end of this stage which equated to 108 female and 55 BME candidates, and these figures are lower than those attained during the 2008 campaign (113 female/60 BME). However in comparison the applicants who had been part of the PA programme achieved a higher pass rate at this part of the process.
- At Written stage it is interesting to note that out of all of the groups females achieved the lowest pass rate. On further analysis it appears that females mainly failed in the following areas; Working with Numbers and Problem Solving.
- Historically, both locally and nationally, a high percentage of BME candidates tend not to be successful at the written stage. However, it is

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encouraging to note that this group achieved a 60% pass rate in the 2009/10 process compared to a 40% pass rate in the 2008 campaign.

- At Role Related stage, 64.5% of females failed with the majority failing more than one test which is comparable with the 2008 output figures. The main de-selectors were equipment carry, ladder lift, enclosed space and equipment assembly. Out of all the categories BME candidates achieved the highest pass rate during these tests.
- Regionally 19 female and 18 BME candidates were successful at interview. In comparison to the 2008 process, this campaign has produced 17% fewer successful female candidates and a 38% increase in the number of successful BME candidates.
- Positive Action candidates tended to achieve a higher pass rate at this stage compared to the other categories with white males achieving 72.7% pass whilst females and BME candidates achieved 92.8% and 80% respectively.
- Of the 10 female and 11 BME candidates who were successful at interview and had nominated Tyne and Wear as their preferred Service, 80% and 45% had been part of the positive action programme respectively.

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The data indicates that the marketing initiatives, external marketing and positive action activities have made a significant impact in attracting a higher percentage of underrepresented groups to the process. It is possible therefore that through these initiatives we are beginning to see changes in society's perception regarding the role of a Firefighter.
- 7.2 Out of the 19 successful female candidates, 13 (68%) were part of the positive action programme and similarly, 8 (44%) of the 18 BME candidates were also part of the programme. This certainly supports the continuation and enhancement of the positive action programme prior to future recruitment.
- 7.3 Clearly the majority of underrepresented groups were not successful at the second sift stage of the process. Collectively this stage failed 68% of these individuals (360 out of 523) and when dealing with limited numbers at the beginning this leaves significantly smaller numbers to progress to the other stages.
- 7.4 The Chief Fire Officer is undertaking a full review of the process to further inform and improve in the future. Included will be improvements to the positive action programme such as:
- Working with training providers to assist females regarding working with numbers.
 - Developing a more tailored fitness programme to specifically assist females to increase their fitness levels.

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- Develop elements of a programme to provide all delegates especially females the ability to handle problem solving situations from a Firefighters perspective.

7.5 It is likely that there will be enough available candidates within the system from this recruitment process to meet the Authority's requirements for at least the next two years. Therefore, this interim period provides an excellent opportunity to finalise the review and implement and embed any changes prior to the next recruitment drive.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 The risk management implications are covered within the equality and fairness implications.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no financial implications associated with this specific report

10 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Although there are a range of candidates from underrepresented groups who have been successful throughout the process and are detailed on a waiting list, there is a risk that, over the coming months, those candidates who have not yet been successful in gaining a position may become disengaged and seek/find employment elsewhere. All candidates still need to satisfy the final stages of the recruitment process and there is also a risk that if the underrepresented candidates are not successful at this stage, then the Authority may not achieve the stretch targets.

11 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

12 RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 The Authority is recommended to:

- a) Note the contents of the report;
- b) Support the ongoing development of a Positive Action programme;
- c) Receive further reports as appropriate.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Creating the Safest Community

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The undermentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

- Strategic Community Safety Plan 2010-2013

APPENDIX 1

2009/10 Firefighter Recruitment Statistics - All Services

Category	Applied	Pass Rate %	First Sift	Pass Rate %	Second Sift	Pass Rate %	Written	Pass Rate %	Role Related	Pass Rate %	Interview
Male	3790	92.8	3519	26.7	940	66.2	622	66.6	414	72.7	301
Female	347	91.6	318	34.0	108	57.4	62	35.5	22	86.4	19
BME	231	88.7	205	26.8	55	60.0	33	69.7	23	78.3	18
Not specified	42	81.0	34	35.3	12	66.7	8	25.0	2	100.0	2
Total	4379	88.9	3892	28.4	1107	64.9	718	63.8	458	73.8	338
PA Female	130	93.1	121	38.0	46	58.7	27	51.8	14	92.9	13
PA BME	75	92.0	69	40.6	28	50.0	14	71.0	10	80.0	8

2009/10 Tyne and Wear Results

Category	Applied	Pass Rate %	First Sift	Pass Rate %	Second Sift	Pass Rate %	Written	Pass Rate %	Role Related	Pass Rate %	Interview
Male	1907	81.4	1552	32.2	499	66.3	331	69.5	230	76.5	176
Female	171	94.2	161	37.9	61	54.1	33	36.4	12	83.3	10
BME	125	93.6	117	23.1	27	55.6	15	80.0	12	91.6	11
Not specified	16	87.5	14	28.6	4	60.0	3	0.3	1	100.0	1
Total	2199	83.4	1833	32.1	589	64.3	379	67.0	254	77.6	197
PA Female	68	95.6	65	40.0	26	50.0	13	69.2	9	88.9	8
PA BME	42	90.5	38	36.8	14	57.1	8	75.0	6	83.3	5

APPENDIX 2

Comparison of 2008 & 2009/10 Recruitment Statistics

Category	Applied			Pass Sift 1			Pass Stage 2			Pass Written			Pass Role Related			Pass Interview		
	2009/10	2008	2006/07	2009/10	2008	2006/07	2009/10	2008	2006/07	2009/10	2008	2006/07	2009/10	2008	2006/07	2009/10	2008	2006/07
Male	3790	2233	1755	3519	2164	1717	940	893	477	622	527	312	414	365	280	301	345	275
Female	347	194	143	318	192	143	108	113	48	62	75	25	22	27	9	19	23	9
BME	231	122	27	205	117	23	55	60	7	33	24	4	23	16	4	18	13	4
Not specified	42	9	13	34	5	0	12	1	0	8	1	0	2	1	0	2	0	0
Total	4379	2436	1911	3892	2361	1860	1107	1007	525	718	603	337	458	393	289	338	368	284

- All data detailed in Appendix 1 & 2 includes candidates who have passed each part of the process but may have withdrawn themselves during the process or did not turn up for assessment
- Candidates highlighted under the BME category may also be included in the male/female sections