FireWorks: For Equality in the Fire Service

Project Report
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Executive Summary and Recommendations

Introduction

The FireWorks Project - 2003-2005 - was timely in that it fell within the UK Government Social Inclusion Agenda when legislation aimed at removing social and employment barriers to under-represented groups was being introduced and/or strengthened. A diverse workforce is one of the key indicators of a fair, inclusive, democratic society and in 1999 the British Home Secretary set targets for the English Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) which required it to ensure that by 2009:

- 15% of firefighters are women
- 7% of the total Fire and Rescue Service workforce is from minority ethnic groups.

The project, jointly funded by Anglia Ruskin University and the European Social Fund, aimed to assist the FRS in its attempts to meet these targets and address the equality and diversity (E&D) issues identified in the Independent Review of the Fire and Rescue Service by Bain et al (2002)[1]. To this end, the research aim can be stated as:

'To identify and address the barriers to the employment, retention and promotion of women and minority ethnic groups (W/ME) within the FRS.'

However, it was further intended that the research activity required to achieve this aim would provide more than a purely academic report. The research team was mindful that practical help in achieving the Government targets was - in many ways - as important to the FRS as further knowledge of the issues. Therefore, we identified a number of intended research outputs which informed the design of the research with the aim of facilitating networking and the sharing of good practice between FRSs and - where possible - other uniformed emergency service personnel:

- The provision of an arena, throughout the project, for the discussion and promotion of equality and diversity issues in the FRS and exchange of good practice.
- A contribution to the development of policy within the FRS Modernisation Agenda, eg informed comment on FRS diversity targets.
- Practical tools for understanding local communities and evaluating the impact of FRS diversity initiatives including diversity training, and initiatives involving local communities.

Research Methods

The research adopted a multi-method approach. This included literature reviews, accessing key academic texts and policy documents and the use of structured observations, case studies, guided focus group techniques and open and semi-structured interviews. Further, the dependence of the research on underpinning quantitative statistical evidence of patterns of FRS employment and local minority ethnic communities required some in-depth analysis of a range of statistics which also enabled us to comment on Government targets and processes of statistical collection.

Sample and other contributors

The research took place with the assistance of 17 English fire and rescue services, who were selected to ensure that the sample contained:

- A Service governed by one of each of the four types of fire authority: County Council Fire Authorities, Combined Fire Authorities, Metropolitan Fire and Civil Defence Authorities, and the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority.
- Rural and urban fire and rescue services.
- Services operated by primarily whole-time and services operated by primarily retained duty system firefighters.
- Fire and rescue services in locations with substantial minority ethnic populations.

In order to facilitate the collaborative working focus of the research and to provide the researchers with on-going evaluation and monitoring of research activity, a Stakeholder Group was convened with representatives from:

- The Asian Fire Service Association
- The Fire Brigade Union (FBU)
- The Audit Commission

1 Bain et al (2002), The Future of the Fire Service: Reducing Risk, Saving Lives, http://www.irfs.org.uk/index.htm 2/12/05

- ODPM (The Fire Service Effectiveness Division)
- Black and minority ethnic members of the FBU (B&EMM)
- The Metropolitan Police
- The Chief Fire Officer's Association (CFOA)
- Networking Women in the Fire Service (NWFS)
- CFOA Equality and Diversity Professionals
- The Retained Firefighters Union (RFU)
- CFOA National Equality Forum
- Unison
- The Equal Opportunities Commission

Summary of Project Findings

Fire and rescue services are undertaking an enormous amount of work through initiatives designed to address the Modernisation Agenda and in most cases have in place the E&D policies required to meet their legal obligations. The widespread commitment to addressing equality and diversity issues has also been demonstrated through an increase in the level of financing over the past 5 years. Resource allocation was identified as an issue in the HM Fire Service Inspectorate report 'Equality and Fairness in the Fire Service' (HMI 1999). That report identified a huge variation in allocated budgets and found that of the 45 fire services surveyed, 31 had no resources available to support equality. This had changed significantly by 2004 when in only one of our sample fire services was there no identifiable equality budget.

However, despite all this activity, there remains a broad perception that FRSs are not managing to address equality and diversity issues and move forward and in our research we noted that, in many FRSs, there was evidence of a lack of organisational alignment in terms of the embedding of E&D within the Service. This is not really surprising, having regard to the enormous number of centrally sponsored initiatives being undertaken by the Service over the past two years. Nevertheless, there appears to be a real need for alignment of policies and practice with regard to the breadth of service delivery from the employment of under-represented groups to community fire safety. Whilst we have witnessed a proliferation of interventions designed to address issues of equality and diversity, frequently these lacked an adequate supporting theory of change or a compelling body of evidence. For example, the concept of 'workplace champions for diversity' requires much greater evidential support. Evidence for these conclusions derives from the majority of our findings from the project, as summarised below:

1. There remains some confusion about terminology in the field. EG diversity v. inclusion, equality v. fairness, positive action v. positive discrimination, community fire safety v. community outreach, Black and Ethnic Minority v. Minority Ethnic[2]. Some project feedback indicated that this observation constituted a focus on 'semantics' to the detriment of 'getting things done'. However, if FRSs are to understand what they are doing and why they are doing it, they need first to understand what other members of their Service, and other services are talking about! A lack of understanding of key terms such as 'positive action' and 'positive discrimination' lies at the heart of much resistance to attempts to address the issues, whilst the use of inappropriate terms to describe local communities may be detrimental to the achievement of co-operative relationships.

2. There is some lack of understanding of 'who' the local community is. However, this lack of understanding is implicitly supported by the perception of the basis for the Government targets. There is little understanding of the theoretical basis for the targets given the complexity of the occupational setting. In addition, the format for Government statistical output in relation to FRS gender and ethnicity employment data contravened advice from the Audit Commission and Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), with the result that FRSs were implicitly directed towards considering only visible minority ethnic groups in their targets which, in themselves, may cause the Service to be unrepresentative of the local community it serves[3].

3. Many uniform and non-uniform FRS employees saw the ODPM targets as unattainable in a situation where there were few whole-time vacancies and hence very little recruitment. However, the perception of targets as unattainable also seems to lead to initiatives which appear to have been designed for the purpose of 'being seen to be doing something', rather than activities carefully designed, planned and evaluated with the potential to address the issues directly. Such findings reflect the widespread proliferation of activity which is taking place across services under the equality and diversity banner but which is - in many cases - conducted to little observable effect.

4. The reasons for this were often signposted very early in the development of initiatives. For example, in some cases policies were not clearly translated - or translatable - into action plans. Action plans did not always contain clear objectives, and the ownership and responsibility for the implementation and evaluation of action plans too was often unclear. Initiatives were often undertaken as though the needs of different under-represented groups were the same and/or were based on untested assumptions about minority perceptions and other barriers to recruitment.

5. Whilst there continue to be examples of bullying and harassment based on gender and racial/ethnic identity, our research suggests that the relationship of these issues to levels of retention and promotion among under-represented groups in the FRS is not as straight forward as might have been previously assumed. The experiences of women are not always the same as those of minority ethnic members of the FRS, although they are both under-represented

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2 Our observations of the inconsistency in terminology in reports from the ODPM were fed back. For consistency, the Fire and Social and Statistics Branch has agreed to use the term 'minority ethnic' in future publications.
3 These findings were relayed to the Fire and Social and Statistics Branch at the ODPM, who responded positively.

groups. Nor are the experiences of all women, or indeed all minority ethnic members, the same. Previous assumptions about the effects upon under-represented groups of behaviours such as teasing and bullying, must be considered and seen in greater complexity. Despite the undoubted existence of high profile cases of bullying and harassment, we were unable to find conclusive evidence that experiences such as these, due to gender and/or racial/ethnic identity, was a major barrier to the retention and promotion of female and minority ethnic staff in general. Indeed, an increase in these cases may be indicative of a growing intolerance of such behaviour.

6. To some members of FRS management who participated in this study, the fact that very few members of a small female and minority ethnic workforce left the Service, indicates that there is no need to consider retention or promotion a 'problem'. Yet the evidence found in studies of the Police Service in particular, suggests that it is not enough to attempt a large-scale recruitment campaign for W/ME without giving consideration to retention and career progression issues from the outset.

7. A lack of adequate alignment results in multiple activities being organised by people in different roles within an FRS, eg an HR person, a Station Manager and a Crew Manager all organising a retained recruitment day with no definition of the responsibilities of each, or recruitment initiatives being targeted at non-existent whole-time vacancies rather than the recruitment of staff to retained duty system and/or community fire safety roles. However, where such activities did appear to have had the potential to support, for example, a more diverse applicant profile in the future - such as young firefighter programmes - these were generally run by volunteer firefighters with limited support from the FRS.

8. It was often unclear whether training was part of a holistic organisational approach towards addressing equality and diversity. Once again, the Service's approach to delivering E&D training did not, in many cases, reflect an understanding of what was required by the workforce in order for them to integrate E&D within their roles. Very little training needs analysis had been undertaken therefore much of the training observed was designed upon what was perceived to be necessary. There was little differentiation made between 'training' and 'informing'. In many cases, examples of 'informing' were observed under the guise of 'training'. This often focused on policy related issues and personal 'skill' or behaviour development where a knowledge or skill need had not been established. Very little evaluation of training had been undertaken at any level beyond the end of course feedback sheets. Most courses required no evaluation in terms of assessing what had been learned. No examples were found of evaluation of performance in the workplace, impact evaluation on the FRS and thus ultimately service delivery.

9. The primary issue here is a widespread lack of understanding about evaluation. Although some excellent evaluations were observed, in general the FRS were aware that their evaluation processes were poor but did not have the time, knowledge, support or investment to improve. The FireWorks Project Team considered that an understanding of evaluation was key to enabling FRSs to become reflexive organisations with the ability to recognise and learn from their own actions. FireWorks has developed and disseminated two evaluation toolkits - one for diversity training and one for initiatives involving the local community - and a community profiling tool to help FRSs identify their local communities and more accurately target, plan and evaluate their equality and diversity initiatives.

10. Role maps and the national competency framework are not fully integrated into FRS E&D activity. In diversity training, there is little understanding of how the diversity competences within each role can be demonstrated in the workplace. This further manifests itself through the use of out of date materials, and subsequently the over-emphasis of the incidence response part of the firefighter role, in recruitment activity. However, the lack of understanding of roles and competencies within the FRS is reflected within the community where an informed appreciation of the role of the firefighter is lacking.

11. The perception from within the FRS that young people from minority ethnic backgrounds and young women are reluctant to consider the FRS as a career due to concerns about discrimination on the grounds of faith, ethnicity and gender were not borne out by our in-depth interviews. This finding requires further research, however, if it were found to be true, current recruitment strategies developed specifically to overcome these perceptions would be likely to fail.

12. There is a high attrition rate amongst equality practitioners. There is no common understanding of the nature of the role and/or the nature and level of responsibility and authority which may be required to support it. The role is commonly situated with the human resource function which may limit the holder's ability to inform effective service delivery. Further study is needed in this area to discover what the issues and solutions are to maintaining the knowledge base and moving on the agenda via qualified and motivated equality practitioners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Audience	Recommendation
ODPM & CFOA	1. **Should establish a framework for data collection and monitor brigades to ensure appropriate qualitative and quantitative data is collected and used to:** 2. identify and promote successful pathways to FRS careers for women and minority ethnic groups; 3. identify and address issues relating to retention and promotion and post-employment plans; 4. identify good practice and support learning both across the FRS and within individual brigades.
ODPM & CFOA & Representative Bodies	5. Undertake a national targeted multi-media programme to inform the public about roles within the FRS.
FRS	6. Ensure that initiatives with young people to raise the profile of the Service as a career choice are based on young people's real perceptions of the role and potential barriers.
ODPM & CFOA	7. Consider commissioning further research into the perceptions of people from minority ethnic backgrounds on the FRS as a career.
ODPM & CFOA	8. **Develop a common performance management framework for equality and diversity within the Service.** 9. Support FRA in developing a common framework for policy development action planning and monitoring and evaluation of equality initiatives and communication strategies. 10. Ensure that the national occupational standard is adopted and that these standards are applied in an open and transparent manner by all. 11. Review and establish appropriate targets for the representation of women and people from minority ethnic backgrounds in the FRS.
FRA	12. Develop a systematic approach to E&D work and policy development which also supports the FRA performance management system. 13. Ensure that action plans developed for E&D have clear indications of ownership, SMART objectives and evaluation strategies. 14. Consider adopting the FireWorks Diversity Initiative Evaluation Toolkit. 15. Maintain on-going dialogue with women and people from minority ethnic backgrounds on issues of retention and promotion. 16. Introduce shadowing schemes to allow managers to learn best practice in recruitment retention and promotion from other organisations.
FRA & FSC	17. **Training in E&D should be aligned with the needs of the organisation as identified through role maps and national occupational standards.**
FRA	18. E&D training should be based on a training needs analysis. 19. Consider adopting the FireWorks Diversity Training Evaluation Toolkit.
FRS	20. **Develop their understanding of, and work with, local communities by:** 21. profiling their local communities and considering using the FireWorks Community Profiling Tool; 22. using Community Outreach as an umbrella term for describing work with local communities, and further categorising Community Outreach as Community Relations, Community Fire Safety and Recruitment.
FRA	23. Ensure that representatives from local minority ethnic communities are included as stakeholders in evaluating E&D, CFS and IRMP initiatives.
FRA	24. **Equality officers should have more influence on the strategic planning of the FRS.** 25. Review the EQ officer's role and the issues arising from their responsibilities, accountability and strategic placement within the organisation.
CFOA	26. Establish a network for all E&D practitioners.
ODPM	27. Commission research to identify the issues leading to the rapid turnover of staff working as equality and diversity practitioners.

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Managing Change, Managing Complexity, Delivering on Equality

2.1 Introduction

Anyone with anything more than a passing knowledge of the troubled history of the equality debate in the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) cannot help but be struck by the intractability of problems relating to the employment of women and minorities. This chapter seeks to consider some of the context of this apparent intractability. It identifies some of the problems around evaluation and learning for effective change in the Fire and Rescue Service, and wider constraints arising from managing change in the UK public sector. These themes will be developed in more detail in later chapters.

FRS initiatives to support the recruitment, retention and promotion of under-represented groups appear to have provided a modest return on a substantial investment. The FireWorks Project is by no means the first attempt to get to grips with this issue and there are plenty of cynics who have wearily told us that it will not be the last. How do we make sense of such cynicism? How in particular are we to reconcile it with the genuine enthusiasm for and commitment to the equalities agenda that we have found from individuals at all levels of the Fire Service? Undoubtedly there are also individuals in the Fire Service who only pay lip-service to equality but it would be grossly simplistic to explain failures in terms of some kind of shared organisational bad faith. Instead the crux of the problem is the inability to translate broad aspirations and imperatives into organisational delivery.

One cannot help but have sympathy for those charged with delivering equality in the current climate within the Fire Service. We have had our own taste of the problems: our research was itself hampered by the unhappy combination of continuing industrial relations problems, recruitment freezes, and reorganisation at all levels. During the research other priorities (not least the response to the threat of terrorism) were in the foreground. Is it too easy, however, to excuse the failure to deliver by pointing to such problems? There will always be organisational upheaval, unexpected crises and other priorities. Any successful approach to delivering equality will have to recognise and accommodate change and complexity - not use it as an excuse for non-performance.

2.2 The Centrality of Evaluation to Effective Policy Delivery

Designing and implementing effective initiatives in a changing and complex environment requires a high degree of organisational reflexivity - the capacity to reflect on and adjust policy and practice in the light of experience and altered circumstances. In turn, this organisational reflexivity requires a common understanding of the data and the evidence, about what works, and in what contexts. As later sections of this report will show, the FireWorks Project has focused on the philosophy and practicalities of on-going evaluation as a key aspect of delivery of the equality and diversity agenda. Such evaluation not only involves collecting data in comparable ways across the FRS but also requires the development of an evidence-based and shared analysis of this data.

Evaluation as a discipline has grown in sophistication and now potentially has more to offer the FRS as it has become both more theoretically sophisticated and methodologically diverse. Many follow Chen (1990) in arguing that only when the practice of evaluation is theory-driven can it promote organisational learning and improve decision-making (on the grounds that describing success or failure does not provide an analysis of why it succeeded or failed). In recent years, theory-based evaluation approaches have flourished (see Stame, 2004). This is important because evaluators are more willing than previously to confront complex questions of causality. In the case of explaining the apparent difficulty in delivering change in the FRS, for example, there are many possible explanations. As Perrin puts it:

A program may fail to meet its performance targets because the program theory is wrong, in which case it should be replaced with something else. But it may also fail to do so for a variety of other reasons such as: inappropriate targets or measures which are not identifying other possible program outcomes; faulty management or implementation, under (or over) funding, unique circumstances (e.g. an employment training program during a recession or when the only employer in a single-industry town closes); the right program in the wrong situation (e.g. effective for some, but not all, of the types of clients it has been serving), measurement of outcomes attempted too soon or at the wrong time, faulty statistics, and so on. (Perrin, 1998)

In the light of this comment, theory based evaluation involves getting 'inside the black box' and understanding the context - how people, embedded in their organisational context, responded to the mechanisms of the programme (see Pawson and Tilley, 1997, pp32-4). However, this requires a very deep understanding of the organisational context beyond the activities associated with more traditional Value for Money (VFM) auditing (Scriven, 1994). This is what the FireWorks Project has sought to deliver by working closely with a wide range of stakeholders and engaging with their efforts to deliver change. In this sense, our research has been a co-production involving our professional expertise as theoretically-informed evaluators and the experience of practitioners delivering change.

2.3 Wicked Issues in Complex Organisations

Underlying the need to embrace the challenge of real-time policy evaluation is - as we have already suggested - the chronic issue of organisational complexity. A complex system is one in which any single input may have multiple outcomes, and outcomes themselves feed back creating turbulence and uncertainty. Bringing about change in the workplace for the FRS is an example of this. Workplaces are held together by complex processes which include the training and induction staff receive, the values they bring from outside the workplace, the workplace culture, and the attitudes outsiders display. For example, we show in this report that ethnic identity does not exhaust the identity of firefighters from minority ethnic backgrounds; their identity includes their self understandings as professionals, leaders, officers, watch members and so forth (and many more issues relating to their lives outside of work). Complexity can make interventions difficult and outcomes uncertain. This is not a challenge unique to the FRS but is shared across all large public sector organisations. These complexities in public services are unlikely to be transcended and by some measures might be increasing (see Stame, 2004, p64).

The reasons why public services such as the FRS often seem to be immune to direction from above entered the policy debate in the UK through Clarke and Stewart's discussion of 'wicked issues'. These issues were 'wicked' because the problem defied conventional, bureaucratic interventions (Clarke and Stewart, 1997). Clarke and Stewart argue that these issues required 'a new style of governing for a learning society':

- Holistic not partial or linear thinking, capable of encompassing interaction between a wide variety of activities, habits, behaviour and attitudes;
- A capacity to think outside and work across organisational boundaries;
- Ways of involving the public in developing responses;
- Embracing a willingness to think and work in completely new ways… This implies:
- A new style of governing for a learning society. (Clarke and Stewart, 1997, p3)

If there has ever been a 'wicked issue' in the FRS it is equality and diversity in employment. Should the Clarke and Stewart analysis be even partly correct, then the established ways of doing public service need to be changed. However, in the FRS this comes up against a resilient workplace culture of team working rooted in notions of collegiality and a shared experience of risk. It also comes up against deep-rooted identities and hard-won workplace rights and privileges. In the face of this, many commentators suggested to us that the problem resides with the 'organisational culture'. This is a concept that, as our work shows, needs to be carefully conceptualised if it is not to simply be a 'catch-all' explanation for why change is difficult. It is not an independent explanatory variable which can be changed independently of the organisational structures and management systems in place; it is part and parcel of a wider context.

2.4 Engaging with the Wider Context

While it might be tempting to see the 'wickedness' of the problem of delivering on equality and diversity as residing solely in the body of the FRS, this is also an issue about how the FRS is embedded in an increasingly novel and fluid environment. This is important to understand because in recent years the FRS has been not only responding to the diversity agenda, explored in this report, but also responding to a wider set of expectations, requirements, partnerships and perceived needs. In evaluation terms, this provides part of the context within which the various mechanisms intended to influence diversity in the FRS have operated (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). We would therefore argue that any assessment of the achievements of the FRS in respect to delivering the diversity agenda would need to take these into account. There are four public sector drivers shaping the environment of the work of the FRS (to explore these further see: Ling, 2002; Pierre and Peters, 2000; Rhodes, 1997 and 2000; Richards and Smith, 2002; Smith, 1999; Walsh, 1995). These four drivers contain related but distinct elements of change in the policy framework and change in the social and political context that together have significantly altered the context within which the FRS operates by creating:

1 new cross-cutting tasks leading to a gradual increase in the number and complexity of the aims and objectives of the FRS;

2 new relationships involving local and national levels of governance with expectations that the FRS should work with local and national partners to deliver its services. For example, local fire services are included in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment framework for local authorities;

3 greater transparency replacing weakening trust in professionals and bureaucrats associated with the rise of inspection and regulation as a means of managing the public sector. Transparency transforms some relationships (e.g. professional power and relationships based upon intangibles such as creativity, altruism and trust). For the FRS the result is that it is accountable for delivering publicly set targets determined by central government in addition to delivering to standards laid down through inspection and regulation. However, as the Atkinson Review for the FRS and the ensuing debate demonstrate, finding meaningful performance indicators for the fire service is extremely difficult. It might be expected that the introduction of Integrated Risk Management Plans will contribute to this pursuit of greater transparency; and

4 the partial empowerment of new partners in public services involving efforts to engage users of services and their partial transformation from passive recipients to the co-producers of new services. The FRS is expected to develop a different set

of relationships with local communities, businesses, and their representatives. This is especially important for effective fire prevention and community safety. At the same time, communities have themselves been changing, becoming more diverse, often more fragmented, and less deferential. In some areas there is not a well-organised community with whom it is easy to consult.

2.5 Dilemmas of Consumerism, National Standards, Public Preferences and the FRS

The FRS also faces a dilemma not of its own making. It is simultaneously expected to be responsive to local communities and local service users as well as responsive to national standards and meeting national targets. One horn of this dilemma is the need for a more consumerist orientation.

'Consumerism' as a term is used in two different ways in the literature. Firstly, it is associated with the view that only where there are 'real' market choices with purchasers who can spend their money as they choose, and providers who stand to profit if they meet consumers' demands, will both the allocation and production of goods be efficient. The second view is that 'consumerism' is part of a wider process of social change in which individuals have become more assertive of their own needs, less tolerant of tradition, and more willing to experiment with lifestyles and personal identities. In this environment, it could be argued, both the public and the corporate sectors are forced to provide more 'customer care', more choice, and respond with greater fleetness of foot to changing demands. More recently, we have seen more discussions about 'public preferences' and 'public value' as terms describing the preferences that the public expresses and reveals about the kind of services they prefer (this might include, for example, characteristics of fairness and respect) (see Kelly and Muers, 2002).

In public policy over the past twenty years there has been a gradual shift: first from a concern with consumerism in the first sense towards efforts to harness the energy of consumerism in the second sense and more recently to address public preferences in the third sense. This shift was already apparent with John Major's use of Citizens' Charters as a mechanism for improving standards of customer care. Significantly, the incoming Labour Government continued with this initiative (albeit in a modified form). However, they have also sought to encourage responsiveness and more 'bespoke' provision in other ways. Public involvement, for example, was one of the pillars of the Modernising Government Agenda (although arguably not a load-bearing pillar). Similarly, the FRS is expected to respond to the needs of the community and of users of their services but in their case the 'user' or 'consumer' is especially hard to define (particularly where the aim is prevention).

Behind this emerging view is a vision of a less hierarchical distribution of power in which democratic accountability becomes less focused on centralised decisions. On the other hand, this does not always fit comfortably with other pressures on the FRS. We have seen a proliferation of regulations and standards which do not always match the aspirations and perceived needs of the local community. There is therefore an increasing reliance on protocols and national standards. The national curriculum and the National Institute for Clinical Excellence are just two examples of this potentially opposing

trend. For example, Richard Sullivan has claimed that there has been a 44-fold increase in regulations governing biomedical research in the last five years and this is in addition to the quasi-regulatory good practice guidance issued by 'hundreds of organisations' (Sullivan 2003). The dilemma is obvious: people both want a responsive, local FRS and also they want to feel that there are national services with high and predictable standards to which all should have access.

2.6 The What and Why of Equality and Diversity

Improving equality and diversity in the FRS is, then, in many ways comparable with other issues that require a significant top-to-bottom reorientation of an organisation. There are, however, particular delivery issues in this area. These relate to a lack of clarity and consensus about both the rationale and end objectives of equality initiatives, i.e. what is equality and diversity work and why do it? Harsh though it may sound, it is not clear to many people within the FRS - including those actively engaged in the promotion of equality - what successful delivery in this case would look like.

If we take 'race' and ethnicity as examples, there is ambiguity and ambivalence that begins in the wider policy realm - we can see the FRS grappling with fluid set of imperatives and a dynamic social and political context. In the case of questions of 'race' and ethnicity, even over the relatively short period since the landmark publication of the Macpherson Inquiry (1999), the legislative and policy framework for race equality provided by Government and its agencies has evolved considerably. The FRS has had to respond to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, European Union (EU) directives on religious discrimination and new local government requirements. Behind this developing framework is a more fluid constellation of policy and public concerns which at points over the past five years have recast equality issues in terms of tackling institutional racism (Macpherson Inquiry), social and cultural inclusion (Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain see Parekh et al, 2000), community cohesion (Cantle Report 2001), and active citizenship (see post 7/7 fallout).

The shifting emphasis of public and policy concerns combines with a sense that, for many in the FRS, the equality agenda is something driven from outside that they must respond to (or be seen to respond to) rather than something owned and driven internally. As a consequence, we can see a series of confusions and contradictions:

- Targets for recruitment of under-represented groups are attempts to galvanise activity but in the FRS they are almost universally seen as 'unrealistic'. Quite what purpose unrealistic targets play is open to debate. In any case other variables beyond organisational control may make achievement or non-achievement of targets a poor measure of performance. With regard to minorities, there is also a risk that simple targets distort analysis of and intervention in recruitment issues. Ethnic categories used in targets ignore some minorities and the complexities of many people's 'mixed' heritage. Emphasis in targets on lumping groups together also fails to address the varied needs and experiences of different minorities (Platt, 2005).
- As the last point suggests, the FRS has much more to learn about the diversity of local and national populations. In particular, too often the assumption is made that

recruitment of minorities will provide cultural intermediaries who can reach out to particular communities on behalf of the FRS. It is, however, relatively unusual in contemporary Britain to find locations made up of distinct ethnic enclaves - instead we find minorities living and firefighters working in extremely diverse settings (Simpson, 2004).

- Champions of equality initiatives argue that these initiatives are not simply just and fair but that they can deliver tangible benefits to the organisation and the people it serves: this is the so called 'business case'. This way of selling equalities work rings the right bells in the current policy and political environment. In other public services such as Policing, the Prison Service and the NHS, relations with client groups have previously been clouded by racism and problems of cross-cultural communication. It may not, however, be as simple to identify and quantify direct service benefit arising out of better more diverse recruitment to the FRS. Although claims are made for a more diverse workforce being able to improve community fire safety, quite how and why this is requires further analysis and measurement. In any case, the emphasis on assumed service improvement spin-off from better employment practices in the FRS is in contrast to relatively little direct examination of service provision as it relates to equality and diversity.

- Last but by no means least, delivery of equality and diversity is dogged by perennial problems of blurring of objectives. This begins at the top of the FRS where equality is often subsumed by senior managers into a project of modernisation. It continues at a local level where initiatives often claim to have multiple and often immeasurable outcomes that span recruitment and community fire safety.

2.7 Final Remarks

One of our anticipated outcomes at the start of this research project was that we would identify successful equality and diversity practices that could work well throughout the FRS. However, it has become clear that the fluidity of context, the variability of local settings, and the indeterminacy of outcomes, means that what works in one place and time may well not work in another. We also became aware that enthusiasm and commitment were not enough to deliver intended change. Later chapters will support this. Consequently, what may be more important than searching for universal solutions is the capacity to learn from others, to conduct after action review, and to build interventions (such as training) on a clear evaluation of what works and why. The role of outside researchers can be helpful in this process and the European Social Fund allowed us an extended engagement with the FRS, hopefully with benefits for the Service.

Improvement is not a task only for the FRS. Many hands are responsible for directly shaping the decisions in and around the Service. Audit and inspection bodies, for example, have 'never before been so closely involved in the management of public bodies' (Morin, 2001). These should not audit to identify failure so much as holding to account for the failure to learn. Local and National Government, the response to the Atkinson Review, the introduction of Integrated Risk Management Plans, and a more thorough-going analysis of

Community Fire Safety by the ODPM are all likely to impact upon the ability to deliver the diversity agenda. These organisations need to be more systematically aligned with each other and the FRS in a project of sharing data, learning lessons and hard-wiring these lessons into a feasible programme of improvement. The following chapters provide insights into how this may be delivered.

Professor Tom Ling and Dr David Skinner

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FireWorks: For Equality in the Fire and Rescue Service

3.1 Introduction

The FireWorks Project - 2003-2005 was timely in that it fell within the UK Government Social Inclusion Agenda when legislation aimed at removing social and employment barriers to under-represented groups was being introduced and/or strengthened. A diverse workforce is one of the key indicators of a fair, inclusive, democratic society and in 1999 Jack Straw, the British Home Secretary, set targets for the FRS which required it to ensure that by 2009:

- 15% of firefighters are women
- 7% of the total Fire and Rescue Service workforce are from minority ethnic groups.

The project, jointly funded by Anglia Ruskin University and the European Social Fund, aimed to assist the English Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) in its attempts to meet these targets and address the equality and diversity (E&D) issues identified in the Independent Review of the Fire and Rescue Service by Bain et al (2002). To this end, the research aim can be stated as:

'To identify and address the barriers to the employment, retention and promotion of women and minority ethnic groups (W/ME) within the FRS.'

This report contains the detailed research findings which underpin the conclusions and recommendations published at the final project dissemination conference in December 2005. Additional project outputs and materials can be found on the enclosed CD-ROM, referred to throughout the report.

3.2 Research Design

Please note:
Throughout the development of the project it became clear that there remained considerable confusion about the 'language' of equality and diversity within the FRS and externally. Some of these issues are addressed later in this report. At this stage, however, please note that early in the second year of the project we decided to adopt the term 'minority ethnic' (ME) in preference to the previously used term 'black and minority ethnic' (BME) to refer to under-represented minority groups. This decision was made as

we became aware of the number of different terms in use, and consultations undertaken by the Police which indicated 'ME' as the term preferred by people from minority ethnic backgrounds (anecdote, Stakeholder meeting 2005). Earlier papers and presentations therefore, may include the acronym 'BME'.

3.2.1 Objectives and Outputs

Within the overarching project aim, the project team determined four research objectives which would require research both within local communities, and the FRS itself:

	Research Objectives	Focus
1	To identify and examine factors within the Fire Service that limit the recruitment, retention and promotion of W/ME.	Community/Fire Service
2	To evaluate existing initiatives designed to promote equality in the Fire Service.	Fire Service
3	To identify the challenges and myths that prevent W/ME from applying to join the Fire Service.	Community/Fire Service
4	To identify barriers within the Fire Service and the wider community that prevent W/ME from joining.	Community

Table 1. Research Objectives

However, it was further intended that the research activity required to achieve these objectives would provide more than purely an academic report. The research team was mindful that practical help in mainstreaming equality and diversity and achieving the Government targets was - in many ways - as important to the FRS as further knowledge of the issues. Therefore, we identified a number of intended research outputs which informed the design of the research project with the aim of facilitating networking and the sharing of good practice between FRSs, and - where possible - other uniformed emergency service personnel:

- The provision of an arena, throughout the project, for the discussion and promotion of equality and diversity issues in the FRS and exchange of good practice
- A contribution to the development of policy within the FRS modernisation agenda eg informed comment on FRS diversity targets
- Practical tools for understanding local communities and evaluating the impact of FRS diversity initiatives including diversity training, and initiatives involving local communities.

Figure 1. Research Outputs

3.2.2 Research Methods

The research adopted a multi-method approach. We adopted a primarily qualitative research methodology, within which the research team applied a range of research methods including observations, case studies, guided focus group techniques and open and semi-structured interviews. However the dependence of the research on underpinning quantitative statistical evidence of patterns of FRS employment and local minority ethnic communities required some in-depth analysis of a range of statistics which also enabled us to comment on the Government targets, and processes of statistical collection (see Appendix I).

Initially a number of literature reviews were undertaken, in tandem with interviews with FRS personnel involved in equality and diversity. These included equality and diversity officers and managers, human resource (HR) personnel (whose role impacted on diversity and/or equality), and training officers. The literature accessed included academic refereed papers, research reports, and policy documents related to the FRS in England and elsewhere and parallel organisations such as other uniformed services (see literature index, CD-ROM).

From this initial work the researchers were able to identify the success or otherwise of previous work in the field in terms of its impact on the Diversity Agenda whilst allowing the researchers to contextualise their observations from the literature within the key issues as perceived by FRS E&D orientated staff. However this also provided the research with a key insight into the work of E&D practitioners, which we were able to present as an additional project output (see Section 4 and CD-ROM).

For further information on research methodology and methods, please see the individual sections.

3.2.3 Sample and other Contributors

The research took place with the assistance of 17 English fire and rescue services, who were selected to ensure that the sample contained:

- A service governed by one of each of the four types of fire authority: County Council Fire Authorities, Combined Fire Authorities, Metropolitan Fire and Civil Defence Authorities, and the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority.
- Rural and urban fire and rescue services.
- Services operated by primarily whole-time and services operated by primarily retained duty system firefighters.
- Fire and rescue services in locations with substantial minority ethnic populations.

Figure 2. Sample FRS profiles

University ethics protocols were followed in establishing fully informed consent from the Chief Fire Officers of the sample FRSs, plus the consent of individuals who contributed directly. Other ethical issues were monitored and progressed as they occurred, through an ad-hoc Project Methodology and Ethics Committee comprised of the project's senior management team and senior University academics (see the enclosed CD-ROM for details of information and consent forms).

Our work in local communities was targeted on young people (and their families) from minority ethnic backgrounds who were identified through contact with the local Connexions service (see Section 8 for a detailed description of this target group, principal author Dr Ferhana Hashem).

Stakeholders

Additionally, in order to facilitate the collaborative working focus of the research, and to provide the researchers with on-going evaluation and monitoring of research activity, a Stakeholder group was convened with members representing the following organisations:

- The Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA)
- The Audit Commission
- Black and minority ethnic members of the FBU (B&EMM)
- Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service
- The Chief Fire Officer's Association (CFOA)
- CFOA Equality and Diversity Professionals
- CFOA National Equality Forum
- The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)
- The Fire Brigade Union (FBU)
- ODPM (The Fire Service Effectiveness Division)
- The Metropolitan Police
- Networking Women in the Fire Service (NWFS)
- The Retained Firefighters Union (RFU)
- Unison

Figure 3. Stakeholder Group Members

This forum, which met quarterly throughout the project, proved invaluable to the research, not only through providing a 'sounding board' as ideas and issues emerged, but also in enabling the sharing of good practice and facilitating communication between the range of parties with interest in our work.

Seminars

In order to maintain the currency of the project within the fast changing FRS environment and to further involve the FRS in the development of the research, throughout 2005 we held a number of interactive seminars to which members of the FRS and other emergency service workers were invited. The seminars sought contributions from the delegates on three key components of the project:

1: Retention and promotion issues concerning minority ethnic and female employees of uniformed emergency services. At this seminar the primary researcher on this part of the project, Dr Jennifer Shea (see Section 6), led a discussion of her literature review, followed by a structured 'brain-storming' session in which delegates contributed their perceptions of barriers and suggestions of solutions to the retention and promotion issues for these groups of employees.

2 and 3: Evaluation of Equality and Diversity Initiatives. A key objective of the research was the evaluation of FRS equality and diversity initiatives. However, feedback from our early work with E&D FRS staff and our June 2004 conference identified the difficulties they faced in evaluating their equality and diversity initiatives themselves. So, in tandem with the research work of identifying and disseminating 'good practice' in terms of diversity and equality initiatives, two researchers were allocated the task of developing 'evaluation toolkits' for the use of FRS personnel.

The first toolkit to be completed was designed to help the FRS evaluate diversity training. This was developed by researcher Dr Steven Wilkinson, and over 50 members of the FRS attended Steven's well received seminars and made useful contributions to the development of the final version of the Toolkit (see Section 5 and CD-ROM).

The second toolkit to be developed in consultation with members of the FRS, was concerned with the evaluation of community initiatives. William Scaife was the lead researcher for this part of the project, and once again his very well attended seminars took the form of an introduction to his review of the literature concerning community initiatives, and a guided focus group discussion to aid the development of the Toolkit (see Section 7 and CD-ROM).

3.3 Feedback and Dissemination

As well as involving the FRS in the project outcomes through the seminars, the project design included regular opportunities for the team to feedback its progress and disseminate its findings.

A project website was developed and regularly updated with the progress of the research and research outputs. One such research output - the 'Dialogue' newsletter - provided a key means by which E&D FRS professionals could share good practice as well as serving as a vehicle for the dissemination of project findings.

Team members took opportunities to disseminate findings throughout the project through publications, presentations and conferences. Free research conferences were hosted by FireWorks in April, June and December 2004, with a final conference in December 2005. Dr Ferhana Hashem presented some early initial project findings at the B&EMM Conference in October 2004. In March 2005 Dr Jaki Lilly, Research Director, presented the interim findings of the project at the Diversity Happens! Board at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and Dr Jennifer Shea submitted a paper to the Fire and Statistics and Social Research Branch at the ODPM, detailing the team's observations on the Home Office Targets and terminology (see Appendix 1). Further, Zoe Allchorn, FireWorks Project Manager, presented interim research findings at the GMEX conference in Birmingham in November 2005.

Members of the team published articles in the April and August issues of 'Fire' magazine which covered their findings with regard to the operationalisation of diversity policies and the evaluation of diversity training. The July issue of Fire Prevention and Engineers Journal published our observations on FRS community work. At the time of publication of this report, articles on the team's practical guide to community profiling and the final project outcomes are planned for early 2006 issues of 'Fire Prevention and Engineers Journal' and 'Fire' magazine respectively.

At the 10th Annual Fire Service College Conference in October 2005, Drs Ferhana Hashem and Jennifer Shea made presentations on their progress to date, and Dr Steven Wilkinson and William Scaife hosted poster presentations of their diversity evaluation toolkits.

The final dissemination event was held at Homerton College in Cambridge on 12th and 13th December, 2005. At this event - opened with a keynote speech by Beverley Thompson, Head of Race Equalities and adviser to the Director General of the HM Prison Service - each of the principal project researchers and guest researcher Judy Foster (Unison), hosted round table discussions of their findings.

Overall, our records show that representatives from 48 FRSs attended at least one of our dissemination events - conferences and/or seminars.

3.4 The Research Report

Within this report is the detail of the research which supports the conclusions and recommendations published by the project team at our final conference in December 2005 (see Section 1).

We begin with details of our FRS focused work. In the next section, Section 4, we review the context within which E&D work is carried out within the Service and the role of the equality practitioner. In Section 5, Steven Wilkinson reviews E&D training followed by Section 6 in which Jennifer Shea describes her work looking at the retention and promotion issues encountered by operational staff who are female and/or from minority ethnic backgrounds.

In Section 7 we focus on both the FRS and its local communities in William Scaife's review of FRS E&D community initiatives. We conclude the report with a Community focus, with Ferhana Hashem's account of her in-depth work with young people, investigating their perceptions of the FRS as a career choice.

Please review the enclosed CD-ROM for further details of our work, and the tools and toolkits described within the report. The report, tools and toolkits will also remain available on the project website: www.anglia.ac.uk/fireworks

Dr Jaki Lilly
Research Director, FireWorks Project

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The Context of Equality and Diversity work within the FRS

4.1 Introduction

This section describes the findings from the team's evaluation of aspects of the context of equality work in the Fire and Rescue Service. Within this early piece of work, the team reviewed equality and diversity policies, schemes and action plans and the resources and support available for equality practitioners. It was anticipated that the findings would support fire and rescue services in providing evidence demonstrating their adherence to the National Framework, and their effective management of diversity, to the Audit Commission's Continuous Performance Assessment (CPA) exercise (Winter/Spring 2005). The findings from this piece of work were originally presented at the project conference in December 2004. A condensed version of this section was published by 'Fire' magazine in April 2005 entitled 'Exclusive Equality Report: Is the Fire Service Succeeding?'.

'I mean we've got all these policies and procedures and they talk very much about having commitment to it… but personally I just feel it's lip service.' (Equality Practitioner)

Equality and diversity policies, schemes and action plans form the bedrock of all equality work in fire and rescue services (FRS) across the UK. Whilst it is sometimes assumed that the existence of a policy is enough to provide evidence of a commitment to equality and diversity issues, during our research we had observed that in some cases it was questionable as to how policies were, or could be, translated into action, and what these actions (initiatives) were. A review of the literature indicated that such concerns have been expressed elsewhere:

'A charge sometimes levelled at formal equal opportunities (EO) policies is that they are not worth the paper they are written on.' (Hoque and Noon, 2004, p481)

'The argument, in short, is that many EO policies are "empty shells": they contain nothing of substance or value to the victims of discrimination.' (Hoque and Noon, 2004, p482)

'It is unknown whether these programmes are, in fact, producing expected gains, because so few organizations have evaluated their outcomes.' (Comer and Soliman, 1996, p473)

Two major surveys have shown that in the United Kingdom (UK) this cynicism is not groundless. Industrial Relations Services (2001) discovered that some three-quarters of 208 companies surveyed had a disability policy. However, of the companies with a policy, only 40% monitored job applications by disability, only 25% consulted disabled employees and only 53% would allow time for treatment and rehabilitation. The Commission for Racial Equality (2000) concluded that over 90% of employees in the Scottish private sector were covered by policies on race, sex and disability. Unfortunately, less than half of those employers with these policies were able to demonstrate any practical steps that had been taken to put these policies into practice. EDSS (2005) noted that 41% of statutory sector funding requests to a Neighbourhood Renewal Fund had not reviewed their equal opportunities policies within the previous two years to take into account legislative changes.

Thus the initial focus of this research was to ascertain the extent to which equality policies were drivers for change, followed by a second area of investigation into the methods of monitoring and evaluation employed by our sample fire and rescue services. The third focus of the research investigated the context within which equality officers in our sample FRSs worked. Where were they positioned in the organisation? What resources could they call upon?

It was anticipated that a clearer understanding of the context of this work and the connections between policy and practice would assist the development of a more consistent approach which would support fire service equality personnel in implementing equality work more effectively and assist them in the monitoring and evaluation of equality initiatives.

4.2 Research Methods
4.2.1 Documentation

A review of the literature provided us with the context for our content analysis of FRS documentation. Resources and materials that were particularly helpful included a study on equality and diversity in Local Government in England (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, July 2003), papers and sources from the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), and documents and policy evaluation schemes from the National

Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) and Unison. We first of all made a search of equality and diversity related documentation within our sample FRSs and - where necessary - followed up with requests for documentation (see Table 2 for the documentation reviewed). Equality practitioners were consulted in order to ensure that the documents we were reviewing were the most up to date.

Within our review we recorded the purpose of each document, whether it served mainly as a statement of commitment or whether it had been devised in terms of specific actions and the depth to which the policy had been developed. Further we examined whether the documents were generic to equality or specific to particular under-represented groups, the extent to which they were driven by legislation and whether they were written for internal and/or external audiences. Equality and diversity documents were reviewed for statements on *recruitment and selection, grievance and discipline, bullying and harassment and flexible working hours.*

4.2.2 Equality Practitioners

Empirical research - in the form of in-depth interviews with equalities practitioners in 14 fire and rescue services - was first undertaken in early 2004 to establish the context of issues of equality and diversity in the FRS. In 2005 Judy Foster (as Unison representative on the Practitioners Forum and a former equalities practitioner) was invited by the FireWorks team to bring these early interviews up to date through telephone interviews with practitioners. We first established the range of job titles, roles and responsibilities of practitioners across the sample services, length of time in post and development opportunities available to them.

FRS Code	Documentation sourced and reviewed
1	Race Equality Scheme (Draft April 2003)
	Race Equality Scheme (2002-2005)
	Equal Opportunities Plan (2000)
2	Corporate Plan 2002-2007 (statement outlining commitment to creating a diverse workforce)
6	
8	Race Equality Scheme 2002-2005
9	Equality and Fairness Policy (2001)
10	Race Equality Scheme (Revised) 2002-2005
	Equality and Fairness at Work (1)
	Harassment and Bullying Policy (2)
	Equality and Fairness, Equal Opportunities Statement, Business Case for Diversity
11	Positive Action initiatives
12	Race Equality Scheme 2002-2005
	Strategic Plan (2002/9)
26	Equality Strategy 2000-2004
	** CC Race Equality Scheme (May 2003)
	** CC Equal Opportunities Policy (July 1999)
31	Equality and Fairness Policy Statement (Re-issued 06/2002)
	Race Equality Scheme (13/10/03)
35	** CC Race Equality Scheme (2002-2004); RES Annual Report
	** CC Equality Policy Statement
	Diversity Strategy (April 2003)
	Action Plan (Responsibilities of the Service)
38	** CC Fire and Rescue Service 2003/03
	Equality at Work - Human Resources (00/04)
	Equality and the Law (20/08/01)
	Equality at Work (27/08/01)
39	Equal Opportunities Policy Statement (undated)
	Diversity and Equality Strategy (Appendix 2) (December 2003)
	Diversity and Equality Action Plan (Appendix 3) (2004/5)
44	** Fire and Rescue Service Actions (2002/3)
	** CC's Race Equality Scheme Action Plan (2003/4)
	** CC's Functions and Policies, Relevance to Race Equality and Review Timetable
	** County Council's 'Action for Equality'
	** CC's Race Equality Scheme 'Action for Race Equality'
45	Diversity and Race Equality Scheme (2002/3 - 2003/4)
	Harassment/Bullying at Work (2001)

Table 2. Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Documentation Reviewed

We also included questions to gauge how E&D practitioners perceived the organisation understood the purpose of their role, and the context for the post. Additional questions were designed to tease out issues practitioners considered significant, particularly in respect of management commitment to diversity and how this translated to the support they perceived they had within their practitioner role.

Although earlier in the project research had been undertaken on the resources that each service provides for equalities related work, this was not updated in 2005. This was because the research in 2004 had already found that it was difficult to draw robust conclusions, in part due to the fact that some practitioners were uncertain of what resources were available to them. In addition in 2005, there was a demonstration of an increasing trend towards mainstreaming equality activity meaning that the identification of specific resources was difficult.

4.3 Research Findings
4.3.1 Documentation Evolution

We determined four levels of policy development: Level 1 - described a comprehensive policy which included an action plan; Level 2 - described a relatively well-formed policy with little reference to an action plan; Level 3 - described a very brief document and addressed few areas of equality; and Level 4 - described where we found little evidence of the existence of a policy.

In the each of the 13 sample fire and rescue services with which this piece of work took place, the issues of grievance and disciplinary and bullying and harassment were developed to Level 1. However, the flexible working hours had a relatively low profile in all reviewed documents.

Around 37% of equality advisers had written their FRSs' documents whilst (21%) were largely subsumed under their county council's documents. Thirty-one per cent of documents had been written by a member of the management team (15% unspecified managerial role, 11% operational managers and 5% HR managers). In 11% of cases we could not determine the author of the documents.
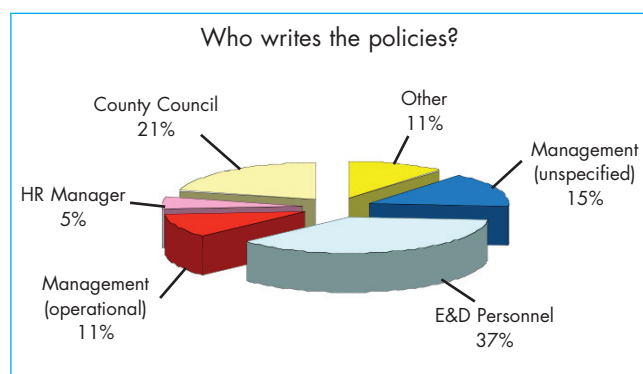
Figure 4. Author of E&D Documents

4.3.2 Equality and Diversity Documentation Portfolio
County council derived documents
We found that the documents devised by county councils were well-informed by the current legislative provisions, well-versed with equality and diversity language and were clear, coherent and user-friendly. County council documents stated what the policy was, and included a general plan that focused upon operational issues but there was little indication of how equality work would be implemented, what resources this might involve, who was responsible for actions, and how such activities would be monitored. Some documents were referred to as 'action plans', although there were no specific 'actions' prescribed within the document. Some county council documents contained specific reference to the Fire and Rescue Service, although others were very general and were sometimes not relevant for the fire service. In recognition of this, a small number of equality and diversity advisers in county council fire authorities had developed their own structured action plans to supplement their county council documents. This figure has been included in the documents written by equality advisers (37%).

Fire and Rescue Service equality practitioner derived documents
Most practitioners in the sample were involved in developing equalities policies and were directly responsible for producing or updating them. In doing so they consulted mainly with internal stakeholders such as the trade unions. There was little evidence of local community involvement in the development of policy in this area.

All the documents written by FRS equality advisers included references to the legal provisions including, as required by the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000), a focus upon the 'general' and 'specific' duties of each service. These documents also included details of structural processes (eg action plans) which took into consideration how policies would be implemented, how resources were to be allocated, what the planned time scale was, whose department the responsibilities were under and when and how the policies and practices would be monitored and evaluated.

Management and HR derived documents
Documents devised by management (especially operational levels) and HR professionals were effective at identifying what the legislative requirements were. However, these documents were generally strategically orientated with little evidence of any structures for implementation.

To be effective E&D documentation needs to be workable, and supported by senior management. Where management had devised the documents there appeared to be a high profile - and thus an indication of management support - to the equality agenda, but the policies were less workable. On the other hand, whilst we found that policies devised by equality advisers were the most likely to have been translated into clearly defined action plans, it appears that some still face resistance in having their policies and action plans accepted:

'I wrote lots of policies and action plans and because they hadn't asked for them, they wouldn't agree them. And I kept saying 'but I know what's coming, this legislation's coming in so I'm writing guidance on this'. 'Well, you've not been asked to do that'. So lots of stuff's sitting there. And now they're realising that it's unfortunate that [they] didn't have the foresight, you know, to push it through ages ago, because it would have been our gain….'
(Operational Equality Practitioner)

And some who had been invited to contribute their comments to policies drafted by management, didn't always feel that their input - where sought - was really valued:

'We keep getting these draft policies, we keep making comments on them, and we don't see the comments appearing in the finalised documents. Should at least be telling people the reasons why comments not acted on. If this keeps happening … I shall be sending out a letter saying 'Don't send them to us anymore. I refuse to do them.'
(Equality Practitioner)

Traditional communication methods such as documentation or orders, supported by training, were used to disseminate policy. However, few practitioners provided evidence of using formal mechanisms to evaluate the impact of policy dissemination.

4.3.3 Equal Opportunities Policies, Statements and Race Equality Schemes

Ninety-two per cent of the sample FRSs had devised their own equality policies and statements. In the main FRSs held an equality policy/scheme or an equality statement and there was a clear distinction between the two documents. Equality policies and schemes were in-depth and included action plans and/or action points whilst equal opportunities statements were visibly less substantial in length and content.

Most of our sample fire and rescue services (62%) had devised their own race equality scheme and a further 31% were subsumed within their county council's scheme. In one FRS - we were unable to find evidence of the existence of the Race Equality Scheme.
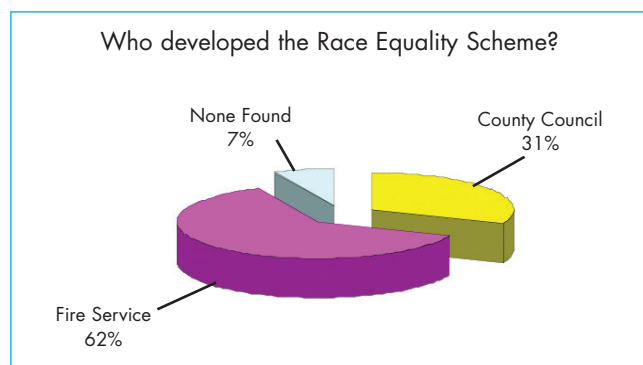
Figure 5. Origin of Race Equality Scheme

All Race Equality Schemes examined were found, in principal, to adhere to the guidelines issued by the CRE and included action plans and provisions for monitoring and evaluation.

4.3.4 Monitoring and Evaluation of Equality and Diversity work

The second focus of research investigated the extent to which fire and rescue services monitored the impact of their equality and diversity work. Documents were reviewed to identify which methods the FRS used to monitor the effectiveness of its equality

and diversity policies and practices. Monitoring included 'staff monitoring', 'member surveys' (this referred to groups associated with the FRS such as local councillors, county council representatives), 'user surveys and other forums' (including local equality and race equality group networks), 'consultation with community groups' (including local ethnic groups/associations, religious groups, women's groups etc) and 'complaints and grievances' from both staff and the public. Additional categories identified more formal monitoring processes such as 'Best Value Reviews'[1], 'Local Performance Indicators'[2], 'Management Assessment Frameworks'[3], 'Baseline Audits'[4], and 'Equality Impact Assessment'[5]. A category for 'Other' was also included.

All fire services in the sample had introduced processes for evaluating their equality work, but the methods of evaluation varied considerably. Although some services used formal structures for evaluation (such as 'Best Value Reviews', 'Baseline Audits' etc) these were not widely used. More often, FRSs had developed their own methods of evaluation and some used a combination of methods.
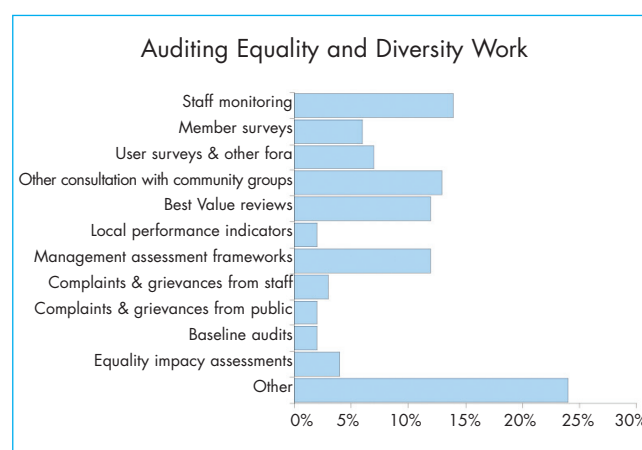
Figure 6. Auditing Equality and Diversity Work

Twenty-four per cent of the evaluation methods used by fire and rescue services were included in the category 'Other'. These included methods of evaluation such as consultation with union groups, seeking advice from equality and diversity professionals and/or approaching other organisations for feedback, such as local authorities.

The process of monitoring and evaluation is an integral part of implementing equality work and our review indicated that FRSs were conscious of the need to evaluate their work, and had begun this process by devising their own methods. Equality practitioners perceived there to be some in-service negativity towards E&D initiatives and considered that their approach to tackling resistance and promoting diversity appears overall to have had limited impact. By 2005, the delivery of training was perceived to have increased understanding in some services, and practitioners considered that remaining resistance was based on deliberate opposition to the promotion of equality - particularly positive action - rather than a lack of awareness (see Section 5 for more information on the effect of E&D

1 Best Value Reviews takes into consideration how responsive the Service is to the needs of its users and whether the services are delivered to a high standard.
2 Local Performance Indicators refers to different levels of service delivery; authorities report their performance against targets and performance plans (ODPM Circular 03/2003).
3 Management Assessment Frameworks refers to processes of consultation, meetings and auditing exercise undertaken by management.
4 Baseline Audits are undertaken in order to assess the needs of the local population.
5 Equality Impact Assessment policies are reviewed at an early stage in order to identify what measures may be unfavourable to certain groups.

training). However, few FRSs had established a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating their equality initiatives, and others were undertaking a variety of methods which were clearly not effective.

4.3.5 Responsibilities and Support of Equality and Diversity Personnel

Our third area of research focused upon the responsibilities and support available for equality and diversity personnel. The objective was to investigate whether it was possible to identify any specific structures within FRSs that were particularly conducive to the support of effective equality and diversity work. The section below includes updated information from the work done in 2005 by Judy Foster (Unison), guest researcher.

Purpose and location of the role

Our initial question was 'Where in the management structure of the fire service is the post-holder(s) responsible for equality and diversity work situated?'. Our research revealed that around 55% of equality and diversity personnel were located within human resource. In some cases (14%) equality and diversity personnel reported directly to a principal officer, while in other cases equality work was located within a dedicated department (7%).

Location of Equality Role
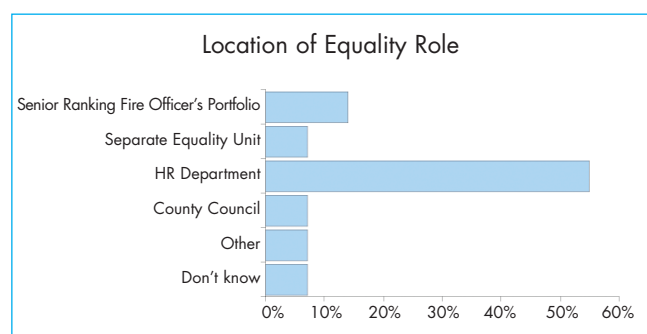
Figure 7. Location of FRS Equality Role

In terms of the Fire Service's understanding of the purpose of the role, most practitioners considered that understanding was better at senior levels within their organisations than at station level. Whilst there were no examples of any serious misinterpretation of role at any level, practitioners perceived there to be a need to raise their profile to improve clarity.

Support in role

Practitioners were asked whether they felt they received sufficient support from management, the trade unions and other representative bodies.

The research demonstrated that, overall, most practitioners do not have any difficulty gaining support to undertake self-development/training for their role which appeared in the main to involve attendance at short courses imparting knowledge or processes. Most are also engaged in internal and/or external networks as a means of sharing knowledge; however few have considered whether a mentor would be of value to provide additional support.

Overall practitioners considered that the support they received from trade unions was useful. Their agenda in the area of equality is to a significant degree in alignment with the stated commitment of the Service and practitioners singled out FBU and UNISON as being the most pro-active.

Although the number of practitioners considering they have sufficient managerial and financial support is increasing, further questioning indicated that the extent to which this support is considered sufficient varies. Whilst overall practitioners consider that they have access to chief officer level management, they considered that the relationship was largely one way.

However, the 2005 interviews also demonstrated the high attrition rate of equality practitioners within our sample. Only one of our original interviewees remained in post, and most current equality practitioners have been in post for less than 18 months.

Resources

In 2004, our second question addressed resourcing: 'What resources are available for equality and diversity work and how is this allocated?'. It was difficult to draw robust conclusions from this data as to how the resources were allocated due, in part, to the fact that some equality advisers were uncertain of what resources were available to them.

Nevertheless, a comparison of equality budgets and resource allocation provided some interesting findings. For example, budgets for equality work ranged from a few thousand pounds up to £125,000. However, there was no observable correlation between the budget allocated and other related factors such as the size of the operational staff and/or the size of the local ME population. For instance in Fire Service 1, the operational staff was 535 (whole-time and retained)[6] and the local ME population totalled 30,674 (Census 2001) with an allocated equality budget of £10,000 to £15,000. While in Fire Service 2, the operational staff was 696 (whole-time and retained)[7] and the local ME population was of similar size (32,218) (Census 2001) with an equality budget of £125,000.

Resource Allocation - Comparison			
Fire Service	*Operational Staff*[1]	*ME*[2]	*Equality Budget*[3]
1	535	30,674	£10 - £15,000
2	696	32,218	£125,000

Sources:
1: Whole-time and Retained, ODPM statistics 2003
2: Census 2001
3: Interviews with equality officers

Table 3. Equality Work Resource Allocation Comparison

6 ODPM statistics for number of whole-time and retained firefighters, 31st March, 2003.
7 ODPM statistics for number of whole-time and retained firefighters, 31st March, 2003.

Data from the equalities interviews showed that overall support for equality work differed considerably across each fire service.

Resource allocation was an issue that was given some attention in HMI's 1999 Report on *'Equality and Fairness in the Fire Service'*. The HMI Report (1999) identified a huge variation in allocated budgets and found that 31 of the 45 fire services surveyed had no resources available for equality. This had changed in 2004; in only one of our sample fire services was there no identifiable equality budget. However, as equality becomes more mainstreamed it is likely to be difficult to identify discrete funding. Nevertheless, perhaps because there appears to be no consistent criteria for resource allocation, equality advisers were still complaining that the support and budgets they received were insufficient given the demands on them:

'They don't give us the resources to tackle the issues properly. There's three of us and a secretary for the whole of **. The fault lies at the top. They're the ones making the decisions. Local Authority and in the Brigade as well.'
(Equality Practitioner)

'This year I'm being audited to death. We've got the county council audit, and the CACFOA audit, and then HR's after me - and there's only me.'
(Equality Practitioner)

However, where the support and resources are considered appropriate, it appears that success follows:

'My management team's fantastic…Every initiative I've wanted to be involved in he has always given me the opportunity to try it. I've gone back sometimes and said 'we've done this - it didn't work' or 'I got that wrong' but he still gives me all his support. That's why we've got the success we have [nationally] and my own profile has also risen because of what we've done.'
(Equality Practitioner)

4.4 Summary and Conclusions
'Commitment to diversity feels like a veneer. Scratch it and there's not much underneath.'
(Equality Practitioner)

It is difficult to assess commitment to an issue through the existence of policies and allocation of resources. However, policies which took into account the specific responsibilities of individuals at all levels of the organisation, and had been translated into SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound) objectives with appropriate resourcing, were more likely to demonstrate an effective and efficient approach to the challenges of the diversity agenda.

Our review of resources appeared to indicate that an increased commitment to the equality agenda has been demonstrated in an increased level of finances allocated for equality work over the last five years. In 2005 there was evidence of an increasing trend towards mainstreaming equality activity and overall resources had increased. Nevertheless, our research on the resources that each service provides for equalities related work and practitioner self-development found that it was difficult to draw robust conclusions. This was in part due to the fact that

some practitioners were uncertain of what resources were available to them although in many cases they still considered them insufficient. Also, it might be considered that as equality and diversity becomes mainstreamed, identifying specific resources becomes less necessary.

There is a high attrition rate within the role of FRS equality practitioner. Few from the 2004 work were still in post in 2005 and practitioners still report facing hostility and negativity to the equality and diversity agenda despite a significant degree of in-service training to raise awareness. There is no common understanding of the nature of the role and/or the nature and level of responsibility and authority which may be required to support it. The role is commonly situated within the human resource function which may limit the holder's ability to inform effective service delivery.

Whilst, however, the findings from this piece of work highlighted some good practice, it also identified that the Service had much to do in this field and subsequently - as predicted - the CPA gave a 'weak' rating to FRSs where such a systematic approach had been revealed as lacking.

4.5 Recommendations
- FRAs should develop a systematic approach to E&D work and policy development which also supports the FRA performance management system.
- FRAs should ensure that action plans developed for E&D have clear indications of ownership, SMART objectives and evaluation strategies.
- Equality practitioners should have more influence on the strategic planning of the FRS.
- FRAs should review the equality practitioner's role and the issues arising from their responsibilities, accountability and strategic placement within the organisation.
- CFOA should establish a network for all equality practitioners.
- ODPM should commission research to identify the issues leading to the rapid turnover of staff working as equality practitioners.

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Equality and Diversity Training in the FRS

5.1 Introduction

As fire and rescue services come to grips with the complex issues of equality and diversity, it is recognised that some workforce training is necessary. Reports from equality practitioners, our initial observations of equality and diversity (E&D) training and the focus of the FireWorks Summer 2004 conference all highlighted the need for better evaluation of training. Work undertaken by previous researchers on this project raised important questions about the purpose and effectiveness of training. It was for these reasons that E&D training became a specific focus of this research.

The FireWorks Project undertook a review of E&D training in the sample FRSs. This review addressed the training that had been implemented specifically to meet the Home Office recommendation discussed in the 'Context' section of this chapter. In order to better understand the issues surrounding E&D training in service organisations an extensive literature review was undertaken (Wilkinson 2005, CD-ROM), and key elements from this review are identified in this chapter to provide a framework for understanding the observations of training undertaken in FRSs. The methodological approach to this review is then discussed followed by a presentation of the findings.

This review does not attempt to identify individual examples of FRS equality and diversity training but does provide a commentary on the training that was observed which focuses on concepts and paradigms of good practice and pitfalls that may be generalised upon to provide transferable lessons. However the work undertaken here was specifically directed at the enabling of FRS evaluation of their equality and diversity training, as a result of our own early observations and reports from FRS equality and diversity practitioners and trainers, of the difficulties they experienced in this field.

The result of the work in this section is the FireWorks 'Guide to Evaluating Diversity Training' Toolkit, which was launched at the Fire Service College Conference in October 2005. This has been made freely available through the project website to members of the FRS, and is also available on the CD-ROM accompanying this report.

5.2 Context

Training is the means by which organisations ensure that the performance of their workforce meets the needs of the organisation and the community. Training equips individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to do their jobs within a changing bureaucracy. Training is a significant organisational cost and is an indication of an employer's investment in their employees. Further, the cost of training to an organisation is not limited to the cost of the trainer: for example, very often there are costs for the venue, time spent in the organisation of the training programme, material costs, and the often hidden cost of staff time.

The issue of training in the FRS had its highest profile following the Thematic Review of 1999. In 'Towards Diversity - Promoting Cultural Change', the action plan following the Review, the Home Office recommended that *'all staff should be re- trained on the fundamental values and issues of diversity and that this should be supported by locally based station training'.* The Action Plan stated that equality training should be given the same importance and recognition as training in other areas and that additional knowledge and skills would be provided for all staff where appropriate for specific post-holders. Further, the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2005/2006 proposed that the 'Diversity Happens' Programme Board review equality training by May 2005. However, as far as the project team is aware, this has not yet happened.

Whilst therefore training is important and has a part to play in the equality and diversity agenda, no-one likes to have their time wasted and senior managers need to be able to direct scarce resources where they can make the greatest impact. To accomplish this, FRSs need to be able to evaluate their training activity in an effective and efficient way that links the training to the Service's objectives, its integrated risk management plan and, of course, its integrated personal development system.

5.3 Literature Review

Identifying a 'training need' is fundamental to the design of any training programme. In practice, E&D training is often run to meet an obligation put on the organisation to deliver training.

While there is no arguing against this happening, the 'requirement' to deliver training should not be the basis for the development of the training programme. What is not recognised is the need to find out what training is needed (Bartram S et al 1994, Tamkin et al 2002). What is not known is;

- What the employees need
- What the employers (or organisation) need, and
- What the community served by the organisation need.

Our review of literature 'FireWorks - Diversity Training Literature Review' (Wilkinson 2005), revealed that the identification of training needs is typically either retrospective to training policy or absent altogether in service organisations. However a well developed training needs analysis will identify what (if any) training may be needed from the perspectives of each of the stakeholders.

Clements and Jones (2002) note that training evaluation is often neglected as it is perceived to be too difficult, unnecessary or an expensive overhead. However Clements and Jones (2002, p130) state that they recognise that evaluation is not easy, and it certainly does not come without cost. However we are firmly of the belief that evaluation of training is an important feature of any diversity programme. (ibid) Three principle models for evaluating training were developed in the 1970s by Kirkpatrick, Hamblin and Warr, Bird and Rackham. Recently however these models have been considered to be inadequate and Kirkpatrick's model has been extended by Phillips to quantify the benefits of training in terms of cost. In addition, a significantly more comprehensive ten-point added value evaluation model was developed by Kearns (Clements and Jones, 2002).

Nonetheless, of the models developed to evaluate training, Kirkpatrick's four level model, remains the most widely used in current practice. Hamblin's and Phillips' improved on Kilpatrick's model by the inclusion of an additional level intended to measure, in financial terms, the results and costs of the training programme (Clements and Jones, 2002). However, all of these three models assume that the training to be evaluated is necessary. The Warr, Bird and Rackham and the Kearns models include a stage that questions the requirement of the training but both exclude any form of financial measurement. The Kearns model is the most comprehensive model but is complex (Clements and Jones, 2002). A suitable general purpose model that covers all aspects of the evaluation of equality and diversity issues can be developed from the five models presented (see Table 4).

5.4 Research Methods

The issues covered in this section of the report include observations from the work of previous researchers on the FireWorks Project - Marina Stott, Kath Clarke and Dr Chris Mann. All three researchers were involved in developing an approach to observing equality and diversity training, approaching FRSs and observing and writing up case examples. Observations were undertaken at FRS training venues using an agreed observation schedule. In particular the researchers were interested in the approaches taken to delivering training and the informal reactions of the participants to the training. Training documentation was also collected and reviewed and E&D trainers were interviewed. These observations, notes from interviews and other collected documents became the evidence base for a review of E&D training.

In total 14 FRSs were contacted and visited and a range of equality and diversity training was observed. This training included classroom approaches and less formalised models such as 'conferences' or 'meetings'.

In the second year of this project and in parallel with continuing training observations, an evaluation toolkit was developed ('Guide to Evaluating Diversity Training In the Fire and Rescue Service', Wilkinson 2005). This Toolkit was piloted with 3 individual E&D trainers and was the focus of 3 developmental seminars (one each in Cambridge, Manchester and Bath). The seminars were attended by members of the FRSs both from within and outside of the project sample. In total 50 people involved in the delivery of E&D training attended. The seminars collected up experiences and evaluation instruments and provided guidance in the use of the Toolkit throughout its developmental stages. Each seminar was reviewed and developmental changes were made as necessary. The final toolkit was then launched at the Fire Service College in October 2005.

5.5 Research Findings
5.5.1 Problems with Recognising Good Practice

It was difficult for the research team to recognise examples of good practice. This does not suggest that good practice did not exist, rather that establishing evidence of good practice and recognising what constituted good practice was difficult. The problem with recognising good practice was punctuated by the following factors;

- Very little training 'Needs Analysis' had been undertaken. Therefore much of the training observed was designed

Level 1 Reaction and planned action	This level is conducted before, during, immediately after and some time after the initiative. It outlines the requirements and the objectives of an initiative, specific plans for implementation of the initiative and attempts to define and measure the participant's reactions to the initiative.
Level 2 Learning	Measures the extent to which participants have acquired new skills, knowledge and understanding and identifies behaviour or attitude changes.
Level 3 Job application/ behaviour	Measures application of the initiative to change in workplace performance and organisation behaviour.
Level 4 Business results	Quantifies any improvement to the organisation and measures business impact of the initiative.
Level 5 Ultimate Value	Measures the monetary values of the results and costs of the programme usually expressed as Return on Investment (ROI).

Table 4. Initiative evaluation model (developed from the models of Kirkpatrick, Hamblin, Phillip, Warr, Bird and Rackham and Kearns)

upon what was perceived to be necessary. This often focused on policy related issues and personal skill or behaviour development where a knowledge skill or behaviour need had not been established.

- Very little evaluation of training had been undertaken at any level beyond the end of course feedback sheets. Few courses required evaluation in terms of assessing what had been learned by the attendees. No examples were found of evaluation of performance in the workplace or impact evaluation on the FRS itself.
- There was little differentiation made between 'training' and 'informing'. In many cases, what was observed was examples of 'informing' under the guise of 'training'.
- It was often unclear whether training was part of a holistic organisational approach towards addressing equality and diversity following recommendations of the Thematic Review.

5.5.2 The Structure of E&D Training in the FRS

Training in equality and diversity in the FRS takes many forms. Some classroom approaches deal with a set of predetermined learning outcomes constructed within a formalised curriculum, other examples are less formalised, and claim to develop personal skills more so than impart knowledge. These programmes tend to be more interactive and involve activities such as role play and demonstration. There is also evidence of a less direct 'conference' or 'meeting' training approach where discussion is the primary medium. Additionally, equality and diversity modules are included in professional development and other courses and programmes and are beginning to be included as a theme within many other FRS training programmes. Training which deals specifically with equality and diversity which was observed in this exercise ranged from a one and a half hour meeting through to a formal 5-day programme.

Training providers include firefighters and FRS equality and diversity officers (practitioners), private training consultants, private training companies, university and college staff and combinations of these. Training was sometimes supported by other subject matter experts including union representatives, members of minority ethnic organisations, legal representatives, human resource personnel, and senior officers. Although rare, there were also examples of the involvement of guests from the community including faith and religious leaders and members of other services.

Those who attended this training included all full time members of the FRS whether 'uniformed' or 'non-uniformed'. There were examples of cases where different management levels received different training. This research did not identify cases where retained firefighters were included in E&D training, however, there were examples of where retained firefighters receive E&D training through self-managed

learning packs. The training observed by FireWorks team members was specifically directed towards members of the FRS, however it is known that in other cases members of the FRS were included in Local Authority organised training programmes.

5.5.3 Training Development

The review found that typically the learning objectives for training lacked clarity about what the learner would know, be able to do, or feel as they left the training room that they did not know, were not able to do or did not feel at the start. This review identified E&D 'learning objectives' that were mostly not structured in a recognised SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Bound) format. Some examples made extreme claims about what could be achieved and what the training would develop in terms of knowledge and skills. Underpinning this problem, there was no evidence of training objectives being assessed.

This was problematic primarily because the FRS were expending training resources without having an understanding of what was required or whether they were achieving it. Many E&D trainers recognised this and felt they needed specific expertise in evaluation to assist them. This led to the development of the Toolkit discussed earlier.

In the review there were some outstanding examples of training development. These were characterised by the following:

- Training objectives were linked to the Role Maps and IPDS model
- Training objectives were realistic and achievable
- Training materials belonged to the FRS and were maintained internally
- A more sophisticated attempt had been made at evaluation of training through, for example, the use of equality forums or steering groups.

Role Maps

A role map is a bit like a job description. It tells the job incumbent, in general terms, everything they need to do in their role. It also tells them how well you need to do it. All roles are slightly different (for example a firefighter doesn't do the same job (role) as a watch manager) but all roles have things in common too. To prove competent all FRS members will be evaluated against their role map (http://www.ipds.co.uk).

National Standards

National Occupational Standards provide a means to measure competency. For example, the following E&D National Occupational Standards are relevant to firefighter, control operator, crew manager, control supervisor, watch manager, and control watch manager:

You must ensure that:	You must know and understand:
your behaviour demonstrates that you accept and respect diversity of people with whom you work/and within your community	how to treat colleagues and members of the public with respect and consideration, taking account of, and accepting diversity
you actively support and promote your organisation's stated values, ethics and codes of practice	how to promote a culture that positively supports the organisational policy on equality and fairness

Table 5. Equality and Diversity National Occupational Standards

Examples of training that was developed to achieve these standards had clarity of purpose and could justify the use of training resources.

To assist in this a set of core values was developed by John Hurren, Oxfordshire FRS on behalf of CFOA. These include the following:

NATIONAL CORE VALUES
We value diversity in the Service and Community by…
- Treating everyone fairly and with respect.
- Promoting equal opportunities in employment and progression within the Service.
- Challenging prejudice and discrimination.

5.5.4 Self-managed and E-Learning
There were some examples of modularised training in the form of self-managed and e-learning courses. These were characterised by:

- Locating the learning in the workplace.
- Contextualising the learning within the line management and professional development domains.

Modularised training was being developed for a variety of reasons including as a means of addressing the problem of training retained firefighters.

There was some criticism of equality and diversity e-learning programmes. These criticisms were mainly anecdotal and were recorded in interviews and observations. The principle concerns was that e-learning was perceived to have been introduced on an economic rationale and did not reflect best learning practice. Also, fire and rescue services had not evaluated their e-learning programmes beyond Kirkpatrick's first level. It is likely however, that the problems of e-learning packages also include issues of time, support and interactivity. In order to provide a means of evaluating e-learning packages more fully, a separate Appendix was added to the Evaluation Toolkit.

5.5.5 Pitfalls
The pitfalls in E&D training identified in this review were not necessarily limited to training delivery. While it was observed and reported that much of the training was enjoyable or informative, there was a significant amount of comments suggesting disappointment and/or there being nothing in the programme that was not known already or in any way challenging. Many comments were made suggesting that E&D training was provided because the organisation was obligated to do so.

In many of the cases observed there was hostility to E&D training. This hostility seemed to range from mild irritation through to a sense of outrage. The basis for this hostility included the following;

- The perception that the training was unnecessary.
- The feeling that the 'message' was patronising.
- An observation that the trainer was patronising.
- The view that training was perceived as a threat to the firefighting community.
- A sense that a 'politically correct' agenda was being forced upon people in the FRS.

- A sense that firefighters were being singled out as a workforce.
- A sense that outside observers may interpret the training as a slight on firefighters.
- A view that 'positive action' was part of the agenda and that this was exclusive and 'unfair'.
- A view that the training resources could have been better spent.

In many cases, trainees had difficulty connecting with or relating to training materials that were used, particularly those that were intended to demonstrate scenarios, case studies or incidents. In some cases there was complete bewilderment. The more extreme stereotypes that were used provoked offence and put up barriers to learning.

Some trainers carried very strong opinions into their training. This was often characterised in the language they used and the language they accepted from trainees. It was also characterised in the emphasis they placed on certain aspects of the course content. While it was clear that the subject required the demonstration of certain behaviours, concepts and beliefs, the role modelling provided by some trainers was more often than not, an exaggeration of what was required or expected in the workplace. 'Word fishing' (where trainees were required to use certain words without necessarily demonstrating an understanding) was also a characteristic of this type of interaction.

Certain elements of equality and diversity training were pitched at inappropriate levels. Often non-management FRS staff were cast in management roles or required to step outside of their positions within the FRS in order to engage with the course materials.

In other cases high levels of subjectivity led to multiple interpretations of the training materials and training activities. While trainers would invariably attempt a definitive solution, this was rarely convincing as it was based solely on personal opinion or experience (often from outside the FRS), anecdotal experience of others, or case examples from other services or organisations.

There was a great deal of variation in courses labelled 'equality and diversity'. Some programmes emphasised 'fairness' at work issues while others placed the emphasis on behaviour (in particular, harassment). Others emphasised issues specific to women or minority ethnic people.

Funding seemed to be a universal problem. Often the training was compromised by lack of funding or funding constraints. There was evidence that equality and diversity training was budgeted on an ad hoc basis with no guarantee that the funding would be sustained in the longer term.

There is no suggestion that uniformity of training across FRSs is necessary nor in most cases desirable as FRSs would argue that their cultural environments are unique from one another, however, there appears to have been a great deal of effort extended in developing and delivering parallel training programmes. This duplication may not have been necessary if FRSs were able to collaborate on training development and course material development.

Perhaps the most significant pitfall in E&D training was that it highlighted issues that occur in the workplace (such as harassment and bullying) and this in turn highlighted a shortfall in effective management.

5.6 Diversity Training Evaluation Toolkit

In recognition of the widespread use of training to address the E&D agenda and the difficulties of training evaluation, the FireWorks team developed an evaluation toolkit to help trainers, training managers and E&D officers to evaluate equality and diversity training. The Toolkit has been designed in a way that it can be used by people with little or no training or evaluation experience. It contains instructions and evaluation tools and devices that can be adapted for local use.

The Toolkit has been designed on a 'Review, Plan, Deliver' cycle model addressing the questions:
- 'Why are we doing this training?'
- 'What specific things do we want to achieve?'
- 'How will we identify success?'
- 'What are the objectives of the training?'
- 'How will we achieve the desired learning outcomes?'
- 'What have the trainees learned from the training?'
- 'What have we learned about the training?'
- 'How will we do things differently in future?'

The Toolkit also contains advice about analysing information, constructing a report and has a section on evaluating e-learning.

5.7 Summary and Conclusions

It was often unclear whether training was part of a holistic organisational approach towards addressing equality and diversity. The Service's approach to delivering E&D training did not, in many cases, reflect an understanding of what was required by the workforce in order for them to integrate E&D within their roles. Role maps and the national competency framework are not fully integrated into FRS E&D activity. In diversity training, there is little understanding of how the diversity competences within each role can be demonstrated in the workplace.

Very little training needs analysis had been undertaken therefore much of the training observed was designed upon what was perceived to be necessary. There was little differentiation made between 'training' and 'informing'. In many cases, examples of 'informing' were observed under the guise of 'training'. This often focused on policy related issues and personal 'skill' or behaviour development where a knowledge or skill need had not been established. Very little evaluation of training had been undertaken at any level beyond the end of course feedback sheets. Most courses required no evaluation in terms of assessing what had been learned. No examples were found of evaluation of performance in the workplace, impact evaluation on the FRS and thus ultimately service delivery.

The primary issue here is a widespread lack of understanding about evaluation. Although some excellent evaluations were observed, in general the FRS were aware that their evaluation processes were poor but did not have the time, knowledge, support or investment to improve. The FireWorks project team considered that an understanding of evaluation was key to enabling FRSs to become reflexive organisations with the ability to recognise and learn from their own actions. FireWorks has developed and disseminated a training evaluation toolkit.

5.8 Recommendations
- FRSs and the Fire Service College (FSC) should ensure that training in E&D is aligned with the needs of the organisation as identified through role maps and national occupational standards.
- FRAs should ensure that E&D training is based on a training needs analysis.
- FRAs should consider adopting the FireWorks Diversity Training Evaluation Toolkit.

5.9 Further Information

For a fuller discussion of the literature within training, and a copy of the Toolkit, please see the enclosed CD-ROM.

Dr Steven Wilkinson

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Factors Affecting the Retention and Promotion of Female and Minority Ethnic Operational Members of the English Fire and Rescue Service

6.1 Introduction

Home Office reports and other studies of the English FRS have tended to include factors affecting the retention and promotion of female and minority ethnic (F/ME) staff in particular as an afterthought to questions of recruitment and the organisational and cultural factors that contribute to the low numbers of F/ME individuals joining the FRS workforce. A result of the setting of various Home Office targets for representation of women and minority ethnic groups in the FRS, seems to have been heavy emphasis upon issues of recruitment in the UK-based literature produced to date. Additionally, where mention of retention and promotion issues appears, little distinction is made between factors affecting whole-time and retained duty system firefighters, other than in those studies that specifically target the retained service.

Many individuals with long experience in the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) would argue that it is self-evident that there is a widespread problem with the levels of retention and promotion of female and minority ethnic members, and that this problem is largely a result of the dominant organisational culture of the FRS. To some degree, these conclusions are based on anecdotal evidence and stories reported informally within the FRS workforce. The FireWorks Project identified the need for research to understand the relationship of these issues of organisational culture to the retention and promotion of under-represented groups. This is not to deny the negative experiences of some F/ME FRS employees, but rather to investigate them in a more systematic fashion in order to provide a sound foundation for policy and initiatives that may be created to redress the situation. In response to this demand, the FireWorks Project designed a programme of research specifically to investigate the actual and potential barriers to retention and promotion of F/ME ethnic members of the FRS. The purpose of this study was to consolidate the findings of previous research in the FRS and other parallel organisations, particularly the Police Service, and to enhance the current state of knowledge about issues affecting the retention and promotion of F/ME operational FRS staff.

6.2 Research Methods

The research began with an extensive search of relevant literature comprising Home Office policy documents, reports by other government agencies, unpublished academic studies of the experiences of F/ME members of the FRS, studies of retention and career progression of under-represented groups in parallel organisations, particularly the UK Police Service, and studies of FRSs in the United States and New Zealand. The remaining aspects of the research plan followed directly from the findings in the literature. The research considered three levels: the national (statistical) level, the local (FRS) level, and the individual (operational employee) level.

National Level

The purpose of research at this level was to investigate whether it is possible at present to build up a broad statistical picture of the retention and promotion of F/ME FRS employees across the UK. Studies in other public services, particularly the Police Service, indicate that F/ME officers have lower rates of retention and promotion than their white British male colleagues. The source of information investigated in this part of the research was the statistical sets made available to us from the ODPM, as reported to the Government by individual FRSs. The statistics available to us covered the years 2000-2001, 2001-2002, and 2002-2003.

Local/FRS Level

The purpose of this phase of the research was to investigate the existence and efficacy of procedures in place within FRSs to improve retention and promotion rates of F/ME firefighters. The source of information for this part of the research was information requested from a sample set of FRSs in England, which had been established in accordance with the overall aims of the project. The sample comprised both rural and metropolitan FRSs, and at least two services from each region. Of those who were invited to participate, eleven FRSs made some contribution to this phase of the research.

One purpose of gathering information from sample FRS human resource departments was to compare the profiles of those who attempt or reach promotion. The ODPM statistics do not give information about the profiles of those firefighters who attempt or attain promotion, with the exception of numbers relating rank to years of operational service.

Following on from this:

- A request for information was sent to the human resource and equality and diversity departments in each of the sample FRSs via the Chief Fire Officer. The request asked for detailed information about mechanisms in place in the sample FRSs to monitor and improve retention and promotion of F/ME operational staff. It included questions about the implementation of the Integrated Personal Development System in each service, procedures for selection for promotion exams and promotion, procedures for appraisal, and procedures for the selection and training of appraisers. Further areas of examination included the procedures in place for exit interviews, and the nature of any relationships in place between the sample FRSs and B&EMM and NWFS groups, and the existence of mentoring programmes and support networks. Questions were also included about issues such as flexible working and childcare, which in other organisations have tended to affect female employees disproportionately.

- The sample FRSs were also asked for numerical data about the numbers of individuals who completed or left training after recruitment, resigned from the FRS, transferred or took up employment in other FRSs, and were promoted within the FRS. We requested that this data be broken down by gender and racial/ethnic background. The purpose of requesting this information is to see whether patterns of resignation and transfer similar to those in the Police Service are emerging in the FRS.

The Retained Duty System also faces challenges in the retention and promotion of women and minority ethnic firefighters. However, the literature review indicates that there are immediate and widespread problems with retention and promotion across the entire retained duty system which overshadow issues specifically affecting only women and minority ethnic members. As a result, we approached issues affecting the retention and promotion of retained duty women and minority ethnic firefighters within this wider context.

- A request for information about relationships with retained duty firefighters was sent to each sample FRS. The questions asked for details of procedures aimed at improving retention and opportunities for promotion for all retained duty firefighters. There were specific questions as to how women and minority ethnic members are targeted within these initiatives, and whether separate initiatives aimed only at these groups exist.

- Two research seminars were held which centred on issues of retention and promotion of F/ME members of the retained duty system. Those who attended the seminars included HR and E&D professionals from the FRS across England and Wales, and their colleagues in other part-time and volunteer emergency services.

Individual Level/Personal Experience

Another valuable tool for investigating the motivations of leavers, and any discrepancies in leaving rates or motivations based on gender, race, or ethnicity, are exit interviews. However, no systematic survey of leavers' experiences across the FRS has been undertaken to date. As a result:

- The sample FRSs were asked to forward an invitation to participate in a research survey to all F/ME leavers from

the preceding two years, outlining the purpose of the FireWorks Project and asking for their willingness to participate in the research. The survey was available in both online and hard copy formats, with provision made for the security of data and sensitive information.

- For comparison, a request was made to the sample FRSs to pass on an identical letter to a sample of white male British leavers from the past two years. The number in the sample was equivalent to the total number of F/ME members contacted by the Service.

The questionnaires asked for biographical details, including gender, racial and ethnic identity, religious identity, age, length of service, rank or role, duty system, and a variety of other questions about their experiences of the organisational culture of the FRS, and their experiences and perceptions of the promotion process (see CD-ROM).

6.3 Research Findings

The response to our research methods was mixed. Eleven FRSs made some contribution to the research, through detailing their own practices and forwarding survey questionnaires to current and former employees. Due to the fact that few FRSs keep contact details for leavers, the response to the leavers' questionnaires was not as useful as we had hoped. The findings from the sample the FRSs and current employees, however, provided much data for analysis. In the following section, we will take a thematic approach to the research findings in this area. Under each major theme, we will first discuss the findings of any previous research. We will then discuss the findings uncovered by FireWorks. Where appropriate, these findings will be sub-divided according to the research levels: national, regional (FRS), and individual. Likewise, although some aspects of the FRSs organisation and culture do present problems in common for both female and minority ethnic employees, where appropriate, distinctions will be made between research findings as they affect different under-represented groups in the English FRS.

6.3.1 The Collection of Information Relevant to the Retention and Promotion of F/ME Operational Employees

Collection of Statistics and Exit Interviews
Previous Findings

In 2002 the Audit Commission identified retention as a difficulty facing the entire UK public sector (Audit Commission, 2002). The report outlined the financial case for concentrating attention on retention issues. Whereas the retention of staff has been identified as a problem across the public sector, it is not generally seen as a major problem facing the UK FRS. Nonetheless, it was recognised by the UK Government in Home Office directives in 1999 and 2000 that further attention must be paid to the retention and promotion of F/ME members of the FRS (EOC, 2004, 40; HMFSI, 1999). The Home Office Fire Policy Unit noted that:

'As is the case for ethnic minorities success in meeting recruitment targets will have no value if it cannot be matched by an ability to retain those that the Service has worked so hard to attract, or if the perception pervades among women that a "glass ceiling" exists and the Service cannot deliver on expectations for career achievement comparable to men.' (ODPM, FRS Circular 1/2000, pt 6)

At that time, the Government identified a problem: that there was 'no centrally held data on the career progression' of F/ME members of the FRS. The same problem exists regarding data on the motivations of F/ME firefighters who leave the FRS, as centrally held data on leavers' motivations is not broken down by gender or ethnicity. In 2000, the Home Secretary announced target numbers for the retention and career progression of F/ME operational FRS staff to be met by each brigade, and ordered that brigades collect and report data relevant to these targets (ODPM, FRS Circular 12/1999, pts 9-10; Circular 1/2000, pts 7-9). Yet the compilation of statistical data does not adequately address the qualitative factors affecting the retention and promotion of F/ME operational FRS staff that have been partly explored in the literature. The 2002 Audit Commission Report noted a major problem in identifying the root causes of high leaving rates, noting that very few (only one in five of those interviewed) leavers participate in exit surveys. To this end, an ODPM document ordered that every FRS was to begin conducting exit interviews with leavers by 1st April, 2002. (ODPM, FRS Circular 12/1999, pts 9-10; Circular 1/2000, pts 7-9).

FireWorks Findings
At the present time, it is not possible to build up a true broad picture of the retention of F/ME operational employees across the English FRS. Many FRSs do not compile data that includes details about leavers' motivations, nor factors such as whether they leave the FRS altogether, or leave to join another regional FRS. Many FRSs also do not keep contact details for leavers; therefore, it was not possible to gather the sort of data we had hoped to be able to gather from the experiences of former FRS employees.

Out of eleven FRSs who responded to a query on the subject, eight are conducting exit interviews. In all cases, these interviews are conducted by a member of the FRS management. Of these eight, however, six are not using the data collected at exit interviews in any meaningful way. That is, the record is deposited in the individual's personnel file, but is not considered in the formation of FRS policy. Those FRSs not in compliance with ODPM's requirement to conduct exit interviews, and those FRSs that do not utilise the information gathered from such interviews, are losing out on a valuable source of information to inform the development of policy and retention and promotion initiatives.

6.3.2 The Use of Ethnic Group Categories
A further problem with FRS monitoring data on promotion and retention lies in the categories used for ethnic monitoring. This needs to be addressed at the level of central government. In particular, the categories of 'white other' and 'other ethnic group' raises problems for monitoring and compiling data about the retention and career progression of ME employees. Data cannot be compiled accurately if there is confusion or disagreement about what constitutes a 'minority ethnic' employee. This conclusion is supported by some of the preliminary responses to our research questionnaires, which include white English employees ticking the 'white other' box (not the 'White British' box), an individual from a mixed Chinese/English background ticking the 'white other' box, and an individual of Italian heritage ticking the 'white other' box and indicating that he had been subjected to harassment based on his ethnicity. Careful re-consideration must be given to the use of such categories for monitoring of data based on race or ethnicity. To this end, the FireWorks Project has written a brief

paper on the use of census ethnic group categories in FRS data collection, and the points made in the paper have been accepted by the Fire and Social and Statistics Branch of the ODPM for implementation (see Appendix 1).

6.3.3 Fora for the Discussion of Factors Affecting Female/Minority Ethnic FRS Employees
In addition to gathering statistical data, we asked sample FRSs whether they have any forum in which female and/or minority ethnic operational staff are able to vocalise issues of concern, other than individual discussions with human resource or line management. The purpose of this question was to see whether the opinions of these employees are taken into account in the formation of policy within individual FRSs. In response to these questions, the sample FRSs reported as follows:

- 44% of sample FRSs report having an official representative of B&EMM who makes a formal contribution to management discussions.
- 33% of sample FRSs report having an official representative of the Women's Section of the FBU, or Networking Women in the Fire Service, who makes a formal contribution to management discussions.
- 45% of sample FRSs report having some forum for the open raising and discussion of issues particularly affecting minority ethnic employees (see below).

The following is taken from the words of one sample FRS equality and diversity officer, to describe the new 'Action Group' they have set up for the discussion of issues affecting under-represented groups in the FRS.

Fora for the Discussion of Factors Affecting Female/Minority Ethnic FRS Employees:
an Example of Practice
'The group meets every two months to discuss current diversity initiatives, how the Service moves forward on diversity, and to ensure everyone's voice whatever role, whether for example Firefighter, Admin Assistant or Engineer, is heard. On issues being raised at the Action Group they are then raised with the Diversity Strategy Group (DSG/an advisory group). The group includes representatives from NF&RS and NF&RS Representative bodies, members from NCC's Social Inclusion and Equalities team, [a local councillor], and Community organisations. Any advised initiatives/policies from this group are forwarded to POG for discussion and decision-making. Upon approval initiatives are then returned to the Diversity Action Group for delivery and implementation at a local level, to the rest of the workforce. In addition; enhanced engagement between B&EMM and POs in 2005 is expected to result in a more open dialogue had between all.
(HR Practitioner)

6.3.4 Teasing, Harassment, Bullying, Discrimination
Previous Findings
Independent studies find the FRS to be a 'closed' organisation where 'fitting in' is highly valued (HMFSI, 1999, p21). Acceptance in the workplace is accompanied by a culture of 'hazing', i.e. initiation into a group using forms of humiliation or practical jokes (as in university fraternities). This culture is exacerbated by an apparent attitude that one must 'put up or

get out', a tacit acceptance that such behaviour is acceptable (HMFSI, 1999, p31). To take an example from a parallel organisation about the relationship of these issues to ME employee retention, a study into the Police Service in Scotland found that the issue of racial harassment was never effectively addressed in that organisation, as those officers who found the problem intolerable left before five years' service, while those who remained developed coping strategies (Onifade 2002, p13-14). Thus it is not the case that there was no problem within the organisation, rather that individual employees had changed their own behaviour in order to fit in. This culture seems to affect nearly all firefighters to some degree, but has the potential to have a disproportionate effect on F/ME members of staff. One comparative study from the US noted that as career firefighters on a watch '... live as a family, sharing a house. …in such an environment, a fine line exists between hazing and harassment' (Waters, 1986, III, p21).

The question of hazing and harassment, 'fitting in', and the dominant organisational culture is an added pressure for female firefighters. This manifests itself in a number of ways. In some cases, prolonged or regular sexual harassment has had 'catastrophic' effects on the women concerned, and led to severe demoralisation. As a result, women have either moved to different stations, or left the FRS altogether (HMFSI, 1999, p24; EOC, 2004, p34). In other cases, although hazing directed at women was not likely intended to be malicious, a sense of isolation expressed by women in various studies exacerbates the problem. In addition to overt harassment, women firefighters have expressed an erosion of confidence due to more subtle forms of exclusion (being left out of watch jokes and banter) and regular questioning and undermining of their abilities by male colleagues (Wood, 2002, 4.4.2).

The study 'Equal Opportunities and the Fire Service' reported verbal abuse of ethnic minorities as a major issue in retention, along with a few isolated incidents of physical abuse (EOC, 2004, p38). The problem of hazing of ME firefighters bears many similarities to that which affects female firefighters. In a survey by HM Fire Service Inspectorate, ME members expressed a lack of confidence in management commitment to procedures related to equality and diversity. Furthermore, a perception that registering complaints about racial and ethnic hazing and harassment will 'make the situation worse', and that 'fitting in' to the organisation is the top priority (HMFSI, 1999, p25-6). The occupational experiences of minority ethnic firefighters in the UK are currently being investigated in a major academic study; the final results of this study will not be available until 2007 (Begum, forthcoming, 2007, for interim findings see paper on enclosed CD-ROM).

FireWorks Survey Findings

Operational staff from both genders and all racial and ethnic backgrounds report experiencing teasing, bullying, or harassment at some stage of their careers. In many cases, the behaviour was reported to be ongoing. Even here, however, there is no clear consensus on the nature of the situation. Over half of the women who reported some form of teasing, bullying, or harassment, reported that it was based not on their gender, but on a variety of other individual factors (examples included: 'because I'm pretty',

'because I'm university-educated', and 'because I have ginger hair'). This supports anecdotal evidence that there remains a tacit acceptance of such behaviours in many of the sample FRSs in spite of the expressed desire of FRS management to bring about changes in the workplace culture in regard to these issues.

In numerical terms, the FireWorks Project found that 68% of whole-time employed survey respondents have experienced at least one of: teasing, harassment, bullying, or discrimination, at some stage in their FRS employment. Of whole-time survey respondents, the breakdown was:

By Gender:
- teasing: 48% of women, 48% of men;
- harassment: 33 % of women, 35% of men;
- bullying: 33% of women, 30% of men;
- isolation: 15% of women, 17% of men;
- discrimination: 30% of women, 26% of men.

Of the women reporting having experienced one or more of these behaviours, 64% believed it was based, at least in part, on gender (as opposed to 14% of men experiencing these behaviours). At the same time, however, 67% of women perceived that the behaviour was due to another factor in addition to, or instead of, their gender. As for their response, 37% of the women and 22% of the men experiencing these behaviours responded by making a formal complaint. On the other hand, 58% of the women, and 72% of the men chose to confront the perpetrator(s) personally (note: respondents may have taken more than one course of action in response to an incident or ongoing problem with one or more of these behaviours), while 26% of the women and 39% of the men chose to ignore the situation.

By Race/Ethnicity:
- teasing: 44% of White British, 57% of ME respondents;
- harassment: 32% of White British, 43% of ME respondents;
- bullying: 32% of White British, 33% of ME respondents;
- isolation: 16% of White British, 19% of ME respondents;
- discrimination: 26% of White British, 29% of ME respondents.

Of the ME respondents who said they had experienced one or more of these behaviours, 68% believed that it was based at least in part on their race or ethnicity. At the same time, 68% of ME respondents experiencing at least one of these behaviours, ticked 'some other reason' (excluding the choices of 'religion', 'gender', 'race', and 'ethnicity'). Of those experiencing these behaviours, 18% registered a formal complaint, while 38% confronted the individual personally, and 19% chose to ignore the situation.

As white British males comprise the vast majority of the FRS workforce, we have also analysed the white British, male respondents to our survey as a separate, control sample. Of whole-time, white British, males responding to our survey:

- teasing: 42% of respondents;
- harassment: 33% of respondents;
- bullying: 33% of respondents;
- isolation: 17% of respondents;
- discrimination: 25% of respondents.

Of these white British males, 8% said specifically that they had experienced isolation based upon their gender. No further information was available about these cases. Under the category of discrimination, a variety of causes were cited, including disagreement with management, and personal favouritism.

The implications of these findings seem to indicate that while women are more likely than men to experience teasing, harassment, bullying, isolation, or discrimination based on their gender, they are not in general terms subject to these behaviours more often than men. Furthermore, while women were slightly more likely to respond by making a formal complaint, and men by confronting the individual, the most frequent response overall (65% of those experiencing these behaviours) was to confront the perpetrators personally. A similar situation exists regarding minority ethnic employees and teasing or discrimination based on race or ethnicity, and with the means of response chosen. In the case of those who ignore the situation, it has been suggested in previous studies of the Police Service that such a decision can in fact be a coping mechanism, designed to deflect further unwanted attention. These factors should serve as a warning to FRSs that the extent of these behaviours in the organisation, and the effectiveness of means for dealing with them, are highly complex issues, and cannot be measured by records of complaints alone.

The limitation of the survey approach on its own is that it tells us little about the seriousness, intensity or regularity of incidents of teasing, bullying or harassment. Nor does it allow direct linkage between these incidents and retention and promotion patterns. Nonetheless, the survey data does highlight the importance of locating problems faced by women and ME staff within a wider problem of inappropriate behaviour in the workplace. Reaction to these reports from FRS management at the FireWorks final conference varied, with some managers asserting that the relationship of teasing, harassment, and bullying to retention and self-confidence in promotion prospects is determined by watch, station, or the resilience of the individual. These opinions, however, also indicate a wider problem: that is, an unwillingness of some FRS managers at lower or mid-levels to put into practice on a day-to-day basis the intolerance of such behaviours as expressed in formal statements by senior management.

6.3.5 Transparency in Individual Career Development and Promotion

The sense of isolation and the erosion of confidence which resulted from the organisational factors discussed above have been identified in the literature as major barriers to the promotion of both female and minority ethnic members of the FRS. A number of studies have pointed to a prevailing culture in the FRS that looks down upon overt displays of interest in promotion, a characteristic held in common with the Police Service (Wood, 2002, 5.3; Bland, 1999, p45). In order to be an effective and respected officer of higher rank, a firefighter must be seen to be part of the organisation without doubt, and to have formed close bonds with his or her fellow firefighters while in lower ranks. Studies find a perception among women firefighters that they are held to a higher standard of performance, and that failure on their part is attributed first to their gender, and only subsequently to their individual personal attributes (Wood, 2002, 5.3).

A similar fear of being judged by their race or ethnicity first has been expressed by ME members of the FRS and the Police Service. ME members of the Police Service have reported that although more transparent promotion procedures are in place and there is increased scrutiny of the selection process by equal opportunities officers, they believe these procedures are ignored. Fear of failure caused by these perceptions, together with the lack of confidence due to the issues discussed above, can lead to 'self-selection' out of application for promotion (Bland, 1999, p39-45). Previous research has suggested that these factors are compounded by a sense of isolation and an absence of the informal 'bonds' more common among white men which lead to respect as a higher officer. Some equalities officers contacted early in this project expressed a belief that somehow the military origins of the UK FRS would deter ME firefighters (particularly African Caribbean firefighters) from seeking promotion; this opinion was not confirmed by any of the subsequent research. Early work for the FireWorks Project in conjunction with FRS equalities officers uncovered perceptions that an emphasis on intangible qualities and 'bonds' with other firefighters, and the opaque nature of assessment of competency and recommendation for promotion, are barriers to the promotion of F/ME members of the whole-time FRS. Similar difficulties have been found in the Police Service, where despite the introduction of new promotion procedures, the informal influence of senior colleagues in mentoring and encouraging junior officers for promotion does not help ME officers to the same degree as white British officers (Bland, 1999, p36-7).

The FRS has made an effort to address the opaque nature of promotion and emphasis on intangibles with the introduction of the IPDS. This is meant to be a transparent, competence-based system of promotion, which supports assessment for promotion and recording of assessments according to national standards. Fire services were due to have support for implementation of the IPDS through the IPDS Hub at the Fire Service College until December 2005[1]. Still, the literature suggests that the success of a system of promotion that relies on self-nomination cannot be fully evaluated until the potential issues of the sense of isolation and the erosion of confidence of F/ME firefighters are also addressed.

In September 2005 the ODPM produced a consultation paper on the implementation of new National Firefighter Selection and Assessment Development Centre Processes. The document puts strong emphasis on the costing of different options and a suggestion that in the next FRS National Framework, each FRS should be instructed to implement one of the options. A national ADC toolkit is currently under

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1 The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2005/06, 31.

development by the IPDS Hub at the Fire Service College. In relation to equality and diversity in the FRS, these national initiatives aim to make promotion procedures fair and transparent and accountable to national standards for all, rather than opaque and subject to informal influence and preferential treatment of certain candidates:

- 59% of survey respondents overall reported that they have had an assessment under IPDS.

Of those who did apply for promotion, there was no visible gender divide in the perception of support from management:

- 60% of whole-time women applying for promotion, and equally 60% of whole-time men applying for promotion, described their line manager as 'helpful/encouraging'.

At the same time, however, operational employees of both genders and varying ethnic identity noted the continuing existence of 'invisible' factors in career progression, particularly a perception of being held to different standards than others, and the influence of favouritism (see below). Statements from white British male FRS employees, however, also indicate that the problems faced by female and minority ethnic FRS employees in this regard should be understood as part of perceptions of informality and favouritism in promotion, which as yet have not been resolved even by the introduction of IPDS and other 'transparent' career progression initiatives.

FRS Operational Employees: Perceptions of Favouritism and Different Standards

'I am watched more because I am the only female on my station and I 'get away' with nothing, i.e. everything I do has to be spot on (in terms of behaviour and discipline especially), when perhaps my colleagues would go unnoticed in their short-comings.'
(White British, female, firefighter)

'You are always being …more closely monitored, even though you can do the job at the same or even higher standard than your peers, you are made to feel less superior.'
(Pakistani, male, sub officer)

'I feel that I have needed to prove myself more than other individuals who at times may have been "in favour". However, this has reduced dramatically over recent years.'
(White British, male, ADO)

In the case of retained firefighters, 78% of those who did not apply for promotion overall cited 'other reasons' for not applying for promotion, which were not related to the availability of training or support from management. Upon investigation of the qualitative responses, this is in many cases because of a lack of opportunities, or perceived lack of opportunities, for career advancement, or because the firefighters expressed a desire to remain in the more active firefighter role.

6.3.6 Provision of Appropriate Facilities and Equipment
Previous Findings
The overwhelmingly male culture of the FRS raises other issues that have had and may have still an impact on the

retention of women. In the past, a need to fit in or be treated 'as a man' was found to extend to the provision of facilities and appropriate equipment, and feelings among some women firefighters that they must downplay or ignore their identities as women in order to avoid conflict (EOC, 2004, p32). Along with harassment, the Equal Opportunities Commission found the lack of equal, purpose-built facilities for women to be a major barrier to retention. Similar difficulties were found to affect women in the Police Service (BAWP, 2004, p19-20).

To examine the current state of affairs in regard to these barriers, we asked a number of questions about facilities for women in the sample FRSs and found the following:

FireWorks Sample FRSs
- Three of the FRSs in the sample reported that all stations now have dedicated facilities for women (showers, toilets, changing). (The survey specified that FRSs should not count those facilities that 'double' for women, e.g. management/women, disabled/women.)
- All other FRSs reported having installed dedicated women's facilities in a percentage of their stations, with ongoing plans to update the other stations.
- 100% of FRSs responding said they now provide appropriate clothing for pregnant employees.

6.3.7 Family and Childcare Issues
Previous Research
A Home Office Report on retention in the Police Service shows that 24% of women leaving the Service (as opposed to 6% of men) list domestic responsibilities as their primary motivation. Women had higher resignation rates in general than men. Yet only 10% of women who leave the Police Service go on to pursue domestic responsibilities full-time. This suggests that 'despite forces introducing policies relating to flexible working, there was little sign of flexible working being applied strategically, to improve retention, efficiency, effectiveness or quality of service' (Cooper and Ingram, 2004, 24, 44; BAWP, 2004, p11-12).

Childcare and other domestic and family responsibilities have also been shown to be a barrier to promotion of women in the Police Service. The residential, off-site nature of command courses may present serious difficulties for women firefighters who also bear primary responsibility for childcare within their families. In the Police Service, it has been shown that training and development opportunities do not fit the needs of women with families because of their centralised nature (BAWP, 2004, p12). The same paper found that a barrier to women taking promotion exams is balancing the time and stress of exam preparation with family life demands (BAWP, 2004, p15). As a result of these barriers, which are similar to those faced by women firefighters, women were less likely to have applied for promotion in the Police Service (Cooper and Ingram, 2004, p45).

FRS Findings
Guidelines for the treatment of pregnant firefighters are in place (FBU, 2005). These regulations give pregnant women the right to be assigned to non-operational duties in order to avoid potential harm to themselves or their child (ODPM, 2004, ch 11). The guidelines call for an individual risk

assessment to be carried out in each case. During pregnancy firefighters are entitled to their normal benefits, including accrual of pension and holiday. They are also entitled to a clothing allowance of at least £100 per trimester towards appropriately tailored uniforms, and time off to attend off-site fitness sessions appropriate to pregnancy (FBU, 2005, 2.5-2.6). Flexible working arrangements to facilitate childcare are in place as women continue to be primary childcarers (Caplen, 2003, p22-4). Despite these provisions a lack of awareness or negligence in the implementation of these regulations, as with the provision of facilities for women, may be a barrier to retention of women. The paucity of exit interview evidence makes the extent of this barrier difficult to ascertain.

FireWorks Findings

Following upon findings from previous research, we asked sample FRSs about their policies on flexible working arrangements, and asked human resource officers from each FRS whether they believed these arrangements had had any notable effect on the rates of retention of female employees. We also asked female operational employees about the effect of child caring responsibilities on their decisions about applications for promotion. We found the following:

- 62% of FRSs in the FireWorks sample reported having some form of flexible working arrangements in place for employees with family or other caring commitments.
- Of these, 80% reported that they believed the arrangements had had either a moderate or great positive effect on the retention of operational employees.
- 19% of women survey respondents who were eligible, but chose not to apply for promotion (as opposed to 6% of men) said they were dissuaded at least in part by childcare or other domestic issues.

6.3.8 The Role of Networking Groups in Combating Isolation

In previous studies, and in many anecdotal examples reported to us in the course of this research, F/ME FRS employees have expressed a sense of isolation within the FRS workforce. A suggestion to come out of the literature was the increased use of networking for F/ME members of the FRS. (EOC, 2004, p33-4). Some members of these groups who were surveyed, however, expressed concern that this would raise their profile and make it difficult to 'fit in' as they might be perceived to be receiving 'special treatment'. A study in the Police Service also noted that it is important to involve senior (white) male officers in such networks in order for F/ME members of the Service to recognise managerial support for the particular difficulties they face[2].

FireWorks Findings

Opinion is divided on the effectiveness, and appropriateness, of support groups for F/ME members of the FRS. This opinion is not divided neatly between the under-represented groups and members of the white British, male, majority, but to a significant extent within each group. This division of opinion is indicated by quotes taken from survey responses, and indicate that previous assumptions about who does and does not support the existence of such organisations are not always accurate (see below).

2 'The Gender Agenda', 12-14.

Networking Groups for Female and Minority Ethnic FRS Employees: Examples of Documented Opinions

'I went to the B&EMM school and it made me aware that I was not alone and had someone to turn to, and in a time when I needed someone to turn to it was and still is essential to all.'
(Whole-time firefighter, male, ticked the 'other mixed ethnicity' box)

'The women's section of our FBU branch is, I feel, a politically correct exercise. I have had problems with our brigade regarding not having a use-able maternity procedure and various family friendly issues. I have phoned the FBU officer regarding these matters. I like the fact that my problem was dealt with by the secretary/chair and not side-swiped to the 'womens' section. I am a member of the FBU like the white males and the minority ethnic members. I don't agree with the FBU having segregation within its organisation. I have attended one networking women conference and heard enough moaning to last me a lifetime.'
(Whole-time firefighter, female, white British)

'In my personal experience I feel that there is no need for this section because within our control room there are other females that I could turn to for support if I needed to. However I can understand that if I was a female on a Fire Station, which is predominantly a male environment, there may be need for this section.'
(Control room officer, female, white British)

'As I am not in this group I cannot comment, however the general word on station is that if there was an 'average white male' section, it would not be politically correct. Double standard.'
(Whole-time firefighter, male, white British)

'The Section looks to ensure that any member of the Fire Service from a black or ethnic minority group, will be treated as they would expect or want to be treated (fairly and equal) and given the same opportunities within the Service, in terms of promotion, current and future roles.'
(Whole-time firefighter, male, white British)

These survey results indicate a wide range of opinions about the effectiveness of networking groups in contributing to retention of female and minority ethnic FRS employees. This may on the one hand be an indication that employees in some locations do not see a need for such groups. On the other hand, it may be an indication that in some locations there is no effective link between such groups and FRS management, and that they are therefore perceived as ineffectual in practice.

6.3.9 The Influence of Positive Role Models and Mentoring Schemes

A suggestion made in the literature is that fire services recruit staff willing to 'show newcomers the ropes' and mentor new recruits, particularly women and people from minority ethnic backgrounds, to counter-act the sense of isolation expressed by certain of these individuals (Brown, 1981, p410). The Home Office Action Plan *'Towards Diversity, Promoting Cultural*

Change' (2000) that followed the 1999 Thematic Review required all FRSs to introduce mentoring systems by May 2001, and early FireWorks Project contacts with FRS equalities officers indicated awareness of similar schemes in other organisations, such as the NHS 'Breaking Through' development programme for ME staff. As a result, we asked participating sample FRSs about the existence and effects of any mentoring programmes, and asked operational FRS employees about the influence of role models on decisions to apply for promotion.

We asked currently employed whole-time members of the FRS about the factors that may have contributed to a decision not to apply for promotion. Of those respondents who did not apply for promotion, by far the greatest number (62% of women and 65% of men not applying), did so for 'other' reasons. Upon examination of the qualitative data, the vast majority of these individuals were found to have been in the FRS for too short a period of time to have considered applying for promotion.

Of those respondents who were eligible in terms of length of service, there were some discrepancies in motivation:

- 14% of female survey respondents (as opposed to 6% of males), were dissuaded by the lack of a suitable mentor or role model
- Likewise, 13% of minority ethnic employees responding to surveys who were eligible, but did not apply for promotion, cited the lack of a suitable role model or mentor (in contrast to 0% of white British, male candidates)

Three of the 9 respondent FRSs in this part of the FireWorks Project have introduced pilot mentoring schemes aimed at improving the retention and promotion rates of under-represented groups in the organisation. A fourth service reports that it is in the process of developing a mentoring scheme. These schemes were varied in nature and aim, and two FRSs gave us further details of their schemes (see below), with one (LFEPS) being particularly well-developed. In all cases, the schemes are still in the early pilot stages, and further information about the strategic effectiveness and success of the schemes is expected in 2006.

Pilot Mentoring Schemes: Examples of Aims and Practice

Scheme 1: *This scheme is aimed primarily at career development of F/ME operational members of the FRS. A female or minority ethnic employee is chosen, with their agreement, for a six-month secondment to a management position. This scheme is still in an early stage of development.*

Scheme 2: *This scheme is aimed at countering aspects of the identified 'organisational culture' of a major metropolitan FRS: the scheme is groundbreaking in its plan to build upon the diversity of FRS employees, rather than eliminate individual differences in the interest of conformity. In this service, training managers have found that new recruits begin to compromise their behaviours and make adaptations as early as their initial training period. Individual interviews are held with every new recruit to explain the scheme, and members of under-represented groups are encouraged to be paired with a mentor, who is*

chosen according to criteria set out by the FRS. The mentor is not a 'buddy' on the watch who helps to 'embed' the new employee into an existing culture, nor is he/she part of the individual's direct line management structure. This allows a forum for discussion of issues/problems that the individual encounters. There are mechanisms in place for finding solutions to problematic issues in a confidential manner.

6.4 Summary and Conclusions

Because of the very low numbers of both women and minority ethnic members of the FRS, it is difficult to determine whether there is a widespread discrepancy in retention and promotion rates between female and minority ethnic members and their white British, male colleagues. The inadequacy of statistical data collected at the level of central government or regional FRS contributes to this problem. As the representation of these groups increases in the FRS, it will be necessary to gather better data about leavers' motivations and post-employment movements in order to monitor retention levels.

Whilst there continue to be examples of bullying and harassment based on gender and racial/ethnic identity, our research suggests that the relationship of these issues to levels of retention and promotion among under-represented groups in the FRS is not as straight forward as might have been previously assumed. The experiences of women are not always the same as those of minority ethnic members of the FRS, although they are both under-represented groups. Nor are the experiences of all women, or indeed all minority ethnic members the same. Previous assumptions about the effects upon under-represented groups of issues such as teasing and bullying, must be considered and seen in greater complexity. Despite the undoubted existence of high profile cases of bullying and harassment, we were unable to find conclusive evidence that experiences such as these, due to gender and/or racial/ethnic identify, were a major barrier to the retention and promotion of female and minority ethnic staff in general. Indeed, an increase in these cases may be indicative of a growing intolerance of such behaviour. FRSs must use the first and best resource, the individuals themselves, for their opinions and experiences, rather than creating unusable strategies based largely on assumption. Careful attention must be given to considering the needs of these members on an individual basis in order to overcome existing or future barriers to retention and career progression.

To some members of FRS management who participated in this study, the fact that very few members of a small F/ME workforce left the Service, indicates that there is no need to consider a retention or promotion 'problem'. Yet the evidence found in studies of the Police Service, in particular, suggests that it is not enough to attempt a large-scale recruitment campaign for F/ME members without giving consideration to retention and career progression issues from the outset. FRSs should take note of this experience, and identify and address barriers to the retention and promotion of these individuals at the same time as they address barriers to their recruitment.

6.5 Recommendations

- FRAs should maintain on-going dialogue with women and people from minority ethnic backgrounds on issues of retention and promotion.

- ODPM and CFOA should identify and address issues relating to retention and promotion and post-employment plans.
- ODPM and CFOA should identify and promote successful pathways to FRS careers for women and people from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- FRAs should introduce shadowing schemes to allow managers to learn best practice in recruitment, retention and promotion from other organisations.

Dr Jennifer Shea

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Evaluation of Equality and Diversity Initiatives

7.1 Introduction

Many initiatives have been developed to manage and implement equality and diversity within organisations and within the local community. Frequently such initiatives have been criticised as being of little value to the victims of discrimination as organisations are unaware of the impact of their equality and diversity initiatives.

This section is presented in three parts: the initial work investigating the context of community focused work within the English Fire and Rescue Service; a review of the literature on the evaluation of equality and diversity initiatives; and a discussion of the major empirical research undertaken by the FireWorks team on the scope and evaluation of the equality and diversity initiatives undertaken by the FRS, particularly those initiatives that are intended to change the local community's perception of the FRS.

We start with the presentation of some of the early work evaluating the connections between policy and practice for community focused activities undertaken by the Fire and Rescue Service. These interim findings were originally presented at the FireWorks Project's mid-term conference held in Cambridge in December 2004.   A version of this section (co-authored with *ACO Allan Hughes [West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service]*) was published in the July 2005 issue of the Fire Prevention and Fire Engineers Journal. These findings should be considered in conjunction with the remainder of the section.

This is followed by a review of the literature on the evaluation of equality and diversity initiatives. Included is a review of the techniques that have been proposed to include the planning, costing and integration of evaluation into the development and execution of initiatives.

Finally we describe our survey of the equality and diversity initiatives undertaken by a sample of the English FRS, and a number of case studies of initiatives that were observed by the FireWorks team. Out of this work a toolkit was developed to support FRS members in the planning and evaluation of their E&D community initiatives.

7.2 Part 1: FRS working with communities

There is increasing recognition across both governmental and non-governmental organisations of the benefits of community involvement in key public services. The Government's commitment to encouraging community involvement is demonstrated through a range of programmes and initiatives including the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit's Single Community Programme, Community Facilitation Programme, National Community Forum, and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) initiative; plus the Department of Health sponsored Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health which has established Patient and Public Involvement Fora (PPI) for every UK NHS Trust.

The thinking behind encouraging community involvement is the principle that that local people know best what the priorities and needs of their own neighbourhoods are and that the opportunities and tools must be available to enable them to participate in decision-making and thus increase the accountability of service providers.

ODPM identify a lack of joint working at local level as one of the 'key reasons for lack of progress in delivering sustainable economic, social and physical regeneration, or improved public services, that meets the needs of local people' and asserts that co-operative working between organisations and the local community will have a far greater chance of success.

Work with the community is a key part of the Fire and Rescue Service's role not only in promoting good community relations and an improved service, but also in seeking to improve community fire safety, and address the barriers to recruitment experienced by under-represented groups within the community.

7.3 Research Methods

The team undertook this research as part of their commitment to helping fire and rescue services evaluate the impact of their community initiatives in this respect. In the course of this research we reviewed policies, statements, action plans, information and websites from our sample fire and rescue services to identify any activity which appeared

to involve the local community. We supplemented this information with information from equality advisers who were interviewed during the Spring and Summer of 2004, and again in 2005.

7.4 Interim Research Findings

All fire and rescue services within our sample engaged in a range of community activities to a lesser or greater degree, and involved the participation of a range of levels of fire service personnel - including firefighters, support staff and chief officers.

However during the course of the research it became apparent that the way in which community involvement was undertaken was quite disparate across fire and rescue services, both in terms of the purpose for undertaking these activities and how such initiatives were described.

An early finding was that there was a range of terms used to encompass both similar and divergent activities. For example, the headings 'Community Outreach', 'Community Development', and 'Community Fire Safety' appeared to have been used interchangeably in policies whilst referring to different types of activities in action plans. In addition some specific activities - such as those concerning recruitment - were listed as also being used to promote community fire safety, community outreach and/or the development of community links.

'Community Outreach' was the phrase most often used as a 'catch-all' umbrella term for a wide range of activities involving the community. Just under 70% of the sample fire services had policies, action plans and other documentation which referred to 'community outreach'. In some cases it was clear that 'community outreach' was used to describe activity undertaken primarily to establish and maintain relationships and involvement with the local communities.

'…that's what we'd want an outreach worker to do, build the links between the stations and community groups.'
(Equality Practitioner)

Whilst in others there was a more specific aim to promote the equalities and diversity agenda through involving community and formal equality groups in the evaluation of equality and diversity practice.

Although in some cases 'community outreach' embraced awareness raising activities to support community fire safety and recruitment objectives, these were more usually identified under their separate headings.

'…we have outreach workers who work on CFS.'
(Equality Practitioner)

However, there appeared to be a lack of consistency or uniformity across the sample regarding the specific purpose of 'community outreach' and in some cases it was difficult to determine how community outreach policy was put into practice. Nevertheless, whatever the term used to describe community initiatives, it was possible to establish three broad aims of this fire service activity - public relations and/or a general wish to establish community links and relationships, the promotion of community fire safety, and recruitment.

7.4.1 Community Links and Relationships

Some of the community work undertaken by fire services appeared to be for the sole purpose of establishing and maintaining relationships and partnerships with the local community and community groups to promote transparency and accountability as a public service.
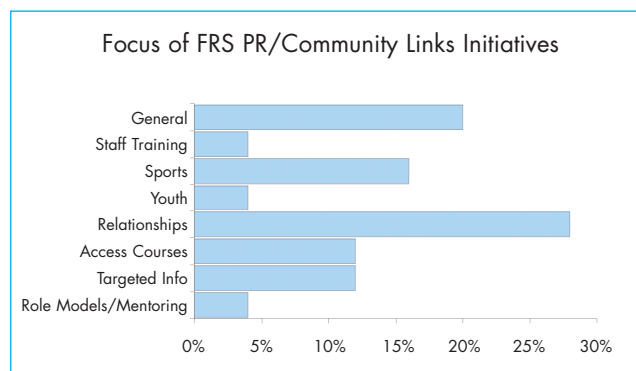
Figure 8. Focus of FRS PR/Community Links Initiatives

In Figure 8, specific activities directed at maintaining and establishing relationships included 'maintaining a database of contact details', 'establishing links with minority ethnic communities/groups and/or associations' and a 'black history month'. General activities included 'advertisements and posters', 'awareness raising activities' and 'promotions'. The fire services also opened up fire stations to provide venues for community events and meetings to take place.

Sports events included a 'world cup initiative' and 'sports team support for women'. Whilst access courses, role models/mentoring and staff training were mentioned as part of FRS attempts to establish community links, they were more specifically used in recruitment activities.

Community relationships with organised equality groups were established in over 85% of the sample fire and rescue services for support on the achievement of the equality and diversity agenda. Some of these consultations and work with equality groups involved organisations such as local Race Equality Councils, whilst others referred to 'equality steering groups' and 'equality forums'. Over 60% specifically identified consultation with community groups as a method for evaluating equality and diversity policy and practice and 50% of these also identified equality steering groups, committees and forums as evaluation partners.
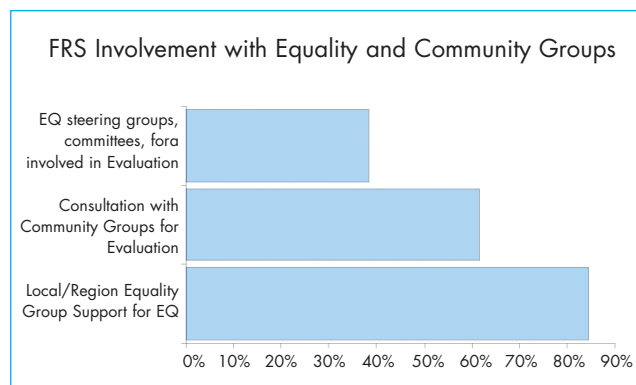
Figure 9. FRS Involvement with Equality and Community Groups

In total 38% of fire services used equality steering groups, committees and forums in their evaluations, but it was not clear whether these were internal groups or externally generated groups.

7.4.2 Community Fire Safety (CFS)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, nearly 85% of our sample fire and rescue services published documentation which identified an improvement in community fire safety as an aim of their work with local communities. However, in only 55% of these were we able to identify activities specifically directed at community fire safety, and in only 40% of FRS were we able to identify activities with clearly defined objectives in this regard.

Initiatives undertaken to promote community fire safety tended to focus on young people, minority ethnic communities and geographical 'hotspots' for call outs.
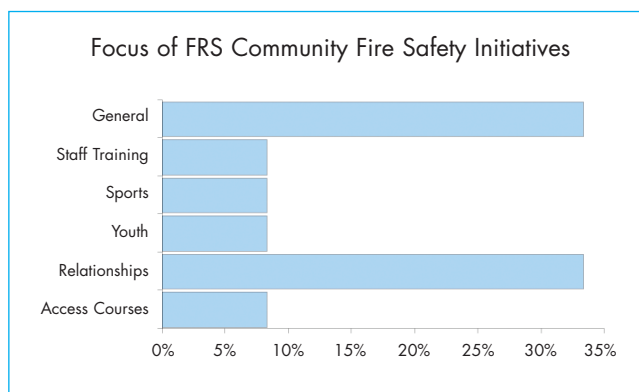
Figure 10 Focus of FRS Community Fire Safety Initiatives

Although there were some targeted campaigns much of the work here fell into the relationship and general categories of activities including visits to schools, youth clubs, community events and religious centres; work with specific groups and religious leaders; invitations to groups to attend events organised by the Fire and Rescue Service and providing information.

7.4.3 Recruitment

Our interviews with equality practitioners identified that in attempting to make progress towards the Government's recruitment targets the FRS face a number of challenges.

One challenge is that a number of services in the sample are not currently recruiting. In light of this, one practitioner declared that since there was no recruitment campaigning, recruitment was from an old list of applicants that had no target group members. Conversely as a result of successful campaigning, another service saw more applicants from the target groups and fewer white males applying than ever before. One service confirmed that a number of transfers from other services, whilst an efficient way of filling vacancies, was undermining opportunities to recruit from local ME communities.

Secondly, whilst recruitment for retained firefighters was ongoing, equality practitioners stated that most of their service's retained stations are in areas with low minority ethnic populations. In addition, they considered retained firefighter vacancies to be difficult to fill and they were therefore more likely to appoint white males.

Nevertheless, 92% of our sample fire and rescue services specifically targeted activities at recruitment. Recruitment activities were focused both on the immediate recruitment of people to the FRS and towards laying the foundation for future recruitment. Recruitment activities tended to be targeted and/or positive action initiatives aimed at increasing the employment levels of under-represented groups within the Fire and Rescue Service - specifically minority ethnic groups and women.

Recruitment initiatives included visits to schools and religious centres, attendance at community events and providing events on station, and inviting potential recruits to open days. Activities included targeted advertising, information and visits; positive action through application monitoring, support and access courses; staff training and the use of role models and mentors.
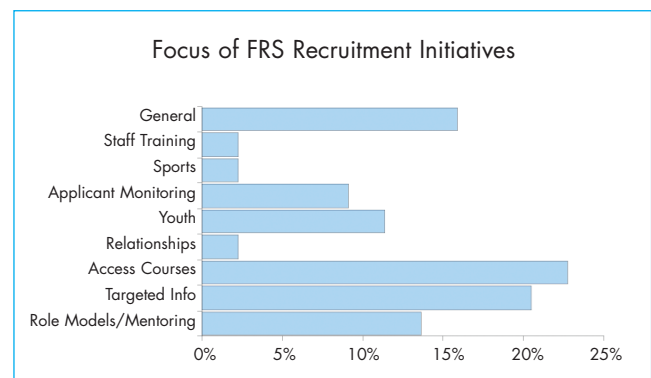
Figure 11. Focus of FRS Recruitment Initiatives

Some activities were primarily youth orientated and included schemes implemented under the Prince's Trust, the Duke of Edinburgh Award, work and initiatives with youth development services, and visits to specific youth clubs. Other initiatives considered useful in recruitment terms were general open days and awareness raising through attendance at events and sports activities. However, although the stated aim of these activities was different to those under the community fire safety banner, many of the activities themselves were the same.

Our interviews with equality practitioners identified that where data was collected from those attending recruitment days, this normally referred to information about potential applicants who had not yet submitted an application form. Of the sample, 6 services collected data from and maintained an ongoing relationship with all attendees and provided them with information about forthcoming recruitment campaigns. Only 2 services specifically mentioned that they maintained contact with target groups, one was on a voluntary and informal basis where a female firefighter liaised with potential female applicants. Three services in the sample collected information for monitoring purposes only.

7.5 Part 2: Evaluating Community Initiatives

Wentling (2000, p435) commented that 'the changing workforce is one of the most extraordinary and significant challenges facing many organisations today'. Organisations now understand that diversity has emerged as a requirement for survival and success. Not only must organisations develop and implement initiatives that allow them to capture and

retain diverse customer bases they must also recruit and retain a workforce that reflects that diversity (Florkowski, 1997; Wentling, 2000). As a result, many initiatives have been developed that are intended to manage diversity within organisations and within the wider community. Such initiatives have become a mainstream issue for both private businesses and public sector organisations (Jewson and Mason, 1994). Within organisations diversity initiatives 'are defined as specific activities, programmes, policies, and any other formal processes or efforts designed to promote organisational culture change related to diversity' (Wentling, 2000, p436). Examples of such initiatives within organisations include: flexible working conditions; home working; education and training programmes on diversity; skill development for working in multicultural environments; career management programmes; mentoring schemes; informal support networks; and dependent care assistance (Arredondo, 1996). In general these initiatives are aimed at ethnicity and gender issues, although some encompass all individual differences and are directed at all employees (Wentling, 2000).

Initiatives to manage diversity within the wider community can range from limited programmes aimed at creating a positive image for an organisation through to comprehensive initiatives aimed at local community revitalisation (Kubisch, Fulbright-Anderson and Connell, 1998; Baum, 2001; Hoque and Noon, 2004).

However, some authors question the value of many of these equality and diversity initiatives (Comer and Soliman, 1996; Wentling, 2000; Hoque and Noon, 2004). The increasing proportion of organisations that claim to have implemented policies has led to the suspicion that in reality these are exercises in image management and that unfair practices, prejudice and inequality persist (see Section 4.1.5).

There are therefore many reasons why equality and diversity policies need to be evaluated. Unfortunately, a lack of attention to their evaluation has been regularly reported (Comer and Soliman, 1996; Wentling, 2000). This lack of attention to evaluation has been blamed on an apparent lack of appropriate measures. Comer and Soliman (1996) contended that there is an urgent need for practitioners and researchers to include suitable evaluation measures as early as possible within an initiatives development cycle.

'At its best, evaluation helps those with interests in programs - planners, implementors, funders, potential beneficiaries, or opponents, for example - understand what difference the programs have made (or could make) in the world: whether, to begin, they have made any difference; whether the difference is what was intended; whether any difference that resulted was desirable; why the programs did whatever they did; whether the intended result, accomplished or not, was reasonable; what, if anything, it would be reasonable for programs to aim for in the future; and what strategies and conditions would make attempts more successful than not.' (Baum, 2001, p147).

7.5.1 The Evaluation Process
In spite of the difficulty of determining the impact of equality and diversity initiatives, some organisations are

making efforts to measure their value and the measurement of cost and return on investment is becoming particularly important (Wentling, 2000). Usable measures are becoming available for the evaluation of internal initiatives and a number of recognised formal techniques have been adapted for the measurement of diversity training (Wentling, 2000; Clements and Jones, 2002) (see Section 5). Techniques are being developed for the evaluation of initiatives that impact the wider community although the accuracy and value of these remains open to question (Kubisch et al, 1998; Baum, 2001).

In the UK public sector, the evaluation of projects, particularly those with a large capital budget, has become a requirement of both central government and other funding bodies. The Department of Health (2002, p2) developed a good practice guide for post-project evaluation 'to ensure maximum pay-off from evaluation'. The guide recommended:

'1 View the evaluation as an integral part of the project and plan for it at the outset. The evaluation should be costed and resourced as part of the project.

2 Secure commitment from senior managers within the organisation.

3 Involve all key stakeholders in its planning and execution.

4 Develop relevant criteria and indicators to assess project outcomes from the outset of the project.

5 Put in place mechanisms to enable monitoring and measurement of progress.

6 Foster a learning environment to ensure lessons are heeded' (Department of Health, 2002, p2).

The Leicester Equality and Diversity Partnership (LEDP) introduced a toolkit to ensure that equality and diversity issues are integral to both the project funding process and the project itself (EDSS, 2005). The Toolkit addressed the six equality areas that are either existing within current legislation or will be subject to legislation in the near future - age, disability, gender, faith and beliefs, race and sexuality. The Toolkit 'was designed to provide Collaborative Groups and the submitting organisations with a framework that would demonstrate active engagement with equality and diversity issues. This could then be monitored and evaluated over the lifetime of the projects' (EDSS, 2005, p4). A claimed advantage of this approach was that the base position was identified at the funding stage of a project so that with suitable criteria, it would be possible to measure and evaluate the progress and outcomes of the project.

Initial evaluation of some 49 completed Equality and Diversity Toolkit responses enabled the LEDP to identify a range of activities to be prioritised for development and action. In particular these areas included the 'development of understanding of equality and diversity monitoring, assessment and development processes and the link to community empowerment' (EDSS, 2005, p12).

7.5.2 Evaluating and Measuring Diversity Initiatives within Organisations

Wentling (2000) undertook a study of the diversity initiatives of 8 major multinational corporations. Of these, 6 had processes in place to evaluate the initiatives. The range of evaluation methods included formal and informal employee feedback, focus groups, management performance reviews and employee data.

Corporations that tracked employee data indicated that they reviewed turnover rates, retention, hiring and promotion of women and minorities. In addition, employment data was reviewed to determine the representation of diverse groups at all organisational levels with particular interest taken in the representation at top management levels (Wentling, 2000).

The participants in the study were asked to specify how success was measured for diversity initiatives. In total, 15 methods were cited with a range of between 5 and 12 per corporation. All corporations reported that leadership commitment and representation of diversity at all levels of the organisation were the most important measures of the success of diversity initiatives. Six corporations mentioned progress towards stated goals, objectives and strategic plans were important.

Wentling (2000, p443) does not indicate precisely how these high level objectives are measured instead stating 'if they achieve their goals, then they could conclude that the diversity initiatives were successful'. Hoque and Noon (2004, p484) raise doubts about this approach stating that:

'…the initiatives become targeted' on a particular group 'in a manner that reflects the needs of employers rather than the needs of the social group in general. A further cause for concern relates to the scope for line managers to exercise discretion in terms of the operationalisation of EO practices'.

Wentling (2000) asked the corporations to identify components of initiatives that were difficult to evaluate. Six were identified including the impact of diversity on profitability and productivity, return on investment and employee behaviour and attitude changes. Of these, that the impact on profitability and productivity were considered to be the two greatest challenges. Wentling (2000, p445) noted that:

'…the reasons for these challenges were that bottom-line (profitability) and productivity are influenced by so many factors that it was difficult to isolate the specific diversity initiatives that caused the increased productivity or profit levels'.

Five companies indicated that they had no effective or efficient method for measuring profitability gain in order to calculate the return-on-investment of their diversity initiatives. Behaviour changes and employee attitudes were considered difficult to evaluate because it was felt they take a long time to occur and any changes may not be obvious or may be difficult to identify.

7.5.3 Diversity Initiatives within the Wider Community

The evidence that has been presented has indicated that initiatives within the wider community have been, and remain, difficult to evaluate (Shaw, 1996; Kubisch et al., 1998; Baum, 2001). Connell and Kubisch (1998, p15) suggested a 'theory of change approach' to evaluating initiatives within the community. This approach requires three steps: articulating a theory of change; measuring an initiative's activities and intended outcomes; and analysing and interpreting the results of an evaluation, including their implications for adjusting the initiative's theory of change and its allocation of resources. Weiss (1995) simply suggested that a theory of change is a theory of how and why an initiative works.

Connell and Kubisch (1998, p19) have identified three attributes of a good theory of change that stakeholders should confirm are present before committing to an evaluation and, indeed, should revisit throughout the implementation and evaluation of the initiative:

It should be plausible. *Do evidence and common sense suggest that the activities, if implemented, will lead to desired outcomes?*

It should be doable. *Will the economic, technical, political, institutional, and human resources be available to carry out the initiative?*

It should be testable. *Is the theory of change specific and complete enough for an evaluator to track its progress in credible and useful ways?'*

Connell and Kubisch (1998, p40) subsequently suggested that a fourth criterion be added: 'outcomes included in the theory of change be meaningful to all stakeholders'.

In the process of developing a good theory of change, Connell and Kubisch (1998) suggest that the stakeholders work backwards from the long-term outcomes to initial activities and resource mapping (see Figure 12). This process is intended to identify and agree the outcomes and activities required to complete the initiative and the evaluation and measurement techniques to be used.

| **Step 6**
Resource mapping | **Step 5**
Initial activities | **Step 4**
Early outcomes | **Step 3**
Intermediate outcomes | **Step 2**
Penultimate outcomes | **Step 1**
Long-term outcomes |
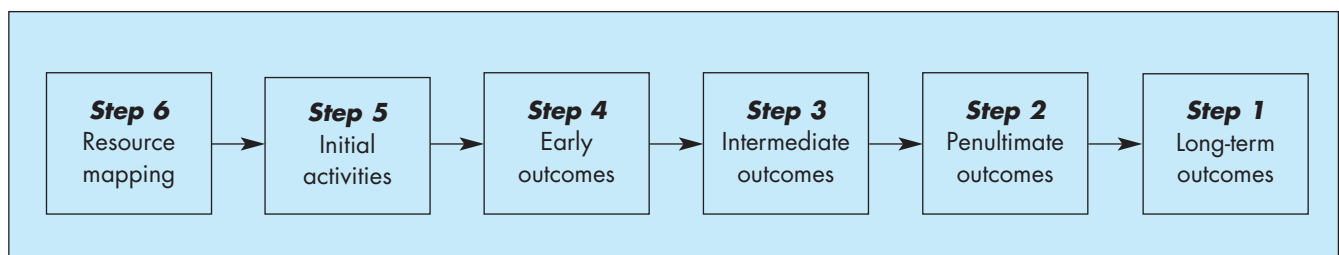
Figure 12. Steps in developing a good theory of change. (Connell and Kubisch, 1998. p22)

The agreed activities and outcomes are then expanded into a matrix chart representing the steps and appropriate responsibilities. For simplicity, the penultimate outcomes can be included with the intermediate and/or long-term outcomes (see Table 6).

Under a theory of change approach the measurement of activities is as important as the measurement of the outcomes.

'To make a case for impact, the theory of change approach seeks to accumulate rigorous tests of links between an initiative's activities and their expected outcomes. Therefore, it must have compelling measures of both activities and outcomes and then link, through causal inference, change in one to change in the other, repeatedly and cumulatively over the early, intermediate, and later stages of the initiative' (Connell and Kubisch, 1998, p32).

As part of the initiative reporting structure, Gambone (1998) suggested a measurement model for evaluations (see Table 7).

	Early activities	Early outcomes	Intermediate outcomes	Long-term outcomes
Community	Publicity about initiative(s)	Community aware of initiative(s)	Perceptions of FRS change	Improved, and measured area-level outcomes
Fire and Rescue Service	Initiative(s) planned and funding received	Responsibility and accountability defined	Initiative(s) implemented and evaluated	Initiatives have provided change to organisation
Personal/ network/ family		Become aware of FRS as a career	Joining FRS seen as a positive step	Encourage family members or friends to apply to FRS
Individual		Attend open and positive action days	Consider FRS as a quality employer	Apply to join FRS

Table 6. 'Theory of Change' matrix for Fire and Rescue Service recruitment initiative(s) (adapted from Connell and Kubisch, 1998, p26).

Measuring context Historical conditions and ongoing dynamics	**Measuring progress** Activities and interim outcomes	**Measuring effects** Long-term outcomes
Question: Under what conditions is the initiative operating? (for example, history, geography, economics, politics, population, or relationships)	**Question:** How are activities catalysed and implemented? (for example, involvement of individuals or groups, decision making, roles, facilitators, or obstacles)	**Question:** What long-term outcomes result from the initiative activities? (For example, change at the level of individuals, family, organisations, institutions, or community)
	Question: What activities are being undertaken? (For example, mobilising people or organisations, new or restructured activities, or new or restructured resources)	
	Question: What early and intermediate outcomes result? (For example, meeting predetermined thresholds for participation, civic activities, or events)	

Table 7. A hypothetical measurement model for initiative evaluations (adapted from Gambone, 1998, p152).

Baum (2001) had reservations about the theory of change approach and believed that practical constraints limit what could be measured and evaluated.

'Even if participants were certain about what interventions should accomplish and how they should produce specific effects, it would be impossible to observe everything that should bear on evaluating an initiative. Finite budgets limit observations to short time periods and narrow physical and social spaces. Long-term outcomes are difficult to identify because they require that evaluators stay in the field a long time and observe an ever-widening array of influences on the objects of the initiative.'
(Baum, 2001, p159)

7.6 Part 3: Empirical Research

Early in 2005 a survey was undertaken of equality and diversity initiatives in the English Fire and Rescue Service. The survey was prepared by the FireWorks research team and submitted to a sample of FRSs with the support and assistance of the Chief Fire Officer's Association (CFOA). The following findings represent the 14 FRSs who responded to our request.

The FRSs were asked to detail the initiatives they had undertaken in the period between 1st January, 2004 and 28th February, 2005 and those that they intended to undertake between 1st March, 2005 and 31st August, 2005. The FRSs were asked to place their initiatives in the categories of recruitment, promotion and retention of women and of minority ethnic (ME) groups and to comment on the success or otherwise of those initiatives that had been undertaken. However, promotion and retention are not considered in this section (see Section 6).

A number of these initiatives were selected for further detailed evaluation, each being treated as a case study.

Data used in the initiative evaluation process was collected through a wide range of methods including document analysis, observation, interviews and group discussion. Data collection techniques, sources and data categories varied between initiative types and the data available for review varied between fire and rescue services according to their own practice.

The evaluation process was an evolving part of the programme and was intended to identify best practice and transferability of initiatives. Considerable care was taken to ensure that the potential pitfalls were avoided and that the final case study reports were valuable and balanced.

One practical outcome of the initiative evaluation process is the Diversity Initiative Evaluation Toolkit (see enclosed CD-ROM) that individual fire and rescue services can use to assess their own initiatives.

7.7 Research Findings
7.7.1 Survey

The numbers of responses by FRS are detailed in Table 8 and the initiatives are grouped by type in Table 9.

In the survey, respondents were specifically asked to indicate the success of their initiatives on a five-point scale where 1 represented no success and 5 represented outstanding success. However, few respondents used this scale; instead a majority of respondents provided written comments. These comments indicated that the definition of success was often taken from a subjective view point as there was little firm evidence available. A sample of such comments is provided in Table 10.

The issue of uncertainty in the evaluation of success was perhaps best described by one respondent who noted in a covering letter:

'I hope you find the above information helpful. Considering the initiatives highlighted it appears to me that we need a comprehensive monitoring system put in place so to be able to judge our successes and failures more objectively'.

7.7.2 Case Studies
Graduate recruitment fair

The FRS attended a graduate recruitment fair, held each year, in the local university that includes a wide range of companies and government agencies including the Police, the Royal Navy and the Army. This particular FRS last recruited whole-time firefighters in 2003. At the time of the fair there were no vacancies for whole-time firefighters although there was a requirement for some 29 community safety officers and retained firefighters in rural areas. A desirable capability for the community safely officer role was a second language from the Indian Sub-continent.

The handouts available on the FRS stand included a wide range of information on the whole-time firefighter role and information on smoke alarms and fire safety. There was nothing available on other roles such as community safety officers or retained firefighters. All visitors to the stand were informed that the FRS was not recruiting whole-time firefighters and were asked to contact the HQ later in the year for further information. No visitor was informed about any other roles even though a number of Asian graduates visited the stand.

Type of Initiative	Number of Initiatives Recorded on Survey				
	0	*1*	*2 to 5*	*6 to 10*	*11 or more*
Women Recruitment	2	2	9	0	1
Women Promotion	7	3	4	0	0
Women Retention	6	3	5	0	0
ME Recruitment	3	1	9	0	1
ME Promotion	8	4	2	0	0
ME Retention	7	4	3	0	0

Table 8. Number of initiatives recorded by each Fire and Rescue Service (N=14).

Type of initiative	Details of Initiative	Number of Fire and Rescue Services	
		Undertaken 1/1/2004 to 28/2/2005	Planned 1/3/2005 to 31/8/2005
Women Recruitment	Open days, positive action workshops and awareness days.	10	7
	Networking with community groups.	2	1
	Young firefighters scheme.	1	2
	Recruitment fairs, graduate recruitment days and career events.	5	4
	Schools and colleges liaison/talks.	2	2
	Positive action event aimed at young adults.	1	0
	Targeted press advertisements.	2	1
	Targeted radio coverage/advertisements.	2	1
	Sport sponsorship.	1	1
	Drama training for managers.	0	1
	Leaflet drops by postal services.	1	1
	Posters/leaflets/etc at shops, businesses, Connexions and Job Centres.	1	1
Women Promotion	Internal Women's Support Group.	1	1
	Use external Women's Support Groups (eg. NWFS)	2	2
	Mentoring scheme.	3	3
	Encourage promotion through IPDS scheme.	4	4
	Assignment to HQ as temporary crew manager.	1	1
Women Retention	Internal Women's Support Group.	0	1
	Use external Women's Support Groups (eg. NWFS)	0	2
	Equality and diversity training/seminars.	4	5
	Policy and/or survey on bullying and harassment	1	2
	Equality survey of women.	0	1
	Uniform Service Course jointly held with the Police.	0	1
	Exit interview programme.	1	1
	Direct communication channel.	1	1
	Plan child care facilities.	0	1
ME Recruitment	Open days, positive action workshops and awareness days.	3	5
	Networking with community groups.	6	6
	Young firefighters scheme.	0	2
	Recruitment fairs, graduate recruitment days and career events.	2	3
	Schools and colleges liaison/talks.	3	3
	Positive action event aimed at young adults.	1	1
	Targeted press advertisements.	3	3
	Targeted radio coverage/advertisements.	1	2
	Drama training for managers.	0	1
	Sport sponsorship.	1	2
	Leaflet drops by postal services.	2	1
	Posters/leaflets/etc at shops, businesses,Connexions and Job Centres.	1	1
ME Promotion	Mentoring scheme.	1	2
	Encourage promotion through IPDS scheme.	5	5
	Assignment to HQ as temporary crew manager.	1	1
ME Retention	Equality and diversity training/seminars.	3	4
	Policy and/or survey on bullying and harassment	1	2
	Uniform Service Course jointly held with the Police.	0	1
	Exit interview programme.	1	1
	Plan to assist trainees finish initial course.	1	1
	Established firefighter assigned to assist trainees.	1	1
	Plan child care facilities.	0	1

Table 9. Type and details of initiative by fire and rescue service (N=14)

Initiative	Comment
Sport Sponsorship	Success unknown as generally lacking on the evaluation side, no tracking mechanism.
Station Open Days	Success tends to be unknown as the details of the numbers attending tend to stay with the watch/station manager.
Leaflet Drops	Whether this is cost effective or works is still under discussion.
Exit Interviews	No particular feedback available but thought to be potentially valuable.
Equalities and Diversity Training	Success not known.
Sport Sponsorship	No specific statistics to link to recruitment, but a wide range of teams from the local ME community took part.
Leaflet Drop by Postcode	We were told that this initiative appears to have been quite successful, unfortunately we do not have further information in relation to progression through the recruitment process.
Women's Positive Action Event	This event appeared not to have been successful.
Targeted advertisement	Unfortunately we are not sure how successful this initiative was.
Graduate Recruitment Fair	This was considered to be unsuccessful as no whole-time vacancies were available and no record was taken on the numbers attending the Fire Service promotion.
Positive Action Day	Success unknown as numbers of attendees not recorded and no evaluation sheets distributed.
Poster Campaign	Not aware that there has been a specific response to these posters.
Community Networking	No information on success but believed of use.
Communication Channel	Success not known but again shows female firefighters that advice and assistance is available.

Table 10. Written comments on the evaluation of initiatives.

The job description and candidate information notes handed out were those used in the 2003 recruitment campaign and were not compatible with the firefighter role maps. This information highlighted the incident response role rather than the fire prevention role and the fixed-shift system rather than the more flexible practices currently being introduced. All visitors to the stand wearing glasses were informed that perfect eye-sight was required to join the Fire Service. National standards now indicate that this may not be correct and that there is now some flexibility.

No record of attendees was noted and no visitor was asked to comment on the presentation either in writing or verbally.

Children's splash event
The schools selected to take part ensured a wide gender and ethnic mix. The assignment of children to the teams during the event also ensured a separation between friends and classmates.

All firefighters on duty were white males. The only minority ethnic participant was the male community outreach officer. One of the 'highlights' of the event appeared to be soaking the youngish female teachers from one of the schools.

The children were expected to write letters of thanks. Evaluation was based around a reduction in incidents for fire-setting and hoax calls.

Positive action event
The event was billed as a positive action event and was advertised in the local press and on the Internet and specified that the FRS wished to attract women and ME applicants. However, of some 20 attendees half were white males.

The FRS was not recruiting at the time of the event although it was possible that this might change in the near future. Once applicants had passed the point of entry tests they were placed on a waiting list for up to 18 months. If no contact was made by the FRS in that period then the application became void and they needed to reapply.

Information handed out included the new national point of entry tests, fire safety and smoke alarm information and an explanatory booklet detailing the firefighter's role, the selection process and a job description. This booklet, however, was printed in 2001 and highlighted the 2-day, 2-night, 42-hour shift system and the incident attending role. It did not reflect the priorities detailed in the firefighter role map. This is critical as a major local issue was the cost of housing locally. Staff at the station could, therefore, live a very long way from the station and travel in to stay for the period of the shift pattern.

Attendees' names were recorded and tracked against subsequent formal application.

Retained recruitment drive
The FRS has targeted women through various routes including sponsorships and partnerships with the local women's football and rugby leagues, and handing out leaflets at local supermarkets, etc. The aim was to recruit women with children in the later years of junior school and the early years of secondary school. This has proved to be very successful with a number of recruits. The scheme is now self-maintaining as the pool of female retained firefighters influence friends and acquaintances to consider joining.

Community Fire Station
The community fire station is a purpose built facility that includes both a whole-time fire station and the community centre that is open until 9.30pm. The facility consists of meeting and conference rooms, one of which is a computer suite, Red Hot Education Station and minibuses. Two PCs

were located in reception, sponsored by Marks and Spencer, intended for Internet and Learning Direct use.

The facility is run by two managers, one receptionist plus two others sharing general administration duties. In addition there is an External Partnership Officer who is tasked with obtaining external support, sponsorship and funding.

English is taught as a second language on Saturday mornings using fire safety as the education medium. The centre has provided 12-week course in conversational Punjabi, including cultural information, for fire service staff. The local further education college uses the facilities for part of the teaching of a public service course.

The complex is considered to be a model for a community fire station and is visited by other FRS from within the UK and from abroad. Evaluation is undertaken through a number of ways including numbers visiting the centre, numbers enrolled on courses, numbers of children attending the education facility, and reduction in local fire-setting and hoax calls. Long-term evaluation will be based on the number of children who have passed through the centre that subsequently apply to become firefighters.

Young firefighters' group
The meetings were held on a weekly basis at a whole-time fire station with a mixed group including both boys and girls from both white and ME backgrounds. Of the attendees, two girls and one boy from a minority ethnic background wanted to become firefighters. However, the group only allowed membership to age 16 except for a limited number of older assistant instructors.

The group was dependent on the efforts of the leader, a senior uniformed fire officer, his wife and his daughter, with limited financial assistance from the FRS or the Fire Authority. The objectives of the group were seen as getting youngsters off the streets into a disciplined environment. The scheme was not seen as part of the FRS recruitment process although the group leader was aware of one successful applicant from the group.

Retained recruitment day
The day had been planned to encourage local people to consider joining the FRS as retained firefighters. Throughout the day, 5 retained officers plus the crew manager from the station, the retained recruitment officer and a seconded crew manager (from a ME background) from HQ and the station manager were available. A retained female officer also attended for a short period.

During the day, 5 white males and one white female attended. The officers from HQ had expected a considerably larger number to attend. A review of the event indicated ownership and responsibility issues with the organisation. The recruitment officer was responsible for producing the event literature including leaflets to be distributed to all houses in the town. The station manager and the crew manager were responsible for arranging the events at the station and organising suitable manpower. Unfortunately, nobody was assigned or authorised to distribute the leaflets which remained in their boxes in the station.

This FRS noted names, gender and ethnicity of attendees in order to monitor subsequent applications.

Whole-time firefighter recruitment
The FRS had been undertaking whole-time firefighter recruitment. Advertisements were placed in five local newspapers and on the Internet. An advertisement was also placed in the local magazine of a local professional football team. Slightly fewer than 3,200 applications were received for up to 35 vacancies on a training course intended to start in September 2005. Of these, applications were received from 211 ME and 255 women. This quantity of applicants cannot be efficiently handled, as there is insufficient capacity within the departments involved in the selection process. The FRS therefore ran a random selection process that selected 350 of the applicants for inclusion in the remaining selection process.

The FRS had excellent statistics on the success of the advertisements and the random selection process. The statistics demonstrated that if the random selection process was analysed at ME and women level about the right percentages were selected. However, if the ME applications are broken down by ethnic group, then the process under or over represents some groups.

Transfer from retained to whole-time
The FRS encouraged retained firefighters to apply for transfer from the retained to the whole-time duty system. However, seniority appears to be lost during this process. In one instance, the watch manager at a retained station with a total of 15 years' service, 7 years as a watch manager, was at the same time a probationary firefighter at a whole-time station. This gives the impression that the FRS considered retained firefighters as being less competent than whole-time firefighters.

Temporary crew manager
Female and operational firefighters from ME backgrounds can apply to be assigned as a temporary crew manager based in the HQ for a six-month period. The role rotates between a woman and a firefighter from an ME background. The temporary crew manager attends events, displays, recruitment drives and can present on public service courses within universities and colleges. This was considered successful as there were always applicants for the position.

Retained firefighter recruitment
Advertisements for retained firefighters were placed in the press local to the station requiring staff, and applications could be picked up at either the local station level or at HQ. In future, the advertisements will probably be included in a local paper specifically directed towards the local Asian population. No evidence was available to indicate the success of this initiative.

Community rooms
The FRS had a number of stations with community rooms with more to be added in the near future. Some combine the functions of both crew room and community centre whilst others are only for the community. Leaflets on recruitment and fire safety were available at all centres. Use tends to be by play groups, local community and ethnic groups. Success was measured on the number of people and/or groups attending

the centre and on anecdotal evidence that some women had been encouraged to apply.

Cadet scheme
Run by the Youth Training Association in conjunction with local schools and the operational staff at a whole-time fire station. The scheme is aimed at low-achievers in the range of 11 to 16 year olds. This programme is not seen as part of the recruitment process of the FRS. No evidence of evaluation was available.

Whole-time recruitment
The outreach activities involve a team of four trained liaison staff on six-monthly secondments from stations. The liaison staff are firefighters and the team currently includes two white women and one Asian man. This team is involved in a series of events including school visits, shows and public events. Within the geographical area covered by the FRS some 180 people are trained to assist with the outreach programme. The purpose of visiting these venues is to disseminate information and recruit interest from women and minority ethnic people from the community. Having indicated interest in the FRS, individuals sign up for a programme that provides an indication of an individual's capacity to undertake firefighter training. This involves running a series of tests and includes providing individual coaching in certain areas such as literacy and fitness.

This programme has in the past been supplemented by other 'coaching' courses. These courses are designed to provide direct coaching to pass the entry requirement for the Fire Service.

The outreach team are unable to provide recruit application forms at the completion of any of their programmes. Application forms need to be requested. This system randomly eliminates applicants. To provide application forms is deemed to be positively discriminatory.

While the application forms ask for applicants to indicate if they have attended any of the outreach programmes, it was not known what effect these programmes were having on the recruitment of people from ME backgrounds or women into the Fire Service.

The complete application and selection process can take up to a year resulting in a drop in interest of those who have attended action days, etc. The FRS is therefore looking at the possibility of implementing mini-recruiting campaigns of 3 to 4 months.

Whole-time and retained recruitment
The FRS was about to embark on a recruitment campaign for the first time in 3 years. Their focus had been upon targeting specific sections of the community. To this end the FRS has found that they had been pushing the frontiers on issues concerning the 'gay' community and specific minority ethnic communities. While there had been successes in both, there had also been backlashes.

With respect to the gay community, the FRS had been specifically involved in providing a presence at festivals. This had involved a particular style of advertising and marketing which had been aimed at engaging with the gay community whilst also addressing the fire safety message. Events that involved minority ethnic communities had also been targeted. The FRS conduct specific events aimed at encouraging women and minority ethnic members of the community to apply. The FRS does not have a pre-application process. All applicants for firefighter positions are accepted. Using this positive action approach the FRS expected up to 6,000 applications for 40 positions in 2005. This FRS is able to provide applications at the specific recruitment events.

Media campaigns
The FRS has engaged in a highly successful media campaign. Advertising in specific journals has created interest in the general public. Evaluating the effectiveness of media advertising campaigns is problematic. There are circumstances where activities are not auditable in the sense that return on investment can be identified in a way that satisfies the auditors.

General community initiatives
Several community initiatives had been engaged in, including school groups, Young Firefighters Schemes, and Youth Offending Team Groups. The impact of these programmes upon recruitment had not been measured as it is accepted that measurement of such activities is problematic.

Workplace Champions
There are two premises upon which the workplace champion (WC) initiative is based. Firstly that training can embed the principles of E&D (see Section 5) and secondly that a network of WCs can reinforce these principles in the workplace. Whilst these premises may well stand, there is no evidence for this and in theory they are problematic.

With respect to the first premise, whilst evaluating training with an attitudinal or behavioural focus is difficult, the investment requires that some effort be made. The presumption that the Five Day Programme delivered provided individuals with a set of skills which established them as subject matter experts (or champions) was not agreed by the equality and diversity officers at the FRS. Neither were the objectives of the programme evaluated against the National Occupational Standards. The second premise, that there is a role for WCs conflicts also with the equality and diversity officers who already have an established network of equality and diversity outreach workers. It was not clear what the WC role should be, borne out in the difficulty in establishing what the role should be called.

7.8 Observations
1   Job descriptions at some open days/graduate recruitment fairs/action days were out of date and over-emphasised the incident response role.   In one instance, the job description for whole-time firefighters was that used in the previous recruitment programme undertaken in 2002/2003 and included references to rank rather than role.   In another the job description was printed in 2002.

2   The owner(s) of initiatives was often unclear, varying from no obvious owner to multiple ownership. Initiatives were sometimes not centrally co-ordinated e.g. we found a case where the HR Manager, a Station Manager and

a Crew Manager each organised a retained recruitment day with no definition of the responsibilities/specific purpose of each.

3   Initiative objectives were often unclear and occasionally non-existent. One graduate recruitment fair concentrated only on non-existent vacancies for whole-time firefighters even though retained and community safety vacancies existed. The reason given by the equality and diversity officer for attending the fair was 'We have to keep our profile up'.

4   The absence of targeted objectives indicated some lack of awareness of 'who' the local community actually was. Anecdotal evidence from seminars and conferences confirms FRS difficulty in profiling their local communities.

5   Initiatives were undertaken 'because we always do it'. One graduate recruitment fair and a number of open days/positive action days were held by FRSs that had no immediate vacancies.

6   Evaluation of initiatives was frequently poor or non-existent, often depending only on the completion of evaluation forms although some excellent evaluations were observed. In general the FRS were aware that their evaluation processes were poor but did not have the time, knowledge, support or investment to improve.

    Good example - In the area of whole-time recruitment, applications had been analysed by gender, sex, newspaper and/or radio advertisement. The FRS concerned intended to use this analysis as input for future selective targeting.

    Poor example - Open days/positive action days, particularly for retained recruitment, were frequently organised by the local station. Details of numbers, gender and ethnic mix were retained by the station and not returned to HQ for analysis.

7   Attendees at all young firefighter programmes that were reviewed were expected to leave at age 16, leaving a two year gap before application to join the FRS as a firefighter. One FRS did not see the scheme as being part of the recruitment process. Firefighters running the schemes were generally acting in a voluntary capacity with only limited support from the FRS.

    One scheme was being run by a senior ranked firefighter, his wife and his daughter.

8   Some excellent initiatives were observed in the area of community fire stations.

    In one case, the community fire station was purpose built as part of a neighbourhood renewal programme and was intended to be the local centre of the community.

9   Incidents of resentment by uniformed ranks were given by equality officers, with action days for women and ME and Gay Pride Day events specifically mentioned.

In one case the Chief Fire Officer over-rode senior officers and insisted that the FRS took part in the Gay Pride Day events, including joining the parade and placing advertisements and an article in a gay magazine. However, in spite of this only one out of over 2,000 firefighters is openly gay.

7.9 Summary and Conclusions

All the fire and rescue services in our review were undertaking work with their communities and many involved representatives from a range of levels and roles within the Service. It appears that work in the community was undertaken to meet three broad aims - to facilitate good relationships with the community, to deliver community fire safety advice and to facilitate recruitment.

The survey and the field trips demonstrated that the sample FRSs were undertaking a very wide range of initiatives intended to influence the wider community to consider a career as a firefighter. The FRS believed that many of these initiatives were very successful, however they had limited knowledge of whether the recruitment initiatives that are undertaken really do address the issues that might stop people from minority ethnic backgrounds applying to become firefighters. There appeared to be some lack of knowledge of 'who' the local community was although some work within community fire safety had produced an improvement in the understanding of the wider social environment and encouraged the recruitment of staff with both an understanding of cultural differences and the ability to speak a foreign language.

However, there was a lack of consistency in how such work was described, difficulties with ownership and an absence of detailed objectives for initiatives, which could have supported the development of a means of systematic evaluation. Some comprehensive evaluation was undertaken but this was limited to areas like employment applications where substantial data was available. In many cases evaluation, where undertaken at all, was limited to feedback questionnaires handed out after events.

Data collected about applicants and potential applicants was collected and analysed in many different ways across the sample of FRSs. In one case extensive analysis was undertaken at a level that would allow targeting of under-represented groups during future recruitment campaigns. In others data was not collected or only used for monitoring purposes.

Many uniform and non-uniform FRS employees saw the ODPM targets as unattainable in a situation where there were few whole-time vacancies and hence very little recruitment. However, the perception of targets as unattainable also seems to lead to initiatives which appear to have been designed for the purpose of 'being seen to be doing something', rather than activities carefully designed, planned and evaluated with the potential to address the issues directly. Such findings reflect the widespread proliferation of activity which is taking place across services under the equality and diversity banner but which is - in many cases - conducted to little observable effect.

The effectiveness of the workplace champion model remains unproven. Initiatives of this nature would benefit from a clear model that incorporates training, policy development, management role developments and investment in key staffing appointments.

7.10 Community Diversity Initiative Evaluation Toolkit

As a result of the information gained and the conclusions reached in this part of the FireWorks Project a toolkit was developed to assist FRSs in the planning and evaluation of their community initiatives. The Toolkit was trailed and tested as part of the case study work and at two seminars that were attended by members of the FRS. The Toolkit is available on the enclosed CD-ROM and the project website.

7.11 Community Profiling Tool

FireWorks developed a Community Profiling Tool which offers guidance to FRSs on collecting data about their local communities. The Tool is available on the enclosed CD-ROM and the project website.

7.12 Recommendations

- FRSs use Community Outreach as an umbrella term for describing work with local communities, further categorised as 'Community Relations', 'Community Fire Safety' and 'Recruitment'.
- FRAs should ensure that action plans developed for E&D initiatives have clear indications of ownership, SMART objectives and evaluation strategies.
- FRAs should involve representatives from local minority ethnic communities as stakeholders in evaluating E&D, Community Outreach and IRMP initiatives.
- FRSs profile their local communities and consider using the FireWorks Community Profiling Tool.
- FRAs consider adopting the FireWorks Community Diversity Initiative Evaluation Toolkit.
- ODPM and CFOA review and establish appropriate targets for the representation of women and people from minority ethnic backgrounds in the FRS.
- ODPM and CFOA should support FRAs in developing a common framework for policy development, action planning and monitoring and evaluation of equality initiatives and communication strategies.

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Investigating Minority Ethnic Attitudes towards a Career in the Fire and Rescue Service

8.1 Introduction

The under-representation of minority ethnic (ME) groups within the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) has perplexed FRS personnel, policy-makers and researchers alike - in spite of recruitment initiatives - FRSs have not seen any significant increases in representation from these target groups. This section considers the barriers to the recruitment of people from minority ethnic backgrounds as perceived by FRS equality practitioners, the perceptions of individual ME young people concerning their attitudes towards a career in the FRS (with a view to identifying whether, if at all, there are any barriers that may prevent them from joining), and to gauge from ME young people and their parents whether, if at all, they perceive any challenges and myths that may prevent them from applying to the Service.

The research investigating ME attitudes involved 18 people who were interviewed in one-to-one in-depth discussions. The overall number of young people interviewed was a relatively small sample - only 10 in total from three locations (Coventry, Manchester and Sheffield). Even with a sample this size, the in-depth level of interviewing that took place helped to identify the fact that FRSs have taken a blanket approach when formulating policies in their work with ME groups. Thus, FRSs had 'lumped' together all ME groups without disentangling the differences between ME groups and within specific ME groups.

This work has shown that the perception that exists within the FRS that young people from ME backgrounds and young women were reluctant to consider the FRS as a career due to concerns about discrimination on the grounds of faith, ethnicity and gender were not borne out by our in-depth interviews. This finding requires further research, however, if it were found to be true, current recruitment strategies developed specifically to overcome these perceptions would be likely to fail.

8.2 Earlier Methodological Approaches[1]

The research method adopted was informed by the literature available on earlier work on ME attitudes. The intention was to avoid carrying out research that had

already been undertaken in the past. This exercise helped to identify any gaps in knowledge and identify new avenues of research. The literature review revealed the following:

1. The impact of factors such as region, socio-economic variables or occupational status have not been taken into consideration:
   - When setting the targets for increasing the representation of ME groups in the FRS, the Home Office have largely overlooked the way in which local geographical and socio-economic differences may shape career decisions. Moreover, brigades have used the Home Office targets to create recruitment strategies that fail to recognise these local differences between ME communities.

2. A bi-modal distinction of 'black' and 'white' or 'visible' and 'non-visible' categories was created which failed to acknowledge variations in ME group composition:
   - The targets set by the Home Office may in fact be reinforcing differences between ME communities and the 'white' or 'white British' communities. The targets have implicitly supported the view that two distinct populations exist - one composed of black and ME communities and the other of white communities. The targets fail to recognise the distinctions that exist within 'African', 'African-Caribbean', 'Asian', 'White' or 'Other' communities.

3. The relationship between ethnicity with other correlated variables was not taken into consideration:
   - A number of existing studies gauging ME group perceptions have not found any specific or conclusive results. It has been difficult to ascertain from this research whether ethnicity is associated with barriers towards a career in the FRS (FRDG 1999/2000; Hussain 2002). Thus in order to gauge ME group attitudes, it is necessary to disentangle ethnicity, community and socio-economic status to begin to explore career aspirations, perceived barriers and family support.

1 Please refer to the attached CD ROM for a full discussion of the research methods.

4. The reasons for choosing the research sample of ME groups:

- The justification for selecting the sample of ME groups involved in the reviewed studies has largely been based upon the assumption that ME groups are composed primarily of 'visible' minority groups. However, no reason is given why these groups are the focus of the study.

- The sample selected in the Leicestershire FRS study (2002) focused upon 'ethnicity' or 'religion' as a way of categorising groups, however, these two themes may differ in character and composition within ME groups. Therefore, it is difficult to draw comparisons between these two themes.

- The London Community Sample Research (2000) focused upon the issue of 'representation' of ME groups in order to gauge perceptions. Therefore the issue of representation was satisfied by gaining participants from a cross-section of society, but this did not reflect 'community' perceptions. Primarily, individuals were the focus of the study and questioned outside of their community environments, thus overlooking the issue of family support, income differentials, advice from friends and family etc. (266 in total, in addition to another 82 selected at the earlier part of the study).

- The Home Office reports by the Fire Research and Development Group (FRDG) (1999/2000) again sought to gauge ME group perceptions by interviewing a total of 171 individuals from a cross-section of society in order to evaluate a representation of views. The participants were chosen by relying primarily upon community groups, educational and voluntary sector organisations. Yet, there appears to be an assumption that ME groups interact with their community within such organisational networks. However, this largely ignores those ME groups that may not participate in such groups and activities.

5. The importance of a more rigorous qualitative research design to capture perceptions:

- Although previous research projects have claimed to have gauged perceptions, it has been difficult to ascertain from these results the variation in ideas and responses of ME groups, and the ways in which the understanding of the FRS may carry across cultural boundaries.

8.3 New Areas of Research
8.3.1 Outstanding Issues

The first task involved defining and selecting people from ME backgrounds. The latest annual statistics (2003) of workforce ethnicity issued by the Fire Research and Statistics Division (FRSD) of ODPM provided the initial reference point for selecting the ME groups chosen for this study.

The FRSD statistics supplied to us presented data in two broad categories of 'white' and 'black and ethnic minority'. The three 'white' census categories were compressed into one, obliterating the distinction between 'White British' and 'White non-British' categories ('White Irish' and 'White Other'). This single, compressed 'white' category was set up

in statistical tables in opposition to a new amalgamated category of 'black and ethnic minority' (BEM) (see Section 6.3.2 and Appendix 1).

The ODPM's lack of definition concerning ME groups has shaped the way in which community perceptions have been assessed. Firstly, the variation of opinion between ME groups has not been analysed adequately. For instance, the London Community Sample Research (2000) failed to recognise the differences of language or religion that may exist within 'Asian', 'Black African', 'Black Caribbean' and 'White' groups in the presentation of research findings (2000: p24). Secondly, the data generated from previous studies have been geographically specific (Hussain 2002; FRDG 1999/2000; London Community Sample Research 2000) and may not be applicable to other ME groups across other FRS.

Without a clear definition or rationale from previous studies on the sample of ME groups (Hussain 2002; FRDG 1999/2000; London Community Sample Research 2000), an in-depth and extensive approach for selection was required.

8.3.2 Selecting ME Participants

In earlier studies the ME groups chosen in the sample were selected in order to gain a cross-section of opinions from society. Yet, this method of sampling was unsatisfactory as there appeared no further justification for selecting such groups apart from the issue of representation (FRDG 1999/2000; London Community Sample Research 2000).

In this study, the sampling method was designed to draw a correlation between local demographic factors and the representation of ME groups in a FRS. The idea was to select people drawing from the 2001 Census (at ward level) from two different ME backgrounds - whose representation was reflected in the FRS chosen for the study (drawing from the most recent ODPM statistics from 2003). The statistical information was taken from the data available from the ODPM on the ethnic composition of both whole-time and retained firefighters.

The intention was to select the first group based upon the largest number of ME firefighters reflected in a FRS; the intention was to select a second group based upon the lowest number of ME groups reflected in a FRS; it was hoped that the last group would comprise of a 'control' sample group that would reflect 'white' British opinions.

8.3.3 The Target Groups - ME Young People and Parents

Some of the earlier studies have not found any specific or conclusive evidence that might inhibit ME groups from joining the FRS (Hussain 2002; FRDG 1999/2000; London Community Sample Research 2000). Yet within the FRS (see 8.5) there exists the view that ethnicity, community and family may shape the attitudes of ME groups towards a career in the FRS. There is very little research that has taken into consideration the career aspirations, perceived barriers and family support which may shape the career choices of individuals. In particular the way in which contextual and social factors - including socio-economic status, ethnicity,

community and family may service as barriers or enhance the development of career aspirations (Hill et al. 2003: p935). For a further discussion on the economic and social activity of ME groups, please refer to an earlier document on 'Contextualising the Debate: Exploring Education, Training and Employment' (Hashem 2004) (see CD-ROM). The influence of the family may be important for young people making career choices for three reasons. Firstly, the impact of socio-economic status may shape the career options available to young ME groups. For instance, lower socio-economic levels may affect the quality of educational opportunities and the type of information available to individuals (Hill et al. 2003: p936). Yet, conversely middle-class ME groups may choose career options that are far more suitable to their educational qualifications and exposed to higher level occupations. Secondly, the level of family support available to individuals may shape career decisions. Family support may comprise of underlying financial factors, as well as approval from parents for a particular career choice. Thirdly, the impact of perceived or actual racial discrimination may limit the types of occupations some minority groups may consider (Hill et al. 2003: p936).

The study thus focused upon young people in order to assess how they may make career choices based upon the support and advice given by their parents. By gaining the involvement and participation of young people and their parents, the idea was to gauge how influential parents were in informing the career choices of young people (GARA 2003: p21).

8.3.4 Control Sample
An important element of the sampling design was to include a control sample family composed of people from white British backgrounds. In earlier studies opinions gleaned from people from ME backgrounds were related specifically to their ethnicity - without considering whether this view was held by a particular group or whether it was held in general by wider society. For instance, according to Bucke (1994) and the 1999 Home Office studies, ME groups perceived the role of a firefighter to be a dangerous job (Bucke 1994: p62; FRDG 3/2000:25; 2/2000: p20). Yet, without being able to draw comparisons with opinions from the 'white' British population, it has been difficult to gauge whether such perceptions were specific to a particular ME group or whether these were opinions that were widely held by the general white British population. Thus, by using a control sample family, the intention was to avoid attributing opinions to specific ME groups.

8.3.5 Age Cohort
Earlier research on the perceptions of ME groups towards a career in the FRS was undertaken primarily with people from the 18 to 30 age group (Hussain 2002: p5) (London Community Sample Research 2000: p9). Individuals were chosen based upon the fact that they were of employment age and it was assumed that these particular individuals would be attracted to joining the FRS.

However, there is evidence to suggest that adolescents make career choices at a much earlier age (Hill et al. 2003: p935). In a study conducted on the career aspirations of

young adolescent groups (12 to 14 years of age) in the United States, Hill suggests that such age groups do consider career options and choose classes in school that may shape their future career opportunities (Hill et al. 2003: p935). This suggests that individuals may make career decisions at a much earlier time in their lives before they reach employment age.

In our study, the age cohort for the young people was between 15 to 18 years of age. This age group is important in particular as it is at a time when young adolescents are in a stage of transition when they are having to make subject choices at school or college to decide their future career paths and thus may be willing to consider themselves in a variety of occupations.

8.4 Research Methods
An early investigation of why ME groups might be poorly represented in the FRS was undertaken with FRS equality and diversity personnel between March and May 2004. Equality and diversity practitioners (both operational and non-operational) were interviewed at length about their equality work and their attitudes and perceptions of the barriers they thought inhibited ME groups from considering the FRS as an employer. The results of these findings are given in 8.5 below. This work formed the basis from which the main investigation was carried out in the following year.

In Spring 2005 a second stage of research commenced. Three regions in England were selected based upon a comparison of the representation of ME firefighters (both whole-time and retained) within the FRS (based upon the 2003 figures) and ME populations within each region (drawing from the 2001 Census). We identified three locations - Manchester, Sheffield and Coventry - where some FRSs appeared to be achieving far greater representation with certain ME groups in the region.

Whilst the intention was initially to choose young people from specific ME groups, it was a challenge to find interested and willing young people from these particular ethnic backgrounds. Subsequently, the young people involved in the study were primarily those who were happy and willing to be interviewed. Table 11 shows their ethnic backgrounds:

As shown in Table 11, both genders were equally represented. It should also be noted that two participants were taken from white British backgrounds. The intention was to use the views of these participants as a 'control' sample, thus providing a point of reference to compare the ideas and attitudes of the young people. Where willing, further interviews took place with the parents of some of the participants. Four Connexions advisers from the three regions were also interviewed who were drawn from the three chosen regions in England.

One-to-one interviews were undertaken with each of the participants. The discussions undertaken with each of the young people focused upon their current ideas on their future career choice, why they aspired to this career and the reasons for their choice. There was also a discussion exploring the support that young people felt was available

Location	Abbreviation	Ethnic Background	Gender	Age
Manchester	MAN YP 1	White British	Female	15
Manchester	MAN YP 2	Mixed White and Black Caribbean	Male	18
Manchester	MAN YP 3	Black Caribbean	Male	17
Manchester	MAN YP 4	Pakistani (Asian or Asian British)	Female	16
Sheffield	SHE YP 1	Other - Syrian	Female	15
Sheffield	SHE YP 2	White British	Female	17
Sheffield	SHE YP 3	Mixed White and Asian	Male	16
Sheffield	SHE YP 4	Mixed White and Black Caribbean	Male	16
Coventry	COV YP 1	Pakistani (Asian or Asian British)	Female	16
Coventry	COV YP 2	Indian (Asian or Asian British)	Male	18

Table 11. Data Collected from Young People on their Ethnic Background, Age and Gender

from their parents, teachers and Connexions' advisers. There then followed an in-depth discussion on their thoughts of the FRS as an employer, whether they knew of anyone who worked for the Service and whether they or their friends had undertaken work experience at their local FRS. Further discussions explored the employment opportunities they thought were available in the FRS, whether they were aware of the main duties of a firefighter and whether they could envisage themselves working in the Service. The last set of questions investigated what they thought their parents would say if they were to work for the FRS.

8.5 Perceived Barriers: Views of FRS Equality Personnel towards ME Groups

Identifying the 'barriers' to ME recruitment is an issue that has caused great confusion within the FRS and thus requires further discussion here. The barriers discussed here have been identified by the equality personnel who worked within the Service. However, whether or not these barriers do actually exist with people from ME backgrounds is difficult to ascertain by drawing exclusively from these comments. Thus, the barriers identified by the equality personnel have been noted as 'perceived' barriers.

The barriers identified focused upon cultural sensitivities and the problems with observing certain religious practices. Firstly, in one fire service (Fire Service 2) a member of the equality team believed that the duties and responsibilities required of a firefighter would challenge the cultural norms of certain ethnic groups. It was suggested that 'handling bodies may not be within their culture' (Fire Service 2, white, male, Divisional Officer, operational). Thus, according to this statement, some ethnic groups would find the job of a firefighter at odds with their own cultural norms, values and practices.

A second factor that was identified as a problem for some groups was that by observing certain religious customs/practices such as keeping facial hair or covering the hair, they would not be considered as an applicant to the Fire Service. In Fire Service 6 the equality adviser

argued that, 'some very devout Muslims … [have] facial hair, which is obviously, from our point of view…our BA [breathing apparatus] manufacturer won't guarantee the equipment if there's facial hair' (Fire Service 6). Thus, according to this view, some Muslim men would not be properly protected or equipped if they kept facial hair. However, another equality adviser in Fire Service 9 was conscious of such views, and was willing to confront this idea. The equality adviser was critical of the policy concerning facial hair especially as it appeared to prevent Sikh men from applying. This equality adviser noted that the prohibition was more of a historical practice, especially as many firefighters had in the past worked for the military before entering the Fire Service. Therefore, even the most traditional practices were being questioned and challenged by some equality advisers (Fire Service 9, white, male, non-professional, operational).

Thirdly, a common and recurrent theme that emerged from the interviews was that Asians in particular were not willing to consider a career in the Fire Service, as they thought firefighting was a low-status profession. For instance, it was suggested that they saw it as a 'second class job' (Fire Service 44, white, male, professional), or a 'very low career, or low occupation' (Fire Service 45, ME, male, professional) (Fire Service 38, white, female, professional) (Fire Service 12, white, male, professional). Therefore, Asians did not consider the profession, because they would be lowering their social position. Certainly, it is a long-standing myth from firefighters that Asians would not consider a career in the Fire Service, because according to some firefighters, Indian castes were prohibited from carrying water. Although the water-carrying caste myth was not specifically mentioned by equality advisers, by suggesting that Asians saw the career as low-status, they were alluding to the notion that Asians disliked the occupation as it was linked to a low-caste.

Nonetheless, this did not reflect all the opinions expressed in the interviews. One equality adviser in Fire Service 6 was suspicious of the water carrying-caste myth, and suggested

that in fact Asians simply did not consider working as a firefighter. She noted that:

'…there's these myths around this lower caste and all this. We actually do go out and speak to people, and it's quite amazing because we sat a group of Asian women …[down]… to do a fire safety talk and recruitment. And what they said to us is, we've actually never considered it.'
(Fire Service 6, white, female, professional)

In another Fire Service, the equality adviser questioned the notion that religion and culture prevent certain minority ethnic groups from applying. She suggested that black minority groups did not appear to have the same cultural, religious or even language problems that Asian groups may have; nonetheless, there still existed an overall problem with recruitment from black minorities. Thus by drawing a comparable example with another minority group, the equality adviser was in fact challenging the myths concerning religious or cultural prohibitions (ME, female, non-professional).

Therefore, according to some equality advisers, religious practices or cultural factors prevent ethnic minorities from applying. Moreover, these equality practitioner perceptions implied that the lack of ME representation in the FRS was not a general problem with the Fire Service, but was an issue for the minority ethnic groups themselves.

A common problem suggested by the equality advisers was that minority ethnic groups were not aware of the careers structure and profile of the Fire Service. This revealed a general trend, as ethnic minorities had very little or no information on the Fire Service. As noted above in Fire Service 6, the equality adviser had spoken to a group of Asian women about recruitment, and they said that in fact they never actually considered the Fire Service as a career (Fire Service 6, white, female, professional). This point can be further substantiated in interviews conducted at two other fire services. In Fire Service 2 the equality personnel suggested that the lack of information was a fundamental problem (ME, female, professional, non-operational). The same problems were noted in Fire Service 9. Here the equality adviser noted that:

'I'd say initially lack of awareness is a big one, not having the information readily at hand, nobody has ever encouraged those individuals to think of the Fire Service as a career and they've never known anybody in the organisation.'
(ME, female, non-professional)

Thus, a problem noted by the equality advisers was a lack of awareness concerning the Fire Service in general. Not only was the lack of information a barrier, but more specifically minority ethnic groups had very little or no understanding of the careers structure and profile. Furthermore, the equality advisers argued that the lack of role models discouraged people from minority ethnic groups from applying. In Fire Service 45 the equality adviser noted that, 'I never saw any black firefighters or women when I was younger, so, therefore, it wasn't lodged in my psyche' (ME, male, professional, non-operational). In Fire Service 6

the equality adviser argued that, 'they look at a fire engine, they don't see many black faces…The more people they see, the more it will be of interest…' (Fire Service 6, white, female, professional). Thus, without the visible presence of firefighters from minority ethnic backgrounds, the Fire Service finds it difficult to generate interest in the profession. However, without a significant increase of minority ethnic firefighters, the Fire Service is unable to appeal to new applicants by representing black and Asian faces. Thus, there is an ongoing and perpetual problem with recruitment from minority ethnic groups.

Lastly, the equality advisers argued that the reputation of other comparable white male organisations especially from the uniformed services, discouraged ME from applying. In Fire Service 12 the equality personnel noted that, 'the uniformed services in the United Kingdom have a very poor reputation for being welcoming of people from different backgrounds' (Fire Service 12, white, male, professional, non-operational). This sentiment was echoed by another equality adviser in Fire Service 9. She argued that, 'because we are a uniformed organisation, I think that's an issue, we get tarred with the same brush for example, the police' (ME, female, non-professional). Therefore, it was perceived that a problem for the Fire Service was that potential ME applicants might make comparisons with other white male organisations (Fire Service 38, white, female, professional, non-operational), whose reputation seemed to exclude them.

What was clear from the interviews with the equality advisers was that minority ethnic groups were not suggesting that the Fire Service itself was racist. More importantly, the fear of racism was more of a problem. It was noted in one fire service that,

'we spoke to some Asian youths a while ago…one of the questions he said is well, we'll be discriminated against because of our race. So that must be in mind….'
(Fire Service 6, white, female, professional)

This was also articulated by another equality adviser in Fire Service 2 who argued that some ethnic groups were under the impression that the Fire Service is still a racist organisation (Fire Service 2, ME, female, professional, non-operational). Yet, what was clear from these comments was that the threat or fear of racism seemed to be greater than actual experiences of racism from the Fire Service.

In sum, the barriers identified in the equality interviews were not necessarily actual or real barriers, but reflected equality practitioners' perceptions. The work also showed that some equality practitioners believed that the social and economic behaviour of ME groups has been constrained. Such views have been based upon preconceptions made about the assumed cultural norms, religious values or social behaviour of certain minority ethnic groups. The focus on 'perceived' barriers to recruitment is especially significant. The barriers identified in the interviews revealed how ME groups were perceived in the FRS in relation to their assumed ethnicity, culture, religion and social values. Therefore, the composition and character of ME groups did not necessarily reflect any reality, but rather provided a view of these communities from within the Service.

8.6 Research Findings[2]

The literature review was undertaken in order to critically explore earlier research on ME group attitudes towards the FRS as an employer. These studies focused specifically upon the careers profile of the profession, the element of danger associated with the job, the issue of racial discrimination as a barrier - drawing a comparison with the other uniformed services - and whether the issue of religion acts as a barrier to ME groups considering joining the Service.

The studies reviewed here included Tom Bucke's on Equal Opportunities in the FRS (1994), which was undertaken on behalf of the Home Office; four reports commissioned by the Home Office on Strategies for the Recruitment as Firefighters of Women and People of Ethnic Minority Background focusing upon three FRSs in England including West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS), West Yorkshire Fire Service (WYFS) and Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) (1999, 2000); two reports commissioned by London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) exploring the attitudes of ME groups in particular the London Community Sample Research (2000) and the LFEPA Community Awareness Audit (2003) by Rekha Khalia and Philip Wilson; a study undertaken on behalf of Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service by Asaf Hussain on the Recruitment of Ethnic Minorities: LFRS Survey Report (2002); and lastly a dissertation by A. D. Clayton on Identifying the Attitudes of Young Asian Males Towards Careers in the UK Fire Services (2002).

8.6.1 Low Careers Profile a Barrier?

Tom Bucke (1994) found that an overall lack of information on job opportunities in the FRS meant that ME groups did not consider the Service as an employer (Bucke 1994: 51). Bucke argued that in comparison to other similar occupations, the FRS was one profession 'few respondents had information or advice about and in this sense it could be described as having a low 'career profile'' (Bucke 1994: p52). Similar results were described in the London Community Sample Research (2000). In the study respondents were unaware of what the job of a firefighter involved. Furthermore, 'awareness regarding how and where to apply was clearly low - an area which the organisation is currently seeking to address' (2000: p35). Thus both studies reported that the FRS is less likely to be considered as a career by ME groups, because of the lack of information and an overall low-careers profile of the profession.

The low profile of the FRS was also found in another study commissioned by the Home Office in 1999. The report on the Strategies for the Recruitment as Firefighters of Women and People of Ethnic Minority Background focused upon three FRSs: West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS), West Yorkshire Fire Service (WYFS) and Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFS) (1999, 2000). Focus groups held with ethnic minority communities found that in WYFS, the FRS 'has a generally positive and professional image with ethnic minorities but a low profile' (2/2000: p18). A similar opinion was articulated by ME groups in RBFS. The FRS was seen to have:

'…a general positive image but it has a much lower profile than the Police and Army who are perceived as…making greater efforts to recruit a more diverse and representative workforce' (3/2000: p21).

Thus the main problem encountered within these two areas was the lack of knowledge about the FRS, perhaps reflecting a very limited presence within these communities.

Within the research undertaken by FireWorks, it was difficult to decipher whether or not the FRS had a low careers profile with local people from ME backgrounds. From the interviews with the local young people, it was apparent that some of them had a better idea than others about careers in the FRS. Two of the participants appeared not to have any idea about jobs in the FRS other than firefighting:

'In my opinion from watching TV and that I'd think they put out fires and help people with…I'm not really sure because I don't really know much about it.'
(COV YP 1, female of Pakistani Asian or Asian British descent, 16 years old)

'…when's there's a fire on obviously, they go there and put the fire out - things like that… That's the exception what people do over there. I don't know anything else.'
(MAN YP 3, male of black Caribbean descent, 17 years old)

Whereas two of the other participants demonstrated a much broader knowledge of careers in the FRS. They described specifically the variation in the different jobs they thought existed within the Service:

'The only one that really comes to mind is the fire officer, I guess there's things involved in crime scenes, I guess they help people…managers and HR…and admin workers, engineers.'
(COV YP 2, male of Indian Asian or Asian British descent, 18 years old)

'Well there's firefighters, then isn't there people who run a switchboard for emergency calls coming in, is there like a sergeant who keeps them in line and tells them what to do and things like that, I think that's it, that's all I know really.'
(SHE YP 3, male of mixed white and black Caribbean descent, 16 years old)

Although earlier reports suggested that the FRS had a low careers profile with most ME people, this data suggests otherwise. Some young people interviewed clearly had better insight than others about jobs in the FRS. These findings suggest that such generalisations about the careers profile of the FRS are in fact untenable.

In Hussain's research on Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS), he focused upon the careers profile of a firefighter. The role of a firefighter appeared a far more favourable profession in comparison to 'odd jobs'. Out of the 4 groups African-Caribbeans reported to have the

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2 Please refer the attached CD-ROM for an extensive discussion of the literature.

greatest interest in firefighting (90%), followed by Sikhs (88%), Hindus (79%) and last of all Muslims (45%). Therefore, interest in the firefighting profession differed considerably across the range of groups included in the study (Hussain 2002: p20-24). The pattern of interest displayed by the African-Caribbean community in the LFRS Report was also noted in Bucke's (1994) study. It was found that interest in the FRS varied across ME groups. The data showed that while African-Caribbean men (45%) had considered the FRS as an employer, other male groups found the Service less attractive (Indian 21%; Pakistani 17%) (Bucke 1994: p63). African-Caribbean men were the largest group to have considered the FRS out of all the male groups. A similar pattern of results were found in the more recent study in the London Community Sample Research (2000). According to the research findings African-Caribbeans (83%) reported a high interest in the specific role of a firefighter, whereas 51% of Asians purported to show an interest in a firefighting career (2000: p27).

According to the London Community Sample Research (2000) the FRS received a high-level of interest from respondents (2000:8). In fact a firefighter's career was rated as a 'high interest role' which was the second most popular choice after IT software engineer. Yet, comparable uniformed professions were regarded with less interest. Low-interest roles included occupations such as police officer and armed forces (2000: p26).

The differences in terms of job interest displayed between ME groups suggests that individuals may make career decisions based upon sometimes very specific issues or at other times disparate factors which the studies were unable to gauge. This indicates that a more in-depth examination is required to examine the attitudes of individual ME people towards a career in the FRS, and gauge the context in which their opinions have been articulated.

8.6.2 Element of Danger a Barrier?

According to Bucke's study (1994) working for the FRS was associated specifically with the issue of danger in comparison to the other four listed services (i.e. Police Service, Army, FRS, and nursing profession) (Bucke 1994: p62). Thus, the image of firefighting as a life-threatening occupation was a prevailing view from the ME groups. There is further evidence to suggest that ME groups would not consider firefighting as a career due to the perception of danger. According to the 1999 Home Office study, it was found in RBFS that the 'perceived "danger" of the job is a turn-off for many, though a few see this as an attraction' (3/2000: p25). The "elements of risk danger" (2/2000: p20) was also reported in WYFS.

Hussain (2002) found similar results in his work on Leicestershire FRS. According to Hussain, all the ME groups questioned in his study perceived firefighting as a dangerous profession; Muslims were shown to have the greatest concerns as they believed the role of a firefighter was especially dangerous (91%) (Hussain 2002: p21).

In our interviews the ME young people revealed mixed views about the issue of danger. One young person did talk specifically about this issue:

'…it's quite a dangerous job, so I don't think a lot of parents would encourage their children to go in it, they would rather have them working at something safe.'
(SHE YP 1, female of Syrian descent, 15 years old)

Yet, two other young people in fact were attracted to firefighting due directly to the association with danger:

Interview 1
Interviewer:
'Is that what you think is quite exciting, the danger?'

Interviewee:
'Yes, when they go into rooms and put things out, into buildings. Obviously I haven't seen the reality…'
(SHE YP 3, male of mixed white and black Caribbean descent, 16 years old)

Interview 2
Interviewer:
'But you were saying that some of it was exciting. What sort of bits do you think were exciting?'

Interviewee:
'I don't know…Just the drill…the rush and having to get out as soon as possible, and climb out and I think how you get praise for it shall I say. You know…'
(MAN YP 4, female of Pakistani Asian or Asian British descent, 16 years old)

It is interesting to note that these two statements (see above) given by the young people from ME backgrounds are almost indistinguishable from the views held by one of the white British 'control' participants:

'The danger… Just being in fires, helping people. You like try and work how what you should do for them to help. Instead of letting them… when you see it on telly like people have been burned and all that. So I'd like to be one of them people that go in and help them out.'
(MAN YP 1, female of white British descent, 15 years old)

This young person was describing one of the reasons why she was attracted to firefighting. She specifically spoke of the danger and excitement associated with the profession. Although this young woman was interested in firefighting, it appears that her reasons for choosing the profession were not noticeably different from the ME young people who had not chosen firefighting, but nonetheless they could see its appeal. This suggests that whilst these young people held a variety of ideas and perceptions about the dangers associated with firefighting it is difficult to speculate whether or not these views are related specifically to ethnic background.

8.6.3 Racial Discrimination a Barrier? - A Comparison of the FRS and Other Uniformed Services

Both the Bucke (1994) Report and the London Community Sample Research (2000) study sought to contextualise the findings by taking into consideration what ME perceptions were in other public employment sectors especially in comparison to the other uniformed services. Bucke (1994)

argued that the Police was the most likely occupation to be associated with racial discrimination in dealing with members of the public (58%). However, the other uniformed professions were less likely to be linked to racial discrimination; for instance 25% of ME respondents linked the Army to racial discrimination, and only 20% of respondents drew the same conclusions with the FRS and 19% with the nursing profession. Thus, although racism was a factor, it was less closely associated with the FRS than the Police.

Similar findings from Bucke's Report (1994) were described in the London Community Sample Research (2000) study regarding racial discrimination. An issue considered in one aspect of the study focused upon the perception of potential problems involved with specific occupations. A comparison of perceived potential problems was made with other uniformed services. The respondents considered that 'being a member of an ethnic minority was felt likely to be a problem within the Police, armed forces and, to a lesser extent, the FRS' (2000: p32). Similarly, displaying a religious belief was perceived to be an issue that would be problematic within both the armed services and the Police, but again to a lesser extent, the FRS (2000: p31).

Supporting the findings from the two earlier reports by Bucke (1994) and the London Community Sample Research (2000) concerning the issue of discrimination, was further study undertaken by Asaf Hussain (2002) for Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service. The variation in the level of responses to the question of discrimination is stark and somewhat surprising between the different groups. The highest percentage that felt LFRS discriminates were African-Caribbeans (73%) followed by Muslims (55%) whereas Sikhs (23%) and Hindus (8%) reported lower levels of perceived discrimination. However, the level of discrimination felt by each group is not entirely reflected in the figures that had applied to join the FRS. Although African-Caribbeans had the highest percentage that felt LFRS discriminates, they were the second largest ME group (9%) to have applied to the FRS (slightly lower than Hindus (10%)). Therefore the findings from the study suggest that there does not appear to be a relationship between racial discrimination and the low level of applicants from ME groups to the FRS (Hussain 2002: p20-24).

The issue of racial discrimination was also explored in the Home Office studies in the three FRSs of WMFS, WYFS and RBFS. The opinions held by the ME communities concerning racism varied considerably. In WMFS incidences of racism associated with the FRS were less evident. Nonetheless, respondents were conscious of general levels of racism in the workplace. In the study it was reported that, 'the main barrier for members of minority ethnic groups is an invisible 'iceberg' of cynicism which is the result of [a] long acquaintance with prejudice' (1999: p15). In WYFS focus groups did, 'not believe that the FRS discriminates', however, 'a significant number see a lack of ME communities and women represented in the FRS as an indication of a degree of sexism and racism' (2/2000: p18). Although the FRS was not seen as an outright racist organisation, it was associated with racism in a more general way as a problem that is symptomatic in many work environments. This sentiment was

reflected in the RBFS focus group, 'Racism in society was a reality for many taking part in the Focus Groups. The Service was not singled out for criticism but seen as an example of a larger problem' (3/2000: p23). Thus, even though in all three areas the FRS were not perceived explicitly as racist, the low representation of minority groups and the lack of knowledge about the FRS meant that those ME groups questioned in the study held ambiguous views about the FRS.

The ME young people interviewed in this study held differing views on racial discrimination in the FRS. One young person thought that Asian women rather than Asian men would encounter problems of racial discrimination:

'I think that if there would be an Asian woman, she'd probably be discriminated against and harassed just because of the fact that she's a woman and she's probably Asian, but it depends really where she's going into. Because most of the Fire Services I think employ white people, I don't know why that is....'
(COV YP 1, female of Pakistani Asian or British Asian descent, 16 years old)

Another young person noted that due to the poor representation of ME groups, this may lead some people to conclude that the FRS was racist. Yet, he suggested that this perception was not necessarily founded upon any specific reality or reputation of the Service:

'To start with there's hardly any ethnic groups in the Fire Service anyway and that would be a start to thinking why, it could be racist, but a lot of people like to jump to conclusions before they check things out.'
(SHE YP 3, male of mixed white and Asian descent, 16 years old)

Yet, another young person did not think that racial discrimination would be an issue at all:

'I think once you're into it then you'll be basically one of the group and that you'd like to think that everything would be equal, your career prospects are equal and all the rest of it.'
(COV YP 2, male of Indian Asian or Asian British descent, 18 years old)

While some of the ME young people believed that racial discrimination may be an issue, they did not identify racism exclusively with the FRS, but in other organisations as well (see below for further discussion). However, one of the white British 'control' participants did not believe that racism would be an issue:

'No. Because everyone is involved in that. They all do the same never mind what culture you come from or anything. We should all respect each other.'
(MAN YP 1, female of white British descent, 15 years old)

These findings suggest that the experiences of racism encountered by ME young people may influence their opinion of organisations such as the FRS. However, the white British participant did not hold such views of the Service as she could not draw from such experiences. Thus, our findings concur with the earlier research findings.

8.6.4 Religion a Barrier?

Evidence from the Home Office studies undertaken in WMFS and WYFS (1999, 2000) suggests that displaying a religious belief would pose a problem to ME communities. This argument seems to be at odds with the findings from the *London Community Sample Research* (2000) study. The ME groups in the West Midlands study identified religion as a problem, *'For man Sikhs, the compulsory headgear when attending fires is a barrier'* (1999: p19). According to the ME groups questioned in the West Yorkshire study religion was also a barrier. In WYFS study it was reported that:

'Many Muslims have a traditional view of the home and family responsibilities of women...Muslim women said that they would face opposition from their families if they were to consider the FRS as a career' (2/2000: p20).

Therefore the Home Office studies appear to suggest that religion is a barrier for both Sikhs and Muslims.

The issue of religion as a barrier was further examined in a more recent study carried out by A. D. Clayton for the Fire Service College. Clayton (2002) claimed that some religious beliefs would make it difficult for some groups to consider working for the FRS. Clayton's focus group work revealed statements such as, 'My religious beliefs would not allow me to be a firefighter' and 'Working in the FRS would make it difficult for me to observe my religious practices (such as prayers) and festivals'. Drawing from these findings Clayton deduced that recruitment from Muslim groups in particular was a problem (Clayton 2002: p11). Yet, Clayton argued that, 'this issue is limited to a small number of respondents' (Clayton 2002: p11). However, it is hard to ascertain the size of Clayton's sample so it is difficult to deduce whether such views were in a minority or whether these were overriding opinions. Also what is apparent is that Clayton's findings are based upon work that was conducted in only one area of the country (South Yorkshire) (Clayton 2002: p5) yet the findings are used to represent the views of all young Asian males predominantly from a Muslim background. Thus Clayton's study overlooks the potential regional and religious variation between young Asian males.

According to the findings from the London Community Sample Research (2000) study, religion appeared not to pose a great barrier to the FRS as a career. A comparison was made with five other uniformed occupations (the armed forces, Police, Ambulance Service, paramedics and nurses). The data indicated that religion would be the most problematic for minority ethnic individuals groups for the Army (52%) and the Police (39%) yet religion was perceived as the least problematic for ME groups seeking to work for the FRS (18%). The results from all three studies are perplexing. One possible explanation for such countervailing views can be found in the way in which the findings were reported. In none of the three studies is there an indication of which views belonged to which ME group, the context in which such comments were made or the age cohort. Presumably the ME representatives from London, West Midlands, West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire were drawn from a broad range of ME communities however, the comments and findings do not reflect the regional variation. The studies anonymised the comments made during the focus group sessions which effectively makes it difficult to ascertain which particular ME groups perceived religion as a barrier.

The ME young people interviewed in the FireWorks study held a spectrum of views on the issue of religion. One young person did not believe that religion would be a barrier:

'I don't see anything wrong with firefighters especially if it's a religious matter that there isn't meant to be anything that religion can [say] against it...it's not like you have to do anything that's anything wrong....you're helping people.'
(MAN YP 4, female of Pakistani Asian or Asian British descent, 16 years old)

This view contradicts some of the earlier studies that suggested that religion would prevent ME people from joining the FRS (2/2000: p20) (Clayton 2002: p11) (1999: p19). However, another young person believed that religion would be a problem to women:

'...there are men there and that's just the religion because men and women are not allowed to mix, you should never work in an all-male environment.'
(COV YP 1, female of Pakistani Asian or Asian British descent, 16 years old)

Some of the other young people suggested that religion was only a factor in terms of ensuring safety and practical requirements. Yet, the young people did not perceive practical and safety requirements as a critical issue associated with religion, and thought it could be overcome by the Service as they drew parallels with the Police Service (SHE YP 3, male of mixed white and black Caribbean descent, 16 years old). This idea was held by a second participant:

'I don't think there's anything to stop your religion from allowing you to continue, I think... there may be some practical concerns.'
(COV YP 2, male of Indian Asian or Asian British descent, 18 years old)

It would be difficult draw any generalisable findings from these views, as these opinions are relevant to the participants involved in the research and not others who were not included in the study. However, what can be gleaned from these statements is that religion had varying degrees of influence on the opinions of these young people, which may or may not have an impact on whether they would consider the FRS as an employer.

8.6.5 Lack of Differentiation by the FRS in their Understanding of ME Groups

Drawing from a review of the current literature, the FRS continues to hold rather outdated ideas in their view of ME groups. They appear not to acknowledge the variation between ME groups. The lack of recognition in ethnic differentiation is reflected even at high authority level. According to Clayton, the Home Office:

'...set blanket targets for brigades to increase ethnic minority representation without taking into account the actual composition of the ethnic minority population, either nationally or locally. This, naturally, led to brigades taking a

blanket approach to advertising and promoting careers in fire services to ethnic minority groups without differentiating between the individual ethnic groups that make up their local population.'
(Clayton 2002: p2).

Without considering the variation in ethnic group composition FRSs have encountered problems in their attempts to increase ME group representation. Clayton's comment suggests that by setting the targets, the Home Office have largely overlooked the way in which local differences in ethnic composition may shape career decisions. In the statement Clayton is also critical of the way in which brigades have used the Home Office targets to create recruitment strategies that fail to recognise the differences between ME communities.

However, not all FRSs have accepted the view of ME groups put forward by the Home Office and further upheld by ODPM. In a recent study undertaken by LFEPA, Kalia and Wilson (2003) undertook a community awareness audit with Bangladeshi focus groups in Tower Hamlets. They argued that their research applied specifically to the participants involved in the study. They noted that:

'the people who took part in this report should not necessarily be taken to be representative of all Asian people in London. Nor should they be taken to be representative of all Bangladeshi[s] in London or Tower Hamlets.'
(Kalia and Wilson 2003: p7)

Thus, Kalia and Wilson were suggesting that their research should not be used to cross refer to other Asian groups and were doubtful about whether 'the blanket term Asian' (Kalia and Wilson 2003: p20) could apply for instance to Indian Sikhs. Furthermore, they did not make any specific claims about the generalisability of their research to Bangladeshis in

Tower Hamlets, London or the rest of the UK. Thus, they argued that their work could not be used to represent the views of others not included in the study.

In sum, there did not appear to be any specific barriers that would prevent ME groups from applying to the FRS. Neither were there any particular myths that were evident that would act as barriers. This work has shown that it is difficult to take such a broad view identifying specific barriers that are applicable within or across ethnic groups.

8.7 ME Young People's Career Choices and their Views of the FRS as an Employer

This part of the research was aimed at finding out from ME young people what they thought about the FRS as a potential employer and what their parents' opinions were of the Service. The intention was also to discover what career choices the young people had made and why they had arrived at their decisions.

The study revealed that all the young people from both ME and white British backgrounds had some idea about the subjects they were interested in and what career this could lead them to pursue in the future. The ME parents who agreed to be interviewed were supportive of their offspring's career decisions and were happy for their children to pursue a variety of career options.

The young people were asked what roles they would be happy to undertake if they worked for the Service (each participant was given a brief explanation of the four duty systems and the types of jobs that were available). The idea was to gauge from the young people whether they could imagine themselves, drawing upon their own interests and career options, in any one of the roles. Table 12 gives their responses:

Abbreviation	Ethnic Background	Gender	Age	Q4. 'Do you have any idea about what careers you would like to do in the future?'	Q8(i). 'What jobs are you happy to undertaken if you worked for the fire service?'
MAN YP 1	White British	Female	15	Firefighting	Not asked[3]
MAN YP 2	Mixed White and Black Caribbean	Male	18	Firefighting	Not asked[4]
MAN YP 3	Black Caribbean	Male	17	Electronic installation engineer	Unavailable[5]
MAN YP 4	Pakistani (Asian or Asian British)	Female	16	Barrister	Retained firefighter
SHE YP 1	Other - Syrian	Female	15	Doctor, psychology, acting	Whole-time firefighter
SHE YP 2	White British	Female	17	Drama therapist or drama teacher	Control room
SHE YP 3	Mixed White and Asian	Male	16	Performing arts, university, police- force	None, participant could not see himself in any role
SHE YP 4	Mixed White and Black Caribbean	Male	16	Construction manager	Firefighter (not specified whole-time or retained)
COV YP 1	Pakistani (Asian or Asian British)	Female	16	Psychologist	Control room, maybe retained
COV YP 2	Indian (Asian or Asian British)	Male	18	Civil service	Retained firefighter

Table 12   Data drawn from Interviews with Young People on what role would interest them if they worked for the FRS

3 The young person was not asked about what role they would be happy to undertake in the FRS as they had already chosen firefighting as a career choice.
4 See Footnote 3.
5 Due to poor communication between interviewer and interviewee, the participant misunderstood the question.

The data contained within Table 12 shows the career choices of the ME young people and the white British participants. Three of the participants (SHE YP 1 female of Syrian descent, SHE YP2 female of white British descent and SHE YP 3 male of mixed white and Asian descent) were interested in drama, acting or performing arts. Two of the participants had chosen firefighting as a career (MAN YP 1 female of white British descent and MAN YP 2 male of mixed white and black Caribbean descent). Psychology/psychologist was also a profession that featured twice (SHE YP 1 female of Syrian descent and COV YP 1 female of Pakistani descent). No other overlap could be drawn with the other career choices.

The results from the interviews showed that there was no distinguishable link between career choice and ethnicity. For instance, the two females of Asian Pakistani descent made different choices - one wanted to be a barrister while the other wanted to be a psychologist; the two males of mixed white and black Caribbean descent also made dissimilar choices - one wanted to become a firefighter while the other wanted to train as a construction manager. Similarly, the two white British participants chose different careers - one wanted to become a firefighter while the other was interested in drama therapy. Thus, the career choices of the participants varied substantially between each individual, and no links could be made between their career choices and their ethnicity.

The roles they could imagine themselves undertaking in the FRS also produced no distinguishable link between job role and ethnicity (see table 12). However, it was apparent that some of the young people were able to reflect upon their own career choices and choose a role in the FRS based upon their own interests and achievements:

'Control room staff, I'm good with computers…and maybe part-time as well…Voluntary would be good because you have the community and part-time it would be good, first of all it would look good on your CV and if I was going to follow a career in the Fire Service it would look good as well, and to have the experience.'
(COV YP 1, female of Pakistani Asian or British Asian descent, 16 years old)

This young person stated that as she was 'good with computers' she could apply this knowledge in a control room position that would require these skills. She also envisaged herself in a retained position and recognised the value of the job. This sentiment was echoed by another participant:

'I think I'm most likely to be one of the retained, in the voluntary bit, probably because I think it's quite a valuable thing to do and something that I'd probably enjoy doing rather than…I think it wouldn't be my main career, I think that's the main point in that decision.'
(COV YP 2, male of Indian Asian or Asian British descent, 18 years old)

This young person acknowledged the value of firefighting, not specifically as a profession of his choice, but he recognised the contribution he would be making of doing 'quite a valuable thing'. He suggested that he could imagine himself in this role, as he could pursue a separate career and undertake retained firefighting duties at the same time.

A follow-up question focused upon firefighting and what they thought their parents would say if they chose to undertake this role. The parents of some of the young people were asked the same questions. The responses of the young people and their parents are given in Table 13 and 14.

Examining the data from Table 13, one of the ME young people suggested that working for the FRS would be a problem for her. She spoke of how much her parents would object, because she was a 'girl' and 'Asian'. This young woman suggested that there existed tensions between culture and religion for her:

'I'd just say that culture doesn't play a role in anything, it's just the fact that I detest everything about culture, I just hate it…It interferes a lot in my beliefs and I think it's a load of unnecessary rules and you have to [do] this and that and it's not good to do that. I think I could change it, their opinion, it depends how determined I was to become a firewoman, but it's a definite no-no, I think.'
(COV YP1, female of Pakistani Asian descent, 16 years old)

According to this statement, culture had been used as a vehicle to constrain her conduct yet, religion had provided her greater direction and guidance. However, these comments reflect the experiences of this young person and should not be taken to represent the opinions of other young women with the same background. Another young person (MAN YP 4, female of Pakistani descent) stated that her father would object, but her mother would not. This view was supported in a further interview with the young person's mother. She stated that she could imagine her daughter becoming a whole-time firefighter (see Table 14), suggesting that she was open to new ideas about her daughter's future career.

None of the other young people believed their parents would prevent them from becoming a firefighter. Exploring the data from Table 14, neither did any of the parents raise any objections if their offspring were to consider becoming a firefighter. In fact some of them thought that firefighting would be the most suitable role for their son or daughter.

8.7.1 Perception that Racism exists in all Organisations

As mentioned above, the FRS was not noted specifically as racist, but the issue of racism was raised in conjunction with other organisations:

'Yes, there's racism everywhere really, whatever job you go for. You could be working in an office and you can get someone say something racist to you, so yes, there could be problems.'
(SHE YP 4, male of mixed white and black Caribbean descent, 16 years old)

This sentiment was echoed by another participant:

'Yes, but racism's everywhere, you can't really escape racism no matter what you do… It's like a cancer, it's just there.'
(SHE YP 3, male of mixed white and Asian descent, 16 years old)

Racism was an issue that the young people were aware could perhaps affect them in their chosen occupation; yet

Young People Abbreviation	MAN YP 1	MAN YP 2	MAN YP 3	MAN YP 4	SHE YP 1	SHE YP 2	SHE YP 3	SHE YP 4	COV YP 1	COV YP 2
Age	15	18	17	16	15	17	16	16	16	18
Ethnic Background	White British	Mixed White and Black Caribbean	Black Caribbean	Asian Pakistani	Other Syrian	White British	Mixed White and Asian	Mixed White and Black Caribbean	Asian Pakistani	Asian Indian
Gender	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Male
If you chose to work as a firefighter, what do you think your parents would make of this career choice?	Speaking of her mother: "She says that if I want to be a firefighter, then I can be. She's not bothered at all. She thinks I'll make a good one she says" "I don't think she minds"	Speaking of his mother: "Proud, but I'mnot doing it for them, I'm doing it for myself and no-one else... Obviously they'd be proud but it's for my own self"	He didn't know	"My mum wouldn't think anything. She would be a bit shocked, but my mum's more free...My dad is strict...No he wouldn't like that - we'd probably argue about that - he probably wouldn't let me join in the first place"	"If they can see that I'm really, really passionate about it and I'm seriously seriously considering it and not a lot would change my mind then they would in the end just give up trying to...."	Not asked	He could not see himself in any role in the fire service	Parents would be okay if he chose to become a firefighter	Parents' opinion: "Definitely no because the fact that I'm a girl and I'm Asian, Asians don't go into the fire service and girls don't do this and that, I could be a doctor or something traditional. Definitely a no-no"	Parents' opinion: "initially they'd probably be a bit reserved... despite being fairly liberal parents...mainly because they can't relate to it...I think it may be seen as one which doesn't have much potential for career progression..."

Table 13. Data drawn from Interviews with Young People on what their Parents' responses would be if they chose firefighting.

Young People Abbreviation	MAN YP 1	MAN YP 2	MAN YP 3	MAN YP 4	SHE YP 1	SHE YP 2	SHE YP 3	SHE YP 4	COV YP 1	COV YP 2
Age	15	18	17	16	15	17	16	16	16	18
Ethnic Background	White British	Mixed White and Black Caribbean	Black Caribbean	Asian Pakistani	Other Syrian	White British	Mixed White and Asian	Mixed White and Black Caribbean	Asian Pakistani	Asian Indian
Gender	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Male
Parents Relationship				Mother			Father	Mother		Father
Ethnic Background				Mixed White and Asian			Asian Pakistani	Mixed White and Black Caribbean		Asian Indian
What jobs are you happy for your son/daughter to undertake? Why is this?				Whole-time firefighter: "I can imagine her doing that"			"I don't know I haven't really thought about it. I don't see why not, if he wants to join the police I can't see why he wouldn't manage a career in the fire service"	"a full-time firefighter would be a role that ***** would enjoy ...he could learn hands on and rewarding as well. And the control, I think he can put himself across quite clearly and concisely and that would be a good role for him"		"I could see him as a firefighter...."

Table 14. Data drawn from Interviews with Parents on what they role they could perceive their offspring undertaking in the FRS

they were still determined to pursue their career choice. For instance, one young person was keen to join the Police even though he was conscious that the Police's race relations record was poor:

'They're much more racist as well, I know, that's the reason why I want to join because if I work my way up and hopefully if I'm the boss of people I'll be able to put my finger on certain problems quicker than letting people get away with it, because I know there's a lot of corrupt people. I know it's a home to a lot of racists. I believe I can work my way up and once I'm at the top I would be able to put my finger on certain issues and things.'
(SHE YP 3, male of mixed white and Asian descent, 16 years old)

It is interesting to note that even though this young person's father (above) was also aware of racism in the Police Service, he still fully supported this career choice:

'I've no problem if that's what he wants to pursue. I've got my particular view about the Police anyway. I would never say to any young person not to do that, because they need to find out for themselves.'
(Father of SHE YP 3, male of Pakistani Asian or Asian British descent)

This parent clearly recognised that racism could affect his son in the workplace yet it did not mean that he had dissuaded him from choosing the Police as a future career.

Another father had himself applied to join the FRS as a firefighter after leaving college. He noted that, 'I didn't see any Asians, can't remember "black", it was difficult, it was uncomfortable'. However, he still spoke about why firefighting appealed to him at the time:

'When I had the idea for applying to the Fire Service, what was different from the usual standard kind of…Not a lot of people from our communities went into it. I mean police was another one but I didn't go into the Police. Don't know why, but fire was something I was feeling more happy about. And I thought deliberately I could take part in it and that was 30 or so years ago, it was a long time….'
(Father of COV YP 2, male of Indian Asian or Asian British descent)

The above statement suggests that this parent was willing to enter a profession that was (and continues to be) under-represented by individuals from Asian or black ethnic backgrounds. However, he was still attracted to firefighting as he saw it as something that was different. He stated that he applied to the Service precisely because of its low employment of people from ME backgrounds and that he wanted to depart from applying to traditional occupations.

8.7.2 A Family Profession?

The data collected from the two young people who were interested in firefighting provides some insight as to what they found attractive about the profession and how and why they made this choice. These two young people gave in-depth descriptions of the reasons for their particular career choice. One young person explained how different the role of a firefighter was in comparison to other apparently mundane office jobs. He was attracted to the variation in the day-to-day duties of the job:

'But it's a good job because me personally I don't want a job where you go and sit in an office and do the same s*** every day, I don't want to do anything where you do the same thing every day and the Fire Service is different every day and that's why I want a job like that.'
(MAN YP 2, male of white and black Caribbean descent, 18 years old)

Another young person discussed how she had always wanted to become a firefighter ever since she was a child:

'…I've always wanted to be one even when I was a kid so… I've always wanted to be one, because I used to watch a programme called 'London's Burning', and it was just always [what I] wanted….'
(MAN YP 1, female of white British descent, 15 years old)

From the above statement, it appears that for some young people, becoming a firefighter was a career choice they had made in childhood. These particular young people were suggesting that for them firefighting was a vocation as well as a profession. In addition, both these two young people had family connections to the FRS:

'My uncle's a fireman and he's done well in life… A good life, a nice wife, a big house, his lifestyle's different to all my other family's and he lives different. He doesn't smoke or drink or anything, he's got a good life.'
(MAN YP 2, male of white and black Caribbean descent, 18 years old)

'…my…auntie, auntie's husband works for them as well… I haven't spoken to him yet but I'm hoping to speak to him next time, when he comes down, next time.'
(MAN YP 1, female of white British descent, 15 years old)

Perhaps part of the reason why these two young people were interested in firefighting was because members of their family worked for the FRS. The young man's views were shaped by his uncle's example; he described how much he thought becoming a firefighter would bring a lifestyle change, stability to his home-life and an entirely different outlook on life. The young woman was aware that she could approach her relative (her aunt's husband) in the future for advice. The comments show that these two young people had the advantage of understanding the FRS not only as an occupation, but also as to how much the profession may shape other aspects of their lives. The social connection these young people had with the FRS is a theme that has been identified in previous research. Jagtar Singh, in his study on Making a Difference: A Study of Under-representation in UK and USA Fire Services (2002), noted that firefighters currently employed in the FRS had some prior connection with the Service through either their friends or family (Singh 2002: p55).

8.8 Summary and Conclusions

This work with young people addressed issues identified within two research objectives. Contained within the first

objective was an assumption that generic barriers to employment in the FRS exist for people from ME backgrounds. However our work suggested that barriers to ME groups joining the FRS were more complex and varied than previously assumed.

The perception from within the FRS that young people from minority ethnic backgrounds and young women are reluctant to consider the FRS as a career due to concerns about discrimination on the grounds of faith, ethnicity and gender were not borne out by our in-depth interviews. In addition, perceptions of barriers to working in the FRS due to racism and danger differed amongst the ME young people and largely depended upon individual circumstances and family settings. A barrier identified by one person was not necessarily a barrier for another. For example, one young person did not believe that religion would prevent her, whereas another suggested that it could. Similarly, one young person thought that racism would be a problem whereas others suggested that it would not be. These views reflected varied perceptions between and within ME groups and opinions of individuals could not be taken as representative of an ME entire group.

The second research objective investigated the grounds of the belief that social norms, customs, religion, culture, gender and so forth were themes that regulated the behaviour of ME groups and constrained people from ME backgrounds from applying to the FRS. However, attempting to identify such challenges and myths has proved to be unfruitful. The young people and parents did not identify the same issues or themes that they believed would prevent them or anyone they knew from joining the FRS.

This work with ME young people and their parents has shown that a spectrum of opinions exist on the FRS as an employer. When informed of available roles in the Service, young people could perceive themselves working for the FRS by drawing upon their own interests and skills base. Furthermore, parents could envisage their sons or daughters working in these roles, thus indicating that they would not raise any objections if their offspring worked for the Service.

The study also confirmed the view that roles within the FRS - in particular firefighting - appealed to young people who had prior knowledge of the profession. The interviews revealed that having personal connections such as family members working for the FRS had a positive effect on shaping these young people's career decisions. Knowledge of roles available in the FRS was limited amongst those without such personal connections.

The findings suggest that FRSs may have assumed an unrealistic degree of homogeneity amongst people from ME backgrounds when developing initiatives designed to address their under-representation within the FRS. Failing to recognise significant differences within an ethnic group and between ME groups may run the risk of FRSs developing evidence-based policies and practices built upon inaccurate and sometimes false assumptions. This work suggests that further research is required into understanding to a much greater depth the perceptions of individuals from ME backgrounds of the FRS as a career.

8.9 Recommendations

- ODPM and CFOA identify and promote successful pathways to FRS careers for women and minority ethnic groups.
- FRSs ensure that initiatives with young people to raise the profile of the Service as a career choice are based on young people's real perceptions of the role and potential barriers.
- ODPM and CFOA consider commissioning further research into the perceptions of people from minority ethnic backgrounds on the FRS as a career.
- ODPM, CFOA and Representative Bodies undertake a targeted multi-media programme to inform the public about roles within the FRS.

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Appendix 1: Observations on ODPM FRS documentation and statistics Update Paper to the fire and statistics and social research branch (ODPM)

Introduction

During the course of the research the team, made significant use of ODPM materials including statistics forwarded through the fire and statistics and social research (FSSR) branch of the ODPM. As part of our reflections on the Government targets, the following observations were discussed at the Stakeholder Group meeting on 16th February, 2005, before being forwarded to FSSR for comment in a paper dated 24th February, 2005. The Update paper of the issues, together with the FSSR responses, are detailed below. (Please note: These responses were made on behalf of the fire and statistics and social research branch, and should not necessarily be taken as the responses of ODPM.)

FIREWORKS UPDATE PAPER, 24 February 2005

This brief update paper reflects the apparent lack of clarity within various sections of the Fire Service about the definition of an ethnic minority. This has implications for targeting and evaluating initiatives to support diversity in the operational workforce, and subsequent achievement of ODPM equality targets.

Issue 1: The indiscriminate use of terms in official Fire Service documentation, including the National Framework 2005/06:

Within the National Framework, the following terms are used without distinction:

- 'black and minority ethnic communities'
- 'minority ethnic backgrounds'
- 'ethnic minority'

The abbreviations BEM and ME are not found in this document.

A member of the FireWorks Stakeholder Group reports that investigations by the Police Service (consultations with leading figures of selected minority ethnic communities) have concluded that *'Minority Ethnic'* is the term most preferred. We have requested some information on these discussions.

> **FSSR Response, 23/3/05**
> **Issue 1 Re: The indiscriminate use of terms in official Fire Service documentation, including the National Framework 2005/06.**
> For consistency purposes we will use the preferred terminology of 'Minority Ethnic'.

Issue 2: The compression of census classification groups for fire service profiles by the ODPM:

Office of National Statistics, 'Ethnic Group Statistics: A guide for the collection and classification of ethnicity data', 2003:

*'In British government research, **minority ethnic groups** are differentiated based on a combination of categories including 'race', skin colour, national and regional origins, and language. … **What has remained fixed, however, is the assumption of an 'ethnic majority' that is White, of British origin, and English-speaking.**'* (7)

Commission for Racial Equality, 'Public Authorities and Partnerships: A Guide to the Duty to Promote Race Equality', 2004:

'Ethnic Minority: All those who did not tick the box White-British (or White-Scottish in Scotland) in the 2001 census.'

In statistics provided to the FireWorks research team describing the ethnic and gender distribution within operational firefighters, the ODPM has compressed the three 'white' census categories into one, obliterating the distinction between 'White British' and white non-British categories ('White Irish' and 'White Other').

By compressing the three white groups, the ODPM has conflated the terms 'White' and 'White British', taking them to be co-terminous.

This single, compressed 'white' category has then been set up in statistical tables in opposition to a new amalgamated category of 'black and ethnic minority' (BEM). Yet this contravenes the advice of both the ONS and the CRE as quoted above. According to both of these publications, a white individual should be classed as belonging to a minority group, so long as the individual does not classify him- or herself as White British in England and Wales and White Scottish in Scotland. These guidelines advise against classification on the basis of colour alone in favour of a combination of factors that includes colour, national origin or ancestry, and language facility.

FSSR Response, 23/3/05
Issue 2 Re: The compression of census
classification groups for fire service profiles by
the ODPM.
Although the statistics provided to the research team
were grouped under the main 5 + 1 headings, this was
done so purely for ease of presentation, the report also
stated that a full 16 + 1 ethnic classification breakdown
was available on request. In future reports, we will
append the full ethnic breakdown to the report.

Issue 3: The inclusion of the 'unknown' in the category of the white majority.

In statistical tables (and their accompanying notes) from the
ODPM describing the ethnic and gender distribution of
operational firefighters, the terms 'unknown' and 'don't know'
are used interchangeably.

It has been made clear that in the compressed version of
ODPM statistics, respondents whose ethnicity was unknown to
the fire authority have been included in the 'white' category
when calculating percentages of 'white' and 'BEM' members
of staff.

It has been suggested by a member of the Stakeholder Group
that 'unknown' respondents have been included in 'white'
category in order to avoid over-estimating the BEM
representation in the workforce when addressing Home
Office targets.

Yet this too contravenes CRE suggestions for the collection of ethnic
monitoring data, which indicate that 'other' and 'don't know'
responses should NOT automatically be counted in this manner:

Commission for Racial Equality, 'Public Authorities and
Partnerships: A Guide to the Duty to Promote Race Equality',
2004:

'…It is important to remember that any aggregation of the
data could hide significant differences between individual
groups…(17).

'You should keep those of unknown ethnic background as a
separate group in all your analyses, although you may wish
to exclude them when carrying out statistical tests (18).

'You should not make assumptions about the ethnic
backgrounds of people in the 'other' and 'unknown'
categories. You should not put those who define themselves
only as 'other' (and do not give any more information) under
any of the broad headings. You should also not assume they
are of ethnic minority background. You should treat them as a
separate group when you analyse the data' (18).

The insistence upon categorising all respondents into one of two
categories, using colour as the sole determinant of status as
'majority' or 'minority', may be problematic in the long term.

The Fire Service uses the census classifications in order to be
able to compare findings about representation of BEM groups
in the workforce to national population statistics.

A member of the Stakeholder group suggested that in total,
the numbers of 'don't know' and 'other ethnic group' are not
statistically significant as a proportion of the national
population, and therefore, further sub-classification or
investigation of these groups would be largely futile.

Yet in some localities, these 'others' may make up a significant
minority group or groups within the local area, which would
emerge from an in-depth community profile.

In this way the question of defining 'minority ethnic' groups
will be closely linked to community profiling.

Office of National Statistics, 'Ethnic Group Statistics: A guide
for the collection and classification of ethnicity data', 2003:
'Although the 2001 census provides a key baseline for
comparisons, it is primarily designed to produce national
data. You may be working at smaller scales, such as a region
or a local council, and there may be large populations of
ethnic groups which you consider need to be recognised in a
question on ethnic group. If this is the case, then you should
ask the ethnic group question in a way that will allow you to
compare your results with the census data.' (50).

'…It is recognised that for some purposes, and particularly
where these groups form a significant proportion of the
population, that you may need to collect data on these
specific ethnic groups. If you decide to introduce extra ethnic
groups to those used in the census, these should be added as
sub-groups of the appropriate main ethnic groups in the
census question.' (54).

To gloss over such distinctions could come at the cost of
ignoring statistically significant minority populations within
certain geographical regions. This may have implications
for the Fire Service's stated aims of continuing to improve
relations with local communities, with effects on
recruitment initiatives, as well as community safety and
education initiatives.

The census ethnicity questions invite respondents to write in
their ethnicity where they are selecting the 'other' option. The
FireWorks team have requested any further breakdown of
data held by ODPM within the 'White' category.

FSSR Response, 23/3/05
Issue 3 Re: The inclusion of the 'unknown' in
the category of the white majority.
'Unknown' ('Don't Know') will, from now on, be
presented as a separate category in all our tables. An
investigation would be conducted as to whether a
breakdown of the 'white' category further contributes to
our presentation of ethnicity. [DN: in the database, the
white category is actually broken down into British, Irish
and White other * so information is actually available]

Issue 4: Motivations for 'Don't Know' responses to ethnic monitoring surveys in the Fire Service

It has been suggested by a member of the Stakeholder Group
that many of the 'don't know' responses were a result of non-
cooperation with monitoring efforts due to feelings of
disgruntlement with the resolution of the strike. This evidence

is anecdotal, however, and while it may reflect the situation for some localities in that year, it does not address the fundamental question at hand, as laid out above.

> **FSSR Response, 23/3/05**
> **Issue 4 Re: Motivations for 'Don't Know' responses to ethnic monitoring surveys in the Fire Service**
> 'Don't know' is when the fire authority has not asked staff for the ethnic origin. 'Not stated' is however different in that the employee has refused to state their ethnic origin when asked.