



FOI reference 025/18	Date Received 16/03/18
Request:	
<p>I am in the process of completing a dissertation project regarding female operational staff within the UK Fire and Rescue Services and am carrying out primary research. Please send me information on the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What percentage of your operational workforce is female? 2. How has this figure changed over the last 5 years? 3. Do you adhere to the Equality Challenge Unit's Athena SWAN Charter? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If "No", does the organisation follow an alternative charter with similar principles that recognises and awards commitment to and progress on gender equality and diversity? 4. What targets does the organisation have regarding increasing the percentage of operational female staff at firefighter level? 5. List and explain any specific initiatives in place during the selection and recruitment process to attract females to the organisation, at an operational firefighting level. 6. How is the organisation addressing the imbalance in the number of females in an operational firefighting role? 7. What percentage of the operational workforce are female in the following categories of managerial roles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervisory • Middle management • Senior management 8. What targets does the organisation have regarding increasing the percentage of operational female managerial staff? 9. How is the organisation addressing the imbalance in the number of female operational managerial staff? 10. Does your organisation allow job sharing or flexible working patterns to encourage recruitment and retention of female operational staff? 11. List initiatives in place that encourage an inclusive environment and positive culture within the workplace. 12. State how you evaluate the success/failure of these practices. 	





Response:

I am in the process of completing a dissertation project regarding female operational staff within the UK Fire and Rescue Services and am carrying out primary research.

Please send me information on the following questions:

1. What percentage of your operational workforce is female? Women 7.87%

2. How has this figure changed over the last 5 years? 16/17 6.96%, 15/16 7.26%, 14/15 7.59%, 13/14 8.21%. We are a reducing workforce so our overall establishment numbers have reduced over this period of time.

3. Do you adhere to the Equality Challenge Unit's Athena SWAN Charter?

• If "No", does the organisation follow an alternative charter with similar principles that recognises and awards commitment to and progress on gender equality and diversity?

We do not as its application is designed for academic institutions. We are assessed against the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Standard (LGA/CFOA) for which we were Awarded Excellence. We also have a number of awards and recommendation including from the EHRC for our work on pregnancy and maternity, recognition from the Times top 50 Employers for women, Financial Mail Breaking the Mould, Department for Communities Local Government diversity Awards, Asian Fire Service Association Awards, Fire Magazine Excellence in Service Awards. Her Majesties Inspectorate inspects us against Equality and Diversity and we are in continual dialogue with our representative bodies and our staff. We are bound by the PSED.

4. What targets does the organisation have regarding increasing the percentage of operational female staff at firefighter level? We do not set "targets" we do not believe they are helpful in this context.

5. List and explain any specific initiatives in place during the selection and recruitment process to attract females to the organisation, at an operational firefighting level.

- Our positive action work is designed to articulate the nature of a firefighters role and to build relationships with people who are interested in pursuing the role. We are aware that the role of a firefighter is misrepresented and misunderstood. Our staff including firefighters, operational and non-operational staff and managers, volunteers, prevent and protect staff support the relationship building to encourage people to apply. We run these visitor **engagement sessions** at community fire stations and we welcome children or any support people attending parties wish to bring along. Many sessions are restricted to women and BAME and some are open to all. 2017 was the first time we had recruited wholetime firefighter in nine years and so we are trialling new approaches. We monitor the attrition rates and are aware where women may be slightly less successful at the physical tests.
- Our communication channels are targeted at women using algorithms; this is not so straightforward with our BAME potential candidates. We only advertise through *WM Jobs* and *Vercidia* who specialise in EDI application profiling.
- We understand the physiological variance between men and women and on that basis encourage preparedness for the physical test and the achievement of the required Vo2. We discuss the Firefit programme at the engagement sessions and send it out to **all** those who attend the sessions.
- The engagement sessions are frontloaded with prevention and protection work and safe and well scenarios, partnership working and day to day activity on a watch.
- The duty crew show the visitors around their truck and explain all the equipment and discuss their job and what they do the nature of *watch life* and give the visitors a feel of the weight of the kit and equipment.
- All of our current selection process, in terms of the application form and educational and suitability testing is done by computer screening. We request, from the fire sector development providers, that the computer screening application tests are void of cultural bias.
- The physical tests are adhered with nationally agreed pass levels as independently determined by the



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- It is not until a successful candidate is in the group discussion phase of the selection process that they come into contact with any aspect of possible subjectivity.
- Our assessors are trained for these scenarios and there are joint scoring and procedures.

6. How is the organisation addressing the imbalance in the number of females in an operational firefighting role? As above in terms of retained firefighters, but this is continuous and we often use the local press, businesses and social settings to encourage applications from women. It is our crew and local Station and Watch Managers who work to encourage vacancies to women in the retained context.

7. What percentage of the operational workforce are female in the following categories of managerial roles

- Supervisory 7.59%
- Middle management 8.69%
- Senior management 12.5%

8. What targets does the organisation have regarding increasing the percentage of operational female managerial staff? AS said we do not set targets. The organisation's policy is to recruit the best person for the role by definition and they are as likely to be women as they are men as long as we continue to challenge the stereotype about the job, the social view on gender and an ingrained culture.

9. How is the organisation addressing the imbalance in the number of female operational managerial staff? As 8. Above. Opportunities are open for all applicants and we are aware that often a person in a minority position either historical and/or self-imposed may not put themselves forward. On this basis we would seek to use the principles of positive action and utilise our Service wide cultural framework to sustainably eradicate any self-fulfilling prophecy in this respect.

10. Does your organisation allow job sharing or flexible working patterns to encourage recruitment and retention of female operational staff? Yes we have a work life balance policy and have several people working permanent and temporary flexible working arrangements.

11. List initiatives in place that encourage an inclusive environment and positive culture within the workplace.

Our Cultural Framework

Leadership Message

Wellbeing, Equality and Cultural Steering Group and plan

Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

The Contribution Women Make annual conference

Corporate Membership and representation on the executive of the Asian Fire Service Association

12. State how you evaluate the success/failure of these practices.

As is required by the PSED we set our EDI objectives and then ensure they are incorporated into our organisational objectives and principles. On this basis all of our work is evaluated within our strategic and departmental structures, this work is not separate or different. Therefore we monitor, and report on, trends and although the numbers of staff in this context is low we can demonstrate proportionality and explore trends internally, as a national Service, with other blue lights services and internationally with comparable countries.