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**McGuirk, S. (2002) "Are We Serious" A strategic approach to
long term equality and diversity in the UK Fire Service. A
discussion document.**

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	<p>ARE WE SERIOUS?.....</p> <p>This report lays out the critical issues that need to be considered as CACFOA decides whether to jump in now, wait or “pass” on equality.</p> <p>There is a recognition that many brigades and individuals are already doing work, but this report is about working collectively as the professional voice of the fire service and signing up as a body to the strategic importance of equality.</p> <p>After considering existing documents, studies, literature, stakeholders and fire service strengths and weaknesses; the report goes on to offer a range of positions and strategies to lobby government for change and to offer a framework to CACFOA.</p> <p>..... YOU BET WE ARE!</p>
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Who would dispute the high performance of the Fire Service, particularly after September 11 2001? But how can the Service take this tradition of high performance forward whilst addressing a number of critical issues? Fire Services have to deal with a number of complex matters – many of which emanate from the Government's modernising agenda and there is a need to enhance the capability for dealing with them. Furthermore, the expectations of the public, in areas of service delivery, are increasing.

So what has this got to do with equality? Why does the Fire Service need to employ more women and people with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds? How will this help firefighters do their job better?

The goal of equality has been promised many times in the past ('The Fire Service and its Personnel – 1969'; 'The British Market Research Bureau – 1982'; 'The Bucke Report – 1994'; 'HMFSI Thematic Review of Equality – 1988') but has not been achieved. There are good reasons to hope that this time will be different.

THE 4 IMPERATIVES

- ***The moral imperative***

CACFOA has to accept that there has been discrimination in the fire service in the past. Following the MacPherson report we all have a clear moral duty to embrace an equality agenda and there is a sense of moral justice that is integral to being an organisation that delivers a public service. It is important, however, to recognise that morality is often very subjective.

- ***Community Confidence/Community Cohesion***

Fire Services have to be seen to be working fairly and efficiently for all members of the community to build community confidence particularly in socially disadvantaged communities.

- ***Economic Reality***

We are at the start of a period where we will have an ageing workforce and an ageing population, and there are fewer young people predicted to be in the labour market. Fire Services will be competing with the best organisations to attract the best people.

- ***Legislation***

Not only are there high legal costs related to discrimination but much of the already existing legislation is being modernised to reflect pressures and demands we cannot ignore. For example, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2002 brings a reform agenda for tackling race and discrimination issues. New legislation relating to discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation will be with us in 2003 and there is need to tune into the significance, and scale of the legal framework.

EQUALITY v DIVERSITY – Is there a difference? So what?

Equality and Diversity are interdependent. Equality without diversity is treating everyone the same, leading to travesty and political correctness without common sense. Diversity without equality on the other hand, is an unadulterated survival of the privileged to the exclusion of others. Neither can be truly effective without the other.

- ***Equality***

Employers have traditionally assumed equality initiatives to be about ethical considerations and legal requirements, especially discrimination. The fire service has taken a compliance-driven approach to the subject, meaning that any legislation or minimum requirements imposed were viewed as the full extent that any activities needed.

Equal Opportunities has often been viewed as “treating everybody the same”. It is something that has been created by society in order that we can live in a fairer society and something that we strive towards. Essentially, equality is about giving everyone a fair chance to fulfil their potential.

- ***Diversity***

Diversity on the other hand, is a management term. Diversity means recognising that the differences that are a natural part of society are often an opportunity for those organisations who recognise it as a strength to excel. In essence, it focuses on how to harness differences between people to drive forward excellence and creativity in performance. Organisations that embrace variety, reject prejudice, and understand and accommodate changing work patterns will be the organisations, which reap the reward of a happy, fulfilled and motivated workforce with diverse skills.

Diversity occurs naturally, we all differ as individuals.

- ***What ‘Managing Diversity’ means for the fire service community***

- It means that we have to make sure that diversity is a strategic issue and therefore crucial for organisational success and to maintain the image, credibility and reputation of the fire service.
- It means that diversity is the responsibility not just of ‘Personnel’ or ‘HR’ but of all employees and in particular those managers who are expected to be

leaders and role models.

- ❑ It means that diversity is about having individuals at the centre of an organisation's focus. We must think about managing the differences between people as opposed to those differences being rejected or viewed as a liability.
- ❑ It means that the organisation has to adapt and change rather than to expect individuals to conform.
- ❑ It means we can recruit the best people and will be more creative.
- ❑ It means we will be better equipped to access a changing world.

THE BUSINESS CASE – Can we really make a difference?

CACFOA must seek to:

- Integrate our services alongside those of other public sector bodies and add more value to the urban renewal/social inclusion agenda, and local strategic partnerships.
- Build on existing good practice of working with the elderly and young people through partnerships.
- Enhance traditional methods of service delivery and encompass a wider safety dimension.
- Be less “threatening” and be better able to work at the heart of communities through reflecting the race, culture and faiths of our local communities.
- Improve our corporate image and be better equipped to compete in the labour market and attract people who can rise to meet future challenge. In relation to customers and service provision, there are heightened expectations of equality because of the increased social awareness in a society where there is a greater acknowledgement of the potential for institutional discrimination and a desire to do something practical about it.
- Change our internal culture and reduce costs related to morale, job satisfaction, turnover and absenteeism.

OUR PLEDGES FOR PROGRESS – What happens now?

We will promote and tackle head on the issues of equality and embrace a ‘managing diversity’ approach.

- CACFOA should support the activities of ECCAB. **(Rec.1)**
- OPD should undertake an impact analysis of the regulatory and legislative framework of the fire service from the perspective of advancing equality. **(Rec. 4)**
- We will have agreed, common terms of reference for existing CACFOA Equality networks which will become regional equality partnerships to develop initiatives from this national strategy (for example, a new equality vision for CACFOA, a business plan to mainstream equality, etc). **(Rec 6)**
- We will carry out an audit and self assessment on Equality based on the Local

Government Equality Standard **(Rec 2)**

- We will work closely with the community.

We will act as a catalyst to influence others

- ECCAB/HMI commission a review of the National Community Fire Safety Centre to:
 - Transform its terms of reference to encompass wider aspects of community relations; and
 - Enable secondments of staff from under-represented groups to develop national guidance and best practice on equality. **Rec 3).**
- CACFOA Finance Officers working group, in partnership with the LGA, should do a full costing exercise of the cost of equality for submission to DTLR. CACFOA should seek to obtain additional funding to support fire services in meeting their equality action plans. **(Rec. 5)**
- The Fire Service College should become a centre of excellence for equality working in partnership with equality practitioners. **(Rec. 7)**

We will measure our success

- HMI should devise a process (which could be the Local Government equality Standard) for measuring progress against the national action plan with progress being reported annually to ECCAB **(Rec. 2)**

1. INTRODUCTION

In the debate that has been taking place at a national level, for some time now, over the quality and costs of public services, there has been a conspicuous absence of discussion about the fire service. Survey after survey demonstrates the popularity of the service in the eyes of the general public, and there would be few who would dispute the high performing image the service enjoys. This was true before September 11th 2001 but, as a consequence of the tragic images flashed across televisions both during and after that disaster, the status of the service has enhanced, and, almost unquestionably, is at an all time high.

That said, the fire service is also grappling with a whole array of complex and “wicked” issues, many of which interweave to form an intricate web of strategic problems, industrial relations being but one of them. One of the major difficulties that faces the service, as a consequence, is that of having the capability, and to a degree the opportunities, to be able to engage with these issues to the extent that their significance merits, and there is the potential for a feeling of the service being “overwhelmed”. Accordingly, relationships can evolve between those responsible for strategic policy development, at “the centre” and the other “stakeholders,” that can be characterised almost as a “critical parent/child” relationship. Indeed, the role played by the stakeholders themselves is ill defined in reality, particularly in relationship to who exactly **should** provide leadership “to the service?” Who should determine relative priorities for the service in a period of change; when everything is a priority, nothing is a priority. Even the use of the term “the Service” implies a concept of one homogenous body that can be discussed in this way as a single unit, rather than a more heterogeneous collection of disparate and different fire services.

The sheer scale and breadth of the agenda facing the fire service collectively, and the stakeholders individually, adds another dimension to this already complex picture. A quote from Sir Richard Wilson, the Cabinet Secretary until very recently, reflects some of this discourse and also reflects the expectations of the public; expectations that are as relevant for the fire service as for any other public body.

“Public Services of the past tended to be something which people got, not as a right but as a favour bestowed at the discretion of the State. Along with that went a tacit understanding that the service might be a bit shabby, slow and bureaucratic. But that was the price of something free. The public were expected to accept that a public service would not be as good as something that you paid for. That is not how most people see it now. People expect from

public services the standards which they themselves are expected to provide in their own jobs. They expect service of the kind which they would get for the private sector.

Sir Richard Wilson, Cabinet Secretary, 2000.

Most people can observe from day to day media coverage and their individual experience that this statement has much merit; with one “perceived” but notable exception – the Fire Service.

For some reason the fire service appears to have been almost “immune” from this kind of thought process in the eyes of the general public, though there will be differing views about why this may be the case. It is possible that many people do not view the fire service as a “public service” in the same way as health, education, etc, something that it now pays for. Rather, the fire service is seen as a “civil” arm of the military, and somehow related to “national security”; certainly the service is never mentioned in the same breath as these other public, or more particularly local government, services by Government Ministers. Indeed, there can be few, if any, services that have been shuffled between three different Government departments in the space of twelve months in the manner of the fire service during 2001-02. It may also be thought that the “heroic” images of the fire service, reinforced by September 11th mentioned earlier, give it an elevated status of the “last high performing public service”, and the last bastion of the public service ethic.

There will, undoubtedly, be many other contributory factors.

However, the service must take time to ask itself, how long can it maintain this revered status in the eyes of the public, and how long will the public be able, or will wish, to compartmentalise their minds to see and treat the fire service differently? Ironically, the fact that the fire service looks so uniform, with relatively few “black faces” or women when compared to other organisations, may also be relevant to the perception of a service that stands apart, and, for some people on the right of the spectrum of political views, this “difference” can mean “special”. Recent articles in the Sunday Mail have actually portrayed the “maleness” of the culture of the fire service as being the bedrock of its success, and renounce the attempts of the Service to recruit more women, specifically, but also to pursue equality more generally, as nothing more than “lamentable” political correctness. But again, and despite the “swing to the right” in recent elections in Europe, it is unrealistic to imagine that this view is going to be acceptable to the majority of people in future, even if it is today, as

the UK becomes a more heterogeneous, pluralist, and multi cultural society; and part of an increasingly European and Global Community.

It is apparent from the foregoing, therefore, that there are a range of compelling imperatives for the fire service to view discrimination and the need for equality as key strategic issues to be addressed. So, it is worth taking some time articulating what these imperatives are.

Moral Imperative:

There is a clear moral duty for the fire service to embrace an equality agenda following the publication of the MacPherson report. The Cante report into the riots in the North of the Country in 2001, published early in 2002, adds even more emphasis to the argument. Additionally, there is a sense of moral justice that is integral to being a public service. The service must also accept, as a starting point or moral foundation, that there has been discrimination in the fire service in the past if there is now to be genuine progress. Circular arguments about definitions of terms such as “institutional racism” are helpful to the extent of assisting an understanding of some of the issues; but unhelpful if the definitional argument itself becomes the focus of activity.

**Community
Confidence:**

If public services are seen to be working fairly and efficiently for all members of the community, then the community’s confidence will be retained. Conversely, if services are seen not to be fair the reverse is true, and confidence will be lost. We have seen worrying evidence of the consequences of a loss in community confidence in the civil disorder in parts of the UK in the Summer of 2001 mentioned earlier in the work of Cante.

The desired outcome of building community confidence is the emerging concept of community cohesion, and the fire service should start to see itself as one of the range of cohesive forces operating in communities, and particularly socially disadvantaged communities.

Economic Reality:

The fire service is facing a massive recruitment bulge over the next few years at a time when we are seeing an aging population, and a reduction in the number of young people in the labour market. The Fire Service, if it is to flourish, must be able to attract

a wide range of people with different talents and skills and from different cultures and backgrounds to enter the service at all levels. This is arguably more true of the fire service than many other services for a number of reasons, not least the desire for the re-engineering process taking place in relation to the role of the service as both an operational, and highly technical fire and rescue service, juxtaposed with an increasingly sophisticated intervention and safety service. There is a “gap” that exists between the fire service and other organisations in relationship to our track record on recruitment of women and ethnic minorities so we are starting from a weak position in the labour market.

This economic reality, underpinned by the hard facts of life – an aging population, etc provides a strong rationale for change. If more evidence were needed the costs of the legal challenges that arise from discrimination, serve to enhance an already persuasive economic argument.

Legislative

There is a mass of legislation underpinning equality, much of it also being modernised to reflect societal pressures and demands, again pressures the fire service cannot continue to ignore. These include Disability Discrimination Act, Race Relations Amendment Act, Human Rights Act, Data Protection Act, the Freedom of Information Act; the list goes on, much of it arising from a European dimension as well as a UK perspective. In the near future there will be legislation to prevent discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and age.

It is worth drawing the new Race Relations Amendment Act (RRAA) out of this list for particular attention. The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) are very clear about the fact that they perceive this legislation as providing the step change in society to tackle issues of race and discrimination. In fact, they see the RRAA as the biggest reform agenda in relation to equality since the legislation of the 60’s, and 70’s. The fire service now needs to be able to tune in to this significance and respond accordingly.



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Self evidently, these equality imperatives, and the multi dimensional picture they paint, demand both a sophisticated analysis, and a sophisticated response to make sense of them, and to address the issues in a cogent manner. A response that is supported by a recognition of the intricate and interwoven nature of the problems, and an acknowledgement that there is a need to look much more at fundamental matters, the structure of the fire service, and the systemic or institutional apparatus of discrimination as well as more “superficial” matters. There must also be a recognition that a collective agreement for change is a pre-requisite, and largely already exists, but that the drive to deliver change must place an emphasis on the public good as opposed to any parochial or vested interests. Change, therefore, will be impossible to achieve by absolute consensus of all the stakeholders of the service, but it should be possible to reach agreement on broad principles.

THEMATIC REVIEW

The Thematic Review of Equality in the Fire Service, in 1999, now known as the “FACE” review, was actually not the first major piece of work looking at equality in the fire service. There had been a significant, previous piece of research by the Home Office in 1994, “the Bucke Report”. Bucke broadly speaking enunciated the same issues. The FACE document, however, may be viewed as something of a wake up call to the Fire Service community to realise that equality was a major strategic and political issue it had effectively ignored. It was unfortunate, though, that the climate at the time of publication, immediately following the Stephen Lawrence enquiry, prevented an open, proper or meaningful discourse about the review and the validity of its conclusions, because there were undoubtedly many matters that needed further analysis and debate. It could be argued, for example, that it was flawed in the sense that it “observed” and described symptoms of a problem, and gave a little regard to an investigation of the root causes of the problem. Consequently, the action plan that derived from that Review, “Managing Diversity II” will, of itself, be unlikely to deliver the change needed. At best, the solutions offered may be palliative in holding the symptoms at bay, whilst the causes of the ailment

could “fester” on. At worst, the solutions offered may not be addressing the real issues at all, and skirting around the edges.

The subsequent Leadership Review, “Managing a Modernised Fire Service”, which was spawned by the original equality work, may also be suggested to have similar flaws skirting around the edges of some of the causes of the problem and considering symptoms.

This commentary on the Thematic Reveiws may, at first glance, appear unfairly critical, and a defensive response, but is genuinely not intended to be negative. CACFOA, as the professional voice of the fire service, is also a legitimate target for criticism in that it had not sought to tackle the equality agenda in a robust manner as, arguably, a number of other professional Associations and Institutions had. Nor was there unanimous agreement, even after the review, that there was a need to do so. There was a considerable sense of hurt, not to say anger and a sense of emasculation, following publication of the review. As the visible leaders of the service, certainly to the personnel within the service, the behaviour and approach of CACFOA Members sets the tone for the whole service.

Notwithstanding, the two reviews outlined, and the action plans that have resulted from them, have been very important catalysts and have provided both a stimulus and a focus to enable debate to be raised. They have also enabled a debate to be raised in the context of wider changes going on, particularly the development of the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS), and the role of the Fire Service College, as well as the roles of the stakeholders of the fire community. Hopefully, the reviews have also changed the climate for equality in the fire service to allow change to grow and mature. CACFOA has a clear and unambiguous role in responding to deliver its stated purpose, and its public duty. There does, however, also need to be a recognition by the Service of the incomplete nature of the analysis to this point if we are truly to embrace the concepts of equality and diversity; go forward to remove discrimination and harassment; and to engage and deliver the services people deserve, not least “safer communities”.

To summarise, it is apparent from the forgoing that the Fire Service faces a significant risk if it does not acknowledge and address the imperatives for equality and diversity. This risk is compounded by the societal changes taking place, and the increasingly turbulent environment both within, and outside the Fire Service. The risk is also immediate and demands action; action that tackles both the structure and the culture of the Service.

This document, therefore, deliberately seeks to be challenging to members of CACFOA, and ultimately other, relevant bodies. Probably, as a consequence of this it is likely to be seen as controversial to some. The time has come to ask ourselves **“Are we Serious?”** This document seeks to attempt to address head on some of the difficult issues, and endeavours to offer a more complete understanding of the problems, with strategies to take the Service forward. Given the challenge some may perceive, and given the complexity of the issues outlined it is inevitable that even this piece of work will be incomplete and open to be criticised. That said, it has been assembled in a sense of partnership and honest challenge by the equality network and practitioners of the service with the desire to make progress.

Once CACFOA has come to terms with the document it is suggested that it is offered to the wider Fire Service Community, to help to develop the strategic partnerships necessary to ensure the Fire Service of this century is as successful as the fire service of the last.

2 THE METHODOLOGY

This document, and the work underpinning it, has:

- Reviewed existing documents and reports considered germane to the issues of equality and diversity in the fire service.
- Taken stock of existing studies and current theories on the synergy, and indeed tension, between the concepts of “equality of opportunity”, and “managing diversity”
- Considered a wide body of knowledge through an extensive literature review (See Annex A)
- Encompassed a stakeholder analysis
- The ownership of the fire service’s equality practitioner’s networks who have taken part in assembling the report.
- Developed a range of positions and strategies to lobby Government for change, through the Equality and Cultural Change Advisory Board (ECCAB), and to advance the service by engaging a wide range of stakeholders.

The report also considers the Strengths and Weaknesses of the fire service, in the context of equality, alongside some of the Opportunities the service needs to grasp, as well as the Threats that must be confronted; a SWOT analysis.

It goes on to discuss a number of emerging issues, and offers a framework for CACFOA to move forward with a number of measures to respond to the SWOT analysis and recommendations following from this.

3. **STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS**

The Term “Stakeholder” is used extensively throughout this document, and indeed more widely in day-to-day dialogue. However, it is considered important, in the spirit of seeking to achieve clarity and definitional agreement, to identify who the stakeholders of the fire service might be.

The list was compiled following a small focus group of CACFOA members and it is acknowledged that at this stage it has not been debated and discussed by the other “stakeholders” identified and, self evidently, therefore, is legitimately open to challenge.

NOTE: A glossary of acronyms may be found at Annex A.

Internal Stakeholders

CACFOA
LGA
Office of Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)
HMFSI (UK and Scotland)
COSLA
NJC
FBU
UNISON
RFU
FOA
Individual Fire Authorities
Fire Service College
APFO
Minister for Fire
Fire Policy Unit
Greater London Assembly
Scottish Executive
Networking Women in the Fire Service (NWFS)

External Stakeholders

“The Community”

Government
CRE
EOC
Disability Rights Commission

Special Interest Groups
Recruitment Authorities/Bodies e.g. Connexions
Schools/Colleges – Career Bodies
Faith Communities – Collectively/Individually
QCA/ Accrediting Bodies
Welsh Assembly
Northern Ireland
Isle of Man

IFE
European Fire Services (Free movement of labour)
Other Government Departments
Greater London Assembly
European Parliament

What this brief analysis demonstrates is that there is a much larger group of stakeholders than those “actively” engaged with the current equality debate in the “fire service community”.

The danger, of course, is that confining the debate to a smaller group of internal stakeholders could have the effect of narrowing the opportunities for the service to develop in a wider context. Consequently, it is clear that in future CACFOA, and “the Service” needs to understand better the breadth of the stakeholders involved and actively work to engage with them, both internally and externally, significantly more than it does at present. This degree of “networking” is likely to have costs and resource implications.

4 SWOT ANALYSIS

Before moving to consider in detail some of the concepts around equality and diversity it is important to contextualise the debate by a brief of review strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, a “SWOT” analysis.

Swot analyses are commonly employed as integral elements to the formulation of strategy, and can provide a helpful way of surfacing sensitive and difficult issues that all stakeholders can acknowledge, but can accept or reject, with impunity. The issues raised are presented to advance discussion and designed to “provoke” the discussion, with no particular emphasis placed on any of them, and consequently, do not necessitate any sense of ownership by individual stakeholders. Rather, there only needs to be an acknowledgement of their relevance and agreement about how actually to address them.

STRENGTHS

- The “can do” approach of the Fire Service
- The Public service ethic/high moral integrity of service – often demonstrated in the amount voluntary work of firefighters in communities
- A willingness to adapt to change amongst officers – and many staff
- Effective training and development framework and a belief in the importance of individual and organisational development.
- Despite there being no current, formalised, performance management framework - a high performing service.
- Willing to learn from others – from JOA course onwards a requirement to benchmark against other public/private sector organisations, including international services.
- Well educated, highly skilled, highly motivated workforce.
- Commitment of “high level stakeholders”.
- High public perception.
- Expectations of the service are clearly articulated through HMFSI Expectations
- Emerging sense of partnership.
- Appetite for cultural change, certainly amongst equality practitioners and new entrants.
- Extensive management training of uniformed officers.
- Effective system of “strategic communications” from the centre, making “direction” possible – Circulars, Dear Chief Officer Letters, etc.
- Strong sense of corporate, social responsibility.
- Consistency in training and development through the Fire Service College.
- Positive Image
- Good relationship with media.

WEAKNESSES (BLIND SPOTS)

- Lack of clarity about where “leadership” of equality agenda resides.
- Lack of clarity about “purpose” and Core Values for the fire service, it is difficult to design a service and change culture when the community expectations as articulated by Government, are vague. There is a vacuum
- Lack of effective, strategic management of change, even when agreed.
- Poor resourcing of any fire service issues from the centre – the time to secure funding for critical issues such as the Radio Project, and New Dimensions are good examples. The refusal to tackle the pension “time bomb” is another.
- Lack of unity of purpose amongst stakeholders, tensions over difficult issues.
- Constraining structures, eg CFBC, Discipline Regulations, to a degree “Expectations”.
- Failure of Burchill to deliver a process to enable change in a timely manner.
- Lack of real commitment to address institutional issues.
- Lack of funding of equality agenda specifically.
- Lack of will to change legislation/regulation e.g. discipline regulations, appointment regs etc.
- Difficult to tackle work/life balance issues and associated conditions of service matters
- Lack of ability to address equality and harassment issues head on within discipline regulations, not designed for behaviour issues, resistance to changing regulations, leading to difficult, drawn out investigations.
- Parochial view of fire service, a lack of input from “critical friends” such as CRE, EOC.
- Poor performance management of Diversity Action Plan, lack of clarity about whose role it is.
- Service is poor at developing and sharing best practice “Silo thinking”.
- Mismatch between high level debate and action on the ground
- Targets seen as quotas
- “Macho” image eg, calendars, “stripograms” etc.
- Self denial of service – leading to blame displacement.
- Perceptions of “Officers versus Men” and “Uniformed Staff versus non-uniformed Staff”.
- No sense of “one-ness” amongst stakeholders.
- Lack of true perception of the expanse of “stakeholders” in the equality debate.
- Lack of consistent management development outside of Fire Service College, and also for support staff.
- Pre-eminent view of the need for “experience” to the exclusion of specialist skill, underpinning the “time served” nature of progression.
- Complex hierarchies, lack of decentralization, an image of homogeneity.

OPPORTUNITIES

- The change out of personnel provides the opportunity to recruit a more diverse workforce
- Opportunity to put in place attractive pay and conditions package, and to attract more talented young people.
- Opportunity to diversify the “business” of the fire service, embrace safety as part of new vision/white paper and enhance the attraction of service as a career to women, black and ethnic communities.
- Opportunity to re-engineer role of National CFS Centre to build bridges into communities to enable more direction and support, secondments of staff, special interest groups, newsletters etc, in support of equality.
- Opportunity to take Equality out of industrial relations arena.
- Opportunity for ECCAB to de-politicise equality matters and to champion issues as well as mainstream equality.
- Opportunity for CACFOA to network and develop strategic partnerships and to take ownership of “the plan” by developing and utilising effective network.
- Opportunity through IPDS to develop a multi-tier entry process to facilitate access for minority groups, at all levels, and to introduce behavioural competence, and a value framework, as well as skills based competences.
- Legislative changes could underpin equality agenda with sanctions.
- New Race Relations Amendment Act provides a good stepping stone for change.

THREATS

- Loss of public confidence!
- Opportunity arising from recruitment “bulge” not taken, targets missed by unacceptable margin.
- Next Thematic Review is unable to support the idea of change taking place, and encourages a negative reaction.
- Delays in regulation change, implementation of IPDS, new recruitment process, funding of facilities.
- Perception of ECCAB as overtly “political”
- Lack of commitment from senior figures in fire service community
- Lack of commitment and visible leadership from CACFOA members, and other leaders.
- Lack of desire amongst the service.
- Prosecutions under RRA etc, introduce a minimalist approach to satisfying legislation
- Industrial relations problems leading to a negative image of service, and making it less attractive to a shrinking recruitment base, particularly amongst minority groups.
- Ageing population/shrinking recruitment base, competition with other occupations that offer better opportunities to target groups e.g. police, armed forces, health service, potentially all these offer better pay and conditions packages as well as career opportunities.
- Maintenance of single tier entry system purely out of a sense of tradition.
- Failure to develop a national strategy as distinct from an action plan.
- Lack of recognition of the need to acknowledge and take account of the wider group of stakeholders.
- Failure to address institutional aspects of discrimination.

5 **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A more extensive literature review may be found at Annex A, but a summary and the central findings of the review are outlined below.

The review has sought to achieve greater definition in relation to a number of terms that are used, and a number of concepts that appear embedded as received wisdom but, in fact, are the source of considerable disagreement. These include:

Equality of opportunity

Diversity

Valuing Diversity

Managing Diversity

Affirmative/Positive action

Employment Equity

By an examination of the academic research and thinking around the topic, the review has also considered criticisms and alternative perspectives within the relevant areas.

A number of issues emerge from this literature review that are germane to the fire service and are summarised in this section of the document.

An outline of some of the legal background to equality is also provided.

The report does not consider in depth the many macro or grand social theories and perspectives on gender or race/ethnicity. There have been volumes written on both these subjects and, given that the purpose of this work is to produce an outcome, it is felt best to focus on the consequences of racism or sexism, to understand and address these, rather than analyse the multiplicity of theories in relation to on their deep roots, and antecedence.

Outcomes Of The Literature Review

Equality of Opportunity versus Diversity?

It is clear, despite all the way these terms have been used in an interchangeable manner in the fire service community for a number of years now, that they are not in fact interchangeable. There are significant differences between the two concepts of

equality of opportunity and diversity. It is also clear that if there is to be a cogent approach to addressing equality and diversity, these differences need to be understood, and definitions need to be agreed to provide a baseline from which to move forward. Ideally, these definitions should be agreed between all the key stakeholders of the fire service community so that there is a solid and progressive foundation, as opposed to one that is merely anecdotal criticism of the history of the fire service, and a reaction to the past.

The distinctive and defining feature of Equality of Opportunity (EOO) lies in its legislative base, building as it has from the Equal Pay Act in 1970 all the way through to the Human Rights Act 2000 and the new Race Relations Amendment Act 2001. The increasing influence of Europe, in relation to the legislative framework that surrounds equalities though, means that the EOO approach remains highly relevant for the fire service. The Government proposes to introduce new legislation relating to discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and religion by 2003 and on age by 2006, though whether this legislation will be as broad as the RRA in its application of a public duty remains to be seen. Clearly, equality of opportunity is very much a live issue!

“Managing Diversity”, on the other hand, has become a term more widespread in the UK over the last few years, and is becoming increasingly influential as an approach. The terminology of diversity has also increasingly entered the “equality lexicon” of the Fire Service, and indeed the term was adopted for the title of the national action plan to address the “equality issues” raised in the Thematic Review.

At this stage, therefore, it is worth offering a working definition of managing diversity.

“Managing Diversity refers to the belief that differences exist between employees but, if properly managed, these differences are an asset to work being done more efficiently and effectively. Examples of diversity factors include race, culture, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, a disability or work experience”.

There are two facets of this definition as it is proposed that distinguish it from equal opportunities. First, the emphasis on the positive perspective of differences among staff, in contrast to the rather negative perspective of disadvantaged, “discriminated against” staff, in equal opportunities. Second, the inclusion of factors of “difference” or diversity that go beyond those covered by law, for example sexual orientation.

One of the most fundamental questions this contrast poses, though, is whether “managing diversity” is really substantially different from equal opportunities? Or, is it a step forward from equal opportunities, which is the manner in which it appears to have been presented to the fire service. Other questions also arise. For example, do equal opportunities and managing diversity have to be mutually exclusive? Are the two concepts interdependent? Does it matter?

Some of these questions do need teasing out and unpacking if they are to provide the platform for a successful transformation of the fire service. “Managing Diversity” could be cynically discussed, in some quarters, as representing nothing more than a change of language to make it more palatable or pandering to political correctness.

Probably the most fundamental difference between the two relates to the force for change from which they emanate.

Equal opportunities tends to be driven by external forces such as the need for legislative compliance; social justice, ethical and human rights, and a concern that people should be treated in an equal way. In contrast, managing diversity is driven “internally” and is directly linked to the “bottom line”. The concept of managing diversity very much rests on a “business case,” instrumental argument, which contends that a diverse workforce will aid profitability. It is argued, by researchers in the field, that by embracing diversity employers gain by making the most of the skills and potential of all employees because:

“The loss or lack of recognition of these skills and potential, usually as a result of every day discriminatory practices is very costly. Consequently, the business case is fundamentally linked to the principles of Strategic Human Resource Management where the human resource and its full utilisation are seen to give a company a competitive edge.” (Casell, 1996, p.55)

So what is the business case for the fire service to embrace diversity and go beyond a minimalistic approach to satisfy legislation? Certainly the bottom line is not profit, and as outlined earlier, the fire service by any measure, is currently a highly successful organisation.

If the Service is to take forward diversity therefore, and be able to communicate the importance of diversity in relation to satisfying “a business case”, then one actually needs to be built, articulated, agreed by the stakeholders and then communicated to the Service in a compelling narrative that convinces people the future is better than the present.

Another contrast between equal opportunities and managing diversity lies in their relative “perspective”. On the one hand, equal opportunities can be largely perceived as an issue most likely to be of concern to personnel departments or “the specialists”. On the other hand, managing diversity, as defined above, may be regarded as a strategic issue in the wider sense, and should be viewed as being crucial for organisational success and to maintain the image, credibility and reputation of the fire service. Accordingly, it is the concern of all employees, but particularly managers who are expected to exercise leadership and act as role models. It is clearly not just those who are in “Personnel” or “HR” managers. The research also demonstrates that diversity requires top leadership, support, commitment and, above all, direction as it should, theoretically, extend way beyond the more legal compliance orientated equal opportunities approach.

A third distinction concerns the focus of equal opportunities and managing diversity. While equal opportunities primarily concentrates on issues of discrimination, with a focus on positive action initiatives, managing diversity is concerned with ensuring that all employees maximize their potential. Managing diversity, therefore, suggests that differences between people should be effectively managed as opposed to being rejected, or viewed as a liability.

A managing diversity approach further differs from an equal opportunity approach since it engages with a wider focus encompassing a range of broader issues and people. Whereas equal opportunities is perceived as relating to specific groups, namely women, ethnic minorities and disabled people, diversity has “individuals” at the center of its focus. This is a concept that can be challenging to the stakeholders of an organisation like the fire service where “flexibility” and “individualism” are not familiar territory. To be effective operationally, the service needs the strength of uniformity and prescription.

Lastly, a managing diversity perspective brings with it an emphasis on organisational culture and management style which are not traditionally part of the equal opportunities approach. It has been suggested that in order to manage and value diversity effectively a cultural transformation is required and that, in a managing diversity approach, it is the organisation which should adapt and change rather than individuals conforming.

The Value and difficulties of Managing Diversity

The notion of managing diversity, though, does promise numerous benefits for those organisations which choose to adopt such an approach. In addition to the full utilisation of these skills and potential of all employees managing diversity can contribute to organisational success since it enables access to a rapidly changing world. Advocates also contend that it enables the best talent to be recruited and enables more creativity. In addition, it is suggested that a managing diversity approach ensures business survival through resilience and flexibility, reducing costs associated with turnover and absenteeism, and improving “customer service” to minority groups, thus improving the “corporate image”.

However, it is also worthwhile noting that Managing Diversity is no panacea and that some of the “softer” benefits that are associated with the approach, such as increased morale, having a competitive edge and more job satisfaction, are very difficult to prove. Further criticisms of managing diversity include the lack of recognition that traditional equal opportunities groups (women, ethnic minorities and disabled people) may also have collective needs as well as individual needs. Furthermore, since all differences are recognised in a managing diversity approach, there is an assumption that all differences are equal. It is clear from the evidence in the Fire Service Thematic Review, and more importantly the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry, that some differences are more equal than others.

Yet another criticism of managing diversity involves the emphasis placed on the role of line managers in diversity management. However, there are questions relating to the practicability of such responsibility given that line managers face considerable difficulties including conflicting priorities, increasing workloads, personal inadequacies and a lack of accountability for equality issues. Combined, these difficulties have the potential to represent an opt-out, as busy managers strive to cope with an “ever increasing volume of work”.

A final key issue relating to the adoption of a managing diversity approach is the potential disparity between espoused organisational rhetoric on managing diversity, and the reality of organisational practices in key areas. This disparity is not so far removed from the fire service declarations of commitment to equal opportunities falling short of the evidence of equal opportunities practices; irrespective of however well intentioned an organisation may be, their claims can only be judged as truly meaningful if there is evidence of their application at all organisational levels. The

Bucke report in 1994, identified a lack of evidence of commitment, a situation apparently unchanged in 1999.

To summarise therefore, there are, self evidently, highly relevant aspects of both equality of opportunity and managing diversity, in relation to the manner in which the fire service must now take forward the equality agenda. There remains a legislative framework around equality and, indeed, this is expanding in its significance not contracting! So whilst the language of diversity may “soften the blow” in some quarters, CACFOA, as a professional association, must continue to acknowledge the importance of the legislative and regulatory framework, and recognise that the only way in which “institutions” can tackle “institutional” discrimination is by changing aspects of the institutional framework, and the apparatus of discrimination. It is because of the continued importance of this, therefore, that CACFOA must continue to seek to influence the recognition of the need to change legislation and regulation, and not permit the pace of agenda to be set merely by tackling the so-called diversity issues.

On the other hand the “managing diversity” approach does have much to commend it, and is without doubt a key part of the toolkit for the fire service’s equality agenda. The national action plan seeks to deliver diversity and CACFOA, therefore, wholeheartedly supports the need to implement that plan. That said, it has already been established in the foregoing that the pre-eminent feature of diversity is the importance of a business case.

So it is important now to shape what that business case is.

6 THE BUSINESS CASE FOR DIVERSITY IN THE FIRE SERVICE

There are a huge number of demands facing the fire service today and new pressures to adapt, to learn, to innovate, and modernise, and to keep pace with the rest of local government, and indeed the world at large. Amongst those pressures are:

- Rapid technological and other change, creating new opportunities and threats and allowing/requiring greater integration of the services delivered by the fire service alongside the services of other public sector bodies, not least as part of the urban renewal/social inclusion agenda, and local strategic partnerships.
- These new services encompass community fire safety but are already going beyond this in a number of brigades to seeing the fire service more as part of an “integrated public realm” working with the elderly and young people through partnerships with such organisations as the Princes Trust, and Age Concern.
- This will inevitably lead to greater porousness between traditional methods of service delivery, and actually between sectors; one good, but contentious example is the fire service supporting the health service through co-responder initiatives in a number of areas.
- Greater organisational complexity will also be inevitable as new technologies, and the e-agenda (there is a public sector commitment to put all services on line by 2005, including the fire service), and organisational forms continue to promote new ways of organising service delivery. The recent regional White Paper, although superficially excluding fire services, will undoubtedly also have a dramatic impact on the structure of the Fire Service. This debate can only be compounded by the New Dimensions regional structure, now being constructed to support the post September 11th operational planning issues, alongside a new communications and radio infrastructure. These factors, and a several more, will inevitably lead to incremental regionalism.
- Increasing “consumer” expectations of service delivery with a more complex array of diverse stakeholders.

- A massive turnover in staff at all levels and ranks, though a disproportionately high percentage of the officer cadre will retire in the next five to ten years.
- Huge financial pressures, an unfunded pension scheme, funding formula changes etc.

This list could go on, but it does serve to illustrate the point that to stand the remotest chance of dealing with this expanse of issues, the fire service needs to be able to attract, recruit and retain talented, innovative people who can rise to meet these challenges in a manner that maintains the status of the fire service in the eyes of the community.

It is apparent that, in future, the role of the fire service will be working much more at the heart of communities, and in particular, disadvantaged, and deprived communities. That role will encompass the traditional firefighting and rescue approach, but it will increasingly encompass a supporting role in regeneration and a wider safety dimension. This could involve almost anything from home risk assessments and fitting smoke alarms, to delivering safety education, to helping to manage “the street scene”, to operating co-responder services and anything in between.

It is a fact, that there is a disproportionately significant level of “visible” ethnic minority communities that feature highly in social deprivation indices, and who may be labelled disadvantaged, not because of their ethnicity but because of their economic and social circumstances. There are large numbers of “white” communities that are similarly disadvantaged. If the fire service is to work at the heart of all these communities then it needs to be more reflective of race, culture and faiths to be able to penetrate all these communities to operate satisfactorily, and not be perceived, or be a facsimile of just one more agency perceived as a threat.

Accordingly, if the fire service does not embrace the need to make a step change in its approach both to embracing equality of opportunity as well as managing diversity, it is highly unlikely to be able to deliver on these issues. This kind of failure, for a service whose tradition and sense of pride is built on a principle of “can do”, will be catastrophic, and so it is as fundamental to the future success of the fire service that it can attract talented people of all backgrounds, and becomes visibly more diverse, as it is to maintain the operational excellence of the service. This is the real business case for diversity!

CACFOA, as the professional voice of the service, therefore, has a clear duty to be at the forefront of ensuring these two issues are taken forward and pursued with vigour, and to be prepared to challenge ourselves and others to achieve this.

7. **A WAY FORWARD**

It is clear that there are now a number of strategic imperatives that mean the Service must go beyond the limited framework of Managing Diversity II if it is to deliver the full equality agenda, and satisfy the step change required in a moral sense but, equally, in a legal sense through the RRA Act, and the other salient legislation.

The narrow focus on “the service” that has characterised discussion to date, and as illustrated in the SWOT Analysis, has resulted in a number of weaknesses, and prevented a broader, more strategic view being taken that places the fire service in the wider context. Consequently, the approach to date has been limited in its parameters and because of the diversity tag, has, mistakenly, seen the delivery of equality to be merely a collection of management actions. Most of the 28 recommendations in Managing Diversity II are targeted either directly at Chief Fire Officers, individual fire services or fire authorities.

The foregoing discourse on “equality versus diversity”, supported by the literature review, demonstrates that, even if these actions can be delivered, and this will be difficult to achieve in a consistent way, they will not address much of the institutional framework of discrimination. There now also needs to be both a supplementary and complimentary framework to move forward.

Moreover, there now also needs to be a reconsideration of the role of a number of the bodies that make up the “institutions” of the fire service community responsible for the stewardship of the Service.

Notably:

- 1 Equality and Cultural Change Advisory Board (ECCAB)
- 2 HM Inspectorate
Fire Policy Unit
Fire Service College
National Community Fire Safety Centre
- 3 CACFOA Equality Networks
- 4 LGA
- 5 Trade Unions

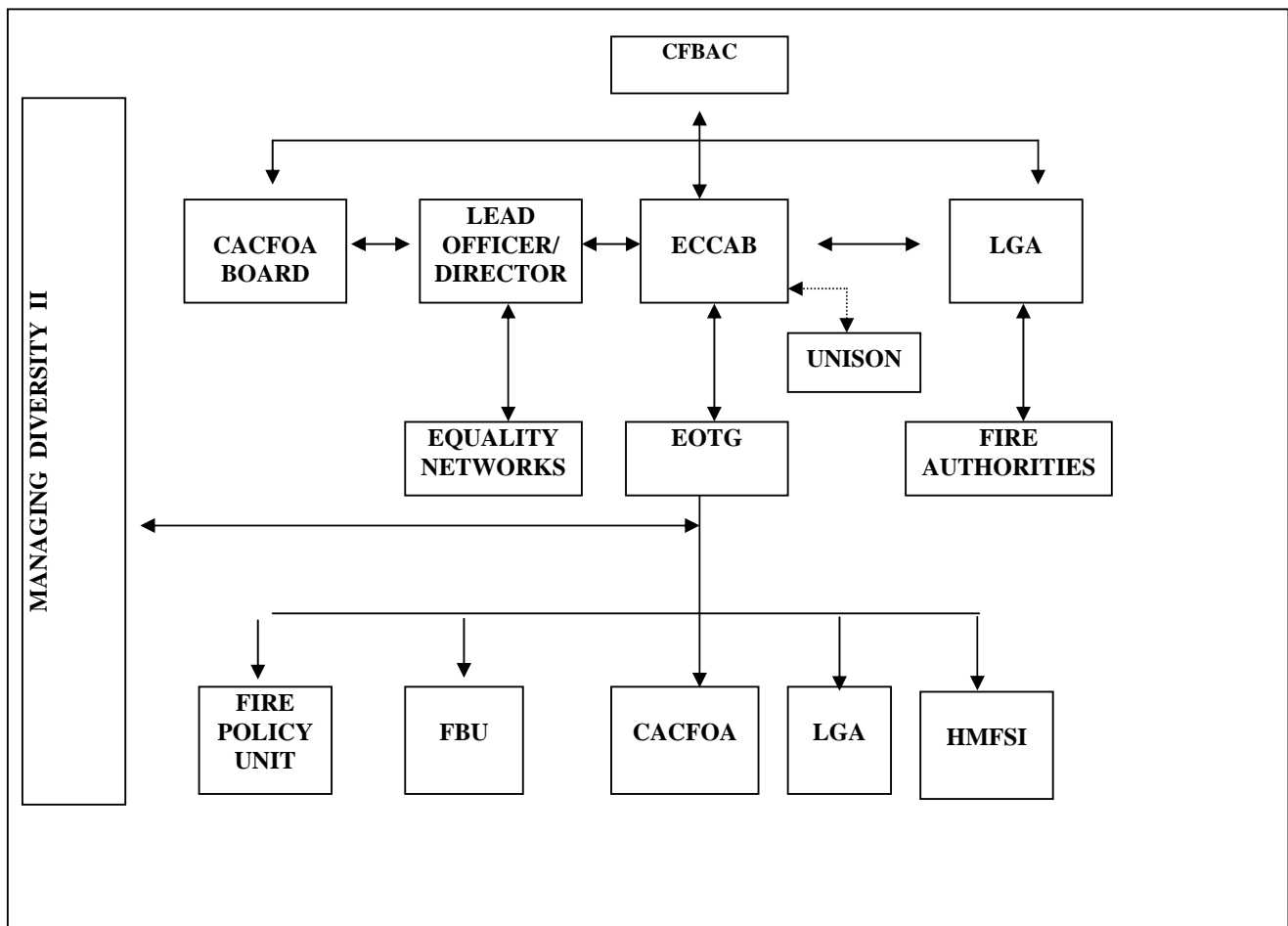
Set out below consequently, is a brief discussion on how these bodies need to adapt to build on their strengths and address some of the weaknesses that have been identified.

ECCAB

It has been identified in the SWOT Analysis that there are a number of weaknesses to the way equality has been tackled so far that have a bearing on the role of ECCAB. Most especially those weaknesses that relate to the lack of a sense of clarity about the machinery and the means to address some of the constraining features such as the discipline regulations, the management and monitoring of the targets, resourcing equality and so on.

It has been agreed through the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council that ECCAB should be the overarching “management board” of the equality and cultural change agenda. Its delivery arm, currently, is a “reconstructed” Equal Opportunities Task Group. However, there are relatively few resources being made available to deliver “the plan” let alone the wider agenda, and there are a number of important stakeholders, external and internal, excluded from ECCAB. Set out below is the existing structure and a schematic of how the “structure” is currently assembled.

Existing Structure



**SPECIAL INTEREST
GROUPS**

It is important in light of the issues that have been identified already that CACFOA should facilitate and support ECCAB as well as the EOTG, and to ensure it does not become overtly political and remains “pure” in the sense of taking the agenda forward. It is also important to press to ensure the wider stakeholders are kept involved.

RECOMMENDATION 1

CACFOA should Support the activities of ECCAB but, in doing so, should also engage with some of the wider, external stakeholders identified in the document.

HM INSPECTORATE/FIRE POLICY UNIT

One of the biggest dilemma, and an issue that has partially stymied the equality debate, has been the absence of any sense of overt leadership and clear policy direction, as opposed to an action plan, or any kind of detailed monitoring of performance against the action plan.

The original EOTG, as a loose coalition of stakeholders, attempted to put a delivery system in place, and to their credit with some limited success. But, in reality, there has been little clarity in terms of real outcomes in a strategic sense. In the spirit of partnership it would be a positive feature if delivery against the action plan(s) could be self-policing through a common community of interest. However, this is neither realistic, nor in line with the current approach to performance management in the public sector where “performance assessment” is more the approach. It is contended, therefore, that the HM Fire Service Inspectorate, in partnership with the Fire Policy Unit should now seek to assert their authority on the performance management of equality and diversity in the fire service, and, in doing so, place equality in the mainstream of fire service activity. That is not to say other stakeholders should be excluded from debate, on the contrary. But, if equality is to progress it does require a sense of leadership and it does need clear sense of momentum introducing into the pace of change. If the new comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) model is to be truly “comprehensive” then it must also acknowledge the strategic importance and significance of this subject. The Local Government Equality Standard provides a helpful self audit framework to assist this process.

RECOMMENDATION 2.

HM Inspectorate, in liaison with the Fire Policy Unit and Stakeholders should devise a clear performance management framework for measuring progress against the national action plan; and for “signing off“ individual action plans in the same manner as Best Value plans, assessed for their “likelihood” of

delivering change. Progress against these plans should be reported annually to ECCAB. CACFOA should encourage practitioners to use the self-audit process contained within the Local Government Equality Statement.

NATIONAL COMMUNITY FIRE SAFETY CENTRE

However, reporting at “the back end” in this way may be seen as a safety net approach, and clearly, the desired approach should be for a much more positive, and proactive partnership approach. What the service now needs, consequently, is a new approach. Such a “fresh start” could be assisted greatly by the creation of a central, national “think tank” for the formulation of policy, for the development and sharing of best practice, and for the kind of creative, and “deeper thinking” about equality necessary to provide the intellectual capacity and learning that the service needs to move forward. The literature review appended provides considerable evidence that people from black and ethnic minority communities, and to a large extent women, have a perception of the fire service that it demands large, white Christian men to be successful. There is also considerable evidence, though, from other “comparable” jobs such as the armed forces, police, etc, that it is not the physical aspects of the Fire Service that is a deterrent to under represented groups, rather it is the macho culture that underpins the image of the physical nature of the job. So there is a real issue about the need to re-engineer “the job”, so that it is seen to be as much about the broader role of safety as it is about the “exciting” or “sexy” role of intervention.

Consequently, it is contended that the time is now right to review the role of the National Community Fire Safety Centre.

Such a review should seek to establish how the fire service builds relationships with communities, emphasising both the safety agenda, and, also articulating the wider operational roles of the fire service, and expanding on the features of being a firefighter that makes firefighting and fire safety attractive as a career. Similarly, such a joint approach could ensure that issues of faith and culture were built in to safety and recruitment campaigns at the point of origin, and start to help the service understand its role in creating a sense of community cohesion.

A re-engineered National Safety Centre could act as a focus for creative thinking and be transformed into a Community Relations Centre or Unit, thus providing secondment opportunities for staff from brigades, and particularly under represented groups, to develop national guidance, best practice, web site, newsletters etc. One of the current difficulties is that the views of the under represented groups, with the commendable exception of “Networking Women in the Fire Service (NWFS) have only been able to

be voiced through the special interest groups of the Trade Union. This is to the credit of the Union and the people involved in NWFS but it does create a potentially confrontational dynamic. Equally, it is considered important that there is more informal decision making at the centre.

Without this review, and without the creation of a new progressive resource such as the one outlined, then equality will be difficult to advance at any kind of pace.

RECOMMENDATION 3.

ECCAB/HMI commission a review of the role of the National Community Fire Safety Centre with the objective of transforming its terms of reference to encompass wider concepts of community relations, and to enable secondments of staff from under represented groups to develop national guidance, and best practice on equality, with the means to share that best practice.

FIRE POLICY UNIT/DTLR

As discussed extensively in the text of this document, managing diversity has much to commend it, and outlined shortly is a suggested approach for CACFOA. But equality of opportunity also remains an important agenda. The institutional nature of some of the apparatus of discrimination can only be dismantled and reconstructed by the Institutions of Government. There does now need to be a recognition, therefore, that the development of equality “for the service” as opposed to individual fire services, cannot take place in an ad hoc manner. It also needs to be recognised that the extent to which equality is seen as a priority in the public sector is essentially a political issue. Government has given a clear steer through the Thematic Review, and the setting of targets, that the fire service is to be considered as part of its wider approach to addressing equality. If the reality is to be achieved, however, there needs to be more causal analysis of the impact of some of the legislative and regulatory framework that has been identified as in need of change. Good examples include:

- The Appointment and Promotion Regulations
 - There are many anomalies difficult to justify from an equality perspective.
- The Firemen’s pension Scheme
 - How would the service cope with job share for the role of firefighters within the existing scheme.
- Discipline Regulations
 - The regulations were designed to deal with incidents or acts of disobedience, they cannot adequately deal with issues of behaviour. Equally, the “court

martial procedure” of the discipline process starts to become problematic with emerging legislation such as Human Rights Act, Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information and so on.

- The “Grey Book” of national conditions of service was established for an all male white organisation. It cannot reflect the wider changes in the workforce at large as more and more women have entered the workplace. For example, it “struggles” to accommodate equal pay issues, job share, flexi time and so on.

This list could extend further, but what it does serve to highlight is that there has not been a full impact analysis of the fire service’s regulatory framework from the perspective of equality.

RECOMMENDATION 4.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister should undertake an impact analysis of the regulatory and legislative framework of the fire service from the perspective of advancing equality. In particular, the analysis should take account of:

Race Relations Amendment Act

Disability Discrimination Act

Emerging Legislation on Discrimination on the basis of Sexual Orientation and Age

The National Conditions of Service

There should be an agreed timescale for this analysis and it should be conducted in a partnership approach that includes fire service stakeholders as well as CRE, EOC and Disability Rights Commission. This subject matter may merit a specific review by the Policy and Innovation Unit.

FUNDING

It is far too easy to “gloss over” the cost of taking forward equality in the fire service. So far it has been anticipated that fire services would resource the equality agenda from within their existing resource base. In support of this, seemingly as a “one off” exercise, £10million of Supplementary Credit Approval was made available to fire authorities. It does need to be recognised though that there is a real cost, and it is significant, and whilst there is also a cost of not delivering equality, and much can be done in collaboration, there needs to be more realism intruded into the discussion.

The examples of cost include:

- Facilities for female firefighters
- Accommodation changes for DDA
- Training
- Targeting of recruitment/cost of recruitment processes
- Support for equality initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION 5.

CACFOA Finance Officers working group in partnership with the LGA do a full costing exercise of the cost of equality for submission to DTLR. The exercise should, however, take a responsible approach and recognise the need for local authorities to accept responsibility for equality as a core activity.

In this context, it is also seen as important that there is a good pay and conditions package for firefighters to ensure the service attracts, and retains, talented people in a shrinking labour market. Retention is undoubtedly going to demand changes in conditions of service.

CACFOA

CACFOA generally, or more accurately Chief Officers in particular, were criticised extensively as part of the original Thematic Review. "Bridging the Gap" examined some, though not all of the issues in more depth, and most of the outcomes of that work have now been "swept up" through the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS). A number, however, remain to be addressed and form the body of recommendations elsewhere in this paper e.g. reform of Appointment and Promotion Regulations.

Notwithstanding, CACFOA does still need to look inward, and ask itself more probing questions, and be prepared to challenge itself.

- CACFOA has never before articulated its own vision for equality in the fire service or provided a compelling narrative for the benefits of equality in the Fire Service.
- Although there is a Lead Officer for equality matters at Board level, equality has not been "mainstreamed" by intruding into the terms of reference and work plans of all working groups, committees and sub committees.

- CACFOA has not sought to ensure a common message is communicated to the membership, or the service, to develop a consistent approach to the equality agenda; for example uniform and mess kit remain highly contested issues to the bemusement of many, the frustration of some, and the annoyance of others. Whilst “symbolically” these issues should not be underestimated in their significance to peoples’ views of tradition, to the external observer they can appear to be tinkering at the edges, and an avoidance tactic by “the elite” unwilling to change.
- CACFOA needs to acknowledge that it “casts a shadow of leadership” over the fire service and these kinds of changes are much more about the cultural web that surrounds organisations and the signals sent to those working within the shadow than they are about pandering to political correctness.

Mainstreaming Equality

A common term encountered in the Equality Lexicon is “mainstreaming equality” but, from a CACFOA perspective what would “mainstreaming” look like.

Currently, the “responsibility” for equality rests with the lead officer, through the network, and loosely associated to the Personnel and Training Committee. This is not unlike the structure in many brigades, where equality lies in the domain of the equality unit or officer.

What now needs to happen is that all portfolio holders should review their portfolios and overlay them with an “equality veneer”. If the illustration of appliances and equipment is considered, for a number of years there has been “an awareness” or realisation that there is a need to factor in to the design of fire appliances the relative height of women as opposed to men. Quite simply, women on the whole are physically smaller in stature than men, hence the review of the height limit as indirectly discriminatory.

Yet the evidence about the true extent to which this has actually taken place, rather than being a discussion, is weak, and some brigades will have made more advances than others. A more positive approach to mainstreaming equality, therefore, would be to programme a formal, structured review or project, inclusive of organisations like the EOO or Networking Women in the Fire Service, to look critically at the design of fire appliances and equipment. Even if the outcome was to continue with the existing design the fact that a review had taken place in an open and transparent manner would be a positive approach.

Equality Network

Following the publication of the Thematic Review, CACFOA established Regional Networks of Equality Practitioners. Whilst there were terms of reference these have become hazy over time. Equally, the extent to which the networks have been effective is variable. One of the difficulties has been though, a lack of clarity in terms of the objectives of the network in the first instance, without a clear strategy in place.

It is pleasing to observe that there is an increasing desire and sense of commitment from the officers involved in these networks, and practitioners more generally, to tackle emerging issues enthusiastically.

In recent months there has been significant re-organisation of the networks and a re-emerging of the Steering Group. Indeed, that group commissioned this piece of work, and it is a positive sign that it has been able to take time to reform and is now in a position to accept a role in delivering change.

RECOMMENDATION 6.

It is recommended, therefore, that there are now agreed, common, terms of reference for the existing CACFOA Equality Networks.

These networks should become regional equality partnerships with a “loose” or flexible membership structure to reflect local issues. The membership could also encompass wider stakeholders such as local CRE, EOC etc.

Following acceptance of this strategy, the regional networks should then take ownership of “packages of work” from the strategy. This will include developing:

- **A new equality vision for CACFOA**
- **A plan to “mainstream equality” into CACFOA business, committees, Business Plan**
- **A delivery framework so that practitioners are demonstrably supporting work arising from Managing Diversity II**
- **A realistic and meaningful mechanism for sharing best practice**

The practitioners should work under the CACFOA umbrella and to commence this new approach there will be a national practitioners workshop. This will hopefully become a bi-annual event for the purpose of sharing good practice as

part of transition to support the recommendation to transform the NCFSC.

Integrated Personnel Development System (IPDS)

The IPDS has been agreed as the framework for performance management in the fire service. It is clear that it cannot exist in isolation and is “merely” the apparatus to deliver the service of the future. It is also an integral element of delivery for the equality agenda. The assessment of an individual’s performance and competence in the workplace must be inclusive of their behaviour and relationships with colleagues and the public, and must take account of the values of the service.

However, IPDS is also an apparatus for designing training. Given that it is national in its sphere of influence it must also encompass the Fire Service College as part of the delivery mechanisms.

Fire Service College

One of the glaring omissions from the equality debate so far has been the role played, or indeed the role not yet played, by the Fire Service College. It is recognised that the College has not been without its challenges and tribulations, not least the financial arrangements imposed on it. This provides a good example of the kind of “institutional” barrier that prevents equality progressing at the pace that is possible.

The College should by now, however, have equality embedded as part of every core progression course; it should be delivering the training for equality advisers, it should provide regular updating for advisers; it should be running professional development services for senior officers and so on. Similarly, equality should pervade the culture of life at the College because, if done well, the College provides a great opportunity to influence the thinking and management culture of every officer trained there.

The extent to which these issues have been addressed is disappointing but it is critical for the future.

RECOMMENDATION 7.

As part of the current review of the Fire Service College the opportunity for the College to work side by side with a new community relations centre to become a centre of excellence for equality should not be missed.

This approach, however, will demand a step change in outlook and culture at the

College, and a preparedness to work with the Service, and fire authorities in partnership; be prepared to accept challenge and be more responsive to the needs of the service.

Alongside culture change at the College itself, equality should be built into all core progression courses, and modules, and new training courses should be devised to facilitate brigade's

- Equality advisers
- Equality training
- Equality practitioners

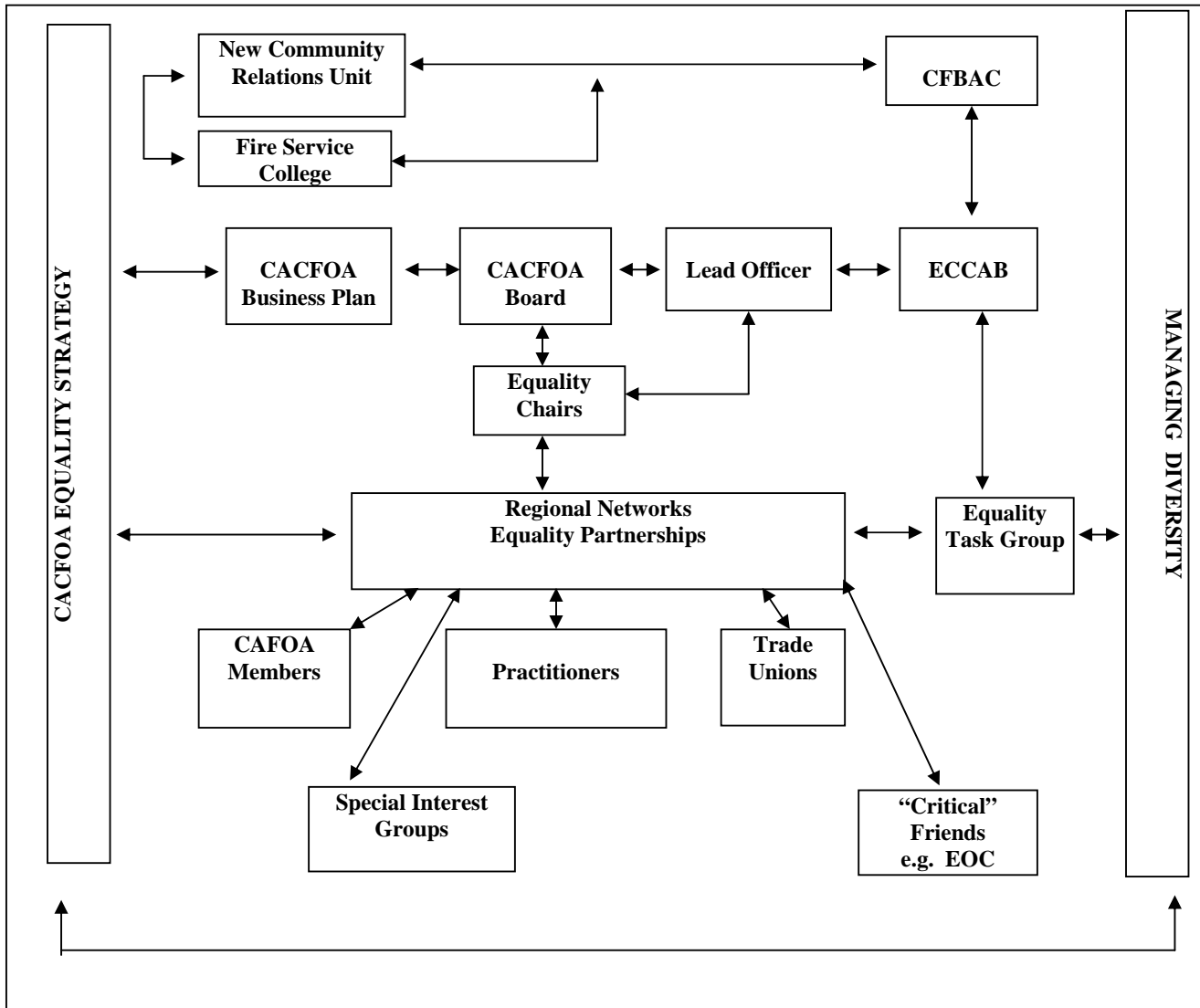
In addition, the College has the opportunity to direct students to research at various levels and provides the opportunity to maintain the knowledge and learning of the service at the cutting edge. For example, cultural awareness/multi faith seminars, legislative updates etc. Many of these issues have particular concerns for fire authorities and a partnership with the LGA could be explored.

Moreover, given the emerging European dimension, the College could facilitate European exchange programmes or equality seminars with the express purpose of advancing equality.

New Structure

Outlined below, therefore, is a new proposed equality structure for CACFOA. It does not fully take account of where other stakeholders fit, at a local level, though it is sufficiently flexible to be able to accommodate all stakeholders at a local/regional level.

PROPOSED EQUALITY FRAMEWORK



FIRE BRIGADES UNION (FBU)

The stance of the FBU on equality matters is, without question, commendable. They have taken a strong line on its importance and they have supported that line with rule changes and a full and frank debate within the union. Regardless of whether it is a defensible position or not, it was undoubtedly a brave decision to withdraw representation from members accused of harassment. That said, there is ineluctably an inherent difficulty for the Trade Union in relationship to supporting many elements of equality and diversity. There is a tension between, on the one hand, wanting to see more women etc in the workplace, yet, on the

other hand, “going to the wall” over suggestions of flexibility in terms of working hours, and changes to working conditions and practices.]

That said, the essential role of the Trade Union is to deliver the best pay and conditions possible for its members and it is an important element of the future that if the fire service is to be successful it needs to be able to offer a pay and conditions package that will attract people.

CACFOA needs to be clear that its role is that of professional advice, not employer, and so it should be possible to develop greater partnership with the FBU in support of this.

8 **CONCLUSIONS**

This research represents the first time CACFOA has set out to consider a debate on the complex issues that surround equality and diversity, and sought to develop a clear strategy.

The research has identified that there are many, and significant, risks and threats that face the fire service by not tackling head on the issues of equality.

The research has also identified, by analysing the relevant thinking and initiatives, that the fire service needs to embrace the approaches of equality of opportunity, ie; satisfying legislation, but it must also go beyond that minimalist agenda to embrace a “managing diversity” approach. To do this, there must be a good business case, and the document has now set this out for CACFOA to sign up to.

In addition, the report has identified the narrow and rather insular approach taken thus far, by the various stakeholders, and acknowledges the importance of now engaging much more with external stakeholders, not least the community. It provides a compelling case for the service to place fire safety work in the heart of the community as the central core of its future role, and to build a bridge into local communities, most especially those communities that currently do not identify the fire service as a career for them, quite simply because they have no relationship with the Service.

Finally, the report has offered a number of practical recommendations that could now form the basis of an action plan to address this important issue, within the main CACFOA Business Plan.

CACFOA needs to recognise the Fire Service has a strong culture, and organisations with strong cultures are, by their characteristics, particularly resistant to change. Predominantly because of the passion and commitment of the staff to their image of “their” organisation. However, the fire service can no longer expect people who are different for whatever reason to hide or adapt their “difference” simply to fit into the dominant culture. The entrants to the service in future represent a wider community whose values have moved beyond accepting “things have always been this way”

Once CACFOA has discussed the views expressed in the paper, and agreed a way forward, the Practitioners Network may then take ownership of the report, and the delivery of the recommendations, and the plan.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1.

CACFOA should support the activities of ECCAB but, in doing so, also engage with some of the wider, external stakeholders identified in this document.

RECOMMENDATION 2.

HM Inspectorate in liaison with the Fire Policy Unit and Stakeholders should devise a clear performance management framework for measuring progress against the national action plan; for “signing of” individual action plans in the same manner as Best Value plans which are assessed for their “likelihood” of delivering change. Progress against these plans should be reported annually to ECCAB. CACFOA should encourage practitioners to use the self-audit processes contained within the Local Government Equality Standard.

RECOMMENDATION 3.

ECCAB/HMI commission a review of the role of the National Community Fire Safety Centre with the objective of transforming its terms of reference to encompass wider concepts of community relations, and to enable secondments of staff from under represented groups to develop national guidance, and best practice on equality, with the means to share that best practice.

RECOMMENDATION 4.

The DTLR should undertake an impact analysis of the regulatory and legislative framework of the fire service from the perspective of advancing equality. In particular, the analysis should take account of:

**Race Relations Amendment Act
Disability Discrimination Act
Emerging Legislation on Discrimination on the basis of Sexual
Orientation and Age
The National Conditions of Service**

There should be an agreed timescale for this analysis and it should be

conducted in a partnership approach that includes fire service stakeholders as well as CRE, EOC and Disability Rights Commission. This subject matter may merit a specific review by the Policy and Innovation Unit.

RECOMMENDATION 5.

CACFOA Finance Officers working group in partnership with the LGA do a full costing exercise of the cost of equality for submission to DTLR. The exercise should, however, take a responsible approach and recognise the need for local authorities to accept responsibility for equality as a core activity.

In this context, it is also seen as important that there is a good pay and conditions package for firefighters to ensure the service attracts, and retains talented people in a shrinking labour market. Retention is undoubtedly going to demand changes in conditions of service.

RECOMMENDATION 6.

It is recommended that there are agreed, common, terms of reference for the existing CACFOA Equality Networks.

These networks should become regional equality partnerships with a “loose” or flexible membership structure to reflect local issues, the membership could encompass wider stakeholders such as local CRE, EOC etc.

Following acceptance of this strategy, the regional networks should then take ownership of “packages of work” from the strategy. This will include developing:

- A new equality vision for CACFOA
- A plan to “mainstream equality” into CACFOA business, committees, Business Plan
- A delivery framework so that practitioners are demonstrably supporting work arising from Managing Diversity II
- A realistic and meaningful mechanism for sharing best practice

For example: a review of militaristic practices, core values, investigative and mediation processes etc.

The practitioners should work under the CACFOA umbrella and to commence

this new approach there will be a national practitioners workshop. This will hopefully become a bi-annual event for the purpose of sharing good practice as part of transition to support the recommendation to transform the NCFSC.

RECOMMENDATION 7.

As part of the current review of the Fire Service College the opportunity for the College to work side by side with a new community relations centre to become a centre of excellence for equality should not be missed.

This approach, however, will demand a step change in outlook and culture at the College, and a preparedness to work with the Service, and fire authorities in partnership; be prepared to truly accept challenge and be more responsive to the needs of the service.

Alongside culture change at the College itself, equality should be built into all core progression courses, and modules, and new training courses should be devised to facilitate brigades

- **Equality advisers**
- **Equality training**
- **Equality practitioners**

In addition, the College has the opportunity to direct students to research topics at various levels and provides the opportunity to maintain the knowledge and learning of the service at the cutting edge. For example, cultural awareness/multi faith seminars, legislative updates etc. Many of these issues have particular concerns for fire authorities and a partnership with the LGA could be explored.

Moreover, given the emerging European dimension, the College could facilitate European exchange programmes or equality seminars with the express purpose of advancing equality.

ANNEXES

ANNEX A

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

UK	United Kingdom
RRA	Race Relations Act
CRE	The Commission for Racial Equality
FACE	Facing A Cultural Equality
CACFOA	Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association
ECCAB	Equality and Cultural Change Advisory Board
LGA	Local Government Association
HMFSI	Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
COSLA	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
NJC	National Joint Council
FBU	Fire Brigades Union
RFU	Retained Firefighters Union
FOA	Fire Officers Association
APFO	Association of Principal Fire Officers
IFE	Institution of Fire Engineers
CFBAC	Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council
NCFSC	National Community Fire Safety Centre
IPDS	Integrated Personal Development System
EOO	Equality of Opportunity
FSC	Fire Service College
FPU	Fire Policy Unit
EOTG	Equal Opportunities Task Group
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DRC	Disability Rights Commission
HRA	Human Rights Act
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
TUC	Trade Union Congress
CCT	Compulsory Competitive Tendering
HR	Human Resource
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission

ANNEX B

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

- 1 For a document of this nature, that seeks to be a blue print for practitioners and practical people to take forward a meaningful agenda for the fire service, it is important not to become too academic or theoretical.

Notwithstanding this aspiration, one of the criticisms that has been levelled at a number of the major reports on equality issues in the fire service that have so far been produced, is that they lack the congruence of any kind of structured theoretical or empirical underpinning. They may also be criticised from the perspective that they consider the fire service almost as if it were in a vacuum, there is no sense of context or relativity to other organisations or walks of life. Is the fire service really that much worse than others, or does it merely reflect society in all its bigotry? Given that the reports were very much related to observation of the service at a particular point in time, the conclusions that were drawn, consequently were perfectly understandable but may in fact be invalid. To develop a meaningful action plan to address problems, it is critical to try to understand the true causal chain that results in those problems. If the cause and effect relationships are not well understood, any attempts to address the deep rooted problems may at best be palliative or, at worst, not be addressing the problem at all, merely concentrating on symptoms whilst the cause of the malady persists.

An illustration of this may be found in the way some of the equality terminology gets “bandied around” without any explicit definitions. Assumptions appear to be made that there is a common and agreed understanding of the meaning of terms being used. For instance, the original Thematic Review was entitled “Founding a Cultural Equality” and the action plan it spawned entitled “Managing Diversity”, and yet nowhere in any of these documents are the terms equality or diversity defined or articulated in the context of the fire service, nor have they ever been in any guidance from “the centre”. Despite this they appear to be considered interchangeable or coterminous with the implication that by simply using them, everyone will know what they mean.

Why is this a concern?

It is actually a significant problem if judgments are to be exercised, and clearly they are, in terms of the success of fire services in being considered “equal and fair employers” by potential recruits, or their success in “managing a diverse workforce”, if there is no clear baseline or starting point, and if the distinctions between these terms are not understood.

Consequently, this literature review has sought to consider and unpack some of the theoretical perspectives on many of these issues, and to arrive at definitions having distilled a range of views that exist. Common definitions, and understanding, founded on valid research, can only assist the development of a more comprehensive, meaningful action plan to enable CACFOA to help take the service forward.

Review

For “Practitioners” concerned about delivery, the breadth of the literature extant on the issues of equality and diversity can be frustrating, obscure and contradictory. Indeed, some facets of the debate are very poorly researched, for example, sexuality.

According to Cousse (2002) the colonial history of the UK, at least in part, explains some of this because access to, and treatment in the workplace, for women and ethnic minorities, did not feature until the 1950's and 1960's, when the effects of post war immigration, started to be felt and popular conceptions, on “race” and “women's rights” started to be challenged. Consequently, these issues did not develop a sense of prominence until after this period and it is in the nature of good quality social science research that it is underpinned by interpreting data on trends and patterns over time. Accordingly, much of the early research that does exist, emanates from outside the UK, typically the United States, Australia and Canada, Countries that had seen large scale immigration at a different period in their history, and needed to face equality related issues before the UK. Ironically, as a consequence of the colonial era, the United Kingdom, in fact, has a long history of hybridity and of multi cultural communities which has also suppressed some of the debate.

Legislation

“Employment equity” legislation in the UK may be best described as somewhat “fragmented”, and has a number of inconsistencies, though in fairness it may be considered quite well developed relative to European countries (Sloane & Mackay, 1997). Equality legislation was initially introduced in the UK during the 1970's, and has gradually been expanded to include more groups and to cover more aspects of employment. In a sense, therefore, there has been a longstanding policy

commitment to equal opportunities (Wilson and Iles, 1999). A distinctive feature is the existence of separate legislation covering sex, race, religion and disability, together with separate enforcement bodies, and separate geographical arrangements in Britain and in Northern Ireland. An additional complicating factor has been the increasing role and prominence of the European community, which takes precedence over UK law, and has increasingly dictated changes in the form of legislation. Good recent examples include the Human Rights Act, the Part Time Workers Directive and the Working Time Directive. The emergence of a regional dimension to government, in relation to the Welsh Assembly, the Scottish Parliament and the regional White Paper are also likely to compound the situation.

Women, broadly speaking make up slightly more than half of the working population and this period since the 1970's has actually been one of expanding employment opportunities in relation to women. This was illustrated in the 1992 EOC Annual Report when the Chair noted that "British women make up a higher proportion of those at work than any of the countries in the EC except Denmark". That said, the "hidden dimension" to this is that most of the growth in the labour force has been in part time employment, and the gender gap in pay, at around 25%, remains wider than most European Countries. Ironically, the fire service is one of the few occupations where there is, and effectively always has been, equal pay, though, clearly, it has never been viewed by women as an attractive enough feature to join. This massive growth in part time employment for women has been a key feature in enabling women to develop a more effective work life balance and juggle the demands of parenthood, with the desire to work.

Racial or ethnic minorities, on the other hand, form only 4.5 – 5% of the population, though their visibility is increased by the concentration in large metropolitan areas.

Similarly, much of the period since the early 1970's, certainly until the 1990's has been one of the growing levels of employment for racial or ethnic minorities, particularly in occupations traditionally the domain of white men, though again much of the growth has been in low skilled or part time employment, with very limited access to managerial positions (Wilson & Isles 1999).

Whilst growth has been an overarching phenomena, there are also a number of other relevant, historical phenomena that impact on the debate. Probably most significant has been the period during the 1980's when there was a focus on the de-regulation of labour markets as a consequence of the emergence of "New Right" political thinking. This change impacted differently on various employment groups but undoubtedly affected women and ethnic minority communities because of the part time nature of

employment. Moreover, this de-regulatory approach encompassed an inherent degree of tension with the desire of those bodies such as the CRE and EOC, charged with encouraging equality of opportunity to increase the extent of legislative controls on the labour market and to adjust the labour market to enable the development of equality.

"The Legal Framework"

A major feature of post war British industrial relations has been the principle of "voluntarism". This is the principle that collective agreements are more likely to endure if they are agreed by the partners themselves, employees and trade unions, without interference from the state or other "regulatory bodies". Thus collective bargaining is held to be preferable to state regulation and it is an approach that has shaped attitudes towards legislation in the labour market.

In the 1960's, therefore, both the CBI and the TUC opposed legislation which would have prohibited discrimination on the grounds of race in employment for the above reason of being resistant to state involvement and regulation. It was not until the 1968 Race Relations Act that these key bodies accepted the inclusion of the prohibition of discrimination in employment, and only then on the condition that the disputes procedure of the relevant industry had been exhausted. Again, the 1980's were a critical period because, for the majority of the labour market, the growth of employment law during the 1980's eroded the tradition of "voluntarism" with just a few notable exceptions that "survived" in the public sector – the fire service being one of them. Once more, the emergence of "new right thinking" and the belief in the power of "the market", reflected in the public sector through compulsory competitive tendering (CCT), was a significant influence. One of the key features of this collective bargaining framework, however, lies on the way remedies must be sought, because each individual seeking redress must file their own application to an employment tribunal, there has never been provision for "class acts" and quotas are illegal.

The real starting point, therefore, for equality legislation was the 1970 Equal Pay Act though its implementation was phased up to 1975. The 1970 Race Relations Act extended equivalence of the equal pay legislation to cover racial minorities, and in 1973, the UK became a member of the European Economic Community and thus subject to European Law, and the Treaty of Rome. In 1975 the European Community issued an Equal Pay Directive which the UK was subsequently held in breach of, so consequently, in 1983 the British Government responded by passing the Equal Pay (Amendment) Regulations. It is important to acknowledge that there is correlation,

broadly speaking, between equal pay and opportunity legislation since, for most of this period, the fire service was one of the few employers genuinely offering equal pay, yet never really publicised it as an inducement to attract more women applicants.

In 1975 the Government passed a Sex Discrimination Act and this introduced two forms of discrimination, direct and indirect. Interestingly, much of the literature illustrating “indirect discrimination” actually cites the example of the fire service’s “old” height requirement of a minimum of 168cm, because this excluded over 85% of women aged 16 – 64.

The 1976 Race Relations Act mirrors the terms of the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act with respect to colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origin. Most recently, and following the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry the Race Relations Amendment Act 2001 has been enacted.

It is clear from all the above that there is, and has been a mass of legislation, but the fundamental question remains as to the effectiveness of a regulatory approach, and the extent to which this employment equity legislation has been successful in removing discrimination against minority groups.

Equality of Opportunity (EOO)

This may be seen as the “traditional” approach to managing “differences” between employees in the workplace, and also access to goods and services. (Cockburn, 1991) suggests that the EOO approach was borne out of the equality legislation across Europe and the UK over the last twenty or thirty years. At the centre of the principle of equality of opportunity lies the ethos that it is wrong – legally, ethically and in terms of being a waste of human resources – to discriminate against groups of employees, on the basis of gender, ethnicity or disability. The identified force for change in terms of EOO is usually external, and it can lead to a narrow, minimalist response to the legislation. Because of this legislative base, and because of historical social taboos, EOO approaches have struggled to grapple with wider equality issues and in particular issues of sexuality. (Rennie, 1993; Storey 1995)

There are a number of competing and complimentary perspectives around the concept of equality, therefore, and it is helpful to assist understanding to divide these into broad approaches. Cockburn, (*Ibid*) on one hand, focuses on ideas of non-discrimination and talks of the importance of the use of formal and fair recruitment systems, where the objective is equality of opportunity, and “equality of outcome”

(see also Jewson and Mason,1980). Cockburn (1989/90) extends this approach to develop the idea of a longer term agenda that focuses on organisational transformation and the range of total inequality within society.

Jewson and Mason (1986) in their research talk about a liberal approach to creating a “level playing field” in which equality can flourish, though they recognise that equal opportunities programmes are necessary to achieve this, including, where necessary, “interventions” to assist the development of under represented groups. They describe the use of positive action as the means to create the level playing field, and one of the key characteristics of their viewpoint is a belief in “the market” as a mechanism for sustaining fairness. It is easy to see how this view resonated with that of the governments of the 1980’s. This is not to say that these governments were opposed to equality, rather they maintained a conviction in the ability of market forces to deliver it.

A more radical view, on the other hand, sees the origins of equal opportunities within wider radical (social) movements and changes. For those subscribing to this radical view it is necessary to see equal opportunities as part of a longer process of change where policy development is seeking to reconcile and balance the interests of disadvantaged groups. This view has much in common with the work of Cockburn who poses a number of these challenging views:

“Equal opportunities is not about treating everybody the same. It is about recognising difference and recognising equality – it is not about joining the status quo, its about changing it. I don’t just want to replace men in power with women in power, I want to replace the way we look at power altogether.”

In the context of the fire service, the “market forces” at play during this period merit some comment.

In the period following the strike in 1978, there was an atmosphere of great hostility and resentment, resulting in the fact that any changes initiated by employers were resisted vigorously. The consequence, however, was the creation of a “climate of resistance” where almost any changes were represented to the workforce negatively as the “tip of the iceberg”. There is good evidence that even equality issues fell into this confrontational approach.

Limitation Of EOO

Shapiro (2000) has considered the achievements of many organisations across Europe whose emphasis has been pursuing equal opportunity goals, and offers five major limitations that can be directed at the approach. Many of these criticisms may

be leveled at the approach the fire service has taken over the years and, to a degree, could be seen to be still embedded in the relevant national action plan:

- Equality objectives are not linked to commercial or organisational objectives
- Equality is seen as the concern of the HR or specialist function
- Equality programmes may create division in the workforce.
- The burden of making adjustments is placed on individuals in terms of their own attitudes and behaviour leading to the perception of abrogation of responsibility
- The focus is on formal processes.

It is worth expanding on these issues a little more if we are to learn how to respond to these criticisms and ensure we encompass the relevant aspects in a new agenda for change.

Equality Objectives are Not Linked to Commercial Objectives

The impetus for equality programmes tends to be a little “high brow” and related to the moral and social rights of individuals and is, therefore, seen as an issue of ethics, rather than one of efficiency. According to Ross and Schneider (1992), this can partly be attributed to policies being adopted in response to legislation. They argue, however, that the law is not an effective vehicle for change since it encourages a minimalist approach. Although some organisations have clearly moved beyond minimum legal standards, few organisations directly link equality issues with their business objectives. Consequently, there is no attempt to understand how inequalities may detrimentally impact on business performance. In the Fire Service the lack of any vision or clarity of purpose to provide unity and a sense of direction makes it impossible to link the benefits of equality to improved performance.

Equality is Seen as the Concern of the Human Resources or a Specialist Function

Equal opportunity tends to be viewed as an issue for the personnel/human resources function, rather than one that concerns all managers and employees. Consequently, equality issues are often marginalized. This marginalisation is often reinforced by the lack of strategic strength of the personnel/human resources function in many organisations, (Price Waterhouse-Cranfield, 1991), such that there is little attempt to align the objectives of equality with the business goals. Within these constraints,

although equal opportunities may be successful in raising awareness of the issues and values associated with equality, it is unlikely that they will become an integral part of organisational life. In a fire service context, the use of uniformed officers “passing through” these key roles in brigades, may, in part at least, explain the lack of emphasis over the years. There is also a clear danger in the outcome of the Thematic Review by recommending a growth in the use of specialist staff rather than a focus on reforming existing staff.

Equality Programmes may Create Divisions Within the Workforce.

There is some evidence that equality programmes in particular, by targeting particular groups of employees, may create divisions within the workforce which mitigate against the achievement of efficient and harmonious working relationships. Such feelings may reinforce the sexist and racist attitudes that the initiatives are intending to overcome (Kandola and Fullerton, 1994; Cockburn, 1990). Again the evidence of the Thematic Review, building on earlier work on the fire service by Bucke (1994) and BRMB (1982) exposes these divisions and, to an extent, so does “Managing a Modernised Fire Service (2001).

The Adjustment Burden is Placed On The Individual

The focus of equal opportunities programmes tends to be on adding special schemes and initiatives to existing organisational and managerial structures (Thomas, 1992). The basic premise which underpins these policies is that specific employee groups require some “additional” training or development to ease their integration into the workforce or to “catch up” with “normal” employees. In taking this approach, there is little attempt to change the organisational values, culture and systems to accommodate the needs of diverse employee groups. Instead, individuals are expected to suppress their differences and assimilate themselves into the prevailing organisational culture (Mandell and Kohler-Gray, 1990). In addition, the targeted groups, commonly women and ethnic minorities, are often treated as being homogenous in their needs and aspirations, showing little regard for other factors that influence their needs. This suggests that the focus of equality efforts over the years has failed to acknowledge the diversity inherent within the workforce.

Focus on Formal Processes

Organisational reform or change initiatives tend to deal largely with formal processes and often have little impact on informal processes, which are arguably the more influential on behaviour. This is a clear danger with the approach being adopted in the fire service with, potentially, an undue focus on recruitment issues because of the targets, to the exclusion of retention issues. A number of spectacular tribunal cases

illustrate the point. The research indicates, consequently, that despite the existence of positive action policies, women continue to face barriers in progressing their career, which can largely be attributed to informal processes. These informal processes continue to reflect the values and attitudes of a dominant culture in which women and other minorities often feel uncomfortable, merely because of their difference. However, many women and minority communities recognise that adherence or conformity to these processes is frequently a necessary requirement for successful career progression (Shapiro, 1997.) These informal processes feature as much within the stakeholders as they do within “the service”, a harasser is a firefighter at the same time as they are a member of their trade union, these are not separate, defining features.

An equal opportunity approach, therefore, on its own may leave the prevailing organisational culture untouched, with employees still being required to conform to norms and practices derived from the “dominant group’s world-view” (Jackson 1992). This also implies that equality programmes do not address the root causes of inequalities and disadvantage, since they leave factors contributing to the undesired circumstances in place (Marshall, 1984).

An important point to draw from these limitations is the overall view of difference inherent within the equality approach currently adopted by many organisations across Europe. The focus of equality and wider management efforts appears to be on conformity or assimilation (Hollistreet al, 1993). That is differences between individuals and employee groups are still seen as “problematic” in achieving organisational success, and certainly this was the situation encountered in the fire service by the Thematic Review team.

It is within this context of the limitations of the equality approach, and the environment of assimilation within organisations, that the managing diversity concept is now entering Europe from North America, and merits more detailed consideration. Before doing so, though, it is also worth exploring the use of “affirmative action”.

Affirmative Action

In the mid 1960’s to early 1970’s in the USA there was an increasing awareness and level of disquiet about deeply entrenched patterns of racial discrimination in institutions of employment and education, with a resulting exclusion, segregation and disadvantage of black communities. The race riots of the 1960’s emphasised this growing dissatisfaction. Consequently, the Government introduced federal regulation that employers who received contracts, grants or other benefits from the Government were required to collect and report data on the composition of their workforce and to set goals and timetables for hiring in order to improve the representation of

disadvantaged groups. The size of the military before during, and post Vietnam, and also as a consequence of the Cold War, meant that there was a great emphasis laid on equality through the military. Probably the example of Colin Powell best illustrates this point. This was “affirmative action,” and is distinguished by the “requirement” to fulfill quotas. Through the 1970’s compliance with these affirmative action requirements was enforced, although not as effectively or vigorously as some critics would have liked (e.g. Benokraitis and Feagin, 1978).

In the 1980’s under the “new right” Reagan and Bush administrations, which were hostile to the principle of affirmative action, enforcement was largely discontinued (Taylor and Less 1992). A number of studies on the effects of affirmative action, however, have shown that those organisations subject to them employed proportionally more black employees and more women than did comparable non-contractors in selected job categories. Affirmative action, as a policy, was clearly intended to deal directly and expeditiously with the systematic – or institutional – discrimination that is embedded in policies and everyday practices, and reflects the historical legacy of discrimination and exclusion in the USA through this period.

It should come as no surprise, consequently, that targets have been introduced for “government” bodies subsequent to the publication of the MacPherson Report, given that MacPherson identified the institutional and intrinsic nature of discrimination in the UK in a similar manner to that in the USA in the 1970’s, though targets do not have the same force or underpinning robustness of quotas. This, essentially, is what distinguishes positive action from affirmative action.

However, affirmative action may be considered a blunt instrument, not designed to address the issue of integrating and retaining racial or ethnic minorities, women and other groups employed under such circumstances. Because of the focus on numerical representation, compliance with affirmative action did not emphasise the importance of changing organisational policies, practices and the “climate” in order to ensure that once employed, members of designated groups would be full and equal participants in the workplace. In fact, there is evidence from affirmative action programmes that this aspiration of full participation did not happen and that continuing discrimination and harassment – including a white male backlash – have contributed to job dissatisfaction and a high turnover among affirmative action groups (e.g. Miller and Wheeler, 1992, Morrison and Van Glinow, 1990).

As a consequence, organisational decision makers in America and Canada have increasingly turned towards ideas relating to managing diversity as an alternative to affirmative action, as well as a way to address the “unfinished business” issues of

retention, integration and career development; the criticisms of equal opportunities. One such broad approach that has been finding support in Canada is the concept of “**employment equity**” and has much to offer the UK as an effective model.

Employment Equity

Employment equity was the response of Canada’s policy makers, in the 1970s, to the persistence of discrimination and disadvantage in employment experienced by women and racial and ethnic minorities. Employees covered by the relevant Canadian legislation are required to collect and report data on the representativeness of their workforce, and to make a plan that encompasses targets for hiring and promotion, and measures to remove discriminatory barriers in employment policies and practices and to accommodate diversity in the workforce. Employers are subject to compliance audits – thematic reviews (?) - and these are available to the public and to the Canadian equivalent of the Equal Opportunities Commission, (EOC), the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

The relevant legislation, requires employees to:

- Provide information to employers about employment equity.
- Conduct a census of the work place based on voluntary self reporting of membership of designated groups
- Conduct a review of formal/informal policies and to identify any that contain systemic barriers.
- Prepare a plan to remove barriers
- Set goals and timetables for improving representation of designated groups
- Monitor and assess the programmes of the equity process with a compulsory three year review of the plan.

The legislation also requires several of these steps to be undertaken jointly by employers and trade unions. The legislation does not impose quotas on employers, rather it requires them to set their own goals for improvement.

Canada’s employment equity policy, not surprisingly, was heavily influenced by the conceptual framework of affirmative action as implemented in the USA; though from its inception it set a course different from affirmative action (Abella, 1984).

Employment equity is generally viewed as an organisational change strategy

designed to prevent and remedy discrimination and disadvantage by identifying and removing barriers in employment policies and practices, and in the culture of the organisation as well, by improving the numerical representation and distribution of the designated minority groups. This Canadian response to inequality has sought to avoid the stigma and controversy attached to affirmative action but, in a sense more importantly, it is also a much broader strategy.

It seeks to recognise the existence of systemic or institutional discrimination, and reflects the reality that the workplace as we know it, was designed by, and primarily for, a working population that was white, Christian, able bodied, male and supported by a full time unpaid domestic worker, the “housewife”.

Alongside this “equality” approach, consequently, the concept of “diversity” has grown, though it is usually prefaced by the words “managing” or “valuing.”

Managing Diversity

Similar to equal opportunities, managing diversity is based on the premise that the workforce is a diverse population, but the term diversity seeks to define visible and non visible differences, over and above those explicitly addressed in equality legislation (Milliken and Martins, 1996). Thus, in addition to differences of gender, ethnicity and physical ability, managing diversity includes such differences as sexuality, age, background, nationality, caring responsibilities, work roles and function, personality type, work style etc. (Thomas, 1992; Cox and Finally, 1995). Managing diversity, while acknowledging the importance of social disadvantage suffered by certain groups, has its focus on valuing people as individuals and its aim is to harness difference in all its forms, to create productive work environments in which everyone’s talents are fully utilised to achieve goals (Chemers et al., 1995; Kandola and Fullerton, 1994; Mandell and Kohler-Gray, 1990; Thomas, 1992).

Underpinning the managing diversity approach is the growing recognition within Europe and North America that assimilation is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain as organisations and customers become more diverse (Ross and Schneider, 1992, Caudron, 1992). Ann Morrison, (1992) an eminent American researcher of diversity, has broadly characterised the distinguishing features of the two approaches.

Business performance is emphasised as a reason for diversity rather than the moral imperative that permeated the affirmative action movement. By making diversity seem as different from affirmative action as possible, though, to avoid the problems

and mistakes that occurred in the past, this strategy creates its own set of problems (Morrison 1992, p 5). In contrast to Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunities managing diversity sprang from a business defined imperative and a management framework.

“Valuing Diversity” programmes, which formed the early diversity work in practice, were soon superseded by the more active “Managing Diversity”, the two approaches distinguished or differentiated, according to their proponents, by the extent to which differences are seen as a source of advantage in “competition” (Thomas, 1990). While valuing diversity aims for recognition and tolerance, managing diversity seeks to harness and capitalise on “sensitivity” to gender, racial, cultural and other differences to create a more dynamic and competitive agreement with culture.

Proponents of managing diversity advance three particular benefits from an approach that encompasses this broader discussion of difference or diversity rather than focusing, as affirmative action did, on gender or race.

First, a focus on a less visible basis of difference discourages stereotypes and avoids the inaccurate assumption that only those things we see make a difference (Stringer 1995 P4)

Second, strategies which recognise all the dimensions of difference are purportedly more inclusive: if the definition (of diversity) includes everyone in the work place, then everyone has a vested interest in understanding diversity and participating in identifying ways to be more effective across differences (Stinger, 1995 P45).

Third, it is argued that the diversity approach reduces the propensity for backlash.

Critique

As with “equality of opportunity approaches”, there are a number of criticisms that may be leveled at “diversity thinking”, not least that it lacks the underpinning and extensive sociological research that exists on prejudice and discrimination. Other criticisms include the view that managing diversity neglects the idea that discrimination, quintessentially, revolves around the exercise of power, and it trivialises the systemic and institutionalised sources of disadvantage. It recasts or redefines diversity as an individual issue that can be solved by educative processes and by individuals exercising choice. It implies that all differences can be managed within the “privilege” of individual managers exercising their managerial discretion (Calas and Smircick, 1993).

In much of the diversity literature – and indeed in much of the work done hitherto in the fire service – diversity is treated as a simple “good” with little attention given as to the reasons why both the term, and its derivative “managing diversity” have been embraced so readily and seen to be much more acceptable than the “old” equal opportunity rhetoric. In whose interests this is, remains largely un-discussed. The label also depolarises or neutralises equality by labeling it as merely “managerial” which fails to recognise that true solutions to disadvantage are inherently political in their nature.

The available research demonstrates that, in reality, individuals in organisations, or indeed in society, rarely act in an individual manner, rather they react systematically to social characteristics that define them – race, gender, sexuality and so on. The argument that “all people are different” reduces the systemic or institutional sources of equality or discrimination to sources of “minor discomfort or inconvenience”. It dilutes organisational responsibilities for ensuring and assuring equal treatment and equal opportunities. In diverting attention from systemic and entrenched causes of discrimination, it implies that solutions lie in the “enlightened” choices of individuals, and that, “with a bit of managerial intervention”, we may all be free to exercise our individual talents and choices.

Much of the work on diversity, therefore, is expounded within what is termed a “rational-instrumental” management paradigm. In other words, it assumes that merely by rationally identifying the costs and “wrongness” of not managing difference, a systematic management approach, or management instruments, can be designed and implemented which sufficiently sanctions discrimination such that prejudice and offensive behaviour disappears.

This, however, denies the existence of endemic sources of inequity and conflict that exist.

The approach expects, and assumes, that through well intentioned and planned actions, and enough management development and training on communication, valuing diversity can become an organisational reality for everybody – with no loss of power, or privilege and no backlash. Managing Diversity imposes a false unity on radically different categories of difference, and converts institutional political and economic issues into matters of human resource management. Black and Smith (1988) term it the “politics of optimism”.

The criticisms of diversity do not render the approach useless to practitioners of equality, nor indeed the fire service. What the criticisms do achieve, though, is a contextualisation of the Fire Service national action plan, “Managing Diversity II,” and provide a compelling argument for CACFOA, as a professional association, to go beyond that action plan.

This outline of the literature available, and the perspectives of equality, diversity and equity, would be incomplete without a brief review of the research and literature specific to the fire service. In doing so, however, there will be a particular emphasis on that which refers or is relevant to the subject matter. Reports on broader fire service matters such as Holroyd or the Audit Commission’s “In the line of Fire”, have been excluded.

Fire Service Literature

The Fire Service and its Personnel (1969).

In May 1969, the Home Office published a social survey on the fire service and its personnel (Thomas, 1969). The objective of the report was to provide information of “direct relevance” to those concerned with “man – management” at the various levels of command in the fire service. It is interesting to note the language used at the time did not conceive that women would ever consider a career in the fire service. The report considered:

- Background of “men” in the fire service
- Reasons for joining and other jobs considered
- Activities during working hours
- Duty systems and shift work
- Part-time employment.
- Social aspects of fire service life
- Promotion prospects and procedure
- Attendance at courses
- Relationship between Officers and “Men”
- Wholtime firefighters opinion of retained firefighters
- Advantages and disadvantages of life in the fire service

But for the bias of the language, the issues covered by the report remain, on the whole, relevant, and the report includes some interesting issues that also remain extant and serve to underscore the perennial and persistent nature of some of the equality issues to be addressed.

A couple of points are worthy of particular note and perhaps go to explaining where the fire service is today.

The vast majority of senior officers in the study, in fact over 70%, had a military background. Equally, they had a significantly higher level of education than the bulk of firefighters who came from skilled manual jobs. Interestingly, therefore, there was little cultural cross over in the world of “officers and men”. If the aspect of social life is then considered, it may be seen that over 90% of officers in the survey described their social life as being in some way connecting with the activities of the Brigade and given that over 55% lived in a fire service house or flat, it becomes easy to understand how a number of military traditions simply carried forward into the service with the officers concerned, in both work and social settings.

British Market Research Bureau

In 1982, the British Market Research Bureau was commissioned to establish some of the issues around the publicity and recruitment of black and ethnic minority applicants to the London Fire Brigade. This was the first real piece of qualitative research on equality and the fire service, and suggested that ethnic minority groups rejected firefighting as a career in favour of what were seen as higher status occupations or because there was an association with the police. What was not clear was how representative these views were of black and ethnic communities in the rest of the country. There still had not been any research done, by this stage, into the issue of gender in fire services in the UK, seemingly, it was the unanimous view of all the stakeholders that the fire service was a male occupation.

The Bucke Report 1994

In 1994 the Home Office commissioned research into equal opportunities and the fire service. The ensuing report (Bucke, 1994) considered, for the first time, issues pertaining to the recruitment and retention of women and ethnic minorities. There is no evidence available to suggest that there had been any guidance or direction given to Chief Officers or fire authorities until this report. The provenance of the work came through pressure being applied by the Equal Opportunities Commission, and a handful of Chief Officers, to acknowledge the under representation of women and ethnic minority groups. At the time the report noted that women accounted for 43% of the country's workforce but only 0.3% of as firefighters. Additionally, the start of a co-ordinated approach to equality across central government departments during this period had highlighted the situation in the fire service during the early 1990's, so that

in 1991 the CFBAC set up the first Equal Opportunities Joint Committee, and some guidance on equal opportunities programmes was promulgated in the form of a Home Office Circular in 1990.

The Bucke report, ostensibly, had two objectives and, consequently, was quite limited in its scope.

- To assess the degree to which the issue of equal opportunities had been addressed by fire brigades; and
- To examine the public image of the fire service with a focus on potential women and ethnic minority applicants.

Nevertheless, and despite its limitations, it came to a number of important conclusions, that, had they been acted upon at the time, may have put the service in better position for the scrutiny applied in the late 1990's. Interestingly, and as set out below, the conclusions had a remarkable degree of synergy with the later work.

The State of Equality

Progress in the brigades studied could at best be described as "patchy", and in some cases, there was considerable "reluctance". Officers in positions of responsibility in these reluctant brigades exhibited a basic ignorance of what equality of opportunity might involve. Conversely, in brigades at the other end of the spectrum, policies were implemented and well understood, and equality was described in terms related to good management practice. What was the difference? To quote Bucke, "full commitment to the equal opportunities policy by senior management", in other words, leadership.

The report also identified that an alarmingly high figure - about half of those interviewed with experience on station, had suffered periods of physical or verbal abuse. Overall, the report clearly identified that there was no quick and easy solution to these problems.

The public Image of the Service

To achieve its second objective the report examined the public image of the service, and the small number of applicants who were women or came from black and ethnic minority communities. The research found that these two groups were significantly less likely to have been exposed to material, or career advice, in relation to the fire service when compared to other, similar occupations. Family connections,

particularly amongst white men, were found to be a major recruitment source, whereas, because of the history of the service, few links existed for ethnic minority communities or women. The other criticism of the report related to the length of the recruitment process, which, together with the dominance of the social networks, resulted in a low awareness of firefighting as an occupation for black communities or women, and because of this image a vicious circle, or self fulfilling situation, had evolved.

The report came to a number of important conclusions, which needed to be implanted if there was to be a serious attempt made to increase application rates from under represented groups:

- Awareness raising of women and black and ethnic community that the fire service was an occupation open to them needed to take place.
- There was a need to acknowledge the perception of the significance of the physical aspects of the role for women - deterred many from applying, the height requirement was again challenged.
- The service needed to be able to assure applicants of a prejudice free environment - sexism and racism were associated with the fire service by these members of the public questioned outside the service, and their perception was borne out in reality by those in the service.

Although this report did result in a number of initiatives, for example the research by the Rubens Institute that led to the abolition of the height requirement, it was, in the main, ignored by all the major stakeholders of the fire service.

This is not said in any critical way, rather a reflection of reality. It was not the case that some members of CACFOA, or the service at large, did not recognise its significance, a number undoubtedly did. But the question does need to be posed in relation to why the report was not instrumental in galvanising the service into action in the mid 1990's when, broadly speaking, it revealed the same situation as that encountered by the Thematic Review Team in 1999 and from which significant activity has now been generated. A number of possible explanations for this are outlined:

- A lack of political will, both at local and central level to take an equality agenda forward.
- A lack of incentive or will for the Inspectorial bodies to place an emphasis on equality through the inspection process, equality was, relatively speaking, ignored until the late 1990's.

- A lack of a perception in the public's eyes of the need for change, media images underpinned the "successful macho" image of the white male service.
- A wider culture in society that was more acquiescent and accepting of racism and sexism.
- A cadre of officers, both in CACFOA and the service at large, who were embedded in the history and traditions illustrated through the social survey of 1969.
- A lack of will to "confront" individuals by fire authorities and chief officers because of a volatile industrial relations climate and wider pressures on the service, pressures that in many people's eyes were more significant than addressing equality; health and safety, and training for competence to name but two.

Many other factors, undisputedly, could be proffered as contributing to the lack of activity after the Bucke report, but the illustrations outlined do demonstrate that the situation encountered in the Thematic Review of 1999 was not something that had taken place overnight, nor was it particularly new.

HM Fire Service Inspectorate Thematic Review of Equality

The initiation of a review into equality in the fire service in September 1998 revolved around a constellation of factors that combined to set the review in a context that was inevitably going to be highly critical of the service. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, and the MacPherson Report, offered a definition of institutional racism that was so broad as to apply to the fabric of almost any organisation in the UK. Additionally, the political climate that permeated the major inquiry, and its aftermath, was such that any attempt to refute or reject labels of racism, or a pervading negativity about institutions like the fire service would have been futile, and invited criticisms of a service "in denial". It is also probably reasonable to say that the conclusions arrived at by the Fire Service Review Team were predictable, and clearly justified given that most of them had surfaced previously in the Bucke report, and there had been little activity in the intervening period to address any of the issues raised by Bucke. The only exception to this, in fairness, was the Fire Brigades Union (FBU). The FBU through the 1990's had undoubtedly appreciated the importance of the equality agenda. As a consequence, they had re-organised the manner in which they sought to address equality by creating a series of special interest groups to focus their activity in particular areas; black and ethnic minorities, the women's network and the gay and lesbian group. The FBU also determined to take a strong line on dealing with harassment by, and to, its members though a policy of "non representation" of those who stood accused of harassment.

Beyond these issues, though, even the FBU, for all the rhetoric of equality, had not sought to pursue actual policies aggressively on behalf of some of these special interest groups, for the very obvious reasons that they come into tension with the function of the “trade union”. Some of the policy changes, to facilitate more women in the workplace for example, fundamentally challenge the perpetuation of the conditions of service of the majority of its members, “white men”.

Clearly, from the above, there is much about the Thematic Review that can be criticised. Conversely, there is also much that can be commended because for all the lack of underpinning theory, concepts and contextualisation, the review nevertheless threw into a harsh spotlight the need for the service to start to grapple with these issues. A number of the outcomes from the Thematic Review, therefore, start to take shape in the context of the previous discourse in this literature review.

What would now be of benefit, however, is to identify which outcomes and this is covered in the body of this report. Alignment of the Thematic Review now needs to be given a priority and which actions are likely to deliver change in the commensurate action plan now need to be given greater emphasis

Additionally, there are clear gaps that emerge when the action plan is considered in light of the body of knowledge and research that exists, and has been outlined in the foregoing. These gaps, clearly need to be filled, and again this report attempts to achieve this.

Managing the Modernised Fire Service – “Bridging the Gap”

The Thematic Review “Bridging the Gap” - ultimately got converted to become a “scoping” document, and sought to address the overriding feature of the equality issue that had come through both the Bucke work and the FACE Thematic Review - leadership. Many of the recommendations of Bridging the Gap, however, rehearsed issues that had been raised before. Two tier entry, the need to review the Appointment and Promotion Regulations, the need to review the Discipline Regulations and so on. In fact, much of the institutional or systemic apparatus of discrimination that cannot be addressed by individual stakeholders and demands the attention of government.

Other relevant Reports

Training Strategy Group

It was unfortunate that in the early 1990's, at the time the group undertook its work, the fire service was in the phase of still grappling with equality. Consequently, the fundamental need to place equality and diversity at the core of training and development programmes for the fire service was missed. It is only in recent times, that the evolution of the Integrated Personal Development System is now starting to capture the need to mainstream equality, and to view it as a key competency within an organisational value structure.

Safe as Houses

One of the overriding concepts that emerges from reviewing the literature, on diversity in particular, is the importance of pursuing good business reasons for equality and diversity. Safe as Houses, offered a compelling narrative for the service to take forward community fire safety in order to save lives. What, in hindsight, it perhaps could have developed more was the link established by Bucke in relation to the perception of women and ethnic minority communities about the role of the firefighter, and the fire service. At a recent equality convention, in a workshop managed by Focus, the company responsible for the equality policies of the Army, there was a clear link drawn between achieving targets for recruitment, and the need to build awareness and capacity in the community about what the Army actually does. No amount of "slick advertising" or targeted advertising, or indeed positive action, will deliver targets if there is no ongoing and enduring relationship with the community, so that potential applicants, and in particular women, and black and ethnic minorities, truly understand what they are "signing up to", and the nature of the organisation seeking to attract them. Community fire Safety, therefore, offers the potential to build these community relations.

Cunningham, Holroyd, Audit Commission, Entec, etc

These reports into major issues around the structure of the Fire Service have not been reviewed extensively because they are not directly relevant to the subject matter. However, given that they are largely responsible for the design of the service as it stands today, the absence of any discussions on equality matters within them serves to underline the omission by all stakeholders.

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